Meddling with the Scriptures: Lay Bible Reading and England's Clergy, 1603-1625

by

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Abstract

Lay Bible reading took hold in England after the Protestant Reformation, and the ramifications of this practice were felt throughout England's seventeenth century. Thus, investigating the clergy's expectations for lay Bible readers during the reign of James I provides important context for English religious life before the English Civil War thoroughly blurred religion and politics. Examining these clerical expectations in publications on divinity and Scripture reading requires one to consider England's print economy and culture towards the Bible and other religious works. Ultimately, this approach reveals that the clergy desired and took meaningful steps to create a strong lay readership in the Jacobean period and that this ambition was partly hindered and partly realized through English printing.

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Introduction

The Protestant Reformation had already transformed England long before James I started his rule in 1603, but Protestantism continued to shift and evolve. With a new monarch taking the throne, any pretensions that the 1559 Elizabethan Settlement, by establishing an official set of English Protestant religious principles, had ended England's questions about religion swiftly evaporated.[1] With the benefit of hindsight, we know that far more than religious change was on the horizon: less than a century later, the battle lines of the English Civil War fell along not only the political distinction of Parliamentarians and Royalists, but on denominational differences between Calvinists (who emphasized that salvation from sin came from God's grace alone, and that this grace was predestined) and Arminians (who, contrary to Calvinism, asserted that salvation was freely given through faith and baptism, and therefore rejected predestination).[2]

In such a climate, where politics and faith blur, overlap, and mix, disentangling the religious positions from the political positions is terribly fraught. For those on either side of the Civil War, treating these positions as distinct probably missed the point of the war altogether. As Katz writes, "it was taken for granted [. . .] that God was continuously intervening in worldly affairs, sowing small clues directing mankind's attention to His pleasure. Apart from conspicuous and meaningful signs and 'providences', the largest single collection of clues was to be found in God's last words, His legacy to mankind—the Bible."[3] The worldly affairs of humanity were deeply connected to religion, and the key to making sense of one's circumstances

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[1] Alister E. McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 130, 132;

[2] Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 28.

[3] David S. Katz, *God's Last Words: Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 52.

was Scripture. Parliamentarian soldiers had their own "Souldiers Pocket Bible" to provide edification amidst conflict, and, as Katz notes, "What Cromwell knew about God and His divine ways came directly from reading the Bible: there was no other authoritative source regarding the divine plans of the Maker of the universe."[4] Likewise, Hill argues that by the mid-seventeenth century the English laity was convinced that the ultimate authority in Christianity was Scripture.[5] Thus, sorting out England's seventeenth century requires investigation of Bible reading and the English clergy's position on a Bible competent laity; focusing this investigation in the Jacobean years, before the obfuscating overlap of war, politics, and religion, offers a more informative, less murky, period of reference.

Thus, the investigation begins with print, since without the press the Bible would have remained the possession of elites alone. Green argues that Britain's print culture and print economy shaped the development of its Protestantism in crucial ways.[6] When Christians responded to the religious discourse that print disseminated, three broad approaches to Protestantism emerged: a mainline group of conformists and moderates who stressed the importance of faith in religious life; a group, distinguished by a higher level of education, that supplemented the importance of faith with a focus on morality; and a non-orthodox group whose emphasis on good works suggested that believers could earn salvation through their own efforts, which defied the orthodox belief that the grace of God alone bestowed salvation.[7] Green also rejects the idea that only Protestants used print to their advantage, since all books that became

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[4] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 49, 56.
[5] Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 18.
[6] Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
[7] Green, *Print*, xvii.

influential best-sellers shaped English religion, including those arguing non-mainstream positions like Catholicism.[8] People outside the priesthood, particularly printers and publishers, factor importantly in the analysis, since their business and search for best-sellers shaped popular religious discourse.[9] Fundamentally, Green argues that focusing studies of English religious publishing upon the uncontroversial best-sellers, rather than the fieriest polemics, illustrates how the majority of Englishmen engaged with their faith.[10] Patterson, similarly, emphasizes the significance of best-seller works of divinity for investigating the religion of English Protestants, with her focus being in the sixteenth century.[11]

Ryrie, on the other hand, cautions against an over-emphasis on the rigid theologies seen in print, and so, eschewing a narrow demographic focus, he examines religious practice across English Protestants broadly.[12] This approach, he argues, reveals popular practice more clearly than the carefully articulated ideologies that authors presented in theological writings.[13] Despite English Protestantism's focus on the intellectual aspects of religion, he argues that the faith was deeply connected to the emotional lives of its adherents.[14] As such, English Protestantism is best understood through the relationship between believers' behavior and emotion.[15] Furthermore, the denominational distinctions that treatises and polemics highlight do not indicate an actual

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[8] Green, *Print*, 1.
[9] Green, *Print*, 2.
[10] Green, *Print*, 3.
[11] Mary Hampson Patterson, *Domesticating the Reformation: Protestant Best Sellers, Private Devotion, and the Revolution of English Piety* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Presses, 2007), 32-3.
[12] Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199565726.003.0001.
[13] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 2-3.
[14] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 3.
[15] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 3.

rift within English Protestantism.[16] Rather, he argues, a deeper unity is revealed through the shared religious practices of Christians, which the theological dialogues of clergymen failed to demonstrate.[17]

Many scholars take a suspicious perspective on the clergy's relationship with lay Bible reading. Narveson, studying the connection between identity development and Bible reading, acknowledges that clerical advice for Biblical study provided the intellectual tools for self-expression and personal transformation.[18] Similarly, Katz argues that the printed Bible allowed Protestants to research issues themselves, become intellectually independent, and foster a general interest in learning.[19] Women especially, using their deepened Biblical proficiency, leveraged the authority of Scripture to expand their own authority in the household and other domains within their influence.[20] As a consequence, the laity's growing competency in understanding their religious lives and texts created tension with the clergy, whose role as professionalized religious leaders after the reign of Elizabeth I was now challenged.[21] As such, Narveson argues that the clergy's Bible reading directions reflect anxiety towards the growth of lay religious knowledge, wherein religious elites took measures to subordinate the religious authority of the laity to that of the clergy.[22] Brownlee concurs with Narveson, drawing upon

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[16] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 6.

[17] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 6.

[18] Kate Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers in Early Modern England: Gender and Self-Definition in an Emergent Writing Culture* (London: Routledge, 2012), https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.4324/9781315569307, 1-2.

[19] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 43.

[20] Narveson, *Bible Readers*, 1-2.

[21] Narveson, *Bible Readers*, 5-6, 12.

[22] Narveson, *Bible Readers*, 12.

evidence of how the Bible affected the daily life of English Protestants.[23] Cambers draws a similar conclusion, arguing, despite the communal Puritan culture that emerged from the "long seventeenth century," that the clergy's vernacular Bible projects subordinated lay religious authority to that of religious elites.[24]

Ryrie is not settled on these issues. As he writes, "The nature of Protestant spiritual experience remains, to a remarkable extent, an undiscovered country."[25] This issue arises due to "the bias both of our sources and of our historiography toward debate and polemic, and away from the often non-discursive lived reality of devotional experience. We know a great deal now, for example, about the emotional culture which Reformation preachers were trying to inculcate; the study of the layperson's experience of such sermons remains much less developed."[26] While lived experiences are useful (but more elusive compared to written documents), examining the clergy's purported goals for lay reading is still fruitful.

Thus enters my contribution. Fundamentally, attempts at understanding the clergy's attitudes towards a lay Bible readership should take seriously what clergy claimed to believe about that issue. As such, I examine prominent religious works written by clergymen that were notable during the reign of James I and interpret their writings charitably in order to determine what they believed and how they thought they could achieve it. This period, as shown, reduces the influence of politics upon religion, unlike the Civil War years, and should reveal a less

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[23] Victoria Brownlee, *Biblical Readings and Literary Writings in Early Modern England, 1558-1625*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), doi: 10.1093/oso/9780198812487.001.0001, 13-14; 37-39.

[24] Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 165.

[25] Alec Ryrie, "The Nature of Spiritual Experience," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations,* ed. Ulinka Rublack, 47-63 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199646920.013.3, 62.

[26] Ryrie, "Spiritual Experience," 59.

fraught understanding of the clergy's approach to lay Bible reading. But the medium of these works is important, as is the economy surrounding it. Thus, I begin by examining Bibles and Bible printing in the Jacobean period, showing that access to Scripture in a higher quality was growing, but was not universal—with the blame residing not with the clergy but rather with monopolist printers. Likewise, while religious publishing was growing in this period and providing access to more works and assistance, this access was not universal. Finally, I argue, from the words of clergy in their religious publications, that the clergy indeed desired a wide and skillful readership for the Bible, contrary to the perspectives described above. By charitably interpreting these works and taking seriously their implications, early Stuart clergymen are shown to have genuinely sought the improvement of lay Bible reading and took serious steps to achieve it.

1.

Hands on the Holy Book: The Bible and Lay Access, 1603-1625

In the Jacobean years, the Bible was increasingly accessible for laypeople. The existence of two high-quality vernacular translations, the Geneva Bible and the Authorized Version, meant that English Bible readers could study freely. Although some scholars suggest that the vernacular Bible projects were subversive rather than supportive of the lay readership, these objections are relatively minor and did not negate the value of possessing an authoritative Bible for English Protestantism. These Bibles were available in a variety of formats, which were further inducements to a wide lay readership. Despite meeting various preferences and price points, poorer lay readers were systemically deprived of the highest-quality interaction with their Bibles. Responsibility for these problems of Bible accessibility and quality resided with the monopoly that the King's Printers exercised over English Bible printing. Although the university presses attempted to challenge them, the only meaningful opposition in the reign of James I were Dutch pirated copies. Despite these complications, the English laity was more capable of engaging with Scripture during the reign of James I, and the problems surrounding Bible access were not the fault of the clergy.

