Confession, the Reformation, Early Modern and Shakespearean Drama

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Abstract

The doctrines and practices of the Holy Church saturated European medieval culture. Confession, as one of these practices, had been formulated over centuries and after the Lateran Council of 1215 became ubiquitous, mandatory and largely uniform. The significance and necessity of confession were communicated in the didactic English theatre of morality drama, enacted in the later middle ages on saint days and other holidays. This theatre brought home to the audience that human sinfulness deserved God's wrath and the eternal torment of hell, but that sins could be redeemed through confession and divine forgiveness obtained. Morality drama, such as the anonymous *Everyman*, was warm, humorous and optimistic. The Reformation challenged the supremacy of the Holy mother Church and threw her sureties into uncertainty. Confession, as a central plank of Christianity, was a particularly contested area, such as evinced in John Bale's play *King Johan*. Yet most Reformists did not want to eradicate confession entirely, rather they wished to eliminate what they saw as its corrupted practice and meanings. The generosity and optimism of the forgiveness of sins in confession as a means of salvation was threatened and the anxiety this provoked in Christians about how to attain salvation is visible in the transformations of the morality form in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

As the last generation of those who had been brought up in the Catholic faith began to die out during the reign of Elizabeth I, the English Reformation had changed society so that the discourse of Protestantism became dominant. Yet the legacy of a Catholic culture, that had been established for hundreds of years, did not disappear overnight. The residual culture of Catholicism, and the discourse and practice of confession with it, remained significant, surviving in recusant families and being revitalized through the work of Jesuit missionaries. Warwickshire remained a Catholic stronghold and it is probable that William Shakespeare was particularly exposed to the legacy of traditional religion. *The Winter's Tale* is both thematically and formally structured by the notion of penance. The characters of Camillo and Paulina are interesting figures of the confessor and the famous dénouement of Hermione's revivification is interpreted as a re-reading of absolution. The legacy of Catholic confession extends to the way in which the self-accusation and acknowledgement of fault, integral to the narrative of the confessant, is associated with a veracious sincerity of speech, an association that can be appropriated in other speech contexts. To confess is also to be re-admitted and reconciled to the Christian community. Both these aspects of confession – as a mode of speech idealised as truthful, and as a means of reconciliation for those excluded from the community, are germane to Iago's duplicity and Othello's otherness in *Othello*.

Measure for Measure evinces an intimate relationship with the only form of confession to officially persist in England - that prescribed by the Church courts - although allusions to and enactments of confession in the play reveal the extent to which the Catholic discourse had been effected by reformist thinking. Michael Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality*, makes a number of controversial claims about the fundamental role of confession in the construction of a Western sense of human identity. These claims are examined in the light of the model of reflexive self-identity and Christian personhood generated in Augustine's *Confessions* and the extent to which they inform theatrical notions of self-reflexivity in the stage practice of soliloquy in *King Lear*.

Paying attention to the ways in which confessional discourses are dramatically utilised, amplified and altered in these plays, generates an appreciation of their significance, the continuities of early modern theatre and their imaginative transformations in the wider religious and cultural context of their Reformation era.

Contents

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Abbreviations

Craft	*The Book of the Craft of Dying*, ed., Frances Comper (New York: Arno Press, 1977)
DER	*Documents of the English Reformation*, ed., Gerald Bray, (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1994)
EEBO	*Early English Books Online* <http://www.chadwyck.eebo.com>
EETS	Early English Text Society
HP	Oscar D. Watkins, *A History of Penance*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, 1920)
LW	*Luther's Works*, eds, Helmut T. Lehmann and Jaroslav Pelikan, 55 vols (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959)
MHP	*Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, eds, John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer (New York: Octagon Books, 1965)
PAR	*Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, eds, Katherine Jackson Lualdi and Anne T. Thayer, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000)
RRR	*Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation*, eds, Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory, Studies in Church History, 40 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2004)
SA	Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*: *Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)
SCER	Thomas Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977)
TDLP	Cardinal William Allen, *A Treatise made in Defence of the Lauful Power and Authritie of Priesthod to Remitte Sinnes* (Louvain: n. pub., 1567)

Confession: the Reformation, Early Modern and Shakespearean Drama

Introduction

> *Confiteor Deo omnipotenti, beatae Mariae semper Virgini, beato Michaeli Archangelo, beato Ioanni Baptistae, sanctis Apostolis Petro et Paulo, et omnibus Sanctis, quia peccavi nimis cogitatione, verbo et opere: mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa. Ideo precor beatam Mariam semper Virginem, beatum Michaelem Archangelum, beatum Ioannem Baptistam, sanctos Apostolos Petrum et Paulum, et omnes Sanctos, orare pro me ad Dominum Deum nostrum. Amen.*[1]

From the morality play, *The Castle of Perseverance* (*c.*1425):

[HUMANUM GENUS *kneels in front of* CONFESCIO]

[...] aske myn absolucioun,
Syr Schryfte, I 3ou pray.

CONFESCIO Now Jhesu Cryste, God holy,
And all þe seynts of heuene hende,
Petyr and Powle, apostoly,
To whom God 3afe powere to lese and bynde,
He for3eue þe þi foly
Þat þou hast synnyd wyth hert and mynde.

[...]

I þe asoyle wyth goode entent
Of alle þe synnys þat þou hast wrowth
In brekynge of Goddys commaundement
In worde, werke, wyl, and þowth.
I restore to þe sacrament
Of penauns [2]

From *The Book of Common Prayer* (1552):

> *A generall Confession to be said of the whole congregation after the Minister, kneeling.*
>
> Almightie & moste merciful father, we have erred, and straied from thy waues lyke lost shepe we haue folowed to much the devices and desires of our owne hartes, we

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[1] The 'Confiteor', *circa* tenth century, part of the traditional Catholic liturgy. [I Confess to almighty God, to blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore, I beseech blessed Mary ever Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints, to pray for me to the Lord our God. Amen]. *The Sarum Missal: Edited from Three Early Manuscripts*, ed., J. Wickham Legg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916; repr. 1969). See also *The Sarum Missal in English*, trans., F. E. Warren, 2 vols (London: Mowbray, 1913). For a history of the 'Confiteor' see *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen> [accessed Oct., 2007).

[2] *The Macro Plays*, ed. Mark Eccles (London: EETS, 1969), p. 42 and pp. 46-47.

> haue offended against thy holy Lawes, we haue left undone those thinges which we ought to have done, and we haue done those things which we oughte not to have done, & there is no health in us, [...]. Spare thou them, O God, whiche confesse their faultes, Restore thou them that be penitent, accordyng to thy promises declared unto mankynde in Christ Jesu our Lorde [...].
>
> *The absolution, or remission of sinnes, to be pronounced by the Minister alone.*
>
> Almightie god, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whiche desireth not the deathe of a synner, but rather that he maye turne from his wickednesse, and lyve, and hath geuen power and commaundement to his ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people beyng penitent, the absolution and remission of their sinnes, he pardoneth and absolueth all them whiche truly repent, and unfeinedly beleue his holy gospel [...] .[3]

The first two quotations above succinctly demonstrate the traditional discourse of confession, in the words of the *Confiteor*, and how it was central to English morality drama, in this instance the play *The Castle of Perseverance*. Morality and mystery plays adopted the themes and purposes of the Christian faith and were precursors to the plays performed in the professional theatres established in Shakespeare's time. Integral to Christian doctrine, the staging of confession communicated the necessity of repentance and the means by which to restore the fallen Christian (the 'Humanum Genus' or 'Everyman' figure) to a state of righteousness and salvation. This drama had a fundamental, didactic purpose: to induce the audience to replicate the staged example and assure its own souls' deliverance. Early theatre thus establishes the coalescence of confession with drama and my thesis takes this as its starting point. It is not just an awareness of the part confession played in drama that is suggested in this study, but also the realisation of the inherent drama in confession. The theatricality of confession, supposedly like Catholic practice generally, was one major objection to the Catholic Church made by Protestant reformers. As the impact of the Reformation began to take effect during the sixteenth-century, so too the understanding and practice of confession was transformed in reformed creeds. The final quotation above, the 'General Confession', shows how confession was retained in the Protestant form of worship. The religious expression of confession might have been altered, but its general precepts remained. It is my contention that the reformed versions of confession, as well as the remembrance and actual persistence of Catholic confession, continue to be utilised and

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[3] *The Booke of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacramentes and Other Rites and Ceremonies in the Churche of England* (London: Richard Grafton, 1552), STC (2nd edn) 16286.3, EEBO <http://www.chadwyck.eebo.com> [accessed June 2007].

expressed in the domain of early modern English theatre. Early modern and Shakespearean plays make use of the remembered meanings of the Catholic discourse of confession and its reformed versions as a theatrical resource, exploiting both their audience's shared cultural memory and contemporary experiences. This thesis presupposes the importance of recognising certain historical meanings that circulated during the time the plays discussed were written, of uncovering how these dramatic works might have been understood by contemporary audiences and readers. Such an approach seeks to acknowledge the historical difference between the interpretative possibilities of the present and those of the past and that an appreciation of the latter must ultimately broaden and enrich the former.

As is probably clear, confession is understood here in its religious sense, as an auricular and sacramental Catholic practice, but reference is also made to its reformed versions. The above title, which refers to 'early modern' drama, equally could have described the selected plays as 'Renaissance', but to the extent that the former term has become associated in criticism with a view which stresses the historical and literary continuities that persisted from the late Medieval to the Reformation eras, the phrase 'early modern' has been chosen. Likewise, the designation 'Reformation' is employed with awareness of the debates that surround its definition in current historiography. Here the period described as the Reformation mostly refers to the events in England roughly between the 1520s, when Erasmus' and Luther's influences were first felt, to the second decade of the seventeenth century when Shakespeare's last plays were written. Correspondence between the English Reformation and European events should be inferred where appropriate to the context. One notorious difficulty in discussing the Reformation period is that of the terminology used to characterize the various proponents of reform in the sixteenth century. The term 'Reformist' has been used in this thesis sometimes as a deliberately non-specific one that, depending on context, might include Catholic proponents of reform as well as those who were variously opposed to the Roman Catholic Church. Originally a deprecatory adjective in the sixteenth century, usually applied to Puritans or Separatists, according to the *OED*, it is used here in a wider sense to denote those who advocated a variety of religious reform. The aim here is to avoid

becoming embroiled in the issue of how exactly individuals or positions should be religiously categorized, where this is not especially pertinent to the argument being made. The choice reflected in the use of the term Reformist is made in appreciation of the religious complexity of the era studied. Historians have acknowledged the difficulty of describing the early Reformists of Henry VIII's reign as Protestant, but even after the more definitive reforms of Edward VI's short supremacy the diversity of generally Protestant creeds – Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican, Puritan, Presbyterian, Brownist, and so on – proliferates. Describing Catholic affiliation is less complex, but here also there are distinctions to be acknowledged between the conservative adherence to residual English Catholic practice of, say, the mid-sixteenth century and those later English Catholics whose allegiance to Rome was inspired by the efforts of post-Tridentine Jesuit missionaries, or that faction called the Apellants. Strict categorizations also do not convey the further possibilities of apostasy, conversion and re-conversion, not to mention the potential for undecided, uninformed, or simply unconcerned attitudes towards actual, and proposed, religious reform.

The religious ritual of confession is associated with Christianity from the times of the early Church and its historical evolution developed a range of understandings worked out in theological debate, some of which were pronounced as heretical, some accepted and eventually promulgated as canon. By 1215 the Lateran Council declared confession mandatory at least once a year for all Christians and the host of penitential literature, already well-established, flourished, designed to educate clergy and laity. Such literature contributed to a general uniformity and ubiquity of confessional discourse and practice across Europe. Doctrine evolved into identifying three parts of confession: contrition, confession and satisfaction and the Scholastic debates of the Medieval period sought to understand how these related to each other and exactly where the efficacy of confession resided. Questions abounded: if true contrition was sufficient to ensure God's forgiveness, why was it necessary to recount sinful events and submit to the judgement of the priest and why was his pronouncement of absolution important? If forgiveness was achieved in confession, why was it necessary to make satisfaction? Could forgiveness be earned, or deserved? And what sort of satisfaction was sufficient – were

notional penances valuable, or were demanding penances, such as were practised in the early Church, preferable? Should the remission of penances be procured through papal indulgences? Such questioning was intensified in the Reformation period, and underlies the greater part of Martin Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* (1517). The Reformation extended debates about confession, felt in the Counter-Reformation Roman Church, but also beyond the reach of the Catholic Church so that its discourse was disseminated into Lutheran and Calvinist settings and in the varying practices of the post-Reformation English Church. These debates went to the heart of such Reformist concerns as the means and possibility of salvation, the authority and role of the priesthood, the relation of state, church, community and individual. Thus as the practice of auricular confession continued to be exercised only by the Catholic minority in England, its ideology – its concepts, practices, beliefs and language - were more generally disseminated into Elizabethan society.

The nature, extent and continuing practice of the Catholic faith during the supremacies of Elizabeth I and James I is the subject of on-going debate in revised historiography. That debate cannot be entered into in any detail here but the work of John Bossy, Christopher Haigh, Eamon Duffy, Peter White, Peter Lake, Michael Questier and Alison Shell, amongst others, has shown, at the very least, that no understanding of the Reformation is complete that does not appreciate the role Catholics and Catholicism continued to play in an otherwise Protestant England and that, as might be expected, this is felt in the literature of that period.[4] The religious culture of the Reformation era has been addressed anew by literary scholars as well as historians over the last two decades, particularly in the field of Shakespeare studies. Possibly a reactionary response to the

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[4] John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Michael Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), hereafter SA.

predominately political and secularising perspectives of new historicism and cultural materialism, there has been a steadily growing body of work that seeks to reassess and explore the significance of religion in the Shakespearean canon.

Yet this aspect of Shakespeare studies alone also suggests how complex and controversial explorations of early modern drama and religion can be. For example, one strand of criticism has been devoted to the vexed question of William Shakespeare's own religious faith, perhaps partly initiated by E.A.J. Honigmann's *Shakespeare: the 'lost years'* (1998), which connects Shakespeare the playwright with a William Shakeshafte, servant to the Catholic Sir Alexander Houghton of Houghton Tower, Lancashire.[5] Such a connection, if accepted, reinforces the notion that Shakespeare was brought up as a Catholic. Other commentators have taken up the question of Shakespeare's religious faith and have sought to read the plays and poems as sources of evidence of his affiliation. However, the debate about whether Shakespeare was a Catholic is problematic in several respects.[6] Fundamentally, too little is known and documented about Shakespeare for any detailed biographical constructions to be more than speculation. If, however, it were proven that Shakespeare had been a Catholic recusant, for example, in what way might this be important; how might such information contribute to the scholarly study of Shakespearean texts in particular? Recently published work such as Richard Wilson's exhaustively researched *Secret Shakespeare* (2004) and Clare Asquith's *Shadowplay* (2005) closely read Shakespeare's plays as ambiguous, topical allegories that necessarily obscured their underground Counter-Reformation politics and which are presented as evidence of the playwright's Catholic belief.[7]

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[5] E.A.J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare the 'lost years'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985; repr. 1998).

[6] The cultural and political implications of establishing the historical specificity of Shakespeare's plays, as well as Shakespeare's own beliefs, are explored by Michael Davies in 'On This Side Bardolatory: The Canonisation of the Catholic Shakespeare', *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 58 (2000) 31-47.

[7] Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion and Resistance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Clare Asquith, *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (US: Public Affairs, 2005).

Other literary critics have resisted attributing definitively Catholic affiliations to Shakespeare, recognising the potential complexity of religious beliefs in sixteenth-century England. There is an appreciation that religious positions were not inevitably static, but could evolve and change, that they could be uncertain, or might blend elements of contemporary religious thinking. Summarising the religious culture of Shakespeare's time, Jean-Christophe Mayer writes: 'religious reform even in late Elizabethan England was still a story of reaction, reversals and alternatives, a fundamental quest for solutions and compromises and a constant cultural negotiation'.[8] Such complexity and contradiction is evident in Shakespeare's plays, as Mayer acknowledges, although their ultimate import is still represented as reflective of authorial outlook:

> Shakespeare whose religious identity was mixed – liked to explore the contradictions of his age [...]. Even if Shakespeare was indeed brought up in a Catholic family, the dramatist's multifarious living and working environments explain why, as many scholars have recognized, his plays send conflicting signals. Far from being a mere expression of his so-called scepticism, or of the fact that he had no faith at all, these mixed signals were, I should like to argue, the traces of a spiritual quest conducted by the dramatist's own creative mind.[9]

If making assumptions about the desires and spiritual development of the authorial mind have been the Scylla of some studies of Shakespearean plays, the previously dominant mode of approaching Renaissance drama - new historicism - seemed to be sucked into a Charybdis of its own. Although usually content to put the text (rather than the author) centre-stage, some new historicists revealed a certain discomfort with the religious discourses that inform texts. Not only does Stephen Greenblatt disallow the historical specificity of religious meaning in the sixteenth century, but embarrassedly seeks to distance himself from the idea of religious belief *per se*. Discussing William Tyndale's criticism of Catholic dogma and ritual as 'works of the human imagination tricked out to appear divine', Greenblatt comments:

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[8] Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 7.
[9] Mayer (2006), p. 12.

> To a reader who believes, as I do, that all religious practices and beliefs are the product of the human imagination, these charges have a melancholy and desperate sound. It is as if the great crisis in the Church had forced into the consciousness of Catholics and Protestants alike the wrenching possibility that their theological system was a fictional construction.[10]

Misinterpreting Reformation polemic as an instance of latent atheism denies religious meaning as one major component of the poetics of sixteenth-century culture that it is Greenblatt's declared goal to delineate.[11]

In the last decade a willingness to treat the religious in its own terms, to appreciate the ways in which religious discourses signified *as* religious, has become more apparent. Rather than reconstructing reductive binary oppositions between the religious and secular, Catholic and Protestant, or radical and conservative, Gary Taylor (although also primarily concerned with discussing Shakespeare's own religious faith) argues for a more sophisticated and multivalent appreciation of Reformation debate, positions and change.[12] Taylor points out that oppositional attacks can be multiple and contradictory, and in relation to the Elizabethan religious settlement, opposition came from manifold points on the religious spectrum. Revising the flawed critical construction of a secular state opposed to religious authorities, Paul Whitfield White has described the development of English theatre as inherently caught up in the religious controversies of the Reformation.[13] Similarly, Debora Shuger has discussed the ways in which

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[10] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 113.

[11] Greenblatt (1980), pp. 4-5.

[12] Gary Taylor, 'Forms of Opposition: Shakespeare and Middleton', *English Literary Renaissance*, 24 (Spring, 1994), 283-314.

[13] Paul Whitfield White, 'Theater and Religious Culture', in *A New History of Early English Drama*, eds., John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 133-152. Yet even here differences in religious positions and the speed of change are overstated. White claims that 'The prescriptions for religious belief and practice taught in the grammar schools and universities, following the official Protestant articles, homilies and prayerbooks since Edward VI's reign, were thoroughly Calvinistic, and as such they radically undermined ways in which the Catholic Christianity of England's past (or to be more accurate, the ways Protestants viewed it) perceived the self and its relation to God and society' [p.146]. However, the Edwardian Injunctions of 1547 explicitly prescribed confession (and so, possibly, traditional perceptions of self). Item 9 orders that ecclesiastics 'shall in confessions every Lent, examine every person that cometh to confession to them'.[DER, p. 250]. To generalise that prescriptions of belief and practice in the second half of the sixteenth century were 'thoroughly Calvinistic' is to seriously misrepresent the complexity and process of religious change in that period.

Christianity itself might be regarded as providing a model of socio-political resistance, encapsulated in the Church's early status as an underground movement in the Roman Empire.[14] Indeed, Shuger shows how certain Patristic writers reveal an energetic egalitarianism that persisted in Christianity, despite its own orthodoxy and hierarchies, and can be traced in Shakespeare's plays, in such moments as when Lear rejects the social and economic inequalities and injustice he witnesses, in his 'poor naked wretches' speech (3.4.28-36). In such a way, Shuger shows how the reductions of binary oppositions can be avoided, demonstrating that such non-marginal resistance, that emerges from within a discourse itself, challenges the very notion of hegemony.[15] In a later work that is a protracted analysis of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Shuger discusses her critical approach to the play, identifying a 'relevant proximate-past' – the past which forms a historical moment of which the play is itself a part, so that it can be only understood (because it understands itself) with reference to that past.[16] Shuger also makes the point that each text's 'relevant proximate-past' will vary and consist of differing time-spans. Apart from the fact that this must be a very useful concept for all criticism that seeks to situate texts within their historical culture's significations, Shuger's analysis is interesting in another way in relation to this thesis. Shuger reads Duke Vincentio in *Measure for Measure* as combining aspects of temporal state polity with forms derived from the penitential system. Her analysis

> defines a model of Christian polity that made the state responsible, at least in part, for the cure of souls [...] that vested the state's spiritual jurisdiction in the crown but also in the courts [...] Shakespeare's Friar-Duke [...] meddles with corrupt consciences, administers equity, hears confessions, and cares intensely about his subjects' salvation.[17]

Shuger's argument demonstrates that the conventional critical divide between the secular and religious needs to be challenged and qualified. One such challenge is made

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[14] Debora Shuger, 'Subversive fathers and suffering subjects: Shakespeare and Christianity', in *Religion, Literature and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688*, eds, Donna B. Hamilton and Richard Strier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 46-59.
[15] Shuger (1996), p. 51.
[16] Debora Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England: The Sacred and the State in 'Measure for Measure'*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 7.
[17] Shuger (2001), p. 117.

by Jeffrey Knapp's *Shakespeare's Tribe* (2002) which persuasively argues that the so-called secular theatre of Elizabethan England was at times consciously engaged in the promotion of Christian ideals. Both the artistic matter of early modern theatres and their commercial conditions were inextricably bound up with the patronage of, writing of, and reception by religious/clergy men of various religious persuasions. Knapp comments: 'Neither the Christianizing nor the secularizing critics have asked whether Shakespeare and his contemporaries were capable of envisaging their profession itself – their acting and playwrighting – as a kind of ministry'.[18] Knapp identifies a more generalised Christian tradition operating in Elizabethan drama, that focused on notions of community, (of the sort described, it seems to me, in Eamon Duffy's *Voices of Morebath*[19]) and is expressed in an open and egalitarian fraternity which is silently contrasted in *Henry V* with the corruptions of the Church. Knapp's thesis is partly supported by his consideration of the antecedents of English theatre: 'Nothing could be more traditional for the English stage than to serve as a platform of religious instruction; why, with the rise of permanent theaters, should that function have simply vanished without trace?'[20]

The recognition of the importance of traditions of English theatre in interpreting early modern drama is a strategic manoeuvre central to the structuring of this thesis. One aspect of those traditions was the relationship between confession and Medieval English drama. The English theatre originated in the enactments of biblical scenes and religious dramas, the miracle plays and morality plays that were performed on festive and holy days in towns and cities. The morality drama had a didactic purpose: to demonstrate the need for repentance and its achievement through confession. Thus the discourse of confession was an integral structural and thematic component of English drama that persisted right up to the time of the plays focused on in this study. Whilst I would not wish to argue that the later plays that are the subject of this study (those written by Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare) were didactic, their immanent relationship with

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[18] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 9.
[19] Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[20] Knapp (2002), pp. 118-119.

the religious, including confession, is demonstrated as a continuing and important aspect of their meaning.

Confession lends itself as a dramatic resource; it is concerned with the ongoing 'drama of living'. For the penitent, confession resolves a soteriological crisis caused by sins committed, representing a potential turning point in the Christian's life and, in a broader sense, the triumph of good over evil. However, confession is also concerned with quotidian experience - deficiencies of conduct, disregarded promises, disputes with neighbours – the stuff of everyday life. Such social dramas of existence were recounted and explored in confession and their resolution was prerequisite to participating in the wider Christian community. But confession is also, in itself, a theatrical practice. Its time and place are stipulated; as it is performed its participants assume conventional personae - of the judge, healer, sinner, penitent and righteous; it has a partially scripted form that defines the dialogue of priest and penitent; the movements and posture of its players are choreographed; and its outcome usually accords to the conventions of its generic form. Thus the discourse of confession innately lends itself to theatrical transposition. Other aspects of confession, too, suggest its peculiar affinity to drama. Until the Reformation confession was understood as a sacrament. Its purpose was not only to bring about repentance for past sins, but to make their forgiveness visible. In 1567 Cardinal William Allen argued for the continuance of confession on exactly those grounds: 'For the minde requireth in her assured deserning [...] some external token'.[21] The assurance of forgiveness is epitomised in the priest's pronouncement of absolution, which, as Cardinal Allen also wrote, 'is Christ in ful power of pardoning [...] truly I heare the swete voice of Christ saing with authority: thy sinnes be forgiuē thee'.[22] Such an understanding of the priest 'playing the part' of Christ and pronouncing His words, in spectacular performance of the sacrament, clearly suggests its mimetic and dialogic features. Moreover, the dialogic aspect of theatre is one particularly shared by confession, as is borne out by the etymology of the word 'confess'. The various forms of the word, such as confession, confessor, confessant, are derived from the stem confess,

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[21] Cardinal William Allen, *A Treatise made in Defence of the Lauful Power and Authritie of Priesthod to Remitte Sinnes* (Louvain: n. pub., 1567), pp. 159-160, hereafter TDLP.
[22] TDLP, p. 161.

from the Latin *confitērī*. The *OED* states that '*con*' is 'an intensive' and '*fātāri*' means 'to utter', or frequently, 'to speak much'. Confession, then, is essentially about speech and its loquacious and performative qualities are readily comprehended and exploited in the context of dramatic dialogue.

In the play *Everyman* Confessyon gives Euery Man 'a precious iewell [...] called penaunce' (l. 556-8). If confession can be imagined as a jewel then it must be multi-faceted and varying aspects of it are revealed according to the face presented and the perspective it is viewed from. As seen above, for example, Cardinal Allen privileges the language of confession, regarding it as especially performative, or as a speech-act. In certain Shakespearean plays the concepts of justice and mercy and notions of equity that underlie confession come to the fore. By confessing, the penitent exposes their thinking to the priest's ministry, pedagogy and judgement. Confession is also seen as a ritual of spiritual and psychological healing; to be absolved of sin was to be spiritually at peace and restored to righteousness before God. But confession also has a communal face – it is a preparation for the sacrament of the Eucharist that unites and defines the Christian *corpus* and to take part one must be at peace with one's fellow-Christian neighbours. Knapp's claim that there is a specifically communal understanding of Christianity evident in Shakespeare's plays, and that this is significantly bound up with notions of social community, can also be considered in relation to the part confession plays in Shakespeare's plays. The Catholic practice of confession embodies ethical notions and processes of communal reconciliation and continued to be incorporated, although often transformed, in other reformed religious creeds. Such notions and rituals offer a model of resolution to communal and theatrical dramas. This perspective also points to the social discipline affected by confession, and its apparatus of churchwardens, priests and Episcopal visitations achieved a high degree of social harmony and discipline through an ethical system that seems to have been internalised and supported by the pre-Reformation population and continued to be upheld in the operations of confessions enjoined by church courts. However, it has been claimed that the psychological dimension of confession extends beyond an internalisation of the religious ethical system of which it is a part. In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault asserts that the

discourse of confession has been fundamental to the formation of Western identity.[23] In its obligation to recount narratives of the self in the inner desires and motives that lead to sin, the assumption is formed that confession produces the truth about the self. In its own terms confession is regarded as a therapeutic process. However, Foucault asserts, the individual in confession is, in fact, the subject of, and subjected to, the authority voiced and represented by the priest in confession and in this way the confessant acquires subjectivity.

The importance of the discourse of confession in drama is a topic that has received curiously little critical attention. One of the few monographs written on this area is Jeremy Tambling's *Confession: sexuality, sin, the subject* (1990), which takes as a starting point the claims Foucault makes about confession as constitutive of the subject in his analysis of a range of literary texts.[24] Tambling contributes to one strain of criticism that recognises confession as an important model for the confessional genre of (non/fictional) autobiographical literature. However, Tambling's book is mostly concerned to construct theoretically informed readings that take Foucault's model of power/knowledge relations as paradigmatic, power that is exercised through the confessional mode to produce dominant and marginal discourses that are traced in the literary text. In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980) Stephen Greenblatt offers a reading of William Shakespeare's *Othello* that is also indebted to the insights of Foucault in its new historicist approach. In a chapter concerned with the 'improvisations of power', Greenblatt follows Foucault in identifying confession as an ideology that authorises and subjugates sexuality.[25] Stephen Mullaney's *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (1988) also shares a new historicist approach and devotes a chapter to the Renaissance theatre as a site of power that appropriates the scrutinising and disciplinary function of auricular confession in a substitution of religious ritual for theatrical enactment. Mullaney loads the term 'apprehension' to produce an interpretation of Shakespeare's

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[23] Foucault, Michel, *The Will To Knowledge, The History of Sexuality*, 3 vols (first publ. as *La Volonté de savoir*, 1976) trans. Robert Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1979; repr. London: Penguin, 1998) I, pp. 58-9.
[24] See the Introduction in Jeremy Tambling, *Confession: Sexuality, Sin, the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990) and pp. 66-69.
[25] Greenblatt (1980), pp. 222-254.

Measure for Measure as interrogating the power of the stage to re-construct presentations of exemplary subjects and behaviour in its audiences.[26] As the stature and impressive literary analysis of these critics demonstrate, Foucault's model of knowledge/power relations has proved influential and generative for the discipline of literary studies, and, especially useful for this thesis has been the cultural model of 'discourses' that circulate at any given time. Yet, as already noted, in the critical metadiscourse of new historicism that has been brought to bear on Renaissance texts in particular, there seems to be a disservice done to the specificity of religious meanings in literature. For example, in *Secret Shakespeare*, Richard Wilson makes the confession box (not actually used in England until the nineteenth century) stand for a Counter-Reformation form of confession that in 'Foucault's thesis [...] constitute[s] the confessant as subject of a deep and guilty sexuality'.[27] In Foucault's account of confession, in what is ostensibly a history, there is a paucity of historical and religious specificity. This is a subject that is discussed in further detail in chapter seven, but apart from the difficulties that emerge of historical accuracy, Foucault's claimed emphasis in confession on the sexual also becomes less convincing on examination. It is fortunate for historians of confession that the texts of penitential writing abound. In this literature can be found a concern for almost every imaginable aspect of life within which emphasis on the sexual appears only in parts and in texts belonging to certain historical periods.

In examining this penitential literature John T. McNeill and Helena Gamer's *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (1965) has proved a useful collection of primary texts in translation.[28] For a collection of Medieval and earlier penitential writings, Oscar Watkins's *A History of Penance* (1920) is an invaluable source of translated theological texts from the Patristic writers to those of the fifteenth-century.[29] References to other studies of confession are made below, but mention must be made here of Thomas Tentler's *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (1977), which analyses the

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[26] Stephen Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 91-114.
[27] Wilson (2004), p. 18.
[28] *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, eds, John T. McNeill and Helena G. Gamer, (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), hereafter MHP.
[29] Oscar Watkins, *A History of Penance*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, 1920), hereafter HP.

history of confession up to the Reformation.[30] An account of what happened to confession during the Reformation does not yet exist in a single source but is part of the first chapter here in summarised form. Apart from primary texts, such as Jean Calvin's *Institutes* and Martin Luther's various writings, recent collections of essays - *Penitence in the Age of Reformations* (2000), edited by Katherine Jackson-Lualdi and Anne T. Thayer, and *Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation* (2004), edited by Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory, a compilation of the conference proceedings of the Ecclesiastical History Society - have been important sources of current research and analysis.[31] These texts have contributed to the history of confession that forms the first section of this thesis.

My approach, then, starts by recognising the traditions of confession itself. This study begins with a survey of the theological writing of the Church patriarchs, the penitential *summae* designed for confessors, and other theological texts that record the understandings of confession of later writers such as the Scholastics and various Reformers. The aim has been to identify the discourse of confession that these texts generated and contributed to, the language, concepts, beliefs and practices that were their legacy and which circulated in the wider culture. The goal has been to establish a sense of how this discourse is expressed in the play *Everyman*, as representative of late English morality theatre and the Catholic culture from which it emerged, and then whether and how it continues to be significant in the dramatic texts of the later theatre. Such an approach thus presupposes that, as Louis Montrose puts it, 'all texts are ideologically marked, however multivalent or inconsistent that inscription may be'.[32] The challenge is to identify in what ways they are marked by confession, to reconstruct their historical significations, and to attempt to do justice fully to the complexity of such meanings in order to analyse how they might generate specific readings of the plays. Such complexity is evident in the discourse of confession itself, with contradictory,

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[30] Thomas Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), hereafter SCER.

[31] *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, eds, Katherine Jackson Lualdi and Anne T. Thayer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), hereafter PAR. *Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation*, eds, Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory, Studies in Church History, 40 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2004), hereafter RRR.

[32] Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 11-12.

multiple and sometimes ambiguous concepts travelling in tandem. Yet, in contrast with the tumult of the Reformation, the long established and practised forms of Catholic confession must have represented a relatively stable discourse whose comprehensive meanings could be reliably recalled in the theatre's communication with its audience.

The first chapter not only provides the basis of an understanding of confession that informs the rest of the thesis, but is necessary in order to appreciate the politico-religious debates that were taking place during the time the plays examined in the subsequent chapters were written. A characteristic feature of Reformist argument was to advocate a return to early Church theology and practice (as they were perceived), holding them up as authoritative models with which to compare what were, it was argued, the corruptions and misconceptions of the contemporary Roman Church. Where confession is concerned, knowledge of earlier practices thus allows the capacity to appreciate the various discourses about confession that circulated in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Such knowledge allows an understanding of the traditions that were at stake to sixteenth-century English Catholics, to follow the opposing voices of Reformists and Counter-Reformists and to understand the ways in which actual practice took its own pragmatic course, embedded as it was in an infrastructure still heavily indebted to the past, even as it responded to the shifting demands of the later Tudor and first Stuart regencies.

The following six chapters fall into two halves. The first three chapters are concerned with plays which, to successively reduced degrees, are in the morality tradition. The latter three chapters analyse selected plays of William Shakespeare. In the second chapter, the anonymous play *Everyman* demonstrates a large degree of conformity to the conventions of the morality tradition and depicts a performance of confession. The two allegorical personifications of Confessyon and Knowlege are found to be pivotal to contemporary understandings of the significance of confession in this play, with the latter figure especially assuming a didactic role that communicates the orthodoxies of the Catholic system about the means of achieving a 'good death' and ultimately salvation, through confession and penance. Responding to previous critical discussions

of the play, this chapter considers the extent to which *Everyman* anticipates emergent Reformist debates, particularly in regard to the orthodox treatment confession receives. Chapter three considers John Bale's *King Johan*, where Reformist polemic comes to the fore, in anti-papal expressions that particularly focus on the Roman practice of confession. Yet, even as the Reformist Bale attacks confession, the playwright Bale not only makes use of the characteristic pre-Reformation practice of confession as a plot device, but also manifests his own submersion in its discourse through the play's utilisation of the language and mode of confession as a dramatic device of character. In the subsequent chapter, the conventional certainty of confession and penance as the mechanism of attaining salvation in morality drama is thrown into doubt in Christopher Marlowe's play, *Doctor Faustus*. Here, Reformist debates, that had sensitised such subjects as scriptural interpretation and authority, the power of sacramental assurance and the official perspectives of the Elizabethan *Homilies* on predestination and justification, are held in a creative tension with the expectations raised by the play's generic form.

Although the chronology of each play's composition observed in the organization of the preceding three chapters is not sustained, *The Winter's Tale* has been selected to begin the section that forms the last three chapters because confession is so clearly integral to its structure and themes. In particular, the relationships between Camillo, Paulina and Leontes are explored as analogous to the confessor-penitent relationship. Although Leontes' long penance evokes early Church practice, it is both the Catholic and Reformists' understandings of absolution, or the forgiveness of faults, which help to illuminate the final scene of Hermione's revivification. The communal dimension of confession, as a means of reconciliation for those excluded by the community as well as the status of confessional speech idealised as truthful, is considered in relation to *Othello*. Both the conventional form of Catholic confession, Reformist versions of the acknowledgement of sin, and the confession of sin prescribed by the Church courts in England in the seventeenth century are significant to the reading of *Measure for Measure*. In the final chapter, an appreciation of the history of confession allows an informed consideration of the extent to which confession may construct the Western

sense of identity, as is claimed by Michel Foucault, and in particular informs an analysis of the relationship between Augustine's *Confessions* and self-reflexivity in the stage practice of soliloquy in *King Lear*. Where the first chapter describes the evidence for recognising that Reformists did not simply abandon the notion of confession, but that they transformed its discourse according to their particular version of Christian faith, so too it is hoped that the rest of this study demonstrates that the relation between confession and the theatre established in the early plays examined, remains vital and significant in Shakespeare's dramas. Only by comprehending the possible meanings of confessional discourse in these plays can their contemporary significance and present interpretative potential be fully realised.

Chapter 1 - The History of Confession

This study aims to examine the extent to which the concepts, language and practices of confession are apparent in selected early modern drama. It depends, therefore, on an understanding of confession itself. Rather than provide a detailed account of the history of confession (parts of which are already available in specialised studies), certain pertinent aspects of the theological and practical evolution of confession will be identified and discussed.[1] These are selected insofar as they are significant to the relations between confession and drama which are mapped in other chapters. Investigations into specific elements of these confessional topics will be developed and expanded upon in detail at a later stage in the thesis where the argument will be that they are especially relevant to particular plays. Tracing confession from its inception in the early Church to and through the Reformation constructs an account which, though necessarily summarised, spans sixteen centuries and is not available elsewhere, as far as it has been possible to determine. Following the evolution of confession through to Reformation and Counter-Reformation arguments allows important connections to be established between these arguments and early Church practices and underlies the arrangement of this foundational chapter.

1. The Early Church

1.1 Baptism

The earliest accounts of the Christian Church are, of course, found in the New Testament and Francis Clark discusses the extent to which their reliability is corroborated by other historical evidence.[2] Whilst the Pauline epistles and Acts of the Apostles describe the growth of the gentile Christian communities, their development

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[1] Apart from Oscar Watkin's *A History of Penance*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, 1920) [hereafter HP] which discusses confession up to 1215, other accounts of the history and theology of confession include John M. T. Barton, *Penance and Absolution* (London: Burns & Oates, 1961), Henry Charles Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church*, 2 vols (New York: Greenwood, 1968), R. C. Mortimer, *The Origins of Private Penance in the Western Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939). For a summarized account of the history of confession see James Dallen, *The Reconciling Community: The Rite of Penance*, Studies in the Reformed Rites of the Catholic Church (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 1991) and Jerry Root, *Space to Speke: The Confessional Subject in Medieval Literature* (New York: Lang, 1997).

[2] Francis Clark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1974), p. 14. Clark sets out references that corroborate New Testament accounts of the early Church in Tacitus' *Annals*, Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*, correspondence of the younger Pliny and Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*.

was against a background of established Jewish synagogue tradition and there was evidently some tension between Jewish originated thinking and that of the expanding Christian churches. However, baptism as the initiating rite into the Christian Church was the act that united all Christians and bound them together as one Church. It was the act that both inherently remitted and signalled remission of sin, for both Jews and gentiles. The ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus' baptizing commission (Matt. 28.19) was the origin of Christian baptism, but Old Testament prescriptions of exclusion and re-admittance after ritual cleansing and purification (for example, Lev. 11-15 & 19:22, Num.19), were already well-established concepts and suggest the link between baptism as the remission of sin on conversion, and penance as a repeatable remission post-conversion. However, Christian baptism differed, even from the baptisms performed by John, because it was perceived that on baptism the gift of the Holy Spirit was received.[3] Baptism also signified other meanings to Christians. Acts 2:38 states that the act of baptism continues to be coterminous with the remission of sin, as does Acts 22.16, and the perception of it as purification remains in Ephesians 5.26. But, baptism is also seen as sanctification and justification (I Cor. 6.11); as a rebirth (John 3.3, Col. 2.12) and admittance to the Church, the body of Christ (Acts 2.41, I Cor. 12.13 and to some extent Gal. 3.27). By encompassing all these original significances of baptism, it is possible to see the later Church as attempting to re-establish a state of salvation in the sinner through the development of the penitential system.

1.2 Sin in the community and individual

New Testament accounts of the early Church show, then, that baptism was originally perceived as the primary means of remitting sin. Once baptism had been performed and the gifts of the Spirit received, the soul was washed clean. Although the possibility of further sin is acknowledged (Gal. 19-21), special mechanisms of forgiveness do not seem to have been considered until specific incidents occurred, and only to the extent of a pragmatic expulsion, and, if repentance was judged sufficient, re-admittance. (Paul's letter to Timothy also advises publicly rebuking

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[3] For extended discussions of baptism in the New Testament see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1963); J. K. Howard, *New Testament Baptism* (London:

sinners to deter others (I Tim. 5:20)). In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he recommends that the sinner is excluded from the community and encourages the Corinthian Church to judge promptly and exclude other sinners without recourse to Roman law.[4] Paul's letter mentions no means of re-acceptance back into the church for a serious sinner who has been expelled, but advises the sinner should 'Be deliuered vnto Satan', until he dies, when his spirit will await salvation on the day of Judgment (I Cor. 5.5). In Paul's analogy of the 'yeast' of sin that sours the 'dough' of the Church, (I Cor. 5.6-8) what is of paramount concern is that the church community remains pure and uncorrupted, rather than the fate of the individual sinner. However, in II Corinthians (2.5-11) Paul does tackle the question of the fate of sinners. He writes that after exclusion the sinner has undergone sufficient punishment and so should be readily forgiven and comforted, to encourage reformation and avoid being 'swallowed vp with ouer much heauines'. And, in I Corinthians (11.28-31), self-examination is called for before participating in the Lord's Supper, an informal and partial precursor to the later requisite of confession before the Easter Mass. The general New Testament attitude towards sin emphasises forgiveness and God's limitless mercy, typified in the parable of the lost sheep, which is followed by encouragement about the efficacy of prayer (Matt. 18).

The power to exclude serious sinners was one that had been traditionally exercised by rabbis in the synagogue and Christian church practice can be regarded as a continuation of this. Authority for the Church as a community to judge matters of sin, exclusion and re-admittance has traditionally lain in Jesus' commission to the Apostles to retain and remit sins, as recounted in the gospels of Matthew and John. In

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Pickering and Inglis, 1970) and, for a more general discussion, Edmund Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, trans. Herbert Bouman (London: Concordia, 1972).

[4] The chapter summary to I Cor. 5-6 in the *Geneva Bible* specifically uses the term excommunication, projecting sixteenth-century concepts back on to early Church practice, 'He reproueth sharpely their negligence in punishing him that had committed inceste, Willing them to excommunicate him, To embrace puritie, And flee wickedness'. This and all subsequent biblical quotations throughout the thesis from Lloyd E. Berry, *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 78. The Geneva Bible has been chosen because it was by far the most popular and widely read in Elizabethan England. However, where the Reformist scholars, whose edition it was, translate significant words and concepts differently from the Roman Catholic Vulgate Bible, both versions will be provided. This is important in order to avoid presenting Reformists' revisions of scriptural concepts as authoritative or agreed, when they were not accepted as such by the Roman Church, e.g. 'repentance' for '*poenitentiam agite*' – previously translated as 'do penance'.

John it is related how, after the resurrection, Jesus appears to ten of the twelve disciples, saying, 'Whosoeuers sinnes ye remit, they are remitted vnto them: & whosoeuers sinnes ye reteine, they are retened' (John 20.23). In Matthew, Christ grants to Peter the 'keys': 'And I wil giue vnto thee the keyes of the kindome of heauen, and whatsoeuer thou shalt binde vpō earth, shalbe bound in heauen: and whatsoeuer thou shalt lose on earth, shalbe losed in heauen' (Matt. 16:19). Thus the Church was granted an absolute authority that made manifest the individual's standing before God through the judgements of the community. The sacrament of penance developed to encompass the dual strands so far noted in early Church practice: baptism purified individual sinners, bringing them to a state of grace and salvation and admitting them into the *corpus Christianii*; but the Church had a duty to uphold its own purity and exemplary status as a Christian community and exercise discipline, with expulsion as its ultimate recourse. These two strands were still being worked out in the early Church, as Christine Trevett acknowledges: 'Middle ways were being forged between leaving unchallenged the pollution of Christian communities and regarding the imperfect and failed as enemies/*echthroi*'.[5]

1.3 Apostasy and remissible sin

A later New Testament writer, found in I John, recognises the possibility and problem of post-baptismal sin and implies a distinction between remissible and unremissible sin (I John 5: 16-17). The passage endorses prayer by the church for those who have sinned, but ends with the assertion that there is one sin that should not be prayed for, that leads 'vnto death', although it does not make explicit what sin that is.[6] Hebrews, written to a group of Christians who seemed to be facing persecution, emphatically denies the possibility of forgiveness for those who denounce their faith, either explicitly, or through their actions (Heb. 6:4-6). Oscar D. Watkins refers to Tertullian, who suggested that the writer of Hebrews was St Barnabus and, likewise, interpreted Hebrews as referring to apostates, that is those who denied their faith,

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[5] Christine Trevett, 'Second-Century Struggle', in RRR, pp. 5-29, p. 8.

[6] Oscar D. Watkins asserts that this referred to the sin of 'spiritual wickedness', blasphemy against the Holy Spirit usually understood as expressions of irreverence or defiance. HP, p. 10.

> For as touching those who were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost [...] and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. [7]

The attitude of Hebrews is rather the exception in the New Testament and represents a view of sin which was developed in various responses to apostasy. Apostasy, that is the renunciation of faith either by word or deed, seems to have happened as a result of either inner tensions in churches between competing factions, or, more commonly, as a result of the sporadic, but frequent, persecutions faced by Christians. Clement, a bishop to a Roman community, explicitly considered the question of what to do with those whose factionalism had threatened the church, in his letter to the church at Corinth (*c.* 96):

> Do ye therefore who set up the faction submit yourselves to the presbyters and be disciplined to penitence. Bowing the knees of your heart, learn to be in subjection, putting away the assertive and overweening arrogance of your tongue. [8]

Although Clement advises the factionists to 'be disciplined to penitence', no formal procedure is implied. However, if those in revolt could not bow to the authority of the church, Clement writes they will 'be torn away from His hope'. The letters of Ignatius of Antioch arise, by contrast, out of the frequent persecutions of Christians. Until the advent of Constantine in the fourth century, Christianity was often regarded as an insurgent sect by both the Roman empire authorities and orthodox Judaism. Frequent pogroms were mounted against Christians and it is during this time that many Christian martyrs were made and, like Ignatius of Antioch in 109, were doomed to be thrown to the wild beasts in the Roman amphitheatre. Ignatius' seven letters to various Christian communities advise avoiding certain sinners, but also encourage the forgiveness and inclusion of most sinners 'so that you may preserve the whole of your community intact'.[9]

Hermas of Rome (*c.* 140) wrote *The Shepherd*, as a response to the continuing threat of persecution and apostasy. It is important, not just because it is the first work that exclusively deals with the question of post-baptismal sin and instigates the concept

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[7] Tertullian, *De Pudicitia*, HP, p. 17.
[8] HP, p. 72.
[9] 'Letter to Polycarp of Smyrna' (11:4), in Dallen (1986), p. 21.

of penance, but also because it was considered by many to merit inclusion in the scriptural canon. Hermas concedes that it is possible that sin may be committed after baptism and that there can be one more remission of sins after baptism - but only one. *The Shepherd* figures the Angel of Penitence who stresses that God's mercy is available to any who sincerely repent at that particular historical time, although there is no assurance that this will be the case in future. The third 'Vision' of *The Shepherd* explicates its attitude toward sin through an image of the church as under construction, like a tower. The tower is built upon the stones of baptism. There are stones that have fallen away, some to the base of the tower, others further off. The analogy is clear: the stones - sinners - nearby may, in time, form part of the tower - the Church; the stones further away are unlikely to seek penance and re-admission to the Church but there remains a place of repentance after death (the first implied existence of purgatory?).[10] Hermas is instructed to communicate his vision in order that encouragement for reconciliation is provided to sinners, especially apostates. The Angel, or Shepherd, of Penitence is the figure into whose care all penitents fall, and he refers to a brother angel, of Punishment, who accords a ratio of thirty days of torment for each hour of sin and as such, perhaps represents another first – the notion of tariff penance – indeed, the principle of more severe penance for graver sins is also declared. Interestingly, no mention is made of penance being prescribed by church authorities, only as a gift from God and procured individually through self-discipline, although other church members are still seen as important in offering prayer for the repentant sinner.[11]

1.4 Exomologesis

In *The Shepherd*, Hermas refers to 'penitence' (μετάνοια), which Watkins states may be interpreted, in this context, as encompassing: a *penitent* attitude; *discipline*, such as fasting or self-castigation, as expressions of that attitude; and, if they are acceptable, ultimate *reconciliation*.[12] However, Watkins also cites the writing of Irenæus (135) that provides an early instance of the Greek term *exomologesis*

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[10] 'Vision III.7', HP, p. 31.
[11] See Dallen (1986), p. 23 who describes these aspects of 'Similitude 8, 6.2 and Similitude 5'.
[12] For example, in *The Shepherd*, 'Similitude 8' and Watkins's comments, HP, p. 64. See also *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, William F. Arndt

(ἐξομολογέω).[13] Irenæus writes of some women in the church in Asia Minor who seem to have admitted, in church, the error of following the Gnostic, Marcus. Thus, *exomologesis* is used here to specifically include the public confession of actual faults. Furthermore, Iranæus writes of the deacon's wife, who 'continued always making *exomologesis*', implying the meaning of the term to include penance.[14] Writing in Latin, in the early third century, the lawyer, Tertullian (b. *c.*160) uses the term *exomologesis* to encompass a wider significance:

> The more straitened then the work of this second and only remaining repentance, the more laborious its proof, so that it may not be only borne upon the conscience within, but may be also exhibited by some outward act. This act, which finds better and more frequent expression under its Greek name, is *Exomologesis*, by which we confess our sin to the Lord, not because He knoweth it not, but inasmuch as by confession satisfaction is ordered, from confession repentance springeth, by repentance God is appeased. Wherefore exomologesis is a discipline for the abasement and humiliation of man, enjoining such conversation as inviteth mercy.[15]

Exomologesis thus refers to the complete penitential process: the public confession of sin; its atonement in order to make satisfaction; and the attainment of forgiveness. However, reviewing 'the liturgies of penance and reconciliation throughout the ancient period', James Dallen asserts that *exomologesis* should be understood even more widely:

> It is confession first of faith, then of praise, and only then of sins. *Exomologesis* acknowledges God's greatness, a greatness shown through mercy leading sinners to repentance, and breathes the same spiritual atmosphere as the Jewish *berakoth*. It is not primarily the acknowledgement of sins – this took place through presenting oneself publicly as penitent – but rather a confession of faith, the praise of God, and an appeal for the community's prayerful support.[16]

Exomologesis is an especially useful term when understood in this, its fullest sense, as it encompasses both senses of confession in modern idiom, that is, the confession

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and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 513 for nuances of meaning of μετάνοια.

[13] For the patristic use of exomologesis, see Arndt and Gingrich (1957), p. 276. Citations include, 'promise, consent', 'confess, admit', 'confession of sins', 'confess transgressions in the congregation', 'make a confession of sins', 'confess sins to the Lord', 'acknowledge', 'praise directed toward God'.

[14] HP, p. 75.

[15] *De paenitentia*, C.ix, HP, p. 115.

of faith and the confession of sin. Its usage in later. Reformation discourses often refers to both the confession of reformed faiths, implicitly or explicitly combined with the admittance of the 'heresy' of former understandings to which those discourses were a reaction.

1.5 The practice of confession

Tertullian's writings are also important because they provide a description of the actual practice of *exomologesis* in the North African, Carthage church. The treatise *De Pœnitentia* (*c.* 203) was composed when Tertullian was a 'catholic' and *De pudicitia* (*c.* 220) when he had become a Montanist. The earlier work stresses the public nature of penances, felt in itself to be edifying and absolving. Confession was made to the whole church and repentance a matter of public declaration. It states that all sins are remissible, whereas *De pudicitia* takes a far more rigorist view, distinguishing between remissible and unremissible sins. Like Hermas, Tertullian accepted penance as a once only event. The description of *exomologesis* articulates a primary concern to atone, through outward expressions of self-castigation and humiliation, for the penalty of sin:

> [The penitent] should abide in sackcloth and ashes, should disfigure his body by filthy attire, should cast down his spirit with mourning, should exchange sins which he has committed for severe treatment: for the rest, to use simple things for meat and drink [...] not for the belly's but for the soul's sake: for the most part also to cherish prayer by fasts, to groan, to weep, and to moan day and night unto the Lord his God; to throw himself upon the ground before the presbyters, and to fall on his knees before the beloved of God; to enjoin all the brethren to bear the message of his prayer for mercy. All these things doeth exomologesis that it may commend repentance; that by fearing danger it may honour God; that itself pronouncing judgement on the sinner, it may act instead of God's wrath, and that, by means of temporal affliction, it may – I will not say frustrate, but – discharge the eternal penalties. When therefore it casteth down a man, it rather raiseth him up: when it maketh him filthy, it rendereth him the cleaner: when it accuseth, it excuseth: when it commendeth, it absolveth. In the measure in which thou spareth not thyself, in the same, be assured, will God spareth thee.[17]

Tertullian assumes the repentant sinner will formally adopt the status of a penitent and explicitly uses the term '*agere pœoenitentiam*', 'do penance'.

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[16] Dallen (1986), pp. 32-3.
[17] *De panitentia*, C..ix, HP, p. 115.

1.6 Rigorism and Novatianists

Generally a more rigorous, formalized attitude towards sin replaced the informal practices of the early Church of mutual, or self-correction and prayer during the period 150-300. However, in about 220 the Bishop of Rome (217 - 222), Callistus declared that he was willing to consider the reconciliation of fornicators and adulterers. Tertullian's second work *De pudicitia* was written as a direct, outraged, response to this declaration. In it he discusses remissible and unremissible sins and, quoting I John 5:16-17, 'There is a sin unto death', asks, if adulterers are to be reconciled, why not idolaters and homicides also? Other unremissible sins were fraud, denial and blasphemy. Minor, remissible sins were of the character of charioteering and games, 'theatrical foulness' or 'athletic vanity'. The only way in which Tertullian would admit that unremissible sinners could be reconciled was through martyrdom. Although there were other regular voices opposed to the rigorist view, Callistus's merciful stance caused a serious schism in the Roman Church. Notably Hippolytus and then Novatian vehemently opposed such leniency and withheld reconciliation to the lapsed, no matter how repentant. A counter-church was established, spreading as far as Gaul and Spain and existed for four centuries.[18] Gradually the more lenient views exemplified by Callistus gained widespread acceptance and, as a response to actual and anticipated persecution by Gallus during the Decian period, the Church officially quashed any remaining rigorist attitudes. In 252, the Second Council of Carthage, under Cyprian, bishop of the Carthaginian church, offered permanent reconciliation to all those who confessed their sins, repented and undertook penance.

1.7 Public and Private Confession

From the descriptions in Cyprian's writings, it seems that confession was now usually made in private. However, the still public nature of acts of penance, such as those described by Tertullian above, meant that open humiliation before the church community remained. Cyprian's writings intimate the beginnings of a more modern concept of confession, not just for *lapsi*, or those who sought reconciliation through a

[18] See HP, pp. 176-221 for a detailed account of the Novatian heresy.

martyr's *libelli* (rather than *exomologesis*) but also sins of thought. In *De Lapsis*, Cyprian advises,

> Making confession of this very thing [sins of thought] to the priests of God (*apud sacerdotes Dei*) with grief and with simplicity, make an exomologesis of their conscience, thrust off from them the load of their minds and seek out a salutary medicine even for slight and moderate wounds.[19]

This may be regarded as an early precursor to the later devotional concept of confession as a method of attaining and maintaining spiritual purity, developed largely in Eastern churches of the fifth and sixth centuries. However, the reference to making confession to the *sacerdotes*, that is, bishops, shows how rare and unusual this type of confession must have been in the third century, limited if only because there were relatively few bishops.

1.8 East/West division

It is at this point in time, that is in the third century, that it is useful to make a distinction between penitential practice in the West and East. In the Western Empire, that is, the Gallic provinces, Africa and the Roman states, frequent persecution meant that the problem of post-baptismal sin in the form of apostasy had stimulated debate about the doctrine and practice of sin. By the end of the third century, a varyingly rigorist, formal penitential procedure had developed to deal with serious and public sins. However, Christians in the East seem to have inherited a far more lenient tradition that included confession sought voluntarily, relatively short penances, and a concept of confession that emphasised the healing of sin rather than its judgement. Origen (d. 254) is perhaps not the best representative of Eastern practice generally because, although he came from Alexandria, and Caeserea, in Syria, he is untypically rigorist, declaring some sins unremissible. However, in his *Homilies on Leviticus*, Origen lists seven means of attaining the remission of sin. These were: baptism; martyrdom; alms; forgiveness of others; conversion of sinners; love; and lastly, penance.[20] Origen wrote that sins committed with deliberate intention, such as adultery and idolatry, were unremissible and would remain 'bound'. Penance, Origen

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[19] *De Lapsis*, 28, in HP, p. 194.

states, is a 'hard and toilsome' means of seeking remission. He expects outward manifestations of repentance and recommends it to him who does 'not shrink from showing his sin to the priest of the Lord, and from seeking the remedy'.[21] Like Cyprian, Origen expects confession to be made in private to a priest, but penances remained humiliatingly public. Where Origen is in line with generally more lenient Eastern practice is in his perception of confession as a potential part of devotional practice. In his *Homilies on the Psalms*, he advises someone who is troubled to seek the aid of a presbyter in examining their conscience. Whilst penance still could be imposed by the church, the less formalised 'examination' implies an alternative practice.

