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"A simple zeal and earnest love to the truth" : the religious journeys of Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Katherine Parr, Queen of England

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“A SIMPLE ZEAL AND EARNEST LOVE TO THE TRUTH”: THE RELIGIOUS
JOURNEYS OF CATHERINE WILLOUGHBY, DUCHESS OF SUFFOLK, AND
KATHERINE PARR, QUEEN OF ENGLAND

A Thesis

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by
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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the religious conversions of Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Katherine Parr, Queen of England throughout the English Reformation and attempts to explain why their conversions proceeded at different rates. Both women came from similar backgrounds, yet Parr's conversion to Evangelicalism occurred much sooner than Willoughby's. Although Willoughby and Parr's reformist leanings are well researched, their conversion to the new faith is a topic which deserves further attention. Studying their individual conversions will not only add to the histories of their lives, but to the understanding of why they became such passionate advocates of reform. This study also focuses on the personal events which caused Willoughby and Parr's conversions to Evangelicalism and argues that their conversions were not explicitly due to any political pressure, governmental changes, or blind devotion to the Crown. Rather, their religious evolution was due to a series of personal events which eliminated the Catholic influences on their lives, exposed them to Evangelical teachings, and transformed them into fervid advocates of reform.

INTRODUCTION

Good Friday, 1554. The sheriff of Lincolnshire was ordered to ride to the home of Richard Bertie and his wife, Catherine Willoughby, with a summons for Bertie to appear before Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester. The Berties' relationship with the Bishop was less than cordial, and upon appearing before Gardiner, Richard Bertie was attacked for ignoring two previous summonses and was ordered to pay a debt to the Crown that Willoughby's first husband, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, owed to Henry VIII. Gardiner's interrogation quickly turned to the topic of Bertie's wife, Catherine, and the many encounters in which she had been disrespectful towards the Bishop. Gardiner recounted a dinner party hosted by the Duke of Suffolk in the 1540s at which he had been deeply offended by Catherine's, then Duchess of Suffolk, remarks. During the party, the Duke requested that the ladies take a man into dinner they admired most. Unable to ask her husband who was busy hosting, Willoughby approached Gardiner and said "since I may not ask my Lord whom I like best, I ask our Grace whom I like least."¹ The Bishop also recalled that in 1547, Catherine had arranged a parade in which she dressed her dog in elaborate clerical robes and made her guests refer to the dog as 'Gardiner' as Willoughby's servants carried it around in a litter. That same year, when Gardiner was locked in the Tower, Willoughby was walking near the Tower and upon seeing the Bishop peering out his window, the Duchess taunted "it is merry with the lambs now that the wolf is shut up."²

Gardiner's comments then turned towards the religion of Bertie's wife. Gardiner asked Bertie, "I pray you if I may ask the question of my lady your wife, is she now as ready to set up

¹ Evelyn Read, *Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk* (Oxford, England: Alden Press, 1962), 58.

² Read, 287.

the mass as she once was lately to pull it down?”³ Putting emphasis on the word “lately”, Gardiner snidely alluded to the fact that Willoughby was once considered a devout Catholic. Gardiner was well aware that Willoughby was now a patron of the works of the reformist preacher Hugh Latimer and that she vocally rejected the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. Responding to Gardiner’s question of whether Catherine could be persuaded to return to Catholicism, Bertie replied “yea, verily, with the truth, for she is reasonable enough.”⁴ Satisfied with this answer, Gardiner sent Bertie back to Lincolnshire.

If one were to examine Catherine Willoughby’s life after the mid 1530s, one would find a staunch Protestant reformer who supported the evangelical cause through financial backing and bold displays of loyalty to reform in the face of conservative opposition. If one were to examine Willoughby’s early life, one would think they were looking at the life of a different woman. Willoughby was born into a devoutly Catholic family and her circle of friends included some of the most conservative Catholics at Henry VIII’s court. When evangelical circles gained power at court as Henry VIII clashed with the Pope to obtain a divorce from Catherine of Aragon in the early 1530s, Willoughby’s letters and her choice of conservative allies indicated her unwillingness to abandon her Catholic faith. Although England formally broke away from the Church in Rome with the passing of the Act of Supremacy in 1534, it was not until the early 1540s that Willoughby started to display her reformist leanings. Yet by her death in 1580, Willoughby was a well-known advocate of reform and a patron of other reformers such as Hugh Latimer and John Foxe.

³John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perilous Days, Touching Matters of the Church* (London, 1570), 2323.

⁴ Foxe, 2323.

Catherine Willoughby was hardly the only noble woman of her time who was born Catholic but died an Evangelical. Queen Katherine Parr was also baptized Catholic but became an advocate for evangelical reform as an adult. In her work *Kateryn Parr: The Making of a Queen*, Susan E. James explains that Parr's immediate family practiced the expected level of piety of an early sixteenth-century family.⁵ Katherine Parr's family was also connected to Queen Katherine of Aragon and Sir Thomas More, some of the most conservative Catholics at court. Yet despite her Catholic roots and family connections, Parr was a well-known supporter of reform by the end of her life. During her tenure as Queen, Parr was nearly arrested in 1546 for her reformist leanings and in 1547, explicitly denounced the Catholic Church in her work, *Lamentation of a Sinner*.

This study attempts to answer two questions; first, what inspired these Catholic-born women to evolve into Evangelical reformers by the end of their lives? Although Willoughby and Parr's reformist leanings are well researched, their conversion to the new faith is a topic which deserves further attention. Studying their individual conversions will not only add to the histories of their lives, but to the understanding of why they became such passionate advocates of reform. Furthermore, why did Parr's transformation proceed more rapidly than Willoughby's? Both women came from similar origins, but why did Parr not resist the acceptance of Evangelical teachings when she first came in contact with them as Willoughby did? This study will focus on the answer to these questions by analyzing the personal events of Catherine Willoughby and Queen Katherine Parr's lives which led to their abandonment of the Catholic faith. This work will argue that these women's conversions to Evangelicalism were influenced by personal events and were not explicitly due to any political pressure, governmental changes, or blind devotion to the Crown. Rather, their religious evolutions were shaped by a series of personal events which

⁵ Susan E. James, *Kateryn Parr: The Making of a Queen* (Brookfield, Ashgate Publishing, 1999), 190.

eliminated the Catholic influences on their lives, exposed them to Evangelical teachings, and transformed them into fervid advocates of reform.

The present work does not attempt to alter the images of these women set forth by previous historians, but rather to shed light on the personal events leading to their conversions. Existing works on Catherine Willoughby focus on her later life when her reformist beliefs were already visibly displayed and were well known amongst her peers. These works portray the Duchess as a bold, well-educated woman of the Tudor court who used her inherited wealth to become an influential patron and advocate of religious reform. Although these works are helpful in understanding Willoughby's later life and her influence upon reform from the 1550s on, there is little emphasis placed upon the events of Willoughby's conversion. This study will also not argue the degree of influence Queen Katherine Parr held over Henry VIII in the last years of his reign, nor will it seek to alter Parr's established image as a caretaker to the ailing king and devoted step-mother to Henry VIII's children. Rather, this study is solely concerned with the personal events of Parr's life which led to her conversion to the new faith and advocacy for reform as Queen. In sum, rather than analyze Willoughby and Parr's later lives, this work will examine their families, upbringings, and the personal events leading up to their complete transformation into Evangelicals.

The argument that the conversions of Willoughby and Parr were due to personal events owes a great deal to the approach taken by Ethan H. Shagan's *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* towards the English Reformation. Historians debate whether the Reformation was a result of a national conversion influenced by the political policies of Henry VIII, or was a "piecemeal process in which politics and spiritual change were intertwined."⁶ Shagan asserts

⁶ Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7.

that people, rather than the government, played an important role in choosing what sort of Reformation they experienced.⁷ Furthermore, Shagan believes that the religion of mid to late sixteenth-century England was “innovated not from above, but was negotiated through layers of local agents and collaborators.”⁸ Therefore, like Shagan, this work asserts that the English Reformation did not affect women like Willoughby and Parr explicitly through governmental policies, but rather that their religious beliefs were impacted by the “agents and collaborators” they came in contact with because of the Reformation.⁹

It is perhaps important now to address why this study has adopted a specific terminology when referring to reformers. Reformation historians debate over whether those who championed the printing of the Bible in English, emphasized the Gospel as the highest religious authority, and wanted to rid the Church of England of its Catholic trappings should be referred to as ‘Protestant’, ‘Evangelical’, ‘gospellers’, or should not be categorized at all. This study takes the approach of historians who feel that the label of ‘Evangelical’ is more appropriate when referring to reformers in England before 1553. Historian Alec Ryrie asserts in his work, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation*, that...

to speak of ‘Protestantism’, is to imply a much more firmly defined identity than as yet existed. When the word was used at all in 1540s England, it referred to the German states which had embraced Luther’s doctrines and had formed a military alliance against the Holy Roman Emperor.¹⁰

Historian Diarmaid MacCulloch’s *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* echoes Ryrie’s argument that ‘evangelical’ is the proper term when referring to reformers in England pre-1553 since “this term went to the heart of Europe’s religious divisions, because the

⁷ Shagan, 22.

⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰ Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xv.

reform movement represented itself as a faithful return to the true spirit of Christ's Gospel, the good news or evangelium."¹¹ Melissa Franklin-Harkrider argues in *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire's Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580* that after 1553, 'Protestant' became "the accepted term in England for a wide range of reformers who...advocated the importance of scripture and preaching, as well as more radical changes in the liturgy and ceremonies of the English Church."¹² This study also utilizes the term 'evangelical' in support of the argument that 'evangelical', rather than 'Protestant', was the term contemporaries would have recognized and label they would have given to themselves.¹³

This study is organized chronologically with each chapter comparing and contrasting Willoughby and Parr's experiences. The first chapter provides information on the childhood and Catholic foundations of the two women as well as a general narrative of religion in England before the Reformation. The content is mainly focused on the piety and loyalties of the Willoughby and Parr families. Chapter two includes a general narrative of the English Reformation as well as a discussion of Willoughby and Parr's introductions and initial reactions to Evangelical beliefs. Chapters three and four recount and examine Willoughby and Parr's acceptance of reformist teachings and argues which events had the most impact on their respective conversions. These chapters also consider the rapidity of each woman's conversion and how each woman's upbringing and experiences affected how quickly she became an advocate for reform of the Church of England.

¹¹ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 2.

¹² Melissa Franklin-Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk and Lincolnshire's Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2008), 8.

¹³ Ryrie, xv.

This study will expose--be it through the death of close Catholic influences, frequent exposure to reformist teachings, or traumatic experiences--that the conversions of Catherine Willoughby and Katherine Parr were due to a culmination of personal events which chipped away at the Catholic foundations of their faith and exposed them to evangelical thinking. To understand the rate at which each of these women abandoned the Catholic faith, however, we must first analyze their individual upbringings and the influence of their family over their religious beliefs.