The Geneva Bible was the older of the two prominent vernacular translations in the Jacobean period. Produced by English Protestant exiles in 1557, English presses began printing it in 1575.[27] The Geneva included book summaries and divided the text into verses to simplify

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[27] S. L. Greenslade, "English Versions of the Bible, 1525–1611," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. S. L. Greenslade, 3:141–74, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521042543.005, 155; B. J. McMullin and Maureen Bell, "The Bible Trade," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie, 4:455–73 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521661829.023, 456.

referencing, which became standard features in English Bibles.[28] Additionally, the Geneva was sized in the much smaller quarto format and was more practical for personal use.[29] Its extensive study apparatus included marginal notes, maps, tables, indices, and cross-references, and, consequently, was useful for laypeople with less education.[30] For example, Revelation 12:1-6 in the Geneva says "[. . . .] And the dragon stood before the woman, which was ready to be delivered, to devour her child, when she had brought it forth [. . . .]."[31] Of the aforementioned passage, the notes identify the child, "*Which is Jesus Christ the firstborn among many brethren, who was born of the Virgin Mary as of a special member of the church.*"[32] Crucially, the translators provided interpretive guidance for a book notoriously rife with meanings shrouded in metaphor and symbolism. The translators' intention in this project was clear: the Geneva's prefaces criticizes those who are willfully ignorant of Scripture's truths and states that the apparatus silences such excuses.[33] From those prefaces, "Yet lest either the simple should be discouraged, or the malicious have any occasion of just cavillation, seeing some translations read after one sort and some after another, [. . .] we have in the margin noted that diversity of speech or reading which may also seem agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost and proper for our

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[28] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 456; M. H. Black, "The Printed Bible," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. S. L. Greenslade, 3:408–75 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521042543.013, 454-5; Katz, *God's Last Words*, 44.

[29] Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 175; Lori Anne Ferrell, "The Bible in Early Modern England," in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume 1: Reformation and Identity c.1520-1662*, ed. Anthony Milton, 413-430 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199639731.003.0022, 420; Black, "Printed Bible," 444.

[30] Ferrell, "Bible," 420.

[31] Author Unknown, "C. The Geneva Bible (1560)," in *Voices of the English Reformation: A Sourcebook*, ed. John N. King, 31-33 (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2004), 31.

[32] Author Unknown, "Geneva Bible," 31.

[33] Ferrell, "Bible," 420.

language [. . . .].[34] As shown, an important goal was to eliminate confusion not only originating in the Bible itself but from the contemporary problems of language as more translations were available.

The second prominent vernacular Bible in this period was the Authorized Version, now more commonly known as the King James Version (AV/KJV). James I considered certain marginalia in the Geneva seditious and so sought to replace it with a version suitable for the mainstream Church of England.[35] Although the AV was neither authorized nor its use mandated, it was the only version printed in the large folio format after 1611 and so would gradually become the Bible found in the parish church.[36] Furthermore, despite royal silence, Princess Elizabeth's copy of the AV bore the Stuart arms, suggesting the Stuarts' tacit preference.[37] Regardless, Protestants continued using the Geneva even after the AV was completed for the former's study aids, and it endured in print until 1644 when the last edition appeared.[38] Both the Geneva and the AV referenced previous vernacular Bibles extensively during translation, including the Bishop's Bible and the Catholic Rheims Bible.[39] Especially vital was William Tyndale's translation, as Katz alleges that 90 percent of the AV was "verbatim Tyndale."[40] Continental European translators inspired the English translators to produce versions which reflected the

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[34] Author Unknown, "The Preface to the Geneva Bible, 1560," in *Documents of the English Reformation*, ed. Gerald Bray, 355-64 (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co Ltd, 1994), 361.

[35] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 456; Greenslade, "English Versions," 164.

[36] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 44.

[37] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 45.

[38] John Coffey, "The Bible and Theology," in *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Volume I: The Post-Reformation Era, 1559-1689*, ed. John Coffey, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), doi: 10.1093/oso/9780198702238.003.0018, 378; Black, "Printed Bible," 454; Coffey, "Bible and Theology," 378.

[39] McMullin, and Bell, "Bible Trade," 457-8.

[40] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 38.

original Greek and Hebrew more closely.[41] The persistence and universality of both versions is evident as it crossed denominational distinctions; Oliver Cromwell used both in his writing and speeches.[42]

Some scholars consider the vernacular Bibles projects partly subversions of non-establishment believers.[43] Translators from various conformist positions worked on the AV, but the exclusion of non-conformists suggests that the translation was highly politically motivated, with its primary aim being to limit the possibility of seditious assistance, like that found in the Geneva.[44] For example, although Dr. John Rainolds served as the Puritan representative at the Hampton Court Conference (1604; where the idea of the AV formally began), he was only sympathetic to their positions and not a Puritan himself.[45] Ferrell also notes that the AV used speech considered archaic even in 1611 to exude grandeur and posture itself as the ultimate authoritative translation.[46] Because it removed interpretive marginal notes, the AV was suited for presenting the authority of the Church of England, rather than fostering scholarship and enhancing lay understanding.[47] Conversely, Cambers also argues that the Geneva's "marginal instructions were designed to guide readers and limit interpretation."[48] In both cases, the vernacular project is considered problematic.

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[41] Green, *Print*, 46.
[42] Black, "Printed Bible," 454; Coffey, "Bible and Theology," 378.
[43] Lori Anne Ferrell, *The Bible and the People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), doi: https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.12987/9780300142617, 90, 92.
[44] Ferrell, "Bible," 424-5.
[45] Ferrell, "Bible," 425-6.
[46] Ferrell, "Bible," 425.
[47] Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 165; Ferrell, "Bible," 426.
[48] Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 165.

However, as Molekamp notes, the AV's existence would not preclude use of the Geneva.[49] The AV and Geneva were printed concurrently for much of the seventeenth century, so while it is feasible that not all Protestants would own both versions, the concepts and study techniques obtainable through the Geneva's marginal notes would not vanish from the broader consciousness.[50] That is to say, while individual Christians might not have total access to the Geneva, the potential for receiving its benefits through other believers was not eliminated with the arrival of the AV. Furthermore, the absence of an authoritative Bible for the English Church had become an issue. For instance, on December 11, 1603, Thomas Lake of Roxton, Bedfordshire would not contribute to his parish's collection for the English Protestant exiles in Geneva—exiles which included the Geneva Bible's translators—because, as he argued, English Bibles differed so greatly in meaning as to discredit them all.[51] This issue of authority provided Catholics with the rhetorical ammunition to further deride Protestantism and England's vernacular project.[52] In sum, even if the AV lacked some of the Geneva's depth (and, as shown, this problem was not intractable, since the Geneva did not disappear), a universal vernacular translation could rally English Protestantism around its ultimate source of authority. Ultimately, Christians in the Jacobean period were not deprived of a high-quality translation.

These vernacular Bibles were available in different formats, some more suitable for the laity than others. 'Folio' identified large books which would rest on parish lecterns, while

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[49] Femke Molekamp, *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England: Religious Reading and Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199665402.001.0001, 7.

[50] Molekamp, *Women and the Bible*, 6.

[51] Christopher Haigh, *The Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven: Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation England, 1570-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ubc/reader.action?docID=415945&ppg=1, 225.

[52] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 44.

'quarto', 'octavo', and 'duodecimo', each smaller than the last, were more suitable for individual use.[53] Green argues that the increased demand for these smaller formats illustrates that the lay readership was growing, and part of the evidence lies with the number of new editions for Bibles in each size across several periods.[54] From 1600-1609, three folio, fourteen quarto, and nine octavo editions appeared; from 1610-1619, eight folio, twenty quarto, and thirteen octavo editions appeared; and from 1620-1629, two folio, eight quarto, and sixteen octavo editions appeared. [55] The cheaper cost of smaller Bibles was yet another inducement to a wider readership.[56]

Scripture was also available in complete volumes or separate Testaments, which provided another cheaper, albeit fragmentary, alternative for laypeople.[57] Green reports that from 1600-1609, twenty-six complete Bible editions and thirteen New Testaments editions appeared; in 1610-1619, forty-five complete Bible editions and twenty New Testament editions appeared; and from 1620-1629, thirty-three complete Bible editions and sixteen New Testament editions appeared.[58] Readers preferred complete volumes, but the existence of this alternative helped limit the barriers to a wide readership. That is to say, it is significant that a larger proportion of believers were acquiring and reading Bibles, even if, for some, their Bible ownership was incomplete.

Bibles were also available in a variety of typeface which broadened the lay readership.[59] Black-letter type was familiar to older readers and those with traditional educations, while

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[53] Green, *Print*, 57.
[54] Green, *Print*, 57.
[55] Green, *Print*, 57.
[56] Green, *Print*, 60.
[57] Green, *Print*, 50.
[58] Green, *Print*, 50.
[59] Green, *Print*, 63.

