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A Legacy of Dissent: The counties of Kent and Essex as centres
of Lollardy and Elizabethan Puritanism, 1400-1600.

by

Sarah Moore

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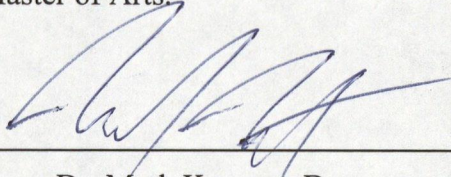
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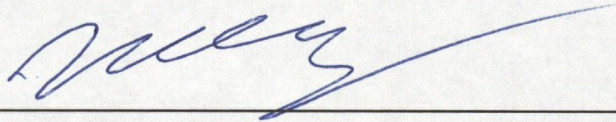
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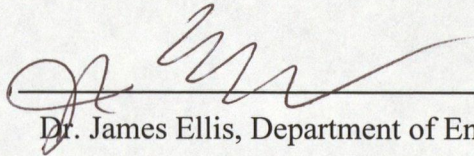
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "A Legacy of Dissent: The Counties of Kent and Essex as centres of Lollardy and Elizabethan Puritanism, 1400-1600" submitted by Sarah Moore in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the correlation between the centres of Lollardy and those of Elizabethan Puritanism in England in the period 1400-1600. This is a phenomenon that has been noted by many historians, but never really explored in depth. This thesis aims to pose some possible explanations for this phenomenon by concentrating specifically on the counties of Kent and Essex. These counties stand out as important centres of both the heretical Lollards and the dissenting Puritans. This study examines the similarities in doctrine between the two religious movements as well as characteristics of the counties themselves that may have played a role in the prevalence of dissent. It contains an in-depth examination of the possible impact of both geographical location and the social factors that may have had an impact on the acceptance of nonconformity by the inhabitants of these two counties.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Dave and Sylvia Moore,
for their constant support and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval page	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: CONTINUITY OF DOCTRINE	18
CHAPTER THREE: GEOGRAPHICAL INFLUENCES	48
CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIAL FACTORS	78
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	108
BIBLIOGRAPHY	119

LIST OF FIGURES

Map 1: The County of Kent	116
Map 2: The County of Essex	117
Map 3: Southern and Eastern Counties of England.....	118

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Religion is a powerful force in any society. It is an individual matter and it is impossible to know why people choose a certain faith. It is, however, possible to speculate on the reasons for their choices. This becomes particularly significant when it concerns individuals or groups that choose a religious path that deviates from the orthodox faith. Considering that the consequences of such an action were often serious, it is important to try to understand what would drive people to follow such a path. Although dissenting groups are always in existence, they become particularly apparent during times of turmoil within the orthodox faith. A group that was ignored before suddenly becomes a threat to the established religious norm because the latter feels weakened. So it is usually in times of religious and national turmoil that unorthodox groups come to the fore.

The period of the Protestant Reformation was a particularly turbulent one in England. Many historians have examined this period and the various religious groups that played a role in it. One of the most studied groups is the Lollards. Lollardy was an exclusively English heresy that was prominent before and during the Reformation. In studying this heretical group, several historians have made note of the interesting phenomenon that those areas that were Lollard centres in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries later became focal points of Elizabethan Puritanism. A.G. Dickens emphasizes the importance of Lollardy in the evolution of English religious groups. He argues that those areas displaying the strongest Lollard tendencies not only later became strong

Protestant areas, but also developed into Puritan strongholds after 1558.¹ John Thomson also argues in his study of the Lollards that their centres followed a progression through Protestantism and into Puritanism. He argues that by the time the Reformation was firmly established the former Lollard centres were already displaying Puritan tendencies.² This is a very interesting correlation between areas of pre-Reformation heresy and the later dissenting movement and one that merits further examination.

Christopher Hill has already examined this correlation to a certain extent. In an article "From Lollards to Levellers," published in 1984, Hill explores the system of inheritance from one dissenting group to another, the "continuities of underground ideas."³ He asserts that continuities do clearly exist between fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century religious dissenters and that it is possible to trace them. To accomplish this, he draws into his study numerous religious groups: Lollards, Levellers, Quakers and Ranters among others. Hill argues that continuity existed between these groups in two forms - that of doctrine and that of geography.⁴ He examines several counties in his study, including Kent, Essex, Sussex and Buckinghamshire, to demonstrate that these counties all had histories of dissent and that they all shared certain geographical characteristics. He demonstrates that the dissenting groups examined all subscribed to ideas that set them apart from the orthodox faith. What Hill accomplishes is to show that there was a continuity of dissenting ideas in certain areas of England. What

¹ A.G. Dickens, Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), 247.

² John Thomson, The Later Lollards 1414-1520 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 253.

³ Christopher Hill, "From Lollards to Levellers," in Religion and Rural Revolt, ed. Janos M. Bak and Gerhard Benecke (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 86.

⁴ *Ibid*, 87.

is beyond the scope of Hill's article is the factors and motivations that lay behind this phenomenon. He argues that there was doctrinal continuity, but he does not explore the ideas themselves or the appeal that they held for people in certain areas. In addition, Hill demonstrates that there was also geographical continuity of dissent. However, he stops short of examining in any detail what factors led to this continuity. The aim of this particular study will be to carry the hypotheses proposed by Hill to the next level. It will examine the motivations, circumstances and factors that led to continuity of dissent in certain areas. To do this, it has been necessary to limit the scope of this study geographically, temporally and to only two dissenting religious groups. Advancing from the assertions of Dickens and Thomson, this study will examine only the continuity between Lollardy and Puritanism. It starts in 1400 and ends in 1600, so that it is confined only to Elizabethan Puritanism and will not discuss the later Puritan groups. Lastly it will focus only on the counties of Kent and Essex.

Although they were not the only areas to experience this phenomenon, the counties of Kent and Essex were centres of intense religious dissenting activity during this period. They were not the most important centres of Lollardy or of Puritanism, but they housed significant cells of both of these groups. It should also be mentioned that neither Lollards nor Puritans were the majority in either Kent or Essex. Most of the inhabitants of both counties followed the orthodox path, but nevertheless the dissenting groups were sizable. Because both areas had quite large Lollard and Puritan groups, there is also a reasonable amount of information about them available. That Lollardy and Puritanism had several tenets and practices in common had a large impact on the areas to

which they appealed. Doctrinal similarities are integral to this discussion. The first part of this thesis will examine the two movements, their origins, their practices and their beliefs. It will show that the Lollards in Kent and Essex expressed many of the same beliefs and concerns as their Puritan counterparts in the later sixteenth century.

The second part of the thesis will examine the factors inherent in the two counties that made them hospitable to dissent. Geographical location and its influence will be examined first. This will include their proximity to London, the interaction with the Continent and their proximity to one another, all factors that fostered and sustained a susceptibility to dissent. Then the discussion will move on to the characteristics of the society that played a role. This will include their social history, the class composition of the society and the trades and resources of the counties. Although direct evidence is lacking for peoples' religious choices, we can nevertheless suggest several hypotheses.

It has to be remembered that the subjects of this study are members of dissenting movements. The Lollards were declared heretics and the punishments they faced were severe if discovered. Naturally, this did not encourage them to be forthcoming about their identities, backgrounds or the motivations for joining the movement. When there is direct evidence available from the Lollards themselves, it is usually in the context of a heresy trial. Even then, when facing terrible punishment, torture, maybe even death, it is impossible to know what some of these people may have exaggerated or fabricated simply for the cause of self protection. However, since it is impossible to know with certainty the degree of validity of their testimony, sometimes it must be taken at face value. Even when direct testimony is available, there is no need for them to discuss what

geographic and social characteristics of their specific county attributed to their unorthodoxy. Therefore the Lollards themselves provide almost no direct evidence to support the second part of this study. However, by studying their backgrounds and movements, it is possible to draw some conclusions.

Although the Puritans were not heretical, they did not conform to the directions of the Church. They were not as threatened as the Lollards, but they were still vulnerable to various repercussions. When direct testimony is available, the Puritans never mention why their counties were specifically prone to religious dissent, nor do they mention any direct inheritance they may have had from the Lollards.

The highly contentious views of the people being studied limits the sources available. Much of the evidence that is available is highly biased and usually produced by the opponents of these groups or in highly stressful situations like heresy trials. The terms “Lollard” and “Puritan” were themselves derogatory labels applied to these groups by their opponents. Because they are derogatory terms they do not always apply to a firm set of criteria. This is particularly difficult when examining the period in which Lollardy and Protestantism overlapped. Because their doctrines were very similar, when the authorities refer to someone as a “Lollard” it is often difficult to determine whether they are a genuine Lollard or whether they are an early Protestant reformer simply being labeled with the derogatory term. These terms also applied to different groups at different times because the groups themselves were always evolving. For example, to be a Puritan in 1581 meant something different than it had in 1558.

There are several sources that will be used for this study. Because it is concerned with such a contentious subject and because of the distance in time involved, several of the original sources have been lost or are only fragmentary. It will draw on primary sources such as heresy trial records, church court act-books, episcopal visitation records, letters and tracts written for or against the Lollards and Puritans (although highly biased, these do offer some valuable information). Fortunately, the Kent Archaeological Society has published several of the county records from this period and the Parker Society has published some valuable collections of letters. In addition, historians and archivists have researched and published various records, such as F.G. Emmison's work on the Elizabethan courts of Essex.⁵

Because some of the documents have been lost, it is necessary to rely on some secondary sources. One of the most valuable secondary sources for the Lollards in particular is John Foxe's Actes and Monuments. It has to be remembered that Foxe himself was biased. In writing he was trying to demonstrate a history for Protestantism and had an agenda of his own. However, despite this, many historians in this area depend highly on him for primary evidence. He compiled his work from original sources and Foxe himself makes a point of saying that the evidence on which he based his work is the public records of the realm.⁶ He has preserved much information that otherwise would be lost. Modern scholars have checked many of Foxe's sources and they have been

⁵ F.G. Emmison, Elizabethan Life: Disorder (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1970) and Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1973).

⁶ John Foxe, Actes and Monuments, 8 Vols (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965), 2:783.

impressed by the historical accuracy of his writing.⁷ Therefore, he remains a valuable resource for anyone studying the Reformation period.

Two other works that provide a wealth of information for this study are John Strype's Ecclesiastical Memorials (1721) and Thomas Fuller's The Church History of Britain (1655). Although secondary works, they based their information on manuscript sources. These works are most valuable because they often quote source material verbatim from the originals, some of which no longer exist.

There are also many modern secondary sources that are highly valuable, especially concerning the histories and characteristics of the counties themselves. Although Hill is the only historian to have explored the issue of continuity of dissent in any great detail, there are many works concerned with this period in history and the Lollard and Puritan groups. This study has been able to draw on some excellent scholarship from some of the top historians in the field. It is hoped that it will be able to add to the current knowledge of this period. To demonstrate where this study will fit within the current research, it is necessary to explore the ideas and debates being carried on in this area of historical scholarship.

There is a long-standing debate within Reformation historiography about the prominence of the Lollard heresy in the emergence of English Protestantism. The debate over the Lollards fits into an even larger debate concerning the true nature of the English Reformation. Historians are divided into two schools regarding Lollardy and the role it played in the success of the English Reformation. The first school believes that Lollardy

⁷ Rosemary O'Day, Debate on the English Reformation (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1986), 22.

played a very significant role in the Reformation by laying the groundwork for it. The other school argues that, although Lollardy did foreshadow some Reformation ideas, it was too small and unorganized to have produced any lasting effects.

The broad historical debate centres on the emergence of the English Reformation. Did England display widespread religious dissension and anti-clericalism before the Reformation? Or was it purely a state-imposed act, before which the majority of people were largely content with the Church?

A.G. Dickens and others who support his view believe that the official Reformation was merely a state confirmation of sentiments and beliefs that the English people were already holding. Because of problems within the pre-Reformation Church, Dickens claims that anti-clericalism was prevalent and that Englishmen had developed certain spiritual needs that could only be satisfied with reforms in the Church.⁸ He argues that, although historians tend to focus on organized heretical groups when examining pre-Reformation dissent, their beliefs were also common outside of the groups, especially in the countryside.⁹ Most people did not belong to an organized dissenting group, but Dickens claims that because of the growing anticlericalism among the people religious change was inevitable.¹⁰ The state-sanctioned Reformation simply accelerated the changes that would have occurred anyway. He does not deny that the reforming ideas from the Continent gave local dissenting groups a boost, but he argues that the effect of continental Protestantism was relatively modest, the local heretical groups having already

⁸ Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York*, 135.

⁹ A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1964), 32.

¹⁰ Ibid.

established a platform of critical dissent.¹¹ So, in short, Dickens argues that the Reformation was exactly what the English people had been working towards on their own. He states that it is of less value to look at Bucer, Bullinger and Cranmer when seeking an understanding of the English Reformation than it is to look at the diverse heretical groups and the sentiments of the people themselves.¹²

Christopher Haigh argues an opposite point of view to that of Dickens. He emphasizes the role of the state-imposed reformation in the religious changes in England. Haigh claims that there is very little evidence of dissent and heresy in the 150 years before the Reformation and that when it did occur, it was limited to isolated and unorganized individuals.¹³ Unlike Dickens, Haigh argues that, without the state-imposed Reformation, religious change was far from inevitable. He claims that the dissent that did exist was unorganized and incapable of implementing religious reforms. There was a high level of compliance with the Church and conformity to its beliefs and very few signs of a future religious reformation.¹⁴ Haigh claims that English dissent was greatly revitalized by contact with continental reforming principles, but that there was no change imminent until the King's Act of Supremacy of 1534. After the state had sanctioned religious change, Protestantism finally began to gain ground in England under the leadership of figures like Cranmer and Anne Boleyn.¹⁵ So, Haigh's position is that there was no

¹¹ Dickens, Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York, 51.

¹² Ibid, 243.

¹³ Christopher Haigh, Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 76-77.

¹⁴ Christopher Haigh, English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 55.

¹⁵ Ibid, 187.

popular religious reformation imminent and that the changes were caused solely by state-imposed reforms. J.J. Scarisbrick is clearly a supporter of Christopher Haigh's point of view. He argues that anticlericalism was not strong in England and that the English were mostly indifferent.¹⁶ He argues further that heresies in the pre-Reformation era had very little impact. Scarisbrick concludes that the religious changes that took place in England were accepted by the laity, not initiated by them. He argues that it was initiated purely by the crown, that "the Reformation was accomplished by statute."¹⁷

That is a brief summary of the general debate between the two schools of thought. If it can be shown that certain areas were more prone to dissent than others it will lend support to the view that the English Reformation was much more than an act of state. Historians on both sides of this debate have commented on the role of Lollardy and its effects on the English Reformation.

A.G. Dickens believes that the Lollards played a major role. In his book, The English Reformation, the section dealing with Lollardy is revealingly entitled "The Abortive Reformation." Dickens argues that Lollardy was a strong movement and that it was only outside factors that prevented it from initiating a reformation. Dickens points out the correlation between the beliefs of Lollardy and those held by reformers.¹⁸ Likewise, Margaret Aston argues that the Lollards made a very valuable contribution to the spread of dissent because they were one of the first groups to present their arguments in text form and in English, thereby altering the character of dissent in England¹⁹. She

¹⁶ J.J. Scarisbrick, The Reformation and the English People (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1984), 48.

¹⁷ Ibid, 62.

¹⁸ Dickens, The English Reformation, 23.

¹⁹ Margaret Aston, Faith and Fire (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), 35.

further argues that this method took churchmen by surprise because they assumed that Lollardy was being spread solely through preaching as other heresies had been.²⁰

Dickens argues that Lollardy had publishers and a thriving underground book trade originating in London. He proposes that this was very important because it provided a “ready-made organisation” for the Lutheran book trade in the 1520s.²¹ He cites specific examples to demonstrate the connections between the two. For example, he discusses the case of John Stacey and Lawrence Maxwell, who both originated from Lollard backgrounds, but later went on to actively distribute Lutheran books.²² Dickens clearly believes that the organized system and channels of book smuggling that had been set up by the Lollards was of great benefit in helping to spread Reformation ideas.

Although he does not view Lollardy as being as influential as Dickens does, Christopher Haigh does agree that they played a significant role through their organization of the book trade. He admits that Tyndale’s Bible was smuggled in through Lollard connections and that it found a receptive audience in the Lollard conventicles.²³ However, although he admits that Lollard channels did offer some convenience to reformed book smuggling, he argues that Dickens overemphasizes this aspect. Dickens particularly emphasizes incidents in which Lollards exchanged their texts for reformed books.²⁴ Haigh says that, by emphasizing this, Dickens is suggesting that the shift to Protestantism was both swift and easy. Haigh argues that it is true that change came more

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 29.

²² Ibid, 28.

²³ Haigh, *English Reformations*, 62.

²⁴ Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 34.

quickly in those areas with a Lollard heritage, but these were still too much of a minority to affect the English Reformation. He argues that the significance of these small groups has been greatly exaggerated by historians.²⁵ He does assert that in those areas where Reformation ideas spread rapidly such as Kent, Essex, Bristol and Gloucestershire there was a strong Lollard heritage and that this aided in conversion and dissemination of Lutheran texts.²⁶ He argues that Lollardy and Protestantism in general did not have a widespread effect: "Marian visitations, even of Bonner's London, demonstrated that the bishops faced not an intractable problem of crushing entrenched heresy but a rather more solvable difficulty in re-indoctrinating a partially indifferent people."²⁷ Haigh agrees with Dickens on the role of the Lollards in disseminating propaganda and literature, but disagrees with him over the magnitude and significance of this endeavor. However, even Haigh admits that those areas that were Lollard were more susceptible to Protestantism than those that were not. This tends to indicate that there was a continuity of dissent in certain areas and this thesis will show that this extended through to the years of Puritanism.

Dickens argues that the most valuable contribution that the Lollards made to later unorthodox movements was that they created a platform of critical dissent on which other movements, Protestantism in particular, were able to build.²⁸ He asserts that it was revived by its contacts with continental reform movements and encouraged by their

²⁵ Christopher Haigh, "The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation," The Historical Journal 25:4 (1982), 997.

²⁶ Ibid, 1000

²⁷ Ibid, 1006.

²⁸ Dickens, Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York, 245.

successes, but it had already done its work by breaking the ice, so to speak. Dissent was now not something that was completely unfamiliar to the English people. By 1530, Dickens claims that Lollardy had achieved two things for the Reformation. First, it hardened the authorities to any ideas of reform because of fear of heretics. This was important because if the Catholic Church had set up a reform program the success of the Reformation would have been reduced considerably. Second, Lollards provided reception areas for Lutheranism because they were able to keep alive the concept of a “personal, scriptural, non-sacramental, non-hierarchical, and lay-dominated religion.”²⁹

The resilience and long-lasting nature of Lollardy is a very important aspect of this discussion. Many historians believe that the influence of Lollardy continued well into the Reformation. Most historians agree that there were Lollards who were still active during the Marian years. A good example of this is the case of Christopher Kelke in 1555. Kelke was charged with being a Lollard and Dickens uses this as evidence for the continuation of Lollardy.³⁰ Naturally, the first objection to be raised against this is that Protestantism had intervened by this date so it is not conclusive that he was a Lollard and not a Protestant heretic. However, Dickens has a counter-argument to this. He says that during the Marian persecutions people were targeted and labeled as being Protestant so why would the interrogators have gone to the trouble of specifically labeling Kelke as a Lollard unless he held characteristic Lollard views distinct from those of Protestants?³¹ This is a valid point and it tends to indicate that Lollards were still apparent enough to be

²⁹ Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 36.

³⁰ Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York*, 230.

³¹ *Ibid*, 231.

considered heretical and their views were still well known enough to identify them as being distinct from Protestants. This also suggests that the Lollard channels and underground conventicles had managed to preserve their doctrines throughout the success of Protestantism. Lollardy had not become engulfed in the reformed religion. Haigh has argued that Lollardy was a shifting phenomenon, too affected by external pressures to be successful.³² However, the case of Kelke indicates a possible continuity of the tradition and its doctrines.

This leads directly into the main issue of this study. Many historians believe that Lollard influence extended not only into the Marian years, but beyond that and into the emergence of divergent branches of English Protestantism such as Anabaptism and Puritanism. John Davis is one of the historians who argues strongly for this point stating that "Lollardy had proved a reservoir that flowed into many channels."³³

Davis argues this case in his examination of the life of Joan of Kent, a figure who will be examined in detail in this study. Throughout Davis' article he follows Joan through her early life as a Lollard (she was accused of Lollardy in 1528) to her occupation as a smuggling agent for Tyndale's New Testament and eventually to her acceptance of Anabaptism some time in the 1540s, for which she was martyred during the reign of Edward VI. Davis claims that her case shows the evolutionary nature of Lollard beliefs and how they began the progress into other radical groups.³⁴

³² Haigh, English Reformations, 53.

³³ John Davis, Heresy and Reformation in the South-East of England, 1520-1559 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1983), 149.

³⁴ John Davis, "Joan of Kent, Lollardy and the English Reformation," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 33:2 (1982), 232.

