EVIDENCE FOR RELIGIOUS READING PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE IN TIMES OF CHANGE: SOME MODELS PROVIDED BY LATE MEDIEVAL TEXTS OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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In studying the History of Reading in late Medieval and Early Modern England my particular focus is an exploration of evidence for popular reading practice and experience. I use a case study method in order to make detailed investigations of groups of manuscripts or books or particular texts in their differing contexts. A key aim is to extrapolate from this very particular evidence to some more general conclusions about reading practice and experience.

For this essay I begin by reviewing some issues pertinent to the study of reading practice and experience particularly in the context of Medieval & Early Modern England and with a focus on religious reading. In the second half of the essay, I proceed with the kind of case study that I propose as necessary for elucidating reading practice and experience, staying for these examples with a fifteenth century context whilst proposing how these examples might relate to a broader chronology of religious reading and change. Here, I take as my focus one text from the basic catechism, the Ten Commandments. I explore short, rhyming, versions of this text in one particular manuscript context (Lambeth Palace Library Ms 853) and I use this to postulate some possibilities for the ways that religious reading provides evidence for experiences of change or difference in two ways: in the first instance I use the manuscript example of two versions of a Ten Commandments poem in this one manuscript to explore the ways that acculturation may occur through familiarity. In the second instance, I use the same poems to propose a reader-centred model for engagement with heterodox (ie changed) ideas and practices.

The Study of Reading

The development of the field known as the History of Reading has brought renewed attention to studies of the manuscript and early printed book, especially given the simultaneous revival

of interest in material culture.[1] Indeed, one of the key scholars of the History of Reading, Roger Chartier, asserts the necessary connections between the material form of the text being read and the production of meaning by the reader.[2] Medieval devotional reading has received particular attention often in relation to the role of religious houses in the promotion of lay literate devotion, particularly in the period approaching the Reformation which emerges as important for the transmission of books, and of ideas.[3]

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[1]See, for example, Price, L., "Reading matter", *PMLA* 121, 1 (2006) 9-16; Cavallo, G.- Chartier, R. (eds), *A History of Reading in the West* (Oxford: 1999); see also, R. Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors and Libraries between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: 1994). Thompson, J.- Kelly, S., "Imagined histories", in Thompson, -Kelly (eds), *Imagining the Book*, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe (Turnhout: 2006), p.6. For other important references see Salter, E., *Popular Reading in English c 1400-1600* (Manchester, 2012), Chapter 1.

[2] Chartier, R., "Preface", in *The Order of Books* (Stanford: 1994), ix; Chartier, "Libraries without walls", *Representations*, Special Issue: Future Libraries, 42 (1993) 38-52, 48-9, the work to which he refers is McKenzie, D.F., *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London: 1986); Chartier, "Languages, books and reading from the printed word to the digital text", *Critical Inquiry*, 31, 1 (2004) 133-52, 147; Chartier, R., "Introduction: Aesthetic mystery and the materialities of the written", *Inscription and Erasure: Written Culture from the Eleventh to the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: 2007), vii-xiii, vii-viii. On reading revolutions see, Darnton, R., "What is the History of Books?", in The *Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (London: 1990) 107-135, 133. For important recent work on materiality and reading see, for example, Sherman, W., *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: 2008); Richards, J.- Schurink, F. (eds), *The Textuality and Materiality of Reading in Early Modern England*, Special Issue *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73,3 (2010).

[3]See, for example, Sergeant, M., "The transmission by the English Carthusians of some late medieval spiritual writings", *Journal of Ecclesiastical Studies* 27 (1976) 225-40; Gillespie, V., "Vernacular books of religion", in Griffiths, J. – Pearsall, D. (eds), *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375-1475* (Cambridge: 1989); Gillespie, V., "Cura pastoralis in deserts", and Hutchinson, A., "Devotional reading in the monastery and in the household", in

Evidence for reading practice and experience can be elusive which perhaps encourages the tendency to discuss theories, rather than practices, of reading.[4] One of the key areas of concern is the problem of knowing what to do with the emancipated, creative, reader who has, and does necessarily, break free from the structural constraints of the written page.[5] Although there are limits to the freedoms of any reader at any moment in history, the heart of this problem is being able to understand the relationship between the products of discourse (eg the written text) and social practices (ie the uses or interpretations of that text).[6] William Sherman has recently proposed that there remains, a "more or less adversarial division between those who study 'imagined' 'implied' or 'ideal' readers and those who study the traces of 'real' 'actual' or 'historical' readers'" which is a sign of the methodological distinctions between theorising and analysing practice.[7]

Sergant, M. (ed.), *De Cella in Seculum: Religious Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: 1989).

4 I have discussed this in Salter, E., " 'The Dayes Moralised': Reconstructing devotional reading, c. 1450-1560" in Lutton, R.S.G. – Salter, E. (eds), *Pieties in Transition*: *Religious Practices and Experiences c 1400-1640* (Aldershot: 2007), 145-162, 149-50.

5 See for example, Chartier, "Communities of readers", 23; de Certeau, M., *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Randall (Berkeley: 1984) 165-76.

6 Chartier, R., *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices* (Baltimore and London: 1997), 1-10. Chartier, *The Order of Books*, 1-23; Iser, W., *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London: 1980), 132; Fish, S., "Interpreting the *Variorum*", in Finkelstein and McCleery (eds), The *Book History Reader* (London: 2001) 450-58, 454.

7 Sherman, W., *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: 2008) 99-100; also, Brayman Hackel, H., *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender and Literacy* (Cambridge: 2005) 6-7.