1.9 Confession as healing

Origen is also more typically Eastern in his representation of the priest hearing confession as a 'healer', rather than judge of sin. In his *Homily* on *Psalm 37*, Origen advises Christians to

> look about thee carefully for the person to whom thou shouldest confess thy sin. First approve the physician to whom thou shouldest lay bare the cause of thine ailment, who knows how to be infirm with the infirm, to weep with those who weep [...] so that in time if he shall have said aught, who first has showed himself a learned and merciful physician [...] thou wilt act upon it and will follow it; if he have understood and foreseen that thine ailment is such as needs to be exposed and to be cured in the gathering of the whole Church, from which it may be others too can be edified, and thyself readily healed; this will have to be arranged with much deliberation and with the experienced counsel of that physician.[22]

The image of the confessor priest as a healer of sin became normative in the Western Church, along with alternate, sometimes dual, images of the confessor as judge (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of these images). In the same *Homily*, Origen relates the presbyter's role to the anointing of the sick, citing James 5.14-6, which further fuses sin and sickness. The *Didaskalia* (*c.* 260), written in northern Syria in the early third century, also contains the recurrent image of the physician proffering his healing

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[20] *Homilies on Leviticus*, in HP, p. 136. This list of the seven means of remitting sin is further notable because it was quoted so widely in Western European penitential literature from the ninth century onwards.
[21] HP, p. 136.
[22] *Homily on Psalm 37*, in HP p. 139.

medicine of confession to a sickening flock. The procedure described for dealing with sinners also reveals Eastern leniency in the relatively short penances assigned. For example, a penance of fasting is recommended only for days or weeks. Other penances last for between two and seven weeks (rather than the penances of years assigned in the West). During the period of penance, penitents were to be ministered to each Sunday, as were catechumens, with prayer, and instead of the Eucharist, a blessing and laying-on of hands. Significantly, no sin was excluded from this process, even those of heresy, adultery and apostasy. Although the *Didaskalia* clearly states there can be only one reconciliation, apparently repetition was possible in most Syrian churches about fifty years later.[23] Chrysostom (*c.* 347-407) declared in his *De Diabolo Tentatore* that confession and penance could be open to sinners repeatedly.[24]

1.10 Donatist heresies

The beginning of the third century opened with fierce persecution and controversies in the West. In 303, the Roman Emperor, Diocletian, launched the last major persecution of Christians. Although nominally only intended to deprive Christians of citizenship and property, the assaults escalated into torture and mass killing, resulting in many apostates. These persecutions indirectly resulted in a major schism of the church when Caecilian was made bishop of Carthage. Some opposed Caecilian's ordination because they said he had surrendered sacred texts to the authorities during the persecutions and was a 'traditor'. A rival bishop was elected, splitting the church. The rival was succeeded by Donatus who vehemently opposed the forgiveness of apostates. He also argued not only that the ordination of priests and bishops was invalid if those performing the ordinations were unworthy, but that the reconciliations of other apostates those priests and bishops performed themselves were equally invalid. Thus the schism that inaugurated Donatism was established in the fourth century and persisted in various forms for the next five hundred years, even though Donatism was declared heretical at the Council of Arles in 314.

1.11 Graded penitents and catechumens

During this time, the Nicene period, the churches of the East established a detailed, graded system of institutionalised penance, principally at the Council of Ancyra in

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[23] HP, p. 253.

314, and ratified at the Council of Nicaea in 325. From the Canons of Ancyra, it is clear that the penitent assumed a graduated degree of participation in the Church's gatherings, assimilated with the gradings of catechumens. Canon 5 refers to those whose grave sins have meant expulsion from the Church as *Mourners*. The repentant are *Hearers*, who progress to the status of *Fallers*. Next the penitent would be received 'without offering' as a *Kneeler*, and finally, the penitent would become part of the fellowship of the *Prayers*, before becoming once more fully reconciled. The process varied in duration according to the sin, for example, the sin of observing pagan feasts attracted a term of six years, whereas the sin of bestiality attracted a penitential period of twenty years. Although the Council of Nicaea affirmed the graded penitential system, Watkins concludes that in the 'great centres' of Western Christendom, such as Rome, it did not really take hold.[25] In the East, in the densely populated cities such as Antioch and Constantinople, noteworthy figures, like Chrysostum and Nectarius, opposed the system on the grounds of it being intolerably public and unnecessarily long.[26]

1.12 Penitential acts, places and costume

Early Church practice was literally to expel sinners from Christian gatherings. The reconciliation of penitents was evident not only from their physical re-admission, but also from the 'laying-on of hands' of the bishop (which, along with prayer, was the early equivalent of absolution). In Cyprian's Carthage church, the imposition of hands was performed by all levels of ecclesiastics. The laying-on of hands could also be performed at the outset of penance. In the third century, Christian churches' catechumens were developed to prepare people for baptism and penitents began to join them. Typically, catechumens were excluded from the Eucharist, but received blessing in the form of the imposition of hands. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) mentions that catechumens were placed on the left side of the altar in the African Church.[27] Canon 30 of the Synod of Hippo (393) describes the reconciliation of penitents in front of the apse, typically at the eastern end of the church, at the bishop's chair, or at the ambo. Costume for penitents evidently became important as

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[24] HP, p. 359.
[25] HP, p. 290.
[26] HP, p. 290.

soon as a penitential process was established and offered another opportunity to demonstrate sincere repentance, as well as reasserting the subjection of the flesh in favour of the spirit: irritant fabrics are often mentioned, such as sackcloth, or goat's hair, with the added connotation of being outcast from the Christian 'flock'. In his letter to Oceanus, Jerome (b. *c.* 346) recounts in detail the penitence of one of his followers in Rome, Fabula. He describes her 'sackcloth' dress, 'dishevelled hair', 'wan face', 'soiled hands' and 'fouled neck'. He continues, 'She laid bare to all her wound, and weeping Rome beheld the livid scar upon her person. The sides (of her dress) were unfastened, her head was bare'.[28] In England, until the seventeenth century, confessions were usually heard in open church, in a side aisle or chapel. Usually the priest would be seated and the penitent might also be seated, or kneeling on a stool, at the priest's side. To preserve the confidentiality of confession, it might be conducted in a discreet whisper, but if, as a font engraving shows, other penitents waiting to be confessed queued nearby, privacy may not have been ensured.[29] Contrary to popular perception, confession was not performed within a confession box throughout most of its history. The confession box was not invented until 1565, and was made mandatory in Milan in 1576, but its adoption in usage was slow. In Italy it apparently remained uncommon in rural churches even in the eighteenth century. It was not introduced into England until the nineteenth century.[30]

The picture that thus emerges from the first four centuries of Christianity is one of the issues of sin, repentance and forgiveness being discussed, debated and always evolving, according to new historical conditions. As represented in the New Testament, the early Church seems to have given less serious consideration to individual sin to upholding the Christian community, promote unity, and acting as an example to non-Christian society. Stimulated by regular persecution, the churches developed doctrine and practice, initially, to deal with the many apostates that resulted. What began as pragmatic, *ad hoc* responses to sin evolved into a gradually

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[27] '*Sermo* 232.8', in Dallen (1986), p. 70.
[28] HP, pp. 407-8.
[29] See A. E. Nichols, 'The Etiquette of Pre-Reformation Confession in East Anglia', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 17 (1986), 145-163. Also Vincent Gillespie, 'Doctrina and Predicacio: The Design and Function of Some Pastoral Manuals', *Leeds Studies In English*, ns., 11 (1980), 36-50.
[30] John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 134.

more formalised and institutionalised set of doctrines, gradings and practices that encompassed all types of sin as remissible and repeatedly so. When the threat of persecutions receded what had been a rigorist attitude toward sin in Western churches now became comparable to attitudes in the East of greater leniency.

2. The Development of Auricular Confession

2.1 East and West

Until about the beginnings of the fourth century frequent and periodic persecutions had meant that Christian churches needed and did develop a penitentiary system, both to provide a means for apostates to be reconciled, and a discipline to unite and bolster the faithful. The penitentiary system in the Eastern churches became generally more explicit with a graded system of penance and was characterized by a more formal and established process. The confession of sin became gradually less public in most churches. Indeed Chrysostum, in his treatise *On the Priesthood* (*c.* 382), argued against the 'intolerable publication' of declaring sin publicly and encouraged confessing privately and to a priest, rather than bishop.[31] In Constantinople, a Penitentiary Order of priests was established, whose sole office was to hear private confessions and assign penances, although this was abolished by Nectarius in *circa* 391 after a scandal involving a priest.[32] After this time the performance of public, formalized penance diminishes to apparent non-existence in the East and private confession and spiritual direction seems to have increasingly taken its place.[33]

In the West, particularly in Rome, the penitentiary discipline of the Church remained formalized. In Rome itself, it seems that even after satisfaction had been made and the penitent absolved, there were severe restrictions upon penitents' lives, such as a bar on marriage, undertaking military service, or attending games. However, as the letters of Paulinus and Salvianus indicate, in the further outreaches of the Empire, such as Spain or Gaul, there seems to have been no penitentiary system at all. In Africa, as the epistles of Augustine demonstrate, the practice of penance was retained

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[31] HP, p. 302.
[32] HP, p. 349.
[33] For a detailed discussion of the evidence for formal confession at this time in the East and West see Richard Price, 'Informal Penance in Early Medieval Christendom', in RRR, pp. 29-39.

and developed as a system in some detail in specific cases. However, its practice as a widespread, recurrent phenomenon at times other than Easter seems to have steadily diminished in the fifth and sixth centuries. To summarize, as Watkins states, in the fifth century:

> While the penitential system of the Church was existing and in use for those who voluntarily sought it, or for those notorious offenders who were singled out by authority, it may be concluded without much hesitation that from this time onwards the growing tendency of the Christian community generally was to ignore Penance, save for the notable exception of death-bed confessions.[34]

This situation continued during the period 450-650. Where confession remained, it was as a ritual associated with Easter that became applicable to the whole congregation and thus lost its individual pertinence; or, as a non-repeatable, auricular confession, it was pragmatically delayed until death was perceived as imminent, when it took place in private, to a priest.[35]

2.2 Devotional Confession

In the fourth century, it became common practice for those who perceived their lives as too subject to the compromising demands of the Roman Empire, to remove themselves from everyday social life and to live as hermits, or in small devotional communities in the desert or other remote areas. They wished to deprive themselves of all but the most basic means of survival and concentrate on their spiritual development. The scant records of these individuals and communities are chiefly found as sayings and short stories, such as those of St Mary of Egypt or Abba Moses.[36] The sayings or 'words' of those who dedicated their lives to the faith were sought after, and gradually the desert 'fathers' came to be consulted more widely as spiritual advisors and confessors. From these origins monastic discipline became established and the practice of private confession and penance to elders more formalized. By the end of the fifth century monastic communities were no longer confined to the deserts of North Africa, but were established in any harsh

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[34] HP, p. 465.
[35] Alexander Murray has surveyed Western literature from the ninth to the twelfth centuries and contends that confession, apart from on death-beds, remained unusual. Alexander Murray, 'Confession before 1215', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Series 6, 3 (1992), 51-81.
[36] See *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Benedicta Ward (London: Mowbray, 1975).

environment, such as the outreaches of the British Isles. Christianity had, by the fifth century, spread to Ireland and the Saxons of Britain and it began to acquire a Celtic character of its own. The *Liber Davidis*, *c.* 569, written by St David in Wales, deals with sin and penance for monks and lay people. It describes a practice that is private, without reference to the Church or a bishop. Confession is recommended as a devotional habit or discipline, as well as a precursor to private penance and reconciliation granted by a superior or Abbot. It is in Irish monasteries, however, that confession became an established, recurrent practice that spread throughout the West. A noteworthy figure was St Finian (d. 548) who founded a monastery and school at Clonard in County Meath, *c.* 530.[37]

2.3 Monastic Confession

The distinct organisation of the Celtic monastery at Clonard was to become prevalent across Europe. It combined the role of monastery and university, training monks and providing education to other students. Monasteries exercised authority and provided aid to their local communities and contained both residential and visiting penitents. Finian wrote a *Penitential* which indicates that only clerks were subject to the authority of the bishop's reconciliation, otherwise abbots possessed supreme authority within their environ and in their immediate locality to reconcile penitents.[38] In the early seventh century St Columbanus travelled as a missionary to Europe and founded several monasteries in Gaul of the Celtic type. He, too, wrote a penitential, and this described in detail the appropriate penance for each type of sin, for those in Orders and the laity. In this penitential even reconciliation of clerks is described as undertaken solely by priests without recourse to the public liturgy of the Church. There is one exception where Columbanus assigns the public recognition of a penitent by standing among the catechumens in church for a lengthy period, as a penance.[39] The other significant aspect of Columbanus' writing in *Regula Cœnobialis* was that it advocated daily confession: 'neither are even little sins to be

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[37] See Elizabeth Hickey, *Clonard: The Story of an Early Irish Monastery 520-1202* (Dublin: Elo Press, 1998).

[38] HP, p. 609.

[39] *Penitential of Columbanus*, Part B.25, HP, pp. 617-8. The assigning of a penance, consisting of the public exposure of sinners as penitents, is an interesting precedent to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century penances assigned by the English Church consistory courts of public confessions in churches

neglected from confession [...] so that confession should be given before meal-time, before going to bed, or howsoever it may be easy to give it'.[40] Whilst Columbanus confined his recommendations to the sphere of the monastery, his successor Eustatius actively sought out those in need and 'drew many of them to the medicaments of Penance'.[41] By the mid-seventh century the system Columbanus had established was recognized in a formal canon of the Council of Chalon. Penance was no longer a one-off remarkable occurrence but described as 'medicine of the soul'.[42]

2.4 *Libri Poenitentiales*

During the three centuries of the period 650-950 there was an expansion of penitential literature, most notably, in England, the *Penitential of Theodore* of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury from 668. The penitentials were often derivative, with primary texts being most usually those of Columbanus, Theodore, David and Gildas. They were known as '*scrift bocs*', in the Anglo-Saxon Church and penance was called '*behreowsung*', from the verb '*hreowan*', from which the modern verb 'to rue' comes. A confessor was a '*scrift*' and confession '*scrift spraec*'. The parish was described as '*scriftscir*', that is the 'confession district', an indication of the primary importance the practice of confession had attained.[43] The Anglo-Saxons were largely Christianized by missionaries from Rome and the continent, as well as from Celtic emissaries from the religious centre of Iona. Furthermore, the use of *Theodore's Penitential* effectually spread the Celtic monastic practice of confession, initially to northern Europe, notably the Frankish country, and then to the rest of the Continent. This penitential is significant because it spread the private practice of confession, penance and reconciliation, as the somewhat tautological explanation makes clear, 'Reconciliation is not publicly established in this province, for the reason that there is no public penance either'.[44] It described a comprehensive and complete system that gained widespread acceptance in England. The *Dialogue* of Egbert, Bishop of York 732-766, demonstrates this acceptance:

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and marketplaces, also as penances in themselves. See Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of these types of penances.

[40] HP, p. 620.

[41] HP, p. 620.

[42] Council of Chalon, 639, Canon 8,HP, p. 626

[43] see the discussion of Leofric's *Scrift boc on englisc* and the provenance of extant manuscripts, in MHP p. 244, pp. 428-9, pp. 436-7, p. 443.

> the custom has been in vogue in the church of the English, and has been regarded as having the force of law, that not only clerks in monasteries, but even laymen with their wives and families, should betake themselves to their confessors.[45]

That confession was seen as a universal right is made clear by Egbert: 'A bishop or priest shall not refuse confession to those who desire it, though they be guilty of many sins'.[46] The *Confessional of Egbert* is the earliest example of a penitential written in Anglo-Saxon.[47]

2.5 Penitential Practice

Concomitant with the universal acceptance of private penance was its recurrent practice as a habit of the devout. Halitgar's *Pœnitentiale Romanum*, *c.* 830 provides an account of the typical procedure of confession at this time.[48] The confessor was counselled to fast with the penitent for a minimum of one day, and to prayerfully seek God's mercy for himself and the penitent. After hearing confession, the confessor was advised to ask the penitent if he knew the Pater Noster, to question him or her about the Creed, belief in the Holy Trinity, the Resurrection, the Last Judgement and forgiveness of others. The penitent was then asked, 'Do you believe that through confession and sincere correction your sins are forgiven by God?'. When receiving an affirmative, penance was given, usually a period of fasting, unless such penance as ransoming captives, almsgiving or serving at the altar were considered more appropriate (in cases of serious or repeated sin, although not as severe as in the early Church, penances could still be as imposing as spending all of Lent in a monastery, or being sent on a pilgrimage). The confessor was advised to show leniency and compassion to the poor or servants. Commutations of penances, in such cases as sickness, were adjusted according to the wealth of the penitent. After reciting several psalms and prayers for forgiveness, the laying on of hands would take place to signal forgiveness, which was confirmed by the bishop formally during Holy Week.

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[44] *Theodore's Penitential* 1.13 *Of Reconciliation*, in MHP p. 195.
[45] HP, p. 644.
[46] MHP, p. 246.
[47] There are several extant manuscript copies, e.g. the eleventh century Codex Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 190. For a discussion of their provenance, see MHP, pp. 243-4.

2.6 Private, auricular confession

By the ninth century, England was a significant contributor of missionaries to Europe who 'exported' Celtic monastic traditions. However, independent of canonical practice and authority, the private penitential system came in for particular objections. In France local church councils in Tours and Rheims in 813 and Paris in 829 criticized the Celtic practice, which, lacking a public dimension, was perceived as too lenient. Penitential literature was condemned and the Paris council even ordered its burning. For a time an uneasy duality existed where church councils tolerated private confession so long as it was of sins not under the remit of canonical statute, a pragmatic approach that eventually evolved into the principle of public confession for public sins, private confession for private sins. One of the most significant factors in achieving the widespread acceptance in Europe of the monastic tradition of private confession and penance was the influence English scholars and missionaries were able to yield through their privileged positions at the court of Charles the Great.[49] Alcuin (b. 735), as an eminent scholar, was invited to attend the court of Charles the Great in 781. He, with a small group of scholar followers, established a sort of academy at the court and from there came a series of influential epistles and treatises. One of these, the *Capitularies*, written by Theodulf, a poet and contemporary of Alcuin at the court, distinguishes between and discusses confessions made to God alone and confessions made to a priest:

> For the confession we make to the priests brings to us this support, that we wash away the stains of our sins when we receive at their hands salutary counsel, the very wholesome observances of penance, or the exchange of prayers. But the confession which we make to God alone is helpful in this, that in so far as we are mindful of our sins, so far as God is forgetful of them; and conversely, in so far as we forget them, so far God remembers them.[50]

Confession to a priest is presented as providing particular support for the penitent, derived from the priest's guidance, the assigning of appropriate penance and the efficacy of joint prayer. Confession to a priest had the potential for educating the

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[48] MHP, pp. 295-302. The *Pœnitentiale Romanum* provides various forms of prayers that could be offered in confession.

[49] David Nicholas, *The Evolution of the Medieval World* (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 127-31.

penitent, a potential recognized in Canon 33 from the Council of Chalon-sur-Saone in 813, 'the confession which is made to God purges sins, while that which is made to the priest teaches how these same sins may be purged'.[51] The Council further expressed the common expectation that confession would be made by reference to the eight (not seven, as they became later) deadly, that is mortal, sins: gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, despondency, sloth, envy, pride.[52]

2.7 Authority of the Penitentials

However, the Council of Chalon objected to the use of penitential manuals in the Celtic system. Canon 38 called into question their authority, expressing exasperation at their wide variation and advocating their being 'altogether banished'. The contemporaneous Council of Tours similarly found penitential variation problematic, but they advocated appointing one penitential as 'authoritative'. The 829 Council of Paris again considered the issue, and this time an unequivocal ban on penitentials was made, exhorting priests to banish them 'to the flames'. The Parisian Council's response to the question of confession perhaps represents the most extreme to be found in the ninth century. The more common response was to seek an authoritative and definitive penitential. In the 820s, Ebbo, Archbishop of Rheims, had commissioned his suffragan, Halitgar, to write a definitive penitential, and perhaps unfortunately, others followed suit.[53] In practice what they produced was a further diversity. By the early tenth century, Regino declared, in *De synodalibus causis et disciplinis ecclesiasticis*, that every priest should be in possession of a penitential and (he advised) that this should be either Theodore's or Bede's. Notably, it is here also that the recommendation of universal confession before a priest at the outset of Lent, in readiness for Easter, is first made. The official adoption, by everyone of reasonable age, of penitential status was to begin on what became Ash Wednesday, signalled by the placing of ashes on the forehead.[54]

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[50] Theodulf's *Capitularies* I. C. 30, I, in HP, p. 694.
[51] Cited HP, p.703.
[52] Watkins states that these eight sins are derived from Cassian but were 'commonplace' in the seventh to tenth centuries. HP, p. 703.
[53] Halitgar wrote the *Pœnitentiale Romanum*.

2.8 Mendicant Orders and the Seal of Confession

The Dominican friars arrived in England in 1221, the Franciscans in 1224, and in the 1240s the Carmelites and Augustinians.[55] The friars' ministry emphasized preaching and the hearing of confessions, separate from, but overlapping that of parish churches. Their Orders provided a much higher degree of education than the average parish clergy possessed in England and thus confessor-friars were popularly perceived as providing greater expertise to both instruct penitents and provide guidance and counselling. Furthermore, the fact that friars travelled throughout the region of specifically demarcated geographical areas, as well as their specialist experience, meant that they were perhaps more worldly-wise than their secular counterparts, with the added bonus that they would not be embarrassingly nearby subsequent to hearing confessions. Friars were licensed, through their Orders, directly by the Pope and their frequently overlapping responsibilities with secular clergy was a continual source of tension that apparently escalated during the Reformation.[56] From the eleventh century to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, the practice of confession developed and became consolidated in Britain, Germany and France. In 1025 Burchard, the bishop of Worms, compiled his collection of twenty books of canon law, *Decreta*. The nineteenth book, dealing with confession and penance, is in effect an exhaustive penitential and was used widely. It is also here that an early reference to the seal of confession is made: 'Above all let the priest give heed not to repeat any the sins of those who make confession to him'.[57]

2.9 Scholastic theology

Burchard, in his *Corrector*, also reiterated and emphasized the importance of the priest in the penitential process, reaffirming the priest's discretion to decide on penitential tariffs. By the early thirteenth century Alain de Lille hopefully refers to confession, in his *Liber Pœnitentialis*, as a 'rule of ecclesiastical institution', that

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[54] *De synodalibus causis et disciplines ecclesiasticis*, MHP, pp. 314-20.

[55] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 28.

[56] For a detailed discussion of revisionist historians' views of English monastic orders see Benjamin Thompson 'Monastries, society and Reform in Late Medieval England', in *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England*, ed., James Clark, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002). See also, P.R. Szittya, *The Anti-Fraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

[57] *Decreta*, C.244, HP, pp. 735-7.

should be observed even when there is no consciousness of any specific sins to be confessed.[58] This rigorous requirement was a reaction to what became increasingly perceived as a growing laxity, as penances were, in practice, more regularly mitigated, in negotiation with penitents during confession with regard to what they were willing to perform.[59] As the importance of satisfaction diminished, theologians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries considered the whole question of the necessity of confession and where its efficacy might lie. Peter Lombard in his *Sententiae*, *c*.1150, asked whether contrition was not sufficient to obtain God's forgiveness. He concludes that it is so only if it precedes the intention to confess orally to a priest if there is sufficient time (obviously a reference to death-bed or emergency confessions). Auricular confession, rather than merely contrition, was justified by Lombard primarily on the grounds of it being traditional practice, ordained by the Church.

2.10 Mandatory Confession

Despite the debates about where the efficacy of confession lay, the Fourth Lateran Council that took place in November 1215 emphatically reaffirmed the practice of confession. The Council declared in decree 21, known as the '*Omnis utriusque sexus*':

> All the faithful of either sex shall after the attainment of years of discretion separately confess his sins with all fidelity to his own priest at least once in the year: and shall endeavour to fulfil his penance imposed upon him to the best of his ability, reverently receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist at least at Easter: unless it happen that by the counsel of his own priest for some reasonable cause, he hold that he should abstain for a time from the reception of the sacrament: otherwise let him during his life be repelled from entering the church, and when dead let him lack Christian burial. Wherefore let this salutary statute be frequently published in the churches, lest any assume a veil of excuse in the blindness of ignorance. But if any desire to confess his sins to an outside priest for some just reason, let him first ask and obtain permission from his own priest, since otherwise he (the outside priest) cannot loose or bind him. But let the priest be discreet and cautious and let him after the manner of skilled physicians pour wine and oil upon the wounds of the injured man, diligently inquiring the circumstances

[58] HP, p. 47.

[59] John Bossy discusses the reasons for the decline of satisfaction in penance, in 'Practices of Satisfaction, 1215-1700', in RRR. See also SCER pp. 16-9.

> alike of the sinner and the sin, by which he may judiciously understand what counsel he ought to give him, and what sort of remedy to apply making use of various means for the healing of the sick man. But let him give strict heed not at all to betray the sinner by word or sign or in any other way, but if he need more prudent counsel let him seek it cautiously without any indication of the person: since we decree that he who shall presume to reveal a sin discovered to him in the penitential tribunal is not only to be deposed from the priestly office, but also to be thrust into a strict monastery to do perpetual penance.[60]

In England, mandatory confession three times annually, soon became the custom. Just four years after the canon, '*Omnis utriusque sexus*', Bishop Richard Le Poore had written detailed constitutions for the diocese of Salisbury that stated that

> Confessions are to be heard three times annually; three times during the year, the laity are to be instructed to communicate: at Easter, at Christmas, during Pentecost. [61]

Furthermore the clergy were, in the same constitutions, admonished for neglecting their duties, advised of the definition of each of the sacraments and told to ask questions to elicit detailed enumerations of sins from those confessing.[62]

2.11 Contrition, attrition and justification

As the role of works of penance diminished in importance as a method of satisfaction, the concept of contrition took its place. St Thomas Aquinas agreed with Lombard's position that it was necessary for the penitent to experience contrition for the remission of the guilt of sin. Yet even if the penitent is able to feel perfect contrition, that is sorrow for the offence sin causes to God, Aquinas argued that contrition on its own cannot redeem Christians. Rather, he contested, the penitent's contrition must be joined with, and made complete by, the grace bought for humanity through the sacrifice of Christ. This connection was established through the priest's pronouncement of the words of absolution and, thus, the sacramental power of penance justified the sinner. The salvific effectiveness of confession lay, then, not in the work of the worker *ex opere operantis*, but *ex opere operato*, in the work worked.

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[60] HP, pp. 748-9.

[61] *Councils & Synods, With Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205-1313*, eds. F. M. Powicke and C. M. Cheney, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), II, p.72.

[62] See Mary Flowers Braswell, *The Medieval Sinner* (London: Associated University Presses, 1983), p. 52.

Duns Scotus too, considered that contrition was necessary for the redemption of sin. However, he conceded that perfect contrition was in itself justifying, but could only be achieved by the saintly devotion of exceptional Christians. More usually, Christians were only capable of attrition, that is sorrow for sin that is motivated by the fear of punishment and needed the sacramental power of absolution in confession. For Duns Scotus it was the pronouncement of absolution that solely justified sinners and assured them of forgiveness.

2.12 The second plank after shipwreck

In this way auricular confession became a central part of medieval religious belief and practice. Numerous penitentials employed the popular metaphor of the 'shipwreck' of the human condition of sin, consequent upon the Fall. The first plank that drowning humanity clings to is that of baptism, which redeems original sin. But the inevitable committing of sins means that the second plank, of penance, is necessary to remit sins and provide a means to reach salvation.[63]

The prolific publication of numerous penitentials meant the ideology and discourse of confession became widely disseminated up to the Reformation. Yet, as Thomas Tentler points out, an appreciation and knowledge of preceding theological writing is important to comprehend the later penitential literature of the eve of the Reformation, as the former texts were ceaselessly referred to as authoritative, if not actually duplicated.[64] In addition, the development of doctrines of repentance, confession, penance and reconciliation were the frequent subject of mendicant preachers and the morality drama that evolved in the later medieval period. As such an understanding and appreciation of the concepts, beliefs and practices of auricular confession both sets the scene for the European and English Reformations and remains critical to fully appreciating the appropriations, transformations and new meanings that were wrought in (post) Reformation literature.

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[63] See SCER, p. 65.
[64] SCER, pp. 30-1.

3. Reformation Arguments

3.1 Confession on the eve of the Reformation

The commission of the Church to bind and loose, the sacrament of penance, the exercising of the keys - all these aspects of the Church's duty to the faithful had survived in one form or another from the ancient Church to the immediate pre-Reformation Church of the early sixteenth century. At times of 'low ebb', such as after the 'Christianising' of the Roman empire in the fifth and sixth centuries, the sacrament of confession was usually practised only in the context of death. At other times, such as the conversion of England during the seventh and eighth centuries, missionary zeal and the fervour of the converted ensured that penance became a pre-eminent aspect of Christian life. The notions and issues surrounding confession and penance in the late Medieval period were the points at which many of the arguments and issues explored during the Reformation were gathered. Here the question of what constitutes attrition and contrition and the role of grace in the forgiveness of sins was debated. Penitential acts of satisfaction for sin became less exacting, and the concept of satisfaction and restitution for sins was further complicated by what had begun as necessary commutations of penitential works being gradually evolved into the granting of papal indulgences. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the system of indulgences was developed and extended to securing remission of time souls spent in purgatory. Although the prime concern of confession, usually undertaken during Lent in readiness for participation in the Mass in Holy Week, was the acknowledgement of sin and its forgiveness, the wider religious context meant a constant awareness of the harrowing one could expect in purgatory for sins that remained unremitted. Eamon Duffy writes of 'the immense elaboration of the late medieval cult of intercession for the dead', which was premised on the existence of purgatory and exploited in several ways, one of which was the sale of indulgences.[65]

3.2 Martin Luther

It was the alleged distortion and abuse of the penitential system that first motivated Martin Luther (1483-1546) to make his protest. Patrick Collinson observes, 'without Luther, we can be reasonably certain that there would have been no Reformation'.[66]

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[65] SA, p. 338, and generally, pp. 338-78.

[66] Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003; repr. London: Phoenix, 2005), p. 4.

The religious questionings of Luther, an Augustinian friar, first found their most outspoken expression in connection with the sale of indulgences. The crisis came when, in attempting to raise funds for the rebuilding of St Peter's, the friar, Johann Tetzel, promised, not just the remission, but eradication, of sin, and a direct ascendancy to heaven for those of the dead on whose behalf people contributed money. Luther's protests began with the publishing of the *Ninety-five Theses* that he apparently pinned on the castle church door in Wittenberg in 1517.[67] In response to the Church's reaction, the protest that started with the *Theses* gradually evolved into a wholesale rejection of the penitential system, the Roman Church, and papacy.[68] Luther asserted that justification could only be through faith; that whatever confession, contrition, penance and sacraments of absolution were offered, humanity nevertheless was innately and inescapably sinful and that faith in Christ alone was the sole and sufficient means of attaining grace and salvation. From Luther's first article: 'Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when he said *Poenitentiam agite*, willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance', flowed the basis from which he argued against the penitentiary system of the Church.[69] Luther did not argue for abolition of confession, rather he positively wanted it to be retained, but in a reformed state that purified it of the abuses and corruption that, he alleged, had attached to its contemporary practice and where the emphasis shifted from confession and penance as earning remission, to the sacrament of absolution that was a God-given gift.

In his article *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520) Luther wrote, 'As to the current practice of private confession, I am heartily in favour of it, even though it cannot be proved from the Scriptures; it is useful, even necessary, and I would not

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[67] 'Ninety-five Theses', in *Luther's Works*, eds, Helmut T. Lehmann and Jaroslav Pelikan, 55 vols (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), XXXI, pp. 25-33, (hereafter LW). See also Collinson (2003), p. 46-7 who discusses the credibility of the traditional account of the posting of the *Theses*.

[68] See V. N. Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) who argues that the Reformation was caused in a sense by the reaction of Rome to Luther.

[69] LW translates *poenitentiam agite* as 'repent', thus eliding the sixteenth-century controversy about this vital translation that encompassed much of the arguments about penance. Where Jerome had written '*poenitentiam agite*' in the Vulgate, the Church had traditionally interpreted this as one commission for the sacrament of penance. Luther, following Desiderius Erasmus's (?1469-1536) new translation of the New Testament, translated this commission as 'repentance', thus negating the justification for the sacrament. Also, see section 3.7 on Jean Calvin below.

have it abolished [...] it is a cure without equal for distressed consciences'.[70] The Roman doctrine of confession consisted of the notions of *contrition*, *confession*, and *satisfaction*. In Lutheran thinking *satisfaction* is pertinent only to the extent that the penitent Christian needs to remind themselves of the full satisfaction made by Christ and resolve to amend their life. This reminder is dependent on a full apprehension of faith, a faith that Luther stated should be stimulated by Scripture:

> For this sacrament, like the other two, consists in the word of divine promise and our faith, and they [the Church] have undermined both of them. For they have adapted to their own tyranny the word of promise which Christ speaks in Matt. 26 [.19] and 18 [.18] : 'Whatever you bind etc.' and in the last chapter of John [20.23]: 'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, etc.' By these words the faith of penitents is aroused for obtaining forgiveness of sins.[71]

Contrition, for the faithful, is assured by sorrow for sin and an assurance of God's love, mercy and forgiveness of it. *Confession*, then, is a means of realizing to the full the above apprehensions and what becomes important is not the enumeration of sin, but the assurance of absolution. Absolution, a gift of grace and an embodiment of the promise of redemption, therefore remains important but not, ultimately, a sacrament. Luther drew a distinction between general and private confession. General confession is made without enumerating specific offences, and private confession is the naming of particular events of sin. In *A Brief Form of Confession* (1531), he wrote, 'But if you are conscious of none at all, [that is, sins] which, however is scarcely possible, then mention none in particular, but receive absolution upon the general confession which you make before God to the confessor'.[72] In articles five and six of the *Theses*, a scholastic distinction is drawn between the *guilt* of sin (*culpa*) and the *penalties* of sin (*poena*).[73] Penalties imposed by the Church, Luther stated, were the Church's business and the pope, episcopacy or priesthood could legitimately remit these penalties or penances (a position made redundant in his later writing). But when a person died the jurisdiction of the Church ended and any

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[70] LW, XXXVI, p. 86. See also David Bagchi 'Luther and the Sacramentality of Penance', in RRR, pp. 119-27. Bagchi correctly notes, that, in 'Babylonian Captivity', Luther recognises penance as a sacrament at the beginning of the treatise but by the end of it does not.
[71] LW, XXXVI, pp. 81-2.
[72] LW, VIII, pp. 119-21.
[73] See also 'The Sacrament of Penance' (1519), LW, XXXV, pp. 9-22.

penance not finished before death no longer pertained. The *guilt* of sin could only be forgiven by God or remitted by the passion of Christ. With this understanding the reasoning for the sale of indulgences for remission of sin in purgatory was negated entirely. Furthermore, Luther insisted on the vanity of the 'works-righteousness' assumption of the Church. Whilst in articles 42-50, Luther admits the rightness and potential for righteousness of 'good works', he does not admit these are a pathway to salvation. Rather, he sees them as an inevitable consequence of obeying the first commandment, a doctrine more fully expounded in *A Treatise on Good Works* (1520).[74] Luther emphasised that grace and salvation can never be earned or deserved, but are bought by the sacrifice of Christ. Thus the reasoning and means of justification for the works of mercy, typically assigned as forms of penance, were also disputed and annulled.

In *Theses*, article 62, 'The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God', Luther stated what were to become cornerstones of the Reformation movement and English Protestant churches.[75] The authority of Church hierarchy and tradition is thus modified in this assertion, with increasing weight given to Scripture, in particular the Gospels. In view of this, universal access to the Bible became critically important and Luther's follower Philip Melanchthon promptly translated a new German vernacular Bible. This had already been done in England by John Wyclif (1320-1384) and was nominally disseminated by the Lollards, although William Tyndale's translation became more extensively available, being used as the basis of the 'Great Bible' (1535), and subsequently, as the 'Bishop's Bible' (1568), and ordered to be displayed in every church by Henry VIII.[76]

Common access to Scripture led to an important consequence in Luther's thinking, that eventually focused on the doctrine of the universal priesthood. Luther argued that

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[74] LW, XLIV, pp. 21-114.
[75] LW, XXXI, p. 35
[76] It is estimated that by 1536 16,000 copies of Tyndale's translation of the New Testament had been brought into England. *The Bible as Book: The Reformation*, ed., O. O'Sullivan (London: British Library; New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 2000), p. 47.

> he who has faith and is a Christian also has Christ; now if he has Christ, so that everything Christ has is his, he also has the power to forgive sins; and if a Christian has the power to forgive sins, he also has the power to do everything a priest can do.[77]

Luther, following the Augustinian concept of the early Church, argued that Christian ministry was the duty of all Christians and included baptism, judging doctrinal questions and teaching and performing the sacraments, including confession and absolution. Luther wrote of the keys, 'or ministry of the word, for these must not be separated', as the duty and right of all believers.[78] Therefore general absolution, which is provided by and communicated through the proclamation of the gospel, can be received from anyone, not just a priest. Private confession was a different question. Luther here recommended that a 'servant of the word', that is a preacher, should be sought to listen to the enumeration of sins, not just to give absolution, but to provide guidance and education. Predictably, just as in the Roman Church, Reformists found that confession presented the ideal opportunity to gauge ignorance of church doctrine and address it.[79] However, the English Church confined confession to a general confession made by the whole congregation, formalised in the litany of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549 and 1552). Conscience would be scrutinized internally and the education of the faithful achieved through primers, sermons, homilies, tracts and of course Scripture. Whilst the self-examination and identity forged through auricular confession was no longer available, early Protestant reformers advocated unmediated access and obedience to Scripture as a sufficient guide to life, as is argued, for example, in William Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528). In his first protest, the *Ninety-five Theses*, Luther steered a fine course between vehemently attacking the corrupt claims and theology of some Roman priests and acknowledging the withstanding rightful role of the Church to exercise a penitentiary system. Within two or three years, Luther completely

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[77] 'Defense and Explanation of All the Articles' (1521), LW, XXXII, p. 28.
[78] 'The Keys' (1530), LW, XXXX, p. 366.
[79] For example, in The Wittenberg Articles (1536), whose main author was most likely Luther's assistant, Philip Melanchthon, it states in Item 7 'Confession and Satisfaction', 'For in that confession the faith of the unlearned may be examined to see how well they are instructed, since the inexperienced are often in need of counsel' – a sentiment repeated in The Thirteen Articles (1538) in exactly the same words. DER, p. 138.

renounced the Church, designating the Pope the antichrist. Yet, whilst Luther came to deny the sacramentality of confession, ultimately he did not reject its necessity overall, arguing its retention in something more like its early Church form. He defined the sins that should be confessed as ones where full consent had been exercised and as serious sins, such as murder, adultery, stealing and lying.[80] Otherwise, Luther advocated general confession of sin, when the Christian thought fit, and repentance as a life-long attitude and practice of belief.[81] Eventually Luther's protestant doctrine was consolidated sufficiently to be expressed as a creed in the Augsburg Confession of 1530.

3.3 Henrican Reformation

Two years after the Augsburg Confession, in 1532, in England, Henry VIII broke with the Roman Church, proclaiming himself the head of the English Church and dissolving the monasteries. The dissolution of the monasteries, undertaken for Henry by the evangelical Thomas Cromwell, meant both a loss of the regular clergy, one of whose specialisms had been confession, and at the same time disbanded what constituted centres of papal religious education and discipline. The Act of Supremacy of 1534 consolidated Henry's supreme power and in the same year Thomas More, the advocate of Catholicism, was sent to the Tower and Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, reached an agreement with the bishops that there should be a ban on contentious preaching for a year. In 1536 Convocation assembled and drew up a list of Ten Articles, the first doctrinal formulary of the Church of England. The Articles were generally conservative, reaffirming the value of images, saints and prayers for the dead. Article 5, on justification, suggests Lutheran influence, however, as does Article 4, on the Lord's Supper. Also following Luther, only three sacraments were addressed: baptism, the Eucharist and penance.[82] In relation to penance, the Convocation retained confession, but rejected the sale of indulgences and the notion of purgatory, since 'the place where they [the dead] be, the name whereof [...] be to

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[80] 'Ein Sermon von der Beicht und dem Sacrament' (1524), in SCER, p. 353.

[81] LW, XXXII, pp. 38-42. See also the more detailed chronology and discussion in SCER, pp. 349-63.

[82] 'we will [...] that this word justification signifieth remission of our sins [...] sinners attain this justification by contrition and faith joined with charity [...] not as though our contrition or faith, or any works, proceeding thereof, can worthily merit or deserve to obtain the said justification'. Article 5, Justification, 'The Ten Articles' (1536), in DER, p. 170.

us uncertain by Scripture'.[83] The thrust of the Articles was chiefly educative, asserting the true meaning of customs, rites and images. Although these actions hardly amounted to radical reform, there was an elite group of English evangelicals who attempted to promulgate the Reformation debate (many of whom were later forced into exile). This group, coupled with the newly introduced vernacular Scripture and the licensing of reformatory preachers, meant that the detail of belief and practice of English Christians fragmented, a fact recognized by Henry as a dangerous division in his subjects. Indeed, in 1545, inspectors were sent around the country to check for conformity to the new practices and found much diversity of reformation. Duffy discusses the evidence for the likely continuation of traditional religious practice in England; reviewing the literature bought in the early sixteenth century, he concludes, 'Clergy and laity alike in early Tudor England perceived the centuries old catechetical enterprise as still very much a priority'.[84] A central component and destination of this enterprise was, of course, the practice of confession.

3.4 Edwardian Reform

When Edward VI ascended the throne in 1547 Protestant doctrine gained a fuller official expression in the Articles and Injunctions (1547) drawn up for the royal visitation that was announced for the whole country. Orchestrated by Cranmer, Duffy identifies these Injunctions as a significant 'point of advance' for Protestantism.[85] Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549 and of 1552 consolidated the reforms. The *Book of Common Prayer* still allowed private confession to a priest, though it did not stipulate a form for this type of confession (presumably priest and penitent would revert to known traditional forms) and this confession was carefully divorced from any context of purgatory. Although the Injunctions retained the traditional annual minimum of confession in Lent, the thrust of Item 9 is educative rather than sacramental, making confession the occasion to test the penitent's knowledge of the

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[83] DER, pp. 173-4.
[84] SA, p. 85.
[85] SA, pp. 448-58.

basic tenets of the faith as a prerequisite to communion, rather than significant as a sacrament in its own right.[86]

3.5 Catholicism restored

The ascension of Mary Tudor in 1553 showed the limited impact the reformatory movements of Henry and Edward had had. Duffy states that parish records show many church objects, which should have been disposed of or relinquished to officials, had in fact been hidden or 'sold' to sympathetic buyers who returned them once it was safe to do so. 'Concealment of this sort took those responsible well outside the law, and could only succeed given almost total secrecy or total solidarity within the community. Nevertheless, many parishes did whatever they could [...] to conceal their possessions'.[87] Contrary to what Duffy perceives as the received Protestant bias of many historians, Duffy's argument is that the Marian period merely recognized and officially restored the people's already existent 'version of traditional Catholicism which had absorbed whatever they saw as positive in the Edwardine and Henrican reforms'.[88] Although vernacular bibles were still permitted, Cardinal Reginald Pole, with legatine powers giving him supremacy over the English clergy, agreed in 1555 to start an English Catholic translation of the New Testament.[89] To Pole, ceremony and sacraments were the preferred means of educating the laity; reading Scripture only encouraged dispute and confusion. However, Catholic primers and prayer books began to appear, such as the officially endorsed Wayland primer, that ran into double figure editions. It lacked indulgence formulae, miraculous legend or elaborate illustration, but restored most of the traditional contents of primers, including a 'Form of Confession', a 'notable indicator of the Marian Church's strong emphasis on the value of the sacrament of penance'.[90] Further, Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London, composed visitation articles in 1554 that were widely adopted by other bishops.[91] These included careful instructions to

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[86] DER, pp. 250-1.
[87] SA, p. 491.
[88] SA, p. 524-64 and p. 526.
[89] Thomas Cranmer nominally remained Archbishop of Canterbury until his execution in 1556 because the division of jurisdiction between England and Rome persisted.
[90] SA, p.539.
[91] *Documentary Annals of the Reformed Church of England*, ed., E. Cardwell, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1839), pp. 136-67. For a detailed discussion of the character of the Marian

detect conformity in the matter of confession. The parish priest was to be questioned about whether women sought housel and shrift before childbirth and special vigilance was encouraged to ensure confession, at the traditional minimum, in Lent.[92] Yet Roman Catholicism itself did not stand still.

3.6 Council of Trent (1545-1563)

Over its three major meetings, the Council of Trent defined and confirmed many aspects of the Catholic faith, including, in its first period (1545-1549), that sacraments worked *ex opera operato*, regardless of the merits of the priest ministering. Much of the first phase was devoted to the subject of justification by faith and these decrees contained a number of issues convergent with confession. Contrary to Luther, the Council declared that good works executed before justification are not sins; that the forgiveness of sins does not depend upon a Christian's belief that they are forgiven; that sin leads away from righteousness and penance restores it. This first stage also affirmed the equal validity of Scripture and tradition as sources of truth.[93] In the second period (1551-2), in session 14, the sacrament of penance was conservatively defined and stated that the faithful should 'receive the sacrament with devotion'.[94] In its third phase, in 1562, the Council defined the doctrine of purgatory and forbade the sale of indulgences, some forty-five years after Luther's first protest against it.

3.7 Jean Calvin

During the period over which the Council of Trent met, Jean Calvin (1509-64) worked on his *Institutio Christianae Religionis*. Originally published in Basle in 1534, the *Institutes* were finally published in a much expanded form in 1559 from Geneva. Book III of the *Institutes* devotes a chapter to penitence, confession and satisfaction. Calvin begins by refuting 'what the scholastic sophists teach concerning repentance'. Calvin alleges that the enumeration of sin was only made law in 1215

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reformation see Lucy Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[92] Gina Alexander reports that the act book of Bonner's London diocese records numerous penances assigned for non-conformity and the certificates of penances received from parish priests affirming the completion of penances. Gina Alexander, 'Bonner and the Marian Persecutions', in Christopher Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 168-9.

[93] A. G. Dickens, *The Counter Reformation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), pp. 107-27.

and, thus, that 'this tyranny was not introduced until piety and doctrine were extinct'. He cites Chrysostom as an authoritative opponent of auricular confession and discusses the errors of scriptural translation that have read 'confess' instead of 'praise'. In discussing the scriptural authority for confession he focuses on James (5.16) and insists that this passage authorises Calvinist practice of confession: 'That we are to deposit our infirmities in the breasts of each other, with the view of receiving mutual counsel, sympathy and comfort'.[95] Calvin also cites I John 1.9, asserting that it refers to the confession of sin to God, but this is, somewhat idealistically, qualified: when the Christian has confessed privately, perhaps to an elder, he will, Calvin writes, 'not be satisfied to whisper the secret of his heart for once into the ear of one individual, but will often, and openly, and in the hearing of the whole world, ingenuously make mention both of his own ignominy, and of the greatness and glory of God'.[96] Calvin advocates three forms of confession: firstly, confession to fellow Christians (as above) although Calvin expects this type of confession to be made principally to pastors as best fitted to respond appropriately; secondly, general confession as part of the litany and as a prerequisite to prayer and communion (Matt. 23, 24); and lastly, 'the other is to be made for the sake of our neighbour, to appease and reconcile him if by our fault he has been in any respect injured.'[97] Calvin advocates that confession should not be exacted, but freely sought and that sins need not be enumerated, rather only faults that worry the conscience should be divulged. Having set out how confession should be accomplished Calvin then turns to the errors of the Roman system of confession. He alleges that auricular confession licenses sin in Christians who know that their Lenten confession will remit all guilt and penalties for it. Calvin admits the power of the keys is given to the clergy to absolve Christians generally and individually, but cautions, 'But when we treat of the keys, we must always beware of dreaming of any power apart from the preaching of the Gospel'.[98] He also argues that only the wisdom of the Holy Spirit

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[94] *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, ed. and trans., H. J. Schroeder, (Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books, 1978). Session 14, p. 91.
[95] *Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 2 vols (London: James Clarke, 1957) I, III.4.6, p. 540.
[96] *Institutes*, 4.10, p. 543 .
[97] ibid.
[98] *Institutes* III, 4.14, p. 546.

can guide the minister in the proper exercising of the keys, and that presbyters who have abused the penitential system, in such things as the sale of indulgences, clearly do not possess the Holy Spirit and thus the absolutions they offer are not efficacious.[99] Satisfactions are not necessary in Calvin's system, as God promises to freely forgive all those that repent; indeed Calvin terms the notion of satisfaction 'blasphemous' and contrary to the 'honour of Christ'.[100]

One cornerstone of Calvin's reforms was a 'two kingdoms' system of separate church and civil authority. Calvin composed a constitution for the Genevan Church, the *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques* (1541) that provided a model of reform for churches all over Europe. It set out the roles of pastors, doctors, elders and deacons, and the consistory, where ministers and elders were to oversee the discipline of the Church. To Reformists, consistories reinstated the communal discipline of the early Church. Consistories were executive and supervisory bodies, and the elders, in particular, were to report to it the 'scandals and faults' of the congregation.[101] Thus one important difference between Calvinist reformed practice and the Catholic penitential system was the authority that resided in lay hands, rather than the confessor-clergy of the old system. Consistories tended to focus on publicly committed or social offences, rather than the sins of conscience referred to the pastor. Less serious sins were confessed to the consistory itself, where penitents received censure, rather than before the whole Church. Expulsion and temporary, or permanent, excommunication remained an ultimate resort. Calvinist Church polity was not replicated in England, and thus, the community discipline that Calvinists regarded as a defining feature of their church was not instigated either, although it was, of course, a pronounced feature of the Scottish Kirk. Graeme Murdock asserts that, in England, 'Patterns of self-regulation and group-regulation filled this vacuum, marked most strongly among those self-obsessed enough to compose daily accounts of their lives'.[102] Yet the Church consistory courts in England did begin to assign

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[99] *Institutes* III, 4 20-1, pp. 551-3.
[100] *Institutes* III, 4 23, p. 555.
[101] *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques*, cited in Raymond A. Mentzer, 'Notions of Sin and Penitence within the French Reformed Community', in PAR p. 85.
[102] Graeme Murdock, 'Did Calvinists Have a Guilt Complex? Reformed Religion, Conscience and Regulation in Early Modern Europe', in RRR, pp. 138-58.

public confession as a penance to those brought before it, in what does, at face value, look suspiciously similar to Calvinist practice (see section 3.11 below). However, without any express doctrinal statement underlying the English practice, which had evolved pragmatically since the break with Rome, it is difficult to make a comparison of the two practices with reasonable assurance.[103]

3.8 Elizabeth I

With the ascension of Elizabeth to the throne in 1558, religious practice and theological doctrine were once more thrown into Protestant gear and many leading Catholics went into exile. All the Catholic bishops resigned with the exception of Matthew Parker, who ordained the new Protestant bishops. Within a month of her accession, Elizabeth banned any disputatious preaching. The following year the Act of Uniformity abolished the Mass and reintroduced a slightly altered version of the prayer book of 1552. An official primer accompanied the prayer book that seemed to return to Henry's middle way, for example, the 'Dirige', prayers for the dead, remained as did the calendar of feast days. However, a royal visitation begun in 1559, established an unalleviated reformatory attitude in its Injunctions that persisted for the next two decades. Once again the cult of saints and the dead were abolished, images banned and removed, most processions forbidden. Article 21 of the Injunctions does, however, preserve the need for neighbours who have quarrelled to reconcile themselves before communion, with curates seemingly being advised to refer them to the Church courts.[106] The Injunctions were enforced vigorously, yet Duffy points to the slow rate of compliance in the parishes, with only forty-five out of one hundred and eighty parishes having complied a year after the visitations had ended.[107] Apart from the significant numbers of Puritans who argued that the reforms had not gone far enough, resistance to Protestant reforms in England was felt from the pressure exerted by exiled Catholics, many living in Louvain, such as Thomas Harding, Nicholas Sanders and Thomas Stapleton.[108] The prolific writings of Cardinal William Allen, originally from Lancashire, now also exiled in Louvain,

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[103] See Chapter 5 for further discussion.
[106] DER, p. 340.
[107] SA, p. 573 and for evidence of the uncertainty this led to, see the will cited p. 566.
[108] Peter Marshall, *Reformation England 1480-1642* (London: Hodder, 2003), p. 174.

were circulated in England. Allen, in a rhetorical echo of Calvin and many other, native, reformers, argued that Protestantism had authorised a dangerous laxity about sin, abolishing the Church's prescribed means of checking it through fasting, penance and confession and belief in purgatory, 'All whiche, being nothinge else but a kynde of softe handeling, and swheet cherishing of sin, hath wroght suche vayne security in mennes myndes, that fewe haue any feele or fear of goddes iudgementes'.[111] In *A Treatise Made in Defence of the Lauful Power and Authoritie of Priesthod to Remitte Sinnes*, Allen argues that the apostles were granted by Christ the right to hear confession and loose and bind sin, and that the bestowal of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles was for this purpose and is by extension granted to all bishops and priests. He asserts that reformers of the simple and 'common sorte', as well as the learned, state a readiness to confess to an apostle, but do not recognise the same power being extended to priests. He states, 'John Calvuin a man borne to seditiō & the Churches calamitie, maintaineth the madnesse of the multitude by this reason: The Apostles (saith he) had the holy Ghost, wherof our priestes haue no vvarant.'. Allen 'proves' that if priests accede they 'have' the Holy Ghost then Christ's 'gift' to the Church continues. Otherwise, he argues, the practice of all sacraments should have ceased with the death of the last apostle.[112]

3.9 Church Papists and recusants

A near-defining feature of sixteenth-century Protestantism was its anti-papal polemic, which, during Elizabeth's reign, as those generations brought up in the Catholic faith died out, became increasingly attached to nationalistic feeling. However, at the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign, Haigh declares, 'Catholic priests and traditionalist laity were in large majorities'.[113] Several factors help to explain why the Catholic faith persisted in England to the end of Elizabeth's reign and beyond, and the practice of confession with it. One pragmatic aspect of Catholic

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[111] William Allen, *A Defence and Declaration of the Catholike Churchies Doctrine Touching Purgatory*, (Antwerp: John Latius, 1565), STC (2nd edn) /371, fo. 5v, EEBO.
[112] TDLP, Chapter 5, pp. 76-98, esp. pp. 77-8.
[113] Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 252.

survival was the fact that the livings of clergy, regarded as the incumbent's private property, could not be easily taken from them and given to Protestant clerics, and where a new choice was to be made it was often nominated by the lay owners of the property, not the episcopates. Catholicism was particularly strong in such northern areas as Yorkshire, Cheshire, Lancashire and more southerly areas, such as Warwickshire and Herefordshire.[115] In these areas, even when the Catholic laity or clergy did come to the notice of authorities, they were often treated leniently, due to strong communal ties.[116] Norman Jones comments, 'the Crown and laity worked on the practical assumption that most Catholics were loyal and dependable subjects. 'Bad Papists' certainly existed, but they were alien and exotic, not at all like your 'good papist' neighbours, kin, and ancestors'.[117]

In 1570 the atmosphere of tolerance began to erode noticeably, when a papal bull was issued that excommunicated Elizabeth and threatened the same for any Catholic in England who attended church, took Communion or recognized Elizabeth as head of the Church. Catholics were faced with a stark choice of loyalty: either conform, renounce faith and be excommunicated, or be recusant and risk financial ruin and

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[115] John Scory, Bishop of Hereford, wrote to the Privy Council in 1564, complaining, 'all the canons residentiary [...] are but dissemblers and rank Papists. And these have the rule of the church and of all the ministries and offices of the same and are neither subject to the ordinary jurisdiction, nor of the dean nor of the bishop. [...] So that they may now do as they like without controlment. They neither observe the Queen's Majesty's injunctions [...] The Communion was not ministered in the Cathedral Church since Easter. The canons will neither preach, read homilies, nor minister the Holy Communion, nor do anything to commend, beautify or set forward this religion, but mutter against it, receive and maintain the enemies of religion'. Cited in P. Caraman, *The Other Face* (Harlow: Longman, 1960), p. 43.

[116] See John Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the People of Europe', in *The Counter-Reformation*, ed., David M. Luebke (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 86-104, for an examination of the tension between kinship ties and parochial uniformity, particularly the enforcement of the latter after Trent. Bossy mentions the atypical case of England in several contexts.

[117] Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell 2002), p. 147.

possibly death. Often, in landed families with Catholic loyalties, only the head of the household and perhaps the eldest son would conform by attending church, possibly once a month - the so called 'church papists' – while the rest of the family would remain Catholic, or recusant. That such families continued to practise confession is verified by the existence of hidden chapels where priests would hear confessions and celebrate Mass, in country houses belonging to significant local gentry, such as that found in the Tower room, in Coughton Court, Warwickshire, owned by the Throckmortons.[119] Such houses acted as local centres for recusant devotions, as well as a potent force for Catholic continuance throughout their geographical sphere of influence - 'seigneurial Catholicism'.[120] Persecution became more common and the number of executions rose as an Act was passed in 1581 making it treasonous to convert to Rome. Recusants were harshly fined for not attending church: £20 per person, per month, for non-attendance, a stricture of mobility within a five mile radius and the confiscation of property.[122] In 1588 twenty-one priests and sixteen lay people were executed. Between 1590 and 1603 a further eighty-eight Catholics were put to death, fifty-three of them priests.[123] Yet, even with the raised political temperature from the 1570s onwards, the ties of community endured. A report written about Lancashire in 1590 noted that, of many hundred indicted recusants, few stood trial because of their kinship with, and generous treatment by, the justices.[124] However, Peter Marshall, surveying historians' opinions, discusses whether Catholicism in Elizabethan England could have continued, or whether its survival was only brought about by Jesuit missionaries.[125]

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[119] For an account of the Lenten confessions of some Cheshire recusants, heard in 1582 see K. R. Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire* (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1971), pp. 42-4.
[120] Antonia Fraser, *The Gunpowder Plot* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996; repr. Orion Books, 2002), p. 195.
[122] Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 259-67.
[123] Alan Dures, *English Catholicism 1558-1642* (Harlow: Longman 1983), p. 27.
[124] Wark, (1971), pp. 78-9.
[125] Marshall (2003), pp. 176-8.

3.10 The Society of Jesus

The Jesuits' spiritual ministry focused on confession and communion. Iñigo López de Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, had written the *Spiritual Exercises* (1548) - a guide to prayer and spiritual examination to analyse the 'discernment of spirits'. As well as catering for a traditionally orientated auricular confession, the *Exercises* instigated a Jesuit 'general confession', which concentrated on intentions and overall tendencies of sinful patterns of behaviour, as opposed to enumerating specific, sinful events. Redolent of devotional types of confession in the monasteries, the provenance of the Jesuit general confession apparently derives from the confessions Ignatius Loyola made himself at the Benedictine Abbey of Montserrat in Spain.[126] Michael Maher argues that the purpose of the general confession was to recover an emphasis on intents and the exercise of the will, thus avoiding binding 'the conscience in snares'- a criticism of confession voiced by Reformists. The *Exercises* declare,

> It is granted that a person who confesses annually is not obliged to make a general confession. Nevertheless, to make it brings greater profit and merit [...] one reaches a deeper interior understanding of the reality and malice of one's sins [...] coming to know and grieve for sins more deeply during this time, one will profit and merit more than was the case on earlier occasions.[127]

The general confession, then, seems to represent a renewed pious commitment to a devotional type of confession that emphasised the penitent's own meticulous self-examination over time, interestingly mirroring, although opposing, the introspective tendencies of Protestantism.

The Jesuits opened two colleges that trained English priests as missionaries, destined especially to minister to those English Catholics that were isolated from the Tridentine Counter-Reformation. The Jesuit missionaries apparently experienced success, with a significant increase in the numbers of recusants. However, their efforts mostly centred on the south-east of the country, whilst the traditional faith

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[126] Michael Maher, SJ., 'Confession and Consolation: The Society of Jesus and its Promotion of the General Confession', in PAR, p. 185 and generally pp. 184-200.
[127] PAR, p. 192.

persisted most strongly in the north, although numbers here also increased.[128] The Jesuits were commonly detested figures in the dominant late sixteenth century English Protestant culture, with the practice of confession that they advanced being seen as an opportunity for potential intrigue and plotting. The equivocations of priests who were captured and tortured were frequently scorned and satirised, whilst the association of Jesuits with the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 temporarily curtailed their activities in England.[129] Some English Catholics themselves were critical of the Jesuit mission. Most secular priests in England (that is those priests who had been ordained by the Catholic Church in England when it existed, but who were no longer affiliated to the Church of England) held a traditional view of Catholicism, continuous with the medieval Catholic Church, whereas Jesuit perspectives were more evangelical, expounding post-Tridentine Catholicism. The faction of English Catholics labelled appellants accused the Jesuits of attracting negative political attention to the English Catholic cause, making Catholicism synonymous with sedition and resented the authority of the English Jesuit superior, granted by Pope Clement XVIII on William Allen's death in 1594. The change of monarchy on Elizabeth I's death apparently resolved such controversies.