CHAPTER 1

UPBRINGING AND FAMILY

Until Henry VIII's break from Rome in 1534, England was one of the most conservative Catholic nations in Europe. Henry, for the most part, was a devout and pious Catholic who "saw the Catholic Church as the infallible guardian of divine revelation."¹⁴ So committed was Henry VIII to the old faith that following Martin Luther's 1517 attack on the Church in his *Ninety-Five Theses*, the King retaliated by publishing *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* in 1521. This defense of the Catholic Church earned him the title "Defender of the Faith." Within the *Assertio*, Henry defended transubstantiation and the belief that the mass is a sacrifice which should be celebrated often, although Christ only died once. The king's conservative nature infiltrated every aspect of his government, and according to Shagan, "religion could be found everywhere, not only in churches and liturgies but in financial transactions, legal proceedings and scientific treatises."¹⁵ This religious atmosphere, one in which the conservative religion of the monarch and his people dominated every aspect of government and everyday life, was the environment in which Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk and Katherine Parr, the sixth wife of Henry VIII, were born.

The role of Catherine Willoughby and Katherine Parr's families in their respective upbringings and educations was a significant factor in determining how these women interacted with religion in their early lives as well as how quickly their conversions to Evangelicalism occurred. For individuals born into the nobility and gentry in the early sixteenth-century, family significantly influenced one's beliefs and loyalties. The nuclear family shaped one's emotional and social experience, and kin were "bound to the nuclear core by the perception of lineage, by

¹⁴ Richard C. Marius, "Henry VIII, Thomas More, and the Bishop of Rome," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* (1978): 91.

¹⁵ Shagan, 1.

mutual economic and political interest and even by ties of emotion.”¹⁶ Furthermore, a daughter’s loyalty to her family’s values was possibly deeper than her male siblings because unlike her brothers, she was less likely to be sent out of the home for schooling.¹⁷ A family’s loyalties and connections at court also shaped with whom daughters chose to associate in their adult lives. For Willoughby and Parr, their family’s respective attitudes towards religion influenced the rapidity of each woman’s eventual conversion to Evangelicalism. Although religious education was a staple of any child’s upbringing, the intensity of one’s family’s devotion to Catholicism had a direct impact on one’s attitude towards the Reformation and reformist teachings later in life.

Early Life of Catherine Willoughby

Catherine Willoughby’s upbringing and her family’s devotion to Catholicism and to conservative Catholics at court were significant factors in making Catherine’s conversion to Evangelicalism a slow one. In either March 1519 or 1520, Catherine was born to Lord William Willoughby and Maria de Salinas. Lord William married Salinas, a Spanish lady-in-waiting to Queen Catherine of Aragon, in 1516. Salinas came to the English court in 1502 shortly after the death of Catherine of Aragon’s first husband, Prince Arthur, Henry VIII’s older brother. Throughout her widowhood, both Catherine’s father, Ferdinand of Aragon, and her father-in-law, Henry VII, refused to pay her household expenses. By remaining loyal to the Spanish princess throughout her troublesome widowhood, Salinas became one of Catherine’s closest friends. When Catherine became Henry VIII’s Queen in 1509, Salinas was one of the few Spaniards who stayed in England. Salinas also served as the Maid of Honor at Henry VIII and Catherine’s wedding on June 11, 1509. According to historian Carole Levine, Maria’s influence

¹⁶ Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1994), 91.

¹⁷ Heal and Holmes, 89.

on the Queen was upsetting to the Spanish ambassador, especially when Salinas encouraged the Queen to support English interests over Spanish ones to gain the love of her new husband and the English people.¹⁸ Because of the Queen's fondness for her, Salinas was asked to stay in England and in 1514 became a naturalized English citizen.

Salinas's and the Queen's friendship remained strong until the end of Catherine's life. Maria named her only daughter after the Queen who served as a godparent at Catherine Willoughby's baptism. Ironically, so too did Bishop Stephen Gardiner, the very man Catherine Willoughby mocked by dressing her dog in clerical robes. Salinas remained faithful to the Queen throughout Catherine's exile from court after Henry VIII obtained his divorce from her in 1533. As explained by Evelyn Read, devotion to Queen Catherine of Aragon was the "dominating force in her (Salinas) life until the day...the Queen died in her arms."¹⁹ Although Henry VIII ordered that Salinas stay away from the ailing Catherine, she rode to Kimbolton Castle in December 1535 where Catherine resided. Upon her arrival at Kimbolton, Sir Edmund Bedingfield, who was appointed to watch over Catherine, did not allow Salinas entrance. Ignoring Bedingfield, Salinas entered Kimbolton Castle to care for the former Queen, who died in Salinas's arms on January 7, 1536.

Catherine's father, Lord William Willoughby also felt a strong connection with the Queen and in his will stated, "I will that the most gracious Queen Catherine, Queen of England, be supervisor of this my last will, and she to have a jewel of my gift worth £40 sterling."²⁰ In her work, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1555: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers*, Barbara Harris's analysis of sixteenth-century wills reveals that "for most aristocratic widows,

¹⁸ Carole, Levine, "Maria de Salinas: Friend and Supporter of Catherine of Aragon," in *Extraordinary Women of the Medieval and Renaissance World: A Biographical Dictionary*, et al. Carole Levin (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing, 2000), 257-260.

¹⁹ Read, 21.

²⁰ Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Wills, PROB 11/23, (London: National Archives), ff.225-7.

administering their husbands' wills was an extension of their careers as wives."²¹ However, Harris's work does not reveal many instances of a woman who was not a family member being made supervisor of a will. Lord Willoughby naming Queen Catherine supervisor of his was will rare indeed. Willoughby also trusted the Queen to aid his widow in finding his daughter a suitable husband. Willoughby's will states, "and I bind my said daughter, Catherine, by this my said will to be ordered in her marriage by th' advice of our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen Catherine, her godmother, and my wife, her own mother."²² The responsibilities Lord Willoughby's will entrusts to Catherine of Aragon is a testament to the close relationship the Queen shared with the Willoughby family.

The Willoughbys' devotion to Catherine of Aragon throughout the 1530s came to represent more than actions taken to support an old friend. According to historian Garrett Mattingly, while Henry VIII sought an annulment from the Queen, Catherine sought to save her marriage not only to protect her daughter's claim to the throne, but to save...

the soul of her husband and the salvation from heresy of all the people of England. As she watched the course of events in Europe she had become convinced that the largest of all stakes was involved, the future unity of the Christian faith.²³

For those who shared the Queen's concerns, like Lady Willoughby, the King's pursuit of an annulment from Catherine represented much more than the end of a marriage. Throughout Henry VIII's 'great matter', loyalty to Catherine of Aragon came to represent allegiance to the faction of conservative Catholics at court and opposition to the rise of evangelical power. As explained by David Loades, by 1529, "Bishop John Fisher led a powerful legal and canonical team, which conducted her defense, and she enjoyed the strong (if surreptitious) backing of all those

²¹ Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2002) 129.

²² Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Wills, PROB 11/293(London: National Archives), ff.225-7.

²³ Garrett Mattingly, *Catherine of Aragon* (1941; reproduced by New York: Book-of-the-Month Club, 1990), 359.

aristocratic families who hated and feared the rise of the Boleyns.”²⁴ Catherine’s unwillingness to comply with Henry VIII’s wishes must have been a source of inspiration for conservative Catholics to remain loyal to their beliefs as evangelical circles gained power. By 1531, the political situation surrounding the annulment became even more polarized. Catherine kept her own court and Eustace Chapuys, the Holy Roman Emperor’s ambassador, visited her regularly. Catherine was becoming not only a symbol of opposition to the Boleyns’ rise to power, but also to the will of the King.²⁵ It was not until 1533, when a proclamation declared that Catherine was no longer Queen and that her daughter, Mary, was a bastard, that Catherine’s political supporters began to abandon her to avoid angering the King.

Catherine Willoughby’s family connection and devotion to Catherine of Aragon represents just one of the numerous Catholic influences on Willoughby’s young life. The language of Lord Willoughby’s will reveals that Catherine’s father was also a deeply Catholic man. Examining Lord William Willoughby’s will, Franklin-Harkrider observes that the language of the will reveals “Lord Willoughby’s belief in the efficacy of the mass, the existence of purgatory, and the importance of good works.”²⁶ Lord Willoughby’s insistence that “immediately after knowledge be had of my departure and death that a trental of Masses be said for the health of my soul, and over and besides I will that every priest of such religious houses whereas I am founder” show the Baron’s belief in the sanctity and importance of the mass.²⁷ Additionally, Lord Willoughby’s will insists that a portion of his wealth be dedicated to providing new and elaborate vestments for the clergy and another portion dedicated to good

²⁴ David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England* (London, United Kingdom: Continuum UK, 2009), 103.

²⁵ Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, 104.

²⁶ Franklin-Harkrider, 26.

²⁷ Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Wills, PROB 11/23(London: National Archives), ff.225-7.

works for the poor, both practices future Evangelicals would frown upon. Lord Willoughby's will specifies that:

20 marks of money be disposed and given by my executors to poor men dwelling and abiding within my lordship where they shall think most convenient; Item, I will that a suit of vestments, the price of 20 marks, be given to the chantry of Spilsby; Item, I will that another of the same price to the house of Mettingham, or else some other jewel that the said house hath more need of the said price of 20 marks; To the house of Hagnaby another suit of vestments of the same price of 20 marks.²⁸

Besides his will making it clear that the Willoughby family's allegiance was to the conservative Catholics at court, the clients Lord Willoughby entrusted to see that his estates be run properly were also religious conservatives. These clients, Francis Stoner, John Elton, and William Marton, helped the widowed Lady Willoughby fight claims from the deceased Lord Willoughby's brother that the inheritance and title should not pass to a female, but to himself. These three loyal clients of the Willoughby's represent another conservative influence on the young Catherine.²⁹ By helping the now Baroness Catherine Willoughby retain her title and inheritance, Stoner, Elton, and Marton proved their loyalty to the family and would remain in the service of the Willoughbys for nearly twenty years after the Baron's death.

Lady Willoughby dominated her daughter's early life and Maria's feud with Sir Christopher Willoughby, her brother-in-law, over her daughter's inheritance alienated Catherine from her extended family. Upon her father's death, Catherine Willoughby became Baroness Willoughby and inherited her father's numerous manors, making her one of the wealthiest women in England.³⁰ Soon after, Catherine's uncle, Sir Christopher Willoughby, accused Lady Willoughby of keeping news of his brother's illness and death from him, destroying evidence,

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Franklin-Harkrider, 27.

