

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

REINVENTING THE COUNTER-REFORMATION IN MARIAN ENGLAND, 1553–1558*

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ABSTRACT. *Over the last thirty years, historians have made several important contributions to our understanding of the short but dramatic restoration of Catholicism in 1550s England. United by a shared rejection of the hitherto dominant interpretation of Mary I's reign as a retrograde and unfortunate interlude in the history of the English Reformation, so-called 'revisionists' have convincingly argued that Mary in fact presided over a remarkably dynamic and innovative revival of Catholicism. Whilst this scholarship has been extremely valuable in tackling the teleological assumption that Marian Catholicism was predestined to fail, this review suggests that the revisionist programme continues to be preoccupied by somewhat ill-conceived and unhelpful questions about how 'successful' Mary's church was in providing for a Catholic future. Such questions demonstrate just how far the historiography of Marian religion continues to operate within a framework still subtly shaped by sixteenth-century, confessionally charged polemic. This review suggests that, rather than debates about 'successes' or 'failures', we need to start working outwards from the valuable findings of revisionists regarding the dynamism of Marian religion, exploring their broader implications for how we understand the long-term development of Catholicism in England, as well as the Marian church's place within European Christendom more broadly.*

The shadow of John Foxe lies heavy over the historiography of the Marian church. Foxe's *Acts and monuments of the Christian church*, first published in 1563, laid the foundations for a long-standing interpretation of Mary's reign as a brutal, spiteful, and inevitably futile attempt to turn back the clock on

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the English Reformation.¹ Foxe's vivid descriptions and woodcut depictions of the Protestant martyrs created by the Marian regime, together with his condemnations of Mary as a weak, incompetent, and misguided ruler, were grist to the mill of subsequent generations of Protestant historians eager to present the Reformation as a foregone conclusion. His account furnished the evidence with which the myth of 'Bloody Mary' was subsequently forged – a myth that continues to capture the popular imagination to this day.² Furthermore, although shorn of its more overt confessional biases, Foxe's narrative also provided the mood music for one of the most influential twentieth-century interpretations of Mary's reign – that put forward by A. G. Dickens in his landmark *The English Reformation* (1964).

Dickens echoed Foxe in portraying Mary and her archbishop of Canterbury, Reginald Pole, as individuals lacking in 'that instinct toward human beings, that sense of the possible in a real world'.³ The Catholic reaction over which they presided was, in Dickens's estimation, marked by an 'exceptional religious and cultural sterility' – the result of their 'fail[ure] to discover the Counter Reformation', as well as their dogged pursuit of an ill-advised and poorly executed programme of persecution.⁴ Another titan of twentieth-century Reformation history, Geoffrey Elton, reinforced many of Dickens's conclusions. He too argued that Mary and Pole were not up to the task of restoring Catholicism to the realm: Mary was 'rather stupid', whilst Pole 'lacked administrative experience and...ability'.⁵ Unlike Dickens, Elton acknowledged that Pole, who had spent most of the reigns of Henry and Edward exiled in Italy, was aware of the Counter-Reformation. However, Pole's major failing was that he opted not to pursue it in England, prioritizing instead a series of 'formal, legalistic and administrative' reforms. As a result, 'he used up the time allowed him without ever getting near to real restoration or real reform'.⁶ Overall, both Dickens and Elton were in agreement that Mary's reign, and particularly her attempt to restore Catholicism, represented not only an unmitigated failure, 'but one likely to have become more monumental with every succeeding year'.⁷

¹ For the clearest example of Foxe's opinion of 'the unprosperous successe of things under Queene Mary', see John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of matters most special and memorables* (London, 1583), pp. 2098–9.

² S. Doran, 'A "sharp rod" of chastisement: Mary I through Protestant eyes during the reign of Elizabeth I', in eadem and T. S. Freeman, eds., *Mary Tudor: old and new perspectives* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 21–36; T. S. Freeman, 'Inventing bloody Mary: perceptions of Mary Tudor from the Restoration to the twentieth century', in Doran and Freeman, eds., *Mary Tudor*, pp. 78–100.

³ A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1964), p. 281.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 280, 268.

⁵ G. R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation: England, 1509–1558* (London, 1977), pp. 376, 384.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 385–6.

⁷ A. G. Dickens, 'The early expansion of Protestantism in England', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 78 (1987), pp. 187–222, at pp. 219–20; Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, p. 389.

This interpretation of Mary's reign still has its adherents. Although willing to concede some successes to Mary and her church, David Loades insisted as recently as 2011 that 'it is not safe to argue that if Mary had lived another twenty years England would have enjoyed a comfortable and safe Catholic future'.⁸ The enduring influence of Foxe's confessionally charged interpretation can also be seen in the curious convention, still followed by many historians of Mary's reign, of depriving the queen of her regnal title – 'Mary Tudor' rather than 'Mary I' – a disservice never done to her younger, Protestant sister.⁹ Nevertheless, over the past thirty years, a growing number of scholars have begun to paint a more positive picture of Marian religion. Instead of working backwards from the assumption that England was pre-ordained to be Protestant and Mary's Catholic restoration predestined to fail, they have emphasized the need to approach Mary's reign on its own terms. In doing so, they have discovered a church that was far more dynamic, strong, and 'successful' than hitherto acknowledged.

To a certain extent, this reassessment of the Marian church has been prompted by the opening up of new sources. The study of 1550s England has always been hampered by a lack of evidence. As Christopher Haigh has observed, 'in Mary's reign no Thomas Cromwell or William Cecil hoarded memoranda and official papers, no John Harrington recorded Court tittle-tattle, and few newsletters reported state ceremonial'.¹⁰ However, historians have recently explored and made more widely available a range of new sources, especially those found in European archives. Thomas Mayer's four-volume calendar of the Marian Archbishop Reginald Pole's correspondence, much of which survives in Italian archives, represents an unparalleled resource for scholars. Meanwhile, Jonathan Edwards, Elizabeth Evenden, and Alexander Samson have demonstrated the benefits of using Spanish sources generated by Philip II's court and advisers, as well as the records of the Spanish Inquisition, in assessing the religious culture of Marian England.¹¹ Scholars of the Marian church have also begun to engage more effectively with types of source hitherto

⁸ D. Loades, *Mary Tudor* (Stroud, 2011), p. 263. See also idem, *The reign of Mary Tudor: politics, government and religion in England, 1553–1558* (2nd edn, London, 1991), esp. pp. 272, 276, 293, 297.

⁹ Even those offering self-consciously revisionist accounts have tended to follow this convention, e.g. E. Duffy, *Fires of faith: England under Mary Tudor* (London, 2009).

¹⁰ C. Haigh, 'Reviewed work: Mary I: England's Catholic queen, by John Edwards', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 43 (2012), pp. 1276–7, at p. 1277.

¹¹ *The correspondence of Reginald Pole*, ed. T. F. Mayer and C. B. Walters (4 vols., Aldershot, 2002–8); J. Edwards, 'Spanish religious influence in Marian England', in E. Duffy and D. Loades, eds., *The church of Mary Tudor* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 201–24; J. Edwards, 'Fray Bartolomé Carranza's blueprint for a reformed Catholic church in England', in T. F. Mayer, ed., *Reforming Reformation* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 141–62; E. Evenden, 'Spanish involvement in the restoration of Catholicism during the reign of Philip and Mary', in E. Evenden and V. Westbrook, eds., *Catholic renewal and Protestant resistance in Marian England* (Farnham, 2015), pp. 45–64; A. Samson, *Mary and Philip: the marriage of Tudor England and Habsburg Spain* (Manchester, 2020).

overlooked by historians of religion, especially legal and administrative records such as court proceedings and accounts.¹²

However, although facilitated by a broadening of available sources, the ongoing reassessment of Marian religion is first and foremost a child of the wider 'revisionist moment' that came to dominate the study of the English Reformation over the 1980s and 1990s. The traditional view of Protestantism, both in England and elsewhere, as a swift, popular, and inherently 'modern' movement predestined to triumph over a corrupt, backward-looking Catholicism that was failing to meet the needs of society was, revisionists argued, a product of ingrained teleological and confessional biases. Reacting against these biases, revisionists such as Christopher Haigh developed a narrative of the English Reformation, or rather of a series of English Reformations, as unwanted and protracted developments that ultimately failed to transform religious mentalities.¹³ Hand-in-hand with this reassessment of Protestantism's successes came a reappraisal of pre-Reformation religion's weaknesses. Scholars such as Eamon Duffy argued persuasively that, far from on its knees, the late medieval church was a vibrant, flexible, and robust institution capable of commanding considerable devotion and respect from the English people, elite and popular alike.¹⁴