Roger Chartier has proposed that as part of a more general shift towards an appropriation-based model of cultural formation, there has been a general shift towards the analysis of practice. But this often seems to entail consideration of large data sets with relatively less consideration of, for example, the detail of an individual manuscript version.[8] In order to understand more about the reading practices and experiences of real readers in the Medieval and Early Modern period, I argue that more work which assesses the evidence of book and manuscript in some detail is needed.[9] There is a great inheritance of scholarship assessing reading habits which is often based around specific manuscripts with associated evidence for ownership, provenance, circulation, transmission, and possible networks of readers.[10] There is a wide

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8 Chartier, "Introduction", *On the Edge of the Cliff*, 2; Chartier, "Texts, forms and interpretations", 83.

9 On the useful idea of the book as always being in process as both "a material object and a cultural phenomenon", see Thompson and Kelly, "Imagined histories", in *Imagining the Book*, 5.

10See, for example, Riddy, F., " 'Women talking about the things of God' A late medieval subculture" 106-111, and Boffey, J., "Women authors and women's literacy", 165-6, 169-75 in Meale, C. (ed.), *Women & Literatures in Britain, 1150-1500* (Cambridge: 1993); Thompson, J., "Another look at the religious texts in Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 91", in Minnis, A.J. (ed.), *Late Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission*, Essays in Honour of A.I. Doyle (Cambridge, 1994), 169-87, 172-3 for particular consideration of the evidence for "reading tastes". On issues of book circulation see, for example, Minnis (ed.), *Late Medieval Religious Texts*, particularly Edwards, A.S.G., "The transmission and audience of Osbern Bokenham's legend of Hooly Wummen" 157-167, 162 on the circulation of booklets; Powell, S., "The transmission and circulation of *The Lay Folks' Catechism*", 67-84, 73-4 on evidence for transmission and circulation, with mention of private reading of this text by Robert Thornton on p. 74; on evidence for book ownership see, Meale, C., " '…alle the bokes that I have of latyn, englisch, and frensch': Laywomen and their books in late medieval England", in Meale, *Women & Literature* 130-3, on the evidence which the last will and testament provides for book ownership see also, Salter, E., *Cultural Creativity in the Early English Renaissance: Popular Culture in Town and Country* (London: 2006), Chapter 7.

range of useful recent work on laypersons' attitudes to devotional, moral, and fictive reading in Medieval and Early Modern society.[11] Much of this work tends to investigate evidence for ownership which is not the same as evidence for reading.[12] Nevertheless, both ownership and provenance are often very significant in uncovering the likely readerships of a particular book and biographically orientated work on book ownership and readers has been a necessary precursor to approaches, such as mine, which prioritise the investigation of reading practice for readers whose identity is not necessarily known by name and social group.

For a consideration of religious reading in late Medieval and sixteenth century England there are some specific cultural conditions which clearly had an impact on the availability, variety and circulation of text, especially literature in the English vernacular. During the years of suspicion about Wycliffism and Lollardy (particularly after Arundel's constitutions of the early fifteenth century and into the period of late Lollard persecution of the 1510s), the ownership of English religious texts, including catechetical and scriptural materials, comes with a set of debates concerning uncertainties and dangers.[13] Because of the threats posed by accusations of Lollardy against those owning and using English scriptural and catechetical writing, the

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11 eg. Gillespie, V., "Mystic's Foot: Rolle and Affectivity", in Glascoe, M. (ed.), *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England* (Exeter: 1982), 212-20. On the significance of the private ownership of devotional books in the development of silent reading, as well as the broader political implications associated with lay independence from the clergy, see Saenger, P., "Books of hours and the reading habits of the later middle ages", in Chartier (ed.), *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 1989), 143-4, 145; Thompson, J., *Robert Thornton and the London Thornton Manuscript: British Library MS. Additional 31042*, Manuscript Studies II, gen. ed. J. Griffiths (Cambridge: 1987) , p. 1; see Salter, *Popular Reading* for references to other works.

12 Cavallo, - Chartier, *History of Reading* 4.

13 Clanchy, M., "The ABC Primer": Was it in Latin or English?", in Salter, E.- Wicker, H. (eds), *Vernacularity in England and Wales c 1300-1550*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy (Turnhout: 2011) 17-39, 11-12.

years of Lollard persecution are generally considered a time of contention around the owner-ship and use of vernacular religious writings.[14] At the same time as some censorship or limitation the continued circulation of English Psalters and other devotional and catechetical texts is evidenced by numerous compilation manuscripts and other collections such as *Speculum Vitae*, Mirk's *Festial* and Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*.[15] After the end of the main Lollard persecutions and at the start of the official reformation process, the years c 1527-30 have sometimes been identified as particularly crucial in the introduction of new vernacular (English) texts in print particularly through the medium of the Primer. This new phase of textual production is sometimes thought to have come to an abrupt end around 1529-34 because of

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14 White, H., *Tudor Books of Private Devotion* (Wisconsin: 1951), 37-8. On the "Lollard Inheritance", see, Loades, D., "Books and the English Reformation prior to 1558", in Gilmont, J-F. (ed.), *The Reformation and the Book*, St Andrew's Studies in Reformation History, trans K. Maag (Aldershot: 1998), 264-91, 264-5. See McSheffrey, S. "Heresy, Orthodoxy and English Vernacular Religion 1480-1525", *Past and Present*, 186 (2005) 47-80, 48 and n. 5. She uses these dates, 1500 being the restart of Lollard persecutions after a "half-century hiatus" and1525 being the "approximate beginning of the reformation in England".