3.11 Confession and the Consistory Courts

Although the practice of sacramental auricular confession had officially ceased in England, surviving only in those recusant households powerful and wealthy enough to risk and afford supporting a priest, the impulse and practice of confession continued in a modified form. Consistory courts took the place of the parochial confessor in the second half of the sixteenth century and continued to hear and judge sinful behaviour and assign penances in the form of public confessions in church. Richard Helmholz comments on

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[128] 'A significant expansion of recusancy can be demonstrated from those counties where the old faith was strongest. In Lancashire the increase [...] was dramatic. The Archiepiscopal Visitation of 1578 recorded 304 recusants, yet by 1590 this had risen to 534, a figure which probably underestimates real recusant strength. By the first year of James's reign the number had risen to over 3,500'. Dures (1983), p. 27.

[129] Fraser (1996), pp. 297-318.

[132] Richard H. Helmholz, *Roman Canon Law in Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 113.

> the effects of closing the penitential forum. The medieval Church dealt with some of the minor offences [...] inside the confessional. The canon law assumed the existence of the internal forum, and depended on it for regulating much of men's lives. With the ending of the requirement of annual confession after the Reformation, that avenue was shut off. Conduct that had once been sorted out privately now gave rise to public controversy.[132]

It is likely that consistory courts were created in response to the new obligations put on the Church at the Lateran Council of 1215, at the same time as annual auricular confession became mandatory.[133] The courts were conducted according to Roman canonical laws whose ultimate authority was papal. Yet, in England, even later in the Reformation, the anomalous situation - where church and state relied upon papal authority to enforce religious and social discipline - continued to be tolerated and even extended.[134] The consistory courts principally heard cases of morality and religious conformity and the latter half of the sixteenth century saw a significant increase in their number.[135] Following the bishop's visitation, records of the Chester Consistory Court show that, on 7th February, 1605, eight local people attended the court on suspicion of various offences, including fornication, non-communication and disturbances.[136] Their cases would be typically brought before the court as a consequence of the churchwarden's response to the bishop's articles of inquiry. One of the eight, Lawrence Pemberton, accused of adultery with Alice Robinson, was 'ordered [...] to purge himself by public penance for four Lord's Days or Feast Days' in four different parish churches. The penance was to stand, dressed in a white shift (signifying spiritual death), at the front of the church and publicly confess the exact nature of the sin, according to the words of a prescribed form provided by the

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[133] Records of the Lincoln consistory court hearings are referred to by a deputy of the late Bishop Oliver Sutton. Dorothy M. Owen, *The Records of the Established Church In England* (Cambridge: British Records Association, 1970), p. 36.

[134] In difficult cases continental treatises of law written both before and *after* the Reformation were often cited. These included the procedural manual of the Inquistion. The *Decretals* and English commentators frequently deferred to the pronouncements of the pope. See Helmholz (1990), pp. 145-54. The reformation of ecclesiastical law was authorized in a Statute of 1532 that appointed a Commission to examine and reformulate canon law, but the Statute failed in its legislative passage through Parliament. Helmholz (1990), p. 35.

[135] The Consistory court of Lichfield heard 81 cases in 1529, 204 in 1590; that of Salisbury heard 92 cases in 1566, 117 in 1597; in Gloucester 122 cases were heard in 1560, 163 cases in 1600. Helmholz, (1990) p. 42.

Court.[137] Once the penance was completed satisfactorily, the Court required to be notified, 'under the hands of the Curates and Churchwardens of the said several churches' by the receipt of a certificate of penance. A resident of Shotwick parish, Margaret Dannatt, was described as 'A common scold and disturber of the neighbours. She is ordered to do penance one Sundaie in Shotwicke Church'. Consistent with the Catholic practice of penance as a necessary Lenten prerequisite to the Easter Eucharist, penitents were usually ordered 'to confesse their falte and certifie before Easter under the Churchwardens hands'.[138] The collapsing of confession *into* and *as* a penance in English Church court practice transformed the Catholic practice of auricular confession into a new arena and new forms in a complex way that partially preserved some of the old doctrines and practice, but associated them with new meaning.

3. 12 Tolerance and religious plurality

In 1603 James I ascended the throne. The fortunes of English Catholics generally fluctuated according to James's foreign policy, but overall the numbers of English recusants increased.[141] Numbers of Jesuits in England rose too, from 40 in 1606, to 123 in 1623.[142] Catholic gentry and their neighbours with Jesuit priests in residence therefore practised frequent, devotional confession. However, given the (increasing) number of recusants and lack of natively trained Catholic priests in existence by the early seventeenth century, the opportunities to confess to Jesuit trained priests must have been fairly limited. The ascension of James I revived hopes amongst Catholics for greater religious tolerance.[143] In the climate of this comparative tolerance, a pragmatic religious plurality emerged. The complex spectrum of possible religious belief and practice is apparent in the account given by John Ridgeway, who in 1607

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[136] *Wirral Notes and Queries*, ed., F. Sanders and W. Fergusson Irvine, 2 vols (Liverpool: Young, 1898) II (Sept., 1893), pp. 64-7. See also Cheshire County Records Office EDC 1/34, 1/35 and 5.
[137] See Chapter 6 for an example of a prescribed form of confession.
[138] See John Addy, *Sin and Society in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1989), esp. pp. 204-8 for a description of typical practice.
[141] Estimated as *c.* 35,000 in 1603, *c.* 60,000 in 1640 Marshall (2003), p. 188, n.53.
[142] Marshall (2003), p. 189.
[143] Father Henry Garnet, the Jesuit superior in England, wrote of 'a golden time[...] great hope is of toleration'. Fraser (1996), p. xxxvii.

applied to a Jesuit college. At his interview he spoke about his family's religious affiliations:

> My father is a learned lawyer, a schismatic, my mother is a Catholic, and both are of high families. I have an elder brother, Thomas, a Catholic, and two others, as far as I know, heretics, namely, Peter and William; six sisters heretics, I think. I have several relations [...]. I claim Mr. Southcott, a Catholic, as my guardian; I have also an uncle and maternal aunt, the latter a lover of Christ, the former of the error of the schismatics'.[144]

Yet this kind of plurality was not especially a consequence of the spasmodically experienced, perception of the increased tolerance in James I's reign. The Protestant Richard Greenham had established something of a seminary in his parish of Dry Dayton, near Cambridge, in 1570.[145] Here Greenham became renowned for his skills as a counsellor of troubled consciences, claiming such seminarians as Joseph Hall and Lancelot Andrewes. Greenham's practical, pastoral skills became a magnet for those who sought comfort, assurance and guidance, and his practice from 1581-1584 was noted by his students.[146] Although Greenham leaned towards the Puritan end of the Protestant spectrum, and emphasised that his counsel was only effective to the 'godly' who shared his religious outlook, the pastoral care he offered shared many similarities with traditional Catholic ministry.[147] Greenham consistently reassured those who came to him of God's mercy, before eliciting a detailed examination of the sinner and their sins through questioning. He took into account the person's maturity, the nature of the sin and the circumstances in which it was committed.[148] As the penitential manuals often advocate, Greenham frequently paid attention to the physical needs of the body as a helpful restorative to afflicted consciences.[149] Although Greenham offered no form of absolution of sin, he encouraged the sinner to find a sense of forgiveness through viewing their trials as divinely ordained, as both testing and guiding. Sinners were also to 'read, hear and confer' to increase

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[144] From *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, ed., Henry Foley, 7 vols (London: Burns and Oates, 1877) I, cited in Jones (2002), p. 140.
[145] Much of this section is indebted to Kenneth L. Parker, 'Richard Greenham's 'Spiritual Physicke': The Comfort of Afflicted Consciences in Elizabethan Pastoral Care', in RRR.
[146] Their notes are documented in Kenneth L. Parker and Eric J. Carlson, *'Practical Divinity': The Life and Works of Revd Richard Greenham* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).
[147] Parker and Carlson (1998), pp. 97-119.
[148] Parker and Carlson (1998), pp. 183-4.
[149] Parker and Carlson (1998), p. 148.

their knowledge of God and to 'pray, sing and meditate' to 'whet up affection'.[150] Greenham's pastoral ministry, although at the sharp end of Puritan thinking, illustrates the continuities of religion in early modern England with its Catholic past and further underlines the truth of the observation that both Protestant and post-Tridentine Catholicism were products of medieval Catholic piety.

Thus, in early seventeenth-century England there had evolved a spectrum of Christian faiths that spanned between the poles of the renewed Catholic devotion of Jesuit missionaries and converts on the one hand to the evangelical fervour of godly Puritans on the other. These poles represent the extremes of religious positions it was possible to occupy, yet any point located between them might in reality have consisted of a complex mixture of residual beliefs and practices, combined with varying degrees of reformed conviction. Confession, as the traditional means of motivating and expressing repentance and attaining forgiveness for sin, was not simply abandoned by the reformed religions, rather it remained a central topic of theological discussion and a range of attitudes was adopted towards it. As has been seen, most Reformists did not advocate its eradication but wished to see it renewed in various forms in the Lutheran, Calvinist and 'Anglicanised' creeds of religious faith. Whether as a non-sacramental practice, a communal exercise of discipline, a general confession as part of the liturgy, or a vestigial practice of the Church courts, confession remained an important part of reformed religious expression, as did its continuing practice in the recusant community to Catholic piety. Reformists returned to their knowledge of the early Church's practices of dealing with sin, citing Scripture and patristic writers as authoritative sources. Their perceptions were fiercely contested by Catholic advocates, who, utilising the same authorities, sought to maintain the Catholic Church's traditional interpretations, the longevity of which were themselves promoted as sources of authority. Thus, the history of confession and the evolution of its dogma became critical to that central issue for all Christians: how to seek mercy and forgiveness for their inevitably sinful condition and attain salvation. The subject of Christian salvation had been the controlling rationale and dramatic impulse of English morality drama. In the next chapter, the anonymous,

[150] Parker and Carlson (1998), p. 139.

early sixteenth-century morality play, *Everyman* will be examined in the light of the discourse of confession. This play maintains an orthodox view of the means of ensuring a 'good death', and ultimately salvation, through confession and penance. Yet, in previous discussions of the play some critics have noted a certain 'proto-Protestantism' evinced at specific points in *Everyman*, that, they argue, anticipates emergent Reformation debates and these aspects of the play will be considered, in particular in relation to the orthodox treatment confession receives.

Chapter 2 - The Repentance Drama of *Everyman*

'I giue the a precious iewell [...]
Called penaunce, voyder of aduersyte'

The majority of English drama before the sixteenth century was religious and, apart from amateur and extempore mummers' plays, took the form of festival enactments, pageants and processions, mystery cycles, miracle and morality plays. Although individually extremely varied, morality plays evince a common cultural inheritance, derived from and shared with medieval Christianity. This culture was generated by a host of religious practices and sources: the liturgy, the reciting of catechisms, St. Jerome's Vulgate Bible, visual and oral media, such as statuary and church windows; or literature, such as penitential *summae*, treatises, hagiography, primers, or books of hours; and the calendar of holidays, festivals and saints' days. These last three were the most likely occasions of the performance of morality plays, demonstrating their evident dual effects of communicating the message and themes of religion and entertaining the audience, particularly in such aspects as the burlesque humour of the traditional Vice, or the thrilling appearances of devils on stage. Extant scripts reveal an energetic, warm, often humorous and essentially hopeful outlook in the morality play world. The fundamental optimism of the plays reflects the Christian message of redemption: that though humanity is flawed, to repent of sins is to be forgiven them and attain salvation.

Robert Potter states that morality drama as a whole should be understood as the 'drama of repentance'.[1] He observes, 'The morality play[s] [...] are in the tradition of sermons and penitential literature advocating repentance and preaching the forgiveness of sins'.[2] The morality plays had a didactic purpose: to illuminate the

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[1] Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 7.

[2] ibid. Several other critics have discussed the origins of and influences upon morality plays and *Everyman*. For example, G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), who argues that morality plays emerged as dramatic enactments of exemplar stories incorporated into sermons and homilies. A.C. Cawley agrees, 'It is now accepted by most scholars that the medieval moral plays are a dramatic development of the sermon' '*Everyman*', ed., A. C. Cawley, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), p. xiii. J.M.R. Margeson, *The Origins of English Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), explores morality plays as being descended from the *Psychomachia*. Henry De Vocht, '*Everyman*': *A Comparative Study of Texts and Source's* Materials for the Study of the Old English Drama, 20 (Louvain: University of Louvain, 1947) argues for the priority of *Everyman* over *Elckerlijc* and proposes as its source a

Christian, divine perspective of human life, demonstrating an archetypal cycle of innocence, fall and redemption. Fundamental to this cycle is the means of redemption in medieval Christian doctrine, that is confession and penance. In *Everyman*, a later play in the morality genre, the metadramatic Prologue alerts the audience to the type of play the audience should expect, that it will be 'By fygure a morall playe'.[3] Perhaps such a statement was felt necessary because, in *Everyman*, the conventional morality cycle is abbreviated, so that Euery Man's first appearance is not one in a state of innocence, but in the already flawed state of a fallen human being. Euery Man's fallen state is revealed in the dread and panic with which he reacts when informed of his impending death, his preoccupation with worldly concerns and his ignorance concerning the attainment of salvation. The immediacy of Euery Man's predicament which is how to achieve a 'good' death, salvation and eternal life, together with the fact that a pre-existent state of innocence is not depicted, directs audience attention to the important role played by the solution to Euery Man's dilemma in the shape of confession.

As has been seen in the previous chapter, penitential literature was an important vehicle for conveying confessional doctrine and that both the penitentials and *Everyman* were popular justifies the assumption that they convey representative understandings of confession and penance in early sixteenth-century England.[4] However, whilst the culturally generative potential of confession at this time is probably indisputable, one must be wary of reading penitential literature as a solely orthodox statement of doctrine. Until the thirteenth century and the Lateran Council of 1215, penitential literature was disapproved of by certain ecclesiastics on the grounds of it not being properly authorised canon and sometimes contradicting church dogma. Furthermore, even later medieval texts, such as John Mirk's

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Scottish poem entitled 'The Thrie Tailes of the Thrie Priests of Peblis' (*c.* 1480-85). V. A. Kolve, ''Everyman' and the Parable of the Talents', in *Medieval English Drama*, eds, J. Taylor & A. H. Nelson, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972) sees *Everyman* as derived from the Gospel.

[3] *Everyman* is a translation of the Dutch play *Elckerlijc* (*c.* 1495). There are four extant texts of *Everyman* that are believed to be the earliest printed copies. Two printed by John Scott of St. Paul's Churchyard are dated 1522-29 and 1530-35. The other two early editions were printed by Richard Pynson, the King's Printer and are dated 1510-25 and 1525-30. This and all subsequent quotations of *Everyman* are from *Everyman*, eds, Geoffrey Cooper & Christopher Wortham, (Nedlands: University of Western Australia, 1980).

[4] That *Everyman* was popular is supported by W.W. Greg: 'None of the four extant editions derives from any of the others, and this suggests that there were several intermediary editions, possibly as many as ten'. W.W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, 3 vols (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1939-59), I, p. 82.

vernacular *Instructions for Parish Priests*, which was adapted from William of Pagula's *Oculus Sacerdotis*, were usually based upon, to varying degrees, the texts of earlier penitentials.[5] Peter Damian, in *Liber Gomorrhianus* (1051), forcefully and rather neatly makes both points:

> But these spurious upstarts of canons [that penitential literature is meant here becomes evident later in the passage] of which we are speaking, are both known to be excluded by the sacred councils and proved to be utterly foreign to the decrees of the fathers. It therefore follows that rules which are seen to proceed neither from the decretal pronouncements of the fathers nor from the sacred councils are in no wise to be held to be among the canons. [...] But if the name of the author is sought, certainly it cannot be told, for it cannot be uniformly found in the various codices. For in one place it is written: 'Theodore says', in another: 'The Roman Penitential says', in another: 'The canons of the Apostles'.[6]

Despite Peter Damian's irascible tone, the fact that he terms penitential manuals 'canons' does reinforce the point against which he is arguing, that is, that they had attained the status of canons, indicating their importance in medieval religious thinking. The period when *Everyman* was published marks the zenith of a relatively uniform Catholic penitential culture. The doctrine and practice of confession, definitions of contrition and attrition, the means of satisfaction and efficacy of absolution, in short the whole culture of repentance and salvation were well-established across Europe and permeated late fifteenth-century English society. Thomas Tentler describes confession on the eve of the Reformation as 'an institution performing positive social functions' and, 'in theory and practice [...] a comprehensive and organized system of social control'.[7]

Everyman is not an apolitical or polemically balanced play; it has a clear didactic purpose – to dramatise humanity's inexorable ending of life in all its terrifying urgency, in order to call the audience to repent of their sins through the means of confession and penance. In a larger sense, the play problematises humanity's eternal and universal preoccupation with death and yokes it to the 'penitential cause', utilising its inevitability. The opening scene of *Everyman* contextualises this problem

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[5] John Mirk's *Instructions* may date from the fourteenth century, although extant manuscripts date from the fifteenth century. See the introduction of *John Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed., Gillis Kristensson, Lund Studies in English, (CWK Gleerup: Lund, 1974) II. See also MHP, pp. 23-8 that refers to 'family traditions' of penitentials.

[6] MHP, p. 411.

[7] SCER, p. xiii and p. 345.

in a cosmologically proportioned timescale. God is the first character whose view of human beings in their medieval moment of history is set within a perspective that spans from pre-Creation chaos to the apocalyptic day of the Last Judgement and eternity beyond. God makes three complaints about man: firstly that man is 'Drowned in synne' (l.26), that is the seven deadly sins, four of which are listed; that the sacrifice of the Passion of Christ is unappreciated; and that man does not appreciate that his life is transitory and merely borrowed.[8] Death is sent to remedy this situation, to bring Euery Man into seeing his life in a divine perspective. As Death is instructed by God the message is clearly communicated to the audience that death is a divine instrument whose purpose is to provide human beings with the choice to attain salvation and unity with the Creator, or to spend eternity in hell. The play charts Euery Man's gradual realisation of this last point and although the plot seemingly develops as a tragedy, ultimately it ends with the Christian resolution of grace and salvation. The play at once attains a divine, grand-scale view of humanity, yet, paradoxically, also achieves the most intimate and particular rendition of human distress. As T. S. Eliot recognised, '*Everyman* is on the one hand the human soul in extremity, and on the other any man in any dangerous position from which we wonder how he is going to escape'.[9] The allegorised and personified characters enact the internal conflict experienced by Euery Man and create an intimacy between the audience and the protagonist. This intimacy encourages a readier internalisation of repentance doctrine. Initially various personifications take the stage: of friendship, familial ties and material wealth, that is, external, social bonds of community. Parallel to the medieval world view of a series of concentric spheres that centre on Earth and man, a movement is achieved from the outer, temporal world to the individual world of personal, allegorized attributes of beauty and strength and then, in a further movement, to the interior world of the components of human identity: that is knowledge, reasoning (or discretion) and sensory perception (the five wits). Pivotal in this movement are the characters of Knowlege and Confessyon.

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8 Thomas F. Van Laan comments, 'the Middle Ages was so saturated with the concept [the seven deadly sins] that even partial enumeration effectively called attention to the whole. Medieval spectators knew the complete list, and they knew the typical characteristics of each Sin'. Thomas F. Van Laan, ''Everyman': A Structural Analysis', *PMLA*, 8 (Dec., 1965), 465-75, p. 468.

9 T. S. Eliot, *Religious Drama: Mediaeval and Modern* (New York: House of Books, 1954), f.9.

Knowledge and Confession

Lawrence Ryan recognises that 'A true understanding of the significance of the character Knowlege is crucial to a proper interpretation of the play'.[10] Yet this is not straightforward; it seems Knowlege might be understood as both a personification of an aspect of Euery Man's identity, and as perhaps symbolising the knowledge of the Church, or, at least, a variety of possible Christian doctrinal significances. With regard to the former, the arrival of Knowlege is only possible when Euery Man has the humility to recognise his sinfulness and his own inability to remedy it. As Ryan comments, one aspect of knowledge in *Everyman* is, '"contrition" or, better, acknowledgement of one's sin'.[11] Moreover, that Knowlege might represent the attainment of grace for Euery Man is suggested by her unasked for, undeserved and spontaneous arrival. However, in the latter understanding, Knowlege is evidently the repository of pastoral wisdom and skills of Christian ministry, bringing comfort to Euery Man at his lowest point of despair. Knowlege emphasises that the act of confession brings peace of mind and comforts the despairing Christian by providing assurance that their sins are forgiven. Knowlege refers to 'the hous of sauacyon' (l. 540) as a 'place/ That shall vs comforte' (l.541-2) and demonstrates, through the performance of allegory, that confession is salvific, as Euery Man kneels before Confessyon and is told to 'aske mercy' (l.543). And, in a literal, theatrical symbol of the value of confession, Confessyon gives Euery Man 'a precious iewell [...] called penaunce, voyder of aduersyte' (l.556-8). Thus Knowlege might be understood to represent the wisdom of the Church, or perhaps the priesthood exercising its ministry. However, Knowlege also encompasses a variety of doctrinal and religious cultural nuances and these may be divided into two main strands, the significance of death and a specific comprehension of the moral system as taught by the Church.

Knowlege possesses an understanding of the doctrinal significance of death and the means, or art of dying 'well'. In the medieval period a whole cultural movement was devoted to this subject. There was an ever present consideration of the imminence and inescapability of death. Originating in the charnel houses of the Holy Innocent's church in Paris, the depiction of the *Danse Macabre* manifests this widespread

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[10] Lawrence V. Ryan, 'Doctrine and Dramatic Structure in "Everyman"' *Speculum* 32, 4 (Oct., 1957), 722-735, p.728.
[11] ibid.

cultural preoccupation and phenomenon of European medieval society.[12] Known as the *Dance of Death* in England, these were gruesome literary or artistic representations of a procession, or dance, in which the dead perform and 'invite' the living to join them.[13] The apparent relish of the physical aspect of death, of '*le Mort's'* cold, bony figure on the shoulder of an unsuspecting victim, inviting them to join the dance, was an intensely provocative reminder of the urgent need for everyone to be prepared, through confession and penance, to meet their maker. Death was the topic around which were gathered considerations of the transience of life, inevitability of death and irrelevance of earthly, material things; all pointing to the need to go to one's day of judgement with confidence that one's sins would be reckoned as atoned for and forgiven. Whilst penitential literature focused on the art of living a good life through which to prepare for death, *De Arte Moriendi*, like the *Dance of Death*, focused on death itself. This treatise was evidently known across Europe by the mid-fifteenth-century and in England was translated as *The Book of the Craft of Dying* (*c.* 1505?), along with other tracts including substantial references to confession.[14] Whilst, roughly, the first half of *Everyman* shares the same concept of life as a pilgrimage to a mortal destination and views it with the same sardonic humour apparent in the *Dance of Death*, the second half of the play corresponds to the reliance in the *Craft* on forsaking temporal things and the examination of conscience through confession and restoration of spiritual health through the sacrament of penance.

The *Craft* follows the medieval orthodoxy that death is the first of the two occasions of man's judgement, the second judgement being the day of the Last Judgement when Christ returns to earth. As in *Everyman*, death is the occasion of a 'reckoning' when each person must render an account of their lives before God - a terrible prospect that provides *Everyman's* cautionary rationale: 'The story sayeth: 'Man, in

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[12] Florence Warren observes, 'This idea of a 'danse des morts' became exceedingly popular in Europe in the fifteenth century'. *The Dance of Death*, ed., Florence Warren, (London: EETS, 1931) XVIII, p. x.

[13] In England, the Benedictine monk and poet, Thomas Lydgate (?1370-1449), translated and put into verse the dialogue accompanying the Parisean *Danse Macabre*. The churchyard of St. Paul's in London depicted the 'Dance of Death' in its entirety, with some additions of characters deriving from Lydgate's verses. Warren (1931).

[14] *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, ed., Frances Comper (New York: Arno Press, 1977). (Hereafter *Craft*). Comper notes that the *Craft* may have derived from Jean le Charlier de Gerson, the famous Chancellor of Paris, whose treatise recognises the importance of confession in the title, *Opusculum Tripartitum de Preceptis Decalogi, de Confessione, et de Arte Moriendi* (*c.* 1470).

the begynnynge/ loke well and take good heed to the endynge: Be you neuer so gay!' (l.10-12) - and one that the *Craft* labours to assuage. On the one hand the *Craft* emphasises the fearsome significance of death, '*Mors peccatorum pessima*', [The death of the sinful man is the worst of all deaths]; on the other hand it holds out the comforting assurance that '*Preciosa est in conspectus Domini mors Sanctorum Eius*' [The death of the good man is ever precious in the sight of God]. These oppositions are negotiated through the sacrament of penance, the only means to ensure that the Christian dies in 'the state of very repentance and contrition faith and virtue and charity of Holy Church'.[15] The *Craft* is composed in six parts, beginning with 'A Commendation of Death'; it then considers the knowledge needed to die well, the temptations likely to beset the dying, questions to ask the dying, and lastly, instructions and prayers for the dying and their attendants. In Euery Man's fallen state he accedes to many of the temptations besetting the dying described in the *Craft*. Euery Man experiences doubts of faith and despairs of God's forgiveness. His first reaction to Death is a blasphemous expression of hopelessness: 'I wolde to God I had neuer be gete!' (l.189). Indeed, in this first half of the play each reference to God or the Saints is in secularised terms, often contrarily conceiving God as non-divine, as a 'hye kynge (l.330) or 'hyest Iupyter' (l.407). Similarly, calls to the Saints are often formed as expletives, 'By Saynt Iohan (l.288), or 'Mary' (l.454). As Euery Man asks each of his friends in turn to accompany him on his pilgrimage and help him make reckoning for his life before God, his faith in them, rather than God, is apparent. Euery Man's reasoning for approaching Goodes further illustrates the *Craft's* temptations of the dying. Euery Man freely acknowledges his devotion to the temporal admitting 'All my lyfe I haue had ioye and pleasure in the [Goodes]' (l.408) and brings common 'wisdom', which is in fact his own 'false' knowledge, to bear on his situation saying, 'Money maketh all ryght that is wronge' (l.413). But Goodes openly advises Euery Man, 'my loue is contrary to the loue euerlastynge' (l.430), and that he is only lent to people; for every one person who uses Goodes to achieve salvation, Goodes, he admits, corrupts a further one thousand. As Euery Man reviews his repeated desertion by earthly friends, kindred and material things, he turns to that

[15] *Craft*, p. 5.

sole gift of the spirit that may accompany him beyond the grave, Good Dedes.[16] However, Good Dedes 'is so weke/ That she can nother go nor speke'. (l.482-3), because she is fettered by the sins of Euery Man. In this way an important doctrinal point is communicated: that good deeds are only efficacious in achieving salvation if one is already in a state of grace; in a state of sin they avail nothing.[17] Overall, the first half of the play establishes Euery Man's sinful state and the poor state of his spiritual health that is an obstacle to his salvation. The *Craft* concurs so closely with the substance and themes of *Everyman* that *Everyman* begins to appear as a dramatic enactment of the book's doctrine; an explication of the knowledge needed to die well and a demonstration of the means of redemption: confession and penance, together with an enactment of the temptations that are obstacles to it. Theological suppositions are not explored, nor are the motives and reasons for a life of sin, rather the whole focus and emphasis is pragmatically devoted to sins committed causing spiritual sickness and the need for confession and penance to restore spiritual health and gain salvation. In the second half of the play, once Euery Man has performed his penance, he is joined by his new friends, Beaute, Strength, Dyscrecion and V.Wyttes. Dramatically, their appearance emphasises that now Euery Man is in a state of grace he has loyal, devoted friends who will stay with him to his journey's end. However, the identities of these new friends are also significant as a result of the same medieval knowledge that brought about Euery Man's confession. 'Dyscrecion', in the *Craft*, is conceived as the exercise of reason or conscience, the ability attained in mature years to make the right choices as a Christian to avoid vice and sin.[18] Likewise, the V. Wyttes or five senses provide the sensory data upon which discretion operates. In Thomistic thinking the five senses contributed the raw data from which cognition, together with reason and self-reflexive perceptions, amounted to knowledge of 'Truth'.[19] It seems that it is from this Thomistic pedigree, developed

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[16] Good Dedes has lost its efficacy for Euery Man's salvation in *Everyman* in the same way that all beneficent acts are rendered worthless without the motivation of charity, or love in Scripture (I Cor. 13).

[17] John 15:4 reads, 'Abide in me, and I in you: as the brāche can not beare frute of it self, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' .

[18] 'When thou camest to years of discretyion he ordained thee three sad counsellors; Reason, Dread, and Conscience'. *The Craft*, p. 138.

[19] 'Quaestiones disputatae de veritate', in *Thomas Aquinas Selected Writings*, ed. and trans., Ralph Mcinerny, (London: Penguin, 1998), pp. 164-216. However, Aquinas uses no directly translatable equivalent of the modern English sense of 'knowledge', rather he discusses three main concepts that each include some aspect of its modern definition: *cognition*, *scientia* and *notitis*.

from Platonic ideas of the soul and knowledge, that the common medieval conceptual anatomy of knowledge arose.

The other strand of Christian cultural knowledge that *Everyman* presumes is that of the ethical system promulgated by the Church. This system took as its authority not only scriptural guidance, but the traditions and established practices of the Church itself, a point emphasised in the opening declaration of the *Craft*, that salvation can only be assured if in 'the faith and virtue and charity of the Holy Church'. In *Everyman*, Euery Man can only transform his sinfulness by renouncing his reliance upon temporal things and the vices they involve, in confession. Vital to a proper confession was detailed knowledge of the moral system which operated as a framework within which faults were enumerated, and which included the seven deadly, or mortal sins, venial sins and the seven works of mercy, corporal and spiritual, the seven points of the *Pater Noster* and the Decalogue. Vices were comprehensively categorised in great detail in such penitential literature as *The Book of Virtues and Vices* (*c.* 1300), with their (typically medieval) structurally opposing virtues.[20] Knowledge of the moral system gained in confession ensured that an awareness of sin and its potential eternal consequences obtained for all Christians.[21] The emphasis in *Everyman* of the necessity of knowledge is one shared in *The Book of Virtues and Vices*. It discusses the 'gift' of knowledge in terms that conceive of it as a specific and detailed knowledge of vices and virtues and emphasises its central role to medieval Christians as the spiritual equivalent of the 'master of the works', 'þis 3ifte is maistre of þe werkes, as for to speke of virtues of þe soule, for it makeþ al [...]. Þis 3ifte is þe priour in þe cloister of þe hert, þat kepeþ wel þe ordre and makeþ to kepe wel ouer al'.[22] Thus, Knowlege is the character that embodies medieval understandings of the moral doctrine taught by the church and practices

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[20] *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed., W. Nelson Francis, (London: EETS, 1942). The *Book* is a translation of the *Somme le Roi* that can be dated accurately as composed in 1279. The *oppositional* categorisations of virtues and vices characteristic of the *Book*, derives from a tradition that has been attributed to the Methodist school of medicine founded by Thomas of Laodicea in Rome *c.* 50 B.C. who advocated that 'contraries are cured by their contraries', MHP, pp. 17-19.

[21] The Franciscan Archbishop of Canterbury, John Peckham, decreed in the Constitutions of the Council of Lambeth, October 1281, that all people who have 'attained the age of reason' should confess to their local parish priest and on that occasion be instructed at least four times every year in order to dispel common misunderstandings of Scripture and eradicate superstition. Instruction was to be given about the articles of faith, the ten commandments, the seven deadly sins with their 'progeny' (or branches), the seven virtues and the seven sacraments.

[22] Francis (1942), p. 149.

pertinent to them. She is the agent by which Euery Man realises the Church's perspective and judgement of his life and thus the need to atone for his sins and beg God's forgiveness.

The pivotal function of Euery Man's confession is emphasised by its performance in the middle of the play. It effects the transition of Euery man from a spiritually ailing sinner to an assured Christian confident of attaining salvation. The conflation of the sin of Euery Man with Good Dedes' sickness is in accordance with the traditional conception of sin as sickness and the sacrament of penance as a cure restoring spiritual health.[23] Euery Man is guided towards spiritual health by the ready assurance of Knowlege that she is able to 'hele [him] of [his] smarte' (l.528) with the aid of Confessyon. Euery Man's confession is structured in three parts, according to the orthodoxy established in penitential guides, of contrition, confession and satisfaction. In effect, Euery Man's contrition achieves self-knowledge. Firstly, he expresses sorrow for his sins and the way in which they have divorced him from God. In Christian doctrine, this sorrow must be for the sin itself rather than for the punishment it will attract, without which it would be deemed attrition. Secondly, Euery Man expresses detestation of his sin. Finally, Euery Man resolves not to sin again, a necessity for true contrition and eventually makes reparation of material goods. Before this final stage Euery Man makes a confession, and this was integral to establishing contrition: that through confession, with the priest directing the penitent through pertinent questions, encouraging a detailed and sincere exploration of conscience, a correctly repentant attitude could be ensured. That this was considered a fundamental requirement is attested to by the fact that the same insistence on the necessity for a full confession is found in nearly all penitential manuals.[24] Euery Man's assertion that he is 'redempte with herte and full contrycyon' (l.549) should be viewed in this context. Much theological dogma had been written about where exactly the value of penitential practice lay and many of the evolving disputes centred on the possibility of perfect contrition.[25]

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[23] In the *Penitential of Theodore* the writer of the Preface refers to the Penitential as being addressed to confessors who are, 'physicians of the soul', supplying 'penitential remedies' and providing 'the treatments of this medicine which follows'. Cited in MHP, p. 182 & n.32. See also John T. McNeill, 'Medicine for Sin as Prescribed in the Penitentials', *Church History*, 1 (1932), 14-26.

[24] 'Of all assumptions the most universal is that a good confession must be complete. This is the first, necessary condition, and is a truly ubiquitous criterion by which the work of the penitent is judged'. SCER, p. 109.

[25] Tentler discusses the disputes at length. SCER, pp. 21-27, 250-273.

Euery Man and Knowlege's use of nomenclature for Confessyon is interesting and implies some of the contemporary anxieties surrounding the sacrament that are more overtly revealed in the discussion of the priesthood later in the play. Initially, Euery Man refers to Confessyon in the masculine as 'that holy man Confessyon' (l.539) who dwells, as Knowlege says, 'In the hous of saluacyon'. Once Euery Man meets Confessyon he addresses 'him' then as 'Shryfte, moder of saluacyon' (l.552). There is no equivalent differentiation of gendered terms in *Elckerlijc*. Straightforwardly, it may be that referring to both genders points to an attempt to make a combined reference to the confessional roles of both the regular orders, or fraternities, who specialized in hearing confessions and the 'mother' Church, normally referred to as female. Another possibility is that the 'holy man' Confessyon and the female 'Shryfte' are conflated in an attempt to defend the priesthood from Donastic accusations, or what became crystallized as Reformist allegations of priestly hypocrisy that invalidated their ministry of the keys. In suggesting that the individual (male) priest-confessor and his office, sanctioned by the authority of the (female) 'mother' Church, are one and the same, the individual becomes insignificant, a cipher for the authority of the Church and so individual priestly inadequacies become less important. Thus sinners could be assured that even if their confessions were made to the most corrupt priest the absolution granted would nevertheless remain valid.[26] Cawley explains this apparent discrepancy in gender attribution by referring to the intimate relationship between the priest and sacrament in confession, stating, 'the difficulty is more apparent than real if the masculine is taken as a reference to the man who acted the part of the priest-confessor, and if the phrase *moder of saluacyon* is regarded as a figurative description of sacramental confession'.[27] The inclusive construal of the phrase 'Shryfte, moder of saluacyon' in Cawley's reading is borne out by the multiple significances that had attached to the word 'shryfte' over a long period of time. Originating in the Anglo-Saxon language, the term 'shryfte' encompassed and could be employed to mean both 'confessor' and the act of making a confession, but also encapsulated the act of the imposition of penance, and granting of absolution. The inclusivity of meaning allows an interpretation of this apparent

[26] This interpretation is lent further credibility by the extended discussion of the role of the priesthood later in the play, which is referred to below. Acknowledgement of corruptions in the Church reveal anxiety regarding the authority of the Church and priesthood and their efficacy as ministers of the sacraments.
[27] Cawley (1961), n.552, p. 33.

inconsistency in gender terms as a defensive emphasising of the role of confessor, or priest, as encapsulating and symbolising the sacrosanct authority of the catholic Church.[28] The employment of the word 'shrift' in this context is particularly apt since its ancient and native etymology lend it the kind of authority that the Church, in its belief in the weight of tradition, itself relied upon to justify its practices (a belief reaffirmed explicitly by the Council of Trent).

Yet, the confession enacted by Euery Man constructs a traditional form of satisfaction that is as outdated, even in the sixteenth century, as it is histrionic. His penance takes the form of self-flagellation or 'scourging', and its performance achieves a number of theatrical and didactic effects. Euery Man's satisfaction is evidently conceived of as a method of subjugating the flesh to spiritual urgencies and thus answers to his attachment to temporal pleasures and material things staged earlier in the play. It is also a method of aligning the sinner with Christ and the suffering He undertook in the Passion, and in this way addresses God's original complaint (l.29-33); and, ultimately, it is a way of achieving sincere contrition, which, in turn, attracts God's grace, mercy and eventually salvation. However, self-abasement, and specifically self-flagellation, had probably disappeared entirely as a method of fulfilling penance in the sixteenth century, although it is comprehensively referred to in earlier penitential literature, such as the *Regula Coenobialis of Columban c.* 600, that stipulates flagellation as a particularly frequent penance. This previously severe approach extended even to the minor offender, so that the sinner accused 'of coughing in the beginning of the psalm [...] is commanded to make amends by six strokes'.[29] Flagellation is also stipulated as an equivalent commutation of a lengthy assignment of penance. The *Pseudo-Cummean Penitential* advises that a year of penance can be commutated to 'three hundred strokes with rods'.[30] By the sixteenth century this had all changed, and flagellation was evidently not an acceptable form of penance. The *Speculum Sacerdotale*, in an accommodation frequently observed in later penitential doctrine, advises,

> But for in tyme þat is now ther be many that wol no3t ne may no3t bere so hye penaunce, therefore it behoueþ þe rest for to

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[28] Shrift: 1. Penance imposed by the priest after confession; 2. the imposition of penance implying absolution, shrift came to be apprehended in certain contexts as = absolution; 3. a confessor; 4. to go to shrift, come to shrift: to resort to confession . <http://www.oed.com> [accessed September 2003].
[29] MHP, p. 260.
[30] MHP, p. 268.

> consider to mannes febilyns and to temper þere penaunce to be li33ter or shorter so that they mowe bere it.[31]

The *Speculum Sacerdotale* suggests other possible penances such as alms-giving, prayer, pilgrimage, sheltering travellers and pilgrims, fasting and keeping vigils.[32] Thus, it would seem that the traditional, if now outdated, act of penance in *Everyman* should be interpreted as symbolic. Like God's mention of only four of the seven deadly sins in the Prologue, the depiction of Euery Man's satisfaction might reflect authorial certainty that the audience will read flagellation as a signal of sincere contrition. It may also represent another attempt to bolster the authority for the practice of confession as a whole, through alluding to the traditions of ancient practice.

Just as Knowlege assured Euery Man of the readiness of God's mercy, so is Confessyon eager to reassure and to soften his harsh counsel to scourge with the comforting knowledge that it will achieve God's forgiveness. Confessyon counsels 'be seker of mercy [...] ye wyll saued be,/ Aske God mercy, and He wyll graunte truely' (l.568-70). Euery Man then performs the act of self-flagellation as satisfaction for his sins and incrementally brings Good Dedes back to animation and health. It is typical of the penitential system and peculiarly appropriate that Good Dedes is brought back to health incrementally, implying that each part of the satisfaction achieves its corresponding effect. In the same way the scheme of tariff penance assigned penances that minutely matched the nature and severity of sins, carefully taking into consideration the circumstances of the sin committed and the social situation of the sinner. Euery Man's prayer of l.581-607 is his first extended recognition of his own sinful state and acknowledgement of his need for God's forgiveness. Essential to his prayer is his plea, 'Though I be a sinner moost abhomynable,/ Yet let my name be wryten in Moyses' table (l.596). The allusion to Moses' table is explained by de Vocht:

> The medieval symbol [is] of the double table given on Sinai, on which are to be written all the names of those who are allowed to enter heaven. The names of those who have kept unsoiled the innocence of

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[31] *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed., Edward H. Weatherly (London: EETS, 1936), p. 75. The only known manuscript (which is a copy) of *Speculum Sacerdotale* has been dated as c. fifteenth century. See *Speculum*'s Introduction.
[32] ibid, p. XXV.

> their baptism are inscribed on the first table, while on the second are noted down all those who escape eternal damnation by due penance for the offences they have committed and repented.[33]

Thus, the doctrinal correspondence between the two sacraments of baptism and penance is brought to attention at the critical point immediately prior to Euery Man beginning his scourging, emphasising that the pains of self-inflicted injury are worthwhile because the redemption of sin in penance is equal to that brought about by the incontrovertible first sacrament of baptism. Like the washing away of sin in baptism, the purification of confession is stressed in its description as a 'clensynge ryuere' and a 'Gloryous fountayne' that washes away all 'vyce vnclene,/ That on me no synne may be sene' (l.546-7). Alcuin of York (*c.* 735-804) promoted penance in the same way: 'Why then in the second baptism of penance also ought we not to be absolved likewise, with priestly help, the same divine grace being pitiful, from all the sins committed after the first baptism'.[34] Euery Man's comment, 'Now of penaunce I wyll wade the water clere/To saue me from purgatory, that sharp fyre' (l.617-8) further emphasises this correspondence, with the 'water' of penance fittingly opposing the 'fyre' of purgatory.

The purpose of Euery Man's penance given here, that is to save him from the fires of purgatory, is, interestingly, mentioned directly only in this sole instance.[35] The slight attention paid to the notion of purgatory in *Everyman* is consistent with the minor part it took in the official church liturgy and sacraments, illustrating a contrary attitude to popular piety. Eamon Duffy states the notion of purgatory exercised 'a vividly imaginative grasp' on the minds of the laity.[36] Sermons and literature dramatically evoked purgatorial tortures in accounts of visions and the afterlife.[37] This literature did not just excite, it didactically exploited such accounts to provoke

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[33] De Vocht, (1947), pp. 79-80.
[34] cited in MHP, p. 397.
[35] The other purposes of his confession mentioned by Euery Man include, to gain the companionship of friends to accompany him on his journey; to render Good Dedes effective in Euery Man's 'last reckoning'; to align himself with Christ in his death; and to 'purify' himself in order to be worthy to receive forgiveness, grace and salvation.
[36] SA, p. 338.
[37] The *Milan Penitential of Cardinal Borromeo* (*c.*1565-82), contains a note added by the compiler stating, 'Saint Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, as is related in her Latin Life, Chapter XXX, affirmed that Christ had revealed to her that he would require the expiation in purgatory of a penance of seven years or longer to those who neglect the canons of penance. (St Mary Magdalene de Pazzi 1556-1607 was an ecstatic Carmelite nun of Florence noted for her sorrow over purgatorial tortures that she witnessed in visions). MHP, p. 368.

the desire for repentance. Such utilization was a strategy not unknown in penitential *summae*. In the *Penitential of Robert of Flamesbury*, (*c.* 1207-1215), the confessor is advised, if the penitent does not willingly undertake a penance, to say,

> Brother, it is necessary for thee to be punished in this life or in purgatory: but incomparably more severe will be the penalty of purgatory than any in this life. Behold, thy soul is in thy hands. Choose therefore for thyself whether to be sufficiently punished in this life according to canonical or authentic penances or to await purgatory.[38]

The lack of any insistence in *Everyman* on the specific threat purgatory poses for the unrepentant or incomplete penitent might reflect a confidence in something that is so obvious it can be assumed, or may otherwise accord with the general optimism of morality drama as a whole and the beneficent emphasis in this play on the healing power of confession and penance.[39]

When Euery Man has completed his penance he is assured by Knowlege and Good Dedes that 'For the is preparate the eternall glory' (l.631), and his new spiritual state is signalled by the donning of a garment which is wet with his tears, and serves to remind Euery Man of the necessary humility and contrition with which to come before God at his journey's end. Traditionally a suitable garment of, for example, goat's hair (to suggest the penitent was no longer one of the 'flock' or 'sheep') or haircloth, known as the *cilicium*, would be worn as part of the act of penance and only for its duration.[40] Euery Man next bequeaths his material goods in such a way as to make restitution for his former sinful life. The proper bestowal of wealth before death was regarded itself as a virtuous act and many penitentials stipulate exact material restitution for specific sins.[41] Euery Man is subsequently advised by

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[38] MHP, pp. 353-4.

[39] Potter comments, 'the morality play embodies a generalized and remarkably optimistic theatrical conception of the human condition [...]. It has the rhythm of the victory of life over death, the shape of enacted ritual.' Potter (1975), p. 10.

[40] One pontifical (*c.* 15-16th C.) shows penitents who were expelled on Ash Wednesday, before their subsequent readmission on Maundy Thursday. They are shown kneeling, wearing the *cilicium* and bare-footed, before the robed bishop who leads them to the church door. Bishop John Grandisson's pontifical, the *Ordinale Exoniensis*, 1337, describes the rite summarily: '*Eiectis penitentibus, claudatur ianua*' [The penitents are ejected, the doors are closed]. Cited in, *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, eds. T. J. Heffernan and E. A. Matter, (Michigan: Michigan University, 2001), p. 229.

[41] Willingness to make proper restitution is an evident issue in the *Craft*: 'The Sixth Interrogation shall be this: Wilt thou that all manner things that thou hast in any manner wise misgotten, be fully restored again, - so much as thou mayst, and art bound, after the value of thy goods; and rather leave and forsake all the goods of the world, if thou mayst not in none other wise?' p. 26. Regino's

Knowlege to go to the priest and seek the Eucharist and extreme unction (l.706). V. Wyttes' concurrence, 'hye you that ye redy were' (l.712) implies the common medieval conviction that confession should be undertaken as a necessary cleansing and purification to prepare for any other religious occasion, or participation in any of the other sacraments apart from baptism.[42] Before he does so, Euery Man's new companions swear to remain with him to the end of his journey – a positive replay of the first half of the drama, emphasising how, with the acquisition of grace and spiritual health, Euery Man has undergone a transformation. Ultimately Euery Man's new friends do desert him as he reaches the grave, but by this stage there is an acceptance, that through the action of grace, Euery Man no longer relies upon his natural gifts, rather he is raised above them.

The Authority of the Priesthood

The discussion about the role of the clergy that follows in the play is seen by David Bevington as reflecting 'a church on the defensive'.[43] Bevington argues that the discussion of the priesthood arises out of a religious climate where the momentum for reform was beginning to emerge and that also induced the publication of Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* (*c.* 1427). The stringent defence of the elevated position of the priesthood is similarly presented in both texts.[44] In *Everyman* the undoubted perception of the authority of the clergy is clear, even in the context of what are otherwise references to corruptions of priestly office:

> There is no emperour, kyng, duke, ne baron,
> That of God hath commycyon
> As hath the leest preest in the worlde beynge.
> For of the blessyd sacramentes pure and benygne
> He bereth the keyes, and thereof hath the cure
> For manne's redempcyon .

Ecclesiastical Discipline asks, 'Hast thou committed theft [...] taking what was not thine?[...] thou should do penance for one year and repay the value'. Cited in, MHP p. 317. The *Pseudo-Cummean Penitential* discusses restitution, citing the gospel story of Zaccheus. It goes on to recommend, 'if perchance they from whom he has unjustly taken something are not in the present world [...] he shall give half [...] he shall disburse so much in silver for alms, and again as much as he is worth in silver he shall bestow of his land on the churches of God for alms [...]'. Cited in, MHP, p. 269.

[42] Tentler discusses the issues surrounding the occasions and frequency of confession, as recommended in a variety of penitential literature. SCER, pp. 70-82.

[43] David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 35-7.

[44] 'It is an exalted ministry that the priest fulfils and his rank is high, for to him is given a thing which is not granted to angels; for only priests, duly ordained in the Church, have the power to celebrate and consecrate the body of Christ'. Thomas À Kempis *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Betty I. Knott (4th repr. London: Collins, 1963) 4.5.

[...]
God hath to them more power gyuen
Than to ony aungell that is in heuen. (l.713-8 & 735-6)

Bevington's statement misleadingly implies an opposing voice that was external to the Church. But there was not any such 'defensive' position in the united, catholic Church; rather, questions about the role of the priesthood and abuses of commutations and indulgences, which could so easily degenerate into simony, were raised from within the Church itself. These questions formed part of the continuing debates in the Church from the time of its earliest inception, and through the centuries contributed to its evolving dogma. Debates that had been conducted throughout the medieval period, notably by scholastic theologians, had explored where the efficacy of confession lay. Peter Lombard emphasised the inward contrition of the penitent, whereas Thomas Aquinas argued that both contrition and the action of the priest combine to secure grace and that the sacrament itself was powerful, '*ex opera operato*' [from the work worked]. Duns Scotus advocated a doctrine that focused the meaning of the sacrament mainly in the priest's granting of absolution.[45] All of these positions are expressed in canonical statute and, more expansively, in penitential literature. Statutes of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, had made clear that the contrition of the penitent was essential; indeed it was an important part of the priest's job to discern it and it was nominally the condition of his granting absolution. Moreover, one purpose of the priest's stipulation of a penance, apart from to punish and atone for sin, was that it was considered an aid to achieving contrition. Thus, a tension had emerged by the time of the early sixteenth century between the varying aspects of confession: the penitent's interior, psychological change in confession that brought about a state of contrition; the notion of good works and practice of tariffs of penance and indulgences; and the absolution of the priest.[46] The tensions of this debate were integral to wider questions of priestly abuses of office as well as questions of church and ecclesiastical authority. Where the efficacy of confession was emphasised as lying in the processes of satisfaction and absolution, priestly authority and power was correspondingly increased.

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[45] See Chapter 1, sections 2.9 and 2.11. Also SCER, pp. 22-7.

[46] One of Martin Luther's objections to penitential practice was that absolution was given before penitential acts were completed. Luther observes, 'Absolution ought rather to follow on the completion of satisfaction, as it did in the early church'. 'The Babylonian Captivity of the Church' LW, XXXVI p. 89.

Commutations of penances had always existed as a necessary compromise to accommodate circumstances that were otherwise obstacles to satisfaction and were an established part of the penitential system.[47] However, the original intention seems to have been that these substitutions for penance were available only to those who could not fulfil their proper penance without real danger to their lives because of an exceptional health problem or other circumstances such as destitution. Later, commutations were recommended to avoid engendering despair in the penitent through the assignment of too heavy a burden of penance. However, this possibility led to some serious abuses.[48] That these abuses had long been recognised to include the sin of simony in the priesthood, which Knowlege refers to, and had emerged as a recurrent problem in the medieval period, is attested to by their frequent mention in the literature of the period.[49] In the fourteenth century, John of Salisbury, in a furious letter to the Archdeacon of Chester [?], rigorously denounces the practice of simony, one that was obviously a recurrent problem:

> We remember that we sent our letters [...] to the [...] officials of the church of Coventry, bidding them to uproot the poisonous weed of simony, which, it is said, is once more putting forth fresh shoots in the bishopric of Chester. For to secure admittance to churches vicars are forced to pay twelve pence a head and are compelled to deliver this sum each year to the ministers, not of the Church but of Satan [...]. This we have forbidden under pain of our anathema and have delivered over to Satan, their prince, all those who from henceforth shall practice such iniquity.[50]

In addition, the *Penitential of Ciudad c.* 1410, discusses simony committed by layman and priests:

> This sin is so grave in the Church of God that all [other] sins are counted as nothing in comparison with it, since by simony, cupidity, and avarice, the whole Church of God is confounded, defamed, despoiled, and

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[47] The *Penitential of Archbishop Egbert of York* clearly demonstrates the interchangability of equivalent penances. It states, 'A man may discharge a fast of one day with one penny, or with two hundred psalms. And if the man knows not psalm-song, then let him sing for one day's fast fifty paternosters, and as often prostrate himself on the ground'. Cited in, *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*, ed., T. F. Simmons, (London: EETS, 1929), p. 217.

[48] McNeill and Hamer refer to the connection between commutations and abuses in MHP, p.27

[49] The *OED* lists the first instances of the word 'simony' as occurring in the thirteenth century. After that usage is frequent and regular throughout the next four centuries.

[50] *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, eds. W. J. Millor and H.E. Butler, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955; revs. 1986), I, Letter 107, p. 169.

> committed to the rule of robbers, spoilers, nobodies, ruffians and fornicators.[51]

The discussion continues at length and is evidently the subject of passionate feeling and recurrent anxiety. However, the affirmation of the priesthood made by V.Wyttes would seem to ignore this anxiety. The discussion of the priesthood can otherwise be regarded as, in effect, a dramatic summing up of the dénouement of the play. Euery Man, having realised his sinful state, has been saved from eternal peril to his soul through the dramatic enactment of the sacrament of penance. The power the ministration of this sacrament confers on the priesthood is therefore already obvious and V. Wyttes' statement summarises its significance. As Euery Man goes to seek the further sacraments of the dying off-stage, V. Wyttes expounds on the critical role of priests in the attainment of humankind's salvation, quickly moving from their pastoral duty - 'To vs holy scypture they do teche,/ And conuerteth man fro synne, heuen to reche', (l.733-4) (which was considered an act of mercy in itself) - to the priest's divinely authorised function of ministering the sacraments of the Eucharist and penance. These two sacraments in particular are identified, not just, of course because they are dramatically apt, but because they are significantly reliant upon the function of the priest.[52] V.Wyttes states that it is the priest's ability to consecrate the Eucharist - 'And handleth his Maker bytwene his [handes]' (l.739) - that illustrates the awesome power invested in the clergy. So far, the effect of V.Wyttes speech is to do nothing but uphold authority and respect for the priesthood. However, as V.Wyttes continues to commend the priesthood, successively praising it as possessing increasingly impressive powers, he seems to have gone too far when saying the priesthood 'arte surgyon that cureth synne deedly' (l.744), continuing, 'No remedy we fynde vnder God,/ But [alone on] preesthod' (l.745-6).[53] This excessive admiration, which apparently exalts the priesthood as the sole source of redemption, belies the arguments that considered contrition to be the aspect of penance that attracted God's forgiveness. Penitential literature and some theological writers quite frequently refer to the fact that, should no priest be available, either confession to another Christian, or simply to God, will be as effective as auricular confession to a

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[51] Cited in MHP, p. 361.

[52] These two sacraments, along with that of baptism, were the only ones Martin Luther advocated retaining in a reformed church in his *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520). He later rejected the sacramentality of penance, although he wished to retain its devotional practice.

[53] Square brackets in Cooper and Wortham (1980).

priest, as long as the penitent is genuinely contrite.[54] V.Wyttes's enthusiastic regard of priests might be played for burlesque potential in performance and makes a stark contrast with the far more cynical attitude of Knowlege who comments, 'If preestes be good, it is so, suerly' (l.750). The qualified 'if' and unadorned and therefore dispassionate 'it is so', concluding with the implied doubt of 'suerly', provides a deflating and appropriately knowing contrast to V.Wyttes's praise that effectively undercuts it. When Knowlege points out that there are priests who are unchaste, or guilty of simony, V.Wyttes' reply is dismissive - 'I trust to God no suche may we fynde!'- although, as discussed above, that these priests *did* exist was a well-acknowledged and recurrent problem. Not to be diverted, V. Wyttes quickly returns to his original point:

> Therfore let vs preesthode honour,
> And folowe theyr doctrine for our soules' socoure.
> We be theyr shepe and they shepherdes be,
> By whome we all be kepte in suerte. (l.768-71).

The subtle depreciation of V.Wyttes' whole-hearted endorsement of the priesthood is all the more effectively executed as it is accomplished by the character Knowlege, whose authority and credibility are already well-established as the embodiment of wisdom and understanding which has guided Euery Man so far in the play.

'Proto-Protestantism'

Cooper and Wortham interpret this discussion of the priesthood as indications that originating, as *Elckerlijc* did, in the Low Countries where the *Devotio Moderna,* or Brethren of the Common Life were established, *Everyman* 'asserts a view of man's spiritual needs which is unmistakably related to the reforming movement'.[55] The evidence they cite in support of this assertion derives from the comparison they make between three ideas, or aspects, of *Everyman* and the writings of Desiderius Erasmus, as a Christian humanist who was educated by the Brethren. Firstly, they suggest that *Everyman* displays a simple piety which is in accordance with the movement's wish to purge the church of ritual and rediscover the purity of the early church. Cooper

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[54] For example the *Craft* declares, 'For though any one man or woman had done as many thefts, or manslaughters, or as many other sins as be drops of water in the sea [...] though he had never done penance for them afore, nor never had been shriven of them before [...] yet should he never despair; for in such a case very contrition of heart within, with will to be shriven if time sufficed, is sufficient and accepted by God for to save him everlastingly'. p. 13.

[55] Cooper & Wortham (1980), p. xxiii.

and Wortham state that the lack of appeal in *Everyman* to 'dazzling arguments of medieval scholastic theology' is proof of the 'simple piety' of the play. [56] This, however, might seem to disregard the fact that the form of the play would have great difficulty in presenting detailed arguments dramatically, and that the play might also have to work very hard to attract an audience to such in-depth debate. In addition, they state that there is a telltale 'revulsion against fanatical extremism', evidenced by the moderation averred by Goodes which 'could have worked for Everyman's salvation, "yf thou had loued me moderately"(431)'. Yet, moderation 'in all things' is advocated in many parts of Scripture to the extent that Cooper and Wortham's claim for it, as a specifically Reformist attitude, is unpersuasive. Conversely, Cooper and Wortham cite the discussion of the priesthood considered above and conclude 'the final statement is an unequivocal affirmation of authority'.[57] Yet, as argued above, Knowlege's less enthusiastic, but authoritative, interjections qualify such unequivocality.

Cooper and Wortham further propose that *Everyman* 'moves on the shadowy middle ground between Catholicism and proto-Protestantism', because, as Cawley noted, penance is omitted from the list of sacraments given by V.Wyttes (l.723) in the original *Elckerlijc*. This, they assert, 'may be interpreted as a sign of embarrassment resulting from a conflict between orthodoxy and the reforming movement'.[58] Whilst this omission is notable, it assumes less importance in the light of the fact that the play as a whole is about the means of redemption, that is, in the form of the sacrament of penance, and presents it in great detail.[59] One other piece of evidence that Cooper and Wortham cite in support of seeing *Everyman* as a 'proto-Protestant' play relates to the circumstances of its first printing. They state, 'It is even possible that Pynson's first edition (the C text) was printed for purely polemical reasons since, in his official capacity as King's printer, he issued a number of political and controversial books concerned with the Reformation'. The reference provided is Gordon Duff's *A Century of the English Book Trade*. The sole entry in Duff reads, 'In 1521 Pynson printed the *Assertio septum sacramentorum* and as King's printer continued to issue political and controversial books concerned with the

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[56] ibid, p. xxxiv.
[57] ibid, p. xxiv.
[58] ibid, p. xxv.
[59] Cawley (1961) states, 'It has [...] been conjectured that the translator of *Everyman* noticed the omission of penance from the Dutch text and added it on at the end'. p. 36, n. 723.