In its emphases upon the dynamism of Marian Catholicism, its successes and the possibility that, had Mary lived longer, England might have remained Catholic, the recent historiography of the Marian church has undeniably been energized by the same impulses as this wider revisionist project. However, in some respects, it still lags behind the broader historiography of the English Reformation, which has begun to enter a more recognizably 'post-revisionist' phase. There has been a recognition amongst Reformation scholars that questions about 'winners and losers' and 'successes and failures' that once so exercised historians like Christopher Haigh may have been somewhat ill-conceived, especially since they often proved incapable of breaking free from the confessional frameworks within which contemporaries defined those terms.¹⁵ For this reason, 'post-revisionist' historians have started thinking more carefully about how, if we accept that late medieval Catholicism was not on the brink of collapse and that Protestant ideas exerted only a limited

¹² P. R. Cavill, 'Heresy and forfeiture in Marian England', *Historical Journal*, 56 (2013), pp. 879–907; F. E. Smith, 'Life after exile: former Catholic émigrés and the legacy of flight in Marian England', *English Historical Review*, 133 (2018), pp. 806–34, at pp. 820–2.

¹³ C. Haigh, *English Reformations: religion, politics, and society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993). For an overview of revisionism in English Reformation studies, see P. Marshall, '(Re)defining the English Reformation', *Journal of British Studies*, 48 (2009), pp. 564–86.

¹⁴ E. Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, CT, 1992).

¹⁵ C. Haigh, 'Success and failure in the English Reformation', *Past & Present*, 173 (2001), pp. 28–49. For a critique of the revisionist tendency to focus on 'winners' and 'losers', see Marshall, '(Re)defining the English Reformation', p. 581.

appeal to most English laypeople, the Reformation managed to take root.¹⁶ In contrast, as we shall see, the historiography of Mary's reign on the whole remains in a distinctly revisionist mode, still often preoccupied by questions about 'successes' and 'failures': of whether or not the changes inaugurated by Mary would have stymied the growth of Protestantism had she lived longer, or to what extent Mary's church successfully made provision for the growth of a strong Catholic faith amongst the English people. This review represents a series of critical observations on the ongoing debates over the nature, priorities, and effectiveness of the Marian restoration of Catholicism. It aims not only to provide a 'road map' of some of the most important historiographical developments to date, but also to help push a new agenda for research that goes beyond the revisionist mode within which much of this scholarship continues to operate. It seems appropriate to begin by considering the thorniest and most contentious issue facing any historian of religion in Mary's England – the Marian regime's persecution of Protestants.

I

The Marian regime's decision to burn alive nearly three hundred English men and women in its attempt to enforce religious uniformity is rightly seen as a significant hurdle for any positive reassessment of Mary's church. Indeed, for scholars such as Andrew Pettegree that decision represents the clearest indication of the Marian regime's religious and cultural sterility, not to mention its misguided and hapless leadership.¹⁷ Even judged by the standards of the time, the scale and intensity of the burnings over such a short period was unprecedented and compares unfavourably with contemporary executions for heresy elsewhere in Europe.¹⁸

In light of this 'burning issue', some historians eager to present a more positive picture of the Marian church have sidestepped the persecutions altogether. Reference to the burnings is, for example, strangely absent from Lucy Wooding's bold reassessment of the Marian restoration as a dynamic, humanist-inspired reform movement that eschewed 'ecclesiastical militancy and bitter polemic'.¹⁹ Other revisionists have attempted to tackle the persecutions head-on, arguing that the decision to eradicate Protestantism by force may have been a far more sensible and effective policy than usually acknowledged. Although the first tentative stirrings of this argument can be found as early as

¹⁶ For examples of this impulse, see E. Shagan, *Popular politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003); G. Bernard, *The late medieval English church: vitality and vulnerability before the break with Rome* (New Haven, CT, 2012).

¹⁷ A. Pettegree, 'A. G. Dickens and his critics: a new narrative of the English Reformation', *Historical Research*, 77 (2004), pp. 39–58, at pp. 57–8.

¹⁸ W. Monter, 'Heresy executions in Reformation Europe, 1520–1565', in O. Grell and R. Scribner, eds., *Tolerance and intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 48–64.

¹⁹ L. E. C. Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2000), chs. 4 and 5, esp. pp. 140–51, quote at p. 180.

1994 in the work of Jennifer Loach, it was not until 2009, with the publication of Eamon Duffy's *Fires of faith* that the Marian persecutions received their first comprehensive revisionist analysis.²⁰ Duffy argued that the campaign against heresy in Marian England was well-planned at the top by Archbishop Pole – a man who was very much ‘in charge’ of the whole operation – and competently executed on the ground by a network of churchmen and lay commissioners working with local magistrates.²¹ He suggested that this campaign was justified in print and pulpit, and accompanied by concerted efforts to persuade those accused to recant.²² As a result, gestures of sympathy or support for the victims were ‘geographically limited to a few communities’ and there was ‘no sign of...spreading religious disaffection’.²³ Most controversially of all, Duffy argued that the burnings were beginning to achieve their aim by the end of Mary's reign – a conclusion that rests predominantly on the observation that the number of those burned fell dramatically during the year 1558. This was not because of popular opposition or because the government was losing faith in its strategy, but because ‘there were fewer defiant activists to execute: the protestant hydra was being decapitated’.²⁴

Several of Duffy's arguments have proven controversial and the debate over the effectiveness of Marian attempts to quash Protestant dissent shows no sign of resolution.²⁵ Such a debate will always be somewhat speculative due to the brevity of Mary's reign. However, it also suffers from operating within a framework still largely defined by John Foxe. Would assessments of the Marian persecutions have been so overwhelmingly focused on the burnings had not Foxe's narrative, a text dominated by accounts of Protestant martyrs rather than those that suffered less spectacular punishments, exerted such a profound influence over our understanding of Mary's reign? Paul Cavill has recently highlighted the need to recognize the burnings as ‘a single dimension of the penal response to religious dissent in Marian England’, and pointed to other ways in which the Marian regime tried to enforce religious conformity – namely through its use of forfeiture.²⁶ This approach might fruitfully be extended

²⁰ J. Loach, ‘Mary Tudor and the re-Catholicisation of England’, *History Today*, 44 (1994), pp. 16–22, at p. 21. See also Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 234; J. M. Richards, *Mary Tudor* (Abingdon, 2008), p. 198.

²¹ Duffy, *Fires*, chs. 2, 4–6.

²² *Ibid.*, chs. 3, 7, and 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁵ In support of Duffy, see T. S. Freeman, ‘Burning zeal: Mary Tudor and the Marian persecution’, in Doran and Freeman, eds., *Mary Tudor*, pp. 171–205; C. Law, ‘The 1557 visitation of the University of Cambridge’, in Evenden and Westbrook, eds., *Catholic renewal*, pp. 65–92, at pp. 90–1. For more sceptical appraisals, see D. Loades, ‘Reviewed work: Fires of faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor, by Eamon Duffy’, *Journal of British Studies*, 50 (2011), pp. 473–4, at p. 474; *idem*, *Mary Tudor*, pp. 261–3; D. MacCulloch, ‘Reviewed work: Fires of faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor, by Eamon Duffy’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 41 (2010), pp. 1303–5, at p. 1304.

²⁶ Cavill, ‘Heresy and forfeiture’, *passim*, quote at p. 906.

further to explore the role of local officials such as JPs and mayors in enforcing Marian religious policy as part of their wider responsibility to uphold law and order. Building on Ethan Shagan's valuable work on the Henrician and Edwardian Reformations, Cavill has also argued that the way we gauge the effectiveness of Marian religious enforcement needs to move beyond a somewhat simplistic paradigm of support versus obstruction (another legacy of Foxe) to take more account of those individuals who, for a variety of complex social, economic, and political reasons, 'collaborated' with governmental religious policies they otherwise disagreed with.²⁷ In short, a convincing investigation into the effectiveness of the Marian regime's attempt to enforce Catholic orthodoxy will need to conceive of enforcement, and the responses to it, more broadly.