The more obvious correlation pointed to by several historians is that between Lollardy and Puritanism. Several of them comment on the fact that there were geographical similarities, not only concerning the large areas, like London, but also in small towns. This is too much of a coincidence to overlook and Dickens for one considers it very significant and believes that Lollardy should not be discounted in any discussion of the origins of Puritanism.³⁵ Most of the scholars studied agree that those areas with a history of Lollardy were more likely to accept both Protestantism and Puritanism. Haigh argues that this may not be a result of something inherent in Lollardy itself, but rather a result of the indoctrination efforts of both Henrician and Edwardian preachers.³⁶ He says that they focused on areas in which they knew Lollardy had been strong because they believed those areas would be more sympathetic to the ideas.³⁷ So even Haigh's view suggests a correlation of some sort between dissenting groups.

Since this study is concerned with Puritanism, it is necessary to discuss the views of the foremost scholar on Elizabethan Puritanism - Patrick Collinson. Collinson is an invaluable source for a study of this kind. Although he is not really concerned with a Lollard heritage in Puritan areas, he does propose that Lollards played a role in the emergence of Puritanism. He discusses how Puritan preachers would drift to certain areas in the country, often strongly Protestant ones. But he also mentions that these areas were usually ones that had housed strong Lollard groups.³⁸ Collinson agrees with Dickens and

³⁵ Dickens, Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York, 247.

³⁶ Haigh, English Reformations, 197.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 223.

Thomson that there was a geographical pattern, that the areas that were Lollard tended to develop strong Protestant leanings and, in turn, were more attractive to Puritans trying to spread their beliefs. Collinson also touches on some similarities in organization and methods. Although they were not under as much threat as the Lollards, Collinson argues that the Puritans also used secret conventicles and underground connections to preserve their groups. It was more acceptable to be a Puritan, but he says that the authorities were still often shocked at the extent of the Puritan "secret confederacy," as they had been at the Lollard secret brotherhood a century or so earlier.³⁹

Clearly most historians agree that the areas that were most strongly Protestant and Puritan were those with a Lollard heritage. As discussed above, most of them have speculated on the reasons for this, from the presence of underground connections to intensified indoctrination efforts in these areas. All the hypotheses proposed have their valid points. However, although they realize that there is a correlation there, none of the historians really look into why these areas were continually susceptible to dissenting religious movements. That is the aim of this thesis, to propose that there were some circumstances that predisposed certain areas to dissent.

In order to profile and understand the counties, this study also has to draw on a different area of history. To examine the characters and beliefs of Lollardy and Puritanism religious history works are essential. Since this paper is also concerned with the characteristics of the counties of Kent and Essex that made them prone to dissent, it is also necessary to examine the histories of the counties themselves.

³⁹ Ibid, 414.

Since both Kent and Essex are quite old counties, there is a reasonable amount of information on them. William Lambarde is considered the founding father of the county history. He published his A Perambulation of Kent in 1570. Although he does not discuss religion in any detail, Lambarde is an excellent source for a contemporary view of Kent and Kentish society. Since Lambarde, there have been many works about both counties. These county histories, both modern and old, have been invaluable in providing both general and specific information about the counties and the people who lived there. This thesis will present an accurate and well-rounded profile of Kent and Essex and their inhabitants. It will also add something to the county histories by attempting to explain their religious affiliations. By demonstrating that there were factors and circumstances that predetermined certain areas to be drawn into dissenting ideas, this study will lend more strength to Dickens' argument. Despite what the state defined as orthodoxy, people in these areas were willing to follow an unorthodox path.

This study is both one of religious dissent and one of societies. This thesis will offer insight into the characteristics of Kent and Essex in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and it will assist in determining what sort of factors and circumstances may encourage a group of people to join a dissenting religious movement. Lastly, as mentioned above, it will add to the argument that Lollardy had far-reaching consequences not only in the era of Protestantism, but beyond the state-imposed Reformation and into the Elizabethan period. This tends to minimize the impact of the state-imposed Reformation on people's religious views.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTINUITY OF DOCTRINE

To trace any form of similarity and continuity between the movements of Lollardy and Puritanism in the counties of Kent and Essex it is necessary to examine doctrine. Doctrinal continuity will not only show that Lollardy laid the groundwork for Protestantism and Puritanism, but will also provide insight into the types of religious issues and ideas that appealed to the inhabitants of Kent and Essex. In tracing doctrinal continuity it is important to remember that the Protestant Reformation had intervened between Lollardy and Puritanism and had exerted an influence. But it is still possible to pinpoint ideas that the Lollards and Puritans shared.

Doctrinal continuity is very easy to trace directly between Lollardy and Protestantism. Lollardy clearly foreshadowed many of the Protestant ideas and clearly there is a heritage there. It is even possible to trace continuity within a single family as in the case of the Browne family of Ashford, Kent. John Browne was imprisoned and executed in 1513 for holding Lollard beliefs. His son, Richard Browne, was arrested as a Protestant under Mary, but avoided being executed when Mary died two days before the execution date.⁴⁰ This example presents a direct continuity of doctrine.

Unfortunately no such example exists for a continuity between Lollardy and Puritanism. It is incredibly difficult if not impossible to trace a continuity between Lollardy and Elizabethan puritanism. The objectives of these two groups were completely different. Lollardy and its descendant, Protestantism, were at root challenging the very theology of the Church, seeking to reform not only practices and liturgy, but the beliefs

⁴⁰ Foxe, Actes and Monuments, 4:181-182.

on which the religion was based. However, Puritanism had no complaint with the theology of the Church. After all, the Protestant Reformation had been victorious in England, its theological aims having been achieved. The Church of England and the Puritans had no quarrel with one another over the basic theology of the English Church. What the Puritans disliked was that certain prescribed practices were not being followed in the Church as they should be. Therefore it is difficult to trace any doctrinal continuity between a group that wished to completely replace the theology of the Church and one that merely wanted to extend already accepted reforms to everyday practice. The only example found during this study of the Puritans referring to a Lollard heritage was in a written defense of the works of the Puritan separatist Francis Johnson in 1593. The author declares that "his writings are only in defence of such doctrynes of the religion of Christe as, being against the canonick functions of the pope, were accounted Lollardye and heresye in the holy servants and martirs of Christ in former ages."⁴¹ The writer is suggesting a continuity between their work and that of the Lollards although they are not discussing specific doctrines. In this instance, the radical puritans clearly felt some allegiance with the Lollards and heretics of years past. It is possible to demonstrate that the Lollards and Puritans had similar concerns. They both addressed the issue of the quality of the clergy. The Lollards aimed to completely topple the priesthood and the Puritans attempted to increase the education and purity of the existing clergy. They both emphasized the primacy of Scripture, the Lollards arguing that it was not necessary to

⁴¹ The Remains of Edmund Grindal, ed. William Nicholson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1843), 463.

have the Church: a relationship with God was possible through Scripture alone. After the Reformation, it was accepted that this was the correct basis of religion, but the Puritans believed that in practice this was being ignored and they tried to emphasize the importance of the Word. In addition to both of these things, the two groups were also concerned with Church decorations and religious objects. As long as it is remembered that in the case of Lollardy these were issues of theology and in the case of Puritanism issues of practice, similarities can be seen between the two groups.

The founder of Lollardy was John Wyclif, an Oxford scholar who began to write about religion in the late fourteenth century. Although they held controversial ideas neither Wyclif nor his followers were deemed heretical during his lifetime. His followers, the Wycliffites, spread out from Oxford across the nation professing his beliefs and eventually the groups that they founded were declared heretical and became known as Lollards, a derogatory term. A.G. Dickens' labeling of this movement as "The Abortive Reformation" is quite accurate. The Lollards professed many of the same beliefs that would be accepted as Protestantism in the 1530s. Theologically, they were ahead of their time. Long after his death, Wyclif was condemned as a heretic and his body was exhumed and burnt as an example to all who followed his beliefs. But they were already spread far and wide. Although Lollardy never achieved any substantial reforms, it was relatively well organized. In 1394 the Twelve Lollard Conclusions outlining the beliefs of the movement were published. The conclusions criticize the English Church for its temporal obsession and the poor quality of its clergy, "not that priesthood which Christ

ordained for his apostles.”⁴² They attacked all prayers, offerings and pilgrimages made to saints as well as exorcisms and blessings, describing them as “the genuine performance of necromancy rather than of sacred theology.”⁴³ Also under question was the monopoly over auricular confession held by the priesthood and the sacrament of the Eucharist (“the pretended miracle of the sacrament of bread”) which they argued drove all human beings to idolatry.⁴⁴ Considering that the Conclusions were written approximately one hundred and fifty years before the English Reformation, clearly their beliefs were forward-looking. In examining the beliefs of various people labeled as Lollards over the period encompassed in this thesis, it is apparent that not all Lollards held all the views laid out in the Conclusions. No doubt this has a lot to do with the personal views of the Wycliffite founders of the various groups. But, all the so-called Lollards had some views in common. They all subscribed to the following: the Eucharist is not really the body and the blood; offerings, pilgrimages and prayers to saints are idolatry; Scripture is the ultimate authority, not the Church; the Bible and other religious texts should be in the vulgar tongue; and confession to anyone, anywhere, was as good as confession to a priest.⁴⁵ Dickens describes the Lollards as a serious, but unheroic group of heretics.⁴⁶ They were most often secretive, practicing Lollardy while maintaining the guise of being members of the orthodox Church and, when caught, they often abjured and did penance

⁴² Edward Peters, Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 277.

⁴³ Ibid, 278

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Thomson, The Later Lollards, 70.

⁴⁶ Dickens, Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York, 44.

to avoid punishment.⁴⁷ There were Lollard martyrs, but the general pattern was one of humility in front of the authorities. The biggest offensive for the Lollards and, without a doubt, also the most damaging was the Oldcastle rebellion of 1414. It was a Lollard rebellion against the state led by Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, whose estates were in Kent. The rebellion was suppressed and Oldcastle's followers scattered. Most were captured, some pardoned and some executed, the latter group including Oldcastle himself. This uprising made Lollardy a very unpopular heresy. It lost what little support it had in the upper classes of society and Lollards had to be wary of their neighbours informing on them. This forced them to form underground, isolated, frightened groups.⁴⁸ Being forced underground killed any chance that Lollardy had for accomplishing significant change within the English Church. As this chapter will show, their doctrines continued to be believed in throughout the rest of the period under examination especially in Kent and Essex.

Kent and Essex both have a long history of religious nonconformity. It stretches from the earliest days of Lollardy through to the era of Elizabethan Puritanism. Moreover, many of the same views were expounded by the inhabitants of these areas repeatedly throughout this continuity of dissent. Oldcastle, leader of the 1414 rebellion, was a Kentish noble and this tends to indicate that Lollardy had already reached the county of Kent. The county as a whole did not play a very large role in the actual rebellion, but Lollards do appear in the records here in the aftermath of 1414 and

⁴⁷ Ibid, 46-47.

⁴⁸ Haigh, English Reformations, 52.

increasingly throughout the rest of the period. In July 1416, Robert Chapell, a chaplain in the diocese of Rochester, was investigated. He was charged with preaching without a license, associating with Sir John Oldcastle (“militis notorie de heresi suspecti”) and for being a heretic himself.⁴⁹ He was forced to abjure his heresies and make certain declarations: that the priests were important and confession to them alone was essential, that pilgrimages to foreign places were beneficial and that images in churches and other religious places were not idolatry.⁵⁰ The things that he declared tend to indicate the heretical ideas that Chapell was suspected of and they appear to be standard Lollard beliefs. Lollard activity increased in Kent throughout the 1420s and beyond. In 1438, a revolt at Tenterden clearly had heretical roots. Five men were executed and several more imprisoned.⁵¹

T.W.Davids argues that no area has a greater propensity for dissent than Essex: “The prominence of Essex in the annals of Evangelical Nonconformity is second to that of no other county in the kingdom.”⁵² He argues that Wyclif’s followers were numerous here from very early on and presents evidence that one of the earliest Lollard martyrs, John Ball who was executed in 1381, was an inhabitant of Colchester.⁵³ Although East Anglia as a whole did not play a large role in the Oldcastle revolt, the largest group of supporters that came out of this area came from Essex.⁵⁴ There were heretics identified as

⁴⁹ The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1414-1443, ed. E.F. Jacob, 4 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943), 4:155.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 4:157.

⁵¹ Thomson, The Later Lollards, 178.

⁵² T.W. Davids, Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex (London: Jackson, Walford and Hodder, 1863), 1.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 119.

Lollards in this area by 1414. In Colchester itself no one was directly labeled a heretic, but some people were investigated as being suspicious. In Thaxted, Essex, however, one John Smith was condemned as a “magnus lollardus” and another man, “William,” was cited as being a Lollard and holding Lollard opinions.⁵⁵ Lollards were clearly present in both Kent and Essex from the early years of the movement.

The Puritans were never condemned as heretics, but they disagreed with the Church of England over practices and the degree to which English religion ought to be reformed. Unlike with Lollardy, it is very difficult to point to a specific individual as the founder of English Puritanism. It grew out of the differing opinions that emerged after years of religious persecution under Queen Mary. The largest influence on this movement came from the Marian exiles, the fervent Protestants who had fled to the Continent after Mary’s accession to the throne. While on the Continent, in places like Frankfurt, Aarau and Geneva, the English exiles were exposed to a purer Calvinist form of Protestant worship, one without vestiges of Catholicism. About one quarter of the returning exiles came under the direct influence of Calvin’s Geneva.⁵⁶ Upon their return they formed a strong party in both the nation and the Parliament and they continued to push throughout Elizabeth’s reign for a purer form of Protestant worship.

The returning Marian exiles and those that they convinced held views that grew out of a conviction that they had been saved by God. As a result of this they must lead a life of visible piety and take an active role in making their nation a model Christian

⁵⁵ E.J.B. Reid, “Lollards at Colchester in 1414,” *English Historical Review* 29 (1914), 102.

⁵⁶ Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), 75.

society.⁵⁷ As a result of this Puritans viewed the English Reformation as being unfinished business, and Elizabeth as their new champion who would finally make England a purely Protestant state. However, they were disappointed. The Act of Uniformity in Religion of 1559 was intended to regulate and bring to one standard Protestant worship in England. Elizabeth, no doubt unwilling to cause turmoil so soon after her accession, made rather conservative changes. She maintained that the second Book of Common Prayer of 1552 was to be the central text of the Church of England and the model for church services. Its use was to be strictly enforced. Although Elizabeth sent out her commissioners in 1559 to remove all ornaments from the churches, within the Act she installed what has become known as the ornaments rubric in which she announced the retention of priestly vestments in their 1548 form. It also gave her the right to add any ceremonies or rites as she saw fit. The Puritans completely disagreed with these Popish symbols being allowed to remain and they believed that the Act gave the Catholics far too much freedom in a nation that was supposedly Protestant.⁵⁸ These sorts of moderate changes were deemed unacceptable to the returning exiles and their supporters. As a result, English Protestantism became anything but uniform. It split into two groups holding differing views on church and state. More conservative Protestants argued that the Queen and the law were the highest authority and should be obeyed and trusted with the administration of the church. The more radical group, later labeled the Puritans, believed that the real and only authority should be Scripture and that the Church of England should be

⁵⁷ John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998), 5.

⁵⁸ Norman L. Jones, "Elizabeth's First Year," in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. Christopher Haigh (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1984), 45-46.

administered by synods of the ministers.⁵⁹ They began to view the Queen as an obstacle in the path of true reform. Understandably, since the Puritans were not a condemned segment of society, they were very vocal about their beliefs and what they understood to be wrong with the Church of England. Several of their views are strikingly similar to those of their Lollard forbears as are their methods for attempting to influence the established Church.

The second Lollard conclusion of 1394 states "That our usual priesthood which began in Rome, pretended to be of power more lofty than the angels is not that priesthood which Christ ordained for his apostles."⁶⁰ Criticizing the privileges, education and practices of the current clergy was continually undertaken by both the Lollards and the Puritans. Anticlericalism, from whatever causes it grew, was a necessary condition for the emergence of Lollardy. In 1429 the Abbot of St. John's in Essex deposited a bill in the king's council in which he accuses the bailiffs and other inhabitants of Colchester of being Lollards. He describes the problems they are causing for him, "manasen and thretenyn the said Abbot and his brethren to brynn (burn) hem (them) and hang hem at here gates." He pleads that "non of the sect of lollardes withynne hem be susteyned ne supported."⁶¹ This is a clear example of anticlericalism being perceived by the clergy themselves, the outcome of which they believed would be violence. A year earlier in Essex one William White was charged with saying that any believer had the right to preach the Word of God with or without a license from the Church, and was accused of

⁵⁹ John Brown, *The English Puritans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 23.

⁶⁰ Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, 277.

⁶¹ *The Red Paper Book of Colchester*, ed. W. Gurney Benham (Colchester: Essex County Standard, 1902), 55.

preaching himself without a license.⁶² Clearly, at this point, Lollards were challenging the very duties and estate of the priesthood. They began to question the ability of the priests to do their jobs. By about 1450 there was intense hostility towards the priesthood in the Eastern counties of England and especially in Kent. The cause of this is unknown. It may have been quite basic, but nevertheless it reveals a potential for heretical belief. In 1454 Thomas Cooper of East Sutton in Kent was called before the consistory court for making certain statements including the fact that he would no more prefer to listen to the mass of a bad priest than he would to that of a barking dog.⁶³ A decade later a man from Lydd in Kent was charged with preaching to his friends in taverns on Sundays and holy days rather than going to Church.⁶⁴ The next generation of Lollards continued to hold these anti-clerical viewpoints. In the visitation undertaken by William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, in Kent in 1511-12 one of the people accused was Richard Ricard of Kennington. One of the charges against him was vehement anti-clericalism, "he wold not by his wille suffer any preest to serve amongs theym. He is soo infest ayenst preests that he is ever talkyng of theym and redy to say the worst ayenst theym and their order."⁶⁵ Likewise Robert Hilles of Tenterden declared "the auctorite and power of preests upon sacraments and other things by them mynistred was no more worth then if they had be doon by a layman."⁶⁶ In 1527 John Pykas of Steeple Bumpstead in Essex declared to the

⁶² Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex*, 2.

⁶³ Canterbury Consistory Court-book 1449-57, Canterbury Cathedral Archives, DC6/J/X.1.1, fol. 67r.

⁶⁴ Canterbury Consistory Court-book 1462-8, Canterbury Cathedral Archives, DC6/J/X.8.3, fol 159r.

⁶⁵ *Kentish Visitations of Archbishop William Warham and his Deputies, 1511-12*, ed. K.L. Wood-Legh (Maidstone: Kent Archaeological Society, 1984), 204.

⁶⁶ *Kent Heresy Proceedings 1511-12*, ed. Norman Tanner (Maidstone: Kent Archaeological Society, 1997), 11.

authorities that anything granted by the pope or any other churchman was of no effect because they had no authority to grant them.⁶⁷

The Lollards clearly criticized the priesthood, their privileges and their authority. Also, as can be seen in the example of William White, they themselves undertook preaching believing that they could do a better job of it than the current clergy. This is also apparent in the beliefs of the Puritans. They were accepted within the orthodox Church, often in positions of high authority. Nevertheless they continually criticized the regular Protestant clergy about their practices and their abilities and, like the Lollards, they believed that they could do a better job and would form a purer clergy. This is also anticlericalism, but against a specific group of clergy not the institution itself.

The Puritans launched a strong offensive against what they viewed as the poor character of the clergy. They emphasized the role of preaching and repeatedly mentioned the idea of the shepherd and his flock.⁶⁸ In an undated document William White, a Puritan from Dunmow in Essex, discussed the remnants of Anti-Christ in the English Church. He attacked the privileges of the priesthood, "though thei deny the pope in wordes, yet will thei not loose any commodity that cometh to them by his law."⁶⁹ The English Church should be free of Popish remnants at this stage of reform, but because of the clergy's desire for certain benefits they are unwilling to let them go. As a result of the clergy's drive for personal gain the people are suffering and "so are all carelesse of a

⁶⁷ Harleian Manuscript 421, British Library, fol 18r.

⁶⁸ *The Seconde Parte of a Register*, ed. Albert Peel, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 1:X.

⁶⁹ This document is listed as undated, but the editor places it sometime between 1571 and 1574. Ibid, 1:100.

godly life, and walke on in wickedness, as though there were no God nor devill, nor heaven nor hell."⁷⁰ It was the mission of the Puritans to put this right by leading the people from these corrupt clergy to a purer form of Protestant worship. Being only nonconformists and not heretics meant that the Puritans had a greater chance from the very beginning of accomplishing their goals to reform the Church from within. Several of them held positions as preachers and pushed their agendas within their parishes, often conflicting with other preachers and the parish inhabitants, especially when a conforming preacher and a Puritan lecturer occupied the same parish.⁷¹ In Cranbrook, Kent in 1575 there was a serious conflict between the appointed minister and the supporters of the Puritan minister. John Strowd, the Puritan preacher, had been suspended for nonconformity and for allegedly being involved in the secret printing trade. The conflict arose between Mr. Good, the schoolmaster, and Mr. Fletcher, the church-appointed minister. The latter bitterly complained that the parishioners gave so much money to Strowd's defense and yet they could not pay the required tithe to the vicar.⁷² In response, Good accuses Fletcher of taking too much from the poor and not enough from the rich and for being a pluralist.⁷³ Clearly, the Puritan faction within Cranbrook was questioning Fletcher's value as a minister and many of the parishioners had transferred their support to Strowd (they later replaced Strowd with Dudley Fenner, a strong Presbyterian). This support from the parishioners was not uncommon.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 1:101.