Roman type was a newer, increasingly prominent style, especially in universities.[60] Editions of complete Bibles and Testaments in either black-letter or Roman both appear concurrently during the reign of James I, sometimes in the same book.[61] For instance, the King's Printers produced an AV New Testament which used black-letter for the text, but Roman for the headings and marginal notes.[62] Green shows that black-letter octavo New Testaments remained popular: from 1600-1609, four out of five editions of New Testaments were black-letter; from 1610-1619, seven out of nine editions were black-letter; and from 1620-1629, seven out of seven editions were black-letter.[63] Green posits that there was a demand for the traditional typeface, as many laypeople were unacquainted with Roman type and probably preferred black-letter.[64] In sum, black-letter New Testaments, cheaper and in a familiar type, suited the preference of many poorer laypeople and expanded Bible readership.[65]

Although formats were an important way of expanding the Bible readership, the issues surrounding formatting meant there was an uneven quality of Bible reading. Study aids were scarcer in cheaper, smaller prints.[66] Quartos usually only cut out the maps, but octavos were particularly unenhanced.[67] Producing a cheap octavo meant devoting the reduced page size and number of pages primarily to the Scriptural text itself, especially for low page-count octavo Testaments.[68] Since these versions appealed to the poor, their Bible ownership was systemically

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[60] Green, *Print*, 63-4.
[61] Green, *Print*, 63-4.
[62] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 45.
[63] Green, *Print*, 64-5.
[64] Green, *Print*, 64-5.
[65] Green, *Print*, 64-5.
[66] Green, *Print*, 67-8.
[67] Green, *Print*, 67-8.
[68] Green, *Print*, 67-8.

deprived of stronger study aids.[69] These circumstances may have disadvantaged the Scriptural competency of the poor, but, as Green notes, "This meant that such readers were in a position either to use it [their Bibles] as the clergy probably wished—as a means of corroborating orthodox teaching and preaching" or to possibly "draw their own uninhibited and sometimes radical conclusions."[70] The implications of this systemic issue are mixed: the poor were less likely to engage with standard study methods disseminated through the apparatus which the clergy had generated, but their deprivation increased the possibility of freer interpretation. While it would be disingenuous to assert that these circumstances were in no way negative, neglecting the significance of reading freely without the guidance of this apparatus would also be an incomplete assessment of the poorer laity's relationship with the Bible.

Although there were many inducements to a wide lay readership, it was by no means universal; despite the variety of Bibles, it was difficult for the poor laity to acquire one. In the 1630s, octavo Testaments cost around ten pence and duodecimos around eight pence.[71] Green notes, "a new bound copy of even the cheapest bible—say 4s. for the text and 1s. for the binding—represented about a week's wages for an unskilled labourer who was earning 8d. to 1s. a day, and over half a week's pay for a craftsman earning eighteen pence a day."[72] Similarly, husbandmen typically had around £3-4 per year for discretionary purchases or fourteen to eighteen pence per week.[73] As Watt argues, assessing discretionary spending in this period is

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[69] Green, *Print*, 100.
[70] Green, *Print*, 100.
[71] Green, *Print*, 95.
[72] Green, *Print*, 95.
[73] Tessa Watt, "Piety in the Pedlar's Pack: Continuity and Change, 1578-1630," in *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725*, ed. Margaret Spufford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 256.

quite difficult.[74] Using these previous figures, she writes "a twopenny pamphlet every fortnight or so looks like a possibility, although it might mean sacrificing two quarts of strong beer at the alehouse."[75] The pressure for a cheaper Bible was satisfied in the 1640s when Bibles dropped dramatically in price; a 1640s octavo was 2s. 8., with the duodecimos, which removed marginal notes, costing even less.[76] Regardless, it can at least be said that a large number of the laity was at a severe disadvantage when acquiring books, Bibles included, during the reign of James I. Even a shared church Bible for the parish was costly.[77] Churchwardens were reluctant to spend parish funds on the new AV due to its high price and the inevitable disputes in the community on how to fairly levy the funding.[78] Thus, even as the number and types of Bibles grew, they were not yet universally affordable, and so the lay desire for Scripture was not yet wholly satisfied.

Although purchasing a Bible was difficult for some, the less wealthy could still acquire Bibles through other means, such as second-hand purchases, gifts, and inheritances; however, such gifts were more typically a wealthy practice.[79] Poor clergymen as well as, no doubt, the well-connected middling-sort and the gentry, could borrow books from wealthier patrons, friends, or parish libraries.[80] Likewise, parishioners accessed many texts through their churches,

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[74] Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1500-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 262.

[75] Watt, *Cheap Print*, 262.

[76] Hill, *English Bible*, 18.

[77] Kenneth Fincham, "The King James Bible: Crown, Church and People," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 71, no. 1 (January, 2020): 77-97, doi:10.1017/S0022046918001318, 90-1.

[78] Fincham, "King James Bible," 90-1.

[79] Green, *Print*, 95; Patrick Collinson, Arnold Hunt, and Alexandra Walsham, "Religious Publishing in England 1557–1640," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie, 4:29–66 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521661829.003, 64; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 296.

[80] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 36-7.

including Bibles, but also prayer books and homilies.[81] Affluent churches offered other works of divinity as well.[82] The library at Bury St. Edmunds is one example, and donations grew the collection from the 1590s onward.[83] However, this, again, was a privileged practice which favored wealthy communities or those with the appropriate social connections.[84] Parishes and philanthropists sometimes donated Bibles, but limited funds meant these donations were typically cheaper versions in octavo or duodecimo, which in turn meant that they lacked many study aids.[85] Although these are notable alternatives for Bible access, they do not negate the systemic disadvantages for the poor laity, and so an accurate characterization of lay Bible access must recognize that, while lay Bible access improved, only the wealthy reaped all of the benefits.

Underlying these issues of lay access to Scripture is the Bible printing monopoly of the King's Printers. The King's Printers had the sole privilege of printing Bibles, and the Barkers, first Christopher Barker in 1577 under Elizabeth and then his son, Robert Barker, happily maintained this privilege over vernacular Bibles.[86] As Katz writes, Robert Barker was "much more interested in restricting the trade in Scripture to his own advantage than in spreading the divine Word."[87] However, the Bible-printing privilege became convoluted after the AV's creation. Payments to the project's workers, including translators and reviewers, were overwhelming, and Robert Barker borrowed large sums to meet the costs.[88] Consequently, the imprints in English Bibles fluctuated for years afterwards in an illustration of the complex debt

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[81] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 62.
[82] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 62.
[83] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 37.
[84] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 37.
[85] Green, *Print*, 91-2.
[86] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 459.
[87] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 41.
[88] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 460.

relationship, with creditors taking advantage of the situation to make a profit off Bible printing as well.[89]

The King's Printers did face competition from university printers, but it was not soon enough to improve Bible ownership for the laity during the reign of James I. As McKitterick argues, unlike the printers of London, university printers were privileged, isolated, and bound up in the interests of their institution.[90] Cambridge was separated fifty miles from London, and poor roads, especially during inclement winters, exacerbated its remoteness.[91] Although Oxford and London connected along the Thames, distance was still an obstacle.[92] This isolation, combined with the growth of student bodies in the 1590s, meant a permanent university press was increasingly viable.[93] The universities expected their printers to produce high-quality academic materials, so these printers would not sacrifice accurate printing in exchange for economic benefits.[94] Initially, the presses were private ventures, but Cambridge and Oxford came to recognize that it served their interests as well to protect their presses against their London competitors and ensure their success.[95] To that end, Cambridge set longstanding officer Esquire Bedell as its printer in 1608.[96] Despite the growing involvement of their respective university, the printers still had their own private interest in the business.[97] They owned their

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[89] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 460.

[90] David McKitterick, "University Printing at Oxford and Cambridge," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie, 4:189–205 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521661829.003, 189.

[91] McKitterick, "University Printing," 189.

[92] McKitterick, "University Printing," 189.

[93] McKitterick, "University Printing," 191.

[94] McKitterick, "University Printing," 189.

[95] McKitterick, "University Printing," 192.

[96] McKitterick, "University Printing," 192.

[97] McKitterick, "University Printing," 192.

equipment, managed costs, and procured print material while paying the university for licensing.[98] Private enterprise backed with institutional support made the university printers a stronger competitor against the London presses.

The King's Printers controlled the price of Bibles, and so the culpability for prohibitively expensive Scripture restricting the growth of lay readership largely falls upon them. [99] Challenging this monopoly, Cambridge's printer, John Legate, printed a miniature octavo Geneva, and as a consequence became caught in legal disputes from 1590-1591, since Robert Barker sought retribution for the infringement on the Geneva.[100] The matter was eventually resolved in court, and the settlement allowed Cambridge's university printer to prioritize his selection of foreign works from the Frankfurt Book Fair before London publishers as a compromise, but this pacification meant that the Bible monopoly went unchallenged until 1629.[101] At that time, Charles I confirmed a 1534 royal charter from Henry VIII which motivated Cambridge to enter the Bible trade.[102] Oxford belatedly exercised this right in 1673-5.[103] These changes came too late for the laity under James I, as the unbroken monopoly meant that Bibles remained costly. However, the fault for this lies not with the Church or its clergy, but rather the economics around printing in general and the King's Printers in particular.

Foreign piracies, mainly from Holland, were the monopolists' primary competitor instead of domestic rivals. Printing Bibles was costly: materials, like paper, were expensive, and the King's Printers worked actively against their opposition, destroying equipment, seizing

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[98] McKitterick, "University Printing," 192.
[99] McKitterick, "University Printing," 193.
[100] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 460-1; Black, "Printed Bible," 456.
[101] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 461.
[102] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 45; McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 460.
[103] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 460.

stock, and starting legal disputes.[104] However, Dutch printers produced unauthorized Bibles that were brought to England.[105] Dutch printing outstripped England's throughout the seventeenth century, despite the protestations of the English printers, and consequently the Dutch versions were a high-quality alternative to domestic Bibles.[106] One such pirate, Michael Sparke, who Katz calls "a sort of publishing terrorist, a notorious infringer of copyrights" distributed these Dutch Bibles successfully for years.[107] When Barker dispatched agents to seize Sparke's merchandise at port, Sparke responded with legal action which successfully prohibited Barker or his men from trespassing against Sparke.[108] This triumph meant that cheaper Bibles were available in England throughout this period, despite their legally dubious origin,

Regarding ownership of illicit Bibles, McMullin and Bell argue that identifying the true number of Dutch pirated copies is difficult since, other than the fleeting cases where imprints were obviously false, the Dutch Bibles were convincing imitations of authorized prints.[109] Furthermore, McMullin and Bell show that the King's Printers successful mass seizures of Dutch Bibles only took place in the latter seventeenth century.[110] By the time that the Dutch Bibles were regularly identified and foiled, Bibles printed at universities had become legitimate competitors.[111] Thus, in spite of the monopolists' efforts, cheaper Bibles continued to be available during the reign of James I.