15White, *Tudor Books*, pp. 36-38. See, Thompson, "Another look at the religious texts" 177; on *Speculum Vitae* see Hanna, R (ed.), *Speculum Vitae* (Vol 1*) A Reading Edition, Early English Text Society*, 331 (Oxford: 2008); on the contents of manuscripts CUL Ff 2/38 and Oxford Bodleian Ashmole 61 which is probably sixteenth century and may be copied from a printed text, Salter "Evidence for Devotional Reading in Fifteenth Century England: A Comparative Analysis of One English Poem in Six Manuscript Contexts", in *Vernacularity*, 65-97; giving many examples of the circulation of literatures relating to the bible, in the English vernacular, see Morey, J. *Book and Verse: A Guide to Middle English Biblical Literature* (Urbana and Chicago: 2000).

various prohibitions and statutes.[16] By 1534 there is thought to have been a revival in the production of English religious texts in print in England for an English market, some of which have a specifically reforming agenda.[17]

The issue of religious change and re-formation looms large in any consideration of reading practice and experience across the Medieval to early Modern period in England. And, indeed, the study of reading helps to contribute to a significant question: "how was the average man [and woman] affected by the Reformation?"[18] The significant role of books and literature in the process and experience of reformation has been explored notably in relation to the role of the Prayer Book and the Bible on the absorption of Protestantism by the people in the Elizabethan era as well as in relation to the role of teaching for those who did not own books themselves.[19] Printing is still often implicated as a major tool in the spread of Protestantism through its production and circulation of English texts.[20] It is important to remember that

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[16]Butterworth*, C.C., The English Primers (1529-1545): Their Publication in Connection with the English Bible and the Reformation in England* (Pennsylvania: 1953) 14. On the 1534 statute, see Loades, "Books and the English Reformation", 278.

[17]On "The primer as an instrument of religious change", see White, *Tudor Books*, 87-102. Erler, M.C., "*The Maner to Lyve Well* and the Coming of English in Francois Regnault's Primers of the 1520s and 1530s", *The Library*, Series 6, 3 (1984), 229-243, 237ff.

[18]Whiting, R., "For the Health of my Soul: Prayers for the Dead in the Tudor South-West", in Marshall, P. (ed.), *The impact of the English Reformation 1500-1640*, Arnold Readers in History (London: 1997), 121-142, p. 121.

[19] Maltby, J., "'By this book': Parishioners, the Prayer Book and the Established Church", in Marshall (ed.), *Impact*, 257-278; Ryrie, A., "Counting Sheep, Counting Shepherds: The Problems of Allegiance in the English Reformation", in Ryrie, A.- Marshall, P. (eds), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: 2002), 84-110.

[20]See Hudson, A., *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: 1988) 510. I discuss these issues further in Salter, "The Uses of English in printed religious

print, in itself, did not cause or enable Protestantism and that, conversely, there was much religious literature, including vernacular works (English in this case), circulating in manuscript before printing became a practical alternative.

One of the other issues which often surfaces in a consideration of changing possibilities for reading practice and experience from the Medieval into the Early Modern period is a sense that reading styles changed (or developed) from group reading aloud to individual silent reading, particularly in the context of a popular consumption of literature. As with other models which find progress in any changes that occur in the transition from the Medieval to the Early Modern, this is problematic. And, interestingly, even in consideration of medieval practices of the 11th to 15th centuries, distinctions between private individual (and perhaps therefore silent reading) and public uses of text are awkward to sustain.[21] For many lay people, the book-centred reading of private devotion, for example, may well have taken place initially in the public space of the church; the subsequent "use" or "borrowing" of such books possibly being through memory in the privacy of the home. But as Chartier identifies, it is also problematic to assume that collective reading is popular and elite reading is private.[22]

To consider the ordinary reader engaged in private reading in a public space requires questions to be asked about the imaginative world of the reader and how interactions between the daily life of public and private practice engage with the reading of such literature. In describing these types of engagement with reading matter it sometimes seems more appropriate to use verbs other than "to read", such as "to see", "to use", "to enjoy", "to consume". Indeed, some scholars of the History of Reading are currently choosing to move away from the term

texts c 1497-1547: further evidence for the process and experience of reformation in England". 61; 232 (2012) 1–22.

21For some implications of silent reading in public, see Saenger, P., *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford. Ca.: 1997), 273-6.

22Chartier, "Communities of readers", 18.

"reading" in favour of the term "use".[23] Sherman's employment of "use" is partly aimed at avoiding the word reading's "associations with particular protocols and etiquettes-- including privacy, linearity, and cleanliness".[24] My suggestion is that all of these activities which seem to require other verbs should be understood as part of the broader sphere of popular reading and the business of being literate, where literacy is viewed as part of the process of cultural formation (or acculturation) and transformation. [25]

Based on research using a case study method, and drawing on this backdrop of research in the History of Reading, I argue for a model of surprising continuity in the forms and contents of popularly available religious reading matter across the great ideological changes of the English Reformation. There is evidence, for example, to indicate that certain forms of popular religious reading matter such as proverbial and doggerelised text remained popular in books with either a "Catholic" or "Protestant" emphasis. This tends to suggest a popular desire for continuity even if this was not directly or solely attached to religious ideology.[26] Alec Ryrie's proposition that "most English people never experienced a dramatic individual conversion"

23See, for example, Sherman, *Used Books,* pp. xiii-xiv.

24 Sherman, *Used Books*, p. xiv. The date of his example is 1586. Commenting on Sherman's choice of "use" and the history of the origins of this term with Robert Darnton's work see Richards, - Schurink, "Introduction: The textuality and materiality of reading in Early Modern England", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 345- 61, 345-6.

25 Fabian, J., "Keep Listening: Ethnography and Reading", in Boyarin, J. (ed.), *The Ethnography of Reading* (Berkeley, London: 1993), 80-97.