³⁰ Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Wills, PROB 11/23 (London: National Archives), ff.225-7.

and withholding items which rightfully belonged to him.³¹ Christopher often wrote to Cardinal Wolsey begging him to intercede in the matter of whether his niece “ought to have the lands for life, as part of her jointure, or not” and to clarify which lands had been left to male heirs and which to heirs general.³² Lady Willoughby fought her brother-in-law’s accusations, insisting that when “a decree was made by Wolsey, that the writer's sister, my lady Willoughby, should bring into Chancery all such evidences as she and the other executors of my Lord my brother had.”³³ In response, Maria “brought in only a little coffer sealed, declaring that it contained all the evidences except those touching the lands of her jointure, and those mentioned in her husband's will, which she declared openly in Chancery that she would not show in court.”³⁴ The stubbornness of Sir Christopher and Lady Willoughby dragged the case out for many years to come.

The feud over Catherine’s inheritance continued in 1528 when Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, intervened. Brandon paid a great amount for Catherine Willoughby’s wardship and was not willing to let the Willoughby feud harm his ward’s inheritance.³⁵ Brandon wrote to Wolsey, master of the wards, explaining that Christopher Willoughby intruded on lands belonging to Catherine and that “it would be much to her prejudice if they came to Sir Christopher's hands.”³⁶ When Brandon married Catherine in 1533 and his interest in her estates intensified, he sued Sir Christopher on Lady Willoughby’s behalf. Although it was eventually decided that that Lady Willoughby’s large jointure of 1516 must be balanced against Lord William’s promise that 300 marks would pass to Sir Christopher, the damage to Catherine Willoughby’s relationship with

³¹ Read, 25.

³² Letters and Papers: 1526-28, Volume 4 Part 2, 1516.

³³ Letters and Papers: 1526-28, Volume 4 Part 2, 1516.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ S. J. Gunn, *Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk c. 1484-1545* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), 118.

³⁶ Letters and Papers: 1526-28, Volume 4 Part 2, 1516.

her extended family was already done.³⁷ There is no evidence of Catherine ever being close with her uncle and considering Sir Christopher was not even allowed on her lands, it is likely that no relationship ever developed between the two. The long feud over her inheritance alienated Catherine from her father's family, allowed her mother to dominate her early life, and fostered feelings of loyalty to the Duke of Suffolk.

Charles Brandon's relationship with the Willoughbys introduced Catherine to another conservative force in her life. As was traditional in sixteenth-century England when a youth inherited a wealthy estate, Willoughby became a ward of a wealthy noble who aided in overseeing the young heiress's property. In Willoughby's case, the lord who bought her wardship was Charles Brandon, one of Henry VIII's favorites and closest friends. In 1528, Catherine went to live at Westhorpe, the home of the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk. Following her father's death, Willoughby was not to be granted control over her estates until 1539 due to her young age. Suffolk's wife, Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's sister, was rumored to disapprove of the King's divorce from Catherine of Aragon and pursuit of Anne Boleyn. Although she never publicly spoke ill of Anne, Mary did refuse to accompany the party which introduced Anne to Francis I in 1532. Like Lord and Lady Willoughby, Mary Tudor considered Catherine of Aragon a close friend and following Mary's death in 1533, one contemporary attributed her death to grief over Catherine's plight.³⁸

The Duke of Suffolk was also known to sympathize with Queen Catherine. Eustace Chapuys, imperial ambassador to England from the Holy Roman Empire, reported that Suffolk "and his wife opposed the divorce in secret and merely lacked the courage to do so more openly,

³⁷ Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 133.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

and a case can be made that Suffolk consistently disapproved of the divorce.”³⁹ Suffolk was often commissioned by Henry VIII to deliver devastating news to Queen Catherine. In April 1533, Suffolk was sent to tell Catherine she was no longer queen and Lady Mary Willoughby (Catherine Willoughby’s mother) reported that “the duke had confessed and communicated before setting out, wishing some accident on himself to relieve him of this hateful duty.”⁴⁰ Although Brandon was one of Henry VIII’s closest friends, his unpleasant duty of delivering news to Catherine of Aragon only provoked within the duke a deep sympathy for the Queen and hatred for his role in her anguish.

An additional indication of Suffolk’s dislike for the evolving political situation at court was his less than amicable relations with the Boleyn family. By not voting for George Boleyn, Anne’s brother, in garter elections, Brandon made it clear he was not pleased about the Boleyn faction’s rise to power. Brandon then became an enemy of Anne herself when, in August 1530, “the French pressed the council to go ahead with the marriage (of Henry VIII to Anne) and trust the pope to regularize it *post facto*, it was Suffolk who led the remaining councilors to reject the scheme.”⁴¹ The Boleyns were aware of Suffolk’s dislike of them and Anne later mocked Suffolk’s marriage to the young Willoughby by stating, “he has carried on an incestuous relationship with his son’s fiancée.”⁴² Brandon’s attitude toward the treatment of Queen Catherine of Aragon and unwillingness to flatter the Boleyns were obvious signs of the Duke’s unhappiness concerning the rise of those with Evangelical leanings at court.

Piety, devotion to Catherine of Aragon, and dislike of the Boleyns were all principles impressed upon Catherine Willoughby by those most influential in her upbringing. Until her

³⁹ Ibid., 118.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 119.

⁴¹ Original quotation in French, “se mesloit et copuloit avec sa proper fille”, Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn : ‘The Most Happy’* (Massachusetts : Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 140.

⁴² Ives, 141.

arrival at Court in the mid-1530s, Willoughby's interactions strictly with those who were suspicious of the evangelical's rise to power. The values and loyalties of her parents laid the foundation for Willoughby's attitude towards England's religious and political changes in the early 1530s and delayed her acceptance of the new faith. Willoughby's initial resistance to evangelical teachings, which will be examined in the next chapter, was a reflection of how deeply the loyalties of her parents and the political opinions at Westhorpe impacted Catherine throughout her upbringing.

Early Life of Katherine Parr

Like Catherine Willoughby, Katherine Parr's initial response to evangelical teachings was affected by the opinions and values of those who raised her. Born in August 1512, Katherine was the eldest surviving child of Sir Thomas Parr and Matilda Green. Matilda, known as Maud to her family, served as a lady-in-waiting to Queen Catherine of Aragon. Just as she had at Catherine Willoughby's baptism, the Queen served as godmother at Katherine Parr's baptism. Maud developed a friendship with Queen Catherine and her will, which mentions the Queen a number of times, is a testament to her connection with Catherine. For example, Maud's will mentions "my beads of lacquer allemagne dressed with gold which the Queen's grace gave me."⁴³ Even after her husband's death in 1517, Parr's mother served Queen Catherine and was a faithful friend until 1531 when Maud herself died.

Although Sir Thomas Parr did not live long enough to hold an opinion on the King's 'great matter', he too was well-connected to those who eventually opposed Henry VIII's break from Rome. As a boy, Parr was placed in the home of Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, for his education. Beaufort's piety was well known and she counted Bishop John Fisher among her circle of friends. Beaufort and Fisher shared an interest in the reform of clerical education,

⁴³ Public Records Office: SP1/74/97. Cited in James, 21.

and at Fisher's urging, Beaufort established Christ's College at Cambridge. Long after Beaufort's death, John Fisher was executed for refusing to acknowledge Henry VIII as the Head of the Church of England. Sir Thomas More, also executed for refusing to acknowledge Henry, also had connections to the Parr family. Through his step-brother, John Colt, Sir Thomas was the uncle of Thomas More's first wife, Jane. Parr admired More's views on education and adopted his educational program, which emphasized classical studies and languages for both boys and girls, for the Parr children.⁴⁴

The circumstances of Katherine Parr's early life mirror much of Catherine Willoughby's. Yet unlike Willoughby, why did Parr not resiliently cling to her Catholic faith when exposed to Evangelical teachings? Both Willoughby and Parr were Catherine of Aragon's goddaughters, both were daughters of ladies-in-waiting, both came from families well connected to those who proved to be conservative Catholics throughout the King's 'great matter', and both of their father's died when they were young. Yet in the early 1540s when Parr made it clear to those closest to her that she was firmly on the side of reform, Willoughby's conscience was still torn between allegiance to the old faith and an attraction to evangelical teachings.

Despite Parr and Willoughby's comparable origins, Katherine Parr's upbringing shaped her priorities much differently than Catherine Willoughby's. Like Lady Willoughby, Maud Parr chose to remain a widow following her husband's death. But unlike Maria Willoughby, whose daughter's education was administered by those outside the Willoughby family, Maud Parr had direct responsibility of supervising the education of her children. Catherine Willoughby's inheritance made her wardship highly sought after and she was placed in the household of the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk, allowing Maria Willoughby to spend all of her time at Catherine of Aragon's side. On the other hand, Maud Parr's three children did not inherit as much as

⁴⁴ James, 27.

Catherine Willoughby and therefore remained at home to be educated, forcing their mother to split her time between court and home. Maud's responsibility of overseeing her children's educations and marriages forced her to focus her priorities on more secular activities than was the case for Lady Willoughby and profoundly affected the environment in which Katherine Parr was educated.

Katherine Parr was educated in an environment much different than the one Catherine Willoughby experienced while under the care of the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk. At the time of Katherine Parr's schooling, the King's 'great matter' was not yet an issue and, unlike Willoughby, Parr was educated at home and not exposed to the conservative political opinions of those like the Suffolks. Instead, Maud Parr dominated which interests and opinions her daughter encountered. Maud's interests were in education and the marriages of her children, and although their wills demonstrate the expected piety of the time, there is no evidence that the Parr's were particularly devout. Therefore, Maud Parr probably did not feel the need to impress upon her children any notions of extreme Catholic piety.⁴⁵ Instead, the curriculum Maud Parr chose for her children reflected her secular interests: Latin, French, Italian, and arithmetic were all subjects emphasized in the Parr household.⁴⁶ In fact, Maud felt so strongly about the importance of education that, in her will, she left "400 marks, for the founding of schools and the marrying of maidens and in especial my poor kinswomen."⁴⁷ This interest in education was passed on to Maud's oldest daughter, who as Queen urged Henry VIII to found Trinity College at Cambridge.

The extent of Katherine Parr's education has been debated and historians such as John N. King, James K. McConica, C. Fenno Hoffman Jr, and Maria Dowling argue that the future

⁴⁵ James, 190.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁷ Public Records Office: SP1/74/97. Cited in James, 21.

Queen only gained an adequate understanding of the basic subjects.⁴⁸ This opinion is based on the drafts of two letters, one to Prince Edward and one to Princess Mary, in which Katherine's Latin is less than exemplary. Susan E. James argues that these letters do not reflect Katherine's knowledge of Latin or her education considering they are not written in Parr's handwriting. James also points out that the letter to Prince Edward was written when the Prince was too young to comprehend Latin and that "a letter written in elegant, elegiac Latin would have been highly inappropriate for a five-year-old and Katherine would have formed her letter in a style comprehensible to her audience, a child."⁴⁹ Additionally, the other letter attributed to Katherine Parr was actually written by the fourteen-year-old Princess Elizabeth while living in Parr's household.⁵⁰ Although James thinks it is possible that Parr dictated the letter written by the princess, it "is more likely that Elizabeth used an English letter of the queen's as an exercise in Latin translation...providing a sample of her abilities for both her stepmother, the sender, and her elder sister, the recipient."⁵¹ Despite the fact that these two letters are not in Parr's handwriting, a multitude of other evidence points to the fact that Katherine received an outstanding education under the direction of her mother.