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[104] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 466.
[105] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 466-7.
[106] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade." 466-7.
[107] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 42.
[108] Katz, *God's Last Words*, 42.
[109] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 467.
[110] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 467-8.
[111] McMullin and Bell, "Bible Trade," 467-8.

In the Jacobean period, vernacular Bibles were available in two prominent translations, the Geneva and the AV, which, despite some issues, were great advantages for the laity. Furthermore, Bibles were available in greater quality, quantity, and in a variety of formats, even though systemic issues deprived the poorer laity of the best experience with Scripture. Monopolists bear the responsibility for accessibility issues, as the King's Printers had forced out its university printer competitors. Still, Dutch piracies meant that Christians could still acquire affordable Bibles throughout the period. Ultimately, Bible printing in the reign of James I was improving lay engagement with Scripture, and the clergy could rest easy that the largest obstacles to that engagement were not their fault.

2.

To the Christian Reader: Religious Publishing, 1603-1625

English religious publishing, like Bible printing, was flourishing in the Jacobean years. Publishers held sway over the kinds of works that readers might acquire, but unlike Bible printing this was a more diverse endeavor; both London Stationers and university printers entered the fray. Not all religious works were accessible to the laity, either due to complexity or cost, but the clergy did try to mend these issues. However, since publishing was not their business, but rather religion, the clergy's greatest influence over English religious publishing was while working in the licensing process for print, where denominational perspectives quietly fought over which view was to receive sanction, without clear domination of one view over all others in this period. Ultimately, religious publishing in the Jacobean years expanded lay access to useful religious works without strong clerical opposition, but this expansion was not universally experienced by the entire laity.

While printers produced texts and booksellers traded them, publishers were what Green calls the "prime mover" in the English print trade.[112] Publishers often had a second profession: many were stationers, but some were also bookseller-publishers or printer-publishers.[113] While there was no formal publishing organization in this period, most publishers were members in the Stationers' Company.[114] The Stationers' Company was royally incorporated on May 4, 1557, and its influence over labor practices and the entrance of new tradesmen into the field meant that it was the dominant body in London printing.[115] Publishing was risky, and anyone within the

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[112] Green, *Print*, 14.
[113] Green, *Print*, 14-6.
[114] Green, *Print*, 14.
[115] D. F. McKenzie, "Printing and Publishing 1557-1700: Constraints on the London Book Trade," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. John Barnard and D. F.

business who did not already have a best-seller (which would yield multiple editions and safe profits) desired one.[116] Finding a best-seller was a complicated affair. Some publishers purchased the rights for successful authors from their peers after a publisher died, while other publishers having the rights for an author with one successful work might accumulate the rights for that author's other works, which had already been published, for a new edition in hope of creating a new best-seller.[117] Flexible scruples were common, and across their career a new publisher might start by publishing a variety of edgier works while hunting their prize authors, pirating popular works or commissioning authors that emulated the greats in knock-offs to sustain themselves.[118] While fledgling publishers might trade in works with novel perspectives or controversial pretensions, successful publishers wanted to preserve their success by releasing works that could experience widespread popularity without bringing criticism upon them.[119] As such, the business was rather dynamic, with the younger participants pushing boundaries while the veteran publishers reaped the benefits of securing widely successful authors.

London was not the only publishing force, and Cambridge's press, besides university materials, printed a variety of popular religious works, including sermons from popular preachers like William Perkins or Andrew Willet's biblical commentaries.[120] The Stationers' Company competed with the university printers fiercely when the latter threatened their interests; however, some university printers, like Oxford's Thomas Thomas (truly, an unforgettable

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McKenzie, 4:553–567 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521661829.003, 554.

[116] Green, *Print*, 15.

[117] Green, *Print*, 17.

[118] Green, *Print*, 22-3.

[119] Green, *Print*, 22-3.

[120] McKitterick, "University Printing," 194; See also the discussion of the university printers in Chapter 1.

name), formed amicable relationships with London stationers like Thomas Chard, while Cambridge's Joseph Barnes leveraged his relationship with his son, Stationer John Barnes, to expand his access to foreign books.[121] With legitimate competitors outside London, the business of religious publication was lively, indeed.

Although there were many religious works available to laypeople with sufficient funds, they were not all equally usable. For example, many laymen found Richard Rogers's *Seven Treatises* [. . . .] unapproachable, even though they were his intended audience.[122] Costing around ten to twelve shillings and taking over 600 folio pages, the book exhaustively explored Christian life, but was too expensive, inconveniently sized, and an extremely lengthy read for many laypeople.[123] In response, Stephen Egerton produced a 1604 abridged version which addressed these issues.[124] For those readers entirely priced out of religious publications, there were alternatives. Catechism classes offered additional instruction using officially and unofficially published texts, though obviously this experience was more mediated compared to the independence of self-study using supplementary texts one chose independently.[125]

Although there were disparities in who could afford and access these religious works, Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham argue that a broad definition of 'religious publication' reflects the experience of seventeenth century Englishmen more accurately.[126] As they say, we ought to include in our definition "folios and fragmentary scraps, bound hardback volumes and fragile hybrid media, such as ballads, woodcut pictures, and engravings, publications costing a few

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[121] McKitterick, "University Printing," 192-3.
[122] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 55-6.
[123] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 55-6.
[124] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 56.
[125] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 32.
[126] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 31.

pence and other publications priced at well over a pound."[127] Larger works of divinity, like

Dent's *Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven* [. . . .], may have cost at least a shilling, but the poorer

laity had cheaper alternatives.[128] For instance, William Slayter paired the Psalms with prominent

tunes, and, despite the resentment of some clergy at this blend between the spiritual and the

worldly, these works appeared in the 1624 Stationers' Register.[129] Cheap religious pamphlets in

quarto or octavo as well as chapbooks that peddlers priced at a penny, spread Godly writings to

rural and impoverished believers.[130] Taken together, there is yet again a problematic disparity

between laypeople who could and those who could not afford the costs in time and money of

religious works, but the existence of alternatives meant that, broadly speaking, the differences

were increasingly that of the kinds of works that one engaged with, rather than whether they

engaged with them at all. As such, it is fair to state that lay access to religious works was

improving in the Jacobean period.

    While some publishers were unconcerned with the positions that they disseminated, the

clergy curated potential religious works in ways that reflected their denominational sensibilities

through their role in the licensing process for printed material, although no clear domination of

perspectives emerged.[131] To summarize, first, a bishop's chaplain would identify necessary

revisions in submitted manuscripts.[132] Next, a warden of the Stationers' Hall would provide their

authorizing signature after confirming the revisions.[133] Finally, a clerk completed a final review

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[127] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 31.
[128] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 35.
[129] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 34.
[130] Collinson, Hunt, and Walsham, "Religious Publishing," 35.
[131] Anthony Milton, "Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England," *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (1998): 625–51, doi:10.1017/S0018246X98007948, 627.
[132] Milton, "Licensing," 627.
[133] Milton, "Licensing," 627.

of all signatures.[134] This process was susceptible to influence from individuals within it at each stage; therefore, entry into Stationers' Register does not necessarily demonstrate that a position was institutionally supported.[135] For instance, overworked chaplains did not read the entirety of all manuscripts that they received, and authors could add new material to the manuscript after it was returned and thereby foil the reviewer.[136] Furthermore, many works in the Stationers' Register had incomplete licensing, such as when a work was entered before it was finished.[137] Thus, any judgments based in the licensing process about what the clergy desired must be made cautiously.

As Milton argues, the official positions of the Church of England were still contested in this period; therefore, government and Church censorship of religious works do not evidence a consensus view, as neither institution was monolithic.[138] Identifying how these works were curated offers insight into the variance in the Stuart clergy's theological views.[139] Thus, this sort of censorship was not the work of a highly intentional, suppressive machine. Likewise, Lake argues, "the aim was to use the licensing process as a symbolic means of withholding approval or sanction."[140] Obvious evidence of attempted censorship is not forthcoming in the record, so Milton argues that it is difficult to compare the differences in censorship pre- and post-Archbishop Laud, who, after becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, would direct his followers to use their position in licensing to greatly restrict the Calvinist views that he had long

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[134] Milton, "Licensing," 627.
[135] Milton, "Licensing," 627-8.
[136] Milton, "Licensing," 627-8.
[137] Milton, "Licensing," 627-8.
[138] Milton, "Licensing," 626-7.
[139] Milton, "Licensing," 626-7.
[140] Peter Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge: 'Orthodoxy', 'Heterodoxy' and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), *244.*

opposed.[141] Instead, Milton suggests that analyzing how particular chaplains treated different works reveals what was considered theologically problematic or commendable at particular times.[142]

For instance, Daniel Featley, a Puritan and Archbishop Abbot's chaplain, attempted to censor preacher Edward Maie's 1620 sermon, *The communion of saints*, which espoused highly sacramental views and argued against the more Calvinist and less sacramental Puritanism.[143] Maie ignored Featley's requested revisions, and the work was published and licensed without any changes.[144] When the chaplain challenged this outcome, Maie included marginal notes at the troublesome passages to placate Featley.[145] However, the published version yet again maintained his anti-Puritanism, including within the newly introduced marginal notes.[146] Despite its licensure, this work did not reflect the goals of the reviewer.[147] It is significant that even as some clergy were attempting to control what religious material the laity would be exposed to other clergy were yet capable of resistance. Thus, the two impulses moderated each other such that the clergy were not in a position to fully restrict the scope of perspectives the laity could encounter.