⁷¹ The figure of the lecturer first appears in the 1580s. They were Puritan preachers who were appointed and paid for by voluntary contributions from the parishioners. They were appointed in addition to the parish minister.

⁷² The Seconde Parte of a Register, 1:119.

⁷³ Fletcher had also been the Rector of Smarden since 1566. Ibid, 1:120.

At the beginning, the Elizabethan Puritan movement was not centrally organized and was susceptible to schisms within itself. But they were forced to close ranks for their protection. In 1583, John Whitgift became the Archbishop of Canterbury. Whitgift was much more determined than his predecessor, Edmund Grindal, to strictly enforce uniformity. One of his first acts was to issue 24 Articles of Religion in 1584 to which he expected all ministers to subscribe. They included use of the Book of Common Prayer and wearing of the vestments, among other conditions.⁷⁴ Those who did not subscribe were suspended.

The response was numerous petitions from parishioners from all over the country. There are several petitions from places in Essex, pleading to have their Puritan ministers returned to them. The alternatives were not at all desirable as the inhabitants of Maldon pointed out to the Council, “such ministers are left unto us as we can prove unto your H. for the most part utterlie unfit for that office, being altogether ignorant, having bene either popish priests or shiftles men”.⁷⁵ The response in Kent was very similar when seventeen ministers were suspended there in the same year. The parishioners and Puritan clergy are not questioning the authority of the ministers to perform ceremonies and other rites, but rather whether the current clergy are fit to hold their posts.

The Puritan clergy in several areas had enough of what they viewed as unfair persecution and judgment by a Church and clergy too unqualified to judge them. The ministers of Essex appealed directly to the Privy Council for help. They were asked to

⁷⁴ Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 239.

⁷⁵ The Seconde Parte of a Register, 2:187.

submit to the Council a survey of the clergy in their areas and the grievances that they had concerning their practices and behaviour. This was a golden opportunity for the Puritans, one never offered to the Lollards, to openly attack the current clergy for all of its faults. And they did. This list includes accusations of drunkenness and adultery among the clergy and the archdeacons. It also includes accusations of widespread corruption within the Archdeacon's Court of Essex. These not only involve the way in which they dealt with the suspended ministers, but also with the parishioners. The courts are filled with injustice and extortion along with the undesirable character traits of the clergy and the Archbishop's officers.⁷⁶ The list mentions, for example, how one woman, having been excommunicated was forced, against the law, to pay for her absolution and how one man was absolved in the place of another, again for a substantial fee.⁷⁷ They state that "ministers ought to be an example to the people in life and doctrine." Yet many ministers lead an evil life and those that tell the people "do as they say and not as they do are not true ministers."⁷⁸ In addition, they allege that when complaints are lodged against certain ministers, the Archdeacons do nothing about it and allow it to continue.⁷⁹

The Privy Council took the survey very seriously and wrote to Whitgift. They sent him three lists: one of suspended ministers who were really "learned, zealous and good preachers," one of current ministers who were clearly unfit for their posts and one of pluralists within the county.⁸⁰ They strongly admonished Whitgift, "Against all these

⁷⁶ For complete list of grievances see: Additional Manuscript 48064, British Library, fol 76-87

⁷⁷ Ibid, fol. 77r.

⁷⁸ Ibid, fol 77v

⁷⁹ Ibid, fol. 78r.

⁸⁰ Thomas Fuller, The Church History of Britain, 8 Vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1845), 5:28-29.

sorts of lewd, evil, unprofitable, and corrupt members, we hear of no inquisition ... but yet of great diligence, yea, and extremity used against those that are known diligent preachers."⁸¹

So the Puritans, although not strictly anti-clerical like their Lollard ancestors, nonetheless made it one of their top priorities to attack the clergy of the day and in the long run attempt to replace them, as had the Lollards with their traveling preachers like William White. Not only did both groups heavily criticize the clergy and their privileges, but they also both argued against church decorations and the form that a holy service should take. The Lollards believed that blessings performed over any object, such as clothing, crosses, bread or water was a form of necromancy. In addition, they believed that offerings or pilgrimages made to objects were "pretty well akin to idolatry."⁸² They argued for the removal of all these false religious objects from the churches and the elimination of them as objects of pilgrimage. There is an early account of iconoclasm in Kent. Shortly after the Oldcastle revolt an anti-Lollard poem was published and it speaks of an incident in Kent in which a figure of St. James was apparently beheaded.⁸³ In August 1511, Joan Riche declared that "images of the crucifixe, of our Lady and other seynts ought not to be worshipped bicause they were made with mannys hands, and that they were but stokks and stonys."⁸⁴ Holy relics were also denied as objects of worship and pilgrimage. This can be seen in the abjuration of John Bayly, charged with saying to

⁸¹ Ibid, 5:29.

⁸² Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, 278.

⁸³ Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), 174.

⁸⁴ *Kent Heresy Proceedings*, 85.

his wife that there was no validity to the holy relics.⁸⁵ In 1527 in Colchester, Marion Matthew declared that for many years she had avoided setting up candles in front of images for it was not lawful.⁸⁶

The attack on statues and images continued through the reformation years. In 1532, John Seward of Dedham, Essex, overthrew a cross in Stoke Park and threw two images from the chapel into the water.⁸⁷ Nicholas Partridge of Lenham in Kent wrote to Henry Bullinger in 1538 and informed him of the story behind a certain statue in Maidstone. This statue was said to have turned its head, rolled its eyes and cried in front of the congregation while the Bishop of Rochester was preaching. It was discovered afterwards that it was being worked by the priests. Partridge describes the reaction, “the trickery of the wicked knaves was so publicly exposed in the image of the crucifix, that every one was indignant against the monks and imposters of that kind, and execrated both the idols and those who worshipped them. God grant that we may really banish all idols from our hearts!”⁸⁸

The Puritans were still trying to accomplish the latter during the reign of Elizabeth. William White, the Puritan from Dunmow, wrote to Bishop Grindal in 1569, urging him to remove “all remnants, badges and marks of Antichrist.”⁸⁹ In 1584, several of the suspended ministers from Kent were defended in writing for their actions in their churches. One of them was Mr. Minge, the Puritan preacher of Ashford. He had been

⁸⁵ Kentish Visitations of Archbishop William Warham, 211.

⁸⁶ John Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, 3 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1863), 1:128.

⁸⁷ John Foxe, Actes and Monuments, 4:707.

⁸⁸ Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation, ed. H. Robinson, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1846-7), 2:610.

⁸⁹ Seconde Parte of a Register, 1:66.

charged with, among other things, removing and defacing statues and other ornaments like the font. His only offense, the defenders claimed, was to deface monuments of superstition which had only been whitewashed and could in an hour be returned to their former state, “standing like a Dianese shrine for a future hope and daily comforte of old popish beldames and young perking papists, and a great offence to all that are christianly minded.”⁹⁰ The Queen herself was admonished for allowing the walls and windows of the royal chapels to continue to be filled with images and pictures that should be “cleansed and purged away.”⁹¹

One of the most important controversies for the Puritans was the issue of vestments, in particular the surplice. It was an issue on which they refused to budge and many Puritan preachers were suspended rather than wear the surplice. In 1567, Robert Hawkins declared before an ecclesiastical commission in London that “surplices and copes be superstitious and idolatrous.”⁹² The position on the vestments was the same in Essex. In December 1586, the Presbyterian classis of Dedham made their position clear, “the Surplice shuld not be yelded unto bicause they sought to have us yeld unto all the ceremonies.”⁹³ The Puritans viewed the surplice as a blatant Popish remnant. John Malvill of South Benfleet, Essex, referred to the surplice as “a rag of Rome” in 1582.⁹⁴ Bishop Aylmer’s visitation of Essex in the summer of 1585 left forty ministers suspended

⁹⁰ Ibid, 1:239.

⁹¹ Ibid, 2:53.

⁹² The Remains of Edmund Grindal, 207.

⁹³ The Presbyterian Movement in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, ed. Roland Usher (London: Royal Historical Society, 1905), 60.

⁹⁴ Emmison, Elizabethan Life: Disorder, 49.

in that county.⁹⁵ One of those suspended was William Seredge. He was accused of holding secret meetings and refusing to wear the surplice.⁹⁶ The Puritans argued against the vestments, in particular the surplice, because they believed “that the clergy should be distinguished from the people by their doctrine, not their garments; their conversation, not their dress.”⁹⁷ And there was support for this among the people. They disliked the vestments because to those who had been Protestants all along they were a visible symbol of the suffering that had occurred during the Marian persecutions.⁹⁸ This has a particular significance for the counties of Kent and Essex since they suffered greatly in 1554-8 and provided more Marian martyrs than other counties. During Nicholas Harpsfield’s visitation in Kent in 1557 most of the directions given to the churches in this county were to undo the work of the Protestants. Orders to purchase cloths, candles, fonts and surplices as well as orders to remove whitewash from paintings and images are the most common.⁹⁹

An absence of vestments and other church accessories can be found in the period of the Lollards also. In the visitation of 1511-12, at the Church at Nackington, Kent, it was noted that “there lakkethe a vestment, a chaleis and a surples.”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the church at Coldred lacked an altar cloth, vestments and other altar accessories.¹⁰¹ Whether these cases were an outward sign of Lollard presence in these areas or not, they bear an

⁹⁵ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 304.

⁹⁶ Archdeacon of Essex’ Actbook, Essex Record Office, D/AEA/12, fol 266v,

⁹⁷ *Zurich Letters*, ed. H. Robinson (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1845), 122.

⁹⁸ Brown, *The English Puritans*, 33.

⁹⁹ *Archdeacon Harpsfield’s Visitation, 1557*, ed. L.E. Whatmore (London: Catholic Record Society, 1950).

¹⁰⁰ *Kentish Visitations of Archbishop William Warham*, 64.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 96.

interesting correlation with the arguments of the later Puritans. The Puritans would have been perfectly satisfied with the state of these two churches. In fact, in Essex in 1585, the churchwardens of Colchester were cited for not having a Bible, a Book of Common Prayer and a surplice. In 1592, they had still neglected to install these items.¹⁰² So one of the main arguments of both the Lollards and the Puritans was against any outward decorations or symbols that set the priesthood and the Church apart from the regular people.

There was not only a continuity concerning the attack on symbols and ornaments, but also regarding certain ceremonies within the Church. John Pykas in 1527 admitted to teaching against the sacrament of baptism “for there is no baptysm, but of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰³ It was also charged that William Raylond of Essex argued that baptism in water was merely a token and that, after leading a good life, one would receive the true baptism from the Holy Ghost.¹⁰⁴ Joan Colyn of Tenterden stated in 1511 that “the sacraments of baptisme and confirmacion is not necessary nor profitable to mannys soule.”¹⁰⁵ This appears to have been a later addition to the Lollard theology since it is not one of the 1394 conclusions. However, it remained an issue into the late sixteenth century with many Puritans likewise arguing against it. They did not argue against the idea of baptism, but against baptism in the current form which they thought was too Catholic. They criticized the ceremony of baptism because of all the additions that had been made

¹⁰² Jay P. Anglin, “The Essex Puritan Movement and the “Bawdy” Courts, 1577-1594,” in Tudor Men and Institutions, ed. Arthur J. Slavin (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 191.

¹⁰³ Harleian Manuscript 421, British Library, fol. 17v.

¹⁰⁴ Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, 1:128.

¹⁰⁵ Kent Heresy Proceedings 1511-12, 38.

by the Church to the original act laid out by the Apostles. They argued that all the original ministers needed was water and the Word. It was now much more complicated, "Nowe, we must have surplusses devised by Pope Adrian, interrogatories ministred to the infant, godfathers and Godmothers, brought in by Higinia, holy fonts invented by Pope Pius, crossing and suche like peces of poperie, which the Church of God in the Apostles times never knew."¹⁰⁶ Several Puritans refused to have their children baptized.¹⁰⁷ William Seredge, the ultra-puritan rector of East Hanningfield, was charged with refusing to use the cross in baptism.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, Thomas Carew, minister of Hatfield Peverel in Essex, was accused by the Bishop of London of corrupting the ceremony of baptism. It was said in 1585 that "He hath broughte his people to that pointe, that they saye even at baptisme, yt maketh no matter for water, so they have the worde."¹⁰⁹ The Lollards attacked the actual concept of the ceremony of baptism, the Puritans merely criticized the form that the ceremony took, not its validity. And therein lies the difference between the heretical movement and the non-conformist movement. The Puritans were trying to effect change within the Church, not eliminate it and its practices as the Lollards were.

The views on the ceremony of marriage were the same as those of baptism. The Puritans believed in the marriage ceremony, but they did not like the role of the wedding ring, viewing it as an unnecessary popish remnant.¹¹⁰ In The Admonition to Parliament they declare that marriage ought to be solemnized in Church, but that the ring should be

¹⁰⁶ Puritan Manifestoes, ed. W.H.Frere and C.E. Douglas (London:Church Historical Society, 1954), 14.

¹⁰⁷ M.M. Knappen, Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism, 2nd ed. (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1963), 150.

¹⁰⁸ Emmison, Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts, 139.

¹⁰⁹ Seconde Parte of a Register, 2:34.

¹¹⁰ Emmison, Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts, 193.

eliminated, “they make the newe marryed man, according to the Popishe forme, to make an idol of his wife, saying: with this ring I thee wedde, with my body I thee worshippe, etc.”¹¹¹ This differs from the view of the Lollards, one of them declaring “that when a man and a woman be contracted togider, it is not necessary to solemnize it in the churche.”¹¹² Lollards did not deny the value of marriage and strongly argued for a married clergy, but they objected to clerical officiation at the ceremony. They argued that it was enough for the man and woman to assent to the marriage without sacerdotal solemnization by the clergy.¹¹³ Again, the Lollards wanted the clerical role eliminated in this ceremony, whereas the Puritans valued the role of the clergy, but wanted one element eliminated.

The greatest doctrinal similarity between Lollardy and Puritanism was the emphasis on Scripture as the ultimate authority. In 1527, John Pykas declared that “God is in the Word, and the Word is in God and God and the Word cannot be departed.”¹¹⁴ They felt that there was no need for a priest to interpret the Scripture for people. That is why one of the main charges leveled against the Lollards in trials is the possession of books, including the New Testament, in the English language. In Colchester in 1414 one of the charges leveled against John Smith was that he had in his possession books in English “contra fidem catholicam.”¹¹⁵ Puritans believed also that religion was a public duty and that the gospel was to be obeyed universally. They acknowledged that the Bible

¹¹¹ Puritan Manifestoes, 27.

¹¹² Kent Heresy Proceedings, 20.

¹¹³ Aston, Lollards and Reformers, 98.

¹¹⁴ Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, 1:130.

¹¹⁵ Reid, “Lollards at Colchester in 1414,” 102.

was the only authority and that in any conflict with human authority the Bible must prevail.¹¹⁶ This did not set them apart from the Church of England that also emphasized Scripture as the ultimate authority, but the Puritans wanted it followed in practice, to the exclusion of all other superfluous ornaments, literature and ceremonies. They wanted the gospel to be placed foremost and that is why they objected in 1559 when Elizabeth chose a via media regarding the English Church. By tolerating various elements in the Church such as vestments, ornaments and other practices, Elizabeth disappointed the Puritans. They believed that most of the Church elements were superfluous and that ceremonies should be returned to a simpler, purer form modeled solely on Scripture. They wanted the Reformation to be fully implemented in practice, not just in theology. For political reasons of her own, the Queen was unwilling to push reform to this extent and the Puritans viewed this as an incomplete reformation, although the Church outwardly voiced Reformation ideals. They were upset with the via media because their highest hopes had now been dashed. By implementing things such as various ceremonies, the vestments and especially the Book of Common Prayer, the Church was distanced in the minds of the Puritans from its ideal state. Their ideal Church was one modeled not on the innovations of various popes, but on the Church as described in Scripture and by the Apostles, pure and unadulterated. Their major concern was that the church was being lost under all of the additions that had been made over the years, "But you have brought the gospel and sacraments into bondage to the ceremonies of antichrist, and you defend idolatry and papistry. There is no ordinance of Christ, but you have mingled your own inventions

¹¹⁶ Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 27.

withal."¹¹⁷ The Word is everything, "we say the worde is above the Church, then surely it is above the Englishe Church, and above all these bookes."¹¹⁸ This belief in the Scripture as the sole authority is also demonstrated in one of the methods used by both the Lollards and the Puritans - the secret gathering or conventicle.

There are numerous accounts of Lollards gathering together in secret meetings to discuss and read the Scriptures. In 1428 William Harry of Tenterden, Kent, was suspected, among other things, of being "in conventiculis occultis cum hominibus diversis suspectis de hujusmodi secta lollardie."¹¹⁹ Most of the accounts given in the 1511-12 trials are of groups of two or three people getting together to discuss Scripture and other points, but there are a couple of examples of larger gatherings. Robert Bright of Maidstone testified that at Christmas time 1509 there were present in the house of John Bampton, eight of them and that they discussed Scripture and the sacraments. And he described a similar meeting the following year.¹²⁰ So-called conventicles in Essex in the early sixteenth century are also described. Women were often charged with hosting such gatherings, especially in the area of Steeple Bumpstead. Mother Charte, Mother Beckwyth, Joan Bocher and Joan Agnes are all charged with holding Lollard schools in their houses in which Scripture was read and discussed.¹²¹ So clearly, the discussion of Scripture outside the Church setting was important to them. They believed they could

¹¹⁷ The Remains of Edmund Grindal, 208.

¹¹⁸ Puritan Manifestoes, 91-92.

¹¹⁹ Register of Henry Chichele, 3:190.

¹²⁰ Kent Heresy Proceedings 1511-12, 55.

¹²¹ Shannon McSheffrey, Gender and Heresy: Men and Women in Lollard Communities, 1420-1530 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 91.

access the Truth through Scripture without the aid of the priesthood. Hence their great dependence on books and other works in the vulgar tongue.

The idea of the conventicle lasted throughout the Reformation and there is even an occurrence during the Protestant reign of Edward VI. In 1550, a group of sixty people at Bocking, Essex, was charged with meeting to discuss Scripture and church ceremonies. The owner of the house in which the meeting was held declared that they were there “for talke of Scriptures.”¹²² Being concerned about the size and organization of this group, the government attempted to silence them through imprisonment in 1551 and again in 1554.¹²³ Several Colchester inns became centers of Protestant teaching, housing what were, in effect, conventicles.¹²⁴ These congregations of so-called “gospellers” were also present throughout the nation. And in these conventicles can be seen a foreshadowing of the Puritan prophecies and classis.

The practice of the prophecy was originally designed to be used within the Church of England. It was intended to increase the education and competence of the clergy. It was a gathering in which two newer ministers expounded on some part of Scripture moderated by a more experienced minister. Then the brethren in the assembly assessed the arguments on both sides. The laity was allowed to listen, but not to participate in this activity.¹²⁵ Prophecies flourished, especially in Essex, through the 1570s. In 1576,

¹²² J.W. Martin, “English Protestant Separatism at its Beginnings: Henry Hart and the Free-Will Men,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* VII (October 1976), 66.

¹²³ Haigh, *English Reformations*, 192.

¹²⁴ Laquita Mae Alexander Higgs, *Lay Piety in the Borough of Colchester, 1485-1558* (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1983), 318.

¹²⁵ William Harrison, *The Description of England*, ed Georges Edelen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 26.

Archbishop Grindal ordered his Archdeacons to investigate the exercises. Walker, the Archdeacon of Essex, responded, "Whether there be any Exercises among the Ministers. Answer, there has been for the space of 12 or 14 years in divers places of the Archdeaconry and now are continued."¹²⁶ According to his report they were quite frequently held, "From Easter to Michaelmas every 3 weeks or every fortnight."¹²⁷ Elizabeth suppressed them as Puritan gatherings. In 1577, she issued a proclamation against the prophesyings. She emphasized how dangerous they were, arguing that the people are thus "schismatically divided among themselves into variety of dangerous opinions."¹²⁸ The punishment for holding such meetings was imprisonment as "maintainers of disorders."¹²⁹ However, this was really a matter of perception. During the Lollard era, conventicles were meetings of heretics who knew themselves to be doing something unorthodox by discussing Scripture. There was no problem with the Puritans discussing Scripture, laypeople doing so was perfectly acceptable since the Reformation. But what the Puritans viewed as being pious discussions of Scripture the authorities viewed as a threat because they were still gathering outside the sphere of the Church of England. The Puritans in no way identified themselves with heretics, even though their opponents sometimes did. However they also had their supporters. The Archdeacon of Essex wrote in 1576 that in his opinion the prophecies were very valuable, "It seemeth good to God, to his Prophets and Apostles to have his word and will revealed to his People. The Godly, Learned and Wise of the Realme have by translating the Scriptures,

¹²⁶ Additional Manuscript 29546, British Library, folio 48v.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ The Remains of Edmund Grindal, 467.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 468.

Reading, Searching and Preaching of the same, put away ignorance the Mother of idolatry, Superstition, Disobedience."¹³⁰ He thought they were especially valuable as a training tool, but this did not stop them being suppressed.