The early sixteenth-century was a time of increasing emphasis on female education in families of the upper circles of society. This phenomenon was perhaps prompted by the fact that at the time the heir to the throne, Princess Mary, was a girl. Sir Thomas More, whose educational program Thomas Parr wanted his own children to experience, did not support the view that a

⁴⁸ James, 24.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 32.

⁵¹ Ibid., 32.

woman's mind was by nature "bad and apter to bear fern than corn."⁵² Instead, More believed there should be no distinction between the education of daughters and sons and stated:

nor do I think that the harvest will be affected whether it is a man or a woman who sows the field. They both have the same human nature and the power of reasoning differentiates them from the beasts; both, therefore, are equally suited for those studies by which reason is cultivated, and is productive like a ploughed field on which the seed of good lessons has been sown.⁵³

According to the Parr's youngest daughter, Anne, her mother respected Thomas Parr's wishes that his children receive the same education as the More children. The correspondence Katherine received in her adult life suggests that she did indeed receive a quality humanist education. As Queen, Katherine often received letters in Latin from Thomas Smith, Roger Ascham, and the Prince of Wales. James argues "it is unlikely that they would have addressed such correspondence, of great importance to them, to a recipient incapable of reading their words."⁵⁴ Additionally, Roger Ascham's letter to the Queen of 1547, tells the Queen, "you possess that universal glory of learning."⁵⁵ Considering the emphasis placed on female education throughout Katherine Parr's childhood, Anne Parr's claim that she and her siblings experienced the same curriculum as Thomas More's children, and the correspondence in Latin that Katherine received as Queen, there is little doubt that Parr's education was far more advanced than what the majority of historians have argued.

The argument that Maud Parr's interests were in secular activities such as education is supported by the fact that she consulted the leading minds in education concerning the schooling of her children. One such educator was Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London and a distant cousin

⁵² Hilda L. Smith, 'Humanist Education and the Renaissance Concept of Woman', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, Helen Wilcox (ed.), Cambridge, 1996, p.21.

⁵³ E. E. Reynolds, *Thomas More and Erasmus* (New York, New York: Fordham University Press, 1965), 135.

⁵⁴ James, 31.

⁵⁵ Maurice Addison Hatch, 'The Ascham Letters: an Annotated Translation of the Latin Correspondence', unpublished PHD thesis, Cornell University, New York, 1948, 223. Cited in James, 26.

of Sir Thomas Parr and a close family friend. Tunstall acted as one of the three executors of Sir Thomas Parr's will and as the sole executor of Maud Parr's will. Tunstall was a central figure in the English humanist circle and was named by Erasmus as one of "the two most learned men in England-both very dear to me", the other being Sir Thomas More.⁵⁶ Cuthbert took a great interest in the education of children and in his work, *De Arte Supputandi*, recommends that both boys and girls study arithmetic. In 1524, Maud Parr expressed her gratitude for "the advice of my Lord of London" for his guidance concerning the education of her children in a letter to Lord Dacre.⁵⁷ Although it is unclear which tutors Maud Parr employed to teach her children, it is clear that her interest in education encouraged her to take Tunstall's advice on education seriously.

Without the luxury of having only one child with a wealthy inheritance who was placed in another household like Lady Willoughby, Maud Parr was forced to divide her attentions between her children and her duty to Catherine of Aragon. According to James, the mother-daughter bond between Maud and Katherine was quite strong and it was obvious from Katherine's interest in education as an adult that her mother was influential in shaping the future Queen's priorities. As will be discussed in chapter two, her mother's relationship with Catherine of Aragon one of the major influences in Catherine Willoughby's decision to ally herself with conservative Catholics during her early days at court. Because Maud Parr died in 1531 shortly before Queen Catherine was banished from court, she never had the chance to prove her loyalty to the Queen as Lady Willoughby did. Katherine Parr was close to her mother and her mother's interests were obviously impressed on her daughter. Perhaps if Maud Parr had had the chance to display her devotion to Queen following Catherine's banishment from court, like Catherine

⁵⁶ James, 29.

⁵⁷ British Library: Addit. MS 24,965, f. 103. Cited in James, 29.

Willoughby, Katherine Parr would have resisted the influence of those at court who were instrumental in removing Catherine of Aragon from the throne.

Whereas Lady Willoughby alienated her daughter's extended family in the course of her legal feuds, Katherine Parr's extended family remained an influential presence in her life after her father's death. One such presence was her uncle, Sir William Parr of Horton. Thomas Parr's heir was only four at the time of his father's death, therefore the management of the Parr estates was left in the hands of stewards and overseen by Maud Parr and Sir William. William Parr was instrumental in helping Maud Parr attempt to advance the fortunes of her children and he tried to help fill the void Thomas Parr's death left behind. William Parr became close to his nieces and nephew and the grief Katherine felt after his passing is recorded in a letter written to Sir Edward North in 1547. In the letter, Katherine writes "it hath pleased almighty God to take unto his mercy our entirely beloved uncle the late Lord Parr of Horton."⁵⁸ Although admired by his nieces and nephew, William Parr was not a pious man and his actions did nothing to encourage his brother's children to respect the old faith.

Evidence of Sir William Parr's lack of devotion can be found in many accounts from the time Parr was in service to the Duke of Richmond. In 1525, Sir William was made chamberlain of the household of Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond and illegitimate son of Henry VIII and Elizabeth Blount. One occasion in which Sir William Parr revealed his less than pious nature was in an exchange with Cardinal Wolsey, the Duke of Richmond's godfather, regarding a new chapel that was to be built for the Duke. When news reached Wolsey that Parr supposedly wanted to build the Duke a larger chapel to house more elaborate religious celebrations, Parr promptly denied the rumor. Parr told Wolsey that he never intended or wanted to build "a chapel

⁵⁸ Katherine Parr, *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence*, ed. Janel Mueller (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011), 120.

like the Lords Darcy and Latimer”, two of the most pious men in Northern England.⁵⁹ Parr also revealed his lack of respect for the clergy in his encounters with the Duke’s tutor, Richard Croke. Parr and Croke often butted heads over the matter of the Duke’s education. Whereas Parr valued riding and hunting, Croke valued Greek and Latin. When Croke tried to set rules for the duke’s education, Parr and his circle “laughed at him and ignored him altogether. What was worse, they taught the young Duke of Richmond to do the same.”⁶⁰ Croke began to send a multitude of letters to Wolsey and the king telling them of how Parr and his friends’ disrespect towards him also started to spread to the young boys in the house. Croke wrote of a boy named Scrope who often taunted the tutor and “excites the other boys against me and calls me names.”⁶¹ According to Croke, the actions of the young boys of the house were influenced by the fact that Parr and his circle “allows buffoons to sing indecent songs and to abuse the clergy” in front of the Duke of Richmond and his schoolmates.⁶²

It was in this environment, where anticlericalism was openly displayed and there was a severe lack of piety, that William Parr, Katherine’s brother, came to live in 1525. After his brother’s death in 1517, Sir William took a great interest in the advancement of his nieces and nephew and found a place for young William in the household Duke of Richmond. This household shaped the attitude and social circle of young William Parr, with whom Katherine was close throughout her life. The household of the Duke of Richmond brought together a group of men whose families all played a part in the religious and political drama of the reign of Edward VI. Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle, and stepfather to John Dudley, future Duke of Northumberland, was named the Duke’s lieutenant. After Edward VI’s death, Dudley

⁵⁹ Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, 4, ii, no. 3135. Cited in James, 48.

⁶⁰ James, 47.

⁶¹ Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, 4, ii, no. 3135. Cited in James, 48.

⁶² Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, 4, ii, no. 3135. Cited in James, 48.

unsuccessfully tried to install Lady Jane Grey on the throne in place of the Catholic Mary Tudor. Henry Grey, the future Marquess of Dorset and father of Lady Jane Grey, was educated with the Duke along with young William Parr, and Edward Seymour, brother to Queen Jane Seymour and future Lord Protector of England, was Richmond's master of the horse. In the years to come, all of these men, either because of deep religious conviction or for personal advancement, became supporters of the new faith.

Katherine Parr's family's connections and interests greatly influenced her values throughout her life. Katherine modeled herself after her mother, whose responsibilities as a widow with three children led her to value education and devotion to family. For the rest of her life, Katherine displayed a keen interest in education and felt it was her responsibility to provide her brother and sister with all she could.⁶³ Katherine's uncle, the impious Sir William Parr, remained a father figure for Katherine throughout her life and when Katherine became Queen, Sir William served as her councilor and chamberlain of her household. In her early life, Katherine Parr was surrounded by those whose interests were secular or whose religious beliefs leaned towards reform. Growing up in this environment, Katherine's ties to Catholicism were loose and vulnerable to being severed by the events of her adult life.

⁶³ James, 64.

CHAPTER 2

EXPOSURE TO EVANGELICAL TEACHINGS

The religious developments of the late 1520s and early 1530s, which opened the door for Evangelical ideas, were not introduced because of any sudden “national conversion” resulting in a mass exodus of believers from the Catholic Church, but rather were a direct result of the political changes taking place at court.⁶⁴ In 1525, Anne Boleyn caught the eye of Henry VIII. Captivated by a new woman and convinced that his wife of eighteen years could no longer provide him a male heir; Henry VIII was determined to take Boleyn as his wife and obtain an annulment from the Pope to end his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Requests for an annulment to Pope Clement VII were justified by claims that Catherine and Henry had been living in sin due to her previous marriage to Henry VIII’s elder brother, Arthur. Unfortunately for Henry, there were many factors which prevented Clement VII from granting the annulment. Not only had Pope Julius II already given a papal dispensation to allow the marriage between Henry VIII and Catherine to take place in 1509, but Charles V, Catherine’s nephew, had recently sacked Rome and placed pressure upon Clement VII not to fulfill Henry’s request. As a virtual prisoner of the Holy Roman Emperor, Clement VII had no choice but to comply.

Therefore, Henry VIII saw legal action to be his only alternative to obtain the annulment. In 1529, Henry VIII called what came to be known as the “Reformation Parliament,” whose purpose was to assist the English monarch in obtaining an annulment by providing him with laws that would pressure the church to grant him what he wanted. Acts such as the 1532 *Act in Restraint of Annates*, which forbade the payment of traditional fees to Rome, and the 1533 *Act in Restraint of Appeals*, which made it illegal for anyone to appeal to the courts of Rome on any matter, slowly cut England’s ties with Rome. Deciding he did not need the approval of the Pope

⁶⁴ Shagan, 3.

to divorce Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII married Anne Boleyn in secret in early 1533. The final blow to England's relationship with the Catholic Church came with the passing of the 1534 *Act of Supremacy* which proclaimed the King, not the Pope, to be the Supreme Head of the Church, and as such, Henry VIII now had the power to determine the doctrine of the new Church of England.