As well as reframing the debate over the effectiveness of the Marian church's persecutory policies, we also need to take a broader view of their impact. Historians have rightly highlighted the influence of the burnings for the long-term development of English Protestantism, both in their contribution to a popular anti-Catholicism that shaped the evolving identity of the Church of England, and in pushing a considerable number of English Protestants into exile where they encountered the ideas of continental reformers first hand.²⁸ However, more work is needed to explore the impact of the burnings on the subsequent development of English Catholicism. In particular, taking the lead from recent work exploring the history of memory, more attention might be given to how the memory of the Marian anti-heresy campaign may have shaped Catholic attitudes to religious persecution.²⁹ Duffy may be right to suggest that the 1555 sermon of Philip II's confessor, who decried the burning of anyone 'for his conscience' after having observed persecutions in Marian England, was inspired more by pragmatism than principle.³⁰ However, it is certainly worth questioning whether the example of the Marian persecutions began to change opinions about how best to deal with de facto religious pluralism following her death. The English Jesuit Robert Persons, writing up a plan for the hoped for restoration of Catholicism in his homeland in 1596, argued that Mary's approach to 'dealing with hereticks' had simply encouraged Protestants to 'change their persons and parts, without changing their minds or

²⁷ *Ibid.*, passim; Shagan, *Popular politics*, pp. 12–25. Andrew Pettegree's older work on Protestant 'Nicodemites' is also important here: *idem*, *Marian Protestantism: six studies* (Aldershot, 1996), ch. 4.

²⁸ On anti-Catholicism, see P. Lake, 'Anti-popery: the structure of a prejudice', in R. Cust and A. Hughes, eds., *Conflict in early Stuart England* (London, 1989), pp. 72–106. On exile, see C. Garrett, *The Marian exiles: a study in the origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, 1938); K. Gunther, *Reformation unbound: Protestant visions of reform in England, 1525–1590* (Cambridge, 2014), ch. 5.

²⁹ A. Walsham, 'History, memory, and the English Reformation', *Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), pp. 899–938; J. Pollmann, *Memory in early modern Europe, 1500–1800* (Oxford, 2017).

³⁰ Duffy, *Fires*, pp. 113–14.

affection'.³¹ Any future Catholic restoration in England, he suggested, would be wise 'not to press any man's conscience at the beginning for matters of religion, for some few years' in order that those corrupted by heresy might 'more boldly and confidently utter his wounds, and so be cured thereof' through rigorous public disputation.³² It might also be worth exploring whether the example of Marian England influenced broader European approaches to religious pluralism. Jonathan Edwards has recently argued that Philip II's experiences in England over the 1550s may have prepared him to 'refashion' the Spanish Inquisition and encourage it towards an even harder line against heresy in his lands – something that suggests that, in the eyes of at least one contemporary observer, the Marian approach to heresy appeared both sensible and potentially effective.³³ However, we might also ask whether subsequent reflection by other continental observers on the ultimate failure of the Marian burnings to prevent the resurgence of English Protestantism contributed to the decline in European heresy executions after c. 1570?³⁴ Was the memory of Marian brutality invoked by the steadily rising number of individuals, both Protestant and Catholic, advocating a degree of religious toleration over the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? It may be significant, for example, that Sebastian Castellio, an early advocate of religious toleration, had had numerous contacts with English Protestant exiles fleeing Marian persecutions over the early 1550s.³⁵ Exploring such questions would not only help us move past somewhat ill-conceived debates over the relative 'success' or 'failure' of the Marian programme of persecutions, but also highlight the significance of Mary's reign for the study of religious change in early modern Europe more broadly.

II

Revisionist reassessments of the Marian persecutions have helped stimulate the reappraisal of other aspects of Marian religion traditionally seen as backward-looking, lacklustre, or lacking in the dynamism of the incipient Counter-Reformation on the continent. The long-standing argument that the Marian regime 'failed to understand the importance of printing' – an offshoot of the now discredited assumption that the Roman church adopted a reactionary attitude to print – has been overturned thanks to the efforts of historians such as Jennifer Loach, Eamon Duffy, and William Wizeman. These scholars have

³¹ Robert Persons, *The Jesuit's memorial for the intended reformation of England under their first popish prince published from the copy that was presented to the late King James II*, ed. Edward Gee (London, 1690), pp. 20–6.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³³ J. Edwards, 'The Spanish Inquisition refashioned: the experience of Mary I's England and the Valladolid tribunal, 1559', *Hispanic Research Journal*, 12 (2012), pp. 41–54, at p. 48.

³⁴ Monter, 'Heresy executions in Reformation Europe', pp. 61–2.

³⁵ H. R. Guggisberg (trans. B. Gordon), *Sebastian Castellio, 1515–1563: humanist and defender of religious toleration in a confessional age* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 173–4.

underlined the extent to which Marian authors collectively defined points of Catholic orthodoxy, especially the importance of papal obedience, with remarkable consistency, demonstrating a militancy and ‘lack of doctrinal compromise’ that would also mark the ‘spirit of the Catholic Counter-Reformation’ post-Trent. They have also highlighted the role of print as a conduit through which new trends in Catholic theology, spirituality, and piety entered England from abroad.³⁶ Alongside print, revisionists have tackled the accusation that the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Marian England, Archbishop Pole in particular, was averse to preaching and regarded ‘energetic evangelism as unnecessary and inappropriate’.³⁷ Duffy has underlined Pole’s commitment to preaching, pointing to the evidence of the archbishop’s own sermons, as well as his Westminster legate synod of 1555–6, which placed the revival of preaching at the centre of its reforming agenda.³⁸ Indeed, the synod as a whole provides the clearest evidence of the Marian church’s progressive approach to restoration, especially in its decrees on episcopal residence and clerical education.³⁹ In a direct prefiguration of later Tridentine legislation, the synod’s eleventh decree ordered the creation of seminaries in English cathedrals to train future generations of clerics.⁴⁰ Although there was insufficient time for many of these clerical reforms to be enacted, the work of Claire Cross, Andrew Hegarty, and Ceri Law has underlined the Marian regime’s success in transforming the universities into institutions that could produce highly educated Catholic clerics and theologians.⁴¹ Finally, at the

³⁶ W. Wizeman, *The theology and spirituality of Mary Tudor’s church* (Aldershot, 2006), passim, esp. pp. 127–36, 198–218; idem, ‘The Marian Counter-Reformation in print’, in Evenden and Westbrook, eds., *Catholic renewal*, pp. 143–64, quote at p. 155; J. Loach, ‘The Marian establishment and the printing press’, *English Historical Review*, 101 (1986), pp. 135–48; Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, pp. 537–43; idem, *Fires*, ch. 3, pp. 190–4. For the older view, see J. W. Martin, ‘The Marian regime’s failure to understand the importance of printing’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 44 (1981), pp. 231–47. For a discussion of wider debates regarding Catholicism and print, see A. Walsham, ‘“Domme preachers”? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the culture of print’, *Past & Present*, 168 (2000), pp. 72–123.

³⁷ Loades, *Reign of Mary Tudor*, p. 293; T. McCoog, ‘Ignatius Loyola and Reginald Pole: a reconsideration’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 47 (1996), pp. 257–73, at p. 270; Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 224. For more positive assessments, see T. F. Mayer, ‘A test of wills: Cardinal Pole, Ignatius Loyola, and the Jesuits in England’, in T. McCoog, ed., *The reckoned expense: Edmund Campion and the early English Jesuits* (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 21–39, at p. 22 n. 5; T. F. Mayer, *Reginald Pole: prince and prophet* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 250; E. Duffy, *Reformation divided: Catholics, Protestants and the conversion of England* (London, 2017), ch. 4.

³⁸ Pole’s surviving sermons are described in T. F. Mayer, ‘A reluctant author: Cardinal Pole and his manuscripts’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 89 (1999), pp. 1–115, at pp. 68–74. Particularly needed is an edition of three English homilies written by Pole, now in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 5968, fos. 401r–482v. On the legate synod, see J. P. Marmion, ‘The London synod of Cardinal Pole’ (MA thesis, Keele University, 1974).

³⁹ *The Anglican canons, 1529–1947*, ed. G. Bray (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 94–107.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 126–9.