There was an intense persecution of "conventicles" in Essex in 1582-84. Some were held in the woods, but many were held in private homes. William Seredge, George Gifford and William Pond of Essex were all accused of holding "conventicles" in their homes.¹³¹ In 1584 William Walker of Cold Norton, Essex was accused of having held a "conventicle" in 1583 and of receiving communion from George Gifford and not at his parish church.¹³² In "The defense of the mynisters of Kent" of 1584 the author(s) objected to the use of the word "conventicle" used by the accusers of the suspended ministers, "The name of Conventicle you knew to be odious, as applied to sectaries and heretiques, and therefore with much spite (devoide of truth) you have laied it upon them."¹³³ Although they object to the use of the actual term "conventicle" what the Puritans took part in seems to have been just that. They met in groups to discuss Scripture and church practice without the authorization of the Church of England. Granted they were all ministers, whether practicing or suspended, but there does not seem to be much difference between their practices and those of the Lollards a century earlier. This can especially be seen in the classis system within the Presbyterian branch of the Puritan movement. The beginning of the classis movement was in the clandestine prayer meetings that gathered around radical ministers during the Marian period and it gradually

¹³⁰ Additional Manuscript 29546, British Library, folio 49r.

¹³¹ Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts*, 97-98.

¹³² Ibid, 102.

¹³³ *Seconde Parte of a Register*, 1:231.

became a more formal system.¹³⁴ Each classis consisted of members who would meet to discuss theology, Scripture and the objectives of the movement. To establish equality among members and to avoid suspicion, the meetings of these classis were always held in different places and always in members' houses.¹³⁵ Richard Rogers, preacher of Wethersfield in Essex, was a member of the Dedham classis. After the formal proceedings of the classis he describes how some of the members returned to a neighbour's house to discuss religious issues.¹³⁶ This bears a strong resemblance to Lollard conventicles.

But the most important aspect of these gatherings is that they upheld the idea of the pure Scripture as Truth, not through the medium of the orthodox Church. In the counties of Kent and Essex those with Puritan leanings were willing to travel to other areas on Sunday if there was a sermon of the Word there.¹³⁷ A Colchester minister, Robert Lewis, was simply unable to compete with the popular Puritan preacher, George Northey, who was viewed as preaching the pure, unencumbered Word.¹³⁸ So, Puritan preachers were trying to lure people away from orthodox church services. Meetings usually took place on Sunday evenings, but it is said that George Gifford of Maldon met with the "godly" almost every night.¹³⁹ Clandestine preaching was quite common in

¹³⁴ The Presbyterian Movement in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, xix.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹³⁶ Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries, ed. M.M. Knappen (Gloucester: Peter Smith 1966), 67

¹³⁷ Patrick Collinson, Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism (London: The Hambledon Press, 1983), 9.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

Essex. In one case the locked Church of Abbess Roothing was broken into to allow the Puritan John Ward to preach there.¹⁴⁰

The use of “conventicles” was also important in the formation of the radically Puritan Free-Will movement that advocated outright separation from the established Church. This movement also had its origins in Kent and Essex. In 1538, Henry Hart of Pluckley, Kent, and five other Kentishmen were indicted for “unlawful assemblies.”¹⁴¹ Hart later became the leader of the Free-Willers. He seemed to mistrust clerics, whom he believed kept Biblical truth from the average layperson for their own purposes. He viewed Scripture as the great equalizer among all human beings and believes its truth should not be restricted by wealth or education.¹⁴² Eight of the sixty people at the Bocking meeting of 1550 are believed to have come from Hart’s group of freewillers and the movement continued into the late sixteenth century.¹⁴³

A definite continuity can be traced in these counties from Lollardy to Puritanism regarding the ultimate authority of Scripture. Although Lollards were heretics whereas Puritans tried to work within the Church, the members of both groups sought answers and guidance from Scripture and one another and not from the traditional church authorities. These discussions of Scripture became more organized over time and because of the changes caused by Protestantism were not as radical in the Puritan era as in the Lollard period. And although Puritans disliked the term “conventicle” regarding themselves their classis and prophesyings resemble in many ways the conventicles of the heretical

¹⁴⁰ Anglin, “The Essex Puritan Movement and the “Bawdy” Courts,” 190.

¹⁴¹ Martin, “English Protestant Separatism at its Beginnings,” 58.

¹⁴² Ibid, 62

¹⁴³ Ibid, 67.

Lollards. They were both meetings organized outside of the Church in order to expound Scripture and discuss religious tenets and practices. The actual practice of conventicling had not really changed, only the tolerance of the established Church towards it. The basis of these meetings was the pure Truth of Scripture. By using the Bible these groups believed they could reach the Truth or the Word without the medium of the Church.

There were several doctrinal similarities between Lollardy and Elizabethan Puritanism. It may not have been direct, but especially in the counties of Kent and Essex the evidence shows that the Lollards and the Puritans had similar concerns, issues that were still being very much debated even after the official Reformation. The concerns of the dissenting groups in these areas remained the same: the suitability of the priesthood, popish ornaments and ceremonies and that Scripture, pure and unadulterated, be the ultimate authority against which everything should be judged. Having established that a continuity of dissent did exist in Kent and Essex, it is necessary to examine what factors made these counties so attractive to dissenting movements. Both the Lollards and the Puritans had strong support in these areas. They espoused the beliefs and ideas that have been discussed in this chapter and they took root in Kent and Essex. The names of these counties surface repeatedly in records of investigation throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Lollards settled here with their anti-clerical, iconoclastic views of religion. They were ahead of their time in that they argued for a religion free of corruption and one that was available to the average layperson, releasing him from being at the mercy of the established Church. By the 1530s in the form of Protestantism many Lollard beliefs were accepted as being the religion of England. Furthermore, after the

return of Elizabeth, the radical Protestants, the Puritans, are seen to be in the old haunts of the Lollard groups preaching once again for a pure Protestant Church, devoid of clerical corruption and one in which the Word, not the Church, would be the standard against which everything, the monarch and society included, ought to be measured. There is two centuries worth of evidence demonstrating that dissent appealed to the people of Kent and Essex. And particular beliefs keep resurfacing repeatedly, demonstrating a willingness to conflict with the orthodox Church over what were considered important issues. So there is a continuity between Lollardy and Elizabethan Puritanism in these counties concerning the presence of dissent and the survival of certain concerns that both groups held in common and that the inhabitants of these areas clearly found appealing. To discover why Kent and Essex were so prone to dissent and so attractive to nonconforming religious groups during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries will be the objective of the remainder of this thesis. Knowing that there were similar concerns between Lollardy and Puritanism it is now possible to examine the factors that sustained the continuity of dissent.

CHAPTER THREE: GEOGRAPHICAL INFLUENCES

When one thinks about the issue of religion, geography is not always a factor that immediately springs to mind. The more apparent factors to look at are doctrine and social issues. In the modern world with its worldwide communications system, it is hard to imagine geographical location as playing a large role in the religious path that an individual chose. However, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries communication consisted of letters and word of mouth, both of which entailed journeying to the destination. This chapter will demonstrate that the geographical location of the counties of Kent and Essex placed them directly in the path of dissenting ideas and individuals.

Kent and Essex are both located on the eastern coast of England, Essex being the more northerly of the two. London is southwest of Essex and northwest of Kent. They are two of the oldest counties in England, being well established long before the Norman Invasion. The Kentish Kingdom appears to have been in place by 488 CE. Essex was also firmly established and, by the late seventh century, it appears that Swafheard, son of the King of Essex, held some form of overlordship over Kent because he ruled jointly with Oswine, King of Kent.¹⁴⁴ So, these are both old, well-established counties, probably because of their important geographical location. The county of Kent has two dioceses, Canterbury and Rochester. Essex forms part of the Diocese of London, which includes Essex, Middlesex and part of Hertfordshire. The county of Essex contains the important Borough of Colchester, it being the only large urban center of the county in the fifteenth

¹⁴⁴ Victoria County History of Kent, 2nd ed., ed. William Page (London: The University of London, 1974), 3:272-274.

and sixteenth centuries with 5000-6000 people, followed by the towns of Bocking and Braintree¹⁴⁵. Kent contained several large towns and important ports including Sandwich, Hythe, Deal and Dover, along with the two important religious centres of Rochester and Canterbury. Kent and Essex were connected economically and socially because of common interests. They both traded with London and the Continent and they had frequent interaction with one another because of their common industries of fishing, cloth manufacture and agriculture.¹⁴⁶

Since it has now been established where the counties of Kent and Essex are located, it is possible to look at how their position may have affected the attraction of the inhabitants to the dissenting movements of the Lollards and the Puritans. There are three aspects to this discussion. First the proximity to London must be examined. As the capital, it clearly held influence over these counties. Secondly, since both counties lie on the eastern coast of England it is possible to demonstrate influences from the Continent, in particular from France and the Low Countries. Lastly, it is important to examine their proximity to one another and whether this helped to foster and maintain dissenting attitudes.

The proximity of the counties of Kent and Essex to the City of London cannot be overlooked. London was the capital and the largest urban centre in England. It was the centre of commerce and of government. Being situated as close to London as they are, Kent and Essex were affected by the capital in the social, economic and religious spheres.

¹⁴⁵ L.R. Poos, A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 41.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Clark, English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution (Hassocks: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1977), 11.

This thesis is concerned only with the latter. There was definite interaction between the counties and the city that had an impact on religious dissent.

In addition to being such a large, heavily populated urban centre, London was also a centre of dissent. The religious example of the capital to the rest of the nation must have been immense during the period of the Reformation. Since it was so large, London offered a degree of anonymity for religious dissenters and a large audience for their views. It also attracted travellers not only from within the nation, but from all over Europe. To achieve the greatest effect, the early Protestants quickly chose London as the "stormcentre of their mission."¹⁴⁷ Using the many roads and trade routes they could spread their views outwards from the metropolis whether as preachers or through the underground book trade. There is plenty of evidence that both the Lollards and the Puritans of Kent and Essex interacted with the City of London. Although travel in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a much more complicated undertaking than it is today, Kent and Essex were very close to London when compared to other counties. Writing in 1587, William Harrison estimated that from Colchester to London was about forty-three miles and that from Dover to London was about fifty-five miles, journeys which were manageable.¹⁴⁸ Because of the shorter distance involved Essex fell more under the influence of the capital than Kent, especially as it was also contained within the Diocese of London. However, although Alan Everitt attempts to argue that the influence

¹⁴⁷ Susan Brigden, London and the Reformation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 111.

¹⁴⁸ Harrison, The Description of England, 401.

of London on Kent was a very small factor, the evidence shows that the Lollards and Puritans in this area were much affected by the capital.¹⁴⁹

There had been Lollards present in London from very early on. As the wealth and corruption of the clergy were most apparent in London, the complaints of the Lollards were very strongly expressed here.¹⁵⁰ The London Lollards spread out through the nation and traveled into places like Kent and Essex. A good example of the sort of interaction that occurred is the case of Father Hacker.

Father John Hacker (alias Ebbe) was the leader of a Lollard group based in London, but he was also well known in Essex. In 1526, Geoffrey Wharton, Bishop Tunstal's Vicar-General, ordered that John Hacker be brought in for examination. This was part of a general visitation of the Diocese of London. It was believed that heresy had spread far "in this diocese of London, and especially about Colchester, and other parts of Essex, as well as in the City."¹⁵¹ Strype states that Hacker had been a great teacher in London "about six years past" and in the area of Colchester, Witham and Braintree.¹⁵² Hacker exposed many of his followers in both London and Essex. Hacker's testimony reveals that there was interaction between the two places. One of the people he implicates is Christopher Ravens, a tailor of Witham, Essex. Hacker discusses how he had visited

¹⁴⁹ Everitt argues that the idea of London as the chief factor in Kentish development is a very difficult one to eradicate. He says that Kent's extremity is about 75 miles from London and is therefore outside the capital's orbit of influence. Everitt concludes that any pull from London has been counter-balanced by Kent's peninsular position which bred and isolated and introverted community with little interest in the capital. Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization: The Evolution of Kentish Settlement* (Leicester:Leicester University Press, 1986), 21.

¹⁵⁰ Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, 93.

¹⁵¹ Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, 1:113.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 1:114.

with Ravens at his house and “that once or twice a yere by the space of four yeres he hath resorted to his house and taught him the commandments.”¹⁵³ They discussed the standard Lollard views of the sacrament and pilgrimages and the worshipping of images. Hacker states “that the one taught the other in such lernynys.”¹⁵⁴ This clearly demonstrates a connection between the London Lollards and Lollards in Essex, a relationship that could not have been achieved without the close geographical proximity. According to his evidence, Father Hacker was traveling frequently from his house in London to Essex. This is not to suggest, however, that Lollardy in this area was a new phenomenon. Hacker was interacting with an already well established Lollard community. One of the first Lollard victims was William Chiveling, a tailor, who was burned for heresy in Colchester in 1428.¹⁵⁵ The relationship with the London group helped to maintain the dissent in Essex.

The influence of London on Kent was not as great as on Essex and there is not as much evidence of direct interaction between London Lollards and Kentish ones. This is basically because of the extra distance involved from the capital. Kent is a peninsula and therefore some areas are very influenced by the capital whereas others are too far away and remote to be greatly affected.¹⁵⁶ However, in several of the busier trading centres of Kent, London influence is apparent, mostly in the form of wandering London preachers spreading Lollardy. One of these figures was Ralph Mungyn. In 1428, Henry Chichele,

¹⁵³ Harleian Manuscript 421, British Library, folio 11.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ The Red Paper Book of Colchester, 53.

¹⁵⁶ Victoria Drummond List, An Imperfect Reformation: Church, State and the Local Community in Post-Reformation Kent (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1991), 43.

the Archbishop of Canterbury, made an effort to track him down as part of a crackdown on heresy. Mungyn had been considered heretical for twenty years and was well known to have had connections with Kent while based in London.¹⁵⁷ There is also the case of the Lollard priest, Richard Wyche, who was burnt in London in 1440. Despite having been imprisoned once for heresy, after being released in 1420 he went on to hold several benefices in both Kent and Essex (he was still in Essex as of 1439).¹⁵⁸ His execution caused riots among the London Lollards, indicating that they viewed this man as an important figure for the cause.¹⁵⁹

Kent had been an important Lollard centre from the early fifteenth century. Sir John Oldcastle (Lord Cobham), a Kentish noble, had led the Lollard rebellion of 1414. Lollardy was mostly found in those areas with strong trading ties to the capital, particularly the clothing towns.¹⁶⁰ One of the ways in which Kent was influenced by London was through migration from the capital. By 1500, the most frequent settlers in this area were from London.¹⁶¹ William Lambarde comments on the type of interaction that took place between the capital and Kent in A Perambulation of Kent (1570), “The gentlemen be not heere (throughout) of so auncient stockes as elsewhere, especially in the partes neerer to London, from whiche citie (as it were from a certaine riche and wealthy seed plot) courtiers, lawyers, and marchants be continually translated, and do become

¹⁵⁷ The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1414-1443, ed E.F. Jacob, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943), 3:195-205.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 3:56-7.

¹⁵⁹ Thomson, 148-151.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 30.

¹⁶¹ Peter Clark, English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution, 11.

new plants amongst them."¹⁶² So there was migration going on between the two places. This group must have contained some unorthodox believers. There were advantages to being in Kent as opposed to London for someone holding dissenting views. A very good example of this is Thomas Becon. In London in 1540, Becon was compelled to recant and burn his books. In 1541, he managed to flee into Kent from where he could have easy access to London and his publisher.¹⁶³ Although Becon was clearly an early Protestant reformer as opposed to being either a Lollard or Puritan, his case demonstrates the kind of advantages that fleeing to Kent would hold for someone avoiding persecution. They would not be in the capital where they had previously encountered the authorities, but they would be close enough to take advantage of the connections and the book trade that London offered. It should be noted that Becon was eventually caught in Kent in 1543 and was arrested because of his connections with the most radical wings of the London book trade.¹⁶⁴

People fleeing London were not the only travellers from the capital to Kent. The new London gentry also viewed Kent as a good place to invest in land and industry. In the period 1480-1660, 290 London benefactors contributed almost 103 000 pounds to charitable funds in Kent.¹⁶⁵ Over half of these were Kentish-born and had made their wealth in London before returning, but 74 had been born elsewhere and had retired to

¹⁶² William Lambarde, A Perambulation of Kent (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1970), 6.

¹⁶³ Derrick Sherwin Bailey, Thomas Becon and the Reformation of the Church in England (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1952), 16-18.

¹⁶⁴ Brigden, London and the Reformation, 349.

¹⁶⁵ W.K. Jordan, Social Institutions in Kent, 1480-1660 (Maidstone: Kent Archaeological Society, 1961), 133.

Kent as gentry or quasi-gentry.¹⁶⁶ It is interesting that the concerns of the London benefactors were secular not religious, with over 80% of their donations going to poor relief and in particular education.¹⁶⁷ Here again London played a role in the society of Kent. Kentish men came back after making it rich in London and London gentry retired to this area. This forged a further connection between Kent and London.

This relationship worked the other way also - London provided a haven for dissenters fleeing their county. As a result of the investigation undertaken in the Canterbury diocese in 1428-9, William Harry of Tenterden, a layman believed to be a member of “secta lollardie”, was caught after having fled to London to avoid capture.¹⁶⁸ Harry was taking advantage of the anonymity of the large metropolis and may very well have been using a network amongst the Lollards that would provide havens for those being persecuted. There is later evidence that the Christian Brethren (the organized wing of Lollardy based in London) offered shelter to other heretics who were facing persecution. In 1527, John Stacy and Lawrence Maxwell, both “known men” and members of the Christian Brethren, sheltered Richard Bayfield, a Lollard fleeing from Essex, in London.¹⁶⁹ These two cases demonstrate that London and the counties of Kent and Essex contained Lollard groups that, to a certain extent, worked together. The counties provided somewhere close for London dissenters to flee to, while London offered a haven for those fleeing persecution in the counties.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 134.

¹⁶⁸ Register of Henry Chichele, 3:189.

¹⁶⁹ Foxe, Actes and Monuments, 4:680.

The case of William Harry, the Kent Lollard caught in London, leads into another aspect of the benefits to dissenters of proximity to London. Harry volunteered to abjure and in his statement he admitted reading "diversos libros in vulgari de sacra scriptura."¹⁷⁰ Harry's statement that he had read the scriptures in English indicates that there was a system for smuggling banned books to Lollard believers. In Kent and Essex there were two possible points of origin - the Continent and London. There is evidence that London was a very important factor in connecting the Lollards and Puritans in Kent and Essex to the underground book trade and thereby fostering and maintaining religious dissent.

Throughout the sixteenth century there was a great trade in contraband books. By the early part of the century there was increased traffic along the coast back and forth from supply centres like London and the ports like Dover and Colchester, either along the roads or by barge along the River Thames.¹⁷¹ According to John Davis these ports were connected with the heretical book trade, the books being smuggled in hidden in bundles of cloth and wool. In this way the trading links of these counties increased the spread of heretical works.¹⁷² Some of these works originated on the Continent, but there were also radical publishers based in London.

William Harry of Tenterden admitted reading the scriptures in English and this is a charge made frequently against Lollards. In Goudhurst, Kent in the visitation of 1511-12, it was charged that William Oswyne "hathe certeyne secret Englisshe books with him

¹⁷⁰ The Register of Henry Chichele, 3:189.

¹⁷¹ J.F. Davis, "Lollard Survival and the Textile Industry in the South-East of England," in Studies in Church History, ed G.J. Cuming (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 195.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 195-196.

and troblithe Goddes service."¹⁷³ It is unknown which books these were since Oswyne had already left the county.¹⁷⁴ Also in the investigation of 1511-12, William Baker of Cranbrook testified about traveling to one Walker's house in Maidstone where he said he read to the others "a booke of Mathewe, whereyn was conteyned the gospels in Englysshe."¹⁷⁵ However, he does not reveal where it came from and where the other members "hath bestowed it he cannot tell."¹⁷⁶ From examining depositions from both counties it is apparent that these groups passed the books around amongst themselves and were often unaware of, or unwilling to reveal, the origins of the books. Clearly, people in these counties were receiving works through the contraband book trade. Some examples do reveal the role of London in this endeavor.

One of the people exposed to the authorities by Father Hacker was Thomas Hilles, servant to the previously mentioned Lollard Christopher Ravens, of Witham, Essex. Hacker says that Hilles is "of the same sorte" and that he "hath a book of the New Testament in English printed which he bought at London."¹⁷⁷ Later in the same heresy record, Thomas Hilles himself describes a trip he made "about Whitsuntide" with one John Tyball. They traveled to London to speak with a Friar Barnes and "they bought a New Testament in English of him."¹⁷⁸ Another man accused in the same visitation, John Pykas, testified that about a year before, he had bought a copy of the New Testament in

¹⁷³ Kentish Visitations of Archbishop William Warham and his Deputies, 1511-12, 284.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Kent Heresy Proceedings 1511-12, 53.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Harleian Manuscript 421, British Library, folio 11.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, folio 35.

English “in Colchester of a Lumbard of London.”¹⁷⁹ The examples of Hilles and Pykas demonstrate that there was interaction between the Lollard groups in the county of Essex and the underground book trade originating in London. There is no similar direct evidence for the county of Kent, but, it is known that the Lollards there did have books and it is quite likely that these also originated in London.