Henry VIII's infatuation with Anne was influential to the religious changes that followed, not only because it drove him from the Catholic Church, but also because Anne was a leading advocate of reform of the Church. As explained in Eric Ives's *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*:

Anne played a major part in pushing Henry into asserting his headship of the Church. That headship...was a change with profound implications, revolutionizing the ethos of Christianity in England. Anne was a strong supporter of religious reform, and she was the first to demonstrate the potential there was in the royal supremacy for that distinctive element of the English Reformation, the monarch's freedom to take the initiative in religious change.⁶⁵

Anne's influence over Henry VIII created "the breach in the dyke of tradition which Anne encouraged and protected [making] the flood first of reformed, and later or more specifically Protestant Christianity, unstoppable."⁶⁶ As Queen, Anne encouraged the appointments of numerous evangelical bishops, such as Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer, leading the campaign to enforce the evangelical belief that relics or any other 'false images' not be displayed in places of worship. Anne's beliefs were not linked to any past forms of English heresy and she has been categorized as an evangelical reformer due to the fact that "the absolute conviction which drove Anne was the importance of the Bible...if her brand of reform needs to be given a label, that label must be evangelical."⁶⁷ Throughout her courtship with the King, the Boleyn

⁶⁵ Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 260.

⁶⁶ Ives, 261.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 268.

faction at court gained power and encouraged a flourishing of Evangelical ideas. In 1528, the Boleyns put forth the *Collectanea satis copiosa*, a petition that argued that there was no evidence that the pope was the supreme authority on spiritual matters and therefore, Henry could rightly decide his matrimonial problem himself. The relationship between Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII marked the beginning of a flourishing of Evangelical activity at court which allowed the individuals who eventually came in contact with Catherine Willoughby and Katherine Parr to openly discuss their reformist beliefs.

Catherine Willoughby at Court, 1533-1540

In 1533, at the age of 14, Catherine Willoughby became the wife of Charles Brandon, a man nearly thirty-six years her senior. Brandon's first wife, Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's sister, died in June 1533. Brandon's only son, Henry earl of Lincoln, was betrothed to Willoughby at the time of his mother's death, but was a sickly boy who died in March 1534. Rather than take the chance of losing Catherine's vast inheritance if his son died, Brandon married the young Baroness himself in September 1533.⁶⁸ Despite the vast age difference, the Willoughby-Brandon marriage was reported to be a happy one which produced two sons, Henry and Charles. According to Carole Levin, Lady Willoughby approved of the match because she saw it as a way to make Brandon even more sympathetic to Catherine of Aragon.⁶⁹ Although Brandon never pleaded with the king on Queen Catherine's behalf, the duke was able to gain the trust of Lady Willoughby. By 1538, Brandon took over all of his mother-in-law's affairs, such as approving her presentations to benefices.⁷⁰ For a daughter whose mother's opinion was of the utmost importance, Lady Willoughby's approval of Brandon influenced Catherine to also trust and support Suffolk's decisions.

⁶⁸ Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 132.

⁶⁹ Levin, 259.

⁷⁰ Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 158.

Although he was sympathetic to Catherine of Aragon, Brandon's feelings toward religion were ambiguous throughout his life. Brandon's indecisiveness towards religion can be seen in many of his dealings with his tenants in Lincolnshire and Suffolk. Whether he did not want to reveal his true religious convictions or because he truly did not have strong opinions, Brandon refused to give answers to those asking his opinion on religious matters. For example, when asked what he thought of the open marriage of the vicar of Mendlesham and if Cromwell intended to rip every image out of the churches, Brandon passed the questions on to Cromwell.⁷¹ When disputes between individuals of opposing faiths occurred, the duke refused to show favoritism to either side. In October 1536, ex-friar John Bale was preaching in Thorndon and met opposition from the Protestant wives of Brandon's tenants. When letters detailing the dispute reached Suffolk, rather than make a decision which could possibly reveal his religious opinions, Suffolk again passed the letters on to Cromwell.⁷²

Despite his tendency to pass religious questions to Cromwell, Brandon did support some of the best-known reformist clergy of the 1530s. The most notable beneficiary of Suffolk's patronage was Alexander Seton, a Scottish Dominican and royal confessor who fled to England after he began to preach justification by faith. Historian S.J Gunn argues that Brandon may have secured Seton's denization, and most certainly secured him a place at the rectory of Fulbeck in July 1539.⁷³ Seton made a career of preaching, writing Protestant texts, and coming into conflict with ecclesiastical authority. Brandon continued to support Seton after the conservative Six Articles of Faith were passed in 1539 and the preacher died in the duke's London home in 1542.

Regardless of instances in which Brandon supported those opposed to the conservative aspects of the Church of England, Brandon has never been categorized as a passionate reformer.

⁷¹Ibid., 164.

⁷² Ibid., 163.

⁷³ Ibid., 161.

Gunn argues that any patronage towards Protestants was probably influenced by the duke's affinity for the personality of the individual, not for their religious leanings. For example, Gunn argues that the duke may have chosen the reformist Thomas Lawney as his chaplain simply because he admired Lawney's wit.⁷⁴ Additionally, Pierre Valence and John Parkhurst, both known for their reformist beliefs, were appointed tutors in Brandon's household, their appointments were due to Brandon's appreciation for their scholarly talents, not their religious views.⁷⁵ On the other hand, Suffolk may have maintained religious ambiguity because it was in his best interest to "preserve his good lordship in the face of appeals for help from followers who took very different views of the Protestant onslaught."⁷⁶ For Brandon, an individual's skills and his own political reputation were of more concern than making his religious inclinations known.

If Brandon was religiously ambiguous, how then did marriage to the duke affect Catherine Willoughby's religious leanings? Lacking strong religious convictions himself, it is doubtful that Brandon ever tried to impose either conservative or reformist beliefs on his young wife. Nonetheless, the individuals Brandon chose to serve in his household most certainly exposed his young wife to Evangelical teachings. In addition to Thomas Lawney, John Willock was one of the chaplains employed by Suffolk after his marriage to Catherine. Lawney argued against clerical celibacy with the duke of Norfolk and Willock opposed the prayers to the dead, confession, and the intercession of saints.⁷⁷ As chaplains in Suffolk's household, Catherine heard Lawney and Willock's sermons and at the very least was familiarized with reformist teachings.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 163.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 163.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 162.

⁷⁷ Franklin-Harkrider, 41.

Willoughby's marriage to Brandon also meant the Duchess spent more time at court where alliances and factions among courtiers were based on political beliefs. Since the creation of the Church of England, factions were divided according to religious beliefs as well. Courtiers and councilors often came together to compete for royal favor, to influence political decisions and to bring down their rivals.⁷⁸ But despite increased exposure to the Evangelical circles at court, Catherine Willoughby's initial reaction to the new faith was one of close-mindedness.

Catherine's arrival to court forced the Duchess to publicly display where her loyalties lay. As argued by historian Barbara J. Harris:

it is clear that in the 1530s and 1540s a number of related factors-their personal and familial ties to Catherine of Aragon...their own and their families views on the break with Rome and reform in the Church-induced some of these women to become involved in, or take positions about, the ongoing dynastic and religious upheavals.⁷⁹

The courtiers the Duchess surrounded herself with made it clear which position she took when it came to Henry VIII's divorce and the break from Rome. Upon coming to court, Willoughby developed a friendship with Princess Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon. According to Franklin-Harkrider, the Duchess and the Princess Mary "played cards, exchanged gifts, and corresponded during the 1530s."⁸⁰ Like her mother, Mary became a symbol of resistance to Henry VIII's break from Rome. The princess refused to accept the 1533 proclamation which declared her mother was no longer Queen and she herself was illegitimate. David Loades argues that Henry VIII viewed his daughter as a potential threat to his reign. Loades asserts that Henry VIII believed that "if rebellion was to stir as the King moved definitively to end Papal authority in England, it was only too likely that she would become its figurehead."⁸¹ If Mary truly was

⁷⁸Natalie Mears, "Courts, Courtiers, and Culture in Tudor England," *The Historical Journal* (2003): 706.

⁷⁹ Barbara J. Harris, "The View from My Lady's Chamber: New Perspectives on the Early Tudor Monarchy," *Huntington Library Quarterly* (1997): 243.

⁸⁰ Franklin-Harkrider, 43.

⁸¹ Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, 106.

considered a threat by the king, those associated with the princess, like Willoughby, also risked Henry VIII's wrath.

In addition to surrounding herself with friends such as Princess Mary, Willoughby made it obvious that her loyalties were with the conservative Catholics when she did not join the court activities in which large Evangelical groups were present.⁸² Throughout the 1530s, Evangelical preachers delivered more sermons at court and those attracted to reformist teachings exchanged reform texts and began to attack traditional views on salvation and scripture. Hugh Latimer, whose sermons attacked the cult of the saints, pilgrimages, and other Catholic traditions, was a frequent preacher at court throughout the 1530s. Willoughby made an effort to avoid men such as Latimer in her first years at court. Ironically, Latimer later became a close friend of Willoughby and she a patron of his work. To disengage herself from the increasing Evangelical atmosphere at court, Willoughby convinced her husband to allow her to remain home whenever possible.⁸³ It was obvious from Catherine Willoughby's early days at court that her mother's loyalties greatly affected her daughter's choice of friends.

Willoughby's friends at court were not merely chosen because of her family's loyalty to Catherine of Aragon, but also because of her devotion to her faith. Franklin-Harkrider's analysis of Willoughby's letters provides a source which reveals the young Duchess's staunch Catholicism. One of the Duchess's letters included the traditional Catholic blessing, 'Jesu have you in his keeping', rather than a reference to the 'Living Lord' reformers of the time preferred.⁸⁴ Additionally, she kept in her chapel throughout the 1530s the elaborate silver and gold chalices, cruets, and a silver-gilt pax left to her from her father. Later in her life, Willoughby renounced transubstantiation, the doctrine which upholds that the bread and wine are transformed into the

⁸² Franklin-Harkrider, 43.

⁸³ Anthony Martienssen, *Queen Katherine Parr* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1973), 63.

⁸⁴ Franklin-Harkrider, 141.

body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, but the presence of these elaborate objects is proof that her belief in the Eucharist persisted during her early years at court. Although Henry VIII's break from the Catholic Church and the rise of the Boleyns made it clear that those loyal to the church in Rome would no longer be in favor at court, Willoughby's actions throughout her first few years at court indicated that the political environment could not easily alter her faith.