⁴¹ C. Cross, ‘The English universities, 1553–1558’, in Duffy and Loades, eds., *Church of Mary Tudor*, pp. 57–76; A. Hegarty, ‘Carranza and the English universities’, in J. Edwards and R. Truman, eds., *Reforming Catholicism in the England of Mary Tudor: the achievement of Friar*

parish level, revisionists have tackled Elton's suggestion that the Marian church's stress on lay participation in a fully restored Catholic liturgy was yet another signal of its failure to harness the 'spiritual zeal and regeneration' of the Counter-Reformation.⁴² They have rightly noted that enforcing strict liturgical observance was in fact a key facet of Catholic reform on the continent, and underlined the extent to which the Marian regime's efforts to rekindle devotion to the body of Christ through its intense sacramentalism prefigured 'one of the most distinctive marks of Counter-Reformation piety'.⁴³

Cumulatively, what this scholarship has demonstrated is that the Marian church's priorities for reconstruction cannot be dismissed as a reactionary attempt to turn back the clock. Both in terms of the strategies it employed, from its use of print and pulpit to its attempts to reform the clergy, as well as in its aims to engender a deep, Christocentric piety amongst the English people, the Marian church pursued a strategy of creative reconstruction that was dynamic, progressive, and in many ways paralleled and even prefigured aspects of the incipient Counter-Reformation as it was being defined by the Council of Trent.

Convincing as all this is, it does raise a number of issues that require further exploration. First, there is a danger of confusing good intentions with solid achievements. Whilst revisionists have convincingly shown that the Marian church's *priorities* for the restoration of Catholicism were far more creative and forward-thinking than hitherto believed, they have been far less effective in demonstrating the impact its reforms made on the religious identities of the English population. Duffy's suggestion that the Marian reforms helped effect a 'dramatic stiffening of spine and principle among the higher clergy' is intriguing in this respect and demands further exploration, especially at the parochial level.⁴⁴ However, we lack any detailed study of the ways in which the Marian reforms may have reshaped the religious identity and piety of the laity.⁴⁵ Of course, highlighting the need to explore lay engagement with the Marian church's religious reforms is easier said than done, especially given the lack of surviving evidence and the brevity of Mary's reign. However,

Bartolomé Carranza (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 153–72; C. Law, *Contested Reformations in the University of Cambridge, 1535–1584* (London, 2018), ch. 3, esp. p. 74.

⁴² Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, pp. 385–6.

⁴³ S. Ditchfield, 'Innovation and its limits: the case of Italy (ca. 1512–ca. 1572)', in P. Benedict, S. S. Menchi, and A. Tallon, eds., *La réforme en France et en Italie* (Rome, 2007), pp. 145–60, at pp. 158–60; Duffy, *Fires*, pp. 34–5, 192–3; Edwards, 'Corpus Christi at Kingston upon Thames: Bartolomé Carranza and the eucharist in Marian England', in Edwards and Truman, eds., *Reforming Catholicism*, pp. 139–52.

⁴⁴ Duffy, *Fires*, p. 197 and below.

⁴⁵ Attempts to gauge the impact of the Marian reforms amongst the laity have largely been limited to consideration of the reconstruction of parochial church fabric: R. Hutton, 'The local impact of the Tudor Reformations', in C. Haigh, ed., *English Reformation revised* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 114–38; Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, pp. 555–64; R. Whiting, *The reformation of the English parish church* (Cambridge, 2010), esp. pp. 19, 26, 58, 103.

a helpful starting point might be to adopt a more nuanced approach that pays greater attention to the interaction between religion and politics.⁴⁶ Any assessment of how far the laity absorbed the more ardent papalism promoted by Marian religious polemic, for example, certainly needs to take account of politics: as Alexander Samson has recently stressed, the notion of ‘England as an empire’ that had been used to defend Henry VIII’s break with the papacy continued to be promoted by members of the political elite in Marian England, even those who enthusiastically supported the restoration of Catholicism.⁴⁷ In gauging the impact of the Marian reforms on the laity we might also adopt a broader chronological framework, a point to which we will return in the final section below.

A second issue raised by the recent reappraisal of the Marian Counter-Reformation is the discord between the apparent creativity and vibrancy of its approach to religious reform, and the repressive brutality of its programme of persecution (regardless of how ‘effective’ such a programme may have been). Perhaps this dissonance is an optical illusion – the product of anachronistically viewing the persecutions through modern, liberal eyes. However, it is also possible that such dissonance is the product of tensions within the Marian church itself. There is certainly evidence of differences in opinion within the church over the best way to proceed with the persecutions. Archbishop Pole, for example, over-ruled Bishop Bonner of London in order to save condemned Protestants from the flames on at least one occasion, whilst it was alleged by a contemporary that the Spanish Dominican Bartolomeo Carranza, who was heavily involved in the Marian restoration, ‘saw [Pole] as being softer than he would have wished in the punishment of [heretics]’.⁴⁸ Exploring the nature and extent of these disagreements and how they played out over Mary’s reign may reveal a policy that was less a premeditated strategy and more the product of a protracted and contentious negotiation. Perhaps, therefore, the Marian church was less unanimous and univocal in its approach to restoration and reform than has recently been assumed? It is to this idea that we now turn.

III

One of the most intriguing questions raised by the revisionist scholarship outlined above relates to the origins of and inspiration behind the Marian

⁴⁶ Something that has long been acknowledged by historians of other Tudor Reformations but is strangely absent from most recent studies of Marian religion. Indeed, other than the study of Mary’s queenship (on which see A. Whitelock and A. Hunt, eds., *Tudor queenship: the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth* (Basingstoke, 2013)), Marian politics is arguable in even greater need of new research than Marian religion.

⁴⁷ Samson, *Mary and Philip*, pp. 54–5, 94–5.

⁴⁸ John Foxe, *The acts and monuments of John Foxe with a life of the martyrologist and vindication of the work*, ed. S. R. Cattle (8 vols., London, 1837–41), viii, pp. 307–8; J. I. T. Idi’goras, *El proceso romano del Arzobispo Carranza (1567–1576)* (Rome, 1988), pp. 95, 100, 102, 105, 110. See also D. Fenlon, ‘Pole, Carranza and the pulpit’, in Edwards and Truman, eds., *Reforming Catholicism*, pp. 81–97, esp. pp. 87–9.

church's religious reforms, especially those that seem to parallel or even prefigure the reforming initiatives of the ongoing Council of Trent. Some scholars, reacting against the persistent tendency to stress the exceptionalism of the Reformation in England, have underlined the influence of individuals who had been privy to discussions regarding Catholic reform in the upper echelons of the Roman church on the continent.⁴⁹ Jonathan Edwards and several other historians have stressed the importance of Bartolomeo Carranza in this respect.⁵⁰ Carranza, a Spanish Dominican, had served as a consultant to the Valladolid tribunal of the Spanish Inquisition in the 1530s and had taken an active role in the first sessions of the Council of Trent in the late 1540s and early 1550s.⁵¹ Having accompanied Philip II into England, Carranza brought these experiences to bear on the Marian restoration, particularly through his apparent role as an adviser to Reginald Pole during the legatine synod.⁵² Carranza's ideas regarding the residence of clergy, which matured during his time in Italy when he had published a number of works on the subject and had participated in fierce debates at the Tridentine council, undoubtedly shaped the London synod's decrees.⁵³ Carranza was also responsible for producing the catechism commissioned by the synod – a work that would later form the basis for the official catechism commissioned by the Council of Trent.⁵⁴ Several historians have also highlighted the importance of other Spaniards who formed part of Philip II's entourage for the Marian Catholic restoration. In particular, the influence of two more Spanish Dominicans – Pedro de Soto, a renowned theologian and earlier participant in the Council of Trent, and Juan de Villagarcía, a protégé of Carranza – has been underlined by historians studying the Marian history of the University of Oxford.⁵⁵

The Spanish role as a conduit of Tridentine spirituality into Marian England can be overstated. The fact that none of the Spaniards were able to speak English, coupled with the pervasive anti-Spanish sentiment commented upon by numerous foreign visitors to England throughout the 1550s, meant that

⁴⁹ On exceptionalism in studies of the English Reformation, see D. MacCulloch, 'Putting the English Reformation on the map: the Prothero lecture', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 15 (2005), pp. 75–95. This has been particularly pronounced in the historiography of Mary's reign, even amongst some revisionists. See, for example, Wooding, *Rethinking*, p. 11.

⁵⁰ Carranza's role has been recognized for much longer by Spanish historians thanks to the pioneering work of Jose Ignacio Tellechea: *Fray Bartolomé Carranza y el Cardenal Pole: un navarro en la restauración Católica de Inglaterra, 1554–1558* (Pamplona, 1977). For English historiography on Carranza and his role in England, see Edwards and Truman, eds., *Reforming Catholicism*, *passim*.