Reformation'.[60] However, the *Assertio septum sacramentorum* was, of course, perceived as an anti-Reformist volume and a defence of Catholic sacramental doctrine.[61] Indeed, the book earned Henry VIII the title of Defender of the Faith from a grateful Pope Leo X. Similarly, Cooper and Wortham also rely on the other two early printed editions (A and B), which were printed by John Skot, who was Dutch, as further evidence that *Everyman* originated, as *Elckerlijc*, in the reformed religious context of the Low Countries. Skot's two early editions were probably printed for Wynken de Worde, who often 'sub-contracted' work to Skot.[62] Wynken de Worde, however, cannot as easily be assumed to have shared the same reformatory religious attitudes of the *Devotio Moderna*, as Cooper and Wortham seem to attribute to printers originating from the Low Countries, because de Worde came from Worth in northern Germany.[63]

If *Everyman* might be said to evince early signs of 'proto-Protestantism', their existence is perhaps less explicitly manifest than Cooper and Wortham suggest. Whether there is an 'unmistakable relation' to the Dutch reforming movement, the *Devotio Moderna* is debateable. Rather, a wider consideration of the play would seem to indicate its potential relation to emergent Reformist agendas. A reconsideration of what the morality drama is about in a larger sense will be helpful in establishing this. Robert Potter argues that:

> They [morality plays] are in fact a call to a specific religious act. If we are to understand the plays, we must clearly understand the action which they promulgate and ultimately represent. It is the acknowledgement, confession, and forgiveness of sin, institutionalized in medieval Christianity as the sacrament of penance.[64]

As stated, principal amongst the means of understanding the sacrament of penance in the early sixteenth century were the vast numbers of long-established (and therefore authoritative) penitentials that ensured a shared and detailed knowledge of penitential doctrine and practice. As Potter observes, 'In collections of sermons [...] as well as

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[60] Gordon E. Duff, *A Century of the English Book Trade, 1457-1557* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1905), p. 127.
[61] The *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments* was written by Henry VIII in 1521. For its anti-reformatory stance see the comments in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 4 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), IV, p. 248 and p. 256.
[62] Duff (1905), Preface, p. xiv.
[63] ibid.
[64] Potter (1975), p. 16.

in devotional works intended for a lay audience [...] and throughout early medieval literature, penance is almost constantly the matter at hand'.[65] In this context, it has been possible to identify several aspects of *Everyman* that reflect traditional thinking about penance found in penitential, and other, literature that support Potter's description of morality drama, and *Everyman* in particular, as 'the drama of repentance'. The two sites of contention or disruption in the text, noted in the contrary use of gender terms to refer to Confessyon and the discussion of the priesthood by V. Wyttes and Knowlege, portray an anxiety surrounding the issues of theological doctrine and church authority in ministering the sacrament of penance. Key to understanding this anxiety is the extent to which human agency or divine sanctification is emphasised. That confession became such a contested area of religion by the early sixteenth century is symptomatic of the peculiar way in which confession, rather than any of the other sacraments, had evolved, in some understandings of it, to depend so completely on the assertion of church authority. In one school of thinking, there is an emphasis in the medieval theology of confession, on the sincere contrition of the penitent that is sufficient to attain God's mercy and His forgiveness of sins. Connected to this emphasis on the penitent's state of repentance was a depreciation of penitential satisfaction, the tariffs of penance and the role of the priest. Set against this is the authority of scriptural commission, church authority, and the authority of tradition itself that asserts the primacy of the Church's and priest's power to pronounce absolution. In other words, one tradition emphasises human agency and the internal psychology of the penitent and focuses on contrition, as represented in the writings of Abelard and Peter Lombard; the other tradition emphasises the grace and forgiveness procured through absolution, such as expressed in the writings of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, and which implies a corresponding authority for the ministers of absolution and the traditions of the Church. These two positions are found to coexist frequently in penitential literature, and certainly both traditions continued to promote confession as necessary in the theological writing of the medieval period.[66] For example, commenting on Lombard's *Sentences*, that persist in advocating confession nevertheless, Tentler observes, 'in the midst of the theology of contrition, confession to a priest is upheld,

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[65] ibid, p. 19.
[66] SCFR, p. 105.

if not logically, at least emphatically'.[67] For Duns Scotus the justifying power of penance lies in its sacramentality:

> Penance is the absolution of a penitent man, done by certain words that are pronounced with the proper intention by a priest having jurisdiction, efficaciously signifying by divine institution the absolution of the soul from sin.[68]

The careful references here to the priest's jurisdiction, granted by the pope, and the 'divine institution' that rests on the scriptural authority of Christ's commission to the apostles are allusions to notions that grant supreme authority to priest and Church. The particular reliance in confession on the power of the priest and Church was a prominent aspect of the sacrament by the early sixteenth century, and is one that attracted the censure of Reformists such as Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli and Jean Calvin. Thus confession and penance, and their detailed depiction in *Everyman* as morality drama, are sites imbued with the central issues that came to the fore in the Reformation: that is, issues of church authority, the role of the priesthood and abuses of their role, the efficacy of sacraments and the operations of grace, justification and salvation. In the next chapter another play which remains in some measure within the traditions of the morality genre, even in its innovative form of a history play, will be examined. John Bale's *King Johan* continues the conventional concern of morality drama with the process of repentance, but in this play, unlike *Everyman*, the impact of the Reformation is not difficult to identify.

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[67] SCER, p. 21. Also see pp. 12-27 and 349-66 for a fuller discussion of the tension between contritionist and absolutionist arguments.

[68] Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in quartum librum sentiarum*, dis. 14, q.4, 2, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 18 (Paris, 1894), cited in SCER p. 27.

Chapter 3 - Confessing Vice in John Bale's *King Johan*

'Thou art not skoymose thy fantasy for to tell'

In John Bale's play *King Johan* confession functions only partially according to the conventions of the English morality genre, which in turn is only a partially preserved dramatic structure. Although the play is a history, there is a central Vice figure, Sedicyon, whose iniquity corrupts and brings about the fall of the three 'estates', Nobylyte, Clergye and Cyvyle Order. They are eventually brought to conventional repentance and confession, although Sedicyon himself is hanged. However, confession is utilised in new ways: as an important dramatic strategy of the play, and as the subject matter of what is especially pronounced Reformist polemic, in comparison with *Everyman*. This polemic is directed against the practice rather than doctrine of confession, reflecting the Reformist desire to reject papal dominance and return the Church, as they saw it, to its earlier, pure ways. The play opposes papal and monarchical power and encourages the latter toward a reformed religio-political agenda.

John Bale (1495-1563) wrote twenty-one plays in all, although only five are extant.[1] The date of the first composition of *King Johan* is difficult to determine exactly. From various allusions in the text, it was probably first composed *circa* 1531-1534.[2] Textual allusions also reveal many revisions were made to the play, probably in response to changes of monarch and religious policy, during Bale's lifetime and were

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[1] These are listed with *incipits* in Bale's own catalogue of writers, *Illustrium Maioris Britanniae Scriptorum Summarium*, (1548) and, slightly altered, in Bale's *Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytanniae Catalogus*, (1557). The five surviving plays are: *God's Promises, John the Baptist, The Temptation, The Three Laws, King Johan.*

[2] The only known manuscript of the play is mainly written in two hands (although there is evidence of another hand in which small corrections and additions appear). 'Hand A', which John Pafford states is not Bale's, primarily wrote what now appears as the first act. Bale revised Hand A's portion and added substantially to it. However it is not known whether what now appears as the 'original' Hand A section was, in fact, itself a revision of an earlier version. However, what is certain is that the play was listed in Bale's *Anglorum Heliades* composed in 1536. For a fuller discussion see *King Johan by John Bale*, eds, W.W. Greg and John H.P. Pafford, Malone Society Reprints, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. xiii. Jesse W. Harris, *John Bale: A Study in the Minor Literature of the Reformation* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1940), also discusses in detail various other evidence for dating the play and concludes its most likely date of original composition to be somewhere between 1531-1534, pp. 67-74. See also Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 175-7.

not completed until 1561.[3] *King Johan* therefore, like Bale himself, has a complicated and protracted relation with the sovereign and official state religion.[4] Bale's life spans the reigns of all five Tudor sovereigns, from the last seven years of Henry VII's reign, the complete reign of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and the first four years of Elizabeth I. Likewise, *King Johan* was written perhaps as early as 1531, revised and expanded during Henry VIII's reign; almost certainly revised again early in Edward VI's reign and probably performed as part of the coronation celebrations; hastily forgotten during Mary's reign and revised once more for performance before Elizabeth I in 1561. The play's composition and performance history are, then, intricately bound to the history of the period. Thus, it is no surprise to find that the themes of *King Johan* are also those that preoccupied the court during the early English Reformation.[5] Although Henry VIII was interested in new learning (that is a mixture of humanist and Reformist precepts that eventually became identified with the Protestant cause) he maintained a religious conservatism and only utilised reformers' arguments to the extent that they supported his personal and political objectives.[6] However, Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's chief minister and Bale's patron, had a truly evangelical agenda.[7] Cromwell, like Bale, had attended Cambridge University, which during the 1520s became a centre of Reformist

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[3] Walker (1991) discusses the process of manuscript revisions of *King Johan* at length in relation to the wider events of the Reformation, pp. 169-87. The final addition: 'Englande hath a quene' (l.2625-6) was written in the hand of the revisionist and appears in the additional folios that contain the second act. See Greg and Pafford (1931), p.xiv. The complex history of the manuscript's composition extends to its modern publication as the manuscript was not found until 1837, and was published the following year by the Camden Society as: *King Johan*, ed., J. P. Collier, (London: Camden Society, 1838).

[4] The details of John Bale's life are fairly well-recorded in the three accounts he wrote himself and are recounted in detail elsewhere. For a detailed biography see Harris (1940) pp. 14-59. Also *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, ed., Peter Happé, 2 vols (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), I, pp. 2-8 and Walker (1991), pp. 169-70.

[5] Although the writings of Martin Luther became significant in disseminating Reformation thinking in England, the terms Lutheran, or Protestant cannot accurately be used of this era since a variety of writings and people, native and European, argued for change in the Church. Peter Marshall discusses the problem of terms in his *Reformation England 1480-1642* (London: Arnold, 2003), p. 27. The term 'Reformist' is used in this thesis, as discussed in my Introduction.

[6] New learning is defined as, 'a term at that time appropriated to the advocates of Protestantism at large.' A. D. Innes, *England Under The Tudors* (London: Methuen, 1911), p. 194. Marshall explains, 'Opponents referred to them disparagingly as proponents of 'new learning', though some of their ideas had long been aired in Lollard circles. What was new was the conviction that [...] 'Justification' in the eyes of God came through faith alone, formed by reading and hearing the scriptures.' Marshall (2003), pp. 27-8.

[7] It might be that Bale's playing troupe also had the patronage of Cromwell and was at court, see Walker (1991), pp. 172-3.

thinking influenced by Desiderius Erasmus (1466/9-1536) who lectured there.[8] Bale's plays steer a careful course between attempting to promote the Reformist point of view that he shared with his patron, whilst simultaneously avoiding the 'dangerous waters' of doctrine concerning such sensitive subjects as the sacraments and transubstantiation, about which Henry preserved an orthodox position. Thus, *King Johan* evinces a political rather than doctrinal engagement in religious debate and, with particular regard to confession, directs polemical attacks against the practice rather than the doctrine of the sacrament.[9]

Bale's careful positioning in relation to confession is discernible in his written response to accusations made against him and his subsequent imprisonment in 1536. After Anne Boleyn's execution the religious thinking of the Court had returned to a more conservative emphasis and anti-Reformists were thus encouraged. Bishop Stokesley, Bishop of London, seized Bale as a heretic and imprisoned him in Greenwich, but, through the intercession of Thomas Cromwell, he was released. Bale became one of several writers recruited to the evangelical cause by Cromwell, who apparently considered Bale's dramatic works as useful propaganda and valued his life for that reason.[10] Before his release, Bale had written an 'Answer' in his defence.[11] Bale's 'Answer' reveals its Reformist tendencies on several counts: its assurance of observing Henry VIII's injunctions; its recommendation to preach solely according to the gospel and only what is 'plainly expressed in Scripture'; its references to the faithful as 'saints'; and the existence of God 'in every faithful person' as well as in heaven (presumably a glance at the sensitive issue of transubstantiation in its noticeable omission of reference to the Eucharist). The 'Answer' also records the following comments about auricular confession. Bale states that he

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[8] Desiderus Erasmus taught Greek at Cambridge University from 1511 and influenced many of Bale's contemporaries, such as Thomas Cromwell, Thomas Cranmer, Geoffrey Downes, Thomas Goodrich, Thomas Bilney, Robert Barnes et al. Harris (1940), pp. 15-19. Peter Happé comments, 'Erasmus is a key figure [...] His own theological and biblical scholarship led him to be critical of many aspects of the Roman Catholic Church. Even though he never left it, he gained much respect from reformers like Martin Luther and John Bale who followed some of his teaching, especially about the Bible, and accepted many of his criticisms of Church practices, such as pilgrimages and the worshipping of images [...].' Peter Happé, *English Drama Before Shakespeare* (Harlow: Longman, 1999), p.94.

[9] For a more detailed discussion of Henry VIII's apparent attitude toward confession in particular see Walker (1991), pp. 210-21.

[10] Harris (1940) lists other Reformist writers recruited by Cromwell, p. 27.

[11] 'The answer of John Bale pryst unto serten articles unjustlye gadred upon hys preching', Public Record Office, Sp 1/111, fols 1 83-7. (*Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed., John S. Brewer, (London: HMSO, 1888) XI, 1536, pp. 446-7.

> Never denied auricular confession to be necessary, but said that no priest could assoil those men who would not reconcile themselves to those whom they had offended. Advised the people in cases of conscience not to resort to unlearned or vicious priests, but to the learned and well disposed.[12]

Negotiating between stating as orthodox a position as possible whilst not betraying his commitment to reform, Bale's apparently innocuous comments here only tenuously imply the common concerns of Reformists about confession – that it should be reinstated in its earlier, purest form, emphasising its 'true' meaning as a mechanism of reconciliation in the Christian community and that it should be ministered without any abuses, spiritual or fiscal. William Tyndale was more outspoken in his criticisms of the Catholic practice of auricular confession:

> Shrift in the ear is verily a work of Satan; and that the falsest that ever was wrought, and the most hath devoured the faith. It began among the Greeks, and was not as it is now, to reckon all a man's sins in the priest's ear; but to ask counsel of such doubts as men had [...]. Neither went they to priests only [...] but went indifferently, where they saw a good and a learned man. And for because of a little knavery, which a deacon at Constantinople played through confession with one of the chief wives of the city, it was laid down again. But we, antichrist's possession, the more knavery we see grow thereby daily, the more we stablish it.[13]

At this time in the early Reformation the doctrine of sacramental confession had rarely been questioned in theological terms (some evangelicals did not do so at all), rather, as was the case with many other religious practices, it was the superstition, ritualization and corruption that had grown up around it that were challenged.[14] Accordingly, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* records a generalised statement about corruption in the Roman Catholic Church, but summarises the typical Reformist view specifically of traditional confessional practice thus:

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[12] ibid.

[13] S. L. Greenslade, *The Work of William Tindale* (London: Blackie, 1938), p. 146. The 'knavery' at Constantinople refers to a Penitentiary Order of Priests established there to hear private confessions. It was abolished by Nectarius *c.* 391 after a scandal involving a priest. See Chapter 1, section 2.1.

[14] Many Reformists were persuaded of the pastoral efficacy of confession, although concepts of purgatory, indulgences and certain penances were rejected. Indeed Henry VIII's Ten Articles (1536) affirm the 'official' preservation of the sacrament, along with baptism and the Eucharist at this early stage, although they also accept the Lutheran concept of justification. Henry instructed bishops and priests to teach, 'That in no wise they do contemn this auricular confession which is made unto the ministers of the Church [...] whereby they may require and ask this absolution at the priest's hands' (03.07, pp. 167-8). He also instructed, 'that although Christ and his death be sufficient oblation [...] yet all men truly penitent, contrite and confessed, must needs also bring forth the fruits of penance [...] and also must do all other good works of mercy and charity (03.08, p. 168). The later Henrican Six Articles (1539) reaffirm, 'that auricular confession is expedient and necessary to be retained and continued', DER, 01., p. 224).

> But as there is nothing in the church so good and so ghostly, which, through peevish superstition either hath not, or may not be perverted, so this confession, also, hath not lacked its abuses.[15]

The usual stance of the Reformists was to argue that the changes they advocated were merely a return to the original, 'pure' and uncorrupted ways of the ancient Church. *King Johan* evinces a similar position, one that is outspoken in its scorn and mockery of Catholic superstition and corruption, but is nonetheless circumspect about the reform of actual doctrine such as transubstantiation. It is significant in this context that Bale devised the, then innovatory, form of a 'history' play, one that rewrites the events as recounted in *The Brut* of the reign of King John.[16] In this way Bale re-appropriates the past for the Reformist cause, yet simultaneously brings to *King Johan* the traditional characters and conventions of the morality drama. Thus, the play demonstrates the same careful positioning between radical innovation and the conventions of tradition in theatrical terms, as it does in political ones. Sedicyon, for example, makes use of wordplay, asides to the audience, crude japery and burlesque humour in the tradition of the Vice. Sedicyon, however, also uses the very means of restitution and repentance of sin found in confession as a way to both effect and communicate his iniquity, a subject returned to below. The burlesque of Sedicyon locates the challenges to Catholic clergy, liturgy and practices in the tradition established in the *Festum Asinorum* [Festival of Fools] and the *Festum Archiepiscopum Puerorum* [Feast of the Boy Bishops]. It is particularly in connection with the performance of, and remarks about, confession that the humour of the play resides, using the language of crude farce and parody. Sedicyon tells King Johan that it was a pity the king was not a confessor,

> Becawse that ye are a man so full of mercye,
> Namely to women that wepe with a hevy harte
> Whan they in the churche hath lett but a lytell farte. (l.164-6)[17]

The church clergy and Orders are often referred to as 'swine', 'pyggyes', 'wyld bore' and the church itself as

> [...] the grownd and mother of whordom-

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[15] George Townsend, *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe: With a Life of the Martyrologist, and Vindication of the Work*, 8 vols (London: Seeley, Burnside and Seeley, 1843-1849), V, p. 348.
[16] King John reigned 6th April, 1199 - 19th October, 1216. Bale's chief source was *The Brut, or The Chronicle of England*, ed., F. Brie, 2 vols (Oxford: EETS, 1906).
[17] This and all other quotations of *King Johan* from *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, ed., Peter Happé, 2 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985), I.

The Romych Churche I meane, more vyle than ever was Sodom,
And to say the trewth a mete spowse for the fynd. (l.368-71)

Such robust attacks no doubt contributed to Bale's sobriquet as 'Bilious Bale'.[18] More seriously, later in their debate Sedicyon alleges that confession is his last refuge, even if the King manages to suppress his existence everywhere else. This was an embarrassingly astute allegation. For example, Sir George Throckmorton was threatened with damnation during confession if he did not continue to resist the passage of antipapal legislation through Parliament.[19] The potential for privacy and the sacrosanct seal of confession meant that the Church was open to the charge of providing occasions for intrigue; indeed Sedicyon claims a calculated, European-wide, conspiracy:

Sedicyon I saye I can dwell whan all other placys fayle me
In ere confessyon undernethe *benedicte*
And whan I am ther the pryst may not bewray me.

K.Johan Why, wyll ere confesshon soch a secret traytor be?

Sedicyon Whan all other fayle he is so swre as stele.
Offend Holy Churche and I warant ye shall yt fele;
For by confessyon the Holy Father knoweth
Throw owt all Christendom what to his holynes growth. (l.266-273)

The perception of Catholic confession as cover for a Continental-wide intelligence system and conspiracy presages the opposing association of Protestantism with English nationalism later in the century. As Dissymulacyon describes the consequences of King Johan's interdiction and his subsequent abdication of the throne, it is further implied that the mandatory confession instigated at the Lateran Council in 1215 was initiated for the purpose of supporting the assertion of papal power over that of European monarchs,[20]

Dissymulacyon The Popys power shall be abowe the powrs all,
And eare confessyon a matere nessessary....
Be this provyssyon, and be soch other kyndes

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[18] 'Bilious Bale', was first used in Thomas Fuller's, *The History of the Worthies of England* (London: n. pub., [J.G.W.L. & W.G.] 1662:) 4pts, iii, p. 61.

[19] The Appeals and Supremacy Acts were resisted by Sir George Throckmorton. Sir Thomas More apparently exercised influence through the Bridgettine monk Richard Reynolds who was Throckmorton's confessor. John Guy, *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More* (London: Harvester, 1980), pp. 207-12.

[20] The Lateran Council took place under the authority of Pope Innocent III's pontificate (8 January 1198-16 July 1216), that is, the pope that Usurpid Powre represents in the play.

We shall be full suere all waye to have owre myndes.
(l.1019-1025)

The opposition between papal and state monarchical power is represented as being centrally located in the sacrament of penance, with the former rule being unfairly empowered and sustained through confession's mandatory and ubiquitous practice. Thus when King Johan has Treason brought before him by Englande, Bale rewrites *The Brut*'s historical account of the 'clerc that hade falsede the Kynges monye'[21] to 'a Clarke which is condemned for treason' (l.1807). Much to his dismay, King Johan finds that Treason (in the guise of a clerk) is in fact a priest. Bewildered, King Johan asks, 'A pryste and a traytour? How maye that wele agree?' (l.1811). Treason freely explains that the 'craftye cloyners' have been well served in carrying out treasonous activities 'underneath *Benedicte*' and confidently states, 'I have holy orders. By the messes, I defye your wurst!/ Ye can not towche me but ye must be accurst' (l.1863). Thus, at this stage, the debate surrounding confession was evidently confined to the political potential or actual consequences of its practice, rather than its existence as a sacrament, with which later Protestant reformers were sometimes concerned.

Perhaps the most shocking of indictments for a contemporary audience is the performance of a confession and the granting of an absolution to Sedicyon as a murderer, *prior* to his stated intention of committing the murder. This dramatic culmination of the many and various facets of Catholic religious practice criticised in the play is both theatrically and didactically successful. Sedicyon does not intend just murder, but regicide, the most heinous type of homicide, in its disregard of the divine appointment that many in the sixteenth century believed underpinned the monarchy. Dissymulacyon's 'confession' mocks every aspect of the sacrament. His motivation for the confession arises not out of a sincere sense of contrition but 'in case thu wylte assoyle me' (l.2014) - Dissymulacyon evidently has nothing to lose by trying out the 'priest'. His plans are assured of confidentiality, once again 'undreneth *Benedicte*' (l.2013), and Sedicyon, as the confessor, reassures Dissymulacyon that he 'shalt be assoyled' in advance of the actual confession. Dissymulacyon adopts the classic pose of the penitent by kneeling and signals its formal commencement by saying '*Benedicte*' to which Sedicyon replies '*In nomine Papae, Amen*' (l.2019) in parody of the correct '*In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*', signalling the usurpation

[21] *The Brut*, p. 16.

of divine authority by that of the pope.[22] The 'confession' proceeds to plot a feasible motive for the murder, that 'a penye lofe he [King Johan] would have brought to a shyllynge' (l.2023) and to discuss exactly how the murder will be accomplished with poison. Dissymulacyon's stratagem extends to a consideration of how, even confessed and absolved, as a murderer he may spend a protracted length of time in purgatory. Sedicyon assures Dissymulacyon that he will arrange for five monks to pray for him to ensure Dissymulacyon's rapid ascent to heaven in spite of the murder he has committed, implicitly suggesting a further criticism of the doctrine of purgatory and associated chancery rites. The discussion ends with another Reformist argument implied, when Dissymulacyon asks, 'Whan the worlde is done what helpe shall I have than?' (l.2046). Rather pointedly Sedicyon's reply is bluntly straightforward, in noticeable contrast to the convoluted intrigue of the rest of the 'confession'. He responds, 'Than shyft for thy self so wele as ever thu can' (l.2047). The doctrine of the second coming and the fact that the second judgement is above the 'earthly' absolution of priests is one that Reformists often chose to emphasise in an effort to undermine the authority of the Church to 'bind and loose'. Sedicyon's choice of the word 'shyft' is perhaps a pun on 'shryft' here. Conversely it is the prospect of the second judgement that is proffered as a source of comfort and justice for the king later in the play,

K. Johan Of priestes and monkes I am counted a wicked man
For that I never buylte churche nor monasterye,.
But my pleasure was to helpe suche as were nedye.
Englande The more grace was yours for at the daye of judgement
Christ will rewarde them which hath done hys commaundement.
There is no promise for voluntarye wurkes
Nomore than there is for sacrifice of the Turkes (l.2149-55)

As noted above, the pope's name is often substituted for that of God's, indicating the substitution of papal for divine authority that the play implies is consistent with much church practice. Indeed absolution is repeatedly granted in the name of the pope rather than God and the absolution Stevyn Langton grants King Johan at l.1789-1800 substitutes the Pope, Cardinals and Langton for God, the Saints and the Virgin.[23] The

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[22] Miller presents confessional forms and explores in detail how they are parodied in *King Johan*, E. S. Miller, 'The Roman Rite in Bale's "King Johan"', *PMLA*, 54 (1949), 802-22.

[23] *King Johan* refers to Cardinal Pandulphus. Historically, there was a Pandulf, bishop of Norwich and papal legate, who came to England in July, 1211. However he was not actually a cardinal. It may be that he is confused with Pandulf Masca who was a cardinal (1192). Steven Langton, *was* a cardinal, and was elected Archbishop of Canterbury in 1206. See Greg and Pafford (1931), Introduction.

heretical nature of such a substitution was taken very seriously by evangelicals, opposing as it does the first and second commandments. Indeed many Reformists, including both Calvin and Luther, identified the 'office' of the pope as that of the Antichrist, asserting that the Reformation had been prophesised in the Book of Revelations.[24] Bale shared the apparent Reformation fascination with this idea, cataloguing as many authors of the subject as he could find and writing his own detailed commentary on the Apocalypse, *The Image of Bothe Churches* [...] *c.*1541-1547.[25] Furthermore, granting absolution by authority of the pope not only ridicules papal and church authority, but carries with it an implicit challenge to the concept of the sacrament of auricular confession itself. The justification for confession and particularly the pronouncement of absolution had traditionally rested on the scriptural account of Jesus vesting authority in the apostle Peter, (Matt. 16:19) to which line of apostolic descent popes laid claim. Deprecating the pope (and thereby those practices justified by his authority) is perhaps the nearest the play comes to challenging underlying doctrine.

Similarly, in *King Johan* the remission of sin is depicted as a powerful weapon in the church's arsenal for achieving control. 'Clene remyssyon' is repeatedly used as a threat or bribe. Sedicyon declares a 'Jubyle' to all that will fight against the king (l. 1645), proffering remission of sin and penances – a stratagem not without historical precedence, as Happé notes.[26] If confession provided the means of plotting treachery, this further aspect of the abuse of the sacrament is depicted in the play as one of sufficient potency to motivate a desire to execute not only treason, but even more 'unnatural' crimes, 'For clene remyssyon one king wyll subdew another. /Yea, the child sumtyme wyll sle both father and mother.' (l.980-1). The manipulation of the church faithful by such means is portrayed as conscious and deliberate and is gleefully celebrated by Usurpid Powre (in the guise of the Pope), Privat Welth and Sedicyon as they agree that the 'clene remyssyon', indulgences and pardons (l.967-70) granted to Irish mercenary insurgents is a worthless but effective strategy for achieving the Church's ends:

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[24] Katharine Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain: 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 32-41, p. 61, pp. 67-8. The identification of the Antichrist with the pope was one first made in the twelfth century by Joachim de Fore.
[25] See Harris (1940), p. 139.
[26] Happé (1985), n. K1644, p. 129.

Privat Welth	And all that they do	ys for indulgence and pardon.	
Sedicyon	By the messe, and that	is not worth a rottyn wardon. [rotten pear]	
Usurpid Powre	What care we for that?	To them yt is venison.	
Privat Welth	Than lett them have yt,	a Godes dere benyson!	(l.970-3)

The food metaphors emphasise the polemical point that the church's apparent concern with spiritual 'daily bread' is at the mercenary cost of temporal bread for its members. The mercenary abuses of the Church form a central part of Treason's 'confession' to King Johan. He tells of the sale of waxen images of the saints as tokens to ward off tooth ache, pestilence and pox (l.1838) and states how the whole church community are dependent on the 'living' made through such superstitiously inspired sales (l.1844-8). This concern with mercenary matters is depicted at the highest levels of the Church hierarchy. The Cardynall and Sedicyon (in the guise of Archbishop of Canterbury, Stevyn Langton) are anxious to exploit the opportunity to impose further conditions on the removal of the interdiction of England. They tell King Johan that they want him to grant a third of England to his sister-in-law as a dowry, confident of the fact that she will bequeath it to the Church on her death. Sedicyon cautions the Cardynall not to raise objections and displays the same reckless, opportunistic attitude (commensurate with the Vice role) that is apparent in Dissymulacyon's later, expedient confession 'in case' he may be absolved ,

> Tush, we must have all, manne that she shall leave behynde.
> As the saynge is he fyndeth that surely bynde.
> It were but folye suche louce endes for to lose. (l.1930-2)

Dissymulacyon's 'saynge' here is a notable pun on that more familiar biblical use of 'binding and loosing' to describe the sacrament of confession. The proverb might suggest that it is 'but folly' to loose sin, rather, 'binding' sins is much more profitable and 'finds' a fiscal reward. Mercenary ends are clearly stated as the goal of the Church in Dissymulacyon's lengthy explanation to Sedicyon of how he has 'infiltrated' every level of church activity. According to Dissymulcyon an important aspect of sustaining Catholic duplicity is the fact that the Church conducts its business in Latin. He says,

> I can make Latten to bryng this gere to the boxe.
> Tushe Latten ys alone to bryng soche mater to passe;
> Ther ys no Englyche that can soche profyghtes compasse.
> And therfor we wyll no service to be songe,
> Gospell nor pystell, but all in Latten tonge (l.715-719)

The deliberate mystification of church practices as a means of maintaining power over the uneducated and preventing any challenge to their claimed unique role as the mediators of Scripture and therefore 'Truth' and God is even more clearly admitted later in the play:

Englande What have they of Christe in the Churche? I pray the tell.
Treason Marry nothynge at all but the Epystle and the Gospell,
And that is in Latyne that no man shoulde it knowe. (l.1839-41)

The abuse of papal power in the play is not only opposed to divine and monarchical authority, but also papal and church authority are set against the autonomy and potency of the individual believer. Evangelicals emphasised the individual's concern with their own state of grace and their attainment of salvation and to this extent focused on the individual's duty and right to assess their own state of sin without the aid of a priest, but with reference to Scripture. Indeed the grounds of argument to secure Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon had established the supremacy of scriptural authority over that of the pope's.[27] In *King Johan* it is primarily the figure of Johan who explores the individual's right to formulate their own scriptural interpretations and live according to their own precepts. Early in the play, King Johan's objections to Sedicyon's explanations of his duplicity expose his Reformist attitude in a number of respects. His appeal to 'the helpe of God' (l.243) is in noticeable contrast to the Vice characters' political reliance on the Catholic church, as is King Johan's subsequent objection to Sedicyon's assertion of Nobylyte's falseness. His typically Reformist confidence in the power of the gospels is revealed when he asks 'Why, geveth he no credence to Cristes holy gospel?' (l.279) and his citations of biblical precedence to support the case for princely authority (l.1410-1539). More significant, however, is the dialogue King Johan enters into with Cyvyle Order, Clergye and Nobylyte that implies an individual responsibility for working out moral precepts for oneself. The subsequent series of 'attacks' on the king and Englande act to position King Johan as an eloquent Reformist casuist, as Nobylyte somewhat mockingly observes:

Nobylyte Good Lord, what a craft have yow thes thynges to convaye!
K. Johan Now, alas, that the false pretence of superstycyon

[27] Henry VIII and his theological advisors steadfastly argued that two passages in Leviticus meant that Henry's marriage to his deceased brother's wife should be judged null.

Shuld cawse yow to be a mayntener of sedycyon!
Sum thynketh nobelyte in nature to consist,
Or in parentage; ther thowght is but a myst.
Wher habundance is of vertu, faith and grace,
With knowlage of the Lord nobelyte is ther in place,
And not wher as is he wylfull contempte of thynges
Pertayning to God in the obedyence of kynges
Beware ye synke not with Dathan and Abrion
For disobeying the power and domynyon. (l.1519-1529)

The assumption here of the necessity of winning the individual's genuine commitment; the egalitarian implications of locating 'true' nobility in the merits of 'vertu, faith and grace'; the reliance on personal 'knowlage of the Lord' and citing the biblical precedent of Dathan and 'Abrion' [Abiram] as an authority, reveal radical challenges to traditional authorities.[28] Even the implicit conflict between 'obedyence of [to] Kynges' and following individual conscience, or the 'wylfull contempte of thynges' identifies a revolutionary tension that was to escalate throughout the rest of the century, exercising such writers as Archbishop Whitgift and Richard Hooker.[29]

Dramatic Tension

A further tension in the text can be found in the particular dramatic technique by which polemical challenges to Catholicism are communicated. Allegations of abuse in Catholic practice are disclosed through the mouthpieces of the Vice characters. Principally Sedicyon, but also Dissymulacyon, Treason and their 'alter egos', Usurpid Powre, Cyvyle Ordre, Clergye, Nobyltye and Privat Welth participate in an extended, detailed and self-condemnatory confession of their abuses of Catholic doctrine and practice. The theatrical incongruity generated by their various 'confessions' - the paradoxical spectacle of a Vice character freely confessing all his 'sins' - is evident repeatedly in the play. When King Johan first meets Sedicyon he observes, 'Thou art not skoymose [reluctant] thy fantasy for to tell' (l.261) in an apparent attempt to gloss over this blatant vehicle for polemical attacks. When Sedicyon and Dissymulacyon gleefully exchange 'vice successes', Sedicyon's question, 'But by what meane? Tell me, I hartely pray the' (l.697), is, again, a transparent dramatic device for more polemic. Similarly self-conscious interrogatory

[28] Dathan and his brother Abiram, sons of Eliab, were Reubenites. They joined the conspiracy of Korah the Levite against Moses' leadership (Numbers 16:25).
[29] Norman Jones traces the genealogy of this tension in *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell 2002), esp. pp. 186-95.

statements are repeated throughout the play: 'Marke well his saynges' (l.836), 'What meanyth this mater?' (l.839), 'But tell me one thynng' (l.855), 'Why so [...] What ys the mater? Tell me.' (l.877). Such is the dramatically maladroit nature of the Vice unreservedly confessing wrongdoings that apparent attempts are made to appropriate and present these confessions as integral to their 'vice-like' character. After Dissymulacyon's lengthy enumeration of papal sin made direct to the audience, Usurpid Powre complains,

> Ah, ye are a blabbe! I perseyve ye wyll tell all.
> I lefte ye not here to be so lyberall. (l.1026-7)

This observation is an ambiguous attempt to hint that Dissymulacyon's disclosures are mischievously motivated 'leaks' which seems to lack credibility in the absence of motive or consequence. However the awkwardness of this moment is quickly glossed over by the humour of Dissymulacyon's response, '*Mea culpa, mea culpa, gravissima mea culpa*! (l.1028). This absurd application of the *confiteor* utilises the typical humanist strategy of parodying and satirizing the rhetoric of one's opponents - a strategy which also can be observed in Bale's non-dramatic work.[30]

It may seem curious that it is confessionary modes of speech that are chosen as a vehicle to convey the polemical points made in the play when they create difficulties of characterisation and dramatic integrity. However, the fact that these speeches are 'confessions' immediately positions their subject matter as sinful and because it is consistent with the matter of religious confession, being self-incriminatory and aberrant, the implication is that whatever is being confessed is truthful, sincere and credible. Therefore, on the one hand the subject matter challenges the practice of confession, whilst on the other it is articulated in a confessional mode of discourse that undermines the credibility, both rhetorically and theatrically, of the characters even as they express those challenges. Rainer Pineas notes a similar technique being utilised in Bale's non-dramatic works.[31] He notes how Bale,

> in recording the evil lives of the clergy [...] is careful to take his materials from Catholic authorities and, thus, in a technique of self-

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[30] For instances of *forma confitendi* see *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole an English Father of the Church and His Followers*, ed., Carl Horstmann, Library of Early English Writers Series, 2 vols (London: Sonnenschein, 1895-1896), I, pp. 340-3

[31] Rainer Pineas, 'John Bale's Nondramatic Works of Religious Controversy', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 9 (1962), 218-33 esp. pp. 223-6.

> condemnation he may have adapted from his own morality plays, have the clergy condemned by their own chroniclers'.[32]

Pineas suggests further implications of this 'economy of technique'.[33] By presenting accusations as confessions they are immediately assumed to be sins. In the penitential system out of which confession arises, these sins should be formally confessed. The system is confirmed as worthless because these sins are not repented, formally confessed nor made restitution for. Thus the 'confessions' both overtly demonstrate and adroitly imply many of the English Reformists' concerns about the practice through a neatly constructed and (at least partially) self-effacing device.

Confession, then, occupies a complex position in *King Johan*. The morality structure delineates moral decline through the confessed sins of the Vice characters who are both instruments of papal authority yet, arraigned through those confessions, tools of polemic for the Reformist cause. The downfall of the King is orchestrated by the clerical figures and through 'ear confession' yet it is the three estate figures, Clergye, Nobylyte and Cyvyle Order, who are brought to confession and repentance at the end of the play. They are restored, not quite through the traditional means of contrition, confession and satisfaction, but through an (albeit 'forced') confession to the figure of Imperyall Majestye, perhaps in his capacity as head of the Church. Thus the substitution of papal and church authority is effectively demonstrated in favour of state and monarchical power. Instead of the disciplinary power of the penitential system to impose proper behaviour, the play suggests, it will be the power of the divine status of kingship and appeals to nationalism that henceforth will enforce moral standards. Yet even as this suggestion is made, it is, like the 'confessions' of the Vice, to a certain extent undone. Critics have found the repentance of the three estates is unconvincingly rapid and relatively vapid, brought about, as it is, by Veritas' critical report of their activities.[34] However, this is perhaps where Bale capitalises most effectively on the traditional morality form. Morality conventions dictate a firm expectation that following temptation and fall, redemption will indeed be brought about. Traditionally, and centrally, this would be achieved by confession. The fact that confession is now condemned is smoothly disregarded in the face of this established convention. Indeed, the language used in the final events of *King*

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[32] ibid, p. 224.
[33] ibid, p. 232.
[34] Potter (1975) notes the rapidity of the scene p. 102 and Walker (1991) says Sedicyon was 'lure[d]' into making a confession, p. 180.

Johan aids this sense of elision. Veritas reports to Imperyall Majestye that the three estates 'repent' (l.2324), begs him to 'remytt' (l.2343) their sin and pronounces 'absolution' in the form of forgiveness and a pardon (l.2344). Yet, the play seems to suggest finally, the replacement of auricular confession and priestly absolution with secular confession and the monarchical promise of pardon may be one with far less comforting outcomes. In spite of Imperyall Majestye's rescinded threat of torture and the rack, (l.2478) and his promise that, 'I perdon the [from those threats] so that thu tell the trewthe' (l.2497), Sedicyon, having admitted the truth, is, in fact, sentenced to a traitor's death by hanging after which his head is to be displayed on London Bridge. Thus, the substitution of contrition, sacramental confession, penitence and redemption, for torture, juridical confession, death and desecration, is realized.

Chapter 4 - Form, Faith and Fall in Christopher Marlowe's *Tragicall Historie of Doctor Faustus*

'I see an Angell houers ore thy head,
[...] with a viol full of precious grace'

The traditional morality form of Christopher Marlowe's *Tragicall Historie of Doctor Faustus* (*c.*1588) is one much debated and explored by critics.[1] The extent to which the morality form represents an implicit judgement of Faustus' 'overweaning' ambition and 'self conceit', that is the mortal sin of pride, as damnably trangressive has also been debated.[2] Conversely, the question of whether the morality form acts as a conventional and religiously orthodox framework within which innovative, humanist knowledge and blasphemously taboo questions can be safely raised has also been argued.[3] In this reading Faustus emerges as a tragic subject – an inevitably doomed hero subjugated to a God jealous of an authority and knowledge reserved for the divine. The former position is somewhat complicated by the fact that the conventions of the morality form are often inverted in the play: Faustus is 'tempted' to repentance, Mephostophilis attempts to warn of the dangers of Faustus' actions and above all Faustus does not repent. The latter position is compounded by the uncertain value and extent of the knowledge Faustus attains and the iconoclastic questions coming from the mouths of either the 'Evil Angel' or from Faustus himself, as one already damned by his own free will.[4] Other criticism moved away from the dichotomy of the morality versus tragedy, the orthodox religion versus

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[1] For comprehensive summaries of various critical positions in relation to *Doctor Faustus* see Max Bluestone, 'Libido Speculandi', in *Reinterpretations of Elizabethan Drama*, ed., Norman Rabkin, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) and the Introduction to *'Doctor Faustus' A-and B-texts (1604,1616) by Christopher Marlowe*, eds, David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). David Bevington comments on the morality form of the play in *From 'Mankind' to Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1962). Douglas Cole includes a chapter on the conventions and ironical subversions of the form in *Doctor Faustus* in *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962). Leo Kirschbaum, 'Religious Values in Doctor Faustus', in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'Doctor Faustus'*, ed., Willard Farnham (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969) and Phoebe S. Spinrad, *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987) both discuss the relation of the play to doctrine and religion. Douglas W. Hayes explores the character of Mephostophilis as a variant of the traditional Vice in *Rhetorical Subversion in Early English Drama* (New York: Lang, 2004).

[2] For example Judith Weil refers to Faustus as a 'foolish wit' in *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[3] See Wilbur Sanders' Chapter on *Doctor Faustus*, 'New Wine in Old Bottles', in *The Dramatist and the Received Idea*, ed., Wilbur Sanders, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

[4] Questions such as the efficacy of prayer, the justice of obedience or damnation. See Robert Heilman, 'The Tragedy of Knowledge: Marlowe's Treatment of Faustus', *Quarterly Review of Literature*, 2 (1946), 316-332.

humanist knowledge debate to a position where the recognition of the contradictions and ambiguities of the play is central to its reading.[5] Of course, ambivalence and instability are inherent characteristics of Renaissance drama, but in this critical view the contradictions and uncertainties of *Doctor Faustus* are the locations of the play's significance as a commentary on conflicting early modern discourses. It is a short step to recognising that the play might operate as a locus of the radical religious disputes of the period, presenting the discourses of the traditional, Reformist and humanistic enquiry as vying for creativity, authority and control of the subject. As Huston Diehl puts it 'is surely in the religious controversies of the 1580s that we should locate *Doctor Faustus*'. [6] Yet, in its fundamental relation to the Catholic system, the morality form once again becomes critically important. The play primarily puts at issue the traditional discourse of the old order of orthodox Catholicism and sets it against the emergent discourses of new 'knowledges', with the conflicting values that each profess jostling to make sense of human experience.

That the form of *Doctor Faustus* is derived from the morality drama is indubitable. The theological framework, the theme of despair, sin in the form of pride, eschatology and the emphasis on the inevitability of death is entirely consistent with it. The appearance of the good and evil angels, the repeated calls to repentance, including those from the 'priestly' figure of the old man, and the dramatic tension created by the moment of death can all be observed in the tradition's antecedents. Preoccupation with the matter of knowledge too is conventional, prefigured literally for example in *Everyman*.[7] Yet many of the conventions present in *Dr Faustus* are subverted, such as the orthodox explication of sin, represented in the dance of the seven deadly sins being orchestrated by Lucifer. If, as has been argued, Robert Potter

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[5] See Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (London: Harvester, 1984); Simon Shepherd, *Marlowe and the Politics of Elizabethan Theatre* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986); Leah S. Marcus, 'Textual Indeterminacy and Ideological Difference: The Case of 'Doctor Faustus'', *Renaissance Drama*, 20 (1990), 1-29; Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 87-93, and Richard Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

[6] Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) p. 76. However Diehl is primarily interested in religious controversies about theatrical spectacle, the theatre and imagination as they relate to *Doctor Faustus*. Emily C. Bartels considers the play from a comprehensive multiplicity of differing contemporary and critical discourses in *Spectacles of Strangeness* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), especially pp. 111-42.

[7] See my discussion of Knowlege in *Everyman*, in Chapter 2.

is correct in calling morality plays the 'drama of repentance', then the failure of Faustus to repent collapses the traditions of the morality drama so radically as to undermine its moral cohesion and purpose. The morality form offers an optimistic and ultimately comforting view of the world, where the archetypal pattern of innocence, fall and redemption assures audiences of the covenants of salvation. Crucially, morality drama focuses on confession and penance as the agencies by which redemption is achieved and many plays personify these figures literally, as in *The Castle of Perseverance* (1405-25). But, of course, there is no figure of knowledge, or confession in *Doctor Faustus*. In fact, Faustus does not confess and is, apparently, not saved because he can not repent and the conventions of the form are thus thwarted.

Yet confession, penance, and the Catholic system of which they were a part, remain a notable aspect of the play, if only by their felt absence. When Faustus consecutively dismisses the academic disciplines of philosophy, medicine and law, he turns his attention to divinity and Scripture: '[...] Diuinitie is best. / *Ieromes* Bible, *Faustus*, view it well' (i.67-8).[8] It is significant that it is Jerome's Bible particularly that Faustus consults: the fourth century Vulgate translated into Latin by St Jerome and used by the whole church until the Reformation. The translation and glossing of the Bible was a central aspect of the Reformation and was the site where claims to power and authority were contested by the various Christian positions. John Wycliffe (*c.*1330-1384) had produced a vernacular translation in the fourteenth century that was deemed heretical and the Church decreed in 1408 the heresy of biblical translation without its permission. William Tyndale produced another vernacular Bible in 1526, which, although a superior translation and later forming the basis of about ninety percent of the Authorized Version, was not officially accepted. However, Henry VIII had been persuaded by evangelicals of the benefits of vernacular Scripture and so commissioned the comparatively conservative 'Bishop's Bible' in 1535. Puritans followed with the Geneva Bible in 1560 that reflected their Calvinist doctrine in substituting such Catholic concepts as 'penance' for the non-institutional 'repentance' and 'confession' with 'knowledge'. In rejecting the Jerome Bible specifically, Faustus thus symbolically rejects the Catholic faith and in this

[8] This and all other quotations from the 'A' text in *Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus' 1604-1616: Parallel Texts*, ed., W.W. Greg, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950).

context the setting of Wittenberg, as the cradle of Protestantism, might also be significant.[9] The issues of salvation and confession of sin are most conspicuously absent in the biblical verses that Faustus cites:

> *Stipendium peccati morrs est*: *Stipendium &c.*
> The reward of sinne is death: that's hard.
> *Si peccasse negamus, fallimur, & nulla est in nobis veritas.*
> If we say that we haue no sinne,
> We deceiue our selues, and theres no truth in vs.
> Why then belike we must sinne,
> And so consequently die.
> I, we must die an euerlasting death:
> What doctrine call you this, *Che sera, sera*,
> What wil be, shall be? Diuinitie, adieu, (i. 69-78)

The first quotation is from Romans 6:23 and reads in full, 'For the wages of sinne is death; but the gifte of God *is* eternal life through Iesus Christ our Lord'. The second quotation is taken from I John 1:8-9 and reads, 'If we say that we haue no sinne, we deceiue our selues, and trueth is not in vs. If we acknowledge our sinnes, he is faithful and just to forgiue vs our sinnes, & to clense vs from all unrighteousnes'.[10] In each case, it is the message and means of redemption that are conspicuous by their absence from these scriptural quotations. Their absence foregrounds the question of how redemption is to be attained in negative terms - an appropriate and symbolic linguistic form that is consistent with the comparatively recent loss of the traditional means, that is, of confession. There is no doubt that these biblical citations from *Doctor Faustus* would have been utterly familiar to a contemporary audience and the fact that they are only partially quoted would have meant spectators would be busy completing them in their heads. The Edwardian Injunctions of 1547 first identified certain scriptural passages for the special comfort and succour of Christians:

> That this damnable device of despair may be clearly taken away and firm belief and steadfast hope surely conceived of all their parishioners, being in any danger, they shall learn, and have always in readiness, such comfortable places and sentences of Scripture as do set forth the mercy,

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[9] Although Leah Marcus (1990) points out how the 'A' text's 'Wertenberg(e)' may in fact refer to a different place and by extension religious position, than the 'B' text's (deliberately changed) 'Wittenberg'. This she cites as evidence to develop different readings of the two versions.

[10] The two complete scriptural passages are given in the Vulgate edition as: *Si dixerimus quoniam peccatum non habemus ipsi nos seducimus et veritas in nobis non est.* (Romans 6:23) and *Si confiteamur peccata nostra: fidelis est et iustus, ut remittat nobis peccata nostra et emundet nos ab omni iniquitate* (I John 1:8-9). It is notable that the Vulgate 'confiteamur' [confess] is translated in the Geneva Bible as 'acknowledge'.

> benefits and goodness of Almighty God, towards all penitent and believing persons.[11]

Both biblical passages were amongst those later stipulated and ordered for memorisation in Elizabethan Injunctions, to be cited during church services and taught to children. Yet Faustus' incomplete recitation of these passages and the syllogistic conclusion he draws from them suggests that far from attaining 'Logickes chiefest end', 'to dispute well' (1.38), Faustus has dismissed what will prove to be a gravely important aspect of Christian doctrine. This raises the questions of why these familiar biblical sentences are incompletely quoted and why, by extension, Faustus is apparently incapable of being saved.

Hermeneutic Uncertainty

The question of Faustus' inability to be saved is, to a certain extent, obscured in the play by the inclusion of alternative discourses within which to interpret the dramatic events. Not only does this create hermeneutic uncertainty, but it is also a very successful strategy for generating gripping dramatic tension. One such discourse is suggested early on in the play, when Mephostophilis' interchange with Faustus throws into doubt the metaphysical world Mephostophilis inhabits,

> Fau. Where are you damn'd?
> Me. In hell.
> Fau. How comes it then that thou art out of hel?
> Me. Why this is hel, nor am I out of it: (iii.318-21)

The concept of hell engendered here makes its physicality ambiguous so that there is a doubt about the extent to which it can be conceived of spatially, or whether hell is, in fact, a psychological phenomenon. The possibility of Faustus' despair being read as symptomatic of a psychological hell that he already inhabits is one that, once raised, cannot be readily dismissed and is not explicitly contradicted until the end of the play. Thus, in the last scene when the moment arrives for Lucifer to claim Faustus' soul, the ontological tension created by the possibility that these inhabitants of supernatural reality might, at the last, minute dissolve as mere figments of Faustus' distressed psyche, cannot be discounted, until the very moment when it is plainly not the case.

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[11] Edwardian Injunctions (1547), item 22, in DER, p. 253.

Conversely, another hermeneutic framework is incorporated into the play through the suggested exposition of magic, often critically equated with new epistemologies of 'science' and potentially blasphemous empirical enquiry.[12] An inherently thrilling theme, the performance of 'black magic' excited members of a contemporary audience to the extent that they testified to witnessing extra-theatrical devils on stage causing the abandonment of the performance.[13] More sceptically, the 'Negromantique skill' (i:138) Faustus thinks he is able to exercise is thrown into doubt. Faustus anxiously demands of Mephostophilis,

> Fau. Did not my coniuring speeches raise thee? speake.
>
> Me. That was the cause, but yet per accident,
> For when we heare one racke the name of God,
> Abiure the scriptures, and his Sauioiur Christ,
> Wee flye, in hope to get his glorious soul (iii.290-4)

Thus the potency of Faustus' Latin incantations is thrown into question and the knowledge of the 'concealed arts' (i.35) he can lay claim to is doubtful. Furthermore, the arguably unsatisfying and vacuous experience of the knowledge he strives for, in order to 'Resolue [... him] of all ambiguities' (i.112) which seemingly fails to do just that, means that the epistemological status of knowledge remains an indeterminate that is exacerbated, rather than resolved, and leads to the exploration of larger questions of 'scientific' enquiry and divine justice that the play explores. Thus, Faustus' lack of redemption might be interpreted as a sinful effect of pride, hubris or a fundamental denial of the theological system that asserts the need for it. A further indeterminacy is generated by the possibility of magic not being interpreted as an exploration of forbidden knowledge, rather as a Reformist critique.[14] Reformists

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[12] Although Kocher states, 'The witchcraft theory expounded by the drama is quite orthodox' (p. 170), he qualifies this view with, 'Marlowe's struggle against Christianity, both in the outer world and within himself, was bound to have the most profound effects on the whole remainder of his thinking. In the sixteenth century, religion was, of course, the ground-work of all political and moral theory.' Paul H. Kocher *Christopher Marlowe: A Study of his Thought, Learning and Character* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962) p. 175.

[13] Prynne, *Histrio-Mastrix* (1633) f.556: 'The visible apparition of the Devill on the stage at the Belsavage Play-house, in Quen Elizabeth's dayes (to the great amazement both of the actors and spectators) while they were there profanely playing the History of Faustus (the truth of which I have heard from many now alive, who well remember it) there being some distracted from that feareful sight.' Cited in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923; repr.1961) III, pp. 423-4.

[14] For a general identification of black magic with Catholicism see Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), esp. pp. 489-508.

deplored the commonly held Catholic belief of the 'magical' qualities of saintly images and relics. Such holy relics were often used as magical talismans in daily life, such as the relic loaned to Catherine of Aragon from Our Lady of Walsingham Abbey to allay the pains of childbirth. Calvin condemned those who 'beholdying a relique shut their eyes through superstition to the ende, that they se[e]ing shoulde see nothing at all: that is to say that they dare not looke in good earnest to consider what the thing is'.[15] The danger of this false vision was that Christians trusted in 'the appearance of a physical thing rather than in God himself'.[16] Such an equation of magic with the misguided practices of Catholicism leaves Faustus, in Protestant terms, as a participant in the condemned perspectives of the old faith; an allegorical interpretation, which though crude, is not inconsistent with the morality form.

However, the morality form operates in an opposite way to the other hermeneutic possibilities discussed, creating definite interpretative expectations that impose closure on the hermeneutic process. The form is, arguably, recognisable at the outset from the prologue, but is undoubtedly so, as soon as the Good and Evil Angels make their first appearances. Once recognised, the form generates hermeneutic certainty, yet by the end of the play this is undone. Nevertheless, the characteristic vacillation between hope and fear conventionally presented in morality theatre is perhaps the strongest source of tension in the play. As a consequence of Faustus' expression of mere intent to consult with 'heauenly', 'Negromantike bookes' (i.80), the Good Angel makes its first appearance and implores Faustus to reconsider his damnable course and instead consult with books of Scripture. Repeated attempts are made by various characters including the three scholars and the Old Man. It is tempting to see the Old Man as a traditional confessor, prevailing upon Faustus to 'guide [...his] steps vunto the way of life' (xiii.1302) and offering a way to 'auoyd dispaire'. The use of the term 'auoyd' is significant here. Its use can be interpreted as both verb and adjective, the nuances of which both have a relation to confession. As a verb, of which the contemporary spelling in *Faustus* is given as a form in the *OED*, 'auoyd' encompasses the meaning of 'To empty a thing of what is in it', as well as 'To make void or of no effect'.[17] Both meanings encourage an interpretation of the Old Man's

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[15] Jean Calvin, *A Very Profitable Treatise* (1561), sig. B, cited in, Diehl, (1997), p. 130.
[16] Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.14.14, cited in, Diehl (1997), p. 132.
[17] The *OED* lists the form 'auoyd' as an instance of the verb 'avoid': I. To empty a thing (of what is in it); to make, become, or be empty. 1. To make (a vessel, place, person) void or empty; to empty, clear,

words as a reference to confession, one of the purposes of which was certainly to 'void' the consequences of sin. Most significantly, it has other consistent senses of to free from, refute, disprove or invalidate an agreement, all especially pertinent meanings in the context of Faustus' contract with Lucifer. The albeit obscure use of 'avoid' as an adjective, in the sense of void, empty, or free of, connotes the active accomplishment of something, implying in this case the potential of an active removal of despair, also consistent with confession.[18] In *Everyman*, the figure of Confessyon offers 'a precious iewell [...]/ Called penaunce, voyder of aduersyte' (l. 556-8). And, indeed, the Old Man represents the most persuasive call to repentance presented and comes closest to success. In a powerfully immediate image, the Old Man exercises the pastoral skill of the confessor to provide comfort and hope:

Old. Ah stay good Faustus, stay thy desperate steps,
I see an Angell houers ore thy head,
And with a viol full of precious grace,
Offers to powre the same into thy soule,
Then call for mercie and auoyd dispaire.

Fau. Ah my sweete friend, I feel thy words
To comfort my distressed soule,
Leaue me a while to ponder on my sinnes. (xiii.1319-1326)

The image of the angel ready to anoint Faustus with the precious oil of grace recalls that other familiar (to sixteenth-century audiences) metaphor of the priest as 'physician of the soul' tending the medicative oil of confession.[19] The fact that the Old Man addresses Faustus with the familiar 'thy' and the chiastic repetition of his initial 'Ah', 'good' and 'I see' and Faustus' reply of 'Ah', 'sweete' and 'I feel' implies a successfully intimate relationship is established. Furthermore, Faustus is able to recognise his actions as 'sinnes' and experience the proffered comfort of potential repentance. The fine balance between hope and despair and the tension created as a result reach an almost unbearable climax in this scene as Faustus nears the end of his allotted twenty-four years. Just as Faustus displays the first stirrings of

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free, rid (of). Obscure. 2. To make void or of no effect; to refute, disprove. In Law, to defeat (a pleading); to invalidate, 'quash' (a sentence, agreement, document, etc.). <http://www.oed.com> [accessed 2004].

[18] The *OED* lists 'avoid' as an adjective, construing its meaning: 'an apparent analogy of void verb. An adjective or ? contrary of avoided; cf. devoid. Empty, void; free or rid (of) Obscure.' Lists instances of use dated 1488, 1514.