Featley also expedited the licensure of Puritan works that he favored, such as those of preacher Paul Baynes.[148] Furthermore, Featley made revisions to various works so that they

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[141] Milton, "Licensing," 628; Nicholas Tyacke, "Archbishop Laud," in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham, 31-70 (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1993), 69.
[142] Milton, "Licensing," 628.
[143] Milton, "Licensing," 628.
[144] Milton, "Licensing," 628-9.
[145] Milton, "Licensing," 628-9.
[146] Milton, "Licensing," 628-9.
[147] Milton, "Licensing," 628-9.
[148] Milton, "Licensing," 629.

could be licensed, which Milton suggests was a collaborative effort with authors.[149] For instance, he edited parts of William Crompton's work to reduce messages claiming inter-religious marriage was sinful.[150] Since the question of Charles I's bride, who would potentially be Catholic, was still developing, Featley leveraged his position in the licensing process to avert controversy for Puritans.[151] In general, Puritans with a place in the licensing process moderated the rhetoric of their extreme peers in what Milton calls "benign censorship."[152] For example, Richard Sibbes wrote prefaces and introductions for the works of radical Puritans, like the aforementioned Baynes, to reduce the intensity of their messages, effectively rescuing the works so that they could enter print.[153] Featley also wrote such prefaces, which, in one case, was part of a broader effort to extract the minister William Chibald from controversy as other clergy denounced his work as heresy.[154]

These cases have been pro-Puritan, but who and what was censored fluctuated. For instance, Thomas Beard's work, *Antichrist the pope of Rome* (1625), included an introduction that claimed it was necessary for the author to remain anonymous, but by the time it was actually printed Beard's name appeared prominently on the title-page—scrutiny against anti-Catholic views had lessened and Beard no longer feared reprisal.[155] Calvinist clergy and Arminian clergy both used censorship to their advantage, but Towers argues that across the early Stuart years

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[149] Milton, "Licensing," 629.
[150] Milton, "Licensing," 629-30.
[151] Milton, "Licensing," 629-30.
[152] Milton, "Licensing," 630-1.
[153] Milton, "Licensing," 630-1.
[154] Lake, *Boxmaker's Revenge*, 219.
[155] Milton, "Licensing," 632.

there was a demonstrable shift.[156] Typically this sort of analysis involves categorizing entries in

the Stationers' Register, but Towers, referencing English bibliographer W. W. Greg, notes that

up to a third of published works did not enter the register or undergo licensing at all.[157] Thus,

Towers instead focused on the publishing history of Puritan author Thomas Taylor and Arminian

author Thomas Jackson.[158] Towers notes, "Judging from the large numbers, there was a demand

for reprints—which up until 1637 did not need relicensing. In a sense they reflected what the

stationers felt fulfilled market demand while newly licensed and published titles reflected what

the regimes would allow."[159] This metric shows decreases in first-edition works espousing

Calvinist beliefs, while newly licensed, first-edition works espoused more Arminian beliefs.[160]

That is to say, Calvinist works that had already been published were not banned, but new books

were more likely to be licensed if it was an Arminian view. Puritan John Bartlet published many

of Taylor's works, which saw success up into the early 1630s; however, once Laud became

archbishop, this success shifted to Jackson's publishing of a higher volume of Arminian

works.[161] The Calvinist trends are at their strongest during the early Stuart years, but the

Arminian turn was growing. Taken together, the Jacobean period thus appears as one much freer

in terms of available perspectives. Although the licensing process did restrict some views, the

larger-scale censorship had not yet arisen, and so neither Calvinism nor Arminianism could

dominate the other. As such, it seems that in the years of James I the clergy's relationship with

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[156] S. Mutchow Towers, *Control of Religious Printing in Early Stuart England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), 4-5; Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, third ed. (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 138-9.
[157] Towers, *Control of Religious Printing*, 4-5.
[158] Towers, *Control of Religious Printing*, 9.
[159] Towers, *Control of Religious Printing*, 9.
[160] Towers, *Control of Religious Printing*, 8-9.
[161] Towers, *Control of Religious Printing*, 69.

religious publishing was much more in tune with a laity that was hungrily awaiting a variety of works.

Religious publishing in the Jacobean years was lively and growing. Both London publishers and university presses entered the business, but the works that ensued were not universally accessible. The clergy made some efforts to amend this, but ultimately their primary role in the world of publishing was using their positon in the licensing process for censorship. By controlling what works could enter the discourse, they exerted influence over the viewpoints that laypeople could access. However, the true dominating power of censorship was yet years off. In sum, the laity generally experienced greater access to religious works under James I, although the benefits were not yet universal.

3.

Necessarie and Profitable: The Clergy's Support of Lay Bible Reading, 1603-1625

Amidst England's growing print economy, where Bibles and religious publications were more widely available than ever, there were a great many topics that the clergy wanted to discuss with their flock. Most fundamental of all, however, was how to read and engage with the Bible. The clergy who wrote on this topic exhibited broad similarities in background and beliefs, and they carried on the mission of teaching the laity to read the Bible that had begun in the sixteenth century. There were some issues with their approach: motivating people to read was left to social pressure, and they did not meaningfully impact literacy rates. However, the claims of today's scholars which suggest that the clergy sought to subordinate lay reading do not bear out. Prominent clerical publications on this issue show instead that the clergy believed in a universal readership, founded upon the interpretive power lent by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they provided instruction that could develop deep reading and study skills in an evolving discourse wherein the clergy recognized that their own work was imperfect, and so they recommended other godly authors. The proclaimed benefits of Bible reading, that it might improve one's spiritual comfort and social relationships, recurred in these writings. Taken together, it is clear that the Jacobean clergy did want a broad, even universal, lay readership highly proficient in comprehending the Bible.

In many respects, the clergy who wrote on lay Bible reading were similar. For instance, most were full-time clergy.[162] They also were increasingly educated in the Jacobean years, with O'Day showing that the proportion of clergymen whose education was graduate, rather than

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[162] Green, *Print*, 6-7.

undergraduate, increased substantially in this period.[163] From "the beginning of 1600 and the end of 1606, 82 out of 109 candidates for deacon's orders in London diocese were graduate and 12 were students. By the 1620s recruitment throughout London diocese was wholly graduate."[164] Even clergy in non-prominent placements were increasingly educated, and out of "87 ordained deacon[s] at Gloucester between June 1609 and May 1621, 52 were graduates; 43 of the 60 ordained priest were graduate."[165] Clergy took these lesser placements for various reasons, including ill-health, retirement, persecution for controversial opinions, or a lack of patronage.[166] Despite these trends towards greater clerical education, Hill argues that the scarcity of skilled clergy in many places motivated the rise of lay reading.[167] Even as education increased, absentee clergymen and greedy parsons meant that many parishes lacked strong guidance and had no recourse but to deepen their own spirituality.[168] There is a certain amount of tension between a laity frustrated with the quality of their ministers and a priesthood increasingly concerned with their own level of education. However, both trends would work to satisfy the anxieties of the other: laypeople deepening their faith through religious publications would motivate clergy to not only better themselves but to also supply the material for religiously curious Christians.

Conformists produced a larger share of religious writings since their access to print resources was not threatened, unlike the radicals who provoked the establishment Church.[169] However, Coffey cautions us to not overemphasize the distinction between conformists and non-

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[163] Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1450-1800: Servants of the Commonwealth* (London: Routledge, 2014), https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.4324/9781315841847, 68.
[164] O'Day, *Professions*, 68.
[165] O'Day, *Professions*, 68.
[166] Green, *Print*, 6-7.
[167] Hill, *English Bible*, 17.
[168] Hill, *English Bible*, 17.
[169] Green, *Print*, 6-7.

conformists. [170] Generally speaking, English Protestantism shared theologically Reformed beliefs, and, even into the years of Archbishop Laud where denominational enmity was at its strongest, English theology exhibited broad similarity.[171] Coffey remarks, "Historians used to trace the ecclesiastical divide to a fundamental theological rift between 'Anglicans' and 'Puritans'. Increasingly, however, scholars have emphasized the doctrinal common ground shared by Calvinist conformists and Puritans."[172] Indeed, all denominational representatives at the Hampton Court Conference agreed that believers needed a new, authoritative Bible translation, resulting in the AV.[173] Thus, clerical advocacy for lay reading was a nearly universal positon.

Martin Luther established that a Reformation Church should make Scripture its foundational authority, captured in the maxim *sola scriptura*.[174] The English Reformation took this advice seriously, and its clergy insisted upon regimented, daily Bible reading long before the reign of James I.[175] In 1571, the *Elizabethan Book of Certaine Canons* decreed that the clergy must preach to the laity and encourage Bible reading.[176] Despite denominational differences, the idea that the laity must read the Bible was not in dispute.