Catherine Willoughby and the Lincolnshire Rising

Although Willoughby's letters and choice of friends displayed her loyalty to Catholicism, events in the north of England threatened the safety of those most dear to her and began to erode the Duchess's sympathies for those remaining true to the old faith. In October 1536, a rising in protest of Henry VIII's break from Rome and the king's recent action of dissolving the monasteries broke out in Willoughby's lands in Lincolnshire. Although the revolt in Lincolnshire failed, it inspired another uprising in the north which came to be known as the Pilgrimage of Grace. Ethan H. Shagan defines the mission of the five thousand rebels who marched towards London in the Pilgrimage of Grace to be, "to gain a legitimate voice with which to oppose a regime whose radical fiscal and ecclesiastical policies had severely depleted its stockpile of goodwill and instinctive obedience."⁸⁵ As Willoughby's husband, Charles Brandon was Henry VIII's obvious choice when designating a leader to put down the rebellion in Lincolnshire.⁸⁶ Brandon's mission was to raise troops, ride to Lincolnshire, and demand that the rebels disperse.

Although Brandon's religious loyalties may have been unclear, his task of putting down the Lincolnshire Rising forced him to oppose Catholics openly and drew him even closer to the king. The Brandons were among Henry VIII's most intimate circle of friends. In September 1535, the king acted as godfather to Charles and Catherine's eldest son, also named Henry.

⁸⁵ Shagan, 89.

⁸⁶ Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 144.

Brandon valued the king's favor above all else and it was not likely he would refuse Henry's orders to disband the Catholic uprising, even if the duke's religious beliefs were conservative. Brandon's successful handling of the rebellion resulted in the crown looking even more favorably upon the duke, already one of the king's favorites. After the revolt was suppressed, Suffolk and Henry VIII exchanged more letters than they had in years.⁸⁷ Henry VIII wrote that Suffolk's good service gave Henry "as moche cause to rejoyse of our favour and goodness herto for extended unto you as of any like thing that we have doon sithins our reign."⁸⁸ Brandon's role in the Lincolnshire Rising proved that he was first and foremost a politician who was willing to do whatever it took to please his king, no matter what his religious sympathies may be.

In addition to the hostility the rebels displayed towards her husband as the noble in charge of quelling the rebellion, those who were tenants on the Willoughby's land also displayed great hostility towards the Duchess's mother. Upon the death of her husband in 1526, Maria de Salinas, with the help of Francis Stoner, became quite an efficient landlord.⁸⁹ When the widowed Lady Willoughby faced litigation to save her daughter's inheritance from being taken by her deceased husband's brother, the Lady did not hesitate to "squeeze her tenants" for money for the case.⁹⁰ Brandon oversaw the trials against the rebels following the rebellion and recorded instances in which tenants used the rebellion of 1536 as an excuse to act violently against the Willoughby family. In one case, Robert Balding, the family cook, who Lady Willoughby pressed for every penny due, captured Stoner and declared "Mr. surveyou, you have bene many tymes

⁸⁷ Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 151.

⁸⁸ Public Records Office: SP1/112, fo. 128 (LP XI. 1239). Cited in Gunn, 151.

⁸⁹ S.J. Gunn, "Peers, Commons and Gentry in the Lincolnshire Revolt of 1536," *Past and Present* (1989): 61.

⁹⁰ Gunn, "Peers, Commons and Gentry": 61.

hard ageynste me.”⁹¹ The attack on her mother’s household showed young Catherine that even her fellow Catholics could turn on those she loved.

Therefore, not only did the rebellion of 1536 put her husband in immediate danger, but the Catholics involved in the uprising also threatened the Duchess’s loyal family friends. Despite her sympathies toward the old faith, the events of 1536 “strengthened the ties between Willoughby and Brandon while weakening her affiliation to religious conservatives in that county.”⁹² Although there is evidence of other noble women supporting the Lincolnshire Rising because of their conservative beliefs, Catherine Willoughby chose not to. Though she was more outspoken than Catherine in her defiance of the crown, Anne, Lady Hussy also clung to her Catholic faith in the face of the spread of evangelicalism. Lady Hussy refused to take the oath to support the royal supremacy and the Act of Succession and was also sent to the Tower in 1536 for addressing the king’s daughter, Mary, as princess. In October of 1536, Anne supplied the Lincolnshire rebels with money and attempted to persuade her husband to join them. The fact that Catherine Willoughby did not follow Hussey’s example is a testament to the loyalty Willoughby felt to her new husband and how appalled she was that the rebels threatened her family. The threat the Lincolnshire Rising posed to Willoughby’s loved ones placed the first seeds of uncertainty about the Catholic Church in the Duchess’s mind.

Marrying Charles Brandon represented a turning point in Catherine Willoughby’s life. Marriage to Charles increased Catherine’s time at court, exposing her to Evangelical teachings and to courtiers who supported reform. But if marriage to Brandon meant increased exposure to reform, it also gave Willoughby a chance to reveal just how deeply her mother’s loyalty to Catherine of Aragon and her Catholic upbringing had influenced her. At the end of the 1530s,

⁹¹Letters and Papers: October 1536. Volume 11, 321

⁹² Franklin-Harkrider, 37.

after nearly seven years at court, Catherine still remained absent from Protestant circles and continued to use saints' days to date letters.⁹³ Despite her initial unwillingness to accept Evangelical teachings, the threat the Lincolnshire Rising posed to her loved ones damaged Catherine's positive view of her fellow Catholics and opened the door for the future events of her life to cause her to doubt the Catholic foundations of her faith.

Katherine Parr, 1529-1543

Just as it was a turning point in Catherine Willoughby's life, marriage also altered Katherine Parr's life in many ways. By 1543 Katherine would be a widow twice over whose husband's families were very different in their religious leanings. Katherine's first two marriages directly exposed her to reformist teachings and to traumatizing experiences which severely depleted Katherine's trust of Catholics. For a woman whose Catholic roots were already shallow, Parr's experiences throughout her first two marriages greatly increased her willingness to accept reformist beliefs.

In 1529, Maud Parr successfully secured a marriage for Katherine with Edward Borough of Gainsborough. The Borough family were distant relatives of the Parrs and were an old and well-established gentry family.⁹⁴ Life with the Borough family was quite different than what Katherine was used to, mostly due to the personality of her father-in-law, Sir Thomas Borough. Sir Thomas was controlling, often lost his temper, and whereas the importance of education was emphasized in Katherine's childhood home, Sir Thomas believed scholarship to be a frivolous activity.⁹⁵ Katherine witnessed her father-in-law's bad temper when another one of his daughter-in-laws, Elizabeth Owen, complained that her husband was "a pawn in his father's hands, too

⁹³ By this time, Cranmer, Cromwell, and Katherine Parr all seem to avoid dating by saints' days. For more information on this topic see Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 162.

⁹⁴ James, 60.

⁹⁵ James, 61.

terrified of him to defy him, and she was reduced to petitioning Cromwell for an income with which to feed her children.”⁹⁶ Sir Thomas promptly threw Owen out of the house and declared her children bastards. Although Thomas Borough’s overbearing and cruel demeanor left Katherine living in fear, it was at Gainsborough that Parr had her first direct contact with advocates of reform.

Parr’s father-in-law’s actions made it obvious that he supported the rise of the Boleyns as well as the spread of Evangelicalism. Borough was part of a group of peers and gentlemen who wrote to Pope Clement VII pleading for the approval of Henry’s annulment from Catherine of Aragon and on Anne Boleyn’s coronation day in May 1533, Borough was reprimanded for seizing Catherine’s barge and tearing her coat of arms from the vessel.⁹⁷ During Boleyn’s reign, Borough was appointed chamberlain of the Queen’s household and according to William Latimer, Boleyn’s chaplain, Anne often discussed matters of religion with Sir Thomas.⁹⁸ As well as maintain connections with advocates of reform at court, Borough also maintained chaplains who were reform-minded. Susan James argues that “given the patriarchal control that Borough exercised over his household, there is little doubt that his chaplains promoted the same viewpoint as their master.”⁹⁹ It is to these reform-minded chaplains that Katherine looked for guidance and consolation throughout her time at Gainsborough.

For a woman living in an environment of fear and uncertainty, speaking with a chaplain represented a means of escaping the troubles of home through religious discussion. As explained by James, “religion was one of the few sanctioned areas of emotional release that women could

⁹⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁹⁷ Letters and Papers: Volume 6, 241. Cited in James, 191.

⁹⁸ Ives, 268.

⁹⁹ James, 191.

claim in 1529.”¹⁰⁰ Living in such a stressful environment, it is likely that Katherine often conversed with the Borough’s chaplains who began to impress upon Parr the need to return to the true spirit of Christ’s Gospel. Evangelicalism was attractive to a woman like Parr for many reasons. Historian Ellen Macek asserts that:

under early Protestantism women gained admittance to a life of prayer and learning on a more equal basis with men. Such an invitation to religious and intellectual equality must have been particularly attractive to women of intelligence and quick wit whose status allowed them some leisure time to pursue these activities. In the reformers’ letters to members of their congregations or to friends and family, they imposed the necessity of self-knowledge, prayer, and meditation upon men and women alike.¹⁰¹

An emphasis on self-knowledge and learning resonated with a woman like Parr who enjoyed intellectual pursuits. Interactions with the Borough’s chaplains gave Katherine an opportunity to not only discuss a love of learning, but also exposed Parr to her first taste of reformist beliefs.

But in 1533, Katherine’s life reached another turning point when Edward became sick and died. No longer welcome in Gainsborough, Katherine moved to Sizergh Castle in Westmorland where she was received by the Strickland family. At that time, Catherine Neville, widow of Sir Ralph Neville also lived with the Stricklands. Lady Neville befriended Parr and introduced her to her deceased husband’s cousin, John Neville, Lord Latimer. Soon after their introduction, Katherine and Lord Latimer were married in the summer of 1534 and Katherine moved with her new husband to Snape Castle in Yorkshire. The north was known for its conservative religious nature and Lord Latimer was an avid supporter of Catholicism whose chapel was famous for its elaborate decorations and architecture. Unlike Sir Thomas Borough, Latimer staunchly opposed the king’s marriage to Anne Boleyn and detested Henry’s break from

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 62.

¹⁰¹ Ellen Macek, “The Emergence of a Feminine Spirituality in the Book of Martyrs,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (1988): 75.

Rome. For the first time in Katherine's life, a deeply pious individual was the main figure in her life.

Despite his conservative religious beliefs which were in opposition to the reformist leanings Katherine held later in life, Parr maintained a fondness for her second husband and his family. Until she died, Katherine kept Latimer's New Testament with his name inscribed on its cover in her possession.¹⁰² Marrying Latimer, Katherine became step-mother to his two children, Margaret and John. She developed an especially close relationship with Margaret whom she brought to court and made a maid-in-waiting when Parr became Queen. In the last year of his life, Lord Latimer was extremely ill and weak and Katherine was a devoted wife and caretaker. It is obvious from his will, in which many bequests were made to his servants and detailed instructions were left for the care of his widow, that Lord Latimer was a kind and loving man.¹⁰³ As good a man Latimer was, however, his young wife never grew to love her new home in the north.