[19] *Penitential of Theodore*, cited in MHP, p.182 & n.32.

repentance, he sends the Old Man away, and amazingly, the Old Man complies without dissent. Left alone on the stage Faustus confides,

> I do repent, and yet I do dispaire:
> Hell striues with grace for conquest in my breast,
> What shal I do to shun the snares of death? (xiii.1330-3)

Of course, conventionally, it would be very clear what Faustus must do and he would be taken to make a confession as, for example, Euery man is by Knowlege.[20] Indeed, the choice of the noun 'snares' may be significant here, as Luther argued the case for retention of pastoral, though not sacramental, confession in the same terms. He wrote of the conscience being 'ensnared' by a burdensome sense of sinfulness.[21] However, without the Old Man, the conditions for confession are lacking. There is no guide to encourage the despairing conscience into a proper sense of contrition, no auditor for the enumeration of sin, no intermediary to pronounce God's forgiveness. Through the constant play of despair and calls to repentance, confession, as the traditional but absent means of redemption, is continually drawn attention to and kept in the audience's mind. Nevertheless, the immediate arrival of Mephostophilis instantly dispels any redemptive possibilities and Faustus renews his contract and sycophantically begs pardon of Mephostophilis and for good measure asks him to punish the Old Man with the 'greatest torments that our hel affords' (xiii.1344). Mephostophilis replies, 'His faith is great, I cannot touch his soule' (xiii. 1345). Unlike Faustus, the Old Man is immune to Mephostophilis' powers and his soul cannot be damned. What distinguishes the two is the Old Man's faith. Thus the traditional resolution to Faustus' predicament, dictated by the morality form, confession, is substituted for faith. Faith has now become the vital attribute that Faustus lacks, the new key to eternal life. Thus, the construction of the play's hermeneutic ambiguity and tense oppositions between psychological and physical reality, religious (or supernatural) and humanistic knowledge, and the contest between hope and despair, are, in the end, concentrated in this central concept of faith. As David Kaula recognises, '*Faustus* is a distinctly post-Reformation play

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[20] See Chapter 2 of this thesis.
[21] 'The Keys', (1530), LW, XL, p. 328.

because the hero's destiny hinges entirely on the question of faith, a question which does not enter into *Everyman* at all'.[22]

Justifying Faith

Faith is strongly appropriated as a Protestant concept in the historical moment of the play's composition. Even a cursory study of the statements of belief and various supporting Injunctions issued through the later Tudor period of the English Reformation reveal how the doctrinal thinking underlying the treatment of post-baptismal sin through the Catholic sacramental practice of auricular confession is steadily eroded, in place of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. The second Henrican Injunctions, issued in 1538, and composed by Thomas Cromwell, maintain the traditional position regarding confession. Item 5 instructs it is to be undertaken every year in Lent and the Eucharist is to be denied to those who do not make a satisfactory confession. Yet even here the emphasis of the subject matter of confession is no longer contrition, confession and satisfaction, but on the ability to recite the new Articles of faith and the Paternoster in English.[23] In the same Injunctions a number of movements are made towards reform, for example, in the provision of a vernacular Bible in every church and the encouragement to parishioners to study it as 'the very lively Word of God, that every Christian man is bound to embrace, believe and follow if he look to be saved'.[24] By 1547, when the Edwardian Injunctions were issued, confession is only briefly referred to as pre-Lenten obligation, and at far more length, a new ministry is prescribed:

> Those persons which be sick or in peril of death be oftentimes put in despair by the craft and subtlety of the devil who is then most busy, and specially with them that lack the knowledge, sure persuasion and steadfast belief [...] that this damnable device of despair may be clearly taken away and firm belief and steadfast hope surely conceived of [...] they shall learn, and have always in a readiness, such comfortable places and sentences of Scripture as do set forth the mercy, benefits and goodness of Almighty God, towards all penitent and believing persons, that they may at all times [...] promptly comfort [...] with the lively Word of God, which is the only stay of man's conscience.[25]

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[22] David Kaula, 'Time and the Timeless in 'Everyman' and 'Dr.Faustus'', *College English*, 22 (1960) 9-14.

[23] The Second Henrican Injunctions (1538), DER, p. 180.

[24] DER, pp. 179-80.

[25] DER, p. 253. Confession is mentioned in Item 9, p. 250.

The 'lapse' of vocabulary represented by the Catholic term 'penitent' and the assertion of Scripture as the *sole* remedy for troubled consciences reveal an uncomfortable tension between the traditions of Catholic religious practice and the newly emergent tenets of Protestantism. This tentative explication of early Reformed doctrine reveals how the agencies of knowledge and confession were being steadily eroded, in favour of the twin necessities of knowledge and belief. Knowledge is knowledge of Scripture and belief, or faith is what justifies Christians.

However, by the time of The Forty-Two Articles, issued in 1553, revised in 1563 and again in 1571, there is no such latent allusion to Catholic practice.[26] Instead there is a confident assertion of Protestant doctrine. Item 5, entitled 'The Doctrine of Holy Scripture is sufficient to Salvation', asserts, 'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation'.[27] Christians, who had taken for granted for hundreds of years that they were assured of salvation through the mediating practices of the Catholic Church, were now obliged to participate in the controversies of scriptural interpretation. Parishioners now had to scrutinise a Scripture, translated into English for the purpose, to assure themselves that, as long as they had faith, they were justified. Successive Injunctions and the Homilies repeatedly evince an anxiety over the contentious potential of scriptural interpretation, as well as frustration at the anticipated hermeneutic skills of its audience. The Henrican Injunctions had advised parishioners to:

> avoid all contention and altercation therein, and to use an honest sobriety in the inquisition of the true sense of the same, and refer the explication of obscure places to men of higher judgement in Scripture.[28]

Some twenty odd years later, Item 11 in The Thirty-Nine Articles asserts, 'Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification'.[29] This referral suggests that many continued to experience doctrinal doubt and confusion. The 'Homily of Justification' presents at great length the doctrine of justification, divided into three parts, to be preached over three consecutive

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[26] as the Thirty-Eight Articles (1563) and the Thirty-Nine Articles (1571) respectively.
[27] The Forty-Two Articles, DER, p. 287.
[28] DER, pp. 179-80.
[29] DER, p. 291.

Sundays.[30] The 'Homily' asserts that faith is a gift of God and through faith is embraced the promise of God's forgiveness found in Scripture. It states that the remission of sin can only be achieved through faith. Yet, the Homily continues, even faith does not merit salvation as 'all is imperfect [...] within us'.[31] Justification must be achieved by

> true & lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by GODS working in us [...] nothing upon the behalf of man, concerning his justification, but only a true & lively faith, which nevertheless is the gift of GOD, and not mans only work, without GOD: And yet that faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, & the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified, but it shuts them out fro the office of justifying. [32]

The Homily's argument goes something like this: faith alone justifies; faith can be found by reading Scripture; all human faith is imperfect; faith is a God given gift and cannot be earned; faith alone justifies. And, again, the perception of the potential for the generation of anxieties and confusions was recognised:

> Here you perceive many words to be used to avoid contention in words with them that delight to brawl about words, and also to show the true meaning to avoid evil taking and misunderstanding, and yet peradventure all will not serve with them that be contentious. [33]

Confusingly, the Homily explains how it is possible for devils also to possess faith, although their faith differs from ordinary belief because they evince no good works:

> The devils have faith, but not the true faith. For that faith which brings forth (without repentance) either evil works, or no good works, is not a right, pure, and lively faith, but a dead, devilish, counterfeit and feigned faith, as Saint Paul and Saint James call it. For even the devils know and believe that Christ was born of a virgin, that he fasted forty days and forty nights.[34]

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[30] Ian Lancashire, ed., Renaissance Electronic Texts 1.1, University of Toronto, 'Homily On The Salvation Of Mankind', STC 13675. <http://www.anglicanlibrary.org/homilies/bk1hom03.htm> [accessed February, 2005].
[31] ibid, p. 1.
[32] ibid, p. 2 .
[33] ibid, 'The Third Part', p. 6.
[34] ibid, p. 7.

At the very least one can appreciate the anxieties and confusions generated by such argument, that left Christians in mortal doubt about the means of salvation.[35]

Some critics of *Doctor Faustus* emphasise the growing significance of Calvinist doctrine in the later sixteenth century and the Thirty-Nine Articles do indeed contain an unequivocal statement of predestinarian doctrine in Item 17.[36] Yet the play need not be understood only in this aspect of its historical context: it can also be considered in a context at once broader and more specific. On the one hand, it could be argued that the long history of traditional salvational doctrine weighs more heavily than a relatively recent doctrinal notion; on the other hand, it seems that a more careful consideration of exactly what Faustus can be understood as rejecting, in terms of his failure to repent, is important. Although there is evidence of an anxiety about the potentially negative impact of Calvinist doctrine on social discipline, the 'Homily on Salvation' at least, is careful not to advance any predestinarian arguments. Indeed it evinces an essentially orthodox doctrine of Christian obedience. Justification manifests:

> These great and merciful benefits of GOD [... that] do neither minister unto us occasion to be idle, and to live without doing any good works, neither yet stirs us up by any means to do evil things: but contrariwise, if we be not desperate persons, and our hearts harder then stones, they move us to render our selves unto GOD wholly. [37]

Desperation is admitted as an affliction in clearly orthodox terms, as a result of 'hearts harder then stones', recalling the parable of the Sower and implying it as a matter of will. Indeed Faustus declares, 'my hearts so hardned I cannot repent' (1.647). Furthermore, both the potential for therapeutic and damnable outcomes to despair were subjects long treated of before the Reformation, as Susan Snyder has shown.[38] The reliance on *God-given* faith as justification is better categorised as

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[35] Popular religious literature of the late sixteenth demonstrates the common preoccupation with matters of salvation, e.g. Arthur Dent's *Sermon of Repentaunce* (London, 1583) ran to 21 editions before 1640 and his *Plaine Mans Pathway to Heauen* (London, 1601) 24 editions in the same period. See Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 247.

[36] For example Michael Keefer cites Calvin's writings at length to suggest Faustus should be properly understood as one predestined to hell. *Christopher Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus'*, ed., Michael Keefer, (Deddington: Broadview Press, 1991).

[37] The 'Homily on Salvation', pp. 7-8.

[38] Susan Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 12 (1965), 18-59.

generally Protestant, with the significant point being that this doctrine, like all those of the Reformists, was formulated in reaction to traditional orthodoxies. The Catholic Church had by comparison troubled the ordinary Christian little either about Scriptural interpretation (only available and cited in Latin in any case) or about the need for faith. Neither received any particular emphasis in the most frequently experienced rituals of the celebration of the Eucharist or auricular confession.[39] Sacraments were, by definition, the 'exteriorized', visible signs of God's forgiveness and thus matters of 'inward' faith were not so much ignored as assumed, or taken for granted. Luther had criticised the Catholic practice of the sacrament of penance on just such grounds: 'this Babylon [Rome] of ours has so completely extinguished faith that it insolently denies its necessity in this sacrament [...] indeed they do not mention faith at all'.[40] In general terms then the Protestant emphasis on faith was a shift in practice that must surely have represented a radical challenge to most Christians' thinking, a challenge that the drama, with its close roots in religious theatre and insight into the nature of spectacle, was sited to appreciate and explore.

From outward sign to inward faith

In order to appreciate exactly what the shift from Catholic liturgy to Protestant doctrine involved, a detailed examination of the pertinent characteristics of Catholic practice is needed. In her influential book *The Subject of Tragedy*, Catherine Belsey examines the play *Everyman* as a 'drama of subjectivity' that emerged from the traditional moral system of Catholicism. She describes the construction of identity through the assumption of knowledge. In this system, knowledge, Belsey states, 'is not instrumental but constitutive', that is constitutive of (Catholic) Christian identity. Christian knowledge brings about the desire for salvation and that is attained by the remission of sin through confession and the sacrament of penance. Confession is the means to salvation in the traditional Catholic system, as faith is for the Protestant. But the communication of this knowledge is the crucial site of distinction. Belsey observes:

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[39] Numerous penitential manuals emphasise the quality of the Christian's piety, but the issue of actual faith is only referred to obliquely it seems - in the requirement for penitents to recite the Creed. Similarly, the traditional liturgy of the Mass emphasises transubstantiation but does not question it as a matter of belief. See SA, pp. 91-130.

[40] 'The Babylonian Captivity of the Church' (1520), LW, XXXVI, pp. 83-4.

> This knowledge is inscribed in a discourse which does not pretend to transparency since it is itself the location of truth. The effectivity [*sic*] of the (Latin) liturgy lies not beyond it in a process which it *expresses*, but in the participation of the faithful in its performance, in the process which it enacts and re-enacts.[41]

Catholic liturgy is in itself the truth of God, the *Logos*, and so participation in its practice ensured, likewise, in itself, an assumption of righteousness. Thus Henry VIII, the epitome of sixteenth-century Catholic piety to some historians, attended Mass daily, but used the time to conduct state business – it was only strictly necessary to be there.[42] Catholic liturgy had the status of what is defined in contemporary speech-act theory as a 'performative', that is a statement which 'not only describes an action but actually performs that action.'[43] An instance of this type of 'illocutionary act' would be the words of absolution in the sacrament of penance. As the priest pronounces, '*Ego te absolve ab omnibus censures et peccatis* [...]', the penitent is indeed absolved of all sin. The accompanying genuflection and subsequent laying–on of the priest's hands signal another aspect of Catholic liturgy, one despised by Protestant Reformists, but notable within this argument.[44] Catholic liturgy was strongly performative, not just in the linguistic sense, but in that it was reliant on the visible, audible, even odoriferous: in the wafting of incense used to signal the imminent Mass; in the elevation of the Host, the significant spectacle of the Mass; in the ringing of the sacring bell indicating the elevation of the Host and moment of transubstantiation; all these sensory experiences demonstrated the 'truth' of the liturgy; an 'inexpressible truth' embodied in an empirical experience rather than expressed linguistically.[45] And, perhaps, this characteristic of the liturgy - its non-referential enactment of an 'inexpressible truth' - is definitive. J. Hillis Miller analyses the language of parable similarly:

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[41] Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 59. (Italics in original).
[42] Alison Weir, *Henry VIII King and Court* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001), p. 134. See the discussion of Henry VIII's personal belief in Peter Marshall, *Reformation England 1480-1642* (London: Arnold, 2003), pp. 26-7.
[43] Austin, J.L., 'Performative Utterances', in *Philisophical Papers [of] J. L. Austin*, eds, J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock, 2nd, edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 233-252, p. 233.
[44] John Bale compares the celebration of the Mass to theatre in his tract, 'The Resurrection of the Masse': 'Ffor of all ocupacions me thinke it is the most foolish. Ffor there standeth the preste disgysed lyke one that wolde shewe some conueyaunce or iuglyng playe. He turneth his back to the people and telleth a tale on the walle in a foren language', pp. 35-6. Cited in Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 35-6.
[45] Duffy refers to this aspect of Catholic liturgy in, SA, pp. 91-130.

> Parable is a mode of figurative language which is the indirect indication, at a distance, of something that cannot be described directly, in literal language [...] like the sun [...] which cannot be looked in the eye, although it is the condition of all seeing [...]. A parabolic narrative is [...] in some way governed [...] by the infinitely distant and invisible, by something that transcends altogether direct presentation.[46]

That transcendent 'something', the *Logos*, the truth of God is assumed as collectively known, in the Bible, in parables, in Catholic liturgy, but cannot be directly described, although many mystics have employed metaphoric language in the attempt to do so, such as 'The Cloud of Unknowing' or 'the peace that passeth all understanding'. Clearly this inexpressibility is the condition of parable, defined as 'the translation of an untranslatable original Word'.[47] In addition, parable, like the liturgy, is characterised by its performative quality, to experience parables is to experience the truth; they are, in themselves, the embodiment of this truth. Miller further clarifies,

> In the case of the parables of Jesus [...] the performative word makes something happen in the minds and hearts of the hearers, but this happening is a knowledge of a state of affairs already existing, the kingdom of heaven and the way to get there.[48]

This redemptive knowledge then, embodied in the Catholic liturgy, as in the parable, is paradoxically at once presumed and simultaneously assured in the performance of its practices.

It is both the 'exteriorized', visible quality of the sacramental practice of confession and its performative status that the Counter-Reformation apologist, Cardinal William Allen, identified in *A Treatise Made in Defence of the Lauful Powre and Authoritie of Priesthod to Remitte Sinnes* (1567) as crucial aspects of Catholic ministry that are lost in Protestant religion.[49] Cardinal Allen explains,

> why we should by externall sacramētes & mans ministery reciue grace & remission of sinnes, is ŷ singular respect had by God of oure infirmitie, as wel of minde as bodie. For the minde requireth in

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[46] J. Hillis Miller, *Tropes, Parables, Performatives: Essays on Twentieth Century Literature* (London: Harvester, 1990), pp. 135-6.
[47] Miller (1990), p. 144.
[48] Miller (1990), p. 139.
[49] TDLP.

> her assured deserning of damnation some external token, by which she may haue good cause to hope of mercie and grace. [50]

The typically early modern division between the mind and body correlates to the distinction between mindful assurance and the 'external token' of sensory apprehension. It is this distinction between the mental or spiritual, and physical that is crucial in Faustus' last occasion of 'temptation' to repentance in scene xiii, cited above. It is the fear of physical punishment that prevents Faustus continuing further with a repentant course, in spite of his cognition of the eternal suffering he must expect without it. Mephostophilis' threat, 'Reuolt, or Ile in peece-meale teare thy flesh' (l.1335) achieves an immediate recantation by Faustus. Furthermore, Mephostophilis' response to Faustus' request that the Old Man be punished for 'tempting' him suggests that the attainment of faith reduces the potency of the physical: 'His faith is great, I cannot touch his soule, /But what I may afflict his body with,/ I wil attempt, which is but little worth' (l.1345-7). As an exemplary Christian secure in his faith, the Old Man, it seems, demonstrates the Protestant privileging of the cerebral over the corporal. Emphasising the comfort offered to those souls who may otherwise despair, Cardinal Allen further identifies the performative aspect of absolution at the conclusion of confession:

> So where after Baptisme mannes life is often defiled by greuous sinnes, and God highly displeased therfore what an infinite treasure is it, and how greate a cōforte to haue an assured help therof, wrought by mās ministery in a visible action, that I may knowe [...] my sinnes to be forgiuen, and Goddes mercy and fauoure to be obteined ageine. We may conceiue easly what a passing comforte it was to the parties that hearde sensibly, by the outwarde woordes of Christes owne mouthe, thy sinnes be forgiuen thee.[51]

It is exactly this outward, visible assurance that is the essential characteristic of auricular confession that Allen perceives to be the efficacious aspect of the practice of confession, to the extent that he is moved to relate his own testimony, departing from what is otherwise a sustained tone of 'objectivity' in his arguments:

> As for my selfe, good Christian Reader, I am not so free from sinne [...] but as often I heare in the sacrament of penaunce the priest, who to me then is Christ in ful power of pardoning, saing the woordes of absolution

[50] TDLP, pp. 159-60.
[51] TDLP, p. 160.

> ouer me, me thinke truly I heare the swete voice of Christ saing with authority: thy sinnes be forgiuē thee.[52]

The priest, who is 'Christ in ful power of pardoning', achieves that transformation of perceived reality through the powerful perception of his voice as Christ's.

To rehearse the argument so far, Catholic practice was characterised by its performative status, as an embodiment of the Truth of God that presupposes a collective knowledge of what it is to be saved and an understanding of the Catholic liturgy as a redemptive process in itself. The Reformation challenged this presupposition of collective knowledge, substituting the performative status of Catholic liturgy with a reliance on reading the Word of God to provide the necessary knowledge for faith, which in turn became the condition of redemption. As Belsey summarises, 'The effect of the Reformation was to transform the discourse of redemption from a liturgical to a scriptural one'.[53] However, the persistent anxiety expressed about the hermeneutics of scriptural interpretation, explored in the evidence of contemporary homilies and injunctions presented above, finds its analogue in the anxiety and ambiguity surrounding the question of interpretation of the written word *per se* in *Doctor Faustus*.[54] As already noted Faustus' own reading of Scripture in scene i is dubious, both in his incomplete rendition of Romans and I John and his fatally flawed exegesis that, scholar though he is, misses the passages' key messages of redemption. Valdes' apparent confidence in the power of the written word is revealed as misplaced when his assertion that 'these bookes [of magic...]/Shall [...] canonize vs' (i.152-3) is ironically and diametrically disproved both by Faustus' contract with Lucifer and the debunking of papal dignity and power in scene vii. As quoted above, Mephostophilis declares that Faustus' reading of the books of magic were not the cause of his appearance (l.290-4), yet in scene ix Robin and Rafe do succeed in using one of Faustus' books to conjure Mephostophilis. The book Mephostophilis gives to Faustus in scene v (l.607) is suspiciously comprehensive and their interchange at the end of that scene implies Faustus is duped when he corrects Mephostophilis, 'O that art deceiued', to which Mephostophilis dubiously replies, 'Tut I warrant thee' (l.808-9). As Simon Shepherd

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[52] TDLP, p. 161.
[53] Belsey (1985), p. 60.
[54] Diehl considers issues of illusion, seeing and interpretation and describes the play as 'conflicted about its own artifice and disruptive to the spectators'. Diehl (1997), p. 81.

states, 'Faustus [is encouraged] to read scriptures, but reading in the play is marked as a problem'.[55] The Good Angel had advised Faustus to "lay that damned booke aside"(i.101) and instead "Reade, reade the scriptures", but the problem lies not so much in Faustus' reading material, as in his ability to interpret what he reads and draw the correct conclusions. The specific hermeneutics of Scripture come to stand for wider questions of the human condition such as of free will, autonomy and the eschatological. Faustus' problematic interpretations are symptomatic of a more general, dialectical insecurity about matters of forgiveness of sin and the means of grace and salvation, both in the play and for sixteenth-century Christians experiencing the Reformation.[56] In less than one hundred lines in scene vi the conditions of salvation are repeatedly questioned. Faustus asserts heaven's purpose as existing for him (l.637), his determination to repent (l.638), his assurance of God's pity (l.645), his inability to repent (l.647), his damned state (l.650), his determination to never repent (l.661), his recognition of God as creator (l.601), and asks whether it is too late to repent (l.705). The power of the 'diuels' is debated (l.709-10), the question of the sinner's will or Christ's intervention effecting salvation is implied as indeterminate (l.711-12), and lastly Lucifer appears, apparently in response to Faustus' prayer (l.714). As Jonathan Dollimore argues, Faustus 'is located on the axes of contradictions which cripple and finally destroy him'[57].

Stephen Greenblatt, in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, describes the sixteenth century, referring to 'the great "unmooring" that men were experiencing, their sense that fixed positions had somehow become unstuck, their anxious awareness that the moral landscape was shifting'.[58] When the assumed collective significance of Catholic liturgy has been undone, when images, for example, are exposed as just that, the whole signifying system of religious discourse, one that relies on a collective presupposition, as argued above, is radically destabilised. Thus Protestants repeatedly referred to 'papists' as 'players', as 'charlatans' or 'tricksters', accused of

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[55] Simon Shepherd, *Marlowe and the Politics of Elizabethan Theatre* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), p. 96.

[56] Lily B. Campbell sites *Doctor Faustus* within the Reformation phenomenon of the 'case of conscience', epitomised by the story of Francis Spira, accounts of which (translated into English) she says, 'took on something of the status of an official document of the Reformation'. Lily B. Campbell, ''Doctor Faustus': A Case of Conscience' *PMLA*, 67, (March, 1952), 219-239, p. 228.

[57] Dollimore, (1984), p. 112.

[58] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 88.

illusionary artifice, of playing a part in 'the Pope's playhouse'.[59] William Fulke, an outspoken Protestant proponent, wrote a *Confutation* to Cardinal Allen's *Treatise* (referred to above) in 1584. The *Confutation* cites Allen's *Treatise* and replies to it point by point. In the case of the 'exteriorized' and performative aspects of Catholic liturgy, Fulke argues, in typical Protestant tones, they are nothing but an 'imaginarie pleasure' and that, 'we haue sufficient warrant out of Gods word, to assure our selues of remission of them [sins], with inestimable ioy & comfort of conscience.' Fulke further advises,

> If our conscience be not satisfied, about anie offence that we haue committed, how we should declare our vnfained conuersion, or repentance, we maie vse the aduise of the Godlie and learned pastor, who is able out of the word of god to resolue our doubts and quiet our conscience. *That the want of* Popish *pennance will driue all men, either to desperation, or securitie and presumption,* it is affirmed, without anie proofe. God be praised, experience cryeth out of the contrarie side. [60]

Yet, certainly in the drama of Faustus' case, experience does not cry out to the contrary. Faustus does consistently despair of God's forgiveness and both his own citation of Scripture and the advice of a godly pastor/confessor (in the figure of the Old Man) proves fruitless. Faustus, as noted earlier, omits the redemptive references from his citation of scriptural passages. And the assurance of God's infinite mercy and the confessional means of gaining it are doubted. 'Contrition, prayer, repentance: what of them?' (l. 454) asks Faustus, to which the Euill Angel, in terms reminiscent of Fulke's 'imaginerie pleasure', dismissively replies, 'illusions fruites of lunacy' (l. 456). Although Faustus has, by a free act of will, chosen his 'damnable course' he despairs of being equally free to choose the path of repentance, even when there is an outward show of merciful warning in the appearance of the words 'Homo fuge' (l. 518) inscribed on his arm immediately after he contracts his soul to Lucifer. Indeed, Cardinal Allen deplores those who will not 'rest' in the comfort and assurance of

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[59] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearan Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 113. Conversely theatre could acquire, 'religious power through the evacuation of a religious ritual', (p. 112) although if that power could be acquired perhaps we should not assume it was necessarily evacuated.

[60] William Fulke, *A Confvtation of a Treatise Made by William Allen in Defence of the vsurped power of Popish Priesthood to remit sinnes, of the necessity of Shrift, and of the Popes Pardons*, in William Charke, *A treatise against the Defense of the censure, giuen upon the bookes of W. Charke and Meredith Hanmer, by an unknowne popish traytor in maintenance of the seditious challenge of Edmond Campion* (Cambridge: Thomas Thomas, 1586) STC (2nd edn) /5009. Reel position STC / 191.01. EEBO <http://eebo.chadwyck.com> [accessed December, 2004].

God's forgiveness, represented by the outward acts of the sacraments. He might well be describing the predicament of Faustus when he discusses the 'other', Protestant 'type':

> It were to tedious, further to declare how these external means of woorking inwarde grace and remission of sinnes, be necessary [...] As for other that are euer doubting, and neuer settled in their faith: that alwayes be learning, and yet neuer attein to knowledge: that had rather understand much, then beleue a litle [...].[61]

To be without the outward assurance of confession is to be condemned, like Faustus, to a terrible despair:

> Without which outwarde solemne acte of penaunce man should either dispaire of Gods mercy, and liue in feare intolerable of everlasting perishing, which oftē fal to timourous consciences, or elles [...] men would lyue in such passing persumptiō, and vayne securitie of heauen, that they would neuer till the very last breath of their euel tyme, either be sory for sinne, or seeke to doo any good worke at al.[62]

Thus in the last scene Faustus continues to powerfully express despair and at the last, in his terrified agony of tension, he successively considers the notions of several conflicting discourses: of astronomy, the Classics, the apocalyptic writings of the Bible, and the Hermetic tradition of Renaissance magic. In a parody of the opening scene of the play, each discourse is called upon, only to be found insufficient. Significantly, Faustus resorts to the residual beliefs of the Catholic religion and begs to enter an unnamed purgatory: 'Impose some end to my incessant paine/ Let Faustus liue in hel a thousand yeeres,/ A hundred thousand, and at last be sau'd' (l.1485-7). However, the relative, potential comfort of atoning for sin after death in the Catholic system is, like confession, the remembrance of a residual discourse of redemption that is no longer available to the Protestant Christian. Instead the emergent discourse of Calvinist Protestantism immediately 'reminds' Faustus, 'O no end is limited to damned soules'(l.1488). As Allen predicted, it is not until 'the very last breath of [...Faustus'] euel tyme' that he expresses any real sense of either recognising his own responsibility for his predicament ('Faustus, curse thy selfe' l.1497), or makes some last minute attempts to renounce 'vnlawful things' and 'burne [his] bookes' (xiv.1508).

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[61] TDLP, pp.164-165.
[62] TDLP, p.162.

In conclusion, the morality form of *Doctor Faustus* acts to generate hermeneutic expectation of an essentially homiletic message. In the morality tradition, redemption would be achieved through the attainment of Christian knowledge and the act of confession. The issue of repentance is to a certain extent obscured in *Doctor Faustus* by conflicting discourses that muddy the hermeneutic waters, so to speak, (but also add to the extremely successful generation of dramatic tension), yet fundamentally the question of whether Faustus will repent, and why ultimately he does not, remains the central dilemma of the play. [64] The change from Catholic to Protestant of the official religion in England meant that the mediated, visible and exteriorized certainties of Catholic forgiveness were lost, being substituted for the interiorized, ambiguous and uncertain attainment of individual Scriptural interpretation and justifying faith. This particular reformation of the doctrines of forgiveness and redemption is explored in some detail in Allen's *Treatise* and Fulke's reply to it, indicating the specific terms in which they understood them. Correspondingly, in *Doctor Faustus* the act and interpretation of reading is problematised. Belief in the central tenet of Christian forgiveness remains a phantasmic impossibility for Faustus in spite of the offices of the Good Angel and Old Man, whilst the threat of physical suffering is a reality keenly felt. The equivalent of the death bed confession, the last scene of the drama, plays out an absent belief in God's forgiveness, much as Allen envisaged it, where the traditional means of attaining that forgiveness are also absent.

In the next chapter, one of William Shakespeare's later plays, *The Winter's Tale*, presents the lengthy process of atonement for sins. The process culminates in the last scene that stages an enactment of forgiveness that might be considered a comparable, exteriorized and physically-signalled absolution of sin, yet is one that takes place in the context of Protestant 'encroachments' on the Catholic understanding of confession.

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[64] Hillman (1997) speaks of the 'conflicting discourses of subjectivity' in the play. p. 100.

Chapter 5 - Confession, Assurance and Faith in *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello*

In the last chapter, it was apparent that Cardinal Allen disputed whether the assurance offered by exteriorized sacraments in Catholicism could be equalled by the Protestant emphasis on reading Scripture as a means of assurance. In turn, this Protestant emphasis itself was traced in official homilies, combined with an evident anxiety about scriptural interpretation, an anxiety also found in the analogous problematisation of hermeneutics - textual, scriptural and theatrical - in *Doctor Faustus*. The remainder of this study will be concerned with the plays of William Shakespeare. As has been seen in the previous section, and in the earlier chapters on *Everyman* and *King Johan*, as a playwright Shakespeare inherited and had at his disposal a rich language of confessional practices and associations that had already been widely employed in the theatre. *The Winter's Tale* (1610/1) not only demonstrates continuities with the plays previously examined, in that it shares in the formal and thematic pattern of innocence-fall-redemption of the morality plays, but also the play makes a good choice to open this section as it is clearly shaped by the penitential process. Leontes' sixteen years of penance are recognisably in the penitential tradition of the Catholic church and, in considering the wonderful theatrical effects of the final scene, contemporary Reformation topics of sacramental assurance, forgiveness of sins, and the necessity of faith can be productively brought to the fore. These topics are also critical to the ancient Church practice of *exomologesis*, which in the second section of this chapter is discussed in relation to *Othello*. *Exomologesis* was both the confession of faith and sin and had been instigated to seek the forgiveness of, and reconcile apostates to, the Christian community.[1] Community acceptance of Othello, as an archetypal outsider and Christian convert, is explored and the terms in which Iago is able to threaten such acceptance are examined in relation to the form and language of confession.

[1] See Chapter 1, 1.4

Penitence and Equivalence in *The Winter's Tale*

'*Tenderly apply* [...] *Some remedies for life*'

In her essay 'Leontes and the Spider', Anne Barton notes the common syntactical arrangements of dualities and opposites in Shakespearean dramatic speeches, observing, 'Shakespeare displayed a marked predilection for analysing situations by way of contraries or antitheses [...]. Elizabethans, trained as they were in the discipline of formal rhetoric, often thought in such patterns'. However, Barton contends that in the romance or last plays a metaphysical logic operates, in Samuel Johnson's sense, where 'heterogeneous ideas [are] yoked together by violence', so that 'antithesis is employed to define resemblance in a fashion both unexpected and only superficially logical'.[2] Barton's observations are not only apt and precise, but with further consideration, seem to assume an expanded significance that surpasses the lexical or syntactical in *The Winter's Tale*. Inherent in the concept of antithesis is the notion of symmetry and balance. Each term must be matched by another for the rhetoric to achieve stylistic decorum. This sort of notional equivalence permeates the play in multiple ways. At the outset of the play notions of justice, reciprocation and vindication are notable, notions that also inherently contain the same principle of equivalence. In the courtly gesturing that opens the play, Camillo speaks of the responsibilities due according to the etiquette of hospitality, 'the visitation which [...] [Bohemia] justly owes him'(1.1.5-7) and of their possible fulfilment. [3] The desire to discharge these duties extends to a concern with rendering the due obligations of friendship and affection. Archidamus affirms that the Bohemians cannot hope to match the Sicilians' hospitality and entertainment, but that they 'will be justified in [...their] loves' (1.1.8-9).

The positive obligations of host and guest elide into negative issues of offence and recompense in Hermione's and Polixenes' interchange in the second scene:

> Pol. To be your prisoner should import offending;
> Which is for me less easy to commit

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[2] Anne Barton, 'Leontes and the Spider' in, *Shakespeare: The Last Plays*, ed., Kiernan Ryan, Longman Critical Readers (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 22-42, p. 37. However, Bernard Dupriez notes that, 'rhetorical antithesis is generally confused with enantiosis, which stresses essential (rather than accidental) oppositions' , in his *A Dictionary of Literary Devices*, trans. Albert W. Halsall (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 51.

[3] This and all subsequent quotations from '*The Winter's Tale*', ed., J. H. P. Pafford, Arden Edition (London: Methuen, 1963; repr.1984).

Than you to punish (1.2.58)

In spite of Polixenes' decorous assertion of the difficulty he anticipates in enacting any wrongdoing, his next speech alludes to that primary committal of offence and reckoning before God: original sin. Hermione's 'good deed' of having 'twice said well' participates in the same economy of obligations owed and paid, offences committed and compensated for. This sense that human relationships are conducted within a paradigm of reciprocity and exchange demonstrates the principle of equivalence at work in the play, frequently expressed in pecuniary language and reinforced when one of the lords protests his loyalty to the king. He is 'not guilty' (2.3.144), begs to be given 'better credit' (2.3.146) and concludes, 'on our knees we beg/ (As recompense of our dear services/Past [...])' (2.3. 148-150). Antigonus promises he will 'pawn the little blood which [...he has] left' (2.3. 165) and wishes the king to 'be prosperous/ In more than this deed does require' (2.3.188-9). The destiny of Antigonus is also determined by the same cultural principle. It is emphasised that he is chosen to deliver the infant Perdita to her fate in recompense for his and his wife's interference (2.3.140-1). It has often been observed that the structure of the play displays a similar sense of equivalence, with the last three acts acting as a counterweight to the first two. William Blissett, for example, compares the play's structure to a diptych, with the scene where the infant Perdita is found functioning as the 'hinge'.[4] Blissett notes many other instances of symmetrical structuring operating in the play, including generic conventions of the tragicomic, the oppositions of court and pastoral, reality and illusion, time the devourer and time the healer, nature the restorer and a savage nature 'red in tooth and claw'; and, to quote Blissett, 'sin dominant and grace recessive in the [the first half of the play], sin recessive and grace abounding in the [second]'.[5] Blissett reads this movement as participating in the play's generally Christian message of redemption, yet is not concerned with exactly how this structural dynamic is constructed. It is the proposition of this section that the sacrament of penance both epitomises the principle of equivalence and is the means by which this structural dynamic is brought about.

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[4] William Blissett, 'This Wide Gap of Time: 'The Winter's Tale'' *English Literary Renaissance*, 1 (1971), 52-70.
[5] Blissett (1971) p. 59.

Penitential equivalences

There is a pronounced emphasis in the penitential literature on symmetricality and equivalence, manifest in several areas of the sacrament of penance, including its underlying doctrine. The Christian's state of original sin is redeemed by Christ and personal redemption is signalled by baptism. In Catholic doctrine, post-baptismal sin occasions a loss of righteousness, that can only be compensated for, and thus grace restored, through a contrite sense of the loathsomeness of sin, a full confession and a sincere purpose of amendment. Penances were performed both to encourage and to display contrition and in recompense to God, and might include literal restitution. By such means the forgiveness of sins was sought, signalled by and achieved in the pronouncement of absolution. The Council of Trent (1545-63) reaffirmed (as against Protestant, particularly Lutheran, thinking to the contrary) that temporal punishment, or penance, was necessary in order to participate in the attainment of salvation assured by Christ as redeemer.[6] In line with New Testament assumptions, conventional notions of confession also had long conceived of sin as sickness, to which must be applied an appropriately matching cure. [7] Thomas Aquinas described the function of penance thus:

> Since man from time to time contracts both bodily and spiritual infirmity (the latter being sin), a cure for his infirmities is needed, and this is two-fold. The first healing is that which restores health, and its place in the spiritual life is taken by penance. The other cure takes away the remains of sin [extreme unction].[8]

This 'healing' embodied the medical imperative of *contraria, contraries sanatur*, that 'contraries are cured by their contraries', identified by McNeill and Gamer as originating within the Methodist (*sic*) School.[9] It became established in medical practice, so that Alexander of Tralles (525-605) wrote, 'The duty of a physician is to cool what is hot, to warm what is cold, to dry what is moist, and to moisten what is dry' – a kind of pragmatic, rather than rhetorical, antithesis.[10] Originally conceived

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[6] see John M.T. Barton, *Penance and Absolution* (London: Burns and Oates, 1961), esp. pp. 11-18.
[7] see Mark 2:5-11; Matt. 9:2-7. For a more detailed exploration of the origins of the conflation of sin with sickness, see John T. McNeill, 'Medicine for Sin as Prescribed in the Penitentials', *Church History*, I (1932), 14-26.
[8] Barton (1961), pp. 15-6.
[9] MHP, p. 44.
[10] cited ibid.

as a medical rule of equivalence, it became institutionalised (perhaps as a result of the dual work of monastic orders providing both spiritual direction and medical care) in the practice of confession where specific vices were combated by their opposing virtues. The *Penitential of Cummean* (*c*.650), for example, states, 'And so they [the Church fathers] determine that the eight principal vices contrary to human salvation shall be healed by these eight remedies.'[11] In practice too, the imperative of equivalence governed the tariffs set in confession, with minutely graded tariffs stipulated for each carefully graded sin. The social status and circumstances of the penitent were also taken into account to ensure the penitential tariff matched them exactly.

The conventional conflation of sin with sickness is one clearly recalled in *The Winter's Tale*. Leontes' sin of jealousy - a branch of one of the seven deadly sins, *invidia* or envy - is a 'diseas'd opinion' (1.2.298), Hermione's life is 'Infected' (1.2.305) and there is a 'Sickness' and 'distemper' that is 'caught' of Polixenes (1.2. 384-6). Leontes speaks in general terms of the 'bawdy planet' that requires 'physic' (1.2.201). More particularly, as in *Othello* (see below), Leontes' suspicions (1.2.284-291) are couched in the conventional terms of *The Book of Virtues and Vices* and follow the 'five stages' of lust referred to there, expressing the play's symmetrical principle further in these allusions to the traditions of the penitential system.[12] In Act 2, Hermione's (otherwise hard to explain) precipitate preoccupation with expiatory possibilities also implies the penitential model that forms part of the play's equivalencies:

> How will this grieve you,
> When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that
> You thus have publish'd me! Gentle my lord,
> You scarce can right me thoroughly, then, to say
> You did mistake. (2.1. 94)

Hermione raises questions of exculpation and reparation in this speech that might be understood in the general context of natural justice, but the meaningful lexicon here may also call to mind a specifically penitential atonement. Knowledge, or 'clearer knowledge', conventionally proceeds from a 'fall' and precedes confession, enabling

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[11] MHP, p. 45. There were at one time eight, not seven deadly sins, with the sin of *tristia* or sadness being eventually omitted from the list. See Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1952).

[12] *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed., Francis W. Nelson, (London: EETS, 1942), p.43 .

the acknowledgement of sin and achievement of contrition. The need, not only to make 'right', but to do so 'thoroughly', is likewise a traditional concern of sacramental confession, and contains the suggestion of fitting and restitutive penance. Thus, Hermione prophetically cautions that it will necessitate more than a superficial acknowledgement of fault to expiate this particular offence, implying the lengthy process of penance actually undergone by Leontes in the play. Hermione's anxiety lest the court misconstrue her lack of tears as indifference (2.1.107-12), also recalls the outward displays of remorse by weeping, wailing and so on, traditionally expected of the penitent to signal contrition.[13] Of course, Hermione is innocent and so enacts no such outward display, apparently eschewing any form of false contrition however expedient it might be. Such adherence to the integrity of confessional ethics is in marked contrast to the earlier plays examined, *King Johan* and *Dr Faustus* where such confessional notions are satirized or subverted. The serious treatment of confession in *The Winter's Tale* in effect elevates and privileges it in a way consistent with the tragedy of the first half of the play, although it might also be considered to be the means of staging the ultimately happy resolutions required of the comedy of the second half.

Camillo and Paulina as Confessors

The principle of reciprocity or equivalence is further reiterated and embodied in the characters of Camillo and Paulina, who express it in their roles as ministers of penance. These characters reflect each other, functioning as mirror images of their roles as priestly confessors, as well as characters who propel the drama of the first and second halves of the play respectively. Camillo's role is established when Leontes declares,

> I have trusted thee, Camillo,
> With all the nearest things to my heart, as well
> My chamber-counsels, wherein, priest-like, thou
> Hast cleans'd my bosom: I from thee departed
> Thy penitent reform'd. (1.2.235)

Clearly, Camillo has acted not only as state advisor but also 'priest-like' confessor, to whom Leontes has not only unburdened himself, but by whom he has also been 'cleans'd'. Thus the nature of 'the nearest things to [his] heart' and his 'chamber-

[13] see Chapter 1, 1.12.

counsels' are implied as not just troubling confidences, but iniquitous or profane, and in need of reform. What may otherwise be interpreted as a courtly stance of gracious compliment-paying on Leontes' part, is confirmed as an authentic penitent/confessor relationship subsequently, when Camillo reproaches Leontes, 'You never spoke what did become you less/Than this; which to reiterate were sin' (1.2.282). Camillo's nomenclature includes 'counsellor'(1.2.408), 'priest'(1.2.237), 'advisor'(1.2.339), 'clerk'(1.2.392), 'father'(1.2.461); and he has possessed 'great authority' (2.1.52). Uniquely, Camillo addresses his sovereign with the familiar 'thee' (1.2.323), the only character to address royalty so in the play, possibly implying some sort of ecclesiastical privilege, although as Pafford observes, Camillo's 'liberty would be less than Paulina's when she calls Leontes mad (2.3.71)'.[14] The same 'liberty' is evident when Camillo sets conditions to his service. Having been ordered by Leontes to poison Polixenes, Camillo agrees he 'will fetch off Bohemia [...]/Provided [...]' (1.2.335) that Leontes does not disclose his suspicions in the meantime; and the closing of their interchange has the same flavour - of two social equals agreeing a bargain, rather than an absolute ruler instructing his inferior:

> *Cam.* I'll do't, my lord.
> *Leon.* I will seem friendly, as thou hast advis'd me. (1.2.349-50)

Evidently, Camillo occupies a privileged position at the Sicilian court: one that is privy to the king's innermost meditations and presumes to categorise, judge and minister to them. Yet the confessor/penitent relationship that exists between Camillo and Leontes is also manifestly unstable and ultimately ineffectual.

To some extent, the tension emanating from combining Camillo's 'priest-like' role with his otherwise inferior status as courtier and subject contributes to the instability of his interactions with his king. However, these interactions are rendered additionally unstable by dizzying reversals, mimicry, parody and aporetic antonyms. The whole interchange in 1.2, when Leontes first confides his suspicions about Hermione to Camillo, 'plays' with the roles and modes of confessional structures. Initially, Leontes accuses Camillo of conniving at the queen's adultery (1.239-49) and in spite of Camillo's denial, insists further in the conventional interrogatory terms of the confessor, achieving, in effect, a reversal of roles. Akin to the prescribed

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[14] Pafford (1963), p. 23, n.324.

enquiring of the five sins of the senses, in the *forma confitendi*, Leontes mimics the confessor 'Ha' not you seen, Camillo?/ [...]or heard?/ [...] or thought?/ [...] If thou wilt confess'(1.2.268-273). [15] The emphatic tone almost shifts Leontes' stance to that of an interrogator or even torturer, recalling the methods of criminal, rather than religious, confession. Expecting an admission of sorts, Leontes is thwarted when Camillo firmly wrests the confessor's role back from the king by administering correction:

> You never spoke what did become you less
> Than this; which to reiterate were sin
> As deep as that, though true. (1.2.282)

Yet the antitheses in this speech, of 'this' and 'that' and 'less' and the not quite corresponding 'deep', introduce an ambiguity which is pronounced in Camillo's final, 'though true'. J.H.P. Pafford glosses the lines 'which to repeat were a sin as deep as that is of which you accuse her even if that were true [which it is not]'.[16] Yet Camillo's 'that', could refer to the 'this': the actual utterance of the accusation, making the sentence collapse into an aporetic and meaningless self-referral. In such a case it could be read, 'You never said anything that reflects upon you so poorly as this, which to repeat would be as shocking as voicing it in the first place, even if it is true'. This ambiguous phrasing also introduces the possibility that Leontes' imaginings *are* true and borders on what, if we are witnessing an occasion of confession, amounts to an abuse of priestly responsibility. In apparent support of this lacunary sub-text, Leontes proceeds to enumerate Hermione's 'sins' and, despite Camillo's reiterated denial of the truth of this 'ventriloquized' confession, Leontes further skews the confessionary mode by asking his confessor to murder the victim of his sinfulness, a transgression of such proportions that the scene threatens to collapse into burlesque. Camillo's confessorial role then, whilst clearly established as such, is constantly destabilised by the forces of both the king's authority and subversions of confessorial discourse and ultimately does collapse, apparently acknowledged by Camillo's weary, 'I must believe you, sir:' (1.2.334), and certainly in the act of Camillo's departure to Bohemia.

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[15] The form of confession took the shape of a list of headings under which individual behaviour would be scrutinised and includes the Decalogue, seven corporeal and spiritual works of mercy, seven deadly sins, seven virtues, fourteen points of faith - and sins of the five senses recalled here.
[16] Pafford (1963) p. 21.

Recent research of printed model sermon collections of the early Reformation period may be significant in reading the confessional roles of both Camillo as healer, and Paulina who also professes herself to be Leontes' 'physician,/ Your most obedient counsellor' (2.3.54-5). The images of Camillo and Paulina, as healers offering *medicamenta* for the soul, positions both characters in what Anne Thayer has identified as a spectrum of possible understandings of confessors and confession in this period.[17] In her research of printed model sermon collections Thayer found that confessors were usually imaged as either judges or physicians. Sermons that emphasise the confessor as judge, correspondingly, tend to emphasise evaluation of contrition, temporal penalties and take a rigorist attitude towards sin. Whereas sermons that represent the confessor as healer focus on the guilt of sin, the confessor's role in effecting the transition from sin to grace and take an absolutionist stance towards forgiveness. The significance of these images is further explained:

> Reflecting and reinforcing local religious sensibilities, the way in which penitence was taught, including the images used for the confessor, seems to have influenced the way people responded to Protestant ideas. Broadly speaking those trained on rigorist sermons with their stern portrayal of the confessor as a judge were more apt to respond positively to Luther's denunciation of confessors as 'inquisitorial tyrants'. People in areas where absolutionist preaching was frequently heard tended to retain Catholicism and to continue to value its sacramental forgiveness.[18]

The images of Camillo and Paulina as healers of the soul might suggest that we should expect an emphasis upon Leontes' guilt, Paulina's role in effecting the transition from guilt to a sense of forgiveness and, lastly, that the attainment and articulation of absolution will be pronounced. Whilst *The Winter's Tale* was obviously composed and performed within a controlled and censored dramaturgical environment dominated by the Protestant state, Thayer's theory also intimates that we should expect a Catholic inflected, that is a relatively traditional, depiction of the process of repentance, forgiveness and renewal.

Paulina's gender should not be seen as a difficulty in aligning her with the image of the confessor as healer. Thayer notes that Meffreth, a Swiss author of model

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[17] Anne Thayer, 'Judge and Doctor: Images of the Confessor in Printed Model Sermon Collections, 1450-1520', in PAR, pp. 10-29.
[18] PAR, p. 24.

sermons, 'compares the confessor to a midwife delivering the penitent of [...] sin'.[19] However, Paulina's approach to confession underlines the fact that Thayer's theory rests on a question of emphasis only. Paulina demonstrates a rigorist attitude toward Leontes, both in her imposing language and her implied questioning of the quality of his sorrow for his sins. Yet, the depiction of the actual confessional process Leontes undergoes, accords with Thayer's characterization of the healing confessor, in that the play employs an absolutionist climax, in a last scene, where, as will be discussed, issues of forgiveness, both perceived and manifest, are vital. In the meantime, to return to Paulina, she embarks on her role saying,

> [...] I
> Do come with words as medicinal as true,
> Honest, as either, to purge him of that humour
> That presses him from sleep. (2.3.36-38)

Like Camillo, Paulina's role as confessatrix is characterised conventionally as akin to the healer's. Yet the powerful image of the humour that 'presses' Leontes, so that he is too suffocated to sleep, recalls a less comforting association: that of the Catholic Church's infamous method of encouraging the confession of heresy by piling weights on the chest of the accused, that is the *peine forte et dure.* [20] Paulina's forthright approach, of 'purging' Leontes' with words, might be 'inquisitorial' or 'tyrannical' in its potency, but, like the Roman Church's, her intention is the restoration of purity and truth. [21] This image embroils Paulina immediately in the oppositional, sometimes subversively so, thematic and linguistic tropes that are at the heart of the play, as Anne Barton observed.[22] The pairing of antithetical terms in 2.3 is, conspicuously, 'only superficially logical': 'free' is matched with 'jealous' (l.29); 'medicinal' with 'true'(l.37); 'honest' with 'mad' (l.70-1). Furthermore, the

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[19] PAR, p. 21.

[20] The Church was prohibited from shedding blood so, during the period of the Inquisition, favoured methods of torture that did not actually split the skin. In the Elizabethan period, the state ironically used the same methods against those who maintained silence when charged with a felony (often cases where the accusation was of harbouring Roman Catholic associates or priests). Those indicted could not be tried if they refused to plead. Lack of trial meant estates and possessions could not be confiscated by the state, and thus could be bequeathed to dependants. The penalty in such cases for the untried accused, however, was a gruesome death by means of *peine forte et dure.* The image was obviously favoured by Shakespeare who uses it figuratively in *Ado* (3.1.76), *Lr* (4.3.25), *MM* (5.1.520), *Oth* (3.4.163), *R2* (3.4.72), *RJ* (1.1.182), *Troil* (3.2.217-18) and *TGV* (3.1.19). For a discussion of Shakespeare's use of this image see K. B. Danks, 'Shakespeare and "Peine Forte et Dure"', *Notes & Queries*, 199 (1954), 377-9.

[21] See Luther's denunciation of confessors as such in quotation above (Thayer, 2000).

[22] Barton (1999), p. 37 (quoted above).

oppositional tropes of loyalty and betrayal, justice and tyranny occur so repeatedly in this scene, and in a variety of contexts, groupings and amplifications, that their meanings begin to slip and merge into one another. From line 70 onwards these terms are used in a bewildering series of connections: with religious belief, the state and crown, marriage, family and individual integrity. Thus, Paulina returns Leontes' accusation of treachery by accusing the king in turn of tyrannous 'weak-hing'd fancy', which she then terms a type of self-betrayal, (2.3. 83-9). Again, when Leontes repeats his threat to have Paulina burnt, she replies,

> I care not:
> It is an heretic that makes the fire,
> Not she which burns in't. (2.3 113-5)

The rapid alternations from treachery, to tyranny, to heresy results in a blurring of the relative positions that inhere in their signification. By liberating the term heretic from its strictly doctrinal usage and conflating it with oppressive authority, Paulina further implies the relativity of such significations, a relativity that had surely become disturbingly apparent to contemporary audiences when both Protestants, under Mary I, and Catholics, under Elizabeth I, had been burnt as heretics at the stake in the recent past, with both parties claiming to have God on their side. By reversing the conventional doctrinal usage of the term 'heretic', Paulina shifts the emphasis on to a privileged and alternative moral system, one to which, she implies, she has access. If it is the 'heretic that makes the fire', then the Church or state (and the two were practically synonymous in post-Reformation England) are in error, the heresy perhaps residing in their lack of the primary Christian virtue of charity. By the same token 'true' faith must reside in 'she which burns'. It would be a short step to an allegorical reading of Paulina's role by relating it to sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century recusant history, where specifically women were often responsible for the preservation and furtherance of the Catholic faith.[24] Where some

[24] See Marie B. Rowlands, 'Recusant women 1560-1640', in *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, ed., Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985) for an account of specifically female recusancy in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods. See also Sarah L. Bastow, ''Worth nothing, But Very Wilful': Catholic Recusant Women of Yorkshire, 1536-1642', *Recusant History*, 25 (Oct. 2001), 591-603.

critics have suggested that Paulina's 'liberated' role is imagined in this female recusant context, this should perhaps be qualified, with Lutheran views on the 'priesthood of believers' being taken into account. The papal Bull *Exsurge Domine* of 1520, promulgated against Martin Luther, condemned his thinking in forty-one propositions. The thirteenth declares Luther to assert, 'In the sacrament of penance and remission of guilt the pope or a bishop does no more than the least of all priests; moreover when there is no priest, any Christian would serve as well, even if such a one were a woman or a boy'.[25] In her priest-like role, Paulina is essentially claiming a superior morality, one that avers a tyrannical lack of Christian charity and love in such barbaric acts as burning at the stake. The significance of this image is further enhanced when one considers that Leontes' sin is the sin of jealousy, a branch of envy. In the Catholic system, the seven deadly sins are traditionally opposed by their contrary virtues and, derived from Prudentius's *Psychomachia* (*c*.410), the sin of jealousy is opposed by that of charity or brotherly love.[26] In this way Paulina's memorable image concisely pinpoints Leontes' malaise and powerfully insinuates its exact antidote.

Paulina's confessorial relationship with Leontes, like that of Camillo's, is subject to the destabilising pressure of the inequality of social status and power. Leontes, initially at least, repeatedly 'pulls rank' in an attempt to silence Paulina. But Paulina embodies the vociferous quality associated with confession originating in its etymology and will not be silenced.[27] Where Camillo's role of confessor was continually compromised and threatened by Leontes, Paulina parries each attempt at wresting her role from her with short, direct reiterations, contradictions and confutations: 'I say good queen' (2.3.59), 'Not so' (2.3.68), 'Nor I; nor any' (2.3.83), 'It is yours' (2.3.95). Paulina's role is further bolstered by what may be described as a 'listing characteristic' evident in her speech that is peculiarly appropriate to the confessor's role. Confessions would traditionally take the form of a list of prescribed questions and in turn the confessant would enumerate their sins in the same

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[25] See Barton (1961), p. 117.

[26] See *Prudentius*, ed. and trans., H. J. Thomson, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1953; repr. 1961) and Macklin Smith *Prudentius' 'Psychomacia'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 130-1, 168-194.

[27] The *OED* lists the verb 'confess' as originating in late Middle English, from Old French *confesser*, from Latin *confessus*, past participle of *confiteri*, ''con - intensive + fatērī, fass - to utter [...] prob. from the same root as fārī to speak, utter; cf. [...] L. fātus spoken, fātum utterance, fātāri (freq.) to speak much''. <http://www.OED.com> [accessed July, 2005].

sequential manner. Thus when Paulina denies treachery her language is structured as an inventory:

> Nor I; Nor any
> But one that's here, and that's himself; for he,
> The sacred honour of himself, his queen's,
> His hopeful son's, his babe's, betrays to slander (2.3.82-5)

Immediately after this speech there follows a catalogue of the ways in which the baby Perdita resembles her father. Again, in Act 3, when Paulina first confronts Leontes with the need to atone for his faults, the same technique is noticeable:

> What studied torments, tyrant hast for me?
> What wheels? Racks? Fires? What flaying? Boiling?
> In leads or oils? What old or newer torture (3.2.175-7)

This partially asyndetic cataloguing lends an emphatic quality to Paulina's words that conveys her moral outrage and establishes her moral authority, doing so in a way that is strongly associated with the linguistic mode of confession. Perhaps predictably then, another notable aspect of the presentation of Paulina is her apparently unforgiving and relentless reminders to Leontes of his sins, starting in Act 3, scene 2 as soon as he displays the first stirrings of repentance (l.153) and almost to the end of Act 5. Some critics have interpreted this as harshly rigorist or absurdly comical.[28] Yet, by provoking shame, it might be that Paulina conscientiously advances the penitential process; as can be seen in Cardinal Allen's *Treatise* on confession, shame was frequently viewed as a helpful antidote to pride and as an aid to self-knowledge and contrition.[29] In this way, Paulina's regular allusions to Leontes' sins may be more sympathetically interpreted as a means of both achieving contrition and contributing to making satisfaction for his offences. This view is reinforced by Leontes admitting 'Thou didst speak but well/ When most the truth' (3.2.232). Thus, where Camillo's role as confessor is evidently established, but ultimately collapses under the weight of Leontes' misconceived jealousy, Paulina has to struggle to gain acceptance as the king's confessor but ultimately proves successful in the role. Her progress is manifest in the nomenclature applied to Paulina by Leontes. In Act 2 she

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[28] Pafford (1963) says Paulina, 'exhibits [...] calculated tactlessness' p. lxxv. S.L. Bethell says of Paulina, 'She is a scold, presented as a comic figure'. S.L. Bethell, '*The Winter's Tale': A Study* (London: Staples Press, 1947), p. 59.

[29] '[Shame] is exceeding commodious to breake the pride of mans harte, & to make him knowe himself. And, if that any burdē of shamfalnesse appeare in ŷ uttering of his sinnes, he maye learne to take it gladly as some worthie payne for his offences, and some peece of recompence and satisfaction for the same.' TDI P, pp. 247-8.

is a 'witch' (2.3.68), a 'bawd' (2.3.69), a 'dame Partlet [...and] crone' (2.3. 75-6). By the end of the play she is, 'true' (5.1.81), 'grave and good' (5.3.1) and 'sweet Paulina' (5.3.70). The respective positions of Camillo and Paulina can be regarded as an instance of what Blissett refers to as a 'pervasive symmetry like the positive and negative of a photograph'.[30]

Performing 'a saint-like sorrow'

Given the multiple lines of symmetry or many equivalencies evident in *The Winter's Tale*, it might be expected that Leontes' penance would demonstrate a similar equivalency: that it would express a reparation appropriate and equal to the sins committed. However, consideration of this aspect of the play reveals a complex picture. Initially it is noticeable that Leontes' repentance is as sudden and total at the moment of the news of Mamillius' death, (3.2.146-7) as the onset of his jealous delusions were at the outset of the play. Yet his swift expressions of regret and pledges to make amends in 3.2, and his facile expression of guilt and his exclusion of Mamillius, Perdita and Antigonus from those he has wronged, provoke Alastair Fowler to question the quality of this confession, asking, 'Has Leontes been too glib in his remorse?'. [31] He cites the facts that Leontes attempts no reconciliation with Polixenes even after sixteen years (he does not make any visit to Bohemia); he does not go to see Hermione when she 'dies' as Paulina encouraged (3.2.204-5); and shows such reluctance in the transformation scene that Paulina reproves him then (5.3.107). [32] Fowler's judgement of Leontes' shortcomings as a penitent, as well as his reading of Paulina's exacting attitude and the long separation of Leontes and Hermione as necessary (so that Leontes may achieve a true state of contrition[33]), lead him to conclude that audiences are being shown the 'slow stages of attrition,

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[30] Blissett (1971) p. 55.