In order to establish stronger faith, readers were advised to make Bible reading a habit, rather than engaging in intermittent reading. [177] Scheduled, daily reading would ensure

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[170] Coffey, "Bible and Theology," 388-9.
[171] Coffey, "Bible and Theology," 388-9.
[172] Coffey, "Bible and Theology," 389.
[173] Ferrell, *Bible and the People*, 90.
[174] Coffey, "Bible and Theology," 375.
[175] Coffey, "Bible and Theology," 375; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 271.
[176] Ferrell, "Bible," 419-20.
[177] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 271.

immersion in the Word.[178] Similarly, child education considered daily reading a necessity.[179] The clergy also insisted upon the spiritual benefits of memorization, since internalizing moral lessons would transform the behavior of believers more effectively than rote, unengaged reading.[180] The prominent female lay-writer on divinity, Dorothy Leigh, touts internalization's benefits in her work *The Mother's Blessing* (1616) illustrating that this concept's significance endured within the lay understanding of godly living.[181] However, the clergy advanced this advice about memorization cautiously; after all, the wayward Catholics were demonstrably untransformed, despite employing memorization.[182] This caution aside, they were still arguing for a deeper lay engagement with Scripture.

However, clerical advocacy did have issues. The clergy considered the opportunity to read the Bible for oneself sufficient motivation for true believers to attain literacy—failure to do so indicated weak devotion.[183] Studying divinity, an active, vigorous endeavor, yielded growth in one's life and promoted true religion.[184] It was unlike other fields of study, which might serve a primarily academic purpose and lack pragmatic value.[185] From the sixteenth century, the clergy believed Christians who failed to read Scripture risked falling into a cycle of sin, so ignorance was not pitiable but abominable.[186] As Ryrie writes, remaining illiterate "was not the absence of learning, but the willful rejection of it [. . . .] Ignorance, like illiteracy, was innocent if you could

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[178] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 271.
[179] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 271.
[180] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 278.
[181] Brownlee, *Biblical Readings*, 23-4.
[182] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 279.
[183] David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), doi:10.1017/CBO9780511560484, 21-2; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 261.
[184] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 265-7.
[185] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 265-7.
[186] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 263.

not help it, but if you had opportunities for learning and spurned them, woe betide you."[187] This attitude did not trouble Protestants, especially since they considered rejecting education's importance to be a Catholic failing.[188] Bishop Jewel in 1564 made this disdain obvious, declaring that Catholics rejected knowledge in favor of ignorance.[189] Furthermore, from Haigh's study of preacher Arthur Dent's *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* (1601), ignorance's sinfulness was an entrenched idea before James I's reign.[190] In the book the analogue for wise, godly men, Theologus, scolds the analogue for Biblically ignorant laypeople, Asunetus, for his abysmal Scriptural knowledge, even though Asunetus argues in his own defense that he is well-catechized and lacks free reading time.[191] The clergy believed that the laity could read the Bible either on the Sabbath or in any fleeting free time they possessed; it was ludicrous to argue that one lacked the opportunity to read.[192] Taken together, this clerical approach seems somewhat elitist. Rather than empathizing with a laity burdened with many other responsibilities, the clergy dismissed the problem outright. Fortunately for them, the laity was sufficiently self-motivated to engage with the Bible; otherwise, this contemptuous response may have hindered the growth of lay readers.

The clergy's approach to literacy was also problematic. People were often taught to read using the Bible, so being literate meant reading Scripture.[193] Children studied divinity and the Bible on Sundays, which strengthened studious instincts early.[194] Although the stigma against

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[187] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 263-5.
[188] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 268-9.
[189] Hill, *English Bible*, 14.
[190] Haigh, *Plain Man's Pathways*, 59-60.
[191] Haigh, *Plain Man's Pathways*, 59-60.
[192] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 261.
[193] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 272-3.
[194] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 262.

ignorance and illiteracy was the prime motivator to learn to read, illiterates still had access to Scripture. One could carefully memorize Scripture as they heard it in sermon, like blind people, without sacrificing depth of understanding.[195] The clergy also urged illiterates to obtain Bibles for their household and to request that their literate peers read the Bible aloud.[196] Similarly, illiterate parents with educated children could gain regular access to a reader.[197] However, rather than actively addressing the root problem of illiteracy, these measures focused on using literates in populations more efficiently while hoping that all believers would find within themselves the motivation and the means to attain literacy. As before, this inactive response to the problem of illiteracy was, fortunately for the clergy, addressed in the wider culture, but still suggests that their interest in the practical obstacles for the growing lay readership was lacking.

Most problematic of all, Narveson argues that some clergy believed lay reading should be restricted and submissive to their authority.[198] Some were concerned that a laity who interpreted the Bible freely would jeopardize the privileged status of the post-Reformation clergy.[199] As a defense, these clergy suggested that only they could comprehend the truly difficult places of Scripture, owing to the laity's lesser education.[200] As discussed previously, the marginal notes in vernacular Bibles would guide lay readers into interpretations that the clergy had composed.[201] Additionally, the use of catechisms constrained the laity within

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[195] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 260.
[196] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 260.
[197] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 260.
[198] Kate Narveson, "'Their practice bringeth little profit': Clerical Anxieties about Lay Scripture Reading in Early Modern England," in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie, 165-188 (London: Routledge, 2012), https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.4324/9781315602219, 165-6.
[199] Narveson, "Clerical Anxieties," 165-6.
[200] Narveson, "Clerical Anxieties," 165-6.
[201] Brownlee, *Biblical Readings*, 37-9.

prescribed positions, rather than encouraging them to generate interpretations that arose from personal reading.[202] In Narveson's view, reading guides and interpretive aids perform as scripts that dominate lay reading in favor of religious elites.[203] However, Narveson acknowledges that this clerical domination is only growing during the reign of James I.[204] While it becomes strong by the Civil War, as the repression of lay gatherings, like conventicles, in those years demonstrates, the clergy's view of lay reading in the reign of James I seems very much the opposite.[205] Likewise, Hill notes such clerical anxieties, but these originate in priests under Charles I and after the period under discussion here.[206] As such, the problems Narveson highlights are not strongly represented during the Jacobean years.

Narveson cites Richard Rogers's *Seven Treatises* (1603) as evidence of clerical anxieties.[207] In one excerpt, Rogers directs the laity to only read the books of the Bible that contain morally transformative lessons.[208] He states that his focus is on that which "may bee profitably used to helpe the Christian to be fruitfull in a godly life" and so refrains, in Narveson's view, from going too deep in his advice around Bible reading.[209] In essence, Narveson argues that Rogers's anxieties about lay reading are implicit in his insistence that deep Biblical understanding was unnecessary and that advice directed towards practical, behavioral change was sufficient for laypeople.[210] However, Rogers gives a justification for writing these treatises

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[202] Brownlee, *Biblical Readings*, 38-9.
[203] Narveson, "Clerical Anxieties," 188.
[204] Narveson, "Clerical Anxieties," 188.
[205] Narveson, "Clerical Anxieties," 188.
[206] Hill, *English Bible*, 14.
[207] Narveson, "Clerical Anxieties," 171.
[208] Narveson, "Clerical Anxieties," 171.
[209] Rogers, *Seven Treatises* (1603), 290 quoted in Narveson, "Clerical Anxieties," 171.
[210] Narveson, "Clerical Anxieties," 171.

which defies Narveson's interpretation. Concerning believers struggling with their faith, he writes:

> why they doe not open their case & make their griefe known to their teachers; I say, some of them are ashamed, some are afraide to shew their estate to others [. . .] [M]anie of their ministers, to whom they have accesse, [. . .] are not able, and others of ill conscience are not willing to resolve them, [. . .] calling them fooles for medling with the Scriptures [. . .] what light , ease of heart, and consolation manie of Gods deare servants have been deprived off for want of direction [. . .] I wished most firmly that some such thing might come forth, that such as are willing, may be able to direct themselves in their daily carriage: which how greatly it may benefit them that have a mind to please God [. . .].[211]

As shown, the clergy's advice about reading, and faith in general, was socially complex. Unlike academics, the clergy were caretakers of spiritual health. Like Rogers argues above, believers struggling with their faith bore religious angst which they felt endangered their souls. Preserving the spiritual health of those with lesser reading ability necessitated guidance, which was the entire reason for Rogers's work. While guidance may appear constraining, like Narveson suggests, it is also uncharitable to fully disconnect clerical assistance from the expectation that the clergy would guide believers towards Christian truth. Encouraging interpretations wholly liberated from the orthodoxies that the clergy taught and included in their religious works invited ambiguity and vagueness about what was true, which is inevitable with self-study of any complex topic. Thus, while the clergy, like Rogers, may have been constraining lay interpretation in one sense, it is not in a manner akin to domination.

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[211] Richard Rogers, 1550?-1616, [. . . .] *Seven Treatises* [. . . .], London, Printed by B. Alsop for Tho. Man, and are to be sold by Beniamin Fisher at the signe of the Talbot in Pater noster row, 1623, https://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/books/practice-christianitie-epitomie-seuen-treatises/docview/2240902582/se-2?accountid=14656, 592-3.

Likewise, although the clergy acknowledged that a laity more proficient in reading Scripture would improve comprehension at sermons, this awareness does not subordinate lay reading to clerical domination. Dent's Theologus says of reading: "For it is of singular use, both to increase knowledge and judgment, and also to make us more fitte to heare the word preached: for, such men as are altogether ignorant of the historie of the Bible, can heare the Word with small comfort."[212] Similarly, Lewis Bayly argues that reading the Bible in order to better understand the "history and scope of the holy Scripture" was profitable for one's religious life.[213] This advice does not subordinate lay reading to pastors; rather, a deeper knowledge of Scripture would enrich one's attendance at services, just as a deeper knowledge of a particular academic topic might enrich a lecture.