Although marriage to Latimer was an excellent match which moved Katherine up the social ladder, life in the north was strange and unpleasant for the southern-raised Parr. Used to the gentle life of the south, the north seemed rough and wild to Katherine. Snape Castle was in an isolated part of Yorkshire which made Katherine feel even more alone without any family or friends. Her mother, Maud Parr, had died in 1531 and her brother and sister were now both in service at court. In addition to the loneliness Katherine felt, her marriage proved to have many difficult aspects. Until his death, Lord Latimer owed the king a large sum of money for the loan he took out to finance his daughter's marriage in 1534.¹⁰⁴ Latimer's family also proved to be challenging to deal with. In 1532, Lord Latimer's brothers, George and Christopher, took legal

¹⁰² James, 70.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 70.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 66.

action against John for property they claimed was theirs according to their father's will.¹⁰⁵ Later in 1532, another brother, William, was arrested for consulting a necromancer who in his meetings with William predicted the king's death. Then in 1534, two other Latimer brothers, Thomas and Marmaduke, were arrested for treason and managed to escape death. All of these conflicts with the crown resulted in the Latimers to be viewed in a less than favorable light by Henry and his advisors. Although the Latimer family troubles made life stressful and difficult for Katherine, the violence which was about to break out in the north would change her outlook on life irrevocably.

Characteristically more conservative than the south, the north teemed with uneasiness throughout Henry VIII's 'great matter'. In October 1536, the conservative north's grievances with their king reached a boiling point. Inspired by the Lincolnshire Rising, those unhappy with the king's break from Rome and subsequent dissolution of the monasteries embarked upon a violent journey to London in what became known as the Pilgrimage of Grace. Although many marched in opposition to the king's councilors, not Henry himself, Henry viewed all of the rebels as traitors. Upon their journey south, the rebels demanded the allegiance of the lords and gentry of the north. Now the wife of a northern lord, Katherine Parr soon found herself in the very center of the violence and terror of the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Just as the Lincolnshire Rising altered Catherine Willoughby's views on Catholics, the Pilgrimage of Grace changed Katherine Parr's attitude towards conservatives but in a much more drastic fashion. Two weeks after the initial uprising in Lincolnshire, a mob appeared in the middle of the night outside of Snape Castle demanding Lord Latimer join them or violence would ensue. Latimer was carried off by the rebels leaving Katherine alone and defenseless. After his abduction, conflicting stories began to circulate concerning Latimer's relationship with

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 66.

the rebels. On October 17, Sir Brian Hastings wrote in a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury that both Lord Latimer and the new Lord Scrope of Bolton were “sworn to the rebels, with the worshipful in their retinue.”¹⁰⁶ Soon after, Latimer’s signature appeared on documents containing the rebels’ demands and news surfaced that he was also in close contact with Robert Aske, the leader of the rebellion. As this news reached Thomas Cromwell and the king, they became suspicious that Latimer had willingly joined the rebels.

John Latimer’s background and subsequent actions during the rebellion gave Henry and Cromwell every reason to be suspicious of him. Latimer’s conservative beliefs and his family’s history of troubles with the crown marked him as an ideal candidate to support the rebels’ cause. Latimer’s family connections also associated him with those sympathetic towards the rebels. Margaret, John’s daughter, was betrothed to the son of Sir Francis Bigod, a rebel leader and close friend of Latimer.¹⁰⁷ Reports came to the king and Cromwell that Latimer was seen carrying the banner and arms of St. Cuthbert, the flag of the rebels, and raising men for the cause on the doorstep of Durham.¹⁰⁸ Although his sympathies were with the rebels, Latimer had no desire to be convicted of treason. Trying to pacify both the rebels and the king, Latimer tarnished his image even more. To appease the rebels, Latimer became the spokesman for Aske and later claimed that he stayed with Aske only to reason with him to stop the uprising.¹⁰⁹ No matter what Latimer’s intentions were, by associating himself with the rebels in any capacity he fell out of favor with the crown indefinitely and his attempt to pacify the king complicated his relations with the rebels.

¹⁰⁶ Letters and Papers, 12, I, no. 131. Cited in James, 77.

¹⁰⁷ James, 81.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 78.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 78.

When amnesty was offered to the rebels in December and Aske's supporters disbanded, Latimer was forced to face the consequences of not resisting the insurgents. The king wrote to the Duke of Norfolk telling him to demand that Latimer "condemn that villain Aske and submit himself to our clemency."¹¹⁰ Far more concerned with making peace with the king than risking the wrath of Aske's followers, Latimer once again left his wife to ride south and plead to Henry and Cromwell that fear for his life and his wish to bring the rebellion to an end were the circumstances which forced him to associate with the rebels.¹¹¹ On the other hand, other great northern men, like Katherine's former father-in-law, Sir Thomas Borough, refused to join the rebels when they demanded allegiance and successfully avoided association with the uprising. No matter what Latimer claimed, the truth was that he neither tried to escape nor did he call his tenants to help defend him from the violent threats of the mob. Katherine's second husband was fortunate that her family members and some of his loyal friends at court were willing to speak on his behalf. Sir William Fitzwilliam, the Lord Admiral, wrote to the king on Latimer's behalf and Katherine's uncle and brother also pleaded with the king to spare John from a sentence of treason.¹¹² Although Latimer's was saved from being sent to the Tower, the consequences of her husband's betrayal of the rebels soon engulfed Katherine's life in violence and fear.

The heaviness of her husband's situation was not lost on Katherine Parr for she too was affected by his association with the rebels. As her husband rode to London to plead his case with the king, Parr knew her life would take a dramatically unfortunate turn if he was unsuccessful. If her husband died a traitor, the forfeiture of his estate would leave his wife and children with no income and no home. But as news of Latimer's journey to London reached the insurgents, anger towards their former ally exploded among their ranks. The wrath of the rebels soon made

¹¹⁰ Letters and Papers, 11, no. 1174. Cited in James, 82.

¹¹¹ James, 82.

¹¹² Ibid., 83.

Katherine less concerned with her husband's fate than with preserving her own life. In January 1537, the rebels stormed Snape Castle and took Katherine and her step-children hostage. The castle was looted and news of the threat that his family would be killed and Snape Castle burned to the ground if he did not return reached Latimer on his way to London.¹¹³ There is no record of the atrocities Katherine and her step-children endured as prisoners of the mob, but having her home invaded and destroyed was certainly traumatizing enough for Parr. Even though her husband returned home, the ordeal of the Pilgrimage of Grace was not yet over for Katherine.

After returning home and securing Snape Castle, Latimer again abandoned his family to save his reputation. The duke of Norfolk was gathering troops at Pontefract to defeat the rebel forces which once again took up arms in the winter of 1537 and seizing upon an opportunity to ally himself with the king's troops, Lord Latimer rode to meet Norfolk. Leaving Snape Castle, Latimer once again left his family vulnerable to the violence and terror they experienced just the month before. Upon his arrival at Pontefract, an investigation of Latimer's involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace ensued under Norfolk's direction. In Norfolk's company was Katherine's brother, William, who was responsible for gathering evidence against his brother-in-law. The preparation of a trial against her husband by her brother must have torn Katherine's loyalty between her beloved brother and her husband. Fortunately, Norfolk wrote to Cromwell that "I can't discover any evidence other than he was enforced and no man in more danger of his life" and no trial against Latimer ever occurred.¹¹⁴ Even though he escaped punishment for involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace, Lord Latimer permanently damaged his political career and reputation.

¹¹³ Ibid., 83.

¹¹⁴ Letters and Papers, 12, ii, no. 14. Cited in James, 84.

The events of the Pilgrimage of Grace inflicted a trauma upon Katherine Parr which undoubtedly altered her world view. Her imprisonment and the destruction of her home at the hands of conservative Catholics greatly diminished Katherine's remaining fondness for the old faith. Not only did the Pilgrimage of Grace compromise Parr's trust of Catholics, it also depleted any influence her husband had over his wife's faith. Katherine witnessed firsthand how Latimer's conservative faith associated him with enemies of the crown and caused his political downfall. Even though Parr's life at Snape Castle isolated her from Evangelical influences and exposed her to the conservative Catholicism of her husband, any chance of Parr's adopting a religious disposition similar to her husband's became obsolete after the Pilgrimage of Grace. From 1536 on, Katherine associated the old faith with those who threatened her life and as the cause of her husband's fall from favor. By the time she left the north, any loyalty Katherine had towards Catholicism was exhausted and her religious leanings could be molded by the teachings of the new faith.

The hardships of the north proved to be too much, even for the conservative Latimer, and Katherine and her husband left Snape Castle in 1537 to move south to Stowe Manor in Northamptonshire. The move south pleased Parr not only because she was leaving behind the unpleasantness of the north, but because she was near family again. Her uncle, Sir William Parr, lived only a few miles from Stowe Manor and many of Parr's other aunts and uncles lived nearby.¹¹⁵ Latimer often left Stowe Manor to oversee his lands and interests in the north leaving his wife to her own devices and free to spend more time with her beloved uncle. With her uncle nearby, Katherine was once again exposed to his reformist beliefs which had become more pronounced since his niece left home in 1529. Specifically, Sir William was part of the dismantling of the monasteries in Northamptonshire and threatened to hang anyone who attempted

¹¹⁵ James, 193.

to interfere with his work.¹¹⁶ After the traumatic events of early 1537 left Katherine at odds with Catholicism and unable to trust her husband for protection, she was more than willing to listen to and rely upon her reformist uncle.

If any time can be pinpointed as the moment when Katherine Parr's mind was opened to the teachings of the new faith, 1537 is likely. Although Catherine Willoughby's marriage also exposed her to evangelical influences and her experience with the northern rebellions was also unpleasant, it did not put Willoughby herself in danger nor did it humiliate her family and damage her husband's political career. If anything, Brandon's successful defeat of the Lincolnshire rising helped increase his favor with the king. Willoughby may have begun to doubt the actions of her fellow Catholics, but her choice of associations at court and the vernacular of her letters prove that Catherine's loyalty to the old faith remained strong. On the other hand, Parr's experience with the Pilgrimage of Grace was violent, terrifying, and threatened her life. Her husband's associations with the old faith brought disgrace and humiliation to the Latimers and put Katherine at risk of losing her husband as well as the majority of her wealth. While Catherine Willoughby's faith in Catholicism endured in the wake of the Lincolnshire Rising, the events of 1537 caused Parr's uneasiness with Catholicism and opened her mind to the teachings of the evangelicals.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 193.

CHAPTER 3

EMBRACING THE NEW FAITH

With the rise of the Boleyns and Thomas Cromwell, the lawyer who orchestrated the king's divorce and oversaw the dissolution of the monasteries, reformers gained a foothold at court. Preachers such as Hugh Latimer gave sermons speaking against traditional religious practices, criticizing purgatory, saints' days, and the use of images. Perhaps the reformers' greatest achievement of the late 1530s was the publishing and distribution of the Bible in English. Traditionally, translation of the Bible was associated with the heretical teachings of Lollards and Luther. Although William Tyndale and his assistant, Miles Coverdale's English translation of the Bible were distributed in England in 1536, their work was not supported by the crown.