This undertaking continued throughout the Reformation and by all accounts was well organized. Lawrence Maxwell and John Stacy of the Christian Brethren would travel to the various Lollard groups and collect money that would then be paid to publishers of dissenting books in London. John Davis estimates that by 1531, this group had published upwards of two thousand books arguing against the real presence.¹⁸⁰ One of the women involved in the spread of dissenting works was Joan Bocher, also known as Joan of Kent. Joan is a significant figure because she had connections with Kent, Essex and London. She abjured first in Colchester in 1528 after which she left Essex and moved to Frittenden, Kent where she was accused of heresy again in 1543.¹⁸¹ By this time Protestant works were no doubt merging with Lollard works, but, as Davis argues, the Protestant books such as Tyndale’s New Testament were moving through the same channels as the Lollard works had.¹⁸² Joan was associated with a radical dissenting group in Canterbury that was centred around the house of John Toftes who later harbored her and others accused of heresy.¹⁸³ Although she later moved on to Anabaptism, throughout

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, folio 17.

¹⁸⁰ Davis, “Joan of Kent, Lollardy and the English Reformation,” 228.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 229.

¹⁸² Ibid, 227.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 229.

the 1530s Joan was still a Lollard. According to Strype, Joan smuggled Lollard books into the King's royal court, hidden under her skirts and distributed them to noble ladies, such as Ann Askew, who was later charged with heresy.¹⁸⁴ Joan was an Essex woman, now an inhabitant of Kent, distributing books among the highest echelons of sixteenth century society. Proximity to London allowed Joan to travel between her home in Frittenden and the royal court.

During the Puritan era, the same factors applied. The Puritan secret printing presses were also based in London. Archbishop Parker, writing to Lord Burghley in November 1572, mentions the Puritans' books and "how they multiplied them by secret publishing."¹⁸⁵ There probably was a Puritan publication department based in London and its head was most likely John Field, the head of the London classis.¹⁸⁶ Until his death in 1588, Field collected accounts from ministers all over the country that were later printed in A Parte of a Register and the Marprelate Tracts.¹⁸⁷ It is known from letters that the Dedham classis, in Essex, had contact with the London classis and, in particular, with John Field. This was most likely to enable them to coordinate their efforts. There were three major classes in Essex - Colchester, Dedham and Braintree. It is believed that these classes fell under the supervision of the London classis and John Field and that they reported to them frequently.¹⁸⁸ This indicates that in the case of Essex, London was still the nerve centre of the movement and of the underground book trade.

¹⁸⁴ Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, 2:335.

¹⁸⁵ Correspondence of Matthew Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1853), 409.

¹⁸⁶ The Seconde Parte of a Register, 1:18.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ The Presbyterian Movement in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, 16.

However, Kent also became caught up in the book trade. Between 1573 and 1576, the preacher at Cranbrook, John Strowd, was accused of “printeing certaine bookes, for dispersinge bookes containinge seditious matter againste the state of this realme.”¹⁸⁹ In 1573, he was examined at Guildhall by the Queen’s commissioners and was asked about copies of Thomas Cartwright’s books. He replied that he had delivered thirty-four to the Bishop of London, that his wife had burnt some and that the rest “were dispersed abroad, he knew not where.”¹⁹⁰ The case of Strowd demonstrates that the county of Kent was involved in the underground book trade connected with London. Particularly significant is that Strowd had to turn over his books to the Bishop of London and not to the Bishop of Rochester even though Cranbrook fell under the jurisdiction of the latter.

All the cases that have been examined demonstrate that Kent and Essex dissenters were influenced by their proximity to London. There is evidence of dissenters, such as Father Hacker and William Harry, traveling between the counties and the capital. The Puritans also did some traveling. Richard Rogers, the Puritan preacher of Wethersfield in Essex, records that over a period of three years he had traveled to London ten times, although he does not mention for what purpose.¹⁹¹ In addition there was the central position that London held in the underground book trade. Being close to the centre of the secret printing presses, Kent and Essex benefited through having easy access to the latest dissenting works and became involved in the actual smuggling of the books along the

¹⁸⁹ Seconde Parte of a Register, 1:108.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 1:112-113.

¹⁹¹ Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries, 27.

trade routes. London, being a centre of religious radicalism from Lollardy through to Puritanism, had a significant influence over its neighbours.

Not only were these counties closely situated to the capital, but they were also positioned on the coast and contained several important ports. In the period of the Reformation, Europe was a hotbed of change and reforming ideas. The next topic to be examined is to what extent dissenting thought in Kent and Essex was affected by the proximity of these counties to the Continent.

Kent and Essex had strong ties with the Continent that, even in the sixteenth century, were already centuries old. It is believed that Kent had established trading ties with Gaul by as early as the first century BCE.¹⁹² Kent in particular has been strategically important since before the Norman Conquest. It is the closest part of Britain to the Continent and it has always been "peculiarly exposed to invasion as well as to the more peaceful influences of foreign civilization."¹⁹³ Kent had received foreign visitors from early on, mostly as pilgrims traveling from all over Europe to visit the shrine of Thomas a Becket in Canterbury.¹⁹⁴ In 1420 at the second centenary of the shrine, there were said to have been 100,000 pilgrims.¹⁹⁵ This was a significant number of visitors, many of them from abroad.

Although it undertook more trading with London than it did with the Continent, Essex had several ports and the very important road from Colchester to London ran through this county. Because of its geographical position, Essex was able to trade with

¹⁹² Victoria County History of Kent, 4:271.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Christopher Wright, Kent through the Years (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1975), 66.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 81.

Europe, in particular the Low Countries that were located just across the North Sea.¹⁹⁶

The following evidence will show that the proximity of these two counties to the Continent affected the degree of religious dissent in these areas, especially on the Elizabethan Puritan movement.

By the end of the medieval period, Kent had a successful cloth-making industry, especially in the towns of Cranbrook and Tenterden. Lambarde mentions how Henry I allowed a large influx of people from Flanders into England to instruct the English in the art of cloth-making.¹⁹⁷ This effort expanded in 1331 when Edward III decided to establish a cloth industry to equal that of the Netherlands. He issued passports to clothmakers to immigrate to England from Ghent to kickstart the industry.¹⁹⁸ These immigrants not only brought their artisanal skills, but they also brought their religious beliefs. Although Lollardy was a heresy native to England, it is significant that the towns in which the immigrants settled were centres of Lollardy. In Kent these areas were the towns of Tenterden, Cranbrook, Rolvenden, Maidstone and Benenden.¹⁹⁹ By the time of the Reformation there was a well-established foreign community of about two hundred years duration in Kent.

Essex had been a centre of the cloth industry since the thirteenth century, especially in Dedham, Colchester, Bocking and Braintree. It benefited from the same sort of measures as did Kent by encouraging migrants proficient in the cloth arts. As in Kent,

¹⁹⁶ William Hunt, The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 13.

¹⁹⁷ Lambarde, A Perambulation of Kent, 96.

¹⁹⁸ Wright, Kent through the Years, 86.

¹⁹⁹ See Register of Henry Chichele and Kent Heresy Proceedings.

these people settled in the cloth towns. There is an example that suggests that they sometimes became associated with Lollard communities. In the visitation of 1527/8, one Abraham Water, labeled as "Dutchman," abjured. He is identified as being of St. Botolph's in Colchester and he holds characteristic Lollard views. He admits to "saying that I could make of a piece of bread the body of almyghty god as well as the best priest could."²⁰⁰ The example of Water demonstrates that the immigrants were not adverse to holding heretical views. In his list of the people examined in the Diocese of London, Foxe mentions John Row, a Frenchman, and Christopher, a Dutchman of Antwerp, both cited in 1531 for the buying and distribution of banned books.²⁰¹ Foxe does not provide the location where they were based, simply that they were operating within the diocese of London. It is apparent that there were foreigners involved in heresy in England. People in Europe, especially in the Low Countries, were exposed to much propaganda in the early decades of the Reformation and doubts about the Real Presence predated the Reformation in some regions.²⁰² Therefore it is not surprising to find foreigners working for the cause around Kent and Essex. The unorthodoxy of the incoming immigrants from the Continent certainly had a steadily increasing impact over the rest of the sixteenth century.

Along with London, Kent and Essex were the main areas in England to receive refugees fleeing religious persecution on the Continent. Whereas before they had come to England seeking economic opportunity, from about the 1560s on, they came seeking

²⁰⁰ Harleian Manuscript 421, British Library, folio 10.

²⁰¹ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 5:37.

²⁰² Philip Benedict, "Introduction," in *Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands 1555-1585*, ed. Philip Benedict, Guido Marnef, Henk van Nierop and Marc Venard (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1999), 12.

religious asylum. They came from France and the Low Countries, in the former escaping the Wars of Religion, in the latter fleeing the religious persecution undertaken by Philip II of Spain. It is necessary to discuss briefly their beliefs and what they were fleeing to better assess their impact on the dissenting attitude in the two counties in which they settled.

From 1560-1580, Europe witnessed two bloody conflicts - the French Wars of Religion and the Revolt of the Netherlands, both of which stemmed from religious issues. In both places there had been the development of a Calvinist movement calling for reforms in Church and State.²⁰³ What ensued was a conflict between the Protestant groups and the Catholic ruling parties. While at the beginning France attempted to accommodate the Protestants, Philip II's reaction in the Netherlands and Low Countries was harsh repression of the heretics, especially under his new lieutenant, the Duke of Alba. The Protestant faction under William of Orange did eventually succeed, but by that time, many Protestants had already fled to places like England to avoid persecution.²⁰⁴ Although France attempted to maintain a balance, it also did not succeed. In 1568-70 and 1572-1576/7, Protestant worship was outlawed in almost the whole of France. After the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, the number of Protestant refugees fleeing the violence and Catholic persecution greatly increased.²⁰⁵ The refugees from the Continent that arrived in England were escaping harsh Catholic persecution and brought anti-Catholic sentiment along with horror stories of persecution at the hands of the Catholics. The

²⁰³ Philip Benedict, "Introduction," 1.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 8.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 16.

groups specific to this study are the Huguenots from France, the Walloons who spoke French and came from Artois, Hainault, Flanders, Brabant, Namur and Luxembourg and the Flemings who spoke a teutonic dialect and came from the Netherlands.²⁰⁶

As mentioned, Kent and Essex both had well-established foreign communities, but the religious turmoil in Europe caused an influx of immigrants and greatly increased these communities. Although England was already Protestant by the time this large movement occurred, the immigrants brought with them their own form of Protestantism that leaned more towards radical Calvinism than the more moderate Church of England. In Kent and Essex the communities of religious refugees were sizable and this clearly had an impact on dissent in these counties.

In Kent there were large communities of immigrants at Canterbury, Sandwich and Maidstone. Until 1570, these had been mostly Flemish communities, of clothworkers and religious refugees. After the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, these groups were joined by Huguenots fleeing France who settled mostly in Canterbury.²⁰⁷ Essex also received immigrant groups. The most permanent immigrant settlement was at Colchester. Dutch immigrants arrived there in 1570, having originally landed at Sandwich and gradually moved into Essex.²⁰⁸ Around 1575, there was some conflict and many left Colchester and settled around Halsted. But, a few years later, they had returned.²⁰⁹ In 1561, Sandwich invited and received four hundred and seven Dutch and Flemish people with a small number of Walloons from French Flanders, Artois and Picardy. They had all lived in

²⁰⁶ W. Cunningham, Alien Immigrants to England, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1969), 154.

²⁰⁷ Wright, Kent through the Years, 129.

²⁰⁸ Cunningham, Alien Immigrants to England, 153.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

London for several years and they brought their own minister in the person of Jacob Bucerus.²¹⁰ In 1568, after another huge influx of Walloons from Normandy and Flanders, it is estimated that “strangers” formed one third of the Sandwich population.²¹¹ With the sack of Antwerp in 1576, immigration to both Kent and Essex continued on an even larger scale. By the end of the sixteenth century, the foreign population of Sandwich outnumbered the native.²¹² The effect in Colchester was very similar, the Flemish community there growing to 1,297 between 1565 and 1586.²¹³

These sizable foreign communities appear to have maintained their religion. It has already been seen how the group that arrived in Sandwich brought their own minister. The organisation of the immigrants appears to have centred around their Church. Although the immigrants during the time of Edward III merged quickly with the local population, these later immigrants hung on to their communities and their Church which was often strongly Calvinist.²¹⁴ And they were accepted as such. In London, the Walloons had the Church of St. Anthony and the Flemings had the Church of the Austin Friars.²¹⁵ In the records of Sandwich of 1563, there are lists of the “Ecclesia Belgica” indicating a well-established community that had maintained their church.²¹⁶ The Canterbury congregation of Walloons was given complete religious freedom, they were

²¹⁰ Anne M. Oakley, “The Canterbury Walloon Congregation from Elizabeth I to Laud,” in Huguenots in Britain and their French background 1550-1800, ed. Irene Scouloudi (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1987, 56-71), 57.

²¹¹ Ibid, 57-58.

²¹² Victoria County History of Kent, 3:351.

²¹³ Hunt, The Puritan Moment, 10.

²¹⁴ Cunningham, Alien Immigrants to England, 139.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 154.

²¹⁶ Additional Manuscript 33511, British Library, folio 301-310.

allowed to provide their own schoolteacher and established the Church of St. Alphege.²¹⁷ Although they had no vote and were barred from becoming freemen, this latter congregation grew. They were viewed as a separate unit within the city and in 1582 they voted in a body of twelve men ("The Politic Men") to handle all of their affairs and problems.²¹⁸ These communities were not hidden or assimilated. They were a visible unit within the city and in both Kent and Essex they maintained their Calvinism. Peter Clark makes a valid point when he argues that the economic benefits received from the influx of these Calvinists, encouraged an association between Calvinism and economic prosperity in the minds of the inhabitants because the foreigners helped boost the cloth trade which had been in a slump.²¹⁹ Also, considering the size of these groups, the Puritan preachers felt more comfortable preaching in the cloth towns where there was a large foreign population because, being Calvinist, they would be more receptive to their ideas. Cranbrook, Kent, was one of the main areas of settlement for the foreigners and as Thomas Wotton writes it was a popular place for preachers, especially on market days "where the use or trade of good clothing dothe alwayes nouryshe a great number."²²⁰

The evidence concerning Sandwich in particular demonstrates that the refugees from the Continent were often not passive even after they settled in England. According to Marcel Backhouse, names have been established for 470 strangers in Sandwich who arrived in 1561-1566. Of these, 48% came from the volatile area of the Westkwartier in

²¹⁷ Oakley, "The Canterbury Walloon Congregation from Elizabeth I to Laud," 59.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 60.

²¹⁹ Peter Clark, "Josias Nicholls and Religious Radicalism, 1553-1639," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 28:2 (April 1977), 137.

²²⁰ Thomas Wotton's Letter-Book 1574-1586, ed. G.Eland (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 24.

Flanders and 140 out of 470 are known to have been condemned heretics.²²¹ Several of the arrivals actively continued to influence the situation in their homeland. In 1561-1566, 150 Flemings came to Sandwich from London. Of this group 32 were militant Calvinists who later returned to the Westkwartier to challenge the authorities.²²² The radical minister, Jacob de Buyzere, was a central figure in the Sandwich community having arrived there from the Dutch Church of London in 1561. In 1566 he returned to the Westkwartier and became a leading figure in the Iconoclastic Fury in which churches were burned and priests murdered. They were defeated and by 1569 de Buyzere is back in Sandwich where he died in 1572.²²³ He is just one example of the type of militant that settled in these counties. His adventures also demonstrate that the Strangers were passionate about their religion and were still very actively involved in the religious controversy back home. Backhouse discusses several instances in which the refugees and their colleagues in the homeland coordinated efforts to accomplish things for the cause, such as prison breaks.²²⁴ It is important for this study because it demonstrates the passionate religious feeling of the refugees and shows continuous contact between Kent and the Continent. These continued contacts with religious controversy were cause for concern. As early as 1568, Elizabeth issued the "Queen's Proclamation Against Strangers." She described many of the immigrants as "sundry persons, being infected with certain dangerous and pernicious opinions in matters of religion, contrary to the faith

²²¹ Marcel Backhouse, The Flemish and Walloon Communities at Sandwich during the Reign of Elizabeth I (1561-1603) (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, 1995), 17.

²²² Ibid, 20.

²²³ Ibid, 37.

of the Church of Christ."²²⁵ She ordered London and all the coastal towns searched for such people and they were to be examined and tried for holding heretical opinions.²²⁶

Although they did not assimilate with the native population, the groups of refugees from the Continent helped to foster and maintain the prominence of dissent in Kent and Essex, especially in the latter half of the sixteenth century when their beliefs had much in common with the aims of Elizabethan Puritanism.

The Continent did not only influence the dissenters of Kent and Essex through religious refugees. It also exerted an influence as a haven. This was during the Marian years when religious refugees from England sought protection from persecution on the Continent. Between the death of Edward VI in 1554 and the death of Queen Mary in 1558, many English Protestants sought refuge in places such as Aarau, Frankfurt, Zurich and Geneva. While there the Protestant refugees came under the influence of Calvinism and this played an integral role in the later emergence of English Puritanism. It has already been seen that Essex and Kent had major ports and that they were situated on the important trade routes for goods to and from London and its continental trading partners. During the Marian exile, the refugees moved along these routes, as they did again when they returned four years later. There are many exiles who either originated in one of the

²²⁴ In the case of Willem Dammon, a group of refugees left Sandwich for the Westkwartier in order to free him from jail. They succeeded and he and they returned to Sandwich. Clearly there had been contact between Sandwich and the Continent. Ibid, 145.

²²⁵ The Remains of Edmund Grindal, 297.

²²⁶ Ibid, 298.

two counties or who ended up settling there upon their return, most of them holding radical Puritan opinions.²²⁷

English natives were also not the only ones forced into exile. What small groups of “strangers” there were in England were ordered to leave by Mary and many of the Walloons of Kent and Essex joined the English exiles on the Continent, mostly at Frankfurt. They formed a large part of the English community there and debated with them over the Book of Common Prayer and they succeeded in “bringing round many of the exiles to their views.”²²⁸ It is apparent that the exiles were exposed to a simpler, more Calvinistic form of Protestantism and that this had an impact on the views they held when they returned.

What is most important is the role that the two counties played in maintaining the communications system between the exiles and their supporters back home. There had been traffic in communications between the continent and Kent and Essex for many years. According to John Foxe, in 1531, Richard Bayfield admitted to smuggling heretical books into England, including ones in English by William Tyndale and John Frith. He stated that he had brought them from the Continent, had landed them at Colchester and had dispersed them from there, many ending up in London.²²⁹ So there was a tradition of communications passing between the Continent and England through the ports of Kent and Essex. It is clear that during the Marian years this tradition survived. In 1558, Mary released a prohibition in which she mentions books “daily

²²⁷ See the complete census of the exiles in: Christina Garrett, The Marian Exiles, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

²²⁸ Cunningham, Alien Immigrants to England, 146.

²²⁹ John Foxe, Actes and Monuments, 4:683.

brought into the realm out of foreign countries."²³⁰ So the communications network was obviously still working in 1558 and it did so through agents who traveled back and forth between the Continent and England. Two of the ones that are known about are Thomas Sprat and John Abell. Thomas Sprat was a tanner of Kent. He had fled to Calais, but he made frequent trips back to England as a messenger to and from the exiles.²³¹ John Abell, also a native of Kent had lived in London, but fled to the Continent after the death of Edward VI. He traveled between Strasbourg and England, like Sprat, carrying communications and books back and forth.²³² While on their missions Sprat and Abell would have landed at either a Kent or Essex port, most likely Dover, and, both being Kentishmen, no doubt made use of any connections they may have had in the county. There was much activity of this sort also at Colchester. During the Marian years, Colchester became a haven for Protestants, "a place of refuge and inspiration for gospellers from many parts of the country."²³³ The fact that the Continent was so close played a role in the gathering of Protestants there. Since they had major ports and were situated on the main thoroughfares between London and the Continent, it is easy to see how these counties would be exposed to the influence of the exiles. Being the counties through which both the refugees and their secret communications moved exposed them to a degree of Protestantism during the Marian years and helped to maintain dissent and anti-Catholic sentiment here during the period 1554-58. The close contact with the exiles may have encouraged the inhabitants to desire a purer form of Protestantism, one without

²³⁰ Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, 3:130.

²³¹ Garrett, *The Marian Exiles*, 292.

²³² Ibid, 67-68.

²³³ Patrick Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal 1519-1583* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1979), 115.

any Catholic vestiges, one that the Church of England did not provide, but which Puritanism did. In A Second Admonition to Parliament (1572) Thomas Cartwright emphasized the continental churches as role models, “the examples of the best Churches beyond the seas, as Geneva, Fraunce, etc,” should be followed by the English Church.²³⁴

The underground book trade between England and the Continent continued well beyond the Marian years. Dissenters on both sides continued to communicate and in May 1566, a letter to Archbishop Parker indicates that the writings of the English nonconformists were somehow being dispersed in the Low Countries.²³⁵

There is one last factor that relates to geographic proximity to the Continent which fostered dissent in Kent and Essex. This was their vulnerability to attack during times of war. Especially in the Elizabethan period, it is easy to see how this encouraged intense anti-Catholic sentiment and inspired a desire for a religion with no traces of popery remaining.

After the Reformation, Henry VIII feared invasion from Europe. He knew that it would come from the eastern coast. Because of this he heavily fortified all the counties on the eastern coast from Essex down to Cornwall.²³⁶ Throughout the rest of the sixteenth century Kent and Essex bore the greatest burden of warfare in both expenses and men because of their proximity to Europe. This was true during the French Wars, but increased greatly after the Spanish Armada. It was a heavy burden, especially for the county of Kent. In a letter written to Lord Cobham on August 3, 1595 Sir Thomas Fludd

²³⁴ Puritan Manifestoes, 94-95.