26I have discussed this in Salter, What kind of horse is it? Popular devotional reading during the sixteenth century" in Hadfield, A.- Dimmock, M. (eds), *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: 2009), 105-20. For similar ideas concerning the continuities of taste and sensibility, Driver, M., The *Image in Print*: Book Production in Late Medieval England and its Sources (London: 2004), 209-12.

is, therefore, probably appropriate in relation to the changes and continuities in reading practice and experience.[27] There is strong evidence to suggest that, while there were many changes, there were also many continuities in the devotional texts being popularly consumed throughout the reforming years including their visual appearance and the languages in which they were produced [28] There is also evidence that individual readers made changes to their devotional books according to the differing and changing requirements of Catholicism and Protestantism and the associated laws and statutes.[29] Of course, such action is not necessarily evidence that the same people actually believed something new or different (although I would not wish to argue that Protestantism had no impact on the people or that the people in general actively resisted Protestantism in favour of Catholicism).[30]

Catechism

 I would like to propose catechetical texts as a very useful example for a consideration of religious reading practice and experience across a broad chronological span of the Medieval to

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27 Ryrie, "Counting Sheep", 105.

28I have discussed some continuities in Salter, "'The Dayes Moralised'", 145-62. The long print run of *The Shepherds Kalender* (c. 1506-1585) provides another example of such continuities. On this see Driver, M., "When is a Miscellany not Miscellaneous: Making Sense of the 'Kalender of Shepherds'", *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003) 199-214.

29See Duffy, E., *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers, 1240-1570* (New York, London: 2006). Salter, "Which Horse is it?" 105-20. See also, Driver, *Image in Print* 194-204, 212-4.

30 For the seminal text on traditional religion see Duffy, E., *Stripping of the* Altars: *Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New York, London: 1994), eg. p. 543.On the difference between participation and ideological commitment see Marshall "Introduction", in *Impact*, 7, and on the possibility that "gullible labourers" were the most easily swayed to conform with new directives, see Maltby, "'By this book'" 271.

Early Modern, for example the period 1200-1700.[31] The encouragement by the Lateran councils of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries to circulate these texts to a wide sector of the population, controversies over matters of vernacular spirituality during the era of Wycliffite and Lollard heresies, and the Protestant desire to circulate and disseminate a programme of religious knowledge all helped to sustain the production of catechetical texts across this long period of time.[32] There were of course some substantial changes during these centuries in the ways that catechetical texts were viewed. This includes the changing form of some (such as the order and numbering of the Ten Commandments which is discussed below) and an altered perception of what was valid or important (such as the increased interest, for Protestants, in scriptural elements like the Decalogue over elements such as the Seven Deadly Sins). Margaret Aston suggests that the expectations of how much of the (new) catechism should be learned also increased during Reformation.[33]

The Ten Commandments

Margaret Aston notes that great attention was given to the commandments in the thirteenth through to fifteenth centuries partly because of the central significance of this element of the catechism for confessional and penitential practice. Ecclesiastical constitutions, such as those of Walter Cantilupe (Bishop of Worcester, in 1240), and Archbishop Pecham's *Ignorancia Sacerdotum* (c. 1260), provided for regular instruction in key elements of the faith; and later medieval commentators such as Jean Gerson and Johann Nider wrote extensively on the Commandments as well as other catechetical elements.[34]

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31 This essay is part of the first stages of developing a project on Reading the Catechism in England c 1200-1700.

32 See, for example, Aston, M., *England's Iconoclasts: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: 1988), 344-70; Green, I., *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England 1530-1740* (Oxford: 1996).

33 Aston, M., *England's Iconoclasts: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: 1988), n 13, 346-8.

34 Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, 344.

It has been noted that dissemination of the Ten Commandments became dangerous in the years after Arundel's constitutions and this includes ownership of books containing commandment texts (in English) or teaching this and other elements of the catechism. This is the case until at least 1519 when seven martyrs were created in Coventry.[35] Ten Commandments texts were in circulation in a wide variety of forms and variations and these included short and long rhymes, prose versions and commentaries, dialogues, mixed Latin and English texts, and versions with more clearly orthodox or heterodox content. Below are extracts from a small selection of the texts in circulation during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which is the period of time particularly relevant to the case study that follows.

Examples of Ten Commandments texts

Example 1: A poem found in six manuscript contexts including Lambeth palace 853 [36]

I warn eche liif þat liveþ in lond	I warn each person living on earth
And do him dredlees out of were	To make him safe out of fear
Þat he must studie & undirstonde	That he must study and understand
Þe lawe of god to love & lere.	The law of god to love and learn
For þere is no man feer ne neer	For there is no man far nor near
Þat may him sillfe save unschent	That may himself save unharmed
But he þat castiþ him with conscience clere	But he that casts him with conscience
To kepe weel cristis comaundement	To keep well Christ's Commandments
Thou schalt have oon god & no mo	Thou shalt have one god and no more

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35 Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, 347; McSheffrey, "Heresy, Orthodoxy", 53-5.

36 Furnivall, F.J. (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ and Other Religious Poems, Original Series*, 24 (London: 1867) 107-13.