Indeed, the desire for a competent Bible reading laity is common in prominent works of divinity in this period. Thomas Wilson states in the preface to *Theologicall Rules*, which he addressed to the broad demographic of "the Christian reader," that "It is not the words of holy Scriptures onely, but the sense and meaning [. . .] which is carefully to be searched after of all those who desire the knowledge of that Truth which bringeth to Salvation."[214] He continues, "I

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[212] Arthur Dent, *The Plane Mans Pathway to Heauen* [. . . .], London, Printed by H.L. for Geo. Latham, and are to be sold in Pauls Church yard, at the signe of the Brasen Serpent, 1625, https://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/books/plaine-mans-pathway-heauen-wherein-euery-man-may/docview/2240937297/se-2?accountid=14656, 272.

[213] Lewis Bayly, d. 1631, *The Practice of Pietie* [. . . .], London, Printed by Felix Kingston for Iohn Hodgets, 1624, https://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/books/practice-pietie-directing-christian-how-walke/docview/2240892846/se-2?accountid=14656, 247.

[214] Thomas Wilson, 1563-1622, *Theologicall Rules* [. . . .], London, Printed by Edw. Griffin for Fran. Burton, and are to be solde in Pauls Church-yard at the signe of the greene Dragon, 1615, https://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/books/theologicall-rules-guide-vs-vnderstanding/docview/2240924071/se-2?accountid=14656, preface 2.

have heretofore travelled to lay forth the signification of words in Scripture by a short and easie

Dictionarie already by me published."[215] Wilson argues that a shallow grasp of language was a

stumbling block for Scriptural understanding. Thus, he provides linguistic aid which improves

lay access to the text's deeper meaning. Later, he writes, "The holy spirit is both author and

interpreter of Scripture [. . . .] Therefore the high and sovereign authority of interpreting Scripture

doth belong neither to Councels, Fathers, nor Pope: but to the holy spirit the inditer of the

Scriptures, he is the principal interpreter."[216] Wilson plainly argues that the clergy do not possess

interpretive authority alone. Rather, it is in the governance of the Holy Spirit, which comes to

any true believer. Thus, this connection to the essence of what made someone Christian—that

is, receiving the Holy Spirit—makes the desire for a universal readership even more evident.

Like Wilson, John Downame envisions a universal readership. He argues in *A Guide to
Godlynesse* [. . . .] that the Holy Spirit was vital in order for humanity to fulfill its religious

duties. Of the role of the Holy Spirit, he says:

> And if we thus gaine his company, and give him friendly intertainement when he
> dwelleth in us, possessing our vessels in sanctification and honour, that they may
> be fit Temples for this pure Majestie, [. . .] then will not he be idle in us, but will
> direct and guide us in all our ways, and inable and strengthen us unto all Christian
> duties of holinesse and righteosnesse [. . .].[217]

Those who receive the Holy Spirit and act upon its "good motions" are capable of

fulfilling "all Christian duties," which includes Scriptural study.[218] Since all true believers come

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[215] Wilson, *Theologicall Rules*, preface 3.
[216] Wilson, *Theologicall Rules,* 2.
[217] John Downame, d. 1652, *A Guide to Godlynesse* [. . . .], London, By Felix Kingstone and William Stansby for Ed: Weuer & W: Bladen at the north dore of Pauls, 1622, https://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/books/guide-godlynesse-treatise-christian-life-shewing/docview/2248504829/se-2?accountid=14656, 7.
[218] Downame, *Godlynesse,* 7.

to possess the Holy Spirit through the grace of God, he does not demean the place of lay religion. These principles generalizes to all Christians, clergy or otherwise. Thus, the laity's position, insofar as they evidence the transformations Downame describes, is not inherently subordinate to the clergy in Scriptural reading.

Bayly in *The Practice of Pietie* [. . .] also demonstrates the clergy's desire for a laity competent in reading Scripture. On the Bible's moral lessons he writes, "apply these things to thine own heart, and read not these Chapters, as matters of Historical discourse; but as if they were so many Letters or Epistles sent downe from God out of Heaven unto thee: for whatever is written, is written for our learning, Rom. 15.4."[219] Bayly further positions laypeople in a strong interpretive position because he conceptualizes Scripture as a communication between God and believer, whether they are clergy or not. He continues, "read them therefore with that reverence, as if God himself stood by, and spoke these words unto thee, to excite thee to those vertues to disswade thee from those vices."[220] Any truly saved reader is capable of learning from Scripture with the text serving as an unmediated connection to God's voice. Therefore, Bayly's insistence upon this directness with God demonstrates that the lay reader's relationship with God and Scripture was not subordinated to priests.

The clergy clearly sought to eliminate obstacles for lay readers' understanding, further demonstrating the goal of a universal readership. Byfield wrote his *Directions* because "I have long observed that in the most places the godly that are unlearned, are at a great want of a settled course herein."[221] Regarding deeper study for laypeople, he says "Many complaine of their not

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[219] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 245-6.
[220] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 246.
[221] Nicholas Byfield, 1569-1622, *Directions for the Priuate Reading of the Sccriptures* [. . . .], London, Printed by E. Griffin for N. Butter neere St. Austens gate, 1618, https://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-

profiting in reading, and some weake Christians afflict their hearts marvelously with griefe and fear, because they cannot read with more comfort and profit when the fault is not in their affection to the word, so much as in their want of direction for their reading."[222] Byfield considers an ignorant and anxious laity a problem in need of solutions. If the lay readership was intended to read meekly—simply following their preachers without any room for their own understanding—then Byfield and other clergy would not express such concerns. Similarly, Downame defines the readership as universal: "all sorts and conditions of men without exception, are tyed to this dutie [. . .] both the learned and unlearned, the Ministers and common people, the poore and rich, men & women, yong, old, and of middle age."[223] Indeed, lay reading altered the social roles of women. Although the intention of improving the female readership was to enhance their function as educators of children, Clark notes, "it is clear from accounts of exemplary women that literacy often transcends these circumscribed functions, permitting the acquisition of verbal and interpretive skills that move beyond the purely instrumental."[224] Obituaries and descriptions about women from their funerals acknowledged among their praiseworthy traits skilled reading and discussion of Scripture, albeit, these abilities were, again, often discussed in a woman's childrearing context.[225] Downame also rejects Bible reading as exclusive or elitist, writing, "Neither let any man pretend that the Scriptures are of such difficulty, and so hard to be understood, that private men must not presume to read them; seeing

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com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/books/directions-priuate-reading-scriptures-wherein/docview/2240934202/se-2?accountid=14656, a3-4.

[222] Byfield, *Directions*, a6-7.

[223] Downame, *Godlynesse*, 631.

[224] Danielle Clarke, "The Countess of Pembroke and the Practice of Piety," in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, 28-41 (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 33.

[225] Clarke, "Countess of Pembroke," 33.

they have plainly taught us, that the *Law of the Lord inlighteneth the eyes*, *and maketh wise the simple*."[226] Bible reading was considered an equalizer, both accessible and edifying to all believers.

The clergy, beyond simply encouraging the laity to read the Bible, offered strategies to improve their study. Bayly recommends meditation after reading to see "how many excellent things thou canst remember out of it."[227] Arguing further for deeper comprehension, he continues, "One Chapter, thus read with *understanding*, and meditated with *application*, will better feed and comfort thy soule, than five read and run over without marking their scope or sense, or making any use thereof to thine own selfe."[228] Comprehending Scripture was not an obscure process because it was a transformative endeavor founded in daily life. As such, the clergy desired that the laity interpreted one's reading in a deeply personal way. Initially, Bayly's statements chafe with those of other authors who acknowledged that Scripture was, at times, too obscure for the unlearned. Regarding such passages, Downame states that "it is not necessary, nor required of all, that they should understand every place, but so much as is necessarie for their salvation, and according to the measure of their gifts, which they have received, which if they exceed, they come under the censure of curiosity & presumption."[229] Downame, by associating high levels of understanding with spiritual gifts (and, therefore, with factors outside of one's own control), assures readers that misunderstandings are not some inadequacy of their own. Rather, he comforts the struggling reader that salvation is still attainable. He argues that the

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[226] Downame, *Godlynesse*, 633.

[227] Lewis Bayly, d. 1631, *The Practice of Pietie* [. . . .], London, Printed by Felix Kingston for Iohn Hodgets, 1624, https://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/books/practice-pietie-directing-christian-how-walke/docview/2240892846/se-2?accountid=14656, 244.

[228] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 247.

[229] Downame, *Godlynesse*, 633-4.

doctrines for salvation are obvious, while "other things lesse necessary [lie] in absolute obscurity, as Chronologies, Genalogies, quiddities and intricate questions, to exercise the curiositie of such as scorne to be vulgarly wise, and would gaine unto themselves an opinion of their learning and knowledge."[230] Those who comprehend the obscure but inessential passages were not greater Christians or more worthy of salvation. The clergy's advice might assist understanding in those topics, supporting deeper comprehension, but this advice does not overshadow the more fundamental position that the Bible's vital truths were available to the wider lay readership.

Further supporting this notion that the clergy desired deeper study skills for the laity, Bayly recommends categorizing parts of Scripture that demonstrate important concepts while reading, including: calls to good work and godly living; judgment and punishment for sin; blessings for persons with Christian virtues of "Patience, Chastitie, Mercy, Almsdeeds, Zeale in his service, Charitie, Faith, and truth in God"; and favor given to God's faithful servants.[231] He also recommends introspection to find ways that the readings apply to the individual reader and also how obedience or disobedience bear fruit accordingly.[232] He summarizes these concepts, stating "In a word; apply all that thou readest in Holy Scripture, to one of these two heads chiefly; either to confirm thy faith, or to increase thy repentance."[233] This advice has a clear religious dimension, but the method of reading that is proposed is very much active. Rather than passively reading, the laity was encouraged to engage with Scripture and receive a framework for effective study. Likewise, Byfield includes tables and summaries to help the reader prepare themselves

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[230] Downame, *Godlynesse*, 634.
[231] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 244-5.
[232] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 244-6.
[233] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 246.

for deep reading, that they might "marke the drift of each booke and Chapter, and when hee hath read, might with singular case and delight remember, what hee hath read."[234] Study without mindfulness was wasteful, and these prescriptions structured the lay reader's practice to be highly focused and fruitful. Again, the clergy's desire for a deeply skilled lay readership is evident, since they provided specific strategies to study their Bibles.