²³⁵ Correspondence of Matthew Parker, 282.

²³⁶ Nigel Nicolson, Kent (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), 29.

and William Sedley summarize the situation, "The shire, being the only high street or way by which all comers and goers into and out of the realm pass, is greatly charged with provisions, horses and carriages, and the personal attendance of the best sort, some of which services have cost 3000 li."²³⁷ They go on to say that "It has lately borne, and during the war is likely to bear, a great burthen."²³⁸ And they were right. In 1599, of an army of 10 680, Kent alone had supplied 6000 men.²³⁹ So the county clearly carried a heavy burden and this caused friction between the government and the people. In January 1564, Parker wrote to Lord Cecil to relate what Lord Cobham had reported to him about the state of Dover. They were trying to prepare for the threatened French invasion and clearly the people of Dover believed that the government was not doing nearly enough to protect them from attack, "the people in the town, as he reported, be amazed, and have their hearts cold, to hear of no preparation towards this feared mischief."²⁴⁰ The burden borne by the eastern coast counties during the times of war caused friction between the counties and the central government along with instilling a fear of an invasion. But not just of invasion. An invasion where they would be the first targets and invasion always by a Catholic enemy, whether it be France or Spain. This, combined with the horror stories of Catholic persecution carried by the European religious refugees, led to increased anti-Catholic sentiment here. This added to the belief that there should be absolutely no vestiges of Catholicism allowed to remain in the Church of England.

²³⁷ Victoria County History of Kent, 3:39.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Correspondence of Matthew Parker, 204.

The last geographical factor in the prevalence of dissent in these areas is the proximity of Kent and Essex to one another. They are separated from one another by the River Thames that could easily be crossed by barge. It is more than a coincidence that the two English counties that were major centres for both Lollardy and Puritanism were situated next to each other. The closeness of the two counties may not have caused religious dissent, but it certainly helped to maintain it. Being so close, the dissenting groups were able to provide protection for people fleeing from the other county and they were also able to coordinate their efforts.

The case of Joan Bocher has already been looked at. After having faced investigation and abjured in Essex, she crossed the river and settled in Kent. She was later investigated again because of her connections with the Royal Court. She had clearly persisted in her heretical beliefs, but leaving Essex to go into Kent provided her with several years of anonymity in which to do so and in which to convert others.

There is another, earlier example of a dissenter traveling between the two counties. In fact, one of the earliest Lollards martyred for the cause may have lived in both counties. It has already been mentioned that William Chiveling, a tailor, was burned in Colchester in 1428. There is no doubt that he was executed and that he was a heretic, but the question arises over whether he was a Kent or Essex man. The Register of Henry Chichele identifies him as being a heretic from Kent.²⁴¹ On the other hand, The Red Paper Book of Colchester identifies him as “a certain William Chivelyng, of

²⁴¹ Register of Henry Chichele, 4:297-301.

Colchester."²⁴² One or other of the sources may be mistaken, but it is also possible that Chiveling did travel from Kent to Essex where he was eventually caught.

Another example of travel between the two counties is the Lollard preacher, William White. White was actually arrested in Norwich in 1428, but in 1422 White is mentioned in the Canterbury Register as a heretic who was caught preaching without a license "in ecclesia de Tenterden' Cantuar' diocesis" and was charged with "heresi ac crimine Lollardie."²⁴³ In May 1428, Chichele issued an order for the arrest of certain heretics in Kent, around the Tenterden area. However, several, like William White and William Harry had already left. Whereas Harry fled to London, White ended up in Norwich, but only after he had been to Essex. By July 6, 1428, there is evidence that White was believed to be in Essex, in the form of royal letters directing the keeper of Colchester Castle to arrest White and two of his followers.²⁴⁴ When investigated, it was alleged that at Easter 1428 White had held a religious rite at his house in Essex. Three of those present were sought one month later in Kent.²⁴⁵

If these cases are valid they indicate that there was travel and interaction between the Lollard groups in Kent and Essex. There is less evidence of travel between the two counties when considering the Elizabethan Puritans. This is because the Puritans faced nowhere near the amount of persecution that the Lollards did. Even though they clashed with the orthodox Church and were sometimes suspended, they were never under threat of death and were free from the necessity of having to flee. However, it is clear that the

²⁴² The Red Paper Book of Colchester, 53.

²⁴³ Register of Henry Chichele, 3:85.

²⁴⁴ Aston, Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion, 81.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 87.

Puritans in the two counties did have interaction and did to a certain degree coordinate their efforts.

In September 1584, the Dedham Classis discussed arrangements for a general conference of the Puritans. This was to include the groups from Suffolk, Norfolk, London, Kent (the group was centred around Dudley Fenner, the minister of Cranbrook) and Essex.²⁴⁶ The Dedham classis also corresponded frequently with Josias Nichols of Eastwell and John Elvin of Westwell, both of which were situated around Ashford in the strong puritan area of Kent.²⁴⁷ This demonstrates that groups in both counties interacted with one another and with the London classis. As David Andrew Penny points out in his thesis examining the Freewill Movement, a very radical form of Puritanism, this movement began in Kent and spread to Essex through members of the Kent factions who traveled into Essex persuading Puritans to follow their views.²⁴⁸

Although there is not as much evidence for Puritan interaction as for that of the Lollards, clearly those in Essex did coordinate their efforts to a certain extent with those in Kent. The fact that the two counties were situated next to one another helped to foster religious dissent, as in the case of the Freewillers spreading their radical point of view. At the very least, their proximity helped to maintain the religious dissent already in existence by providing dissenters with somewhere close to flee to if necessary, somewhere with much the same economic and social systems. That Kent and Essex were neighbours definitely played a role in their reputations as centres of dissent.

²⁴⁶ The Presbyterian Movement in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, 94.

²⁴⁷ Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 321.

²⁴⁸ David Andrew Penny, The Freewill Movement in the South East of England (Ph.D. Diss., University of Guelph, 1980), 127.

According to this evidence, geographical location does impact the prevalence of religious dissent in a specific area. It is apparent that, being situated as they were, between London and the Continent, Kent and Essex were exposed to radical religious ideas. Proximity to London provided access to religious dissent and a haven for those dissenters fleeing persecution. From the Continent they were exposed to radical Calvinism through religious refugees from France and the Low Countries and to the Marian exiles being situated as they were on the main communication routes. In addition, the fact that Kent and Essex would have been the first targets if there was a Catholic invasion, no doubt created anti-Catholic sentiment and made Puritanism more appealing. And the proximity of the counties to one another may also have had an effect. In short, where the two counties were situated affected their identification with the movements of Lollardy and Elizabethan Puritanism. Location made them very attractive to religious dissenters, and in addition made the inhabitants more receptive to dissent.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIAL FACTORS

It has been discussed how geographical location had an influence on a particular area's support of dissenting religious movements. In the case of Kent and Essex it is apparent that their location played a role in the attraction of the inhabitants of these areas to dissent. Their location gave them the ability to access and maintain dissenting viewpoints. However, geography alone cannot make an area susceptible to dissent. It is a significant factor, but not the sole factor. The seeds of religious dissent cannot be planted in an area unless the inhabitants are receptive. Therefore an examination of the societies of Kent and Essex is essential.

This chapter will be a short profile of the two counties and the sort of people who lived in them. It will have three sections. The first will examine the long history of social unrest in Kent and Essex. The inhabitants of both places displayed a strong willingness to revolt against established authority. This may have encouraged the inhabitants to be more receptive to dissenting religious movements. The next section will discuss class composition. The gentry and yeomen as classes did not have a long history in these areas. Therefore they did not hold the deep-rooted loyalty that classes with an older pedigree may have had. For the most part they were self-made men who valued their independence and often wielded their power to forward their beliefs. They controlled much wealth and they were sympathetic to the movements of Lollardy and Puritanism and aided their spread and continuity. And lastly, the important role of the cloth industry in this area will be discussed. The prominence of cloth workers in the movement of Lollardy in particular cannot be ignored.

Kent and Essex are two of the oldest counties in England. The Romans landed and established themselves in these areas and, eventually, both of these counties developed into independent kingdoms. From very early on the people in these counties seem to have possessed a sense of themselves and their independence. Writing in 1570, William Lambarde mentions how his home county of Kent was distinguishable from others even in Roman times, “our countrie of Kent, the inhabitantes whereof, Caesar himselfe in his Commentaries, confesseth to be of all other the most full of humanitie and gentlenesse.”²⁴⁹ All the works on Kent and its history agree that it was unique and that its society developed along a different line than most other counties. The strong self-consciousness in this area seems to have been induced by the role that this county played after the Norman conquest. William the Conqueror used much of the economic and legal systems of Kent as a model for the law of the rest of England. Because of this Kent was allowed to retain many of its rights and privileges, unlike most of the other counties.²⁵⁰ Its strategic importance for both trade and defence encouraged William to do all that he could to keep the people of Kent satisfied and this led them to be very aware of their self-importance.²⁵¹ Essex did not play such a central role in the period of the Conquest, but it also possessed an identity of long-standing. At the time of Caesar’s invasion in 54 BCE Essex was inhabited by the Trinobantes and already possessed a sizable town, Camulodunum, which was later to become Colchester. And, like Kent, by the late fifth

²⁴⁹ Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent*, 2.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 19.

²⁵¹ *Victoria County History of Kent*, 3:177.

century CE it was a flourishing independent kingdom.²⁵² So, although it has not been lauded as much as Kent in the annals of English legal and economic history, Essex and its inhabitants did possess an ancient identity and sense of independence. This led both Kent and Essex on similar paths and made both of them prone to religious dissent.

Both Kent and Essex possessed a willingness to act against the state and the Church when they believed it was in their best interests. Neither county was backward in expressing their dissatisfaction with those in authority and this offers much insight into the attraction that religious dissent held for the inhabitants of these areas. This was particularly prevalent in the period encompassed by this study. As with the rest of England, the Black Death had a huge impact on Kent and Essex. The rise in cost of living as a result of the plague and the French Wars heightened the discontent in these areas.²⁵³ The circumstances that emerged as a result of the Black Death caused discontent all across England and it culminated in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. This revolt was led by the people of Kent and Essex. It began as a protest against the poll tax in Essex, but swiftly grew when the Kentishmen joined them. The two groups formed a force of 50 000 to 100 000 men. In June they assaulted Rochester Castle under the leadership of Wat Tyler to release the radical Wycliffite priest, John Ball, who had inspired them to revolt.²⁵⁴ The Peasants' Revolt was eventually put down, but not before they had marched on the Tower of London and executed the Archbishop of Canterbury on Tower Hill (he

²⁵² Victoria County History of Essex, 2nd ed., 8 vols., ed. William Page and J. Horace Round (London: University of London, 1977), 2:203-204.

²⁵³ Victoria County History of Kent, 3:286.

²⁵⁴ Victoria County History of Essex, 2:214.

was reportedly beheaded by John Starlyng, an Essex man).²⁵⁵ The leaders, including Wat Tyler, were captured and executed. However, this was only the beginning of a long period of revolt in which the people of Kent and Essex were at the forefront. Despite the important role played by John Ball in the Peasants' Revolt, it is unlikely that religion played a large role, but the targeting of the Archbishop indicates that there was some dissatisfaction with the Church.

The Oldcastle Rebellion of 1414 has already been discussed. The leader was Sir John Oldcastle who lived at Cooling Castle, a fortified manor house in Kent.²⁵⁶ Unlike 1381, this revolt was clearly based on a religious issue, Oldcastle himself being a fervent Lollard. About twenty-four of the men who were indicted after the uprising were from Essex and several more came from Colchester, "a notorious hotbed of the sect."²⁵⁷ It was after this revolt that a commission was sent out to uncover the extent of the Lollard sects. The commission found well-established groups in Essex at Colchester, Thaxted and Pattiswick.²⁵⁸

Discontent continued in both Kent and Essex. During the reign of Henry VI, Kent became the center of national discontent with the incapable king.²⁵⁹ The biggest cause of discontent was the neglect and resulting loss of almost all of England's conquests in France. Discontent greatly increased when it was discovered that the Duke of Suffolk had conceded the last English possession of Maine to the French king in a secret clause. In

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 2:215.

²⁵⁶ Frank W. Jessup, *A History of Kent* (London: Phillimore and Co. Ltd., 1974), 68.

²⁵⁷ L.R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death*, 255.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 265.

²⁵⁹ *Victoria County History of Kent*, 3:289.

May 1450, the Duke of Suffolk landed at Dover on the coast of Kent, after being waylaid on his way to Calais. He did not receive a welcome reception. The account of the fate of the Duke of Suffolk comes from a letter written to John Paston, "oon of the lewdeste of the shippe badde hym ley down his hedde, and he should be fair ferd wyth, and dye on a swerd; and toke a rusty swerd, and smotte of his hedde withyn halfe a doseyn strokes, and toke away his gown of russet, and his dobelette of velvet mayled, and leyde his body on the sands of Dover."²⁶⁰

Less than a month after the Duke of Suffolk was murdered, the Cade rebellion broke out. Clearly it had been building for some time while the English possessions were being lost. It started at Ashford, Kent and by June, 20 000 men were encamped on Blackheath under their leader Jack Cade, a soldier who had returned from France.²⁶¹ Unlike the uprising of 1381, this revolt commanded the support of the upper classes of society not just the peasantry, since many of them had fought in France as knights and archers. Cade had hundreds of followers from Kent, including 1 knight, 18 esquires, 74 gentlemen and numerous yeomen.²⁶² Cade's rebellion was quite serious. He and his rebels held London for three days during which they executed the Lord Treasurer. The revolt collapsed after Cade was executed and free pardons offered to his supporters.²⁶³ Eight of the rebels died in Canterbury in February 1451 and the heads of nine more men of Kent were placed on London bridge.²⁶⁴ Several men of Essex were also

²⁶⁰ The Paston Letters 1422-1509, 3 vols., ed. James Gairdner (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910), 1: 84.

²⁶¹ Wright, Kent through the Years, 89.

²⁶² Jessup, A History of Kent, 69.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Wright, Kent through the Years, 90.

involved in this uprising and the inhabitants were implicated in helping Cade to travel around the area. Several of them suffered the punishment meted out to Nicholas Jakes, "atteint of high treason," who was hung, drawn and quartered and one of his quarters sent each to Colchester, Rochester, Chichester and Portsmouth.²⁶⁵ Of Cade's Essex followers about one half were agriculturalists and about one quarter were craftsmen and retailers.²⁶⁶ After the uprising was put down a very turbulent time ensued in Essex and there were many small uprisings in the months that followed the downfall of Cade. One of these was led by Robert Helder, a weaver from Bocking, who had also been accused of being a Lollard. On September 9, 1450, Helder staged an uprising at Sible Hedingham. It was put down, but not before the rector of the parish had been murdered.²⁶⁷ Nor was Kent quelled by the defeat of Cade. In July 1451, the county was in such a disturbed state that the King decided to make a progress through it. While he was at Canterbury, there was an uprising of about five thousand at Maidstone.²⁶⁸

Essex and especially Kent continued throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to display a willingness to rebel against authority. The people of Kent openly supported Henry Tudor against the monarch, Richard III. Henry reckoned that among his supporters there were "many Kentishmen."²⁶⁹ And much later, a combination of foreign affairs and religious tensions culminated in Wyatt's Rebellion of 1554. Sir Thomas Wyatt lived at Allington Castle near Maidstone and he was passionate about preserving the

²⁶⁵ Victoria County History of Essex, 2:217.

²⁶⁶ Poos, A Rural Society after the Black Death, 258.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 259.

²⁶⁸ Victoria County History of Kent, 3:292.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 3:296.

accomplishments of the Reformation. Wyatt set up camp at Rochester and had collected about 4 000 followers within just a few days. He marched to London, but found no support there and surrendered. He was executed a few months later.²⁷⁰ Essex likewise continued to be outspoken, racking up more charges of sedition than any other county during the Elizabethan period. From the 1570s on seditious talk increased in this county caused by unemployment, high prices and disastrous harvests. F.G. Emmison argues that these attitudes had an older model, “the medieval stirrings of radicalism in Essex were becoming rampant” and he reiterates that this county had a “sturdy, independent spirit.”²⁷¹

Both Kent and Essex have a tradition of insurrection from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Most of the uprisings were caused by socio-economic factors as opposed to issues of religion. However, they demonstrate that neither Kent nor Essex was averse to following a path contrary to that dictated by the national authority. When they felt justified the inhabitants were perfectly willing to rebel, risking their lives to right the wrongs that they perceived. Apparently the Church was also a target in these uprisings. While they were rebelling the people of Kent and Essex took the opportunity to take out their frustrations with the Church, as can be seen in both the murder of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1381 and the rector of Sible Hedingham in 1450. It is interesting that the rebels from these areas identified the Church with the various problems that had caused them to rebel in the first place. So the attack on church figures tends to indicate the

²⁷⁰ Jessup, *A History of Kent*, 94-95.

²⁷¹ Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Disorder*, 65.

existence of anti-clericalism, a condition leading to dissent. The revolts demonstrate the tendency of the people of Kent and Essex to go their own way, even if it was in opposition to authority, civil or religious.

The class composition of the counties of Kent and Essex also played a role in the willingness of these areas to accept dissenting groups like the Lollards and the Puritans. As will be demonstrated, the classes that tend to be more independent such as the gentry and the yeomen were both numerous here. In Kent in particular, but also to a certain extent in Essex, the inhabitants had always had a higher degree of independence and freedom from serfdom than elsewhere in the country. The attitudes and religious beliefs of the yeomen and gentry are particularly significant in these areas because of the power vacuum that existed here. As a result of their location and terrain, the areas of these counties that were prone to dissent were often subjected to only minor interference from the authorities, whether civil or ecclesiastical. This isolation from central authority made the influence of the yeomen and the gentry much greater and that is why it is necessary to examine their religious beliefs and affiliations to see if they played a role in the prominence of dissent in these areas.

From the twelfth century on, Kent had a large number of small-scale tenants working on manors who would form partnerships and in effect work for themselves. This fostered a strong sense of solidarity among the lower classes of society.²⁷² The revolt of 1381 began in the Southeast and had many Kentishmen among its leaders, but Frank W. Jessup argues that the concerns of the people of Kent must have been different from those

²⁷² Penny, The Freewill Movement in the south east of England, 1550-58, 39.

of the other supporters. He argues that serfdom had always been rare in Kent. And he further argues that when labor services were imposed they were not very burdensome. Jessup's conclusion is that the people of Kent were more concerned about the burden placed on them as a result of the French Wars than any infringement on their freedom.²⁷³ Prior to 1066 even the county's peasants were often independent free-holders who worked a fair-sized farm. By the middle of the Middle Ages feudalism had all but disappeared in Kent. In fact, being born in Kent was sufficient to classify one as a free-man throughout the nation, as Lambarde points out, "the bodies of all Kentish persons be of free condition."²⁷⁴

Essex began very similarly to the society of Kent. It had an unusually high number of free-holders before the Black Death. They were more numerous here than elsewhere in England and in the county itself they far out-numbered the villeins. But after the Black Death agriculture contracted and manufacturing began to expand, especially the cloth industry, and it absorbed much of the population of the countryside. By about 1350, over half of Essex rural inhabitants, many of whom had previously been free-holders, were now dependent on wage labor in the industrial or artisanal fields.²⁷⁵ This hampered their independence much more than that of their Kentish counterparts. Unlike Kent, therefore, Essex was fighting against infringement of rights and the imposition of a servile status in the revolt of 1381.

²⁷³ Jessup, *A History of Kent*, 66.

²⁷⁴ Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent*, 511.

²⁷⁵ Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death*, 17-18.

From the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the Southeast of England held the largest proportional share of the total wealth of the nation as a result of both farming and industry.²⁷⁶ The prosperity throughout the Southeast ushered in the heyday of a very important segment of society - the yeomen. Because of the prosperity in this area this class was numerous in both Kent and Essex and influenced the societies to move towards greater independence. The forebear of the yeoman was the free tenant who stood above villeins and serfs and was numerous in both Kent and Essex.²⁷⁷ By tradition the yeoman were rural and agriculturally based, working farms passed down through the family although many also farmed newly acquired land. William Harrison describes them thus: "freemen born English, and may dispend of their own free land in yearly revenue to the sum of 40s. sterling, or 6 pounds as money goeth in our time."²⁷⁸ They were a very proud class, often not wishing to move up to the gentry class, and they believed in defending their views, as can be seen in the fact that there were many yeomen in the ranks of Cade's followers.²⁷⁹ In Kent, the yeomen formed a significant part of the society. Lambarde discusses them saying "the yeomanrie, or common people... is no where more free, and jolly, then in this shyre" and "neither be they here so much bounden to the gentrie by copyhold, or custumarie tenures, as the inhabitants of the westerne countries."²⁸⁰ Aside from being numerous, the Kentish yeomen were also notoriously wealthy, benefiting from trade with London, as is demonstrated in this rhyme:

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 34.

²⁷⁷ Mildred Campbell, The English Yeoman under Elizabeth and the Stuarts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 11.

²⁷⁸ Harrison, A Description of England, 117.

²⁷⁹ Victoria County History of Kent, 3:290.

²⁸⁰ Lambarde, A Perambulation of Kent, 7.