And serve him boþe wiþ mayn & myȝt | And serve him with both manner and might

And over al þing love him also | And over all things love him too

For he haþ lent þee liif and liȝt | For he hath given thee life and light

If þou be noied bi day or nyȝt | If thou be troubled by day or night

In peyne be meeke & pacient | In pain be meek and patient

And rewle þee ay bi resoun riȝt | And rule thyself with reason right

And kepe weel cristis comaundement. | And keep well Christ's Commandments

Lete þi neiȝe boris, boþe freend & fo | Let thy neighbours both friend and foe

Freli of þi freendschip feele | Freely of thy friendship feel

In herte wilne þou hem also | In your heart desire them also

Riȝt as þou woldist þi self were wele | Right as thou would [for] thy own welfare

Helpe to save hem from unsele | Help to save them from mischance

So þat her soulis ben not schent | So that their souls be not harmed

And her care þou helpe to kele | And their care thou help to calm

And kepe weel cristis comaundement | And keep well Christ's Commandments

Goddis name in ydil take þou nouȝt | God's name thoughtlessly take thou not

But ceesse & save þee from þat synne | But cease and save thee from that sin

Swere bi no þing þat god haþ wrouȝt | Swear by nothing that God hath made

Be waar his wraþe lest þou so wynne | Beware of his wrath lest you incur it

But bisie þee evere her bale to blinne | Be busy thee ever its evil to thwart

Þat wiþ blaberinge ooþis ben blent | That with blabbering oaths are made

Uncouþe & knowen of þi kynne | Uncouth and known of thy kind

And kepe weel cristis comaundement | And keep well Christ's Commandments

Example 2 A poem found in two manuscript contexts including Lambeth Palace 853 [37]

Every man schulde teche þis lore	Every man should teach this law
To his children with good entent	To his children with good intent
And do it himsilf evermore	And do it himself evermore
To kepe weel goddis comaundement	To keep well God's Commandments
Fals goddis schalt noon have	False gods shall thou none have
But worschipe god omnipotent	But worship God omnipotent
Make not þi god þat man haþ grave	Make not thy god that man has engraved
Þis is þe firste comaundement	This is the first Commandment
Goddis name in ydil take þou not	God's name in vain take thou not
For if þou do þou schalt be scheent	For if thou do thou shalt be damned
Swere bi no þing that god haþ wrouȝt	Swear by nothing that god hath made
Þis is the secunde comaundement	This is the second Commandment
Have mynde to helewe þin holi day	Have mind to hallow the holy day
Thou & alle þine wiþ good entent	Thou and all thine with good intent
Leve servile werkis & nyce aray	Leave servile works and nice things
Þis is þe þridde comaundement	This is the third Commandment

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37 *Hymns to the Virgin*, 104-5.

Þou schalt have none alyene godes before me. Þou schalt nouȝt make þe an ymage grave by mannes honde, ne no lykenesse þat is in hevene above and þat is in eorþe byneþe, noþer of hem that beþ in waters under þe eorþe. Þou schalt nouȝt worschepe ne herye hem. Ich am þy Lord God a strange lover gelouse. Ich visyte the wykkednesse of fadres into here children into the þrydde and ferþe generacioun of hem that hateþ me, and I do mercy into a þousand kynredenys of hem þat loveþ me and kepeþ myn hestes.

Thou shalt have no alien gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee an image graven by man's hands, nor any likeness that is in heaven above and that is in earth beneath, nor of them that are in waters under the earth. Thou shalt not worship nor heed them. I am the Lord God a strange jealous lover. I visit the wickedness of fathers onto their children unto the third and fourth generations of those that hate me, and I do mercy unto a thousand kin of those that loveth me and keepeth my behests

Example 4 A typical example from early printed matter, from *The arte or crafte to Lyve Well* (1505)[39]

One onely god y shalt wor   One only god thou shall wor/

shyppe / and love perfytly: ship / and love perfectly

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38 Jefferson, J.A., "An edition of the Ten Commandments commentary in BL Harley 2398 and the related version in Trinity College Dublin 245, York Minster XVI.L.12 and Harvard English 738 together with discussion of related commentaries" (Unpublished PhD Thesis University of Bristol, 1995) 7. This is described as "moderate lollard writings" in Gayk, S., I*mage, Text and Religious Reform in Fifteenth Century England* (Cambridge: 2006) 19-20.

39*The Crafte to Lyve Well* (1505), STC 792, fos 27r-v.

God in vayne thou shalt not	God in vain thou shalt not
swere: ne by his sayntes verily	swear: nor by his saints verily
The sondayes y shall kepe / in	The Sundays thou shall keep/ in
Servynge god devoutely.	Serving God devoutly

The Case Study: **Lambeth Palace Library, London, Ms 853**

The manuscript used here as the basis for the case study of Ten Commandments texts is Lambeth Palace Manuscript 853 which includes two rhyming versions of the Ten Command-ments. The manuscript is a collection of 34 items of varying lengths predominantly in Eng-lish. The book looks like a single product, using the same hand and style throughout. In char-acter the texts are mainly religious, with quite a lot of didactic material, several giving a mor-alisation of the ages of man with other slightly more political texts commenting on the stand-ard trope of the vanities of the world, and there are others with a slightly more contemplative tone.[40] The two poems of the Ten Commandments found in this manuscript are different and this demonstrates nicely that even doggerel adaptations of this text were various, even in one manuscript produced at one time. Extracts from the two commandment poems are given in the examples above. The first is given the title "Kepe Weel Cristis Commandement" in the *Early English Text Society* [EETS] edition, after its repeated refrain. It is a poem with 13 stanzas of 8 lines with the first line being "I warn each man that lives on land". The second is given the title "The Ten Commandments" in the same EETS volume. This is a poem of 11 four line stanzas with the first line, "Every man should teach this law".[41] For clarity, I will use a shortened version of the first line of each poem in the following discussion. Alongside Lam-beth Ms 853, "I warn" is also found in a range of other places with a few variations, includ-ing, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng.poet.a.1 (The Vernon Manuscript), London, British Library Add. 22283 (The Simeon Manuscript), British Library Harley 78 (incomplete), St

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40 James, M.R., *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Pal-ace: The Mediaeval Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 1932).