⁵¹ J. Edwards, 'Introduction: Carranza in England', in *idem* and Truman, eds., *Reforming Catholicism*, pp. 1–20, at pp. 6–10.

⁵² J. Edwards, *Mary I: England's Catholic queen* (New Haven, CT, 2011), p. 240.

⁵³ J. Edwards, *Archbishop Pole* (Farnham, 2014), p. 174; P. Preston, 'Carranza and Catharinus in the controversy over the bishops' obligation of residence, 1546–1552', in Edwards and Truman, eds., *Reforming Catholicism*, pp. 99–114.

⁵⁴ Edwards, 'Fray Bartolomé Carranza's blueprint', pp. 141–59.

⁵⁵ Hegarty, 'Carranza and the English universities', pp. 157–9.

they were only ever able to have an advisory role.⁵⁶ They certainly would not have had much influence beyond the level of the ecclesiastical elite, and even in that sphere it is worth noting that the Marian church may have been wary of giving too much heed to Spaniards following the election of the vehemently anti-Habsburg Gian Pietro Carafa to the papacy in 1555.

However, the other figure often cited as a key link between Marian England and the incipient Counter-Reformation in Italy was not limited in the same way – Mary’s archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Reginald Pole. Eamon Duffy described Pole in 2009 as the ‘invisible man of the Marian restoration’.⁵⁷ This judgement is a little unfair. As long ago as 1972, Dermot Fenlon produced a meticulously researched monograph tracing Pole’s Italian exile from the early 1520s to the accession of Mary I. Although Fenlon’s work was predominantly focused on Pole’s time in Italy, he nonetheless highlighted the cardinal’s role in summoning a national synod following his Marian repatriation, ‘which dealt with ecclesiastical reform in a manner sufficiently original as to influence the later development of the Counter Reformation’.⁵⁸ Similarly, a series of works by Thomas Mayer over the 1990s and early 2000s greatly enriched our understanding of Pole’s Italian career, as well as the relative success of his final legation in Marian England, particularly in establishing the administrative and legal framework necessary for a successful Catholic restoration.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Duffy’s 2009 *Fires of faith* went further than both these historians in presenting Pole as the ‘single most influential figure in the Marian restoration’.⁶⁰ As Duffy argued, Pole, who had presided over the opening of the Council of Trent, had ‘lived for twenty years at the storm centre of the struggle for the soul of the counter-reformation’. ‘To suggest that he had somehow failed to notice or chose to ignore it’, Duffy suggests, ‘is preposterous. It was the vision of the church matured in that Italian arena that he brought to bear on the reform and renewal of Catholicism in Marian England.’⁶¹ Duffy’s conclusions have since been reinforced by Jonathan Edwards, whose recent monograph on Pole delineates the cardinal’s place within the context of continental Catholic reform over the 1530s and 1540s,

⁵⁶ E. Duffy and D. Loades, ‘Editors’ introduction’, in *idem*, eds., *Church of Mary Tudor*, pp. xi–xxvi, at p. xxi. The reports of foreign ambassadors in London are littered with descriptions of the English people’s ‘most inveterate detestation of foreigners’, especially Spaniards, e.g. *Calendar of letters, despatches & state papers relating to the negotiations between England and Spain*, ed. G. A. Bergenroth et al. (13 vols., London, 1862–1954), xiii, nos. 60, 216.

⁵⁷ Duffy, *Fires*, p. 29.

⁵⁸ D. Fenlon, *Heresy and obedience in Tridentine Italy: Cardinal Pole and the Counter-Reformation* (London, 1972), p. 251.

⁵⁹ Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, *passim*; *idem*, ‘Cardinal Pole’s concept of reformation: the *Reformatio Angliae* and Bartolomé Carranza’, in Edwards and Truman, eds., *Reforming Catholicism*, pp. 65–80; *idem*, ‘The success of Cardinal Pole’s final legation’, in Duffy and Loades, eds., *Church of Mary Tudor*, pp. 149–75.

⁶⁰ Duffy, *Fires*, p. 33.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

and explains how this context subsequently shaped his approach to the Marian restoration.⁶²

The overwhelming recent focus on Pole and Carranza may have disguised the extent to which other individuals served as conduits between Marian England and the first stirrings of Tridentine reform on the continent. Important though they undoubtedly were, if this pair did hope to effect an ambitious, proto-Tridentine reform programme in Marian England, they would have had to rely upon other individuals to help implement it, especially the episcopate. Pole himself had voiced his belief that bishops should be at the forefront of Catholic reform at a speech given during the opening of the Council of Trent in January 1546, and the ideal of a pastoral, preaching episcopate lay at the heart of his legatine decrees, discussed above.⁶³ We still lack the detailed study into the Marian episcopate needed in order to determine how far Pole and Carranza's agenda was supported by Mary's bishops, and whether they may have spearheaded reforms of their own.⁶⁴ However, it is worth noting that several Marian bishops had themselves had first-hand experience of Tridentine Catholicism abroad. Richard Pate, Marian bishop of Worcester, had attended the first sessions of Trent during his exile in Italy.⁶⁵ Following his repatriation, he seems to have been eager to apply these experiences to reforming the English church. A letter written by the bishop to Pole in 1558 recalled how, when 'we were yet in Rome as banished men', they had often discussed the ways in which they might 'fraime and reforme' religion in England in such a manner that it would 'right justly be cownted an exempler to the rest'. Pate reminded Pole that now, having obtained a position whereby 'you now rule, and govern', he was in a position to 'perfo[rme] what I dar[e]...boldly say, you vowed' – a comment that can be read as a gentle rebuke of the cardinal for not having done enough to forward the cause of reform in Marian England.⁶⁶ A similar exposure to Tridentine Catholic reform can be found amongst several Irish prelates. William Walsh and Thomas Leverous, both of whom were appointed under Mary to key religious battlegrounds in the Pale around Dublin, had formed part of Reginald Pole's exilic household in Italy during the 1530s and 1540s. As Henry Jefferies has recently demonstrated, following their return home these émigrés helped lead a remarkably successful

⁶² Edwards, *Archbishop Pole*, passim, esp. chs. 6, 7.

⁶³ V. McNabb, 'Cardinal Pole's eirenikon', *Dublin Review*, 198 (1936), pp. 149–60, esp. p. 159.

⁶⁴ The only overview of the Marian episcopate as a whole is that of David Loades, 'The Marian episcopate', in idem and Duffy, eds., *Church of Mary Tudor*, pp. 1–29. Duffy provides a brief analysis in *Fires*, pp. 23–5. See also Lena Oetzel, 'When criticism becomes resistance: the Marian episcopacy in 1558/59', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 107 (2016), pp. 107–36.

⁶⁵ On Pate's career, see Fenlon, *Heresy and obedience*, pp. 149–60; T. A. Sowerby, 'Richard Pate, the royal supremacy, and Reformation diplomacy', *Historical Journal*, 54 (2011), pp. 265–85.

⁶⁶ Richard Pate to Reginald Pole, 20 May 1558, London, The National Archives, SP 15/8, fo. 191r. This letter is badly damaged, but the overall sense can still be understood.

and dynamic Catholic restoration in Marian Ireland.⁶⁷ We might also consider agents of reform in Marian England aside from the episcopate. Revisionist scholarship has tended to present the Marian Counter-Reformation as a largely clerical phenomenon. However, the thrust of much recent work on the wider European Counter-Reformation has been to emphasize the laity's agency in appropriating and shaping religious reform imposed from above.⁶⁸ This needs more research in the English context. However, Ceri Law's recent work on the University of Cambridge, which has highlighted the importance of individuals within the university itself, rather than Pole or his allies, for implementing and facilitating the 'Marian drive for Catholic orthodoxy' there, suggests that the Catholic revival in England was not solely driven by the ecclesiastical elite.⁶⁹

Broadening the field of vision beyond Pole and Carranza may also reveal the extent to which Mary's church drew inspiration from manifestations of Catholic reform beyond those being discussed in and around the Tridentine council. It is notable that a number of prominent individuals within the Marian church were former Henrician or Edwardian exiles who had been heavily involved with Catholic reform movements abroad that did not fit the Tridentine mould. Richard Smyth, chaplain extraordinary to Mary and a prominent publisher of religious texts during her reign, had participated in a series of reforming provincial councils in Scotland during his Edwardian exile from England. Led by Archbishop James Hamilton, these councils had pursued a programme of 'inclusive, generous reform both of discipline and of doctrine' that eschewed the more stringent, doctrinaire approach ultimately championed by Trent.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Richard Pate, the Marian bishop of Worcester already mentioned above for his presence at the early sessions of the Council of Trent, had become associated with the followers of a Spanish humanist and mystic, Juan de Valdes. These followers, who referred to themselves as the *spirituali*, endorsed a markedly irenic and mystically inflected programme of reform that sought to accommodate the key evangelical doctrine of justification by faith alone within a reformed Catholic ecclesiology.⁷¹ Reginald Pole himself

⁶⁷ H. A. Jefferies, 'The Marian restoration in Ireland', *British Catholic History*, 33 (2016), pp. 12–31, esp. p. 26.