[31] Alastair Fowler, 'Leontes' Contrition and the Repair of Nature', *Essays and Studies*, 31 (1978), 36-64, p. 50.

[32] Fowler, in fact, is mistaken in this assertion. Leontes does accord to Paulina's wish for him to see Hermione's body a little later in the same scene: 'Prithee, bring me/ To the dead bodies of my queen and son'. (3.2.234-5).

[33] Paulina's 'harsh' attitude is commented upon above. It might be that the separation of Leontes and Hermione should be more accurately viewed as contributing to Leontes' satisfaction, not his contrition. It was a traditional idea in penitential thinking that, in cases of serious sin, the penitent should be removed from their spouse and not be 'at one', in order to maintain the efficacy of the penance. For example *Columbanus' Penitential* advises: 'For the laity must know, that in the period of penance assigned to them by the priests it is not lawful for them to know their wives, except after the conclusion of the penance; for penance ought not to be halved.' Pierre J. Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 22.

contrition and repentance'.[34] However, it is worth situating these terms, that his reading depends upon, more exactly with regard to their historical usage and signification. Conventionally speaking, the three parts of the sacrament of penance are not 'attrition, contrition and repentance' as Fowler has it, but contrition, confession and satisfaction. This tripartite division rests on the distinction between *culpa*, broadly speaking, the guilt generated by offences committed against God and/or your neighbour, which is remitted by true contrition and the acknowledgement of sin in confession; and *poena*, that is the temporal punishment assigned by the confessor. Satisfaction has more to do with the latter term and is concerned with the need to make restitution, 'a recompense equal to the damage caused by the offence, a full and equal payment'.[35] In the late medieval period, satisfaction was increasingly perceived as a remedy for time otherwise spent in purgatory, which could be remitted through indulgences or otherwise modified by a perception of its medicinal or reformative potential. John Bossy argues that the Roman law concept of *satisfactio* further compromised the traditions of full penitential satisfaction. It emphasised the *satis* - 'enough' - aspect of the concept where the offending party need do just enough to address the situation and prevent any further action. This kind of satisfaction does not aim at an equivalent restitution, but may offer a token or gesture sufficient to avert any consequences or action ensuing from the offended party. As Bossy states, in the early modern period, 'people were well up in Roman Law, and it showed in the matter of satisfaction'.[36] Thus, he continues, 'We come to the sixteenth century, in a Renaissance intellectual climate where the notion of retribution for sin was coming to be thought a barbarous anachronism',[37] and argues that the concept of satisfaction 'gently faded' with its practice eventually disappearing by the eighteenth century. According to Bossy, satisfaction was progressively more often made a point of honour (this is the time the duel began to be practised) and might be seen as vindicative, in the sense of disclosing the truth about the offence or offender.

Bossy's argument demonstrates the continuing relevance of the concept of satisfaction, and whether it can, or needs to, be fully achieved. Certainly, the question is doubtful in *The Winter's Tale*. Corresponding with the 'principle of

[34] Fowler (1978), p. 51.
[35] John Bossy, 'Practices of Satisfaction, 1215-1700', in RRR, pp.106-118, p.107.
[36] Bossy (2004), p. 107.
[37] Bossy (2004), p. 108.

equivalence' referred to above, Paulina's first thought is that a full satisfaction is an impossibility:

> Do not repent these things, for they are heavier
> Than all thy woes can stir [...]
> [...] A thousand knees
> Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting
> Upon a barren mountain, and still winter
> In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
> To look that way thou wert. (3.2.208-214)

The weight of Leontes' sins can never be balanced, seemingly, by any remorse he may demonstrate. Even the severe penitential behaviour associated with the ancient Church, such as fasting and self-castigation, is apparently insufficient. Yet that sufficiency remains a preoccupation of all the characters involved.[38] Cleomenes later tells Leontes,

> You have done enough, and have perform'd
> A saint-like sorrow: no fault could you make,
> Which you have not redeem'd; indeed, paid down
> More penitence than done trespass. (5.1.1-4)

Whether this is in fact the case remains in doubt. Paulina (whose authority to make such judgements is inferred at 5.1.51-2 and again at 5.1.69-71) neither confirms nor denies it, although her direction of the last scene implies confirmation. Weighed against the uncertainty about whether Leontes has, in fact, 'done enough', is the fact of the reunion of (almost all) the original court in the last scene. This scene implies a reconciliation between all parties. If understood as a culmination of the social aspect of confession, (where the previously expelled sinner is readmitted and reconciled to the community, that is, the early Church's practice of confession which was so influential in Reformist thinking), then, it might be assumed, Leontes has performed sufficient penance.[39] Certainly the audience, as an extension of the community, is reconciled to Leontes at this point, as are Polixenes and the courtiers. Michael O'Connell draws attention to the way in which the ending of the scene also implicates the audience as participant in it.[40] As Paulina makes her characteristically assertive defence of her actions, 'those that think it is unlawful business/ I am about,

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[38] For example, Hermione accuses Leontes, 'You scarce can right me thoroughly [...]'(2.1.99); and Leontes pursues 'shame perpetual' (3.3.238).Camillo doubts the possibility of Leontes recovery (5.3.49-53). Polixenes wants to 'take off' Leontes' grief (5.3.55).

[39] See Chapter 1, 1.2.

[40] Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 139-142.

let them depart, (l.96-7), O'Connell imagines the audience too being bound by the instruction. Having been given the choice to leave the theatre, the audience listens to the music that strikes up and witnesses, with Leontes, the statue coming to life. The audience is implicated, like Leontes and the court community, in the apparently miraculous redemption of trespass. Thus the audience is involved in this scene of forgiveness in a way that, as mentioned above, is consistent with the forgiveness of penitents and their reconciliation with the community in early Church practices of confession. However, Leontes' reunion with his principal 'victim', Hermione, is less certain in its expression of forgiveness. Hermione pointedly states that she 'preserv'd/ [herself ...] to see the issue' (5.3.127), of the Oracle's fulfilment, rather than to be restored to her husband (although her gestures indicate the beginnings of propitiation [5.3.111]). From Hermione's perspective, this scene might be understood more thoroughly in terms of Bossy's notion of satisfaction, encompassing the secular notion of the token gesture that aims to vindicate rather than make full restitution. Starting in the courtroom of Act 3 and through Leontes' reconciliation with the variously wronged parties, ultimately Hermione is cleared of all wrong-doing and her honour restored, concern for which was the primary motivation for her self-preservation, as she was at pains to make clear at the outset: 'no life,/ I prize it not a straw, but for mine honour/ Which I would free' (3.2.109-11). In other words, for Hermione, the last scene might represent an ordeal in its medieval sense, revealing the truth, and expressing her, now acknowledged, innocent status.

However, if the critical focus is returned to the context of Leontes' performance of penance, then the picture that emerges might be usefully understood by reference to Thayer's theory of the images of confessors in sermon collections. Images of confessors as healers, it will be recalled, are usually associated with an emphasis, in sermons, upon the guilt of sin and the movement from sin to a state of grace. Thus, in the opening scene of Act 5, although not required by Paulina who acts as the spiritual director of Leontes' penance, there is an extended confession spontaneously made by Leontes which is full and contrite. After sixteen years of 'shame perpetual' there can be no doubt of Leontes' sincerity, and, unlike his swift and partial confession in Act 3, scene 2, this confession addresses the wrongs done to all 'victims'. Leontes freely admits that he 'kill'd' Hermione (l.17); remembers Antigonus (l.40); acknowledges he lost a couple (Mamillius and Perdita) due to 'all mine own folly' (l.134) and

admits 'the wrongs I have done thee', (l.147) to Polixenes and Camillo. Again, Thayer's theory suggests that the confessor's part in absolution will be emphasised, as will the perception and manifestation of a sense of forgiveness itself. Paulina's prominent direction of the last scene is clear. Forgiveness, too, receives a spectacular treatment in what is an astonishing dénouement.[41] Paulina's declaration that Leontes' faith 'is required' (5.3.95) to bring about the restoration to life of the queen establishes the relationship between the restored state of grace, and faith (its precondition and consequence) and what it can achieve: Hermione's revivification. Hermione's renewal can therefore be regarded as the wonderfully manifest expression of Leontes' own renewal of spiritual grace and thus a visual (or sacramental) sign of his absolution. There are two further implications of recognising this last scene as the performance of an absolution for Leontes. Firstly, if Leontes is absolved then, clearly, his penance may be presumed as sufficient and complete and therefore that its notionally excessive duration of sixteen years was necessary. Such a demanding requirement for making satisfaction for sin implies a fundamentalist return to early Church practice that perhaps comments implicitly on the general Protestant calls for such a return in other areas of religious practice. Secondly, the efficacy of Leontes' penance is made to rest on whether he *believes* himself forgiven: it is only through his faith that renewal can be effected. This suggests the extent to which Protestant inroads are made into what is a largely Catholic performance of penance in the play. As discussed in the previous chapter, whilst Catholic doctrine did assume the need for faith in the repentant Christian seeking forgiveness, faith was, in a sense, appropriated by Protestants, expressed in the central tenet of justification by faith. By making faith the precondition for Hermione's revitalization the issue is emphasised in a way previously unprecedented in the Catholic system. The memorable image of Hermione's invocation: 'You gods, look down/ And from your sacred vials pour your graces/ Upon my daughter's head' recalls the same image evoked by the Old Man in *Dr Faustus*. Where, in that play, there was insufficient faith to claim the grace on offer, in *The Winter's Tale* the matter of faith has been reconciled with the traditional means of making restitution and seeking forgiveness.

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[41] Many critics have recorded the spell-binding effect of the last scene on audiences. See *Shakespeare 'The Winter's Tale': A Casebook*, ed., Kenneth Muir, (London: Macmillan, 1968) for recorded accounts of audiences' reactions to the scene.

While, therefore, the principle of equivalence finds expression in the discourse of confession in *The Winter's Tale*, the relationship between these two aspects of the drama is a dialectical one. The play utilises aspects of thinking about confession to both create and express equivalence, such as notions of retribution, atonement and, of course, the embodiment of confessional practice enacted in the figures of Camillo and Paulina. However, much as Barton says the rules of antithesis are subtly distorted in the language of the last plays, so too are the governing principles of the practice of confession and penance in *The Winter's Tale*. Barton's further comment about the metaphysical nature of 'heterogeneous ideas [...] yoked together by violence', suggests the analogous challenge faced to assimilate new ideas, both religious and secular, that undo the established certainties of pre-Reformation religious thinking on confession. Distortions in the traditional equivalencies of confession are discernible in Leontes' penitential process. Secular ideas begin to undermine these established doctrines, with notions of judicial reparation (as Bossy has it), as well as canonical ones, shaping the presentation of Leontes' reunion with Hermione. Similarly, the privileging of Protestant understandings of the work of faith in obtaining a sense of forgiveness also encroaches on what can be understood as a visual expression of absolution enacted in the last scene. Thus the play utilises the discourse of confession to explore fundamental questions: such as how to atone for and rectify suffering caused, how to live with oneself in the shameful recognition of such mistakes, how to restore and renew familial, communal and spiritual relationships. The play re-negotiates the conventional solutions to such questions offered by confessional discourse, taking account of contemporary secular and Reformist movements, and reiterates them for a contemporary audience. Such profound issues are the bulwarks of theatrical constructions and they are explored in this play by yoking together the mutable discourses of the time, both secular and creedal, to improvise novel, sometimes inconsistent, but nevertheless meaningful enquiries.

Confession as a Self-Validating Discourse in *Othello*

'But words are words; I never yet did hear
That the bruis'd heart was pierced through the ear'

Just as the last section showed how the language and concepts of confession are integral to *The Winter's Tale* and its structure, so this section will consider how the genre of confession is appropriated and transformed into the dramatic domain of *Othello*, seen in the use of the language, structure and generic conventions of confession within the play. *Othello* draws upon the associations of confession as a rite undergone by hitherto excluded penitents who seek admittance or re-admittance to their social group, found in the early Church practice of *exomologesis*. For *Othello* *exomologesis* is particularly pertinent, since, as outlined in Chapter 1 above (see section 1.4), this process was undertaken by an apostate in order to be re-admitted into the Christian community and was the earliest formalised mechanism designed to recuperate those who were excluded. It was from this that the system of confession and penance gradually evolved and it was this institutionalised format that fed into the tradition of confession as a self-determining and supposedly truthful form of speech, one which authenticated those who were excluded: the Christian 'Other'.

The assumption of truthfulness and sincerity in confession became an important aspect of it. Whilst religious confession, and even more so juridical confession, may be undermined by circumstantial limitations such as coercion or expediency, the ideal of truthfulness remains a potent assumption that underlies its function in both contexts. Religious confession, of faith or sin, presupposes authenticity - its 'truth claim' rests on the confessant's sincerity, as Dorothea von Mücke recognises: 'a profession of faith demands to be respected in its integrity; to be taken as utterly sincere'.[42] It is a primary articulation of the self, with the subject of the enunciation also being the speaking subject and as such becomes self-validating. Indeed, individuals become in a sense authenticated by the discourse of that which they confess concerning themselves. Moreover, when one confesses one's belief, whether of faith, or of oneself, no one else is qualified to question its actual authenticity; although it may be interrogated, judged and absolved, the fact of its status *as* belief cannot be contested. Pragmatically, the doctrine of religious confession is also

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[42] Dorothea von Mücke, 'Profession/Confession', *New Literary History*, 34 (Spring, 2003), 257-275, p. 257.

predicated upon the truth of that which is confessed. A false confession of one's sins would be an illogical act; penitents would presumably only avail themselves of confession in the certainty of eternal damnation without it. The privacy of confession, the intimacy of the relationship between confessor and penitent, as well as the sanctity of the seal of confession, operate to encourage and legitimise the authenticity of what is confessed. As Diarmaid MacCulloch observes, "one-to-one confession in total confidentiality is potentially one of the most intimate and individual relationships constructed by humanity".[43]

Othello's position as 'other' is occasioned by virtue of his ethnicity. Although Othello's military achievements earn him Venetian esteem, the extent of any sense of equality or belonging is severely restricted, as is evident in Brabantio's outraged and racist response to the idea of Othello as a partner to his daughter: 'if such actions may have passage free/ Bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be' (1.2.98-9).[44] This lack of acceptance is countered by the way in which Christianity is emphasised in the construction of Othello's character, since Christian doctrine ideally encompasses the levelling premise of equality of all before God, as Paul asserts in his letter to the Galatian church: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28). As a Christian convert, therefore, Othello able to assert his equality and there is a conspicuous use of language which proliferates with Christian vocabulary and scriptural terms, emphasising, in effect, Othello's Christian credentials.[45] Furthermore, when asserting his authority and stature to gain control of a seemingly volatile disturbance in 2.3, it is to a shared sense of Christian community that Othello appeals: 'Are we turned Turks? And to ourselves do that/ Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?/ For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl' (2.3.166-9). Of Othello's status as a Christian there is little doubt, as Iago explicitly refers to it at 2.3.338-9: 'To win the Moor, were't to renounce his baptism,/ All seals and symbols of redeemed sin'. Confession, as a Christian practice, forms part of this conscious

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[43] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 412.

[44] This and all subsequent quotations from *Othello* ed. E. A. J. Honigmann, Arden Shakespeare, 3rd edn (London: Thomas Nelson, 1999; repr. 2002).

[45] For example 1.3.124-5, 2.1. 193, 2.3.165-8, 3.3.179-194, 4.2.48-55, much of 5.2 See Richmond Noble, *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge and Use of The Book of Common Prayer* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935).

self-projection through Othello's language. In 1.3 the principals of Venice congregate to hear Othello's public confession of his 'unnatural' courtship of Desdemona. Othello starts by acknowledging that which is true, 'That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter/ It is true; true, I have married her'(1.3.79). Othello asserts that he is unable to adequately present himself due to the 'rudeness' of his speech. Rather the potency of his defence will rest upon its completeness and veracity, that he 'will a round unvarnished tale deliver' (1.3.91). Brabantio's response, the repeated accusation of unnaturalness, takes a potentially ambiguous form that is significant for the underlying sub-text of confessional discourse:

Brabantio It is a judgement maimed and most imperfect
That will confess perfection so could err
Against all rules of nature, and must be driven
To find out practices of cunning hell
Why this should be. I therefore vouch again [...]
Duke To vouch this is no proof (1.3.100-8)

If the first two lines are read against the metre, that is if the pause is placed after 'perfection', Brabantio's riposte could be read as contesting the confession of perfection, thus implying Othello does not know what a decorous confession is and further positioning him as the outsider. The passage as a whole raises the issues of veracity of speech and of what is 'natural', plausible and proven. But Brabantio finely discriminates between the 'maimed' and 'imperfect' *judgement* lying behind the confession that 'perfection so could err', and the *confession* itself of such a belief. What is open to question is both Othello's 'judgement' and Brabantio's assertion or 'vouching', whilst the veracity of confession itself remains unchallenged. Now that the issue of truth has been raised, the form of Othello's assertion of his sincerity is notable:

[...] as truly as to heaven
I do confess the vices of my blood
So justly to your grave ears I'll present
How I did thrive in this fair lady's love
And she in mine. (1.3.124-8)

Othello's appeal to shared notions that should be common to a Christian community is again emphasised. The predicate comparative: 'as truly [...]' clearly invokes the traditional religious conception of confession as a genuine form of speech. As noted

earlier, confession could not function unless it were presumed sincere, truthful and as complete as the penitent could manage – the doctrinal prerequisites necessary to receiving absolution. Furthermore, the omniscience of God, to whom one's sins are known anyway, made insincere or deliberately incomplete confessions doctrinally illogical. Yet, whilst taking up the religious notion of confessional self-accusation, Othello, in fact, twists his 'confession' into its opposite: self-vindication. As a Moor whose difference is set against his Christianity, Othello's appeal to the veracity of confession is an attempt to appropriate the ideal of this discourse as truthful, in effect utilising it both as a recuperative mechanism for one who stands persecuted or accused and as an authentication of the narration of self, for one who is constantly mistrusted as Other.

The appropriation of confessional ideology continues to be utilised in several ways throughout the play. Iago ironically impersonates the penitent's practice of self-accusation to construct a humbly honest character before Othello, acknowledging his 'sinful' habit of fabricating 'faults':

> I do beseech you, [...]
> - As I confess it is my nature's plague
> To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
> Shapes faults that are not – that your wisdom [...]
> Would take no notice [...] (3.3.148-153)

Iago, of course, wishes to manoeuvre Othello into a confessor-like role of interrogation, manipulating him into drawing the 'truth' about Desdemona from his ostensibly reluctant subaltern. Iago also advises Cassio, in seeking Desdemona's help, to 'Confess yourself freely to her' (2.3.313) and, likewise, Desdemona reassures Cassio that in pleading his cause with her husband he will find 'his board a shrift'(3.3.24) and later informs Othello that Cassio is indeed 'penitent' (3.3.63).

Most notably, even in the fourth act, when finally Iago openly asserts Desdemona has committed the mortal sin of adultery, Othello needs to hear a confession from Cassio and his desire to remain confident in the truth of confession is clearly manifest. Othello's fragmented response of nine lines contains four references to confession, before he finally breaks down and falls into a trance. Almost his first words upon regaining consciousness are to ask pathetically, 'Did he confess it?' (4.1.64). And later in the fourth act, Desdemona, much like Othello's earlier

'confession' as exculpation, adopts the conventions and form of confession but inverts their purpose, in an '*anti*-confession', as it were, to reinforce her assertion of her innocence:

> Here I kneel:
> If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love
> Either in discourse of thought or actual deed,
> Or that mine eyes, mine ears or any sense
> Delighted them in any other form,
> Or that I do not yet, and ever did,
> And ever will
> [...]
> love him dearly,
> Comfort forswear me! (4.2.153-161)

Assuming the kneeling posture of the penitent, Desdemona's speech resonates with the enumeration of sin as it is prescribed in confession manuals. She refers to her 'will' or intent to sin, an important aspect of confession where intentions were a primary concern; she 'confesses' to no conscious sins of thought, word or deed, a discrimination made by confessors;[46] and she accounts for her five senses, by which she has also *not* sinned, another orthodox component of a well-structured and full confession. Thus the play appropriates confession to exploit in several ways its ideological significance as the discourse of truth and sincerity.

The thematic conventions of confession are apparent in *Othello* also. Confession is fundamentally about sin and a necessary prerequisite to its expression is a grasp of what constitutes sin. The devil was in the detail, with the classification of virtue and vice being extremely elaborate and exemplified in such tomes as the medieval *The Book of Vices and Virtues*.[47] This elaborate system is implicit repeatedly in the moral casuistry of *Othello*. For example, Othello's incredulous response to Iago's suggestion of an innocent naked coupling makes reference to the careful discriminations of sin found in this scheme,

> *Othello* Naked in bed Iago, and not mean harm?
> It is hypocrisy against the devil:
> They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,
> The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.

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[46] For example, see the *Confiteor* quoted at the beginning of the Introduction.
[47] *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed., W. Nelson Francis, (London: EETS, 1942).

Iago So they do nothing, 'tis a venial slip (4.1.5-9)

The issue of virtue, the avoidance of occasions of temptation and the reference to 'venial' sin, in contrast to mortal sin, all explicitly use the language of the traditional genre of confessional discourse. Furthermore, the several references to animals that traditionally symbolised certain of the deadly sins reiterates the generic genealogy of the language.[48] The irony of Othello's threat to Iago, 'be sure to prove my love a whore [...] Or..Thou hadst been better have been born a dog' (3.3.362) is perhaps intensified by the knowledge that a dog was often used to represent the second sin of *invidia*, or envy. Likewise, Othello's preference to be a toad rather than a cuckold in 3.3.274 takes on heightened meaning when it is recognised that images of toads were frequently used to denote jealousy (a branch of envy) in medieval literature. As such, Othello as a jealous 'toad' is far more accurate a description than a cuckold, which, of course, he is not. Similarly, E.A.J. Honigmann discusses the many allusions to Othello's poor eyesight, [49] a defect associated with the primary sin of *superbia* or pride, in *The Book of Vices and Virtues*: 'For þan synne of pride is wel perilous, for it blyndeþ a man þat he ne knoweþ not hymself, no seeþ not hymsel'.[50]

The transformation of confessional style and form is also evident in Iago's dramatic machinations, as a manipulative strategy of his duplicity. Iago's attempt at convincing Roderigo of Desdemona's adultery both accords to generic conventions and, in exposing them, transgresses their assumption of veracity as merely a conventional assumption, revealing their vulnerability to exploitation. In Act 2, Iago claims the educative role of the confessor and advises Roderigo, 'Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be instructed.' (2.1.219). Iago's instruction is of the progressive intimacies of the sixth deadly sin of *luxuria* or lust as described in medieval literature. In *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, for example, the temptation of lust progresses through five stages: it begins with 'foolish looks', then 'foul words', 'foul touching', kissing and lastly, 'Comeþ man to do þe dede'[51]. Accordingly, Iago speaks of how Desdemona's 'eye must be fed' (2.1.223-4), the fact that Cassio is 'voluble' and of their touching hands. Iago boldly sums up, 'Lechery, by this hand:

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[48] See Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1952) Appendix 1 p. 243.
[49] Honigmann (1999), pp. 17-19.
[50] *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, p. 11, l.25
[51] ibid, p. 43.

an index and obscure prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts'(1.255-6). Iago concludes in a manner markedly akin to *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, as he says, 'Villainous thoughts, Roderigo: when these mutualities so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and main exercise' (1.258-260). Iago thus acts as the parodic voice of the discourse of confession. His parody of the confessional genre is not good-humoured, rather it is sardonic and contemptuous, a malicious exploitation of confessional morality to manipulate Othello's responses. In an ironic parody of the healing of confession, Iago apostrophises, 'Work on/ My medicine, work!' (4.1.44-5) and similarly adopts the language of confession to pretend to a moral integrity so that Cassio's behaviour is 'vice' (1.168) and Desdemona's is 'iniquity'. In contrast, Othello occupies a more direct relational position to the genre of confessional discourse. He has apparently internalized its ideological assumptions – that one who confesses belief or sin is sincere and that what is confessed is truthful. Iago, however, parodies this assumption, the 'not said' of Othello's discourse, by exaggerating it and exploiting it. His exploitation is achieved through the assertion of plausible motives, opportunity of occasion and making his accusations accord to the morphology of sin, in order to build a convincing narrative of, in this case, adultery. The blueprint of confession is thus parodically conformed to in order to lend credibility to his 'second-hand' or 'ventriloquized' confession of Desdemona's sin.

So confessional discourse lends itself to dramatic transposition in *Othello* in two main respects. First, confession, as the recuperative mechanism developed by the Church to reconcile those it had excluded, is peculiarly fitted to explore the position of Othello as Other. Second, the ideological status of confession as synonymous with truth lends authenticity to the defence of those mistrusted or accused. However, where Othello's adoption of confessional discourse is ingenuous, Iago's parody of it is altogether more calculating and exploited as a strategy by which to destroy his superior. The final scene, like *The Winter's Tale*, assembles the main participants in Cyprus in a communal act of partial *rapprochement*. Iago apparently has disclosed Othello's request for him to murder Cassio and Othello confesses that that was so and asks Cassio's forgiveness. However, the ultimate revelation of Iago's duplicity is, ironically, not found in a truthful religious confession of wrongdoing, as Iago determines 'From this time forth I never will speak word' (5.2.303), but in the enforced confession brought about by torture, which is promised by Gratiano,

Brabantio's brother. Othello's last speech suggests that he now divests himself of his Christian persona. He wishes to be remembered as 'like the base Indian' (l.346), and pointedly recollects his pre-conversion self who murdered the Turk. Correspondingly, rather than choose a long penitence, as Leontes did, Othello opts for the non-Christian restitution of suicide. In the following chapter it is the acknowledgement of fault and the grounds and justice of reparation that are explored in the arenas of individual spirituality and communal relationships.

Chapter 6 - Performing Confession in *Measure for Measure*

'I'll teach you how you shall arraign your conscience
And try your penitence'

The dual images of the confessor as judge and healer, commonly found in the rhetoric of confessional discourse, suggest two of the purposes of confession: the judgement of sinfulness, and the forgiveness and redemption of sinners. As has been seen, confession is presented primarily as a discourse of healing in *The Winter's Tale*, emphasised in the language of disease and 'physic', the images of the confessor figures as healers and the revitalising drama of the last scene. This restorative capacity is further emphasised in the appropriations of confessional discourse in Othello's speech, that seem to claim a sense of shared community with the Christian Venetians, one that Iago parodies and exploits. In *Measure for Measure* it is not so much the redemptive capacity of confession that is emphasised, although this is certainly one important aspect of it performed by the Duke-Friar; rather the main focus shifts on to confession as an arena and exploration of the ethics of judgement, where faults are exposed and laid bare as threats to community which the ritual process of confession eventually restores.

In her analysis of *Measure for Measure* M.C. Bradbrook observes that 'in this play the problems are ethical, and concern conduct rather than belief [...] The method [...is] largely based upon the debate: not the massed public debate, but the naked antagonism of conflict'.[1] Whether conduct and belief can be divorced in this way may be doubtful; the perception of the pragmatic and quotidian is almost certainly shaped by ideological attitudes. However, Bradbrook's comment might be useful as a means of distinguishing between those beliefs that are consciously established and possessed, and those that are perhaps barely acknowledged, but nevertheless govern the *process* of ethical decision-making that is both generative and expressive of the subjective world of dramatic characters. Such perspectives encourage a reading of the play that understands it as a drama of moral casuistry: that is, the working out of ethical values and judgements through their performance. A concern with judgement,

[1] M. C. Bradbrook, 'Authority, Truth and Justice in 'Measure for Measure'', *Review of English Studies*, 17 (Oct., 1941), 385-399.

and principles of judgement, is signalled by the play's title, which is from the gospel of Matthew (7:1-5):

> Ivdge not, that ye be not iudged. For with what iudgement ye iudge, ye shal be iudged, and with what measure ye mette, it shal be measured to you againe.
>
> And why seest thou the mote, that is in thy brother's eye, and perceiuest not the beame that is in thine owne eyes?
>
> Hypocrite, first cast out the beame out of thine owne eye, and then shalt thou se clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brothers eye.[2]

The imperatives of the first part of this passage position the Christian as both generative and reflective of the judgement of God. It emphasises that judgement should be withheld until the 'beame' of misapprehension or fault is amended. In the context of other Gospel Scripture this faultless, ideal state, to be without sin and possess perfect perception, is unattainable in earthly life. Thus judging others is inherently unjust and should be left to divine omniscience. Yet judgements must be made when one is in a position of judgement, as a magistrate, for example, or another official capacity. This apparently irreconcilable dilemma suggests a necessary ethical qualification: where judgement of others is made, it must be tempered with mercy, in the recognition of essential human fallibility.[3] In the Geneva Bible (1560) there is a marginal gloss to the passage from Matthew: 'He commandeth, not to be curious or malicious to trye out, and condemne our neighbours fautes: for hypocrites hide their owne fautes, and seke not to amēde them, but are curious to reproue othes mens'.[4] In this gloss, the undefined connection or fraternity of 'brother[s]' in the biblical passage is notably interpreted in a communal context, as a warning against hypocrisy towards 'neighbours'. The biblical passage positions the '[br]other' in direct relation to the self, encouraging perception of the other, in a sense, as an extension of self, or as interchangeable with self. Yet this charitable Christian ethic assumes the possibility of both discerning one's self and that of the other, a possibility beset with all sorts of difficulties staged in the play.

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[2] *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, ed., Lloyd E. Berry. (Madison, MA: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). For Shakespearean references to the Geneva Bible specifically see Naseeb Shaheen, 'Shakespeare's Knowledge of the Bible – How Acquired', *Shakespeare Studies* 20 (1988), 210-212.

[3] This ethic is found repeatedly in Scripture, for example: 'Let him that is among you without sinne, cast the first stone at her' (John 8:7).

[4] Berry (1969).

Above all, the allusive title establishes a relation between the play and judgement specifically in the context of Christian religious ethics.

Huston Diehl points out that some critical interpretations of the play have tended to disregard the rigorously contested nature of religious doctrine and belief in early seventeenth-century England, although she proceeds to claim, 'Shakespeare [...] participates in [...] efforts to legitimate theatre by aligning it with the moderate Calvinism of the established English Church.'[5] Yet the equally contested critical interpretations of *Measure for Measure* point to the difficulty of attempting to relate any part of the Shakespearean canon to one particular creed of religious discourse. For every 'circulating' discourse at work in the plays, one may note another, inconsistent, or contradictory ideology in operation; the proliferation of critiques of *Measure for Measure* in relation to seventeenth-century religious history attests to the fact that this play is no exception.[6] The play's title, its casuistical structure and debate of ethical notions, its religious characters and language, encourage a perspective that is definitely religious, definitely Christian but not definitively of a singular Christian creed; as Lucio says, 'Grace is grace, despite of all controversy' (1.2.24).[7] However, that said, it is the case that this play is about judgement, 'the

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[5] 'To a surprising degree, scholars who focus on the play's religious dimension ignore the contested nature of religion in early modern England, preferring to speak of a universal Christianity in ways that obscure the controversies fracturing the Christian church during the Reformation'. Huston Diehl ''Infinite Space': Representation and Reformation in 'Measure for Measure'', *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 49 (Winter, 1998), 393-410, p. 394 & 397. Although to speak of an 'established Church' at this date also seems to obscure those controversies.

[6] For example, Victoria Hayne locates the play within the contemporary debate stimulated by Puritan calls for the death penalty for fornication and adultery, in 'Performing Social Practice: The Example of 'Measure for Measure'', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44 (Spring, 1993), 1-29. Stacy Magedanz discusses the conflict represented in Reformation debates between perceptions of public justice and spiritual forgiveness, specifically citing early modern Anabaptist perspectives. She analyses the figure of the Duke as a site of potential resolution to this debate, in 'Public Justice and Private Mercy in 'Measure for Measure'', *Studies in English Literature*, 44 (Spring, 2004), 317-333. L.R. Poos draws attention to practices derived from Catholic Roman law in the operation of the Church courts' hearings of cases of defamation. 'Sex, Lies, and the Church Courts of Pre-Reformation England' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 25 (Spring, 1995), 585-607. Margaret Scott examines the anomalies of English marriage contract law, locating the play's ambiguities in the confused and shifting attitudes manifest in the implementation and jurisdiction of marriage from Catholic pre-Reformation, to post-Tridentine Counter-Reformation, law. ''Our City' Institutions': Some Further reflections on the Marriage Contracts in 'Measure for Measure'' *English Literary History*, 49 (Winter, 1982), 790-804. B.J. and Mary Sokol, examine the early seventeenth-century debate between Sir Edward Coke and King James I representing the potential conflict between absolute monarchical power and the rule of law, made pertinent by debates in the Anglican Church about polity. 'Shakespeare and the English Equity Jurisdiction: The Merchant of Venice and the Two Texts of King Lear' *Review of English Studies,* New Series, Vol. 50 (Nov., 1999), 417-439.

[7] This and all subsequent quotations from *Measure for Measure*, ed., J.W. Lever, The Arden Shakespeare, (London: Methuen, 1903; 2nd edn repr. 1977).

terms/ For common justice' (1.1.10-11) and the occasion of religious judgement for Christians had been, in the Catholic system, confession. In the Reformation setting of seventeenth-century England confessional ideology became confused and complex.[8] Martin Luther had advocated the continuing confession of sin to a priest for those who were troubled by their consciences, but no longer regarded confession as a sacrament. The Calvinist Church continued institutionalised public and private confessions in the consistories, but this was not replicated in the English Church, although it was a pronounced aspect of the Scottish Kirk. Although confessions could still be made informally to a minister of the Anglican Church, the scrutiny of conscience in English Protestantism was achieved in an internalised introspection. Even those English Catholics who continued to practise auricular confession must have been influenced by the innovations of missionary Jesuit confession that emphasised it as a spiritual devotion as much as a sacrament. This diverse and multi-faceted complexity of confessional ideologies is exploited as *Measure for Measure* explores judgemental ethics. The play stages scenes of various types of confession; the central character is disguised as a Catholic friar-confessor throughout the play; a scene reminiscent of sacramental confession is performed; Reformed versions of confession are enacted and the doctrinal casuistry underlying the traditions of religious confession are explored and staged persistently as central to the dramatic plot. The prominence of confession emphasises by extension its roots of ethics, ritual and language derived from the Catholic system. Indeed, what is commonly overlooked by critics is that Reformist notions of religion were not only contested but were profoundly reactive – reactive to England's past Catholic culture that persisted in the present in England, as well as in Europe, in reality and in the play.

The continuity and expansion of the Catholic community in England was briefly but significantly enhanced in the immediate period following the death of Elizabeth I and the accession of James I, the probable time of *Measure for Measure's* composition. Several textual allusions suggest that the play was written and first performed in 1604, in the public theatre.[9] The newly designated King's Men were directed to perform before the Royal Court and, according to at least one editor, *Measure for*

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[8] See Chapter 1, section 3, for a more detailed discussion of Reformed theologies of confession.

[9] For textual allusions see *Measure for Measure*, ed., Brian Gibbons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 21-22.

Measure 'seems to be Shakespeare's first response' to the order.[10] It is certainly recorded as having been performed before the royal court on 26 December 1604, and this performance almost certainly took place before James I and Queen Anne of Denmark, who had ascended the throne just over a year before, in 1603.[11] It was one of a series over the next decade of plays, masques, pageants and dances that 'were the heart of the social life of the court'.[12] James I had arrived in London on 7 May, 1603 and was crowned on the feast of St James, 25 July,1603. The coronation of James I and Anne made plain one noteworthy fact, that the queen refused communion.[13] Anne had originally been trained in the Lutheran faith at her native Danish court, incompatible with the Calvinist faith of Scottish Presbyterianism, the official state religion of Scotland that she was nominally expected to profess after her marriage to James in 1589.[14] Many of the Scottish nobles who formed the queen's court circle were either openly Catholic or crypto-Catholic, such as the Countess of Huntly who was French Catholic born and shared the desire to see the churches reunited, as in fact did James himself. Evidence strongly suggests that in 1600 Anne had converted to Catholicism herself.[15] As state head, Anne's conversion was a tacit re-legitimation of Catholicism difficult to envisage in the previous reign, particularly for some fiercely Protestant, powerful factions at Elizabeth I's Court.

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[10] Gibbons (1991) p. 12.

[11] The Revels Account Book records the performance of 'Mesur for Mesur' by 'Shaxberd' in the banqueting hall of Whitehall on St Stephen's Night. Cited in, E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, 2 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), II, p. 331.

[12] Albert J. Loomie, 'King Jame I's Catholic Consort', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 34 (1970-1), 303-316, p. 303.

[13] Peter McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 169-172 and *Narratives of Scottish Catholics Under Mary Stewart and James VI*, ed., W. Forbes-Leith (Edinburgh: Paterson, 1885), pp. 263-66 and pp. 272-274.

[14] Although it had been agreed at the time of her marriage to James VI that Anne could continue to practice the particular brand of Lutheranism observed at her native Danish Court in private, there was immense pressure not to express her religious belief, at least publicly, in any way that conflicted with Scottish Presbyterianism.

[15] Father Robert Abercrombie wrote to John Stuart OSB, the Prior of the monastery at Ratisbon, that he had secretly instructed Anne in the Catholic faith, 'about the year 1600'. W. Forbes-Leith (1885), pp. 263-265. Furthermore, it seems that Elizabeth I was concerned that Anne had converted to Rome. Elizabeth wrote to Anne, in a circumspect message and sent an oral one [later recounted by letter], effectively asking Anne to deny the truth of the rumours that she had converted. Anne diplomatically replied that she would inform Elizabeth of the name of anyone who attempted to change her beliefs. Helen G. Stafford comments, 'The words were meaningless. Anne had no intention of confessing any fault, and Elizabeth evidently decided that further remonstrance was useless. The pro-Catholic trend of events in Scotland continued.' Helen G. Stafford, *James VI of Scotland and the Throne of England* (London: Appleton-Century, 1940), pp. 166-169. See also W. Bliss, 'The Religious Belief of Anne of Denmark', *English Historical Review*, 4 (January, 1889), 110; and Loomie, (1970-1).

Yet the Scottish court had been an entirely different entity, one far less stable and secure in its power and perhaps this is why a more flexible religious policy seems to have pertained. James VI's foreign policy had long been to offer a placatory attitude towards those foreign states that remained Catholic, (particularly to the powerful Spanish), an attitude extended to those at home who hoped to restore Catholicism as the state religion.[16] He seems to have adopted this approach whenever it seemed politic to do so, certainly in relation to his queen and initially to English Catholics when he assumed the throne as James I.[17] Anxious for all the support of the English nobility that he could muster for his claim to the throne, which had been contested by the existence of other claimants, James I made a number of statements suggesting that if Catholicism would not be actually restored as the state religion, then at least the situation for English recusants would improve significantly, and that they would no longer be subject to the persecution that had been threatened and intermittently implemented for the last two decades.[18] At the Scottish court, Father Robert Abercrombie, Anne's priest and confessor and the superior of the Jesuit mission in Scotland, had requested papal permission for 'certain individuals' to attend 'the sermons of the heretics' when necessary to permit outward conformity, so that putting this tolerance to the ultimate test seems to have been avoided.[19] In England, the pragmatic, common practice was established where a head of the household conformed through minimal attendance at church services, the so-called 'church papist', whilst the rest of the family continued to practise Catholicism. In this way

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[16] 'During the last twenty years of the 16th century [...] there was usually the prospect, or should we say the hope, of a political restoration of Catholicism'. Hubert Chadwick, 'Crypto-Catholicism, English and Scottish', *The Month*, 178 (1942), 388-401, p. 397.

[17] There has been continuing debate amongst historians about the extent to which James I policy of religious toleration was consistent and successful. Two influential contributions to this debate that make a persuasive case for the positive are, John J. LaRocca, '' Who can't pray with me, can't love me': Toleration and the Early Jacobean Recusancy Policy', *Journal of British Studies*, 23 (Spring, 1984), 22-36 and Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, 'The ecclesiastical policy of James I', *Journal of British Studies*, 24 (April, 1985), 169-207.

[18] See, for example, James I letter to the Earl of Northumberland, 24th March, 1603, 'As for the catholiques I will nather persecutt any that wilbe quyet, and give but ane wtward obedience to the law, nather will I spare to aduance any of them that will by good service woorthelly deserve it'. *Correspondence of James VI of Scotland with Sir Robert Cecil*, ed., John Bruce, (London: Camden Society, 1861), p. 75. Barry Coward comments, 'In 1603 there were even high hopes among Catholics, fostered by James before his accession, that they would be allowed some relief from the penal laws [...]. James's public attitude to English Catholics in the first decade of his reign fluctuated from tolerance to severity, which, however must not obscure his success in allowing a measure of toleration to Catholics'. Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age 1603-1714* (London: Longman, 1980; 2nd edn, 1994), p. 128.

[19] Chadwick (1942), p. 397. For an account of a series of measures enacted by James I early in his reign that affected Catholics see ibid, pp. 117-136.

English Catholics had striven to avoid open conflict with the state's dictat of religious conformity too, conflict which would attract the severe fines and confiscation of property imposed on recusants. Still, relatively large amounts had been sequestered from recusants by the treasury, representing a lucrative source of monies and land for the monarchy. In 1603, James I appeared sympathetic to Catholics, declaring an amnesty of arrears of fines accrued.[20] However, peace negotiations that had taken place between England and Catholic Spain to formulate the Treaty of London, were eventually concluded with its signing in August of 1604, thus neutralising the perceived threat of an expansion of Catholicism. The negotiations at Somerset House were ones Shakespeare's theatrical company, the King's Men, were required to attend: an Audit Office record shows payments made to 'Augustine Phillippes and John Hemynges [...] and ten of their fellows'. [21] The state of war that had officially existed between England and Spain ended and with it James' perceived need to mollify Spain through the careful treatment of English co-Catholics who had hoped for Spanish military intervention to restore their religion. At the same time there was a new awareness of the substantial increase in recusant numbers, thought to be a result of the strenuous activities of Jesuit priests to convert the population. Some historians conjecture that this seeming increase might be rather a new willingness on the part of hitherto unacknowledged recusants to become known, in the apparently more tolerant atmosphere of James I's early reign. Either way, because of the tacit validation of Catholicism as the queen's religion, the king's implied, albeit politically motivated, policy of religious tolerance, and the consequent change of climate for recusants meant that in 1603-4, for a brief period as it turned out, issues of Catholic belief received more attention and were construed more positively than since the Marian period fifty years before.

In this climate, it is unsurprising that a play concerned with judgemental ethics is sufficiently at ease to express that concern in the forum most associated with Christian judgement in the Catholic system, confession. But Catholic ethics had also become notoriously associated, in the late sixteenth century, with the Jesuit casuistry of equivocation. As already mentioned, Anne of Denmark's confessor, Father

[20] Between 1593-1603 recusants were fined £6,500-£8,500 per annum. In 1603 only £1,414 was in fact paid. After the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 recusants were once again fined, and actually paid nearly £7,000 that year. Christopher Lee, *1603* (London: Headline, 2003), pp. 221-222.
[21] James Travers, *James I: The Masque of Monarchy* (Kew: The National Archives, 2003), p. 20.

Abercrombie, had sought papal authority for his Catholic flock effectively to equivocate in the matter of outward conformity to religious prescriptions. Likewise, following the Act of Supremacy (1559), Jesuit priests and members of the recusant community (who were increasingly arrested and interrogated as traitors, especially since the 1580s) needed a way to avoid incriminating themselves or betraying their fellow Catholics. [22] The issue of equivocation is explicitly explored in Shakespeare's next play, *Macbeth*, satirically so in the Porter's grumblings, but tactics of equivocation are conspicuously paralleled in *Measure for Measure* in its linguistic and dramaturgical strategies. [23] To equivocate may not have been to observe the literal truth, but to do so, it was claimed, was in the service of a higher cause. Strategies included deliberately ambiguous or incomplete statements (that were 'completed' silently in one's head) to avoid self-incrimination or betrayal of others.[24] Equivocation became an attractive target of dramatic satire in its practice of minute discriminations and in partialities that seemed ludicrously pedantic, from an unsympathetic viewpoint, in order to maintain a nominally clear conscience. The Protestant cleric Jeremy Taylor objected to Catholic casuistical thinking thus:

> What God had made plain, men have intricated [...] They have made their cases of conscience and the actions of their lives unstable as the face of the waters, and immeasurable as the dimensions of the moon; by which means their confessors shall be enabled to answer according to every man's humour, and no man shall depart sad from their penitential chairs.[25]

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[22] A series of threats combined during the 1580s to result in a harsher attitude towards Catholics in England: John Somerville's planned assassination of the queen and the Throckmorton Plot in 1583, the Parry Plot of 1585, the Babington Plot of 1586, war with Spain begun in 1585 and the Armada invasion of 1588. The more potent perception of the threat posed by Catholics resulted in fines for recusancy being increased to £20 per month in 1581 and conversion of self or others to Rome became a treasonable offence. In 1585 legislation was enacted to make any priest that was not ordained in England a traitor; in 1587 laws improved the efficiency of the collection of recusancy fines and in 1593 recusants were prohibited from travelling more than five miles from home. The references in *Measure for Measure* to 'penalties' (1.2.157) of nineteen years ago and 'statutes and laws' of fourteen years standing (1.3.21) might relate to those legislative Acts.

[23] In the intervening period between *Measure for Measure* (1604) and *Macbeth* (1606) the Gunpowder Plot had been discovered. James I had insisted on interrogating Father Henry Garnet, the leader of the Jesuits in England, himself. James was convinced that Garnet must have had previous knowledge of the Plot and was 'equivocating' in his denials. See Antonia Fraser, *The Gunpowder Plot: Terror and Faith in 1605* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1996; repr. London: Orion, 2005).

[24] For example, a Jesuit priest interrogated by the authorities might be asked 'are you a priest?', to which he could answer 'no' whilst silently completing the sentence in his head, 'not of Delphi'. Cited in Camille Wells Slights, *The Casuistical Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

[25] Slights (1981), p. 6.

Equivocation was a concept particularly associated with the Jesuits, but one that had emerged from the traditions of moral casuistry established in the Roman Church, and, as Taylor implies, those traditions were established and described in penitential *summae* produced for the guidance of the pre-Reformation priest in confession. The handbooks were often minute descriptions and discriminations of different types of sins with the aim of aiding the priest to judge penitents fairly and appropriately. Of course, to many post-Reformation Protestants the reasoning and ethics of Catholic casuistry were suspect. The English Church needed a clear expression of its own casuistry, although this now aimed principally to guide the layman not cleric. Francis Bacon identified the problem, referring to Catholic casuists: 'The Word (the *bread of life*) they toss up and down, they break it not. They draw not their directions down *ad casus conscientiae*; that a man may be warranted in his particular actions whether they be lawful or not.'[26] For Protestants there was insufficient emphasis on Scripture as the revealed word of God; indeed the more Puritan position was that 'cases of conscience' were unnecessary, since the proper path was recourse to Scripture to guide one's behaviour in multifarious circumstances. However, other Protestants evidently felt that the complexity of moral decision-making needed more specific explication and practical application. William Perkins articulated the problem clearly in a series of lectures he gave at Cambridge University in the 1580s that were published *circa* 1612:

> There must needes therefore be a certen and infallible doctrine, propounded and taught in the Scriptures, whereby the consciences of men distressed, may be quieted and releeued. And this doctrine is not attained vnto by extraordinarie reuelation, but must be drawne out of the written word of God. The point therefore to be handled is, What this doctrine should be? It is not a matter easie and at hand, but full of labour and difficultie.[27]

Camille Slights asserts that 'casuistry as a self-conscious theological discipline was peculiar to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,' and estimates that in the latter forty years of the sixteenth century more than six hundred collections of cases of

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[26] Francis Bacon, 'An Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England', in *Letters and the Life of Francis Bac*on, ed., James Spedding, 7 vols (London: Longmans, 1861-72), I, p. 92.

[27] William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience Distinguished into Three Bookes*, 2nd edn, (Cambridge: T. Pickering, [1612 ?]), p. 4, STC/1493:01, EEBO <http://eebo.chadwyck.com> [accessed May 2006].

conscience were published.[28] The moral casuistry manifest in cases of conscience was a purposeful attempt at replacing that of the Catholic Church used in the ministration of confession, yet, apart from the conspicuous emphasis on new scriptural translations and interpretations, and providing another example of the difficulty of drawing clear lines between pre- and post-Reformation theology, it is strikingly apparent how similar the new casuistry is to the old, in its forms, subject matter and prescriptions.[29] However this 'new' casuistry was no longer dependent upon the mediation of church or minister or the extra-self judgement and pronouncements of the priest, but upon an internalised sense of self-judgement and validation, hence its emphasis on the exercise of the conscience. The fact that the mode of moral judgement, previously ritualised and verbalised in the practice of confession, was now, in Protestant practice, an internalised process meant that it could not be mediated or verified as valid by an outward authority. It is this problem - of the visibility and authenticity of moral integrity - that *Measure for Measure* fundamentally dramatises. Its central concern to 'see [...] what our seemers be' (1.3.53) is represented in the recurring trope of the 'tongue' that should accord with the 'heart'; that a just, but merciful, ethic should 'live in th[e] tongue, and heart' (1.1.45).[30] Edward Coke used an identical metaphor when speaking against the practice of equivocation in the trial of the Jesuit superior, Father Henry Garnet, in 1606:

> For these Jesuits, they indeed make no vow of speaking truth, and yet even the equivocation and lying is a kind of unchastity [...]. The law and sanction of nature, hath, as it were, married the heart and tongue, by joining and knitting of them together in a certain kind of marriage; and therefore when there is discord between them two, the speech that

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[28] Slights (1981), p. 6-8.

[29] Perkins (*c*.1612) for example, devotes a substantial section of his first book to listing scriptural citations, the translation, interpretation and meanings of which had been contested by Reformers. Yet the form of his casuistry reiterates the deductive logic of traditional patristic and medieval theological writers and the convention of the *quod libet*. Images of sin as disease and the 'Pastour' as 'physitian' (p. 6) are wholly conventional, as is the paradigmatic hierarchy of, traditionally, God, priest, Christian, substituted with God, conscience and Pastor, Christian. Perkin's *Cases of Conscience* is also concerned with traditional subject matter, such as comforting the distressed or despairing conscience, how one may attain salvation, resist temptation, attain forgiveness, the comfort of the dying (see table of contents). Its prescriptions rely on traditional methods of ministration too, such as confession, assigning of good works, prayer and meditation, as well as Protestant scrutiny of conscience and scriptural guidance.

[30] See for example 1.4.33, 2.4.1-15 & 171-3, 5.1.10-11. For a detailed analysis of representations of the tongue in early modern literature see Carla Mazzio, 'Sins of the Tongue in Early Modern England', *Modern Language Studies*, 28 (Autumn, 1998), 93-124.

> proceeds from them, is said to be conceived in adultery, and he that breeds such bastard-children offends against chastity.[31]

The equation between equivocation as a discord between heart and tongue, with unchastity or adultery, is not just dramatised in the play's themes of 'false-seeming', hypocrisy and fornication, but the tactic of equivocation is also analogous to the linguistic strategy at work in *Measure for Measure*. The ambivalence of the Duke's opening lines implies the possibility of assuming a character and questions its discernibility from that outwardly displayed or professed:

> Duke: Of government the properties to unfold
> Would seem in me t'affect speech and discourse (1.1.3-4)

The lexicon of 'unfold', 'seem' and 'affect' all carry within their significance the suggestion of something not disclosed, an equivocation or pretension, and serve to imply a question about the ability to know another by their speech and conversation. (Of course there is an immediate ironic humour in a player opening the first act self-consciously troubled that his speech may be perceived as an artifice). The Arden edition suggests an interpretation of these lines by glossing 't'affect' as 'in the modern sense of to "practise artificially"'. Thus the Duke's lines are a decorous display of courtly manners, acknowledging Escalus' good judgement and an admission of the superfluity of teaching Escalus something in which he is already expert. Yet this meaning of 'affect' *is* primarily a modern one; the earliest recorded usage, in the *OED*, of this sense of 'affect' is also reliant on another of Shakespeare's plays, *King Lear* (1605), whilst the next date cited of its usage is 1663, with all other citations from eighteenth and nineteenth century literature.[32] However, another meaning of the verb, suggested by its derivation from the Latin *afficĕre*, is provided in the *OED*, and the evidence for its first recorded usage again rests on a Shakespeare play. This second sense of 'affect' is defined as, 'to do to, act on, influence, attack with a disease; also, to put to, attach to'.[33] This meaning is apparent later: 'the resolute acting of your blood/ Could have attain'd th'effect of your own purpose'

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[31] *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, ed., T. B. Howell, 21 vols, (London: Hansard for Longman, 1816), II (1603-1627), p. 234-5.

[32] 'Affect, v1, 5. 'To show ostentatiously a liking for; to make an ostentatious use or display of; to take upon oneself artificially or for effect, to assume.' Earliest citation in *KL* (2.2.102), <http://www.oed.com> [Accessed October, 2005].

[33] 'Affect, v2. 'to do to, act on, influence, attack with a disease; also, to put to, attach to'. ibid.

(2.1.12-3).[34] The specific sense of 'affect' as 'attack with a disease' is used in *Troilus and Cressida* (1606).[35] With this latter meaning the Duke's opening lines might also be interpreted thus, 'to expound the characteristics of holding office and ruling would be for me to influence or infect my words and thoughts'. At the least, this alternative reading exists as a latent possibility, one that a contemporary audience might be busy considering, if only to reject, as Vincentio continues,

> Since I am put to know that your own science
> Exceeds, in that, the lists of all advice
> My strength can give you. (1.1.5-7)

The prepositional 'since' and referential clause, 'in that' (emphasised in parenthesis in the folio text) encourages an auditor or reader to interpret these three lines as a completion and retrospective explanation of the preceding two lines. Yet the spectre of meaning continues to linger around the first impression of the character; the linguistic equivalent of a sleight of hand where ostensibly open disclosure is associated with a corruption or artifice. In much the same way but inversely, Isabella's provocative directive to Angelo, 'Hark, how I'll bribe you' (2.2.146) is seemingly an open avowal of corruption, although wittily, the proffered 'bribe' turns out to be prayer. In addition, some critics have discussed the underlying significance of the Duke's observation to Angelo that 'There is a kind of character in thy life' (1.1.27), suggesting that 'kind of' renders this remark contradictorily ambiguous, in spite of his subsequent declaration that Angelo's character, 'to th'observer doth thy history/ Fully unfold.' (1.28-9) ('unfold' connects these two speeches and appears repeatedly in the rest of the play). Both speeches, in their latent potential contradictions of their surface meanings, are a linguistic analogue of equivocation. They go to the centre of the play's concerns with corruption and abuse of office, integrity, hypocrisy and the ability to 'read' character from speech, reasoning and actions, to know how to, as Isabella says, 'Unfold the evil, which is here wrapt up/In countenance!' (5.1.120-1). The Duke suggests that it is the particular skill of the confessor to do just that: 'There is written in your brow, Provost, honesty and constancy; if I read it not truly, my ancient skill beguiles me' (4.2.152-4). And the

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[34] The change in spelling is not a reliable indicator of a change in sense. *OED* notes the initial 'a' and 'e' are interchangeable and in any case early modern typography is notoriously unreliable in this respect.
[35] *TC* (2.2.59).

structure of the play seems to confirm that it is the context of confession that produces knowledge for correct judgements, that the particular form of auricular confession exposes the truth, in spite of any false pretences.

In his analysis of *Measure for Measure*, Stephen Mullaney recognises the Renaissance theatre as a site of power which appropriates the disciplinary function of auricular confession as a judgemental critique for self and others. His argument asserts that the way in which the discourse of confession operates is through a process of internalisation by its subjects that remains as a 'spectre' haunting both the post-Reformation subject and drama. Mullaney comments on Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors* (1612) where a didactic role is claimed for the theatre, making 'the ignorant more apprehensive', compelling the audience to 'see and shame at their faults', in order to encourage their reform, 'lest they should happen to become the like subject of general scorne to an auditory'.[36] The disciplinary function claimed for the theatre by Heywood is identified by Mullaney:

> The spectre Heywood has raised with his talk of shame and apprehension before a judgemental auditory is a considerable one [...] the ghostly practice the Reformation sought most strenuously to suppress – the *psychotyrrani* [*sic*] of auricular, sacramental confession, through which the Church exercised its power to 'sit in the conscience's of men'.[37]

Yet if confession can be said to be a spectre haunting *Measure for Measure*, its emanations are brought to life and boldly confronted in the figure of the Duke. The Duke's disguise as a confessor operates in the play in a similar way to the 'spectral' meanings at odds with the superficial meaning of the play's language discussed above. The pattern of an apparent acceptance of truthfulness subsequently and purposefully exposed as false, or a distrust of apparent falsity which is then revealed as legitimate, is further replicated in the staging of confession embodied in the guise of the Duke. To many Protestants, auricular confession was suspect; they feared that the occasion of confession might be exploited to provide opportunities for secret intrigue and plotting. It was a commonplace of late sixteenth-century Protestant

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[36] Stephen Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 98.

[37] The phrase 'to sit in the conscience's of men' is a misquotation of Mullaney's, (ibid, p. 99) taken from William Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528) (London: Penguin, 2000), 'to sit in the consciences of the people', p. 119. In an interesting act of cultural regression, Tyndale's sixteenth-century, gender neutral use of the collective 'people' is substituted for the subsuming use of 'men' as a common gender noun.

polemic that the papal 'anti-Christ', protected by the sanctity of the seal of confessional confidentiality, was able to manipulate the channels of communication represented by the practice of confession, and so hatch secret plots against sovereign and nation state.[38] As if to confirm these reformist anxieties, 'the old fantastical Duke of dark corners'(4.3.157), consistently claims insights explicitly, or inferentially, gained from the confessional. He reveals to Claudio Angelo's frivolous motive to 'practise his judgement with the disposition of natures', (3.1.162-3) and thus test Isabella's 'virtue'. This knowledge, the Duke claims, he has gained when hearing Angelo's confession (3.1.165). Of course, at this juncture the audience is likely to be sceptical of the Duke's pretension to special knowledge of Angelo gained from the confessional. Even at the end of the play, Vincentio, now undisguised, continues to pretend to privileged information gained in confession and recommends Mariana to Angelo claiming that 'I have confess'd her, and I know her virtue' (5.1.524). These dramatic reminders of the enduring Protestant nightmare of confessional intrigue are importantly, in the play, benign, in motive and consequence; they act to bring Claudio and Juliet to a sense of repentance, thus restoring them to grace; right the wrong done to Mariana; prevent an unjust death sentence and expose Angelo's hypocrisy and corruption. Yet, the Duke's lack of right to exercise confessional authority is inescapable and obvious, though perhaps circumvented in performance, but even theatrically, it is only his position of temporal power that licenses and legitimises such duplicity. The authority and judgement properly belonging to confessors is exercised by this ducal prince in a transparent act of appropriation that forces a conscious Machiavellian insight into the condition of power as knowledge, an insight that had fuelled the Reformists' fears about the potential power offered by auricular confession in the first place. However, the benign exercising of the Duke's power, rather than being interpreted as Mullaney's '*pyschotyranni*', encourages an image of him as confessor that might be perceived more fittingly as a re-presentation

[38] See Chapter 3 on John Bale's *King Johan* for an example of this type of polemic. These 'spectral' fears about confession were about to become all too revitalised in the case of the Gunpowder Plot where it was reported that Father Henry Garnet, the head of the Jesuit missionaries in England in 1605, had heard about the intended Gunpowder Plot during his confession of Father Tesimond in 1604. He maintained that he could not reveal the information to warn Parliament because he had gained it under the seal of confession. Father Tesimond, in turn, knew about the Plot from his confession of Robert Catesby. Catesby, Garnet reported, had given permission for the seal of confession to be broken if Father Garnet's life ever depended upon it. Fraser (2005), pp. 155-160 and pp. 303-317.

of some kind of Providence, a reincarnation of the ghostly Father as divinely omniscient and powerful, 'working all things to the good'.