A Knight of Wales,
 A gentleman of Cales,
 A laird of the North Countree,
 A yeoman of Kent
 Sitting on his penny rent
 Can buy them out all three.²⁸¹

The progress of the yeoman's prosperity was a little slower in Essex mostly because of the set-backs after the Black Death. However, in the sixteenth century land value rose in Essex and the areas around it. The yeoman who possessed excess farmland above what he needed to be self-sufficient could prosper greatly through renting it out and many did at the expense of small-holders who could not afford the high prices.²⁸² It was a county of large farms interspersed with smaller ones and the Essex yeoman had plenty of opportunity. They supplied not only Colchester and the continuously expanding cloth towns of the county, but also the demanding London food market that was the main impetus behind the prosperity of the Essex yeoman-farmer.²⁸³

The yeoman class was therefore gaining in both wealth and numbers as the old feudal system broke down and particularly in Kent and Essex where their prosperity was fueled by London. So what impact would the growth and increasing wealth of this class have on the attraction of religious dissent to these counties? They formed a segment of society that held a very strong sense of independence. After all, the yeomen in these counties controlled the food supply to the capital and other parts of the nation. They were also self-made men. Even if they farmed family land their forebears had prospered from

²⁸¹ Campbell, *The English Yeoman under Elizabeth and the Stuarts*, 77.

²⁸² Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525-1700* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 6.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

being independent free-holders outside of the gentry's authority. W.K. Jordan argues in his study of Kent society that the yeomen were conservative when compared to the gentry, but yet over this period a decline in their interest in the Church can clearly be plotted. He finds that in the pre-Reformation era, yeomen donated approximately 80% of their bequests to religious funds. During the Reformation this fell to 34% and in the Elizabethan period it had dropped to just over 6%.²⁸⁴ Granted this does not demonstrate a willingness to follow religious dissent, but it does indicate a secularization of this class and a drawing away from the close relationship with the Church.

The yeomen class was apparent among the Lollards in Kent. Stephen Castelyn was one of the over fifty suspects detained on suspicion of Lollardy in Kent in 1511-12. Seven Castelyn wills exist from 1473 to 1532 and these suggest that the Castelyn family was very well established in Tenterden from the 1460s on and that they got their wealth from lands and tenements in both Rolvenden and Tenterden.²⁸⁵ The Pellonds were another prominent family. William Pellond was abjured in 1511-12. They had held Tenterden land from the fourteenth century on and were of higher status and older pedigree than the Castelyns.²⁸⁶ In the case of Colchester apparently several Lollards there were connected with local government. Thomas Matthew went on to be the Chamberlain of the town in 1532-33. Robert Best was the eldest son of an Alderman and Margaret Cowbridge was an Alderman's widow.²⁸⁷ Discontent with both Church and State can be

²⁸⁴ Jordan, *Social Institutions in Kent, 1480-1660*, 149.

²⁸⁵ Rob Lutton, "Connections between Lollards, Townsfolk and Gentry in Tenterden in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries," in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 205.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 215.

²⁸⁷ Higgs, *Lay Piety in the Borough of Colchester*, 295-296.

increasingly seen in the yeomen. In 1528 about one hundred yeomen of Kent urged Wolsey to encourage the King to repay his loan from them. Wolsey responded by having their leaders arrested. This led to increased hatred of the Cardinal amongst this class. There was seditious talk in Cranbrook and Goudhurst and several people were indicted at Rochester Castle for plotting to drown Wolsey.²⁸⁸ There is very clear friction here between the yeomen of Kent and the leading figure of the Church in England. Although it was not over a religious issue, it is still significant.

Protestantism appealed greatly to the yeoman class. It makes sense that the independence of this class would encourage affiliation with a movement that advocated less commitment to the Church. Puritanism was even more attractive to this social stratum. There were yeomen who were content to be Anglicans, but mostly this class leaned towards Puritanism, whether in its moderate or more radical forms. They may not always have had the education to understand the theological details, but they had deep religious loyalty and were willing to defend their beliefs.²⁸⁹ According to Mildred Campbell it appealed to this class because it preached simplicity and independence. The sons of yeomen were the ideal recruits for the Puritan clergy, particularly within the Presbyterian classis of which they formed a large part.²⁹⁰ The yeomen continued to fill important posts in local government, "the yeomen were both bone and sinew of rural parish government."²⁹¹ When the yeomen did have strong religious views their

²⁸⁸ Victoria County History of Kent, 3:298.

²⁸⁹ Campbell, The English Yeoman, 290.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 292-293.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 315.

importance as local government officials would definitely have exerted some influence over the acceptance of dissent in the towns in which they were involved.

This is particularly apparent in the role of the churchwardens in aiding dissenters, especially in the Puritan period. There are several instances in which the wardens were accused of aiding and protecting Puritan preachers. The ecclesiastical courts depended heavily on the capability of the wardens. It was an unpopular job, but beneficial to the dissenters if a yeoman or labourer with sympathetic views took it. Wardens could assist the Puritans in not wearing the surplice by simply not providing one to them. Camille Rusticus avoided wearing one at Vange, Essex for seven years thanks to the wardens who made sure that the parish lacked one.²⁹² In a case at the 1583 Assizes, Stephen Beamond, the rector of Easthorpe, was charged with not wearing the surplice and not using the Prayer Book. He had been helped by the wardens, Thomas Pudney, husbandman, and Richard Cranefield, ploughwright.²⁹³

It is apparent that the rise of the yeoman class added to the already existing sense of independence held by Kent and Essex. The yeoman was a social figure whose heyday coincided with the period of religious dissent under examination. This social class was becoming more numerous and accumulating more wealth. And, as Jordan argues, they were gradually turning away from the Church as the primary receiver of their bequests. The yeomen definitely re-shaped the economies and societies of Kent and Essex, but

²⁹² Anglin, "The Essex Puritan Movement and the "Bawdy" Courts," 191.

²⁹³ Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts*, 196.

another class had a greater effect on the adoption of religious dissent and displayed much more radical tendencies.

As important as the yeomen were, the gentry played a much more significant role in the counties. There are several direct links between the gentry of Kent and Essex and the dissenting movements of Lollardy and Puritanism. That the gentry encouraged dissent in these areas is more important than the role of the yeomen. Whereas the yeomen held a large amount of wealth and dabbled in local government politics, the gentry held most of the wealth and wielded power in the Houses of Parliament and generally had much more influence over the character of the counties. The gentry of Kent and Essex profited from the increase in land value and the concentration of wealth in the Southeast in the same way that the yeomen did. The gentry as a class varied greatly in wealth ranging from one hundred to ten thousand pounds per year.²⁹⁴ The manorial gentry emerged in Kent between 1150 and 1350 and it included families like the Twysdens, Oxindens, Derings, Culpeppers and Engehams, among others.²⁹⁵ The nobility and gentry of Essex were relatively new. Only 15% of the aristocratic families of the early seventeenth century could trace their lineage to before 1485. Essex was a unique county in this respect.²⁹⁶

It is well known that the gentry was involved in Lollardy. After all, Sir John Oldcastle, a Lollard, had led the rebellion of 1414 and although religion was not the only issue behind the uprising, the very fact that it was led by a lord and supported by the upper classes indicates their willingness to take up a position of non-conformity.

²⁹⁴ Wright, Kent through the Years, 112.

²⁹⁵ Everitt, Continuity and Colonization, 220.

²⁹⁶ Hunt, The Puritan Moment, 16.

However, as we have also seen the upper classes swiftly removed their open support for Lollardy after the Oldcastle rebellion and after Oxford had been purged of Wycliffites. However, that was not the last time that so-called gentlemen were involved with religious dissent. Thanks to the research of Rob Lutton there is a whole study on the connections between the Lollards of the 1511-12 Kent heresy trials and the local gentry. The Lollards in this area were clearly not confined to the lower class. The Castelyn and the Pellond families were not gentry, but were wealthy citizens. However, they were both connected with the Foule family which could be classed as lower gentry. The Foules also had the reputation of leaning towards the unorthodox when it came to religion.²⁹⁷ But probably the most important family in this county was the Guildfords. They held the manor of Halden in Rolvenden and by the early sixteenth century they held two manors in Tenterden also. This family carried on a protracted conflict with the Neville family and in order to maintain their hold on Tenterden they rallied support from leading families like the Foules, Pellonds and Castelyns. The Guildfords gained a strong reputation for being highly unorthodox when it came to religion, although Lutton suggests that encouraging religious dissent was a political maneuver to gain allegiance. The government elsewhere was working very hard to preserve the traditional religion, but in this area of Kent there was a power vacuum and Lutton argues that the Guildfords filled it by appealing to the unorthodox tendencies of the inhabitants.²⁹⁸ Whether it was a political move or not, it is

²⁹⁷ Lutton, "Connections between Lollards, Townsfolk and Gentry," 218.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 220-221.

not difficult to understand how four of the leading families of the Tenterden area being viewed as unorthodox would encourage other inhabitants to be so.

The upper classes tended to keep any Lollard tendencies that they had secret after 1414. However, in a place like Kent where the authorities rarely became involved it is likely that unorthodox tendencies were present among the higher classes if not openly declared. Lollardy did have wealthy lay patrons since it was able to fund quite a widespread underground book trade. There were also influential people like Joan of Kent who was able to infiltrate the royal court. It has been seen already that the Essex upper class was mostly instituted after 1485 and was therefore relatively young and although Kent had several old families, there was no significant noble family in this county, most of it being controlled by many small gentry families. Neither these lower gentry nor the new gentry of Essex would have displayed the loyalty to the civic authority or the Church that may have been held by old noble families who were often tied through blood and loyalty to both the Crown and the Church.

It is important to note that although the social factors are being discussed here in general terms, they are not uniform for both Lollardy and Puritanism. One factor may have played a very large role in the former and virtually none in the latter. In discussing these circumstances it is not the intention to argue that their impact was equal on both the dissenting groups under consideration. The role of the gentry is indicative of this. They were forced to suppress any affiliation that they had with Lollardy, although they still no doubt played a role. But in the era of the Elizabethan Puritans the gentry came out strongly in support of them in Kent and Essex. There is no doubt that, concerning the

popularity of Puritanism in these counties, the gentry can be assigned a major role, especially in Essex. Members of this class will be seen in the role of both lay patron and Puritan minister.

The gentry played a large role in the success of Puritanism partly because of the ecclesiastical system in Kent and Essex. In the Southeast of England in the sixteenth century there was a preponderance of lay holdings over ecclesiastical positions. For example, within the Archdeaconry of Essex 78% of the church livings were controlled by lay patrons.²⁹⁹ Most of these were single livings held by gentry families and the bishop rarely rejected their nominees although he had the option of doing so. Therefore the type of clergy was dependent on the choice of the laity.³⁰⁰ The Rich family and the Petre family were unusual in that they both held multiple livings. The latter was strongly Catholic, but the former played a very large role in the success of Puritanism. At least eleven Puritan clergy can be found in the Rich family's benefices.³⁰¹ The Rich family had not always allied themselves with the Protestant cause. During the Marian period Lord Rich actively participated in the persecution of the Protestants and T.W. Davids describes him as "no very good friend of the Protestants."³⁰² However, upon his death his son, the new Lord Rich, openly declared his support for the Puritans and became a very important patron of the group, placing them in his ecclesiastical holdings and employing them as private chaplains. Robert Wright who was ordained in Antwerp in 1581 was shortly after invited to be the chaplain at Lord Rich's seat of Rochford Hall. A church was formally

²⁹⁹ Jay P. Anglin, The Court of the Archdeacon of Essex (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1965), 202.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 258.

³⁰² Davids, Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in Essex, 57.

set up there and the family attended services led by Wright and his assistant chaplain, John Greenwood, instead of at their parish church.³⁰³ The Queen quickly heard of the disorders in the house of Lord Rich and he was cast into Marshalsea Prison.³⁰⁴ By the end of 1579, Lord Rich's uncle, Richard, had been committed to the Fleet for nonconformity. By 1582, Lord Rich, Richard Rich and Robert Wright had all been released.³⁰⁵ This was clearly a nonconformist family. Lord Rich even suffered imprisonment because of his religious convictions. One of Lord Rich's ministers was George Negus who was the puritan minister of Leigh and connected with the Dedham classis. He was suspended for refusing to wear the surplice, but returned after a petition signed by twenty eight of his parishioners was delivered urging him to wear the surplice if it meant that they could have him back, "We do therefore intreat yow as you tender our soules, and as yow regarde that accounte which you must make unto God for them, not to forsake us for such a trifle."³⁰⁶ Obviously in this instance the congregation was very happy with Lord Rich's choice for their minister. It is apparent that in Essex the known nonconformity of one of the leading families played a role in the acceptance of dissent in this area. Lord Rich, controlling as many livings as he did, was able to influence the inhabitants by installing puritan ministers in these positions. In addition, the nonconformist ministers in this area had a very powerful ally to protect them to a certain degree from the onslaught of the Church. Rich also played an important role in the civic sphere, being a Member of Parliament. It was to him that 236 people of Dunmow submitted their petition in 1586

³⁰³ Greenwood was executed in 1593 for being a radical separatist puritan.

³⁰⁴ Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in Essex*, 70-71.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 73.

³⁰⁶ *Seconde Parte of a Register*, 1:275.

requesting that their lordships be made aware of the disgraceful state of their ministry. It is also interesting to note some of the names affixed to this petition: Francis Barrington Esq., Richard Franke (Gent), John Franke (Gent), Francis Browne (Gent) and William Man (Gent).³⁰⁷ Here are five other members of the gentry who were greatly dissatisfied with the state of the clergy. It is not apparent whether they, like Rich, actively supported the Puritans, but clearly they were dissatisfied with the Church in its current state. Essex was populous and prosperous. The Rich, Barrington and Wroth families were all leaders in politics and this was the place to be if you were a nonconformist.³⁰⁸ They were more accepting of Puritans here and to be appointed by one of these families was a way to promote your cause. A good example of this is the case of Richard Rogers, the Puritan minister of Wethersfield and a member of the Dedham classis. In 1583 he was suspended by Whitgift, but was restored after thirty weeks by Aylmer, Bishop of London. Rogers explains how this came about, "Sir Robert Wroth (Lord of the manor of Great Barsfield near Wethersfield) writ in favour of me, and bad me Preach and he would beare me out, and so I have continued about 20 yeares."³⁰⁹ This demonstrates the importance of having a lay patron who moved in powerful circles. In 1587 another sympathizer, Sir Edmund Lewknor (MP for Maldon), was sent to the Tower for supporting the Puritans. His personal chaplain was Richard Blackerby, one of the senior Puritan ministers of Essex.³¹⁰ Often the bishops were pressured to accept partial conformity from the Puritan clerics by members of the Privy Council and other powerful men who supported the

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 2:191.

³⁰⁸ Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries, 21.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 29.

³¹⁰ Harold Smith, The Ecclesiastical History of Essex (Colchester: Benham and Company Ltd., 1933),

nonconformists. Except for George Gifford who was deprived from Maldon in 1585, no Puritan minister nominated by a lay patron was deprived of his office until 1606.³¹¹

In Kent the Puritans had very important patrons in the gentry class. One of the more influential supporters was Thomas Wotton, the Sheriff of Kent, appointed by Elizabeth herself. He was one of the people who wrote to the Privy Council in 1583 on behalf of the suspended ministers, and he states that these men “doo unto their awne parisshioners preache very Christianlye and emong theym lyve right vertuouslye.”³¹² Wotton also emphasizes that “so well learned and vertuous ministers” should not be treated so harshly for errors made by one or two of them.³¹³ He had also signed the letter in favor of John Strowde in 1574, along with Lady Elizabeth Golding and Lady Shelly, among others.³¹⁴ Lady Elizabeth Golding of East Peckham and Mrs. Mary Honywood of Charing were both influential ladies and supportive of the Puritans, in particular Edward Dering.³¹⁵ Wotton was not the only member of the gentry to support the suspended ministers of 1584. In May a delegation of Kentish gentlemen appeared at Lambeth Palace to confront Whitgift. It was led by Sir Thomas Scot, a leading Kentish gentleman, and included Thomas Randolph, Nicholas Saintleger, Henry Killigrew and leading members of the Wotton, Dering and Finch families, twenty-five gentlemen all together.³¹⁶ Patrick Collinson argues this was “the fruit of the puritan cultivation of the country gentlemen

13-14.

³¹¹ Anglin, *The Court of the Archdeaconry of Essex*, 276.

³¹² *Thomas Wotton's Letter-Book, 1574-1586*, 63.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ *Seconde Parte of a Register*, 1:115.

³¹⁵ Collinson, *Godly People*, 317.

³¹⁶ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 257-258.

and their wives."³¹⁷ Clearly the members of these gentry families did not appreciate it when their demands were not met by the Church because they were very aware of their importance. After he had begun to persecute the Puritans, Archbishop Whitgift was confronted by an elderly Kentish gentleman who told Whitgift that he had lived through six Archbishops and that Whitgift was the first to set himself against the gentry.³¹⁸ The gentry clearly expected compliance on behalf of the Church and believed that they really decided the nature of the Church in their counties. In Kent and Essex where the gentry leaned towards Puritanism this attitude had a very obvious effect on the religious allegiance of the inhabitants.

It has been discussed how the upper classes influenced Puritanism through being patrons, but they also supported it by providing ministers. Cambridge was a hotbed of Puritanism in the late sixteenth century and the only class that could afford to send their children to university were the gentry. As a result, many members of this class became Puritan chaplains, as is the case with Edward Dering. The Derings were one of the oldest Kentish families and had been settled around Ashford in the Weald.³¹⁹ Dering obviously used the connections provided by his background to gain support. He also managed to persuade his two brothers, Richard and John, to support the "godly" cause. By 1584, the Derings had confronted Whitgift about the suspended ministers.³²⁰ Figures like Dering, being gentry themselves, were able to reach people in this most influential class.

³¹⁷ Ibid, 258.

³¹⁸ Collinson, Archbishop Grindal 1519-1583, 286.

³¹⁹ Collinson, Godly People, 290.

³²⁰ Ibid, 292.

It is apparent that the support of the gentry of Kent and Essex was a very important factor in the success of Puritanism and, to a lesser degree, Lollardy. The independent nature of these classes combined with the history of social unrest in Kent and Essex paints a picture of two counties well assured of their independence and willing to go against the official government or Church if necessary. Even the county leadership displayed these tendencies.

There is one more factor that remains to be discussed while examining the societies of Kent and Essex. That is the economy and in particular the prominence of the cloth trade in these areas. It will be seen that the presence of this industry did affect the societies and their willingness to accept religious dissent. In his study of the continuity of religious dissent, Christopher Hill mentions that forested areas were particularly prone to dissent. He cites high industrialization, few manor lords, a highly mobile population, large parishes and inaccessibility as the main factors.³²¹ The main dissenting areas in this study, the North of Essex and the Weald of Kent were both industrialized and heavily forested areas. Hill's contention is supported by Alan Everitt's study of Kentish settlement. He argues that there was scattered settlement all over Kent, but that the Weald was especially isolated. Before the nineteenth century most Wealden farms were isolated for weeks during the wet season and roads to places like Cranbrook and Benenden were awful.³²² This isolation could easily breed a sense of independence and a sense of community where the people were shut off from contact with anyone outside of the

³²¹ Hill, "From Lollards to Levellers," 87-88.

³²² Everitt, Continuity and Colonization, 54.

immediate area. Since the landlords often did not actually live in the area, the inhabitants were given increasing freedom and authority over their own matters. In short, this was quite a difficult area to govern. As Everitt also mentions because of scattered settlement the inhabitants could not easily access the local parish church for long periods.³²³ Clearly this would encourage if not open dissent at the very least indifference to the established church since it did not play as prominent a role in the everyday lives of people here as elsewhere. Besides these areas being isolated and fostering a sense of community, they were also involved in the cloth trade. This played a very important role in the prominence of Lollardy and to a lesser extent in the success of the Elizabethan Puritans. By the mid fourteenth century the Weald saw a revival of iron mining in Kent and their goods were always in demand. This coincided with the rise of the woollen industry in the area around Cranbrook, Goudhurst and Hawkhurst.³²⁴ For the next four centuries this area produced England's best broadcloth. The iron industry and the wool industry combined to make the Weald of Kent the premier manufacturing district in Britain and "a scene of activity."³²⁵ There was evidence of a cloth industry in northern Essex and especially Colchester as early as the thirteenth century. A large portion of the Northeast remained devoted to spinning cloth.³²⁶ The significance of the fact that these areas are where religious dissent constantly surfaces throughout this period cannot be ignored.

The research of John F. Davis demonstrates that the majority of the Lollards found in the Southeast between 1414 and 1534 were connected with textiles or its

³²³ Ibid, 56.