⁶⁸ A theme apparent in many of the contributions to A. Bamji, G. H. Janssen, and M. Laven, eds., *The Ashgate research companion to the Counter-Reformation* (Farnham, 2013).

⁶⁹ Law, *Contested Reformations*, p. 98.

⁷⁰ On the Scottish Reformation, see A. Ryrie, 'Reform without frontiers in the last years of Catholic Scotland', *English Historical Review*, 119 (2004), pp. 27–56, quote at p. 52. For Smyth's involvement, see C. Kellar, *Scotland, England and the Reformation, 1534–1561* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 42–4.

⁷¹ How to interpret the various manifestations of religious reform in sixteenth-century Italy continues to divide scholars. For an overview of the debates, see M. Firpo, 'The Italian Reformation', in R. P. Hsia, ed., *A companion to the Reformation world* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 169–84. For an exposition of Valdes's beliefs, see idem, *Juan de Valdes and the Italian Reformation*, trans. R. Bates (Burlington, VT, 2015), pp. 1–58. For Pate's associations with

had also been heavily involved with this group during his Italian exile, hosting a number of members of the *spirituali* in his Viterbo household and encouraging the dissemination of their tracts.⁷² Some historians eager to emphasize Pole's role as a conduit of Tridentine ideas into England have tended to gloss over his former involvement with the *spirituali*. William Wizeman's recent account of Mary I's religious policy, for example, presents Pole as a dyed-in-the-wool Tridentine Catholic *avant la lettre*—a 'doyen of Catholic renewal' who 'oversaw the first series of sessions of the General Council of Trent'—without mentioning that Pole had violently disagreed with the direction the council had begun to take in 1547.⁷³ Eamon Duffy is far more alert to the legacy of Pole's involvement with strands of evangelical Catholic reform in Italy. However, even he tends to downplay Pole, leader of the *spirituali*, in favour of Pole, harbinger of the Tridentine Counter-Reformation.⁷⁴ In particular, he never confronts the curious contradiction between Pole's Italian years as the leader of an irenic attempt to reconcile Catholicism and moderate Protestantism by advocating a degree of doctrinal fluidity, and his Marian role as (in Duffy's opinion) the driving force behind a programme of persecution and the enforcement of rigid doctrinal orthodoxy. Such a contradiction may well be inherent in Pole's actions themselves, but it nonetheless demands closer scrutiny for what it might reveal about the formation of Marian religious policy. Alongside Pole, Thomas Goldwell, Marian bishop of St Asaph, and George Lily, a Marian prebend of St Paul's and Canterbury, had also spent much of Henry's and Edward's reigns in Italy and had attended sermons inspired by Valdes at Pole's Italian household in Viterbo.⁷⁵

More work needs to be done to unpick the implications of all these individuals' involvements with such diverse manifestations of Catholic reform abroad for the development of Marian Catholicism.⁷⁶ However, the very

members of the *spirituali*, see: Alvise Priuli to Lodovico Beccadelli, 15 July 1541, Oxford, Bodleian Archive, MS Ital C 25, fos. 175r–178v, at fo. 178r; Priuli to Beccadelli, 7 Dec. 1542, Oxford, Bodleian Archive, MS Ital C 25, fos. 263r–265v, at fo. 264r; Vittoria Colonna to Pole, 25 Dec. 1545, *Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, 1, no. 459. Pate defended the *spirituali* interpretation of justification at the Tridentine council: Fenlon, *Heresy and obedience*, p. 150.

⁷² Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, pp. 103–43; A. Overell, *Nicodemites: faith and concealment between Italy and Tudor England* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 33–75; Edwards, *Archbishop Pole*, pp. 85–108. On the dissemination of *spirituali* tracts, see M. Firpo, 'Il Beneficio di Cristo e il Concilio di Trento', in C. Mozzerelli and D. Zardin, eds., *I tempi del concilio: religione, cultura e società nell'Europa Tridentina* (Rome, 1997), pp. 225–52.

⁷³ W. Wizeman, 'The religious policy of Mary I', in Doran and Freeman, eds., *Mary Tudor*, pp. 153–70, at p. 156.

⁷⁴ Duffy suggests that by 1553, Pole had 'long since reconciled himself to the council's teaching on justification': *Fires*, p. 34. Whilst this may be the case, there was considerably more to the beliefs of the *spirituali* than justification by faith alone.

⁷⁵ *Il processo inquisitoriale del Cardinal Giovanni Morone*, ed. M. Firpo and D. Marcatto (6 vols. in 7 parts, Rome, 1981–95), vi, pp. 271–2 n. 9; *I processi inquisitoriali di Pietro Carnesecci (1557–1567)*, ed. M. Firpo and D. Marcatto (2 vols., Vatican City, 1998), 1, pp. 64, 67.

⁷⁶ Although see now Overell, *Nicodemites*, ch. 3.

existence of repatriated Henrician and Edwardian exiles within the Marian church suggests an institution that may have been something of a ‘melting pot’, incorporating a broader, more eclectic, and more international array of reforming impulses than would later be permitted within the bounds of Tridentine Catholicism. It may be the case, therefore, that recent work emphasizing the influence of the ongoing Council of Trent in Marian England has been guilty of ‘failing to forget the future’ (to appropriate Simon Ditchfield’s phrase): of assuming that, because of the immense influence it would later go on to assert over the Counter-Reformation as a whole, Trent must also have been the guiding inspiration behind the Marian reforms.⁷⁷ Such an observation might also be applied to the historiography of the Counter-Reformation more broadly, which still often tends to downplay the significance of the many dead ends and paths not taken on the road to Counter-Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century – especially those movements that favoured a more eirenic approach to Protestantism.⁷⁸ Just because they were not ultimately endorsed by the Tridentine council does not mean that they were inherently untenable or that they failed to have any influence over the development of the Counter-Reformation.⁷⁹

Alongside these influences from abroad, it may also be worth revisiting the Marian church’s debts to the past. Although revisionism tended to suppress exploration of transformations taking place within the late medieval church in order to emphasize the strength and cohesion of religion on the eve of the Reformation, a number of more recent ‘post-revisionist’ studies have turned their attention to such internal developments. In particular, Robert Lutton and Christine Peters have underlined the growth of an intensely Christocentric spirituality amongst some sections of the late medieval laity. Peters sees this development as a potential ‘bridge to Reformation’, preparing the ground for the early acceptance of evangelical ideas by some individuals during the 1520s and 1530s.⁸⁰ However, these same developments might also

⁷⁷ S. Ditchfield, ‘Tridentine Catholicism’, in Bamji, Janssen, and Laven, eds., *Ashgate research companion*, pp. 15–32, at p. 17.

⁷⁸ Massimo Firpo’s work suggests that this historiographical tendency may itself be the product of the Roman Inquisition’s rise to power in the mid-sixteenth century: M. Firpo, *Valdesiani e spirituali: studi sul cinquecento religioso Italiano* (Rome, 2013), pp. 259–68. For an analysis of ‘paths not taken’ in a British context, see A. Ryrie, ‘Paths not taken in the British Reformations’, *Historical Journal*, 52 (2009), pp. 1–22.

⁷⁹ An idea that resonates with the conclusions and suggestions of S. S. Menchi, ‘The inquisitor as mediator’, in R. K. Delph, M. M. Fontaine, and J. J. Martin, eds., *Heresy, culture, and religion in early modern Italy: contexts and contestations* (Kirksville, MO, 2006), pp. 173–92; C. Russell, ‘Religious reforming currents in sixteenth-century Italy: the spirituali and the Tridentine debates over church reform’, *Journal of Religious History*, 38 (2014), pp. 457–75.