41 Lambeth Palace Library Ms 853 47-50; Furnivall, *Hymns* 104-13

George's College Windsor EII (now catalogued as SGC LIB MS 1), and Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 1584). The only other identified manuscript context of "Every man" is British Library, Harley 665.[42]

The opening stanza of each commandment poem gives a clear sense of their difference in tone: "Every man" is less harsh than the warning tone of "I warn" (see extract above). The focus on "Every man" seems to be as a teaching text for children whereas "I warn" is set up, as the first two words imply, as a warning of the perils of not keeping the Commandments. Seeming to confirm its role as a teaching text for children, "Every man" clearly provides the number of each commandment as the last line of each of the 10 commandment stanzas (2 through to 11). In "I warn", the numbering is less clearly articulated although each commandment has its own stanza and the first line of each of the commandment stanzas (2, 4 through to 12) clearly indicates to which it refers. (Stanza 3 has the addition on the neighbour from the New Testament). It is noticeable that the last line of the first stanza of "Every man" seems to allude to the other poem with the line "To keep well God's commandment", although in "I warn" the poem has been Christianised (so, the keep well line becomes "Keep well Christ's commandment"). [43]

Instance 1: Manuscript Evidence for Religious Acculturation[44]

The existence of two versions of the same catechetical text in what seems to be a planned manuscript is not unique by any means, and it relates to the manuscript culture of copying.

42See Mooney, L, Mosser, D.- Solopova, E., *The Digital Index of Middle English Verse* http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/imev/ 1229.

43 Cawley, A.C. "Middle English metrical versions of the Decalogue with Reference to the English Corpus Christi Cycles", *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s.8 (1975) 129-45, 133.

44 I am grateful for discussion of this issue at the "Religious Acculturation" meeting held at Queen's University Belfast in June 2012, and at Leeds IMC in sessions organised by Pavlina Richterova (Vienna) and Sabrina Corbellini (Gronigen)

John Thompson noted this issue with reference to the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript miscellany and suggested the situation of "two conflicting impulses that must have been encountered on numerous occasions by some late Medieval copyists and collectors of Middle English religious literature": firstly an "urge to be eclectic... to satisfy a voracious appetite for religious and moral reading"; and secondly an "urge to be conservative, to limit and control the range of instructional and devotional material being made available to other listeners and readers".[45] The existence of two versions of the Ten Commandments is not unique either for manuscripts produced at a very similar date to Lambeth Ms 853. The Simeon manuscript has the "I warn" poem together with another version of the Ten Commandments although this other version is not a stand-alone poem but rather part of the *Somme le Roi* sequence. I have already described some of the differences in the two Commandments poems of Lambeth Ms 853 perhaps suggesting that each poem has its own function. It is also reasonable to suggest that the two poems are in the same book by choice, therefore, because they offer a different perspective or a different tone. But given that my interest is in understanding more about reading practice and experience using material evidence such as this, I want to propose a possible model for what we might describe as "religious acculturation" stimulated by this piece of evidence.

The Ten Commandments (like much popular religious text) is very familiar territory for the reader from a wide range of literate occasions that involve reading a book as well as some of those other activities I mentioned in the first half of the essay (listening, seeing, using, thinking). It is possible to say, therefore, that people were already "accultured to" The Ten Commandments. So with regard to the practice and experience of using Lambeth Ms 853, some questions to ask are: how might these two poems be used (together or separately)? What, if anything, does this suggest about the nature of religious thinking or reading? Can this help with making a model for acculturation through religious reading more generally?

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45 Thompson, "Another look" 177.

Drawing on some anthropological work on the making of popular history, I propose the following scenario: in using this book, and others like it, the individual reader or member of a reading group turning the pages has the experience of, "Oh this is the poem where we teach our children about the precepts" whereas "This one beginning "I warn" is where we acknowledge our responsibilities in fear of peril". Why not also then: "Do you remember the time that we read the warning poem and there was a great clap of thunder—this could have been a sign about the actions of N.N. who didn't return after he was discovered...".

I am borrowing here from the ethnographic work of Johannes Fabian who constructed an excellent model for understanding the cultural processes surrounding the making of popular history, or "historiology".[46] I suggest that we might be able to understand aspects of religious acculturation as analogous to the making of popular history. One of the key elements to take from Fabian's work is the (very simple) concept of the ways that knowledge is produced rather than re-produced through the retelling of events in, for example, the stories, myths, or images that are so important in historiology.[47] In his agenda-setting work on the construction of popular history through the combination of pictorial and oral narrative he gives examples of the ways that the performance of popular history might use "variations in stress, pitch, volume, speed, intonation patterns, register and even linguistic code" as well as various "audible gestures"; alongside this are instances where the historiologer "performs little sketches", recalling particular actions, one example is concerned with a telephone not working and having to crank it over and again, which is told with the cranking action.[48] Fabian describes these instances as moments where "performative takes over from informative talking".[49] A key point,

46Fabian, J., *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Berkeley LA, London: 1996).

47Fabian, *Remembering*, 251.

48Fabian, *Remembering*, 253.

49Fabian *Remembering*, 253.

for my purposes, is that it is in the familiarity of the telling and the re-enactment that the popular history comes alive.