It would seem, therefore, that in *Measure for Measure* confession is more centrally significant than Mullaney's 'spectral' version of it would suggest. The spectre of confession is not only brought to life but takes centre stage in the Duke's role. Yet the several ways in which confession is enacted allow not only an insight into the transformations it had undergone, but also the play's presentation of the relative merits of these revised arenas of Christian judgement. Tyndale's complaint, that the Catholic church, through confession, was able to 'sit in the consciences of the people' is admitted by Angelo,

> O my dread lord,
> I should be guiltier than my guiltiness
> To think I can be undiscernible,
> When I perceive your Grace, like power divine,
> Hath looked upon my passes. (5.1.364-68)

In Angelo's mouth, Tyndale's complaint, of an internalised (to Tyndale, false) sense of subjectivity to an extraneous religious power, is exposed and re-presented in a secular context where it operates as a function of state power, acting as a check on the actions of the deputy. In Act 2, scene 3, the Duke performs what might be recognised as a fairly conventional scene of auricular confession, 'the common right' (2.3.5). The purpose of hearing Juliet's confession is, the Duke tells Juliet, to 'Teach you how to arraign your conscience/ And try your penitence, if it be sound,/ Or hollowly put on' (2.3. 21-4). Although the term 'penitence' is derived from the Catholic system and appears in the Vulgate, this was one of the fiercely contested words that Reformists alleged were a mistranslation and thus, in the play, might be interpreted as generating the expectation of a scene of specifically Catholic auricular confession.[39] To judge the quality of the repentant attitude is conventionally one purpose of confession and Juliet's reply, 'I'll gladly learn', indicates a decorous submission to priestly authority. Juliet's deference suggests that she herself may not be able to judge her own conscience accurately, and contrasts with Protestant doctrine that judgement can be left to the individual Christian. Judgement of the

[39] William Tyndale's edition of the New Testament (1525) translated 'repent' for 'penance', Berry (1969), p. 2.

Protestant type is enacted by Angelo in the earnest self-scrutiny of his soliloquies, in the immediately prior and following scenes. The question of whether Juliet is truly contrite, or whether she merely experiences attrition, is raised. Her own evaluation, 'I do repent me as it is an evil,/ And take the shame with joy' (2.23.35-6), in the use of the relative 'as' and the ambivalence of her 'shame', ostensibly referring to her repentance, but also perhaps, literally, her pregnancy, is however, implicitly accepted as contrite in the Duke's response, 'There rest' (2.3.36). The conventional pronouncement of absolution might reasonably be inferred, but is not actually depicted, perhaps, because nominally an illegal act.[40] This short scene demonstrates that Juliet understands her sin, understands the distinction between attrition and contrition and is fully contrite and therefore within the realm of a proper penitence that will meet with merciful forgiveness. Juliet, however, is not entirely excused. In the theatrical equivalent of a penance, Juliet is left to bear as best she can her mistaken belief that her lover Claudio is dead, until the revelations of the last act.

Juliet's confession to the Duke in 2.3 is suspended and illuminated by its stark sandwiching between Angelo's soliloquized declarations of guilt at the end of 2.2 and his further twenty soliloquized lines that open 2.4; a structural arrangement that invites comparison. In Angelo's first soliloquy he has been left alone on stage and guiltily proceeds to disclose his temptation to sin:

> Isab. Heaven keep your honour safe.
>
> Ang. [*aside*] Amen.
>
> For I am that way going to temptation,
> Where prayer's cross'd.
>
> [...]
>
> Isab. Save your honour. *[Exuent all but Angelo].*
>
> Ang. From thee: even from thy virtue!
> What's this? What's this? Is this her fault, or mine?
> The tempter, or the tempted, who sins most, ha?
> Not she; nor doth she tempt; but it is I
> That, lying by the violet in the sun,
> Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,

[40] It was illegal to perform any of the sacraments onstage. A royal proclamation of May, 1559 prohibited stage plays from dealing with 'either matters of religion or the governance of the estate of the common weale', Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages*, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 1962-2002). II, part 1, p. 75. However, by the early seventeenth century the official Protestant line was that there were now only two sacraments, baptism and communion.

Corrupt with virtuous season. Can it be
That modesty may more betray our sense
Than woman's lightness? Having waste ground enough,
Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary
And pitch our evils there? O fie, fie, fie!
What dost thou, or what art thou, Angelo?
Dost thou desire her foully for those things
That make her good? O let her brother live!
Thieves for their robbery have authority
When judges steal themselves. What, do I love her,
That I desire to hear her speak again?
And feast upon her eyes? What is't I dream on?
O cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint,
With saints dost bait thy hook! Most dangerous
Is that temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in living virtue. Never could the strumpet
With all her double vigour, art and nature,
Once stir my temper: but this virtuous maid
Subdues me quite. Ever till now
When men were fond, I smil'd and wonder'd how.

(2.2.158-87)

Angelo's confessional soliloquy starts with the conventional beginning of a confession: a prayer (albeit Isabella's as she leaves the stage and only assented to by Angelo). Angelo proceeds by examining the circumstances of his offence, exploring the origin and motivation of his temptation, counterparts to comparable aspects of Catholic-type confession. His acknowledgement of his own culpability is affirmed in the image of the sun's heat that cultivates the deliciously scented flower, but that also heats carrion flesh to make it putrid. This image combines the conventional confession of fault with a Calvinistic philosophy of humanity as essentially good or evil. The heat of the sun acts equally on the two objects – the flower and the flesh – but whether its effect is to nurture or corrupt is pre-determined by qualities intrinsic to them, just as the Calvinist Christian is saved or damned regardless of the lives they have led. Following this admission of sin, is an admonition, 'O fie, fie, fie!', apparently representing an internalised expression of the traditional function of the judgemental priest. A reprimand of this sort is expressed by Romeo's confessor, Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), accompanied by similar interrogatives: 'Art thou a man? [...] /Why rail'st thou on thy birth, the heaven, and earth?/ [...] Fie, fie!'(3.3.108-121).[41] Next in Angelo's soliloquy comes a form of moral instruction

[41] *Romeo and Juliet*, ed., Brian Gibbons, Arden Edition (London: Methuen, 1980; repr. 1993)

or correction, albeit a curious one.[42] The speaking subject position of this speech is notably unsettled, as a third person interrogative is assumed after the first person formation of the first ten lines. The admonition, interrogatives, apostrophes and moral instruction of l.172-6 are redolent of the part a confessor might conventionally be expected to take in dialogue with a speech acknowledging guilt. Here Angelo fulfils this role himself, but it makes for a drastically unstable soliloquy. The first three lines of this speech manage to combine discourses suggestive of detailed self-scrutiny: 'What's this? What's this? Is this her fault, or mine?'; the hypothetical rhetoric of moral casuistry in cases of conscience: 'The tempter, or the tempted, who sins most, ha?'; and the admission of culpability associated with the confession of sin: 'Not she; nor doth she tempt; but it is I'. The instability of recourse to this series of judgemental critiques authentically generates a sense of bewilderment and discomfort as Angelo systematically assesses his state of mind. One other noticeable aspect of Angelo's soliloquy is the evident depth and subtlety of his self-reflections. Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1548) had initiated a new emphasis in Catholic confession on the interiority of the Christian, advocating a regular introspection according to the ethical critiques of Catholic casuistry, in order to develop a greater awareness of the originating intents and motives of personal sinfulness. The developed sensibilities of Angelo's soliloquy may owe something to this reformed version of the Catholic discourse of confession.[43]

Angelo's acknowledgement of guilt continues in scene 4, after Juliet's brief interview with the Duke, almost, one might think, in case the audience missed the contrast between the two types of admission of sinfulness the first time round. Indeed, Angelo's second soliloquy draws explicit attention to the potential for willed self-delusion in the Puritan version of examination of conscience through another use of the heart/tongue metaphor:

> When I would pray and think, I think and pray
> To several subjects: Heaven hath my empty words,
> Whilst my invention, hearing not my tongue,
> Anchors on Isabel: Heaven in my mouth,
> As if I did but only chew his name,

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[42] 'Thieves for their robbery have authority,/ When judges steal themselves' is an inverted version of the ethic expressed elsewhere in the play of a need for those who exercise the authority of the law to set a good example.

[43] See Chapter 1, section 3.10 for a more detailed discussion of the *Exercises*.

> And in my heart the strong and swelling evil
> Of my conception. The state whereon I studied
> Is, like a good thing being often read,
> Grown sere and tedious; yea, my gravity,
> Wherein – let no man hear me – I take pride,
> Could I with boot change for an idle plume
> Which the air beats for vain. (2.4.1-12)

Angelo's self-conscious awareness of the inconsistency between his prayerful intent and unruly imagination makes him a split subject where his tongue stands in the same relation to his heart as others have done who have been duped by 'the state whereon [...he] studied'. The difference between this admission of guilt and Juliet's does not lie in the awareness or degree of guilt, but rather in the exposure to an external mediation - an extra-self judgement. Angelo's guilty enjoinder, 'let no man hear me', allusively points to this felt absence, the 'spectre' of a confessor. The Puritan alternative to auricular confession, recourse to and meditation upon Scripture: 'a good thing being often read', is dismissed suggestively as something 'Grown sere and tedious'. As the scene progresses it is evident that, whereas the rationale of Juliet's confession was that it expressed a sincere and proper contrition, this admission of guilt is both clearly unrepentant and lacking in a purpose of amendment.

Although the rhetoric of ethical evaluation is unstable in Angelo's soliloquy and demonstrates a combination of discourses rooted in the variety of possible religious positions consequent upon the Reformation, what emerges clearly is the fact that the ethics of Angelo's and Juliet's confessions *are* implicitly compared. This comparison encourages a hypothesising of ethics, that is, it points to a moral casuistry being worked out and at work. The logical extrapolation of ethics, the 'dependency of thing on thing' (5.1.65), is complex and determined by the particulars of cases, but the play repeatedly suggests at least one guiding principle: the maintenance of an honesty and integrity of conscience that acknowledges one's own inevitable sinfulness and need for merciful judgement, which therefore should also temper the judgement of others; in other words an extension to others of the same ethics one applies to oneself, the ethos encapsulated in 'measure for measure'. Yet this apparently simple and straightforward ethic is complicated by its enacted exposition in the play. Escalus, who is repeatedly depicted as an ideal of judgement moderated by mercy, calls on the moral criteria of Angelo's personal behaviour as he

remonstrates with him to save Claudio's life in act 2 (2.1.8-16). In a reversal of the appeal to personal behaviour as a standard by which to judge others, Angelo asserts that Claudio must be made an example of (2.2.91-105). Similarly, although Isabella asserts 'We cannot weigh our brother with ourself' (2.2.128), she then invokes Angelo's personal sense of sin as a basis of fair judgement:

> Go to your bosom,
> Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know
> That's like my brother's fault. If it confess
> A natural guiltiness, such as is his,
> Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue
> Against my brother's life. (2.2.137-142)

The repetitions and contradictions of these ethical variations about judging self and others generate, in effect, a casuistical exploration of them as the drama develops. The Duke repeatedly reiterates these ethics, for example, 'If his own life answer the straitness of his proceeding, it shall become him well' (3.2.249-51); and again,

> He doth with holy abstinence subdue
> That in himself which he spurs on his power
> To qualify in others: were he meal'd with that
> Which he corrrects, then were he tyrannous;
> But this being so, he's just. (4.2.79-83)

The Duke expresses the same ethic in its most problematic exposition in his soliloquy:

> He who the sword of heaven will bear
> Should be as holy as severe;
> [...]
> More nor less to others paying
> Than by self-offences weighing.
> Shame to him whose cruel striking
> Kills for faults of his own liking!
> [...]
> O, what may man within him hide,
> Though angel on the outward side!
> [...]
> Craft against vice I must apply.
> With Angelo tonight shall lie
> His old betrothed, but despised:
> So disguise shall by th'disguised
> Pay with falsehood false exacting (3.2.255-274)

The Duke's appeal to the same ethical standards one applies to oneself as a criteria for judging others, is made inconsistent even as it is stated. 'Th'disguised' refers to Mariana who is to pose as Isabella, but, of course, could equally apply to the Duke who delivers this speech in *his* disguise. His impersonation of a Friar might be equally justified as 'craft', but runs dangerously close to the accusation of 'falsehood', or the assumption of an 'outward side'. Many critics have objected to other aspects of the Duke's behaviour that seemingly contradict the judgemental ethic of judging others in a way consistent with the self. Vincentio sets Angelo up as a ducal scapegoat, requiring him to enforce laws he has allowed to lapse, apparently in order to maintain his popularity; he devises the 'bed-trick', not only practising deception but consequently placing Mariana in the same position to the law as Claudio and Juliet; and his disguised role-playing in itself hardly supports his integrity.

In *Basilikon Doron* (1598), written as a guide to kingship for his eldest son, Henry, James I also appeals to personal integrity as lending authority to exercise judgement of others. He discriminates between the justice administered by delegates who only had authority to enforce the law, and that exercised by sovereigns who could and should mitigate the law in accordance with their conscience, with the proviso that their own behaviour was exemplary:

> As he cannot be thought worthy to rule and command others, that cannot rule and dantone his owne proper affections and unreasonable appetites, so can hee not be thought worthie to governe a Christian people [...]. Therefore (my sonne) first of all things, learne to know and love that God, whom-to ye have a double obligation; first, for that he made you a man; and next, for that he made you a little GOD to sit on his throne, and rule over other men. Remember, that as in dignitie hee hath erected you above others, so ought ye in thankfulness towards him, goe as farre beyond others. A moate in anothers eye, is a beame in yours; a blemishe in another is a leprouse bile in ye; and a venial sinne (as the Papistes call it) in another is a greate crime in ye. Think not, therefore, that the highness of your dignitie diminisheth your faultes (much less giveth ye a license to sinne), but by the contrarie ye faulte shal bee aggravated accordinge to the height of your dignitie, any sinne that ye commit, not being a single sinne procuring but the fall of one; but being an exemplare sinne, and therefore drawing with it the whole multitude to be guiltie of the same.[44]

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[44] 'The First Booke: Of a Kings Christian Duetie Towards God', in James I, *Basilikon Doron* (London: E. Allde for E. White,1603), pp. 1-2, EEBO, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>. Modern spelling

Thus, ultimate judgemental authority, the authority to mitigate the law, finally rested on the authority of personal integrity. James I explicitly quotes the 'measure for measure' biblical passage and seemingly interprets it as discriminating between those subjected to judgement and those that will administer judgement. The latter role requires exemplary personal moral integrity because they will be disproportionately held to account by divine judgement. Implied in this hierarchical critique is an inherent antidote to the potential pride, or sense of superiority, associated with those elevated to a position of judgement, such as Angelo. The ethics of moral authority resting in personal integrity is one that had been frequently debated and contested by Protestants in a religious context. Protestants objected to priests pronouncing the absolution of sin when they were personally corrupt. In Catholic dogma this objection amounts to the heresy of the Donatists.[45] That this central ethic of the play is dissonant with the figure of the confessor who repeatedly states, enacts and contrives its articulation is ideologically aporetic. This illogicality might be described as a further manifestation of the ideological discontinuities reflected in the combination of discourses noted above. Yet if the forum that the play's staging of judgemental ethics is analysed within is shifted, from that of seventeenth-century theological discourses to the English socio-religious practice of the same time, then the Duke's insistence on the crude 'golden rule' of 'do as you would be done by' gains more clarity and possible significance, although, as will be discussed, the extent to which these discontinuities are resolved remains questionable.

The suggestive depiction of relatively formalised auricular confession and Angelo's soliloquized scrutiny of his conscience are not the only types of admissions of sin staged or alluded to. Confession still existed as a frequently witnessed and regularly practised experience for post-Reformation Jacobeans in their Church courts, market places and parish churches. These 'church confessions' were stipulated as penances by the ecclesiastical courts that were still conducted according to Roman canonical

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edition: *James I The True Law of Free Monarchies and Basilikon Doron*, eds. Daniel Fischin and Mark Fortier, Tudor and Stuart Texts (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1996), pp. 103-4. For a detailed consideration of the possible relation of *Measure for Measure* and contemporary representations of monarchical power, see, Stephen Cohen, 'From Mistress to Master: Political transition and Formal Conflict in 'Measure for Measure'' *Criticism*, 41 (Fall, 1999), 431-64.

[45] See Chapter 1, section 1.10 for an explanation of the Donatist heresy.

laws whose ultimate authority came from the pope. After the Reformation, this anomalous situation had continued to be tolerated and even furthered, in the interests of religious and social discipline. [46] Most consistory court cases were matters of moral and religious conformity, and the latter half of the sixteenth century saw a huge increase in cases as a result of more stringent implementation of the law. [47] This increased stringency is evident from the stricter enforcement of Articles of Inquiry. Churchwardens, who were elected in every parish to serve, unpaid, for one year, were responsible for monitoring the behaviour of their parish.[48] They were directly answerable to the diocesan bishop, usually at the time of his visitation. There was little room for neighbourly good feeling on the part of churchwardens.[49] Articles of Inquiry were detailed and thorough and churchwardens had to swear they would answer questions truthfully and completely. Indeed there are regular cases of churchwardens themselves being brought before the court for failure of their duties.[50] Richard Helmholz comments,

> Tightening up visitation machinery in this way encouraged churchwardens to present objectionable conduct they might otherwise have overlooked. [...] Elizabethan and Jacobean act books suggest vigorous and occasionally excessive, activity on the part of many churchwardens. Many of the offences presented were distinctly minor breaches of the moral law. [51]

In Act 2 of *Measure for Measure*, the courtroom scene, Elbow introduces himself as 'Constable', (l. 47) a widely defined designation that included the office of petty or

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[46] In difficult cases Continental treatises of law written before and after the Reformation were often cited. These included the procedural manual of the Inquistion. The *Decretals* and English commentators frequently deferred to canonical pronouncements. See Richard H. Helmholz, *Roman Canon Law in Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 145-154. Revision was considered. A statute was authorized in 1532 that appointed a Commission of 32 men to examine and reformulate canon law, but the statute failed in its legislative passage through Parliament. ibid, p. 35.

[47] The Consistory court of Lichfield heard 81 cases in 1529, 204 in 1590; that of Salisbury heard 92 cases in 1566, 117 in 1597; in Gloucester 122 cases were heard in 1560, 163 cases in 1600. Helmholz (1990), p. 42.

[48] See Charles Drew, *Early Parochial Organization in England: The Origins of the Office of Churchwarden* (London: St Anthony's Press, 1954).

[49] See H. Gareth Owen, 'The Episcopal Visitation: its Limits and Limitations in Elizabethan London', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 11 (1960), 179-85, and Dorothy M. Owen, *The Records of the Established Church in England* (Cambridge: British Records Association, 1970), 1.

[50] The STC lists over 400 surviving editions of Articles of Inquiry. 'Virtually all late sixteenth-century *ex officio* act books [the Church court record books] contain prosecutions of churchwardens for failure to present, and this was something new [...] although the mechanism of enquiry was not new, the rigour of its enforcement was'. Helmholz (1990), pp. 106-7.

[51] Helmholz (1990), pp. 107-8.

parish constable, that is churchwarden.[52] Elbow's malapropisms, amateurish inefficiency and rambling presentation of 'evidence' are a comic staging of what must have been a common enough 'type' in this unpaid, mandatory office. His later exchange with Escalus indicates that Elbow's earnest zeal for his office and gullible naivety have been thoroughly exploited by his neighbours in their persistent 're-election' of him for over seven years. His evident satisfaction in his repeated occupancy of the office, which he proudly declares, 'few of any wit' (l.265) in his neighbourhood would be 'fit' to take, is revealed as entirely misplaced. As John Addy recognises, 'The office of churchwarden [...] was one to be avoided, if possible, for the responsibilities attached to it were onerous [...] it is not surprising to discover that many men attempted to avoid [it]'.[53] Elbow's naivety is exposed when he announces, 'As they are chosen, they are glad to choose me for them; I do it for some piece of money, and go through with all' (l.265-7). No doubt his neighbours suffered from the illusion that they had bribed Elbow to continue in office, but Elbow himself is plainly under the impression that he has been re-elected, or 'chosen'. Escalus' prompt request for 'the names of some six or seven, the most sufficient of your parish' (l.269-70) implies the overdue need for his intervention.

For those brought before the ecclesiastical courts and found guilty, the penance most usually assigned was a public confession. This would be made in the penitent's church, usually on three consecutive Sundays, sometimes, in cases of fornication or adultery, in the parish church of the partner of the accused as well. The whole process of these confessions was distinctly dramatic and easily appropriated by the theatre. The ritual stages of the confession maximised its spectacular significance: the courts directed the movements of penitent and minister outside and within the church, stipulated that the penitent should kneel during the confession, 'scripted' the speech of the penitent, and commanded its enactment before the congregational audience. The penance assigned to the boldly aliased Vertue Anderson dated 29 July 1594, demonstrates the theatrical dimension of confession:

> *Parte of the pannance Inioyned vnto johane Andrewe alias Vertue Anderson of trinity parishe in Elye.*
>
> The saied penitent shall vpon Sundaie, beinge [...] clothed in a white sheete downe to the grownd and havinge a white wande in her hand, resort vnto the parish

[52] The meaning of the term is surprisingly varied and historically lengthy, as listed in the *OED*.
[53] John Addy, *Sin and Society in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge 1989), pp. 46-7.

> churche porche [...] and there shall stande from the second peale to morninge praire vuntill the readinge of the second lesson, dessiringe people that passe by her into y^e^ church to pray God for her and to forgiue her; at which time y^e^ Minister there shall comme downe to this penitent and fetch her into y^e^ church with y^e^ psalme of *Misere* in English, and place her in the middle alley there apart from all other people, where she shall penitently kneele vntill y^e^ readinge of y^e^ ten commaundementes, at which time y^e^ Minister there shall comme to this penitent and cause her to say and confesse as followeth, viz:-
>
> Good people I acknowledge and confesse y^t^ I haue offended Allmightie God and by my euill example you all, for that I haue broken his Divine lawes and commaundementes in committinge y^t^ most shamefull and abominable sin of adultrie or fornication, for which I am most hartily sory, and I aske God and you all most hartily forgiuenesss for the same, prommisinge by Godes helpe never to offend hereafter in y^e^ like againe.
>
> And at y^e^ end of this confession the first day y^e^ Minister to reade y^t^ homely against adulterie or fornicacion, and y^t^ third daie to reade y^e^ homely of repentance, y^e^ penitent standinge by all the while; and in like manner and forme in euery pointe and condicion as aboue is prescribed she shall do two other Sundaies or holydaies. [54]

In some particularly vigorous courts, or in cases of repeated or serious sin, penitents were assigned the same humiliating exposure, but in the market place or other public arena. They were required, in the same costume as in church, but bare-headed, legged and footed, displaying a paper pinned on chest and back declaring the offence, to walk in procession, sometimes with the court apparitor leading, to the town market or cross and to stand there for between two and four hours. The theatrical element of these penances was sometimes purposefully further invoked with the stipulation that they were to take place at the busiest times of day to maximise the number of spectators.[55] It is this practice of processional penance that seems to be recalled when Lucio comes upon Claudio and Juliet in act one. Claudio asks the Provost 'why dost thou show me thus to th'world?' (1.2.108), to be told, 'I do it not in evil disposition,/ But from Lord Angelo by special charge'. Thus it is the 'precise', 'strict' Angelo that has instigated the public humiliation and exposure of the couple to communal disapprobation. In this way, the first appearance of the protagonists of the play is clearly associated with the post-Reformation practice of penance and confession. Stage directions do not indicate that the couple should exhibit signs declaring the nature of their offences, as the paraded penitents mentioned above were required to do, but Claudio's comment that their offence,

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[54] Hubert Hall, 'Some Elizabethan Penances in the Diocese of Ely', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3rd Series, 1 (1907), 263-77, p. 268.

[55] Dave Postles, 'Penance and the Market Place: a Reformation Dialogue with the Medieval Church (*c*.1250-*c*.1600)' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 54 (July, 2003), 441-468, p. 453.

'With character too gross is writ on Juliet' (1.2.144) may be an allusion to the practice.

Victoria Hayne has discussed the relevance of confessions imposed as penances by the Church courts to *Measure for Measure*.[56] She asserts that the play's 'plot hinges on a social question': that is, on the problems created by an ambiguous practice and law of marriage formation and which were sorted out in the ecclesiastical courts. Sexual relationships and morality *are* important aspects of the dramatic plot, but the question of 'how should society respond?', as Hayne frames it, does not seem to have a serious correlative significance in the play.[57] Claudio's arrest only comes about, after all, as a consequence of the primary dramatic impetus of the Duke's desire to expose his deputy's self-conscious reputation for moral superiority. And Claudio is not the one actually put on trial; the ethics of his offence are barely glanced at, and 'how society should respond' is presumed by all the characters, bar Angelo (a presumption, it will be argued, in which the theatrical community of the audience is encouraged to share). The real issues in question are Angelo's ethics, his failure to fulfil Vincentio's commission to 'be thou at full ourself./ Mortality and mercy in Vienna/ Live in thy tongue, and heart' (1.1.44-5), to temper the rigour of the law, and his moral hypocrisy and lack of forgiveness for his fellows. More persuasively, Hayne sites the play within the contemporary debates provoked by Puritan calls for England to instigate the death penalty for adultery: '*Measure for Measure* asks its audience to imagine the consequences of the most extreme proposal put forward by puritan reformers and legislators'.[58] Indeed, historical research, published by Dave Postles after Hayne's essay was written, confirms the effect of severe Puritan attitudes on the penances assigned to cases of concupiscence. Postles examined Consistory court act books from East Anglia, a region peppered with Puritan 'hotspots', and notes the intermittent frequency of market place penances. The incidence of these penances usually increased as an effect of the zeal of those communities involved: [59]

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[56] Victoria Hayne, 'Performing Social Practice: The Example of "Measure for Measure"', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44 (Spring, 1993), 1-29.
[57] ibid, p. 3.
[58] ibid, p. 18.
[59] Postles (2003), p. 461.

> The reintroduction of penance in the market place in some ecclesiastical jurisdictions coincides with the influence of 'godly' regimes – the hotter sort of 'Puritans' [...]. Whilst godly religion required a strong measure of interiority, the godly apparently resorted to public, communitarian enforcement of penance.[60]

Thus the dramatisation of comparatively draconian responses to sexual offences does have a ready foundation in historical practices. It is not just the severity of Angelo's judgement that is at issue in the play, but the ethics of his judgement, extrapolated from the dramatised case to be implied as generalised principles of judgement applicable to the community. It is this shared communal characteristic of judgement in the play and post-Reformation practices of confession that seems to be of most importance.

The overwhelmingly communal nature of post-Reformation English Church court confessions is one of its most notable features. This, perhaps, is not surprising given the continuing significance and emphasis accorded to communality in early Stuart religion, recognised by many historians.[61] The operational procedures of the Church courts depended on communal evidence and judgements and demonstrate the communal cohesion of social ethics. Presentments brought before the ecclesiastical court relied upon the evidence of parishioners supplied to churchwardens. If the accused swore their innocence they would pursue a process of compurgation, where between six to ten neighbours 'of good reputation' who knew the accused, would have to be persuaded to come to court and swear their belief in the accused's innocence. If found guilty, there were two alternatives: confession, or excommunication. For those brought before the courts for non-conformity, perhaps surreptitious Catholics or Separatists, the threat of *de excommunicato capiendo* must have had little potency. But for the majority of people the threat of excommunication pertained, apparently due to the pressure of communal responses. Conventionally, no other Christian was to consort with the excommunicated until they had performed a penance and been received back into the Church and it seems this restriction

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[60] Postles (2003), p. 451.

[61] For example, Patrick Collinson remarks, 'the trick in making the Protestant settlement of religion stick was to sell it to that social majority for whom 'religion' was part and parcel of good-neighbourhood'. Patrick Collinson, 'Anti-Papist, Anti-Puritan', in *Not Angels, But Anglicans: A History of Christianity in the British Isles* ed., Henry Chadwick, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2000), p. 144.

continued to be observed.[62] As Ronald Marchant states, 'The social effects of excommunication depended very much on popular opinion.'.[63] The communal nature of confessions (which were stipulated in a predominantly uniform format) is also noticeable. The penitent was required to stand in the church porch initially, a ritual exclusion designed to preserve the 'purity' of the community of the faithful. The congregation's prayers were to be supplicated for by the penitent and the invitation from the minister to return into the church designated the community's consent to readmit the sinner. It is also notable that Johane Andrewe's confession is addressed to the church community and it is before them, as well as God, that offence has been given and forgiveness is sought, 'I haue offended Allmightie God and by my euill example you all'. Offence to the community is not only important, the community are also utilised as a salvific resource, to generate shame as an aid to contrition, as witness to humble and properly repentant behaviour, and as judges who may withhold or grant forgiveness. *Measure for Measure* creates this same communal position in its audience, when, in 2.1, Claudio and Juliet are first paraded 'to th'world'. The stage is bare of other characters before which they could be 'shamed' and so the theatrical audience is the sole spectator, effectively invited to judge, to condemn or empathise as it will. Lucio's assumption - that Claudio's and Juliet's exposure must be consequent upon such a serious offence as murder (1.2.128), apparent in his incredulous query, 'Is lechery so look'd after?' (1.2.133) - signals to the audience at least one response it might emulate, encouraging of a Christian forgiveness. Likewise, the audience is positioned in the final trial scene, aligned with the confessor Duke whose omniscience it shares, to be in a position of judgement.

The final scene suggestively parallels the discourse and practices of post-Reformation confession as it operated in the ecclesiastical court, and implicates the audience as a judgemental or congregational community. Isabella stands before the assembled 'court' and the confessor Duke, and publicly confesses that she is a fornicator (5.1.21), accusing Angelo as her partner. In a parallel of the common

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[62] Marchant recounts an example from the archdeacon's register in Nottingham, which records a letter received from a local rector asking for permission to grant absolution to a pregnant excommunicate, Mary Bell, who was near her time of delivery in order for a midwife to be able to attend her. He estimates that about 5% of the population were excommunicate at any one time during the period he examines. Ronald A. Marchant, *The Church under the Law: Justice, Administration and Discipline in the Diocese of York 1560-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 221.
[63] Marchant (1969), p. 221.

consistory procedure of compurgation, Angelo's innocence rests on the opinion of his community which supports his self-presentation as chaste and honest. The community are further implicated in Angelo's assertion of Mariana's reputation as besmirched, which Angelo chiefly uses to justify his forswearing of the contract between himself and Mariana (5.1.219-21). However, in each of these cases the audience, of course, know the reverse of these 'facts' to be true and thus are positioned to exercise (correct) judgement. Along with this implicit critique of the communal judgements of the last scene, the Duke purposefully manoeuvres the proceedings so that Angelo must judge his own 'cause' (5.1.168-9). This is a theatrical, literal staging of the methods advocated in Puritan doctrine of self-examination of conscience. Not only does this scene serve to dramatically repeat and emphasise Angelo's hypocrisy, but it also underlines the inadequacy of a procedure that leaves self-deluded and hypocritical self-judgements unchallenged. The scene throws into stark relief the contrast between the potential for mistaken witness of communal attitudes towards neighbours, the fallacies of self-evaluation and, in this case, the 'superior' (because correct) perceptions and knowledge procured through the practice of confession that the Duke professes. The ethics and means of right judgement are repeatedly raised, emphasising a series of distinctions that ultimately rest on the difference between the superficial appearance of things and hidden truths that must be searched out. In her preamble to her defence, Isabella constructs a series of oppositions: between what is 'strange' and what is 'true' (1.38-49); the 'impossible' and that which 'seems unlike'; the seemingly 'shy' and the 'arch-villain' (1.56-60) that are finally expressed in her summary, 'To make the truth appear where it seems hid,/ And hide the false seems true' (5.1.68-9). The audience, of course, is positioned to navigate between these oppositions, not to take all it sees and hears at face value. Likewise, the ability of the community to discern truth and come to correct judgement is implied in Mariana's ostensible 'riddle', 'Who thinks he knows that he ne'er knew my body,/ But knows, he thinks, that he knows Isabel's' (5.1.201-2). This is a riddle the play's audience can solve, but otherwise is obscure to the other characters present. Indeed, Angelo constructs such a plausible defence that Isabella, Mariana and the Friars are in real danger of losing their cause, a danger that culminates in the threat of the rack for the Duke and his timely defrocking.[64] What is

[64] The Duke is joined in the last act by his confidante Friar Peter (or Thomas).

thus made doubly clear is that the plausible, even when seemingly strengthened by the testimony of others, may still be false. The resolution to these judgmental errors is reserved for the moral authority and knowledge gained from auricular confession by the Duke, and as such it represents a fundamental opposition between the various types of confession that are presented in the play - the traditional and various revised versions. One, derived from pre-Reformation religion, is concerned with interiority, intents, mitigating circumstances and the careful discernment of penitential sorrow: an intimate, but, importantly, externally verified practice. The others, while capitalising on the latter, remain either too isolated and subjective to be efficacious, as in Angelo's case, or too concerned with that which can be outwardly declared, made public and put on show, and which privileges and utilises communal judgement in a more or less one size fits all system of penance, as in Church court confessions. The practices of pre-Reformation Catholicism, then, are privileged in the play's resolution: it is the old practice of confession that enables the knowledge to be gained to make correct judgements, to expose Angelo's hypocrisy, to save lives, spiritual and temporal and to restore communal harmony.

Like Stephen Mullaney, Huston Diehl acknowledges the crucial relation between confession and *Measure for Measure*, and she also reads the resolution to the play as primarily communal, but explicitly contests the interpretation of Catholic confession as privileged. She asserts that the final scene stages the type of open and shared confession of guilt and shame advocated by Calvin at meetings of the Calvinist Church in their consistories, in recognition of Christians' status as a community of sinners.[65] Thus, Diehl argues, the play recognizes the 'infinite space' between the divine ideal and flawed humanity that becomes a catalyst of contrition in the drama's characters and establishes, through the artifice of theatre, a felt need for grace in the audience. Diehl concludes,

> Certainly auricular confession is, as he [Stephen Mullaney] suggests, a 'specter' that haunts *Measure for Measure*, but Shakespeare's play questions its efficacy and, in the final scene, stages another kind of confession, a public and communal rehearsal of mutual guilt that conforms much more closely to Calvinist than to Roman Catholic rituals of confession.[...].

[65] See Chapter 1, section 3.7 for Calvinist practice of public confession in the consistory.

> Even Escalus and the Provost, who appear relatively blameless, and Isabella, who was clearly wronged, confess their faults and ask - publicly - to be pardoned for their behaviour; and Angelo, the most obviously guilty character, not only requests forgiveness but is also asked to forgive the Provost. [...] Indeed, the Duke himself [...] asks to be pardoned, confessing to Isabella.[...]. All of these confessions are offered spontaneously and openly to the entire community.[66]

Admittedly, there are, in this last scene, eighteen requests for, or expressions of pardon, from the moment of the Duke's defrocking at l. 354, to the end of the play, l. 536, some 180 lines. However, a detailed examination of the nature of these expressions undermines Diehl's claims. For example, Escalus makes no confession of fault; the Duke does spontaneously pardon his inadvertent impertinence ('What you have spoke, I pardon' [5.1.359]), but Escalus does not solicit it, and in fact does not speak at all at this point. Escalus only speaks twice, once to express surprise and confusion about Angelo (l.378) and once to admonish Angelo directly (l.468-471). Neither of these two instances where Escalus is given lines could be construed as confessions or requests for forgiveness. The Provost does, ostensibly, request forgiveness of Vincentio (l.460) for not executing his office as directed by Angelo, but performing it, unwarranted, according to 'private message' (l.455-465). However, this really cannot be regarded as a sincere request, as the private message came from the Duke himself and the charade of the Duke accusing the Provost of exceeding his office and stripping him of it, is being enacted only to provide yet another example of Angelo's culpability and a further opportunity for Angelo to spontaneously admit his guilt before judgement is passed on him, as will be argued. Although Isabella does ask the Duke to pardon her for her unknowing indictment of him, (l.383) this 'confession of fault' can hardly be regarded as one of sin, but rather as a courteous admission of involuntary incivility. The Duke instructs Isabella to pardon Angelo's desire for her, 'For Mariana's sake' (l.401), but specifically declares there can be no forgiveness for Angelo's condemnation of Claudio to death. Isabella's plea for Angelo's life is conspicuously *not* on the grounds that she has forgiven him (although it may be implied), rather she pleads that the equation drawn by the Duke between Angelo and Claudio, 'An Angelo for Claudio' (l.407), is not valid, since 'His act did not o'ertake his bad intent' (l.449). After this Isabella, although directed to pardon various characters by the Duke, including himself, does

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[66] Diehl (1998), pp. 408-9.

not speak again. Finally, Angelo, the 'most obviously guilty character', also, most significantly, fails to either confess or ask for forgiveness:

> Oh my dread Lord,
> I should be guiltier than my guiltiness
> To think I can be undiscernible,
> When I perceive your Grace, like power divine,
> Hath looked upon my passes. Then good prince,
> No longer session hold upon my shame,
> But let my trial be mine own confession.
> Immediate sentence, then, and sequent death
> Is all the grace I beg. (5.1.364-72)

Angelo's admission of culpability here is a partial, hypothetical and conditional one: he 'should', he says, be guilty if he thought he could continue to conceal his faults from a power so omniscient, a concealment that is now plainly futile. Although he does, glancingly, refer to 'my guiltiness', such a partial and unemphatic confession of this sort, buried in the decorum of courtly rhetoric, would hardly qualify as contrite if made before a confessor, as the Duke pretended to be. Indeed, Angelo specifically requests to be allowed to *not* confess, rather, for his 'trial [to] be mine own confession', instead. One expects the nouns to be vice versa in this line: that is, 'let my confession be mine own trial', as a confession of guilt obviates the necessity for a trial in a criminal case. It is significant that they are in reverse order. Moreover, Angelo markedly does not ask for forgiveness but, proudly, prefers death to the humbling subjection experienced as a recipient of grace and forgiveness. The only other time Angelo speaks, after the Duke discards his disguise, is in response to Escalus. Whilst they are waiting for Barnadine to be brought, Escalus gently admonishes Angelo,

> Esc. I am sorry one so learned and so wise
> As you, Lord Angelo, have still appear'd,
> Should slip so grossly, both in the heat of blood
> And lack of tempr'd judgement afterward.
>
> Ang. I am sorry that such sorrow I procure,
> And so deep sticks it in my penitent heart
> That I crave death more willingly than mercy:
> 'Tis my deserving, and I do entreat it. (1.468-75)

Whilst this is more nearly a confession, in that Angelo admits causing Escalus sorrow, and that his heart is 'penitent', a confession of his actual wrongdoing still

remains absent. Furthermore, Angelo's pronounced repetition of his rejection of forgiveness in favour of death because ''Tis my deserving' emphasises his continued adherence to an ethic that cannot allow judgement to be tempered with mercy, even now, even for himself. This seems to represent the moral crux of *Measure for Measure*. Retaining the guise of the friar intact, the Duke designed the confrontation of Angelo at the city gate to press Angelo into a spontaneous admission of his faults in the face of those he has wronged. Putting Angelo in charge of his own case further accentuates and escalates this pressure, although it still proves ineffective. Effectively turning the tables, the Duke directs this last scene, where the knowledge of Claudio's survival is withheld initially, in order to provide opportunities for those Angelo has wronged, principally Isabella and Mariana, to exercise judgement upon Angelo. The Duke's protracted withholding of the fact of Claudio's survival enables the demonstration to Angelo of the fact that others are able to exercise mercy and forgiveness even when they are not deserved – thus simultaneously showing the tempering of unmitigated justice, which is the ideal of Christian mercy and forgiveness. Such calculated manipulations as the Duke performs, contests Diehl's assessment of the scene as 'mutual' and 'spontaneous'. In fact, the Duke engineers the only confessions of fault and expressions of pardon by the other characters. Corresponding to his former disguise as confessor, it is the Duke himself who grants the only other instances of pardon in the scene, for what are now revealed as his subjects.[67]

The traditional doctrine of auricular confession, as well as the post-Reformation 'version' of confession ordered by the Church courts, have as an integral element the declaration of self-incriminatory truths, an element that is suggested by the repeated exhortations to admit the truth in the nine instances the word 'confess' and its variants are spoken in the last scene of the play.[68] But the practice of post-Reformation, seventeenth-century confession in England's churches proves to be a context where the dilemma of judging truthfulness is problematic. In the Catholic system, annual confession in Lent had been a prerequisite to receiving the Eucharist at Easter. Thus part of the purpose of confession had been as a ritual of spiritual purification which allowed the Christian to reassert their place as participant in the

67 These pardons are granted spontaneously at l. 359 (to Escalus), 385, 396, 400 (to Isabella), 481 (to Barnadine), 489 (to Isabella), 496 (to Angelo), 517, 518 (to Lucio).
68 The word 'confess' and its variants appears in lines 116, 164, 185 186, 215, 275, 287, 370, 524.

Christian community. But confession could not be effective if Christians were in conflict or disharmony with other members of Christ's body. Consequently, those accused of non-communication in the post-Reformation Church courts often pleaded 'reasons of conscience', that is, being out of charity with neighbours or burdened by a sense of sin. Helmholz comments, 'It seems likely that some of these responses [pleas of conscience] in fact concealed more serious dissent from the Church, perhaps most often Catholic recusancy'.[69] Whereas the medium of auricular confession allowed dissenting beliefs to be exposed and addressed, the public environment of the Church courts was an ineffective setting for detailed and thorough spiritual investigation: the courts had to take declarations of spiritual ineligibility at face value. Conversely, recusant defendants were in the morally incongruous position of being obliged to exploit the very changes to a central tenet (and sacrament) of their belief that they otherwise sought to preserve, in the interests of the larger cause of their continued adherence to their faith. It is this same pattern of moral incongruity that Isabella faces when she is obliged to confess to fornication, an offence she has not committed, in the service of a larger cause. The same model is apparent as the Duke engineers the identical offence of pre-marital fornication between Angelo and Mariana as the one he instructed his deputy to punish rigorously. The pattern is duplicated elsewhere in the play. Isabella's necessity to plead for mercy for an offence she believes should be punished, 'There is a vice that I most do abhor, /And most desire should meet the blow of justice; /For which I would not plead, but that I must.' (2.2.29-32) is imposed on her by codes of family allegiance. The ethics of being obliged to declare a conviction one does not really possess are further explored when Angelo claims that 'our compell'd sins' do not count (2.4.57-8), but then withdraws the claim because he 'can speak/ Against the thing I say' (l. 59-60). His conflation of 'charity in sin' (2.4.63) is rectified by Isabella as ignominiously 'of two houses [...] nothing kin'(2.4.111-2) and yet she is obliged to lend tacit agreement to 'charity in sin' and practises duplicity herself in order to ransom her brother, as she thinks. The Duke assures Isabella that 'the doubleness of the benefit defends the deceit from reproof' (3.2.258-9). Later, Vincentio reassures Mariana that, as party to the same deception, she commits 'no sin' (4.1.717), although, in an aside, refers to Claudio's reprieve (as he imagines it)

[69] Helmholz (1990), p. 115.

as 'purchas'd by such sin/ For which the pardoner himself is in' (4.2.106-7). In each case, what is spoken is either at odds with a principle avowed previously by the same character, such as in Isabella's case, or contrary to something already established to the knowledge of the audience. Such contradictory statements, together with those discussed earlier, emphasise the profound caution with which the play's community (including the audience) need to approach the judgement of others. It seems the only conclusion that can be drawn with any certainty from these otherwise ethically troubling statements, is that their eventual justness lies in what is already known about the true nature of Angelo's character, and the Duke's larger cause of exposing it. The parallel with the situation in Church courts is evident; non-conformists could plead reasons of conscience to conceal a religious faith at odds with the official state imposition of Protestantism. In the pre-Elizabethan system, such cases of dissenting or unorthodox belief would have been resolved in confession. The sanctity of the seal of confession allowed for a sincere dialogue that did not just require outward conformity or avowal, but aimed to secure a genuine conviction to Christian tenets. The position of the confessor within the parish community meant that priests were ideally situated to assess the true characters of their flock. Confessors possessed not just a lengthy acquaintance with their congregation's spiritual development, but, like other members of the community, they would have had usually a prolonged and intimate knowledge of the character, family and circumstances of parishioners. In *Measure for Measure* it is the knowledge that is derived from the Duke's practice of auricular confession that ultimately ensures a providential outcome. This knowledge is shared by the audience and in this way the audience is omniscient, positioned to assess when judgements are correct and when they are mistaken. The theatrical community of the audience must, as in the *theatrum mundi*, reject outward representations, in favour of the realities of known characters and histories. Such a conclusion to the play suggests the comparisons being made between the judgemental ethics of the religious discourses circulating in the post-Reformation community. In the 'precise' figure of Angelo, the strict ethics of Puritan judgements about the self and others, and the sexual and sanctified relationships between the two, come under scrutiny. Ethics specifically associated with the Catholic community are implicitly critiqued also, such as the ethics of equivocation, religious conformity and social ethics of community. However, it is in the last scene that the examination of principles of judgement culminates, and it here that, in the combined figure of the

Duke-confessor, auricular confession is found authoritative and seen to be the ultimate means of securing the knowledge with which to perform measured justice and restore communal relations.

Measure for Measure, like *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello* in this, thus presents a continuing attention to the communal and public aspect of confession, one that leaves relatively unexplored the personal psychology of the process of confession. Yet, it is this latter aspect that has become most commonly associated with confession today. Such associations assert a fundamental connection between the practice of confession and the genealogy of a Western sense of identity, theorised in the writing of Michel Foucault. This association allows the effect of confession to be traced at its most intimate level in the confessional mode of speech that is soliloquy and will be examined in relation to *King Lear*.

Chapter 7 - The Subject and Soliloquy in *King Lear*

'O you kind Gods,
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!'

This chapter is concerned with historical notions of confession, but mainly to the extent that they are pertinent to the cultural and psychological effects Michel Foucault assigns to them in the formation of a Western sense of identity, which he asserts began to emerge in the early modern period. Foucault's cultural theory of subjectivity is partly argued from evidence derived from the history of confession, but this evidence is problematic in certain areas. Bearing these problems in mind, the generative part played by confession in subjectivity remains a persuasive and credible theory, and so will be discussed in relation to *King Lear*, although in the light of an alternative model of human identity found in St Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions* (397). This archetypal model is generated and expressed in confessional or biographical discourse and as such shares the same qualities as soliloquy – a form readily transposed into theatre. In the academic discipline of English Literature it has been *King Lear*, above all plays in the Shakespearean canon, that has been singled out as a masterpiece of the theatrical construction of identity. For this reason, and for the fact that the soliloquies examined are peculiarly communicative of identity, it is with *King Lear* that this study concludes.

Foucault's subjectivity

In *The History of Sexuality* Michel Foucault constructs a historical account of how Western discourses of subjectivity and specifically sexuality have been conceived and evolved.[1] In doing so Foucault assigns a fundamental significance to the practice, concepts and beliefs of auricular confession. What Foucault has to say about confession, therefore, is worth considering in itself. However, Foucault has been an important influence in the formation of the discipline of cultural studies in general, and particularly in the hypothesising of a model of cultural, political and historical theory that came to dominate critical approaches to early modern literature in the discipline of literary studies, specifically in the guises of new historicism and cultural materialism. That aspect of cultural materialism that envisions culture in terms of Raymond Williams' description of circulating emergent, dominant and residual discourses is helpful also in the project of this thesis, particularly in explaining the dramatic

[1] Michel Foucault, *The Will To Knowledge, The History of Sexuality*, 3 vols (first pub. as *La Volonté de Savoir*, 1976), trans. Robert Hurley, (London: Allen Lane, 1979; repr. London: Penguin, 1998), I.

manifestations of confession after its mandatory practice had finished. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams discriminates between those 'features' of a culture that are 'archaic' and those that are 'residual'. The residual, according to Williams,

> is still active in the cultural process. [...] Thus certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social and cultural institution or formation. [2]

A defining characteristic of the residual is that it represents an alternative, or opposition in some way, to the dominant. Williams points out that residual cultural elements are 'usually at some distance from the effective dominant culture, but some part of it, some version of it [...] will have had to be incorporated if the effective dominant culture is to make sense in these areas'.[3] This, of course, is an idea that might be usefully transferred into historical accounts of Christianity and the varying sections of it that developed through and after the Reformation.

Foucault's model of culture extends Williams' dynamic 'features', in its account of knowledge/power relations that are seen as diffuse, immanent in all relations and always, by definition, accompanied by the possibility of resistance. Foucault's model has proved particularly fecund for literary critics in its concept of 'discourses', a term that encompasses the construction of knowledges, their concepts, language, beliefs, practices and significances. Thus all cultural artefacts, including writing, can be analysed in terms of the discourses that operate within them, that they sometimes share, might reproduce and re-'write'. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault aims to provide a historical account of the evolution of a discourse of sexuality, primarily in Western societies (although in comparison with Eastern and Arabo-Moslem ones), a discourse that has become dominant in the production of Western subjectivity. In Foucault's analysis, auricular confession is an originating, paradigmatic discourse, that has been reproduced and re-written in a long and gradual process through the last millennia and has shaped the production of subjectivity.

Foucault identifies 'epistemes', that is large periods of history that share some defining and dominant knowledge discourses. Foucault's epistemes tend to construct a sense of isolated, disjunctive phases in history and are argued vaguely. One instance of this is

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[2] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 122.
[3] Williams (1977), p. 123.

his characterization of the medieval period as one where conceptualisations of identity rested on ties to the commonweal, such as kinship, or allegiance (that is, people felt themselves defined by and 'vouched' for by reference to others) and rests solely on a citation of the etymology of the word 'avowal', which, whilst supportive, seems rather limited evidence for such a large claim (a claim which has also been contested by some revisionist historians).[4] Foucault asserts that this sense of identity changed over a relatively short period in the sixteenth century, to one where the individual 'was authenticated by the discourse of truth he was able or obliged to pronounce concerning himself'. The truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power'.[5] Foucault asserts that in providing an account of oneself in confession, and according to the authority of religious discourse, represented and voiced through the confessor, one is both literally subject to that authority and acquires subjectivity. The confession of the 'truth' of oneself Foucault describes as

> An immense labour to which the West has submitted generations in order to produce – while other forms of work ensured the accumulation of capital – men's subjection: their constitution as subjects in both senses of the word.[6]

Foucault terms confession a 'technology of self', a process that produces self-knowledge that constitutes subjectivity. Germane to Foucault's account of the discourse of sexuality are some various aspects of confession that he explicitly draws attention to. Firstly, Foucault identifies the particular speech context of confession as important. He argues that because the subject of the enunciation in confession is the same as the enunciator, there is presumed to be a 'basic intimacy' that guarantees its veracity. Indeed, the more obstacles to the expression of their truth that confessants experiences, the more resistance they have surmounted, the more the truth of the confession is 'corroborated'. Secondly, he says confession is associated not only with truth, but also with freedom; that to make a confession is to be liberated by the expression of the truth about oneself and by such means one is unburdened, vindicated, redeemed, purified and, in religious contexts, assured of salvation. Additionally,

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[4] Foucault (1976), p. 58. Foucault's views of medieval identity are countered for example in David Aers, *Community, Gender and Individual Identity: English Writing 1360-1430* (London: Routledge, 1988), esp. the *Introduction*. Emily Steiner argues the role of the possession of documents in forging a sense of identity in *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) especially the section on Margery Kempe, pp. 229-246.
[5] Foucault (1976), p. 59.
[6] Foucault (1976), p. 60.

silence is seen not as an opposition to confession, but rather as 'an element that functions alongside the things said'.[7] The significance of what is not said, what cannot be said, or who chooses to withhold speech, is as integral to meaning as the multiplicity of things that are spoken about in confession.[8] Finally, Foucault states that confession 'produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it', that the very act itself effects a transformation - in religious discourse envisaged as effected through contrite confession, transforming the confessant from sinner to saved. [9] In secular terms confession may be regarded as an exploration, a catharsis, a clarification, an articulation of truth.

Although Foucault is vague in identifying the chronology of what is an evolutionary cultural thesis, he does mention the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 that made annual confession mandatory, implying this as one starting condition of Western subjectivity. He also pinpoints the Reformation, in particular the beginnings of Protestantism, as the time when confession lost its formalised and specialised religious location, spreading into internalised and secularised settings. Following the Council of Trent (1545-1563), Foucault traces a general shift of emphasis in confession, on the one hand, to the recounting in detail of originating thoughts and desires of sexual sin, rather than their enactment in deed, and on the other, to a newfound circumspection that curtailed its explicit discussion:

> According to the new pastoral, sex must not be named imprudently, but its aspects, its correlations, and its effects must be pursued down to their slenderest ramifications. A twofold evolution tended to make the flesh into the root of all evil, shifting the most important moment of transgression from the act itself to the stirrings – so difficult to perceive and formulate – of desire.[10]

The Council of Trent was, of course, partly concerned with addressing abuses in confession that had formed part of Reformist agendas. Carlo Borromeo (1538-84) Archbishop of Milan from 1565, is particularly associated with the reform of confession. He created a design for a confession box that separated confessor and confessant, with a grille constructed of holes that 'nothing bigger than a pea' could

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[7] Foucault (1976), p. 27.
[8] Leila Hojati has analysed and constructed an anatomy of confessional modes of speech in her PhD thesis, *Acts of Confession: Power and Identity in the Novels of Saul Bellow* (forthcoming doctoral thesis, University of Liverpool, 2007).
[9] Foucault (1976), p. 61.
[10] Foucault (1976), pp. 19-20.

pass through. Yet this was only one minor aspect of Tridentine reforms. Cardinal Borromeo also produced what has been called the 'Milan Penitential' (*c.* 1582).[11] This penitential *summa* is structured in sections according to the Decalogue, and the seven deadly sins, followed by two specific sections on gluttony and drunkenness, and so demonstrates no particular concern with the sexual. The prefatory passage is also conventional in tone and refers to the penitential canons, promulgated over the preceding millennia, as authoritative in cases of doubt. The anxiety to treat such delicate subjects as the recounting of sexual topics in confession cautiously was perhaps more immediate following the Reformation, but it is also a continuation of a manifest concern in confession manuals that greatly precede that time.[12] In John Mirk's *Instructions to Parish Priests*, for example, (which continued to be published and remained popular in the sixteenth century) there are 31 lines dedicated to the sin of *luxuria*, compared to another section on *gula* of 35 lines or, in accordance with the conventional emphasis on pride as the most common and serious sin, *superbia*, which has 71 lines devoted to its confession and remedies. Furthermore, the nature of the inquiries the confessor was directed to make about the sin of lust are not particularly intrusive and have a strong flavour of establishing a recognition of respect for others, in its concerns with consent and responsibility, as much as sin. One obvious problem that is brought to light here is the transference of what is a Franco-orientated perspective of history, particularly in terms of the Counter-Reformation, into a generalised discussion of 'Western subjectivity', that includes the very different history and culture(s) of the English Reformation(s). Moreover, Alexander Murray makes a number of points, which although commenting on the late medieval practice of confession, can be extrapolated as of continuing generic relevance.[13] Firstly, Murray points out that it was 'axiomatic' that confessors had to exercise their own judgements

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[11] See MHP, pp. 363-8.

[12] See, for example, l.1286-1301 in *John Mirk's Instructions For Parish Priests*, ed., Gillis Kristensson, Lund Studies in English, (Lund: Carl Bloms, 1974), one of the most popular fifteenth-century manuals, although based upon, and a loose translation of, the widely read, *circa* 1320s, *Oculus sacerdotis*, by William of Pagula, itself based upon Pecham's Injunctions of 1287 and other earlier penitential writing. See also the Prologue to the *Pœnitentiale Romanum*, Bk 6, by Halitgar (*c.* 830) that emphasises the solicitous sense of fraternity priests should have with penitent 'subjects', 'since we are 'members one of another' and 'if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with it', in MHP, p. 297.

[13] Alexander Murray, 'Counselling in Medieval Confession' in *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, eds, Peter Biller and A. J. Minnis, York Studies in Medieval Theology 2, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1998), pp. 63-77.

in establishing sinfulness, contrition and appropriate penitential tariffs.[14] To generalise about the flesh being the 'root of all evil', as Foucault does, is problematic therefore, in that actual pastoral practice may have varied considerably. Secondly, an increasing trend of the later medieval period, identified by Murray, is the dialectical nature of confession, where, penitential writing suggests, confessor and confessant would negotiate and compromise about degrees of sinfulness and penance. Above all, the penitent's assent was necessary to any judgements.[15] As Murray states,

> To sum up: the confessor's handbook, unlike liturgical books, gave the priest only a minimal script, from which he had to improvise in conversation with his penitent. Together they had to forge a morality practicable as well as consonant with Christian profession.[16]

There is no reason to suppose that such negotiation ceased in the practice of early modern period confession. In addition, John Bossy identifies a developing trend of decreasing emphasis on the confessional concept of satisfaction and pinpoints as representative and influential the concern of Thomas Aquinas that the penitent should not be moved to anger over a satisfaction perceived as unjust and thus lose the 'pacific disposition' necessary to confession.[17] Overall, if confession subjectified the individual and did so solely in terms of the sexual, it would be difficult to read this as a one-way process, absent of any agency on the part of the confessant. However, it would be falsely contentious to deny the clear association of confession and the sexual in certain periods of history, as Thomas Tentler recognises: 'sexuality holds a special place in medieval religion [...] it was inordinately concerned with the sexual'.[18] Yet this changed, probably as a result of Scholastic debates, so that eventually, 'there was a greater willingness in the high middle ages to admit that sex might be good'.[19] In the Counter-Reformation period the emphasis in confession shifted again, to the originating desires and motives of sin, as Foucault says, but these are not particularly

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[14] In his 'Milan Penitential' Cardinal Borromeo also refers to the joint responsibilities of confessor and penitent, 'that they severally accurately investigate [...] and then, that they temper the penance with their own justice and prudence'. MHP, p. 364.