⁸⁰ C. Peters, *Patterns of piety: women, gender and religion in late medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2003), *passim*, quote at p. 4; S. Wabuda, *Preaching during the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2002); R. Lutton, *Lollardy and orthodox religion in pre-Reformation England: reconstructing piety* (London, 2006); *idem* and E. Salter, eds., *Pieties in transition: religious practices and experiences, c. 1400–1640* (Aldershot, 2007).

be seen as bridges between late medieval and Counter-Reformation piety. A reorientation of parochial devotion away from the more exuberant cult of saints and towards a more evangelical emphasis on Christ was characteristic of Counter-Reformation spirituality on the continent.⁸¹ The failure of the cult of saints to re-establish itself effectively in Marian England, as well as the more Christocentric emphases discernible in the Marian church's intense sacramentalism, might therefore be seen as *both* a foreshadowing of later Counter-Reformation piety *and* a continuation of developments already pregnant in late medieval religion. Such a recognition effectively turns older arguments that the Marian church 'saw the future in terms of the past' on their head.⁸²

Finally, as well as developments within late medieval religion, we also need to pay greater attention to the Marian church's relationship with English Catholicism as it had evolved during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. Analysing the printed vernacular works published under Mary, Lucy Wooding has suggested that Marian Catholicism represented a continuation of a strain of Catholic thought forged during Henry's reign – a Catholicism that had absorbed the energetic, Erasmian-inspired reformism of the early Henrician Reformation, and managed to accept the royal supremacy.⁸³ Several historians have rightly pointed to certain problems with this interpretation, not least its implication that, despite the presence of individuals such as Carranza and Pole, Mary's church was largely disconnected from the wider Counter-Reformation.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Wooding's insistence that the religious priorities of many Marian churchmen may have been shaped by their experience of conformity during the reigns of Henry and Edward demands greater attention. In particular, it seems likely that these conformists may have developed different understandings of their faith to those, like the Henrician émigrés discussed above, who had resisted the English Reformation from the outset.⁸⁵ A figure such as Stephen Gardiner, for example, who had composed a sophisticated defence of the royal supremacy in 1535 (his *De vera obedientia*) probably had a very different appreciation of the papacy's importance than Reginald Pole, who had written several tracts underlining the inviolable centrality of Roman

⁸¹ Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, p. 564.

⁸² Loades, *Reign of Mary Tudor*, p. 288.

⁸³ Wooding, *Rethinking*, passim, esp. chs. 4 and 5. David Loades also stressed Marian Catholicism's debts to Erasmian Humanism: idem, 'The spirituality of the restored Catholic church', in McCoog, ed., *The reckoned expense*, pp. 3–19, esp. pp. 14–15; idem, 'The English church during the reign of Mary', in Edwards and Truman, eds., *Reforming Catholicism*, pp. 33–49, at p. 34.

⁸⁴ See for example Wizeman, *Theology and spirituality*, pp. 7–8; Duffy, *Fires*, pp. 189–90.

⁸⁵ Ethan Shagan has explored the conflict between conformist and non-conformist Catholics during the reigns of Henry and Edward, but the implications for Mary's reign need to be considered: idem, 'Confronting compromise: the schism and its legacy in mid-Tudor England', in idem, ed., *Catholics and the 'Protestant nation': religious politics and identity in early modern England* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 49–68.

obedience for the Catholic faith over the 1530s and 1540s.⁸⁶ Even allowing for the likely possibility that former Henrician conformists may have reconsidered their beliefs during the religious radicalism of Edwardian England, more consideration of the potential divisions and disagreements between leading members of the Marian church on account of their very different experiences over the previous twenty years is needed. In contrast to the work of historians such as William Wizeman that has emphasized the ‘predominantly uniform theology and spirituality’ of Marian authors and ecclesiastics, further research in this area may reveal a church rather less at ease with itself, in which tensions between individuals with different ideas about the direction reform should take were simmering just below the surface.⁸⁷ Far from a sign of sterility or weakness, such tensions and disagreements would underline the extent to which the Marian church was part of the lively, passionate, and dynamic debates and discussions taking place throughout Catholic Christendom regarding the future of the faith.⁸⁸

Overall, by acknowledging the Marian church’s debts to the medieval, Henrician, and Edwardian past, as well as to diverse manifestations of reforming Catholicism elsewhere throughout Catholic Christendom, some of which were Tridentine in nature, others of which tended in a rather different direction, we might arrive at a more complex, contested, and international picture of Mary’s church than most revisionist scholarship has allowed. Indeed, the very idea that ‘Marian Catholicism’ can be distilled down to a single definable essence – be it ‘late medieval’, ‘Erasmian’, ‘Henrician’, or ‘Tridentine’ – is to obscure the extent to which it took inspiration from all these sources and more.

IV

What are the implications of the last thirty years of Marian revisionist scholarship for our understanding of the English Reformation more broadly? Historians have, somewhat perplexingly, been slow to ask this question, let alone propose possible answers. However, it has considerable potential to develop our understanding of religious change both in sixteenth-century England and more widely on the continent. If we recognize Mary’s church as a far more dynamic, international, and forward-thinking institution than hitherto acknowledged, how does the prevailing historiographical picture of English Catholicism under Elizabeth I change? Most obviously, such a reassessment of Marian Catholicism’s strengths undermines assumptions regarding

⁸⁶ Pole’s tracts in support of the papacy include his 1536 *Pro ecclesiasticae unitatis defensione* and his *De summo pontifice Christi in terris vicario...* (Louvain, 1569).

⁸⁷ Wizeman, *Theology and spirituality*, pp. 2, 49, 253.

⁸⁸ On the intra-Catholic disputes within European Catholicism, see M. Firpo, *La presa di potere dell’inquisizione Romana, 1550–1553* (Rome, 2014), pp. 114–66; idem, ‘Rethinking “Catholic reform” and “Counter-Reformation”: what happened in early modern Catholicism – a view from Italy’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 20 (2016), pp. 293–312.

early Elizabethan Catholicism's weaknesses. The 1560s is often seen as a decade of confusion for England's Catholics, with the overwhelming majority unsure as to how they should respond to Elizabeth's religious settlement. As many historians continue to argue, 'the drive for comprehensive separation [from the Church of England] did not really gather momentum until the arrival of the first contingent of seminary trained missionaries in 1574'.⁸⁹ However, if the clerical reforms envisaged by Pole's legate synod had begun to have an effect upon the standard and dedication of the English clergy, we might begin to question such a pessimistic assessment. Thomas Mayer's recent examination of the Marian cathedral chapters certainly suggests that English Catholicism in the 1560s may have been stronger and more clear-headed than hitherto imagined. Mayer argues that the cathedrals, having been successfully restored to their central role in religious life by Mary and Pole, became 'seedbeds of recusancy' under Elizabeth I.⁹⁰ My own work has reinforced this suggestion, arguing that deprived Marian cathedral clerics became the leaders of a concerted and co-ordinated campaign in favour of principled Catholic non-conformity following Elizabeth's accession. Far from lacking the zeal of their seminary and missionary counterparts, these clerics anticipated many of the strategies of the later English mission in order to promote recusancy throughout England from as early as 1560.⁹¹ Further research at the parish level may reveal the extent to which such conclusions were also true of the parochial clergy.⁹² Recognizing the extent to which English Catholic laypeople may have been receiving a clear message regarding the impossibility of conformity with the Church of England from the very beginning of Elizabeth's reign also suggests that explanations for the small number of recusants in the wake of the Elizabethan settlement – explanations that often centre upon English Catholics' supposed lack of direction – may need reconsideration.⁹³ Perhaps, rather than disorientating them, the dramatic swings in official religious policy between 1530 and 1560 had encouraged English laypeople to trust more in their own instincts in religious matters – a suggestion that chimes with Peter Marshall's hypothesis that the ultimate effect of England's switchback Reformations was the creation of a more religiously self-aware and discerning laity.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ A. Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Farnham, 2014), p. 57.

⁹⁰ T. F. Mayer, 'Not just the hierarchy fought: the Marian cathedral chapters, seminaries of recusancy', in Evenden and Westbrook, eds., *Catholic renewal*, pp. 93–123.

⁹¹ F. E. Smith, 'The origins of recusancy in Elizabethan England reconsidered', *Historical Journal*, 60 (2017), pp. 301–32.