Acculturation through familiarity

On the broader issue of how religious acculturation occurs across the reforming era, perhaps it is possible to take a similar model to the one proposed above. This is a model that has broader implications for understanding the processes of change associated with religious reading practice and experience across the reforming era. I suggest that the process of incorporating and accepting changing ideologies in a popular context is similar (analogous) to the business of making popular historiology (where a key element is the very familiarity of the cultural product involved, in this instance the text of the Ten Commandments). The scenario looks rather like this: "Do you remember the time that..., do you remember our parents reading this poem and crossing themselves each time Christ was mentioned..... This time/ now when we read/tell it we didn't/don't cross ourselves. Do you remember the time when we stopped crossing ourselves? Do you remember the time when we were worried to say the 'hath grave' line in the children's poem? Now we emphasise 'hath grave' in the second stanza because there's no fear that this phrase sounds Lollard."

In the first half of the essay, I noted my finding of the very continuity in reading practice and experience across the reforming era and that means the surprising continuity of actual texts in circulation and also in styles of "popular" text being produced and circulated. This includes macaronic forms (Latin and English in this case), rhyming versions of biblical and catechetical material such as the Ten Commandments, doggerel rhyme more generally. Continuity is, I suggest, key to the processes of religious acculturation that I propose here for popular religious reading. I suggest, therefore, that this connection between familiarity and acculturation has broader implications for understanding the experience or nature of change in popular culture.

Instance 2: Ten Commandments and Wycliffism/ Lollardy [50]

My second model explores the possibility that a text such as the Ten Commandments as found in rhyme in Lambeth Ms 853 might be open to, or stimulate, a range of interpretations that include potentially heretical understandings. So, for this example, I take the notion of change to mean the mutability of the meanings of one particular text in the imagination of the reader who may, in this fifteenth century context, be seeking out heterodox or sectarian views. The Ten Commandments lends itself to such a consideration because it was a controversial text in the fifteenth century. Anne Hudson identified that Decalogue texts receive frequent mention in heresy trials and one reason for this was that the prohibition on the making of graven images "offered such an obvious place, and obvious hunting place, for Lollard views". [51] The graven images phrase was not officially sanctioned in English (printed) text until 1539 / (1545).[52] It is significant, then, that the Decalogue texts identified as Wycliffite or Lollard (or Lollard-leaning) tend to make specific reference to graven images. One such version is given as Example 3 above. This version is described as a controversial heterodox view of Commandments found in a manuscript with more traditional texts.[53]

In England in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the Ten Commandments in English is potentially quite a dangerous text to own, then, at certain times of visitation and depending on which region of England the text is owned in. *Dives and Pauper* is also mentioned as a du-

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50 I am grateful for discussion of these issues at Leeds IMC 2012 in my paper at the session sponsored by The Lollard Society

51 Hudson *Premature Reformation*, 484; Gayk, *Image, Text* 11.

52 See Aston, *England's Iconoclasts* 344ff, and discussion in Salter, "Uses of English" 128-9.

53 The text identified by Thomas Arnold as quintessentially Wycliffite (using Oxford, Bodleian 789) has very similar phraseology for this commandment Arnold, T. *Select English Works of John Wyclif edited from original Manuscripts*, 3 Vols (Oxford: 1871), Vol 3 "Miscellaneous works" 82-92.

bious book on a number of occasions (as discussed by Hudson, for example). Perhaps its explicit use of the "graven images" phrase does not help to reassure authorities of its orthodoxy at this time.[54] At the same time there is also evidence to suggest that not all ownership of such a text needed to be kept under wraps. One such example of open reference to a book containing the Ten Commandments which, being given an English title one might assume is actually an English text, is found in the last will and testament of a carpenter called William Basse of Southwark near London in 1488, as follows:

> Item I bequeathe unto William Hylle of the Citte of Caunterbury a maser with a foote carvyd and with a knoppe of silver and gilt a book with x comaundementes and other div<u>er</u>se things therynne a gowne of Grene and a cloth of Grene for a bedde of tapstry werk and with portatrwys of men and women in the same. [55]

> Item I beaqueath to William Hill of the City of Canterbury a maser [cup] with a foot carved and with a knob of silver and gilt a book with 10 commandments and other diverse things therein a gown of Green and a cloth of Green for a bed of tapestry work and with portraits of men and women on the same

This situation of one text having potentially orthodox and heterodox connotations points to an issue of current interest in studies of Wycliffism and Lollardy which is that there are many similarities between the texts and ideas used and valued by those in the "mainstream" and those who hold "sectarian" beliefs.[56] Another way of looking at this is to identify the "plasticity of the categories of orthodoxy and heresy".[57] And as Rob Lutton's work shows, if we are viewing sectarian behaviour as polysemic, we should remember that orthodox behaviour was

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54 Hudson*, Premature Reformation*, 485.

55 The National Archive, London PROB 11/8/38/306.

56 Somerset, F., "Afterword", in Bose, M – Hornbeck II, P.J, *Wycliffite Controversies*, Medieval Church Studies 23 (Turnhout: 2012) 319-333, 327.

57 McSheffrey, "Heresy, orthodoxy", 49.

multifarious too.[58] McSheffrey has described the ways that the ownership of certain English texts, especially catechetical and scriptural material, was sometimes part of an accusation of heretical practice. At other times the very orthodoxy of the common reader owning, using, and learning English catechetical material was emphasised.[59] This issue of the heterodox, or Lollard leaning, or orthodox, nature of the mixture of texts in some manuscripts has been taken up more recently, for example, in the work of Amanda Moss on Westminster Manuscript 3 where there are various Ten Commandments texts, as well as in other studies of what have been termed "cosmopolitan" or "lollard friendly" texts and their readerships.[60] Anna Lewis's discussion of a "catechetical hinterland" with reference to the heterodox range of *Pater Noster* texts in circulation during the fifteenth century demonstrates more evidence for the interconnectedness between the mainstream and the Lollard or Wycliffite.[61] And as Mary Dove recently demonstrated, the whole catechism was really part of the Wycliffite pastoral

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58 See, for example, Lutton, R.G.A., "Lollardy, orthodoxy, and cognitive psychology" in *Wycliffite Controversies*, 97-119.