[15] Interestingly, this negotiable and consensual approach in confession, that implies a correspondingly active part for the subject in the production of subjectivity, accords with Foucault's later ideas about the subject becoming active in 'crafting' their self in the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*: *The Care of the Self*, 3 vols (first publ. as *Le Souci de soi*, 1984) trans. Robert Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1988; repr. London: Penguin, 1990), III.

[16] Murray (1998), p. 77.

[17] John Bossy, 'Practices of Satisfaction 1215-1700', in RRR, pp. 106-118.

[18] SCER, p. 165.

[19] SCER, p. 167.

envisaged as sexual. This new emphasis in confession emerged from the intellectual and reformatory debates of sixteenth-century Italy (which also spawned such Orders as the Ursulines and Theatines) and which recognised the need not just for sacramental confession, but a devotional type of confession that aimed to explore in detail spirituality and the self. In the *Spiritual Exercises* this type of confession is described as 'general confession', which 'brings greater profit and merit, because of the greater sorrow experienced at present for all the sins and evil deeds of one's entire life [...] one reaches a deeper interior understanding of the reality and malice of one's sins'.[20]

The collapsing of subjectivity into sexuality is done silently in *The History of Sexuality*, with no overt statement, or explanation. Given the attribution of the production of sexuality to the discourse and practice of confession, this silence seems to ignore the fact that confession was about sins; all seven of them. In the post-Reformation period, when the emphasis of Christian morality shifted increasingly to the criteria of the Decalogue, the sexual remains far from an exclusive criteria brought to bear on the individual.[21] If one could produce other knowledges of the self and could be evaluated in other ways, then there must be, by definition, other subjectivities. Where the notion of confession as generative of a subjectivity bound by sexuality does seem more apt is in the construction of women expressed in penitential literature. Jacqueline Murray has undertaken an analysis of fifteen English and French manuals produced in the thirteenth century. Murray finds that

> In these manuals women were defined by their sexual and reproductive functions. They were not considered to have an independent or individual social, economic or spiritual identity. Nor were their souls seen as truly sexless because their whole spiritual identity was inextricably tied to their sexed bodies [...] the salvation of women's souls was linked to their sexuality and to their sexuality alone.[22]

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[20] *Spiritual Exercises*, para. 44, cited in PAR, p. 192. See also chapter 1, section 3.10.

[21] Raymond A. Mentzer has scrutinised the cases appearing before the Calvinist Church consistory in Montauban. He states, 'disputes amounted to roughly a quarter of all wrongdoing handled by the town's consistory, while sexual faults were considerably fewer – less than a tenth of offences.' 'Sin and Penitence in the French Reformed Community', in PAR, p. 90. See also John Bossy, 'Moral Arithemetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments', in *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe*, ed., Edmund Leites, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 214-34. Also Martin Luther's, 'How One Should Teach Common Folk to Shrive Themselves' (1531) that advises confession of sin according to the Ten Commandments, LW, LIII, pp. 119-121.

[22] Jacqueline Murray, 'Gendered Souls in Sexed Bodies: The Male Construction of Female Sexuality in Some Medieval Confessors' Manuals', in *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, eds, Peter Biller and A. J. Minnis, York Studies in Medieval Theology 2 (Woordbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1998), pp. 79-93.

To sound a note of caution, it should be remembered that Thomistic theology took for granted the inseparable nature of the soul and the body, although, it should also be pointed out, this does not seem to be a gendered body.[23] Nonetheless, where men were categorised precisely, as young, old, free, serf, lay, cleric, scholar, labourer, and so on, the categories available to women were limited to virgin, matron/wife, or widow – all dependent on sexual status. In the male authored, androcentric penitentials, female subjectivity at least does seem to be conceived of solely in terms of sexuality. However Foucault's claim is more emphatic:

> In the space of a few centuries, a certain inclination led us to direct the question of what we are, to sex. [...] with the great series of binary oppositions [...] the West has managed [...] to bring us almost entirely – our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history – under the sway of a logic of concupiscence and desire. Whenever it is a question of knowing who we are, it is this logic that henceforth serves as our masterkey.[24]

For Foucault, it is this assumption, generated from the discourse of confession, that 'what we are', or the 'truth' of subjectivity, lies in an 'obligatory, exhaustive' self-analysis of desires, which are presented as exclusively, or ultimately, sexual. For Foucault, the circumscription of desire is achieved through the process of auricular confession. Although he acknowledges that, by transforming desire into discourse, effects of 'mastery' and 'detachment' are achieved for the penitent, effects that might be thought to restore some sense of agency in the individual, this sense of mastery is yoked further into subjectification; that is, it becomes, according to Foucault, an act of containment that poses as a liberation. Confession, then, becomes an exercise of power, justified in the Christian profession as a means of forgiveness and the restoration of righteousness; it is, 'a physical effect of blissful suffering from feeling in one's body the pangs of temptation and the love that resists it'.[25] The mastery of the self that confession implies thus becomes in fact a mastery of the self by a dominant discourse

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[23] St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, trans. Thomas Gilby et al., 60 vols (London: Blackfriars, 1920-1929; revs. 1964-), I, (Ia2æ. 71-80), q.76, a. I, ad. I, 'The human soul, is indeed separate, but none the less in matter [...]. It is separate according to the rational power, since the rational power is not the power of any corporeal organ, in the way that the power to see is the act of the eye: for to reason is an act that cannot be exercised through a corporeal organ, in the way that vision is exercised. But it is in matter, inasmuch as the soul itself, whose power it is, is the form of the body'. See, *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, eds, Martha C. Nussbaum and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) for a fuller discussion of Aquinas' commentary on *De Anima*, esp. pp. 27-56 and p. 53.

[24] Foucault (1976) p. 78.

[25] Foucault (1976), p. 23.

that is an exercise in power, although the specific project, or identity of that power is undisclosed. Any temporal mastery implied might be problematic, in that confession was an extraordinarily 'levelling' practice to which everyone was constrained, including confessors and ecclesiastics themselves. Of course, Foucault's language here, of 'bliss', 'pangs' and 'love', is a deliberately ironic use of quasi-mystical lexicon that registers the sceptical and ironic distance between the discourse of religious confession and his politically inflected metadiscourse. Foucault portrays the confession of sin as the acknowledgement of a lack of mastery of desires, an excess that has escaped the controlling discipline of the individual, or that, being controlled, is simply reiterated in another guise, for example envy projected as false witness. Confession then, rather than being seen primarily as a mechanism of forgiveness, or a process of spiritual healing, is the operation of power that imposes a halt on the ceaseless deferral of satisfaction experienced as the constantly desiring self.[26] The pronouncement and experience of absolution offers, at least for the moment, a means of escape for the heteroglossial sinner to a fully present and satisfied, unitary self, at peace with the world and God.

Yet the introduction of a Lacanian theory of identity here points to another problem latent in Foucault's account of confession. The generation of subjectivity in confession, apart from being conceived of as exclusively sexual, is also simplified implicitly as a transparent reflection, or assumption, or both, of the discourse of confession. In spite of the rubric of power being always accompanied by the possibility of resistance as a condition of its existence in Foucault, in practice he seems to project confessants who would be entirely innocent of any self-reflexivity, or insight into the narrative process of confession. Where, Foucault says, the penitent is obliged to render an account of their self in terms of sinful intents, motives, temptations and desires, this is what that self becomes. Yet Lacan observes that the very act of narrating the self, of 'reconstruct[ing] this construct' of self, involves the frustrating recognition that the self cannot be captured in narrative, that the nature of language, which functions through deferred presence, constitutes the deferred presence of self in narrative accounts of it.[27]

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[26] This idea presupposes a Lacanian model of desire that, in its ceaseless quest for satisfaction to restore a lost sense of presence, Jacques Lacan said was comparative to 'the unconscious [that] is structured like a language'; that is, it is founded upon an absence that is continually being sought to be recovered as presence. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* (1966), trans. Alan Sheridan, (London: Tavistock, 1977).

[27] Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis* (*Discours de Rome*), trans. Anthony Wilden, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1968), p. 11, cited in,

The contradictions of these two models of human 'being' remain unresolved, but Lacan's observation does draw attention to an inherent self-consciousness experienced in the act of self-narration.

Augustine's 'inward turn'

If, then, Foucault's account of the role of the discourse of confession in the formation of subjectivity is problematic in certain areas, does that negate the whole premise of any sort of relationship between the two? Part of the project of this thesis has been to prove that the answer would have to be negative. However, it may be necessary to approach this asserted relationship with an alternative model of self, or subjectivity, and a vocabulary that is capable of doing greater justice to the complexity of concepts of human identity, in both their various cultures, social formations, historical times and conceptions and one that might span these divisions. Charles Taylor models a spatially conceived theory of identity.[28] He claims that people exist within moral frameworks, frameworks that are exceedingly complex in their variability and impossible to fully articulate. People make qualitative distinctions about the various conceptions of those frameworks they see as pertinent to them at any one time. Their sense of identity exists in plotting their own personal position in relation to these frameworks, that is they take their bearings from a pre-existent set of 'moral goods'. Taylor's concept of 'moral goods' does not just encompass morality but larger evaluative sets. He identifies three basic frameworks, or 'axes': respect for human life and its concomitant prohibitions and obligations; categories of what constitutes a rich and meaningful life; and notions of what constitutes a sense of dignity for ourselves and others. Taylor observes, 'Probably something like these three axes exists in every culture'. [29]

It is Taylor's project to trace how various cultures have historically conceived variant categories of these three paradigmatic frameworks, how they are related, what relative value is attached to them and how they are articulated throughout the history and development of Western modernity, charting a concomitant development of senses of

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Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 244.

[28] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[29] Taylor (1989), p. 16. Although these frameworks are articulated in positive terms here, their negative expressions are included by definition. Thus the individual takes up their own position and construes themselves somewhere in relation to these frameworks.

self. Taylor's model allows for the recognition of several different locations of the self – the sites on his 'map' of 'moral goods'; positions from which the self can find its bearings, accepting, modifying or rejecting as seems appropriate at any time. Taylor identifies the writing of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) as an important contribution to the historical process of producing senses of self. Augustine develops a language of inwardness that privileges the self as a source of authority. Outward, sensory perception is only important or useful in so much as it accords with and is scrutinised according to the God-given knowledge of memory that resides in the inward self. This inward self then becomes the source, location and arbiter of meaning, as much as it can be understood. In Book 10 of Augustine's *Confessions* an object-self is reflexively considered:

> I turned myself unto myself, and said to myself, 'Who art thou?' And I answered, 'A Man.' And behold, in me there present themselves to me, soul and body, one without, the other within. By which of these ought I to seek my God? I had sought Him in the body from earth to heaven, so far as I could send messengers, the beams of mine eyes. But the better is the inner, for to it as presiding and judging, all the bodily messengers reported the answers of heaven and earth, and all things therein, who said, 'We are not God, but He made us.' These things did my inner man know by the ministry of the outer: I the inner, knew them; I, the mind, through the senses of my body.[30]

This sense of a self regarding the self, Taylor describes as *radical* reflexivity. According to Taylor, ancients such as Plato construed the self as a being of spirit, as a soul, or as a physical existence; whereas, Augustine initiated a first-person perspective towards the self, a radical reflexivity that indicated a sort of experiencing of experiencing, the component that is 'presiding and judging' over what is brought to the 'mind'. For Augustine, God is to be found as the source that powers the perception, the activity itself, of knowing. If God thus enables insights into the self it might be concluded that the need for confession is obviated. As Augustine asks, 'What [...] have I to do with men, that they should hear my confessions?'[31] Augustine questions the justification of his making an auricular confession, its potential veracity or infidelity, posing a hypothetical objection that

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[30] *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. E.B. Pusey, DD (London: Thomas Nelson, 1937), Bk 10:9, pp. 224-5. (hereafter *Confessions*).
[31] *Confessions*, p. 219.

> their [the auditor's] ear is not at my heart, where I am, whatever I am. They wish then to hear me confess what I am within; whither neither their eye, nor ear, nor understanding, can reach; they wish it, as ready to believe – but will they know?'[32]

The resolution to this concern is that the activity of knowing, divinely enabled, is also shared by others and provides them with the capacity to assess and believe the confessions they hear. Specifically, Augustine terms this capacity as 'charity', the shared, divinely created, aspect of human beings, or the 'brotherly mind', that will 'love in me, what Thou teachest is to be loved, and lament in me, what Thou teachest is to be lamented'.[33] To know this aspect in others, or in one's self, is to love it as it is God-given and thus shares the aspect of divine, perfect love. A sort of intuited recognition is implied, a recognition that is enabled by God and shared by the Christian community. That which is recognised is the aspect of self that resides in '*memoria*', a type of innate memory common to all, where a capacity of 'truth', an internal faculty that is awakened, not taught, resides and this includes the revelation of God. For Augustine, then, confession operates in two distinct, but interlinked ways. Confession as a narration of self can be made to God, as in the *Confessions*, and in this context can be presumed to fully disclose the known aspect of the self (God, of course, already fully knows the complete self). Secondly, auricular confession as a sacramental practice is limited, both by the incomplete cognizance of the self and by the necessarily partial account that can be provided of events of sinfulness. Furthermore, within this constraint, the human auditor of the confession may or may not regard the confession as complete or truthful; yet, Augustine says, the *memoria* will enable a connection to be made between fellow-Christians in charity, that will allow the truth of confession to be discerned. Augustine concedes it is possible to be entirely mistaken about oneself, as he says he was, as a Manichaean, where the search for inner self-knowledge has not yet arrived at the conscious and articulated awareness of the truth of the *memoria*.[34]

The articulation of inner truth, *verbum*, is formulated by an inward journey of self-discovery. Sin then, the subject matter of confession, might be the mistaken ways, digressions and *cul-de-sacs* visited on the path to reflexive self-knowledge and knowledge of God, or may result from the danger of being misled by exercising the

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[32] *Confessions*, Bk 10.4, pp. 220-1.
[33] *Confessions*, Bk 10.5, p. 221.
[34] *Confessions*, Bk 7.1-3, esp. pp. 131-4.

faculty of reason, that might lead to evil. These limitations are acknowledged, 'yet is there something of a man, which neither the spirit of man that is in him, itself knoweth. [...] I will confess then what I know of myself, I will confess also what I know not of myself'.[35] The doctrine of auricular confession had always recognised the possibility of sins either forgotten or unacknowledged, provided for in the words of the *confiteor*, but Augustine's paradoxical confession of what is known *and* unknown is different; not a confession of self-conscious sin, rather an uneasy awareness of incognizance, of aspects of self that escape his customary radical reflexivity. Sin, however, could also be unintended actions, or guilty capitulation to temptation, as well as a failure of the will, a lack of commitment, or assent, to what is known to be good. This failure Augustine attributes to a perverse disposition, made by the Fall, and only redeemed through grace – a philosophy that became central in the Reformation. Important Reformation figures, such as Martin Luther and Jean Calvin, were indebted to Augustinian concepts of Christian doctrine and deity, extrapolated in such ideas as justification by faith and predestination.[36] In the *Confessions*, there are three categories of sin: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride. The first type of sin is written about, in what became the familiar terms of the penitential, as sins of the five senses. These, as *per* Foucault, are envisaged as sins of concupiscence: 'I should set myself to take food as physic. But while I am passing from the discomfort of emptiness to the content of replenishing, in the very passage the snare of concupiscence besets me'.[37] The principal temptation of the second kind of sin, 'the lust of the eyes', exists in curiosity, which is, 'for trial's sake, [...] out of the lust of making trial and knowing', and it is 'from this disease of curiosity, [that] are all those strange sights exhibited in the theatre'.[38] Lastly, pride is deemed as an undue attention to other people's regard and an imperfect love and fear of God.[39]

In Augustine's *Confessions* the location of self is dispersed over a variety of sites: spirit, sight, mind, eye of the mind, *memoria*, charity, man [*homo*], body [*corpus*] and soul [*anima*]. Augustine's use of the term soul is unsurprising given his education in ancient and classical philosophy, and so it is the more noticeable that even when he

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[35] *Confessions*, Bk 10.6-7, p. 222-3.
[36] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London: Allen Lane, 2003; repr. London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 129-30 and pp. 109-10 .
[37] *Confessions*, Bk 10.42, p. 251.
[38] *Confessions*, Bk 10.51-2, pp. 259-60.
[39] *Confessions*, Bk 10.56, p. 262-4.

writes of the soul it is apparently conceived of as discontinuous, in the sense of a series of transformations. In Book 4, Augustine reflects on his past, erroneous beliefs as a Manichaean and the miseries and grief he consequently suffered, observing a fundamental incompleteness of soul that can recover only partially a sense of wholeness and permanence by locating that part of the self that knows God.[40] Yet the terms in which this conclusion is expressed further emphasise the self as transmutive. Augustine speaks of the soul, the eye of the soul, the heart, the heart of the soul, the ear of the heart of the soul, apostrophising them all as 'thou' and 'thee' and directing them to 'hearken to him'.[41] The question of what aspect of self is thus instructing these 'soul-parts' remains; indeed, at each further discrimination, the location of self continues to evade the speaking voice. Augustine continues that the 'Word of Scripture' will heal the decay of the soul and restore all the soul's mortal parts which shall then 'stand fast with thee [the soul]'.[42] The flesh is spoken of as a further component, or possession, of the soul, providing the partial knowledge gained from the senses, the whole of which remains unknowable to the soul. Thus the self is pursued through a series of distinctions, each transferring to another, in an apparently infinite movement or process. The more the sins of these various aspects of self are reflected upon and the more a sense of interiority is thus accomplished, the more a sense of identity, of the 'I' of the narrative, is located in the temporary stops, or stabilizations of this transitory process. This constituent and transient identity is a pronounced feature of the *Confessions* and is one that is also reflected in the identity of the 'confessing self'. Although no formal system of auricular confession apparently existed in the North African Roman Church of which Augustine was bishop, but an informal practice of private confession, the systematizing of categories of sin according to which aspect of the self was involved, inchoate in Augustine's three categories mentioned above, *was* much developed later. Thus the acknowledgement of sins of the wits, or senses, for example, shares Augustine's componential view of the self. Furthermore, a formalised process of exclusion for sinners, excommunication in its literal sense, taking up the role of the penitent and re-admittance in Holy Week *is* described in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* (i.17), delineating a ritualised transition from righteous Christian, to fallen Christian, to penitent, and redeemed Christian. Although

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[40] 'Turn on, O God of Hosts, shew us thy countenance, and we shall be whole'. *Confessions*, Bk 4. 15, p. 68.
[41] *Confessions*, Bk 4.16, p. 69.
[42] *Confessions*, Bk 4, p. 70.

this movement was formally expressed rarely in Augustine's Church, reserved for serious sins of adultery, homicide and sacrilege, its dynamic is modelled in the personal arena of conversion, articulated in the *Confessions*, as well as in daily devotions. In *Tractates on the Gospel of John* (*c.* 414-6) Augustine describes how a Christian should maintain their piety through regular confession: 'For he who confesses his sins and accuses his sins now acts with God. God accuses your sins; if you, too, accuse them, you are joined to God'.[43] Augustine here sees a fundamental process undergone in the experience of identity: between 'man' and 'sinner', the former created by God, the latter authored by man. It is the Christian's duty to quell the latter by 'accusing' his sin through confession and thus proceeding to align their 'true' identity with that aspect of self that is godly. To confess is to 'do truth', and 'he who does truth accuses his own evils in himself; he does not spare himself, he does not pardon himself that God may pardon [...] it has shown him what he hated in himself'.[44] Thus the notion of a contingent, transitional self, formed from temporary stabilizations achieved by self-scrutiny, is not an unfamiliar one, either in Augustine's *Confessions*, or in the later, expanded, discourse of auricular confession.

The generation of an inward self, reflexively known, privileges that self, but it remains, in Augustine, a divinely inspired and created process. The self embarks on its quest to know itself because God has made it so and the goal of the quest is to come closer to God. This is in contradistinction to later, more secularized philosophers, such as Descartes (1596-1650), where scrutiny of the self was in order to achieve self-mastery through self-objectification, or self-improvement through the exercise of an impersonal reason. Thus Taylor comments,

> Augustine's inward turn was tremendously influential in the West [...] in inaugurating a family of forms of Christian spirituality, which continued throughout the Middle Ages, and flourished again in the Renaissance. [45]

One member of this 'family of forms' was undoubtedly the practice of confession. The influence of the Augustinian concept of self is evident in both autobiographical and sacramental confession, and ultimately, it is my contention, is projected on to the early

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[43] St Augustine, 'Tractates on the Gospel of John 11-27', *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, trans. John W. Rettig, 92- vols (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988 - 1995), LXXIX, Tractate 12.3, p. 41.
[44] ibid, 'Tractate' 12.4, p. 41-2.
[45] Taylor (1989), p. 177.

modern English stage in the forms of theatrical identity presented there. However, it is useful to recognise also that this is not an exclusive influence or projection. Concepts of self exist in dialectical relations to myriad influences which palpably include other dialectical discourses in early modern England, such as the bio-pyscho model of the 'humours', the rhetorically constituted self, the self as Protean, or as player in a *theatrum mundi*, or the self as ruler of its micro-kingdom, the body.[46] Such discourses can no doubt be placed on Taylor's axes of 'moral frameworks' used to describe individual senses of identity. My argument would be that Foucault was correct in identifying confession as a significant inheritance in the formation of concepts of the self in Western Europe, but that this was not solely, or primarily in terms of sexuality. The impact of confession on early modern identities should take up its position as one of a number of discourses on something like Taylor's moral map, from which the self takes its bearings in an active process of self-construal, of which the enactment of confession, as a mechanism in its realisation, is an integral part.

The self of soliloquy

If the Renaissance, Western sense of the self owes a significant debt to Augustine, sustained and developed in the practice of confession, how might that fact relate to the depiction of self on the early modern English stage? It would not be inappropriate, perhaps, to assert such a connection. The origins of the English theatre are well recognised as residing in the Catholic Church, in the ritual festivals celebrated especially at Easter which developed in mystery plays, the morality plays calling the audience to repentance and the theatricality of Catholic ritual itself with its attention to costume and spectacle. This connection, however profoundly modified, was sustained by some Reformists, such as John Bale, in the use made of staging polemical plays to promote their religious beliefs .[47] The appropriation of the religious extends even to the material existence of the first professional theatres, which bought many of their costumes and props from the enforced sales of Catholic accoutrements. But confession shares the paradigmatic conditions of its possibility too with theatre, in particular with

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[46] See Katherine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). John Lee, *Shakespeare's Hamlet and the Controversies of Self* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) presents an expanded discussion of these various construals of the self. Hugh Grady's, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, & Montaigne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) contends that both the latter authors of the title created ideas of the self that were influential in the work of Shakespeare.

[47] See Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) who disputes the common critical perception of the early modern stage as secular.

the presentation of self on the stage. Its supposition of an assumed language and role, its use of gesture and conventional forms, its postulation of audience and presentation of inwardness are the conditions of characters' existence, the latter being pronounced in the dramatic technique of soliloquy. Thus the presentation of character on the stage, the type of self that is presupposed, its staging and performance, particularly in self-addressed soliloquy, might be an obvious place to look for confessional interconnections.

In order to both establish terms and elucidate an examination of early modern notions of theatrical identity further, some discussion of vocabulary may be helpful. The *OED* observes that the word 'self' is etymologically obscure.[48] Its commonest use is as an appositive with the first-person pronoun, discriminating between the subject, 'I' (or 'me', or 'my' in Middle English) and 'self' and has a first recorded use in the twelfth century. Thus, a primary division is suggested between 'I' (or its variants) and 'self' that parallels the Augustinian division between the narratorial 'I' of the *Confessions* and the subject self. Self as identity, in its modern sense, uninflected and as a noun, was not in use in the late sixteenth century. However, the *OED* does cite its first 'noun-like' use - in an inflected form, in such variants as 'herself', 'himself', 'myself'- in the sixteenth century.[49] The commonest use of self might be in transition in the sixteenth century, it seems, from a use that discriminates between 'I' and 'self', to one where this division had begun to be dissolved in its treatment as a noun phrase. Early modern usage of 'identity' is in the sense of the sameness of inanimate objects, 'in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities'.[50] Again, however, the meaning of 'identity' seems to undergo some change, with a first cited use of 1638 of 'identity' as the sameness of a person; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else. Likewise, the term 'subject', first meant a person who owes some sort of allegiance or fealty to, for example, the Crown. The *OED* records the first use of 'subject' in something approaching the modern sense, as the form, matter, or object, of thought, or study, including of the self, in 1586, with one other citation that pre-dates the eighteenth century. However, the term 'person' is well-established by the sixteenth century, is distinctively Christian and became fused with

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[48] <http://www.oed.com> 'Self', definition 1 [accessed 2006].
[49] 4. a. 'In noun-like use: my being or personality; my own or very self', first citation Wynkyn de Worde's, *Pylgrimage of Perfection* (1526).
[50] *OED* 1.a. 'Identity', first cited usage 1570.

its theatrical sense. 'Person' derives from the Hellenistic Greek word, πρόσωπον [prosophon] and arose from a consideration of the person of Christ and then to the three persons of the Trinity and thence to human beings as persons made in the image of God.[51] It encompasses the notion of hypostasis, that is the union of the divine and human in the person of Christ. Personhood is a uniquely Christian concept. The other primary sense of person is defined in the *OED*, as a role, or character, a persona, being assumed in life, or in a play, borne out by its Latin etymon of *persōna* [mask]. The *OED* explains that the Greek word was translated in the Vulgate as the post-classical Latin *personam*, thus fusing both senses of the word together. These two concepts of person, that of the immanent substance of the person and an assumed role, or persona, share a paradigmatic relationship with Augustine's construction of self, the person in confession and the person generated in soliloquy; in that, in each case, there is a self-same, or inalienable, self that is presented to a reflexive self (the 'I' of autobiography, the past self of confession, or the reproduction of self in character). Thus, in contrast to the vocabulary of self considered above, of 'self', 'identity' and 'subject', that underwent some significant changes in the early modern period, the concept of 'person' was well-established by this time and in such a way to suggest how the generative potential of Christian confession, autobiographical and auricular, might be transposed on to the stage.

In establishing the nature of the connection between the self generated in the self-narratives of confession and those generated or presented in the theatre, it is important to note the significance of the title and confessional style of Augustine's *Confessions*. The work bears the title *confitear* and is referred to as such by Augustine in his letter to Paulinus of Nola.[52] The *Confessions* are confessions in the sense of *exomologesis*, where confession is both of faith and of the self.[53] But the *Confessions* are also analogous to the act of confession, that is, in itself, as noted above, efficacious in the process of redemption. As James O'Donnell states,

> The 'truth' of which Augustine spoke was not merely a quality of verbal formula, but veracity itself, a quality of a living human person. Augustine 'made the truth' – in this sense, became himself truthful – when he found a pattern of words to say the true thing well [...]. For Augustine to write a

[51] Attributed to the writing of Tertullian in the third century, in the *OED*.
[52] James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), I, p. xxxi-ii.
[53] See Chapter 1, section 1.4.

> book, then, that purported to make truth and seek light [God] was not merely a reflection upon the actions of his life but pure act itself, thought and writing become the enactment of ideas.[54]

Like the practice of confession, whose goal is furthered by the action of confessing in itself, the process of composing the *Confessions* is also, in itself, a way of recognizing the self. Yet, and here we come back to the point made earlier, this process does not arrive at an uncomplicated reflection of self. Augustine recognises that he is not fully knowable to himself or, potentially, to others and this is apparent in his descriptions of his younger, past self as alien to his present self, which in turn is partially incognizant to his writing 'self', a recognition redolent of Lacan's observations noted above. The writing aims to fully reveal the textual entity, 'Augustine', that is referred to by the speaking voice of the narration, the authorial 'I', both of which are presented as only partially known and can only be completed, or validated as 'true', to the extent that they make a connection with God. Thus, paradoxically, Augustine attains self-knowledge only through his growing recognition of God, whilst God is located and explored in his knowledge of the self. Although some scholars have described Augustine's *Confessions* as an extended form of prayer, they remain (even in the passages addressed to God), because God is located in the self, as much a dialogue with the self. This primary characteristic is acknowledged in the title of what James O'Donnell refers to as 'the *Confessions*' adumbrated form, *soliloquia*' (386) – the first instance of the word, according to the *OED*, derived from the Latin *sōlus*, alone and *loqui*, to speak. In the *Confessions* Augustine worries over the likely reception of his writing, particularly amongst his Manichean detractors. However, the status of his writing as a written account of soliloquized thought counters this anxiety. In Book 9, Augustine recounts how, during a period of enforced rest as a result of a lung illness, he read the fourth Psalm and spoke his thoughts out loud to himself . Augustine regrets that his detractors were not there to hear him, but realises he would have reacted differently if they had been, 'Because in truth neither should I speak the same things, nor in the same way, if I perceived that they heard and saw me; nor if I spake them would they so receive them, as when I spake by and for myself.'[55] Thus, it is the soliloquised quality of his writing that Augustine appeals to both as guarantee and generator of the truth.

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[54] O'Donnell (1992), *Introduction*.
[55] *Confessions*, Bk 9, 8, p. 195.

The connection between Augustine's *Confessions*, a model disseminated and developed in the practice of confession, and the early modern theatre can be, perhaps, most directly traced in the examination of theatrical soliloquy. Raymond Williams offers an interesting discrimination between different types of soliloquy in *Macbeth*. He distinguishes between soliloquies (which he terms 'reflexive monologue') that contain generic forms, like shared prayer, and refer to commonly recognised attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and other soliloquies that are 'within an individual condition', in a 'most fully internal mode' and are identified as such 'only through overhearing confession'.[56] Although Williams seems to be seduced by the generally assumed (and theatrically exploited) equation between self-addressed speech, self-accusatory speech and truthful speech (discussed below), the self implied and generated through confessionary, self-narrative does predicate itself upon its condition as authentic.[57] The concern, then, is obviously not with non-illusionist, or meta-theatrical address, such as the speeches of the Chorus in *Henry V*, Time in *The Winter's Tale*, or Gower in *Pericles*. Rather, the type of address under scrutiny is the sort that originated, in English theatre, in its use as a technique of Vice characters, who disclosed their duplicitous plans, either to other Vice characters, as in John Bale's *King Johan*, or alone on stage, usually out of earshot of stage others, or delivered as an aside and thus understood as not overheard. This type of address became more sophisticated in revenge theatre where the hero's ambivalent intents needed fuller expression.[58] By the time of Shakespeare's Jacobean plays in particular, soliloquy frequently articulates the varying and sometimes conflicting discourses circulating in the Reformation period, such as those observed in Angelo's soliloquies in the preceding chapter. James Hirsh has argued at length that it is erroneous to understand the dramatic soliloquies of characters as representing some sort of interior monologue. He comments,

> Innumerable commentators in later ages have asserted that soliloquies in Shakespeare's plays were meant to provide direct access to the thoughts of characters. In order to refute this long-standing and deeply cherished notion, it has been necessary to demonstrate that the evidence that soliloquies represent speech is pervasive in his plays.[59]

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[56] Raymond Williams, *Writing in Society* (London: Verso, 1983; 2nd edn, 1985), pp. 50-7.
[57] This idea was also explored in relation to *Othello* in Chapter 5.
[58] See S.S. Hussey, *The Literary Language of Shakespeare* (London: Longman, 1982) who traces the development of the soliloquy in such terms.
[59] James Hirsh, *Shakespeare and The History of Soliloquies* (London: Associated University Presses, 2003) p. 26. For an overview of critical interpretation of soliloquy see his Chapter 9.

Hirsh's argument is detailed, but the fact that soliloquies in Shakespeare's plays are spoken does not necessarily preclude their intended reception as a representation of thought. However, Hirsh's pronounced scepticism may reflect the tension that exists between the idea that soliloquy is an articulated form of self-meditation and the ability of the self (both on-stage and off) to fully know and present itself, in particular through conventional forms such as, confession, or soliloquy.[60] This tension is sometimes utilised in Shakespearean soliloquies where the idea that soliloquized speech is generally a truthful, spontaneous and faithful revelation of the character's thought is juxtaposed with soliloquy *as* spoken and thereby revealed as a theatrical artifice.[61] The self-incriminatory nature of Edmund's first soliloquy, in *King Lear*, not only encourages the audience to consider it as 'truthful', to the extent that it is a true confession of character, but that this truth is further validated because it is delivered in the special conditions of self-address.[62] This last feature is exploited by Edmund when he intentionally allows Edgar to overhear the last sentence of his speech, 'O! These eclipses do portend these divisions. Fa, sol, la, mi'(1.2.133-4). Where soliloquy is equal to a 'true' revelation of self, the truth of that self is guaranteed by its expression as soliloquy; however, Edmund's first two soliloquies demonstrate and discuss the limitations of this equation. There is, in one sense, a paradoxical elision of self, akin to the one noted as a feature of Augustine's *Confessions* above, in Edmund's first soliloquy. It is constructed through the oppositions established: of the 'plague of custom', or the 'curiosity of nations', and the 'law' of 'Nature'. The rules of primogeniture and legitimacy are challenged as Edmund asserts his common identity with his brother: 'my dimensions are as well compact,/ My mind as generous, and my shape as true, /As honest madam's issue' (1.2.7-8). Yet, Edmund identifies himself as a 'bastard' and 'base' even as he rejects the very notion of such categories and the

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[60] J. David Velleman discusses the self as constituted from self-narratives. He considers the, 'conception of the self as the fictive protagonist of a person's autobiography [...]. We invent ourselves [...] but we really are the characters whom we invent.' J. David Velleman, *Self to Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 205-6.

[61] The idea that soliloquies are truthful and sincere representations of character's 'selves' is frequently 'played' onstage, as critics have recognised. For example, S.S. Hussey (1982) comments, 'By convention [...] what the character says in a soliloquy is to be taken as sincere, at least within the limits of his own self-knowledge.' Hirsh discusses soliloquies and their sincerity or otherwise at length in his Chapter 5.

[62] For example, Emily C. Bartels, in 'Breaking the Illusion of Being: Shakespeare and the Performance of Self' *Theatre Journal*, 46 2, (May, 1994) 171-185, describes Edmund's soliloquy as one that, 'distinguishes him [...] to stake a strong claim to selfhood and persuasively assert (several times) an 'I'. In it he invents his own terms of being', p. 178.

'custom' and 'curiosity' that upholds them, asserting that the 'lusty stealth of nature' lends him a superior vitality. If his claim that he is as 'generous' and 'true' as his brother has any credence, his adoption of the socially determined role of bastard implies the existence of a self-conscious and transformative identity that is as much a work-in-process as Edgar's persona of Poor Tom. Indeed, in his second soliloquy, Edmund scathingly rebuffs determinist notions of character that would make his playing the villain a necessity, declaring, 'I should have been that I am', whatever the circumstances of his conception.[63] The question of what he is, if he merely plays the role of bastard villain, remains in flux.[64]

The sense that unacknowledged, undelineated and unknown selves, perhaps morally equitable with Edgar, are identities as possible to Edmund as his elected playing of the villain is further reinforced by his 'uncharacteristic' expressions at the end of the play. In 5.3, after the two brothers have fought, Edmund acknowledges, 'What you have charg'd me with, that have I done, /And more, much more' (l.161). Edmund's offer of forgiveness to the man who has beaten him, made conditional on whether he is of noble birth, receives a prompt response from Edgar:

> Edgar Let's exchange charity.
> I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;
> If more, the more th'hast wrong'd me.
> My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
> The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us;
> The dark and vicious place where thee he got
> Cost him his eyes.
>
> Edm. Th'hast spoken right, 'tis true.
> The wheel is come full circle; I am here. (5.3.165-73)

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[63] Richard Hillman, in *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), claims the opposite: that Edmund, 'mistakes his fashioned self for something essential', p. 215. Yet the pronounced awareness Edmund possesses of his conscious assumption of a theatrical, villainous character is clearly evident, 'my cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom O' Bedlam' (1.2.132-3).

[64] Hirsh (2003) finds the same effect generated by Hamlet's soliloquies, 'Hamlet speaks to himself for hundreds of lines, but rather than more and more clearly revealing his essence, Hamlet's soliloquies suggest that he does not have an essence, a single [...] core of being', p. 189. Velleman (2006) discusses the complex area of conceptions of identity. Analogous to the adoption of a persona, he considers the relationship of past, remembered selves and the anticipation of future selves to the existence of the person's sense of who they are. Senses of past and future selves, Velleman sees as, 'reflexive modes of thought [that] are significantly different from the self-image that embodies a person's sense of self'(p. 5). However, whilst Velleman does concede that a person's sense of self is 'constituted by reflexive thought', he cautions, 'the fact of who he (*sic*) is lies strictly beyond his powers of self-definition' (p. 6).

Edmund immediately recognises his brother's appeal to Christian codes of knightly chivalry. Whilst a somewhat anomalous allusion in an ostensibly pre-Christian play, it does serve to emphasise Edmund's noble charity, in that he responds to such an appeal, an aspect of the character hitherto subsumed by his villainy. As noted above, charity is the quality that Augustine asserts will enable the truth of an auricular confession to be discerned by those who hear it, in the *Confessions*.[65] Edgar's prepositional 'If', which qualifies the idea that he is of superior birth to Edmund, and his observation that 'The gods are just', in their punishment of Gloucester for begetting a child out of marriage, is curiously conciliatory towards Edmund, as though Edgar belatedly attempts to appease Edmund's feeling of inequitable treatment as illegitimate. In spite of the fact that Edmund has undoubtedly committed 'heinous, manifest, and many treasons'(5.3.93), both the forgiving tone and facts of this speech suggest a sympathetic recognition on Edgar's part of a brother 'more sinned against than sinning', one whose unmerited harsh treatment by their father has, perhaps helped to spawn Edmund's choice of villainous persona. Edmund's declaration, 'The wheel is come full circle; I am here', can be literally interpreted as an admission of the justice of his defeat, but might also be read as answering Edgar's charitable recognition of a justly aggrieved brother, one who exists apart from the villainous bastard. When the bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought onstage and Edmund pathetically observes, 'Yet Edmund was belov'd' (5.3.239), the naivety of reading the sisters' mutual sororicide as signs of their love for him, as well as the self-objectifying reference to 'Edmund', is both remarkably unvillainous and to this extent self-alienating, and further, artfully, contributes to the hypothesis of a mutable identity. Critics are sometimes troubled by the inconsistency of Edmund's seemingly aberrant attempt to rescind his writ for Lear and Cordelia's death, an inconsistency acknowledged as uncharacteristic by Edmund himself: 'Some good I mean to do/ Despite of mine own nature' (l. 241-2). Yet the unsettled presentation of this character's self prepares for this seeming discrepancy, eliding the theatrical inconsistency here by means of the aesthetic corollary of soliloquy earlier in the play. Thus it is the particular form of speaking of and to the self articulated by the narrator of Augustine's *Confessions* that is modelled in theatrical soliloquy, and that predicates an only partially knowable and known object self, which is manifest in the soliloquised performance of character.

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[65] 'Men may hear, to whom I cannot demonstrate whether I confess truly; yet they believe me, whose ears charity openeth unto me', *Confessions*, Bk 10.3.

Such an absence - of an objectified self, one that purports to be generated and sustained in the speech technique of soliloquy, a speech technique that simultaneously demonstrates other possible aspects of self that remain inarticulate - dramatises the parameters of the Augustinian sense of self to which the early modern period paid renewed attention. Cordelia might be seen to enact these parameters in the articulation of a vitally significant self, through her asides, even as she champions silence. Many critics have commented upon the techniques for establishing Cordelia's character. For example, Harold C. Goddard describes Cordelia as a 'Bright Absentee'.[66] Stephen Booth notices Cordelia's 'two hour absence from the stage', but asserts the comparatively short time that she is onstage is sufficient to establish her role in the play.[67] James L. Calderwood reiterates the critically established parallel between Cordelia and the Fool as doubled characters and their composite functions in the play of loving opposition to Lear. Each character embodies 'merely part of the truth' and thus the Fool's presence compensates for Cordelia's absence.[68] Marvin Rosenberg states that much of the language of *King Lear* is 'non-verbal, designed for the actor's face and body rather than his tongue [...]. Cordelia's inner resistances are barely indicated in words'.[69] Cordelia is 'but slenderly known', however, her first two speeches, delivered as soliloquised asides, benefit from their mode of address, in that they establish relationship with the audience and as such are disproportionately potent in forming the character.[70] But as soliloquy, these first speeches also generate that componential view of self already noted. That there is a separate aspect of Cordelia's self (the one that is spoken to in asides) to the one that speaks to the Court is evident from Cordelia's first aside taking the form of a self-objectifying rhetorical question: 'What shall Cordelia speak?'. Her resolution, 'Love, and be silent', (1.1.61) logically

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[66] Harold C. Goddard, 'King Lear' in, *William Shakespeare's 'King Lear'*, ed., Harold Bloom, Modern Critical Interpretations Series (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 28.
[67] Although Booth reads this negatively as: 'cold, priggish in the extreme, and a bit cheap in the crudeness of her ironies'. Bloom (1987), p. 68.
[68] Bloom (1987), p. 126.
[69] Marvin Rosenberg, '*Lear*'s Theatre Poetry', in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'King Lear'*, ed., Janet Adelman (London: Prentice-Hall, 1978).
[70] Hirsh (2003) defines theatrical asides, that are not overheard by any other character, as soliloquy, observing, 'soliloquies and asides are overlapping, not mutually exclusive categories', p. 88. Hirsh cites the analogous case of a stage direction, 'Speakes to herselfe', which appears in the anonymous play, *King Leir* (*c.* 1590) and indicates Gonorill's aside is guarded from the hearing of the Gallian ambassador who is onstage. Discriminating between the boy actor and female character, the stage direction indicates that the aside is understood as soliloquy, not heard by 'character others', only by the actor's audience.

implies that this self, the silent self, exists in distinction to the Cordelia who actually speaks. The discrepancy is noted by Alexander Leggatt: '[Cordelia] is not just tongue-tied; she *says*, quite articulately, that she is tongue-tied.' (Leggatt also notes that 'She actually speaks far more than her sisters.')[71] Her resolve seems to claim that it is an act of love to maintain silence and that speech is a superficiality that is to be distrusted in its potential of disguising unloving intents (an assertion that is expanded upon in Cornwall's exposition of those that 'constrain the garb' of speech [2.2.92-101]). Lear's explicit command at the end of the lines, 'what can you say to draw/ A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.' (1.1.84-5), an instruction that does not appear in the Quarto text and is added in the Folio, might be read as implying that Cordelia initially *is* silent, allowing a pause that emphatically performs, as it were, her eventual response: 'Nothing'. At this point in the play, Goneril and Regan's speeches retain a potential interpretation as affectionate, albeit hyperbolic, indulgence of an elderly father. Cordelia's asides express a resolve of silence that is yet unproven in its lovingness, gaining credibility as sincere from their status as soliloquized asides, yet ultimately the ethical value of Cordelia's silence is held suspended until Act 4. The alliance of silence with loving righteousness, in contrast to 'that glib and oily art' of grandiloquent speech, is also apparent in Augustine's *Confessions*. Augustine's former occupation as professor of Rhetoric is despised, in an ironically eloquent, as well as another self-objectifying, image as a 'service of my tongue[...in] the marts of lip-labour'.[72] Augustine's students bought 'At my mouth arms for their madness', and on Augustine's conversion he admits God 'didst rescue my tongue, whence Thou hadst before rescued my heart'.[73] Speech and silence, then, can be a potent index of righteousness and, for Cordelia, at least in these circumstances, the command to forced and duplicitous speech makes silence a preferred and metaphorically more grave choice, reiterated in Cordelia's second aside, 'my love's/ More ponderous than my tongue' (1.1.76-7). The image of the heart weightily anchoring utterance is explicit in Lear's response to Cordelia's anti-panegyric speech, 'But goes thy heart with this?' (1.1.104). Just as Augustine could not make his inner self visible, could not, 'speak the same things, nor in the same way', if he thought they were 'heard or seen' by others, as noted above, so Cordelia 'cannot heave/ My heart into my mouth' (1.1.90-1) before the

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[71] Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Tragedies: Violation and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 146.
[72] *Confessions*, Bk 9.2, p. 189.
[73] *Confessions*, Bk 9.7, p. 193.

assembled court. Thus the division between the two aspects of Cordelia's self, the one that resolves to be silent, and the one that does speak, not only underlines the division of self produced by soliloquy as already noted, but also aligns the latter, silent self as one that cannot be articulated. Cordelia does not maintain silence because she does not love her father, but, it is implied, because that inner, silent self cannot be done justice to; its gravity and significance exceeds the capacity of speech.

In Foucault's paradigm of power relations, silence is deemed, not as the antithesis of confession, but as functioning along side it, revealing the parameters of what can be said, in what way and by whom (see above). Cordelia's silence might be seen, in this context, as a resistance to the patriarchical authority of court and king, or as demonstrating a modesty befitting an unmarried woman, the latter if not for the fact of the confidence of her exposition in 1.94-103 and the extent of her two speeches, totalling thirteen lines, in comparison to Goneril's, of seven, and Regan's, of eight. However, if Cordelia's silence is read in the context of Augustinian notions of identity, the pretension of a flattering devotion to her father is resisted by Cordelia precisely because the truth is deemed to be generated through one's speech about oneself. This may seem a somewhat obvious observation to make, but the Augustinian notion of selfhood attaches an overwhelming importance to the journey of self-knowing (including its accomplishment through the self-accounts of confession) because it is the route to knowing God. Thus the activity of false speech is not only an instance of the perversity that leads to evil, which Augustine attributes to fallen humanity, but also an abjuration of the search for the true self, and therefore God. For Augustine, the love of praise, as well as the utterance of undeserved praise or praise that does not rightly attribute merit or blessings to God, is a sin that falls into his third category of the temptations of pride. Flattery received from the 'tongue[s] of men' is a 'daily furnace'[74] to Augustine that is not only sinful, but misleads him from himself, as he admits, 'For herein [whether praise is merited] I know less of myself, than of Thee. I beseech now, O my God, discover to me myself also, that I may confess unto my brethren [...] wherein I find myself maimed [that is, by flattery]'.[75] The structure of Augustine's *Confessions* further demonstrates the equation between loquacity and the search for self and God, on the one hand, and, on the other, silence, or at least a

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[74] *Confessions*, Bk 10.57, p. 264.
[75] *Confessions*, Bk 10.59, p. 266.

reduced need for confessionary disclosure, and the realization of knowledge of self and God. The first nine books of the *Confessions* are descriptive of Augustine's spiritual journey, leading to his experiences of conversion and baptism. Books 10 and 11 effect the transition from the intimate confessionary tone of the previous sections, to more abstract enquiries into categories of sin, memory, time and the reading and revelation of Scripture. The final two books, 12 and 13, are exegetical discussions of Genesis. Thus the need to eloquently recount painful and detailed past thoughts and events diminishes upon conversion. The urge for extended self-scrutiny and judgement recedes and the disunity between the authorial 'I' and the subject of the writing is dissolved into the relative tranquillity of less figurative discussions. That is not to imply that the need for confession evaporates on conversion. Rather, that knowledge that resides in the *memoria* and can recognise God, can now more easily recognise those aspects of the self that are sinful and so the process of confession is made easier.[76]

In this context Cordelia's comparative serenity in the face of demands that she disclose her self - as she says, 'for want of that for which I am richer [...] and such a tongue/ That I am glad I have not' (1.1.229-31) - can be understood as signalling that she possesses a greater self-knowledge and probity than other, more loquacious, characters. This characterisation of Cordelia is eventually confirmed by the Gentleman's description of her receipt of Kent's letter, ironically expressed in lavishly rhetorical language, but thereby emphasising the contrast with Cordelia's earlier pithy speeches. She is moved, 'Not to a rage', but to 'patience and sorrow' (3.4.16). Her self-knowledge and mastery is celebrated: 'it seem'd she was a queen/ Over her passion; who, most rebel-like/ Sought to be king o'er her' (l. 12-15), a self-government that means she barely speaks, but 'once or twice' (3.4.25). In quelling those rebellious aspects of self, her inner identity is characterised as worked out (in the sense of processed) and harmonised in its self-knowledge, displaying the fruits of the spirit and culminating in the overtly religious metaphor: 'she shook/ The holy water from her heavenly eyes' (3.4.30). Harold Bloom sees Cordelia as 'an eminently Christian

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[76] For a detailed account of this aspect of the *Confessions* see Brian Stock, *Augustine The Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), esp. pp. 211-23.

personage, who says that she is about her father's business, in an overt allusion to the Gospel of Luke'.[77] This view is further reinforced by her apostrophe.

> O my dear father! Restoration hang
> Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
> Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
> Have in thy reverence made! (4.7.26-9)

The personified 'Restoration' is the actual addressee, but framed as the speech is, between an apostrophe to her father, and the reference to her father's reverence, the healing power Cordelia requests is easily mistaken for that commonly sought from the heavenly Father, correspondingly positioning Cordelia as a divinely potent instrument of renewal. The healing kiss, echoing the liturgical kiss of peace, silently enacts what could not be spoken earlier and proves in performance a loving identity that has hitherto only briefly been indicated by the character in her asides. Thus, the self-reflexive division of Cordelia's two early asides is worked into ethical resolution in her reported self-mastery and the claim that her silence was loving and that her loving was morally weighty. Cordelia's silence is confirmed as loving and is authenticated as truthful by Cordelia's own actions and the report of the gentleman, that aligns it with gracious forgiveness.

Michael Holahan discusses the construction of Cordelia's character, declaring that his 'concern is to detach subjectivity from an exclusive identification with inwardness and to attach it to forms of ethical perception that resist categorical explanation'.[78] Despite the vague terms, Holahan does regard Cordelia's role as emblematic of a central ethic of *King Lear*, expressed in the linguistic and dramatic imagery spoken and enacted by Cordelia herself and in the speech of other characters about her. Holahan observes, 'An ethics without an objective standard must be trivial. In *King Lear* that standard – one concerning the worth of speech – is embodied in Cordelia, especially in her lips and voice.'[79] He analyses the abundance of references to Cordelia's mouth, breath, voice and lips, from Kent's reference to Cordelia's 'low sounds' (1.1.152), to Lear's repeated allusions to her lips and soft voice,[80] as well as Cordelia's symbolic awakening of renewed life in Lear, bestowed in her kiss (4.7.27). Noting the play's circular structure,

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[77] Bloom (1987), pp. 2-3, referring to 4.4.23-4.
[78] Michael Holahan "'Look, Her Lips': Softness of Voice, Construction of Character in 'King Lear'" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48 (Winter, 1997) 406-431.
[79] Holahan (1997), pp. 413-4.
[80] For example: 1.1.91, 1.1.93, 1.1.152-3, 1.1. 224-5, 1.1.230, 4.3.20, 4.7.27, 5.3.271, 5.3.306, 5.3.309.

Holahan observes that in the last scene, 'the quality of her [Cordelia's] voice has passed to Lear as an authoritative sign of her rule in his ethical growth'.[81] That rule is, of course, encapsulated in the brevity of Cordelia's forgiving denial of any resentment. 'No cause, no cause' (4.7.75). Consistent with the silent self that maintained its superior integrity and truthfulness (and was eventually proved as such) Cordelia's unspoken actions and Lear's allusions indicate that Lear, too, has reached a stage of self-knowledge that renders him capable of appreciating the worth of Cordelia's silence and emulating it even as he dies in his remembrance of it: "Look on her, look, her lips,/ Look there, look there!' (5.3.309). Holahan aims to 'study the fields of space around and between characters rather than within one character'.[82] He sees characters as unfolding and developing in their interrelation with other characters in the actual space of interrelation, so that characters' significance is an aggregate of the whole dynamic of the play. Thus Cordelia's meaning, and Lear's renewed sense of her worth, is effected not in the character's projected inwardness, or subjectivity, but in his attention to and reverberation of her 'low sounds', gentle voice, soft breath and lips. Holahan's approach, 'To understand characters within a play as one would words within a language', is richly generative, but runs the risk of over-emphasising the mimetic quality of the last scene out of the context of the rest of the play. Whilst Cordelia's early speeches express a desire to be silent and are comparatively unembellished statements on a par with her declared *modus operandi* to 'do't before I speak' (1.1.225), in actual fact, as already noted, Cordelia *does* speak, including in the 'inwardness mode' of self-address and to a greater extent than her sisters. That early scene concisely, but conspicuously, establishes a sense of Cordelia's character, that is only played out in the last act. Her last acts, of the kiss and her appearance in Lear's arms, are but mimetic expressions of the significance of her character, already constituted through her earlier speeches. Furthermore, if one seeks to 'understand characters in a play as one would words in a language', then that language must include not only the aggregate of the play, but that of the theatre – especially the audience.[83] Since Cordelia's early speeches are in soliloquy they are especially

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[81] Holahan (1997), p. 422.
[82] Holahan (1997), p. 428.
[83] Daniel Dennett discusses the effect of narratives about the self, 'These strings or streams of narrative issue forth as if from a single source [...] their effect on any audience is to encourage them to (try to) posit a unified agent whose words they are, about whom they are: in short to posit a center of narrative gravity'. *Self and Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives*, eds. Frank S. Kessel, et al. (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1992), p. 418.

connective with the audience; they draw the audience into a dramatic tension, suspended for the best part of three acts, until the truth is proven that Cordelia is as loving as she so briefly claims to be. When Edgar suggests, 'Let's exchange charity' (5.3.165) he appeals to a wider perspective that exceeds that of singular characters. In the same way, Augustine asserts that his *Confessions* will be understood in the quality of the charity of his Christian community, again a perspective that transcends individual interests and boundaries; and he thus petitions the interconnectedness of all human beings. This, surely is the condition of Shakespeare's theatre, which depends on the interconnectedness of human beings being felt between audience and character, in a suspension of disbelief that allows the illusion of character as real, especially encouraged in soliloquy, even as it sometimes 'plays' with that illusion.

The significance of confession for Foucault, it will be recalled, lay in its mode of self-scrutiny and modes of autobiographical narrative that generate a 'truth'; a truth, it was assumed, that subjects the one that expresses it. Identifying a perceived historical trajectory in confession that emphasises the revelation of hidden, motivating desires, Foucault read confession as an originating discourse that produces sexuality and subsumes identity so that 'the question of what we are [...] bring[s] us almost entirely – our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history – under the sway of a logic of concupiscence and desire'.[84] However confession, as Augustine's writing demonstrates, models an identity that is far more complex, still locating the truth of self in self-scrutiny and narrative, but acknowledging aspects of self that are only gradually and partially known. In a recent interview Jacques Derrida was asked about identity, which he described thus:

> there *is* no identity, there is only identification or self-identification *as a process*; and, indeed, that there *is* stabilization of identity only means or confirms that there can be a break, there can be pathology, there can be ruptures. The two go together. It is *because* the break is always possible that we need and perform identification.[85]

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[84] Foucault (1976) p. 78.
[85] *Life After Theory*, eds. Michael Payne and John Schad, (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 25, (italics in the original).

The scrutinising narratives of self-reflexivity, established by Augustine as self-address, or soliloquy, allow that they are not complete or exhaustive, that self-identity lies in the *process* of soliloquy and is accomplished by self-conscious choice. Silence might be just as eloquent an expression of identity, indeed, in the Augustinian model, part of the truth of the self can only be expressed by silence. In *King Lear* these insights are utilised to present a character that comes as close to silent as can be achieved in a Shakespearean theatre that usually depends, not only upon mimetic action, but speech, for the construction of character. By invoking the truth of Cordelia's silence in brief soliloquized asides, the form of these early speeches signals an inspired transposition of confessional speech into the domain of the theatre, creating a complex character, components of which are withheld from the audience. The construction of Cordelia's character relies upon an appeal to the 'charity' of the audience to believe that Cordelia's worthiest identity exists, even though it is barely uttered. Through the process of the drama, the audience's charity is justified and the pleasure of this being confirmed is offered as the process of character construction is played out to its resolution, a pleasure that somewhat redeems the otherwise tragic conclusion of the play.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this study, attention was called to the image of confession as a precious jewel in *Everyman* and it was observed that if confession can be envisaged as such a jewel it must be multi-faceted. Throughout this project various facets of confession have been analysed in its transference from the religious to the theatrical domain. The three plays *Everyman*, *King Johan* and *Doctor Faustus* illustrate a successive modification of the conventions of morality drama, making a transition from the positive depiction of confession as the means of restoring grace and ensuring salvation, to the vehement attacks of Reformist polemic on its papal authorisation and Catholic practice. Yet confession remains embedded in *King Johan* as a structural and characterisation device, exposing the continuing immersion of this type of theatre in the discourse of confession and exploiting its association with sincerity and truthfulness. The relation of confession to *Faustus* is felt most by its arresting absence, an absence which proves a barrier to the archetypal movement effected in the morality form, from innocence - to fall – to redemption. Faustus's felt deficiency of repentance generates a potent anxiety in the play about the means and possibility of Christian assurance; the justification of faith, predicated in Reformed religious discourses on Scriptural assurance, is complicated by a lack of hermeneutic certainty that places the protagonist in a hellish tragedy.

In *The Winter's Tale* the equivalences of confession are reproduced in a repeatedly staged pattern of structural and thematic arrangements. Recognising this formal dynamic allows us to appreciate the ways in which the process of confession is presented in the language and images of the play and the way in which images of the confessor as healer can be usefully compared with the confessor as judge to locate the play in a religio-cultural context. The penitential process conventionally leads to absolution and it is through the interpretative perspective of this aspect of confession that the play's last scene, of Leontes's redemption and Hermione's vindication, has been read. The dual dimensions of community and individual, encompassed in the concept of *exomologesis*, illuminate Othello's strategic performance as a Christian convert to authenticate and gain acceptance of himself and the opportunity thus created for Iago's exploitation.

n *Measure for Measure* confession is presented as an arena of judgement that resupposes the necessity of personal and communal examinations of wrong, but that eing done, justice should be tempered with mercy. The figure of the Duke as the friar-onfessor is the principal vehicle through which those examinations are conducted and lthough the Reformist nightmare of confession as a subversive channel for intrigue is layed out in his character, it is also re-written significantly for benign effect. Claims that he last scene evokes the communal consistory of the Reformation Calvinist Church are hallenged by consideration of contemporary English consistory court practices. For Michel Foucault, the practice of confession produces the Western sense of human dentity in a subjectivity and sexuality that become an exercise of power. An alternative nodel of identity generated in the confessional writings of St Augustine, creates a sense of identity that is transitional and dynamic. Not only does this model allow a greater legree of agency than Foucault's, but it recognises identity as a process, one that is pparent both in the self-address of Augustine's *Confessions* and the reflexivity of stage oliloquies in *King Lear*.

Such analyses of the theatrical manifestations of confession provide an understanding of he variety of its facets, its inherently histrionic quality and ways in which they are ransmitted from religious discourse to dramatic resource. However, the scope of this tudy has necessarily been constrained and further research might extend to the possible nteractions of confessional discourse with other generic forms. One line of enquiry night be to examine a potential relationship between confessional modes of speech and ther groupings of Shakespearean plays, such as the comedies, or late plays. Interesting comparisons might be made between confession in Shakespeare's plays and those of ther dramatists such as John Ford, or the alternative early modern dramatic form of the nasque. The intimate relationship of confessional modes of speech and soliloquy might provide a context from which to investigate the voice effects of poetry, for example in the vorks of John Donne. There are abundant possibilities for further research, and any such nquiries can only help to restore a significant aspect of early modern theatre to any udience willing to listen.

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