⁹² See P. Marshall and J. Morgan, 'Catholic conformity and the Elizabethan settlement revisited', *Historical Journal*, 59 (2016), pp. 1–22.

⁹³ D. MacCulloch, *The later Reformation in England, 1547–1603* (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 148–9; N. Jones, *The birth of the Elizabethan age: England in the 1560s* (Oxford, 1993), ch. 5; C. Highley, *Catholics writing the nation in early modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 8–9.

⁹⁴ Marshall, '(Re)defining the English Reformation', pp. 585–6.

The reassessment of Marian Catholicism also has the potential to shed interesting new light on the relationship between the Elizabethan and Stuart Catholic community and Catholic reform and renewal on the continent, especially the vexed question of how far it was possible to implement the objectives embodied in the Tridentine decrees in a country in which Catholicism was a church under the cross. Alexandra Walsham has suggested that, at least at the level of the elite, Elizabethan and Stuart Catholics were remarkably receptive to a Tridentine brand of ‘doctrinally self-conscious, interior religion’, nourished by ‘regular reception of the sacrament, careful perusal of devotional literature and constant, searching scrutiny of conscience’, that was touted by foreign-trained Jesuits and seminarians. As a result, she suggests that the homes of the gentry and nobility became ‘humid hothouses in which Tridentine spirituality seems to have flourished exuberantly’.⁹⁵ Walsham attributes the receptiveness of the Catholic gentry and nobility to such a spirituality to the conditions of persecution that forced clerics and laypeople into intense, clandestine, and intimate relationships within the confined space of the domestic household. However, if, as revisionists have suggested, the Marian church had already begun to engage with the spirituality of the incipient Counter-Reformation, we might ask whether the reason the Elizabethan and Stuart Catholic gentry were so receptive to Tridentine spirituality was, at least in part, because they had already encountered it. In order to test such a hypothesis, more research into the impact of the Marian restoration upon individual gentry and noble families is required. It would also be worth considering how far the Tridentine-inspired, ‘doctrinally self-conscious, interior religion’ Walsham detects amongst the Elizabethan and Stuart Catholic elite was nourished by works of catechesis and devotion that had been produced earlier during Mary’s reign.⁹⁶ Certainly, the English Dominican William Peryn’s *Spirituell exercyses and goostly meditacions* first published in 1557 – a tract that sought to inculcate a deep interior piety amongst the laity inspired by both Flemish mysticism and the *Spiritual exercises* of Ignatius Loyola – continued to nourish the spirits and strengthen the resolve of Catholics who endured persecution under Elizabeth, including the York butcher’s wife and subsequent martyr Margaret Clitherow and the community of exiled English Benedictine nuns at Cambrai.⁹⁷ A detailed study into the Elizabethan afterlives, reception, and uses of Marian printed texts might therefore underline the extent to

⁹⁵ A. Walsham, ‘Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter-Reformation’, *Historical Research*, 78 (2005), pp. 288–310, quotes at pp. 291, 297, 299.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

⁹⁷ Wizeman, *Theology and spirituality*, pp. 209–17; J. Morris, ed., *The troubles of our Catholic forefathers, related by themselves* (3 vols., London, 1872–7), III, p. 393; P. Lake and M. Questier, *The trials of Margaret Clitherow: persecution, martyrdom and the politics of sanctity in Elizabethan England* (London, 2011), p. 37; Augustine Baker, *Directions for contemplation: Book H*, ed. J. Clark (Salzburg, 2000), pp. 82–3.

which the Elizabethan Catholic community depended upon developments inaugurated by Mary's church for its survival and strength.

Finally, we also need to work through some of the implications of recent work on the Marian church for the European Counter-Reformation itself. Just as historians of the English Reformation once saw Mary's reign as largely disconnected from European Catholicism, scholars of the Counter-Reformation still tend to overlook the brief restoration of the faith in Marian England.⁹⁸ However, Eamon Duffy's suggestion that the Marian enterprise 'became a crucial influence in the final stages of the Council of Trent and, through Trent, in the catholic church as a whole' – that it effectively 'invented the Counter-Reformation' – is intriguing, and warrants more detailed investigation.⁹⁹ The decrees of Pole's legate synod, together with a selection of the cardinal's other writings, were published in 1562 and sent to Trent where they informed the council's seminary legislation.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, several prominent members of the Marian church subsequently played important roles in the Counter-Reformation on the continent. For example, Richard Smyth, former chaplain to Mary, became *premier lecteur* in scripture at the University of Douai, whilst Thomas Goldwell, Marian bishop of St Asaph, went on to attend the final sessions of the Council of Trent and became involved in the pioneering reforms of Carlo Borromeo's diocese in Milan.¹⁰¹ However, for the English Jesuit Robert Persons, Mary's church was not a shining example of Counter-Reformation *avant-la-lettre*. Writing at the end of the sixteenth century, Persons set out his vision for what a restored Catholic church in England might look like – a church that implemented the decrees of the Council of Trent 'entirely and fully without limitation of restraint'.¹⁰² Such a church would, in Persons's opinion, be worlds away from the Catholic restoration that had occurred during Mary's reign. He accused her church of gross 'negligence', of being concerned only with the externals, 'without remedying the root, the renewing of the spirit, which should have been the ground of all'.¹⁰³ Persons's damning assessment may have been a delayed reaction to Reginald Pole's failure to take up Ignatius Loyola's offer to send Jesuits to England in the 1550s.¹⁰⁴ However, his account suggests that more exploration into the complex legacy of the Marian church and its reforms amongst Catholics

⁹⁸ For example, no reference to Marian England can be found in Bamji, Janssen, and Laven, eds., *Ashgate research companion*.

⁹⁹ Duffy, *Fires*, ch. 9, quote at pp. 204–5.

¹⁰⁰ Reginald Pole, *Reformatio Angliae, ex decretis Reginaldi Poli cardinalis, sedis apostolicae legati, anno 1556* (Rome, 1562); *Calendar of state papers relating to English affairs in the Vatican archives*, ed. J. M. Rigg (2 vols., London, 1916–26), 1, no. 85.

¹⁰¹ J. A. Löwe, 'Smyth [Smith], Richard (1499/1500–1563), theologian', *Oxford dictionary of national biography*; Edwards, *Archbishop Pole*, p. 265.

¹⁰² Persons, *Jesuit's memorial*, p. 14.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–1.

¹⁰⁴ On Pole and the Jesuits, see McCoog, 'Ignatius Loyola and Reginald Pole', pp. 271–3; Duffy, *Fires*, pp. 30–3; Mayer, 'A test of wills'.

in late sixteenth-century Europe is needed. Further research in this area might help us appreciate more fully the extent to which the Marian church influenced the development of early modern European Catholicism, thereby challenging the disproportionate importance still often granted to the traditional Catholic heartlands of Spain and Italy in accounts of the European Counter-Reformation. In this sense, the study of Marian Catholicism has the potential to contribute towards the ongoing process of ‘decentring’ the Counter-Reformation – uncovering the interplay between centre and periphery in the development of that phenomenon.¹⁰⁵

In 1992, Eamon Duffy lamented that ‘a convincing account of the religious history of Mary’s reign has yet to be written’.¹⁰⁶ Almost thirty years on, Duffy’s comments, to a degree at least, remain true. Although we have moved beyond assumptions that the Marian church was predestined to fail and now have a far deeper appreciation of the Marian church’s dynamic and innovative policies, some of which captured the spirit of the incipient Counter-Reformation, historians continue to be preoccupied by ill-conceived questions about how ‘successful’ these policies were in providing for a Catholic future, and how effective they might have been in suppressing Protestantism had Mary lived. Such questions are not only largely unanswerable, but they demonstrate just how far the historiography of Marian England continues to operate within a revisionist framework still subtly shaped by sixteenth-century, confessionally charged polemic. This review has suggested that we might focus less on debates over ‘successes’ and ‘failures’ and instead start to work outwards from the valuable findings of revisionists regarding the dynamism of Marian religion, exploring their broader implications for how we understand the long-term development of Catholicism in England, as well as the Marian church’s place within European Christendom more broadly. In this way, we might not only arrive at a more ‘convincing’ account of the religious history of Mary’s reign, but also come to appreciate its broader significance for the religious changes that transformed Western Europe over the early modern period.

¹⁰⁵ S. Ditchfield, ‘Decentering the Catholic Reformation: papacy and peoples in the early modern world’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 101 (2010), pp. 186–208.

¹⁰⁶ Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, p. 524.