59See, for example, McSheffrey, "Heresy, orthodoxy", 59.

60 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 271; Moss, A. "Context and Construction: The Nature of Vernacular Piety in a Fifteenth-Century Devotional Anthology", in *Vernacularity in England and Wales* 41-64; Johnson, I "Vernacular theology/ theological vernacular: A game of two halves?" 73-88 and Perry, R.- Kelly, S., "Devotional cosmopolitanism in Fifteenth century England" 363-80 both in Gillespie, V.- Ghosh, K. (eds), *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth Century England,* Medieval Church Studies 21 (Turnhout: 2012)

61 Lewis, A., "Textual Borrowings, Theological Mobility, and the Lollard Pater Noster Commentary" *Philological Quarterly*, 88, 1 (2009) 1-23. On Lollard appropriations of mainstream discourses see also Gayk, *Image, Text* 18. Another similar example is discussed in Patwell, N, "Canons and Catechisms: The Austin Canons of South-East England and Sacerdos Parochialis" in *After Arundel*, 381-93, 388-9.

agenda.[62] All of which recent work constitutes a problematisation (sometimes a deconstruction) of what constitutes Wycliffite or Lollard texts and behaviours and a demonstration of the mutual interests in catechetical writings of mainstream and sectarian readers.

Reflecting on this issue of the problems of differentiating between mainstream and sectarian practices and ideas, Fiona Somerset has recently identified a further issue in defining what constitutes heresy. She suggests book use or sharing as an area of practice that prevails for Lollards and that this might be relatively less concerned with doctrine than with group identity. As she says: "One might imagine defendants bemused by 'inquisitors'' insistent focus on the precise doctrine of the Eucharist, for example, and far more concerned among themselves with a sense of group identity and of mission drawn from group reading of the Ten Commandments".[63] Choosing to focus more on distinctions than similarities in the "catechetical hinterland" (and demonstrating the minute differentiations in textual form that this might entail), Matti Peikola has discussed evidence for what he describes as the "late medieval contest between two catechetical programmes – a contest in which the lexical minutiae of even the most elementary items of faith, such as the *Pater Noster,* the *Ave Maria*, and *Creed*, were regarded as significant, and were consequently carefully scrutinized and if necessary modified by scribes".[64]

My tentative proposition takes up this current trend to deconstruct what constitutes a "mainstream" or a "sectarian" text, and is based on the evidence from Lambeth Ms 853, to suggest a reader-focussed consideration of the possible heterodoxy of a text. And I draw, here, on Peikola's proposition about the significance of short phrases as "'hot links' which point towards

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62 Dove, M., "The Lollards' three-fold Biblical agenda" 211-26, 220.

63 Somerset, "Afterword" 327.

64 Peikola, M., "'And after All, Myn Ave Marie Almost to the Ende': Pierce the Ploughman's Crede and Lollard Expositions of the Ave Maria" *English Studies*, 81,4 (2000) 273-292, 290.

an issue more fully explicated elsewhere in Lollard texts". [65] The piece of evidence in Lambeth Ms 853 is one phrase found in the children's text of the Commandments ("Every man") for which the seventh line is: "Make not þi god þat man haþ grave". In the fifteenth century, as I have indicated above, the "hath grave" phrase signalled an issue of major contestation with regard to sectarian and mainstream versions of the Ten Commandments. This hot phrase is admittedly rather "innocuously" used in a ditty which might seem aesthetically very far from Lollard-sounding.[66] But my reader-focused proposition is that this phrase could function as a stimulus towards Lollard thinking or as a connection to other texts exploring this issue at greater length. For a reader dissatisfied by orthodox thinking about images at this time or for a "wannabe Lollard", or for a confirmed Lollard experiencing fear of persecution, this little phrase in this poem might either acculturate him or her into sectarian thinking or enable him/her to pursue heterodox practice and ideas in secret. Such an approach has broader implications for understanding the transmission of non orthodox (or changed) views of religious literature.[67]

Conclusion

This essay presents two models for understanding the ways that Medieval manuscripts can provide evidence for the experience and practice of religious reading during a time of change.

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65 Peikola, "And after All, Myn Ave Marie" 277. For an analogous discussion of distinctions in Lollard discourse on images see Gayk, *Image,Text* 20, 23.

66 The role and uses of rhyme is the subject of a forthcoming article. But for a re-examination of Lollard aesthetics and rhyming text see, Gayk, S., "Lollard Writings, Literary Criticism, and the Meaningfulness of Form", in *Wycliffite Controversies* 135-52, 137,152; Peikola, "And after All, Myn Ave Marie" 277, where "Innocuous" is to discuss the phrase "almost to the ende" in *Pierce Ploughman's Creed*.

67 I am currently developing this model for consideration at greater length.

Each instance is concerned with very specific pieces of evidence using one manuscript as the source for this case study. Each model also has wider applicability, particularly with reference to understanding more about cultural processes and the ways that processes such as ideological change and transition might have been understood and experienced in Medieval society through religious reading. While I review the general background to my approach to religious reading in English Medieval and Early Modern Society in the first half of the essay, the case study focuses on catechetical texts (specifically the Ten Commandments in this instance) which were widely circulated and intended for the widest spectrum of readers and users. By examining the evidence offered by the occurrence of two versions of a doggerel Ten Commandments poem in one manuscript of the fifteenth century, I hope to have demonstrated the ways that evidence from popular forms, innocuous words, and basic rhymes might enable much greater understanding of the nature and experience of religious reading.