Another aspect of the clerical desire for a skilled lay readership emerges from the recommendations for a highly disciplined, scheduled reading practice. Byfield includes a calendar in his *Directions* to complete the Bible once per year.[235] Likewise, Bayly recommended yearly Bible completion.[236] Specifically, reading three times per day, morning (before prayers), noon, and night, with Psalms accompanying daily prayers as per the liturgical schedule of one's parish.[237] These guidelines allowed one to finish the Bible "except six Chapters, which thou maist adde to the taske of the last day of the yeare."[238] These schedules appear quite rigorous for laypeople with busy lives and professions, but to those who would claim insufficient free time, Bayly writes "remember that thy life is but short, and that all this businesse is but for the use of this short life: but salvation or damnation is everlasting!"[239] He continues, "defraud thy foggie flesh of so much sleepe; but rob not thy soule of her foode, nor God of his service: and serve the Almightie duely whilest thou hast time and health."[240] Obviously, this intimidation in pursuit of spiritual upkeep was considered justifiable. However, this uncompromising regimen also meant that the clergy sought disciplined study of Scripture even outside the priesthood.

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[234] Byfield, *Directions*, a5-6.
[235] Byfield, *Directions*, a6.
[236] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 244.
[237] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 244, 247.
[238] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 244, 247.
[239] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 248.
[240] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 248.

The discourse present in these clerical works was also consciously evolving. Anticipating the need to expand his work, Byfield writes, "if anything be now wanting by the intimation of my friends, I may make further supply in after Editions, if God will."[241] This sentiment demonstrates that clerical prescriptions about reading and religious life more generally were not necessarily absolute. It acknowledges the possibility that the clergy's advice might be lacking in some way or fail to address an important topic. Consequently, this attitude humbles the authority of their work—it acknowledges that the clergy's efforts can be insufficient or flawed. Likewise, the clergy humbled their authority by directing readers to other writers. Downame recommends Rogers's "Seven Treatises; or if they seem too long for our little leisure, the abridgement of them, the which is so exactly done, that in my judgment it fully comprizeth in it the whole summe and substance of them all, with the addition of many other particular poynts and proofes."[242] He also recommends Dent and other contemporaries. [243] Downame does condition his recommendations, since Scripture is the ultimate authority and accessible to all through the Holy Spirit: "But let such know, that howsoever the Scriptures containe all things necessary to salvation; yea, are sufficient to save the most ignorant, through the inward illumination of the Spirit, where all other helps and meanes are wanting."[244] Still, he considers other religious works useful to reduce confusion and to emphasize obvious Scriptural lessons: "wee should use them for the cleering of those places that are obscure, and for the inforcing and applying of those poynts that are more plaine."[245] Such works have utility, but they were not a substitute for the Bible or the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Bayly does not forbid the Apocrypha (non-

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[241] Byfield, *Directions*, a4.
[242] Downame, *Godlynesse*, 637.
[243] Downame, *Godlynesse*, 637.
[244] Downame, *Godlynesse*, 636.
[245] Downame, *Godlynesse*, 636.

canonical books of the Bible), but warns readers to "beleeve them so farre as they agree with the Canonicall Scripture, which is indited by the Holy Ghost," since the Apocrypha is "but penned by mans spirit."[246] Although the clergy did not condemn other religious works, the insistence upon their fallibility compared to Scripture is evident, which further highlights clerical emphasis that the Bible was the true authority accessible for all Christians, lay or otherwise.

The clergy also hoped lay readers would attain comfort and self-improvement from Bible reading. Byfield urged readers to note "in the reading [what] I finde sensible comfort and ravishing of heart in."[247] Recording these places throughout the Bible might yield "20, 40, 50, &c. of such places" which they could then reference for encouragement during difficult times.[248] Byfield also advises readers to note areas "that containe evident ground of truth, against which there can be in my conscience no eavill, but I could live and die in the assurance that this is the wil of God."[249] Byfield's beliefs clearly shape this advice, as he offers the verse example of 1 John 5, which he views as an assertion of Trinitarian doctrine.[250] Byfield also advises the reader to note places which revealed one's flaws in order to be "guided by the very finger of God to know the faults, I should set myself most against in mortification."[251] As Downame argues, the benefits of reading were "the reforming of our lives and conversations."[252] The clergy were directing readers to personalize their reading, focusing their attention on issues relevant to them that could improve their lives and character. This focus further suggests their ambitions for an

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[246] Bayly, *Practice of Pietie*, 247-8.
[247] Byfield, *Directions*, a9.
[248] Byfield, *Directions*, a9.
[249] Byfield, *Directions*, a12.
[250] Byfield, *Directions*, a13; In particular, Byfield is likely referring to a Trinitarian interpretation of 1 Jn. 5:7 (cited here in the AV), which states, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."
[251] Byfield, *Directions*, a11.
[252] Downame, *Godlynesse,* 631.

engaged lay readership, since their desire that the laity reap benefits from Bible reading, rather than merely submitting to clerical authority, is emphasized.

Scriptural engagement was also to be communal and social. Household heads and servants would read, in addition other worshipful activity, like psalm singing, in the company of family and fellow workers to cement one another's faith.[253] Likewise, the clergy's Bible reading instructions were socially-minded. Byfield suggested that readers compare themselves against their neighbor to discern whether, in themselves or others, "certaine things, strongly objected against the practise of the godly" were perpetrated.[254] Specifically, he says "I would marke, where my course differed from other men, and in reading I would gather evident places, that might warrant my practise."[255] As an example, he advises gathering verses that condemn keeping wicked company, if the reader's introspection identified such a sin.[256] Likewise, Dent's Theologus emphasizes the importance of social reading, saying "publique and private reading of the Scriptures, is very necessarie and profitable."[257] Downame describes religious reading as the second "private means of godly life," but demonstrates the utility of reading with others; indeed, "this publike reading is to be preferred before private."[258] The social emphasis is embedded in many of the clerical suggestions. Byfield recommends "a little paper booke of a sheete or two of paper, as may be most portable" for one to create notes about particular topics which stump the reader.[259] One can then easily consult others "when I come into the company of Preachers or

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[253] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 272; Molekamp, *Women and the Bible*, 51-2; Brownlee, *Biblical Readings*, 20-1.

[254] Byfield, *Directions*, a14.

[255] Byfield, *Directions*, a15.

[256] Byfield, *Directions*, a15.

[257] Dent, *Plaine*, 272.

[258] Downame, *Godlynesse*, 636.

[259] Byfield, *Directions*, a15.

able Christians."[260] Not only were readers receiving study advice, they were being urged to greater levels of fellowship in the shared duty of lay Bible reading.

The Jacobean clergy who discussed lay Bible reading in print exhibited many similarities, both in background and beliefs. While their approach to practical issues, such as motivating people to read the Bible or to become literate, was problematic, they were not, as many scholars suggest, disinterested or intent on dominating lay readers. Rather, the clergy desired a universal lay readership, empowered by the Holy Spirit and engaging with the deep study skills that the clergy passed on. In time, they hoped that the laity would reap spiritual comfort and social harmony as a consequence of their Bible reading. Ultimately, what the clergy under James I sought was quite simple: highly capable lay Bible readers.

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[260] Byfield, *Directions,* a17.

Conclusion

I sought in this study to make sense of the early Stuart clergy's beliefs and actions relating to lay Bible reading in a period before the religious-political obfuscation of the English Civil War. In order to do so, I examined the clergy's words charitably and took the implications of their writing seriously. While other scholars have discerned clerical anxieties or even a desire to subordinate lay Bible reading, what I found instead was something quite the opposite. Lay bible reading was an important issue to the early Stuart clergy. In this period, English vernacular Bibles and Bible printing improved the laity's relationship with Scripture, and to the extent that this improvement was not universal it was the fault of print monopolists, not the clergy. Likewise, the laity was also exposed to a widening amount of religious works by publishers, while the clergy contributed primarily through contesting one another's interpretations in the licensing process—without the clear domination seen later in the seventeenth century. Finally, a serious examination of the clergy's attitudes and prescriptions toward lay reading expressed in prominent Jacobean-period published works reveals not only their genuine desire for a universal, highly-skilled lay Bible readership, but also the particulars of how they hoped to generate that laity.

These elements together might have yielded the all too exciting seventeenth century. If scholars are to understand how England could become embroiled in a Civil War deeply divided on religion, the roots may not have been too secretive after all. The clergy had given Christians an important idea—that anyone could read and understand the word of God. The consequences of such liberty are immense, and, no doubt, future studies will find much of this connection between Bible reading and the impacts upon a religious world.

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    Bifeild Preacher of Gods Word at Isleworth in Middlesex. London, Printed by E. Griffin

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and are to be sold in Pauls Church yard, at the signe of the Brasen Serpent, 1625.

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Duties Wherein it Consisteth, the Helpes Inabling & the Reasons Parswading Vnto it

Ye Impediments Hindering Ye Practise of it, and the Best Meanes to Remoue them

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Benefite of such, as either Want Leisure to Reade, Or Meanes to Prouide Larger Volumes

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