³²⁴ Nicolson, Kent, 52.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Victoria County History of Essex, 2:330.

affiliated trades such as tanners, glovers, parchment makers, etc.³²⁷ This is quite unusual since the lower ranks of society were generally more conservative in matters of religion than the upper classes. However, in Kent their donations to the Church appear to have tapered off much like those of the yeomen in 1480-1660. Over the whole period they gave about 40% of their total bequests to religion, yet in the Elizabethan period they gave a mere 5% to the church.³²⁸ There does appear to have been a distancing among the artisan and labourer classes from the church and they were at the forefront of dissent. As early as the last years of the fourteenth century one John Smyth, a cobbler of Thaxted, Essex, was charged with Lollardy and after 1414, fourteen other Thaxted people were accused including John and Thomas Cok, both weavers.³²⁹ In the Kent heresy trials of 1511-12, all the defendants are laypeople and they are predominantly artisans and clothworkers. Out of those whose occupations are known there are two weavers, one cordwainer, three cutlers, one tailor, one fletcher, one shoemaker and one glover.³³⁰ But not only are their occupations themselves of interest, but also are their home towns. Six came from Cranbrook, twelve from Tenterden, three from Benenden and three from Rolvenden, all of them important clothing towns grouped close together in the Weald.³³¹ In Essex as well a startling number of Lollards prosecuted were members of the cloth industry. William Chiveling, burned in 1429 in Colchester was a tailor.³³² Of those persecuted in 1527-28 many were also artisans and clothiers. Thomas Hilles and John and

³²⁷ Davis, "Lollard Survival and the Textile Industry in the South-east of England," 193.

³²⁸ Jordan, *Social Institutions in Kent*, 155.

³²⁹ Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death*, 266.

³³⁰ *Kent Heresy Proceedings 1511-12*, xxiii-xxiv.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² *Red Paper Book of Colchester*, 58.

Richard Chapman all worked for Christopher Ravens of Witham who was a tailor.³³³

William Russel and William Raylond of Colchester were both tailors and Robert Best was a weaver.³³⁴

It is apparent that in both counties Lollardy was attractive to artisans and cloth workers. These clothing towns were situated in the isolated regions in northern Essex and the Weald of Kent. Therefore these inhabitants probably already possessed a sense of independence and self-sufficiency along with an indifference to the Church. These different cloth centres also had contact with one another. The spread of Lollardy was assisted by the trading links and mobility of the distributors.³³⁵ It is quite possible that being connected through the industry was the way in which new converts to Lollardy were made. But probably the most important factor in the attraction of clothworkers to dissent was the fluctuations of the industry itself. In 1539, weavers from Colchester and Dedham complained of being badly underpaid. Considering that one third of Colchester's population was in the cloth trade it is easy to see that any slump or change in the industry could affect the whole society.³³⁶ In the 1520s war with the Emperor shut down the ports of Flanders and Spain and English merchants were not welcome there. By 1528 clothiers were having trouble selling their cloths in London and the cloth trade fell on rough times.³³⁷ Since the clothworker was a wage laborer dependent on an industry, it is possible that during this period there was a strong feeling of insecurity and that this

³³³ Harleian Manuscript 421, British Library, fol. 11.

³³⁴ Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, 1:117.

³³⁵ Davis, "Lollard Survival and the Textile Industry," 196.

³³⁶ Higgs, *Lay Piety in the Borough of Colchester*, 108.

³³⁷ Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, 170.

encouraged a susceptibility to dissent. The economic slump in this industry and the general problems that it caused in society may very well have encouraged the threatened segments of these societies to receive religious ideas that offered new spiritual hope.³³⁸ Lollardy with its attacks on the orthodox church and the spiritual hierarchy was no doubt appealing. After all, it advocated a more independent spirituality that was not tied to the orthodox church. They were dependent on others for their income, but with Lollardy they could have a degree of control over their own spirituality.

The attraction of religious dissent to these areas and this stratum of society continued. Puritanism appealed mostly to the higher classes, but nevertheless the cloth industry still played a significant role. For example, all but one of the Bocking members of the radically Puritan Freewill movement in Essex were directly involved in the cloth industry.³³⁹ Likewise, in the Crown's attempts to crack down on radical Puritan separatists in the 1590s, artisans and clothworkers area strong presence. In London in March 1592, 52 people accused of being separatists were examined. Of these 33 were artisans and of this latter group, 19 were connected to the cloth trade.³⁴⁰ The supporters of the Puritans were not only involved at the level of laborer and artisan, but also at that of cloth merchant. The rise of the cloth industry had spawned a new class of merchant in these areas, one that was highly mobile and self-made. These new merchants of the cloth trade were also attracted to dissent. William Cardinal of Great Bromley in Essex was a Puritan clothier with interests in the Dedham area. Cardinal was a merchant and an

³³⁸ Penny, The Freewill Movement in the South-east of England, 50.

³³⁹ Ibid, 126.

³⁴⁰ The Writings of John Greenwood and Henry Barrow 1591-1593, ed. Leland H. Carlson (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 293-294.

industrialist and his brother-in-law was Dr. Edmund Chapman, a Puritan fellow of Trinity College. When Chapman was ejected from Norwich in 1578 Cardinal endowed a lectureship in Dedham parish church and installed Chapman in the position.³⁴¹ Another case involved Archbishop Grindal who licensed Thomas Upcher, rector of Fordham, Essex, not to wear the surplice because the congregation was so against it. Upcher was the rector, but was also a cloth weaver in Bocking.³⁴² This demonstrates how members of the cloth industry still influenced the conformity in this area. The instability and unrest within the cloth industry continued into the Puritan era. In the 1560s there was clearly discontent in the woollen industry in Essex. Led by John Broke, a woollen-weaver, the people of Bocking and Braintree were said to be set to riot in 1566-67. One of the weavers explained the reason, "We can get no work nor we have no money, and if we should steal we should be hanged."³⁴³ Clearly the cloth workers were in distress again and were unhappy enough with their conditions to revolt. So again they were more prone to new religious ideas than they had been. Puritanism appealed to the newly rich merchants of the wool trade for another reason. It appealed to them because of their new found prosperity in a relatively young industry. The imagery in Puritan sermons is drawn largely from the world of trade and small business. The increased social mobility in these groups caused great anxiety. The Puritan theories of predestination allayed feelings of guilt on behalf of these newly affluent merchants.³⁴⁴ Since many of them were also self-made men and as a group relatively young, the merchants probably were also attracted to

³⁴¹ Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 223.

³⁴² Collinson, Godly People, 13.

³⁴³ Emmison, Elizabethan Life: Disorder, 63.

³⁴⁴ Hunt, The Puritan Moment, 124-125.

Puritanism because it advocated certain freedom from the church and one that appeared more secular with no decorations or Catholic trappings.

So what picture of Kent and Essex in the sixteenth century do we have now? They had a long history of social unrest and revolt. The inhabitants had a strong sense of their independence and felt justified in taking steps to right the perceived wrongs. Along with this willingness to rebel, they possessed yeomen and gentry of a very young pedigree. Because they were new classes and essentially self-made men they demonstrated increased independence and increasing emphasis on secular concerns as opposed to religious ones. Add to this the pressure of the cloth industry with all of its accompanying stresses and the existence of large isolated areas with hardly any manorial or ecclesiastical control and the result is two areas that were very prone to dissent. Kent and Essex were both large cloth centres and cloth workers were the most exposed to dissent through interaction with one another and continental refugees. Through their industry, these two counties had interaction with both the rest of the nation and Europe which other counties did not. They also had more exposure to dissent which was maintained by the cloth trade.

The inhabitants of these areas were not afraid to challenge the status quo. The more they advertised their independent spirit, the more the dissenters were attracted to Kent and Essex. They were likely to have a better chance of making converts here than in some of the more conservative counties ruled by old noble families. Society therefore played a very important role in the acceptance of Lollardy and Puritanism in Kent and Essex. They possessed an almost inbred sense of independence and demonstrated it

throughout the several revolts and uprisings. And they were easily accessible, being highly mobile because of the cloth trade. So it is not difficult to see why dissenters, either Lollards or Puritans, would settle in these counties and try to promote their faith. Kent and Essex were the ideal places for religious dissent.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

After this examination of the counties of Kent and Essex it cannot be denied that these counties were hotbeds of religious dissent during the Reformation period. Often these places surface in heresy trials, uprisings and ecclesiastical investigations. Numerous Lollards, Protestants and Elizabethan Puritans used these counties as a home base in a legacy of religious nonconformity that lasted for over two hundred years.

The initial argument out of which this study grew was that centres of Lollardy later became centres of the Elizabethan form of Puritanism. In the cases of Kent and Essex this has been proven to be a valid assertion. These counties contained large and important cells of both groups. The main question at the beginning of this study was “why?” What was it that encouraged the prevalence of dissent in these two counties? The first thing to examine was whether there was a direct inheritance. If there had been a direct connection between Lollardy and Puritanism, as there had been between the former and Protestantism, the correlation between their centres would be explained. Unfortunately, no such connection existed. Therefore the reasons for the correlation had to be found in something other than direct inheritance.

First to be examined was any similarity in doctrine between the two groups. If the inhabitants of the two counties were used to certain Lollard beliefs and Puritanism espoused similar ones it may explain the attraction of the people to the latter. With the Protestant Reformation intervening between the two movements this was in itself a difficult undertaking. Nevertheless it was demonstrated that the Lollards and Puritans held surprisingly similar views on several topics, although the Lollards were concerned

with theology and the Puritans with the implementation of reformed theology in practice. It is fascinating that the concerns expressed by the inhabitants of the counties had not changed between the era of Lollardy and that of Puritanism, despite the reforms that had been implemented after the acceptance of Protestantism in England. This tends to indicate that the reforms undertaken by the Church of England did not adequately address those concerns, leaving the same issues to arise repeatedly over this period.

Although the Protestant Reformation intervened between the two movements a continuity can be traced. The Lollards attempted to change the theology and doctrines of the Church. They may have been a small group, but they were ahead of their time. Of course by the time of the Puritans many of the former Lollard ideas were now accepted as part of the Protestant Reformation. Nevertheless they were still not being implemented as completely as they should be in the opinion of the Puritans. They were still searching for their pure Reformation. A direct doctrinal continuity cannot be traced, but a legacy can be seen from the Lollards, who were ahead of their time, to the Protestants, who officially implemented many Lollard beliefs, to the Puritans, who believed that the true Reformation had still not been implemented in practice. Doctrinal similarities may not completely explain the correlation between Lollard and Puritan centers, but it does establish a history of certain viewpoints in these areas. Certain views had been tolerated in Kent and Essex for many years before they were officially sanctioned. It is entirely possible that the inhabitants were therefore more accepting when the Puritans began to spread very similar ideas.

Yet, similarities in doctrine, although important to examine, do not alone explain the prominence of dissent in Kent and Essex. The two religious groups are not similar enough to indicate that a doctrinal inheritance was the main factor. It is possible, and highly likely, that an early dissenting group like the Lollards was able to prepare the ground for later dissenters. But this does not explain why Kent and Essex became dissenting areas to begin with and why they continued to play an important role in the strategy of dissenters for over two hundred years. There were characteristics of the counties and their inhabitants that attracted dissenters to them and that made religious dissent attractive to the inhabitants themselves.

Through examining the geographical location of these counties it became apparent that simply because of where they were situated Kent and Essex were at the forefront of religious dissent. Their proximity to London and their interaction with the Continent continually exposed them to dissenting ideas. The high number of “strangers” who had settled in these areas made the inhabitants aware of not only violent Catholic oppression on the Continent, but also of the innovative reforming ideas that were gaining in popularity there. Kent and Essex were both under continual threat of Catholic invasion by either France or Spain. Fearing an invasion by a Catholic nation must have affected the inhabitants of this area greatly, especially during the Puritan era when England was solidly Protestant. They viewed Catholics as a threat and the enemy and this must have produced intense anti-Catholic sentiment and a desire to eliminate all vestiges of that religion in the English Church. The psychological impact on the inhabitants of both the

immigrants and the threat of invasion is something that needs to be further explored and will probably prove highly significant.

Something that should also be examined in more detail is the relationship between the two counties. There was much interaction there. Although the relationship with one another did not make either county more prone to religious nonconformity, once the seeds of dissension were planted the two counties' proximity to one another aided greatly in maintaining a haven for religious dissenters. It is apparent that geography was a very strong factor in the prominence of nonconformity in Kent and Essex. The location of the counties both exposed them to dissent and aided them in maintaining it.

However, people do not automatically follow religious dissent because of where they live. It can not be emphasized enough how dangerous it was to be a religious dissenter, especially in the era of Lollardy. Evidence shows that the counties were exposed to dissent as a result of their geographical location. However that does not explain why the inhabitants of these areas were so willing to accept dissenting views or, if they did not accept the views themselves, why they shielded, protected and created a haven for those who did. There is no way to know what encourages an individual to follow certain religious views, but an examination of the society in which that individual lives can offer some insight. The culture surrounding them and the heritage of the place where they live can all have an influence on their value system.

It was observed that Kent and Essex had a history of being rebellious and that the inhabitants of both places had a long-held belief in their rights and their independence. In the revolts in which the inhabitants were continually involved they proved themselves

time and again willing to confront authority. This also is an issue that requires deeper investigation. Why were Kent and Essex so prone to disturbance and revolt and what impact did this have on the inhabitants? Again there is no direct evidence that the history of social unrest affected their willingness to accept religious dissent, but nevertheless it seems difficult to deny. The counties were used to standing against the norm and challenging authority. It is a small step to go from this to challenging the orthodox religion or, in the case of the Puritans, the way in which the accepted religion was practiced. This sense of independence was further heightened by the willingness of the influential classes of the yeomen and the gentry to argue for their rights and follow dissenting religious groups if they chose. The gentry of both Kent and Essex proved very influential in protecting religious nonconformists, especially the Puritans. This can only have added to the attraction of these counties for religious dissenters. In addition, the counties were further exposed to dissent by the prominence of the cloth trade. An extensive amount of research has been done on this particular phenomenon and it has been demonstrated that there was a higher propensity for dissent among clothworkers than within the general population. This makes the fact that Kent and Essex were both centres of the cloth trade highly significant. Once again, it is difficult to know why workers of the cloth trade were so prone to dissent. A very likely suggestion is that they continually searched for new hope in different religious ideas because their industry was so fragile and could easily fall into a slump. In the counties of Kent and Essex, where a very high proportion of the population was involved in the cloth trade, it is not difficult to see the huge impact that a slump in the industry would have had.

The factors discussed reveal a lot about why the counties of Kent and Essex were prone to religious dissent in general and Lollardy and Puritanism in particular. Whether these were the sole factors is impossible to tell, but they are definitely significant. It is the conclusion of this study that the counties of Kent and Essex were prone to religious dissent because of a combination of geographical location and societal factors. Add to this the doctrinal similarities between the movements of Lollardy and Puritanism and the final product is a possible explanation for the prevalence of both religious groups in Kent and Essex. The factors discussed about these two areas may contribute to an overall understanding of why the Puritans seemed to be following in the Lollards' footsteps throughout the country. It may be discovered that the same factors that attracted dissent to Kent and Essex were also present in other areas that were centres for both Lollardy and Elizabethan Puritanism.

This study fits within the larger historiographical debate on the true nature of the English Reformation. As mentioned, historians have been debating whether the English Reformation was purely state-imposed, as argued by Christopher Haigh, or developing at the grass-roots level long before the official Reformation, as argued by A.G. Dickens. The case studies of Kent and Essex clearly dispute the argument that there was no impetus for religious change in England until the official Reformation was imposed. Clearly there was a long and virtually continuous tradition of dissent in Kent and Essex between 1400 and 1600. Resistance to the religious norm was in existence long before the state-imposed Reformation and continued throughout the period, being heightened by interaction with the Continent. It is interesting to speculate whether the tradition of

dissent would have been maintained if the Protestant Reformation had not been officially sanctioned. Perhaps Kent and Essex would have led a popular movement for reform if given time as they had led so many movements before. After seeing how Kent and Essex managed to maintain their dissent through two centuries and intense persecution, particularly in the Marian years, it is highly probable that the dissenters, whether Lollard or Protestant, would have continued to persevere in their dissent with or without the official Reformation. There was a desire for religious change growing long before the official Reformation. Granted, as Christopher Haigh argues, the dissenting groups were a minority in these counties and the nation in general and in no position to cause real change at the point when the official Reformation was accepted. But nevertheless there was a continuity of dissent in these counties and impetus for change among the people themselves as Dickens asserts. As has been seen, Kent and Essex were at the forefront of the dissent network. Although dissenters were not the majority in either county or in the nation as a whole, the degree of activity in these two places contradicts the concept of a passive populous with no drive for religious change until the government sanctioned it. In general this study tends to support the views of Dickens more than Haigh, but it is not completely in agreement with Dickens. Contrary to Dickens' argument, this study demonstrates that Continental influences were very important in the acceptance of reformed ideas in England. Kent and Essex were strongly influenced by the Continent, as much if not more than they were influenced by London. Therefore the impetus for religious change was not occurring in England independently of the Continent, but rather constantly being influenced by it.

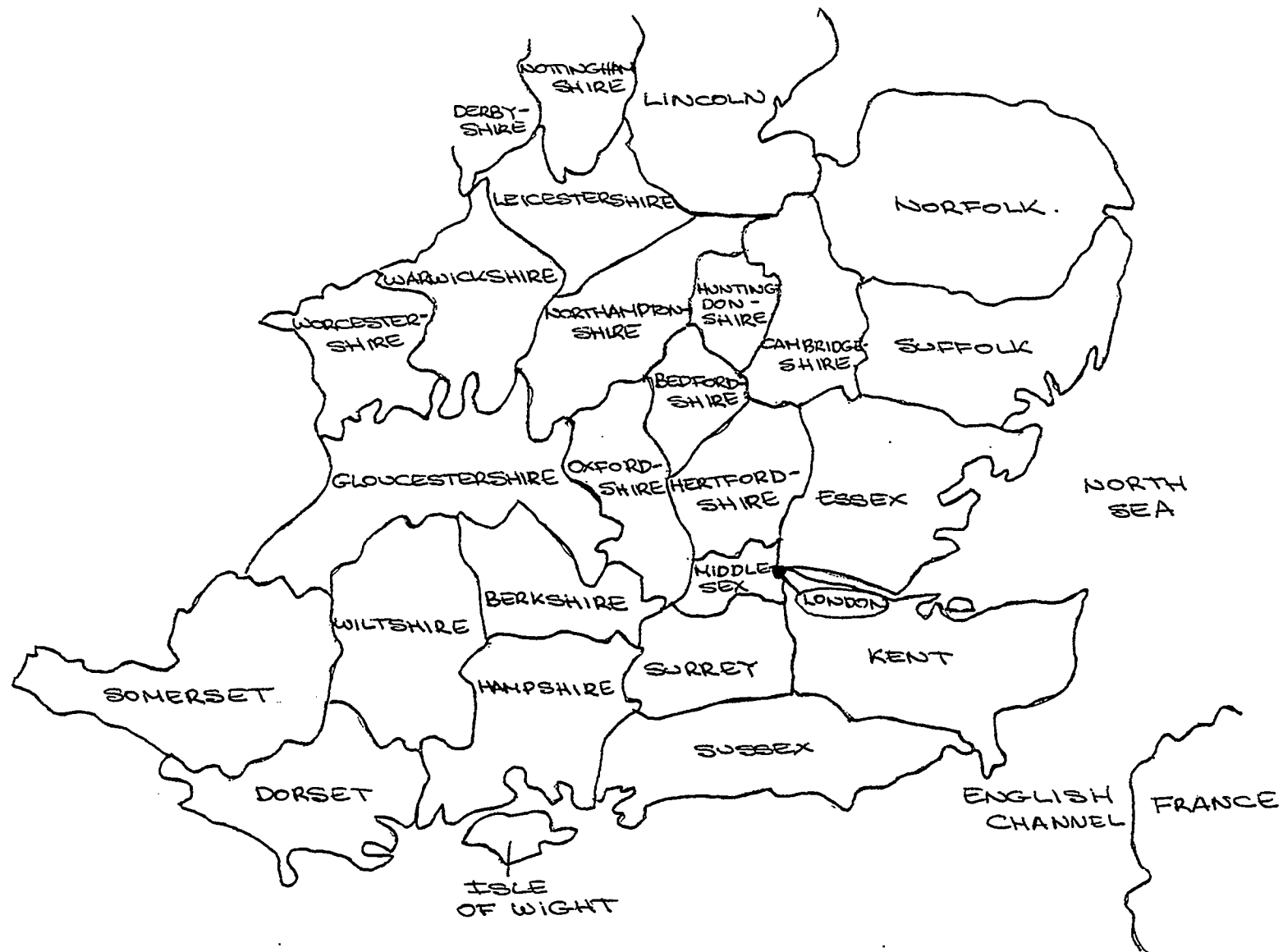
The correlation between centres of Lollardy and Elizabethan Puritanism had less to do with a doctrinal legacy than it did with the areas themselves. In addition to the similarities in doctrine and methods between the Lollards and Puritans, they had in common the characteristic that they were outside of the religious norm. The very fact that they were dissenters seems to have added greatly to their appeal for the people of Kent and Essex. And the characteristics of the counties likewise appealed to dissenters because it afforded them unique opportunities for spreading their ideas and maintaining their networks. Although a direct connection may still be discovered between the Lollards and Puritans regarding doctrine, the Puritans were not really following in the Lollards' footsteps. Rather it appears that the characteristics of Kent and Essex that appealed to the Lollards also appealed to the Puritans. As a result of the factors discussed Kent and Essex were the ideal places to introduce and maintain dissent. Therefore there was a history of dissent in these two counties, but based not on a doctrinal inheritance. The prevalence of nonconformity was a result of the location and society of Kent and Essex themselves. The outcome was that these two counties provided a safe haven for dissenters of religion for over two centuries during a very turbulent period in English religious history.



Map 1: The County of Kent



Map 2: The County of Essex



Map 3: The Southern and Eastern Counties of England

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