That same year the Convocation of Canterbury petitioned Henry for an orthodox rival to Tyndale's translation, "that the holy Scripture shall be translated into the vulgar tongue by certain upright and learned men, to be meted out and delivered to the people for their instruction."¹¹⁷ The king listened to the Convocation, for John Rogers's 1538 English 'Matthew Bible' was ordered to be placed in every church and the royal injunctions of 1538 urged bishops to encourage the laity to read Rogers's Bible. In 1539, Cromwell organized the translation and publication of the crown's official translation of the Bible. The result was the 'Great Bible,' translated by Miles Coverdale. An English translation supported by the crown was a great victory for evangelicals who adamantly advocated that the word of God be available to all.

As great a victory the printing of the Bible in English was, Henry's favor soon shifted towards conservative doctrine. After Thomas Cromwell's execution following his failure to

¹¹⁷ W.J. Sheils, *The English Reformation: 1530-1570* (New York: Pearson Education Inc, 1989), 34.

negotiate with the Lutheran princes and his poor choice of Anne of Cleves as Henry's fourth wife, the king's favor fell upon the conservatives.¹¹⁸ In the summer of 1539, Henry presented the House of Lords with six questions on central issues of dispute between conservatives and reformers. It was obvious from the way the questions were phrased that the king demanded traditional answers from the Lords. The *Six Articles of Faith* enforced belief in transubstantiation, denied the necessity of Communion in both the body and blood of Christ for the laity, required that priests remain celibate, and supported the continual use of both private Masses and confession. The passage of the *Six Articles of Faith* was a complete victory for conservatives such as Bishop Stephen Gardiner and a complete defeat for reformers such as Bishop Hugh Latimer and Bishop Nicholas Shaxton. Unfortunately for the evangelicals, the *Six Articles of Faith* was just the first of Henry's conservative acts passed in the last seven years of his reign.

Further blows were dealt to the evangelical cause as more conservative Acts were passed. In 1543, an Act was passed which limited the reading of the Bible to those of the rank of merchant, gentleman, and above. Additionally, the publication of *The Necessary Doctrine and Erudication of a Christian Man*, which included a preface by the King, advocated traditional beliefs such as masses for the dead and rejected Lutheran views on Justification by Faith and freedom of will.¹¹⁹ The conservative Acts of the early 1540s pushed reformist Bishops Latimer and Shaxton to resign and forced Archbishop Cranmer to support reform creatively without challenging orthodoxy. Until the end of Henry's reign, Cranmer focused on the creation of literature infused with subtle reformist vernacular such as his English Litany (1544) and *The*

¹¹⁸ Sheils, 35.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 36.

King's Prymer (1545) which was a standard guideline manual for schoolmasters.¹²⁰ Although utterly defeated by Acts of the 1540s, another event in 1543 eventually played into the Reformer's favor. On July 12, 1543 Henry VIII took Katherine Parr as his sixth wife, and as her future actions would prove, she was a fervid supporter at court of the evangelical cause and the reformers once again had the ear of a powerful individual.

Katherine Parr: Prelude to Queenship, 1542-July, 1543

Following the move to Northamptonshire, Katherine Parr was happy to be back in the south and closer to family but she still had to deal with the emotional scars from the Pilgrimage of Grace. Since being taken hostage in her own home and witnessing the negative affects his conservative reputation had on her husband's political career, Katherine began to doubt the tenets of her faith. Ellen Macek argues that women who converted from Catholicism to Evangelicalism usually were subjected to experiences which traumatized them in some way. The way in which these women chose to deal with their crises...

indicates their high sense of self-identity, their developing autonomy, their commitment to the early reforming communities, and their psychological readiness to embark on a higher level of spiritual maturation.¹²¹

The way in which Parr dealt with her crisis evoked all of these things within her. In the years following the Pilgrimage of Grace, Katherine's connections in London integrated her into reforming circles which influenced her to develop a religious outlook independent of her husband's conservative leanings. Embarking on a journey of a "higher level of spiritual maturation" from 1537 on, Katherine developed a genuine curiosity for evangelicalism; a curiosity which later evolved into Parr becoming a fervid reformer.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹²¹ Macek, 75.

Katherine's religious transformation undoubtedly began with the move south which brought her closer to her reform minded uncle, but moving to London in 1542 rapidly brought her into the evangelical fold. Lord Latimer attended Parliament as a peer in the winter of 1542 and Katherine gladly moved with him to the busiest city in England. Not only did a life in London offer Katherine excitement it also brought her closer to her brother and sister. William Parr was now the son-in-law of the Earl of Essex and his circle of friends included those who also had once been members of the Duke of Richmond's household. Anne Parr became a maid-in-waiting in 1531 and served all of Henry's queens. Her brother and sister's service at court presented Katherine with a convenient entrance into court life and ingratiated Parr into her brother's social circle.¹²² The atmosphere at court encouraged intellectual discussion of many topics, particularly, religion, and Katherine's new friends' reformist leanings surrounded her with conversation concerning the advancement of the new faith.

Since Katherine's religious attitude was malleable following the events of 1537, the religious conversations at court profoundly shaped her interest in evangelicalism. Evidence of Parr's attraction to her uncle and brother's reformist beliefs can be found in who she connected with in her early days at court. Among Katherine's friends at court were Sir John Dudley, the future Duke of Northumberland who would support the radical Protestant reforms of Edward VI's government and attempted to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne, and Sir Thomas Wyatt, whose son would lead a rebellion against the Catholic Queen Mary in an attempt to place the Protestant Princess Elizabeth on the throne. A mutual interest in evangelicalism also introduced Katherine to Sir Thomas Seymour, brother of the former Queen, Jane Seymour, and the man who proved to be the great love of Parr's life.

¹²² James, 88.

Although his commitment to the new faith was probably more of a man seizing an opportunity to associate with up-and-coming courtiers in order to advance his political career, association with other reformers introduced Katherine to Seymour. Seymour was an attractive man still unmarried in his mid-thirties and although Katherine admired and cared for Lord Latimer, she was not in love with him.¹²³ Parr married the wealthy Latimer out of necessity when her first husband's death left her with little income and unwelcome at Gainsborough. After nine years in a loveless marriage which exposed Katherine to danger on multiple occasions during the Pilgrimage of Grace, it is no wonder that Parr was drawn to Seymour. According to Susan E. James, the early 1543 Holbein miniature of Seymour was possibly painted for Katherine. Katherine's letter to Seymour following the death of Henry VIII also reveals that she had loved Thomas since 1543 and would have taken him as her husband had it not been for the king. In a letter dated March, 1547 Katherine wrote, "I would not have you to think that this mine honest goodwill toward you to proceed of any sudden motion or passion. For, as truly as God is God, my mind was fully bent the other time I was at liberty, to marry you before any man I knew."¹²⁴ Although it is obvious that Katherine grew to love Thomas Seymour in the winter of 1543, her relationship with him would have to wait until Parr was free from her marriage to the ailing Lord Latimer.

Since his embarrassing fall from royal favor due to his involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace, Lord Latimer was a spent force. After 1537, Latimer left his conservative friends in the north and begrudgingly ingratiated himself to the king by carrying out the persecution and execution of the rebels he once associated with.¹²⁵ Latimer's participation in the elimination of the northern rebels proved that his political downfall had utterly defeated his zeal for supporting

¹²³ Ibid., 93.

¹²⁴ Parr, 131.

¹²⁵ James, 86.

conservative religion. In addition to the fading of his passion for the old faith, Latimer's health also declined following 1537. Following his move to London in 1542, it was obvious to Sir John and those around him that his life would not last long. Latimer's will not only provided for his widow, but also reaffirmed that although he renounced his support of the northern rebels, his religious beliefs were still decidedly conservative. In his will, Latimer provided money for a priest to sing for his soul and also left funding for an "obit" to be said yearly in Well Church for himself and his ancestors.¹²⁶ Although Lord Latimer's death in March 1543 meant that Katherine was free to marry again, it also meant that she needed to secure a means to stay in London.

When it was apparent that her husband was dying, Katherine secured a place in household of Henry VIII's eldest daughter, the Lady Mary. Since Mary accepted her father as the Head of the Church of England in 1536, her relationship with Henry improved and she was granted her own household. Katherine's appointment to a position in the conservative Mary's household should not be seen as a step back towards Catholicism in her religious journey, but rather an instance of Parr doing what she needed to do to get what she wanted. In her 1547 work, *Lamentations of a Sinner*, Katherine describes herself as "continually traveling uncomfortably in the foul, wicked, and perverse ways" throughout her early life.¹²⁷ Since Katherine was a part of the reformist circles at court and she was uncomfortable for some time with Catholicism, it is more likely that Parr took a position in Lady Mary's household out of necessity and not due to any mutual religious interests with her conservative mistress. Rather than seeking to obtain a position through religious ties, Katherine probably utilized her mother's ties to Catherine of Aragon to secure her position in Lady Mary's household. Although Katherine entered Mary's household to assuage her fear of having to leave London after her husband's death, her role in

¹²⁶ Ibid., 89.

¹²⁷ Parr, 449.

Mary's service soon caught the eye of someone who ensured that Katherine stayed at court permanently.

After his ill-fated marriage to Katherine Howard ended with her execution in February 1542, Henry was free to take another wife. With her more frequent appearances at court after her move to London, Katherine Parr caught Henry's eye and by February of 1543 it was reported that the king was "calling at the princess's apartment two or three times a day."¹²⁸ Although most women with an ailing husband would be thrilled to garner the affections of the king, Katherine was not. Rumors spread that Katherine said she was not happy about the king's favor and that it was better to be his mistress than his wife.¹²⁹ Besides the fact that Katherine feared she would end up like Henry's former wives who met unfortunate ends (two divorced, two executed, and one dead after childbirth), she was still in love with Thomas Seymour. Unfortunately for Katherine, a relationship with Seymour became unlikely when the king's attraction to Parr became obvious. Although the prospect of marriage to the king was unattractive to her, those closest to Parr pressured her to change her outlook on marriage to Henry.

Great favor often fell upon the family of the woman who held the king's affection. The Boleyn, Seymour, and Howard families all experienced an increase in influence and power at court when their respective relative was Henry's Queen. This trend was not lost on the Parrs and they were aware that Katherine's elevation to Queen would mean titles, offices, lands, and annuities for them as well.¹³⁰ Even before her marriage to Henry, the Parrs experienced an outpouring of affection from the king. Shortly after Lord Latimer's death in March, Katherine's brother was made chief steward and receiver of Writtle, chief steward of the Honour of Beaulieu in Hampshire, Lord Warden and Keeper of the West, and was also elected into the esteemed

¹²⁸ David Loades, *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 113.

¹²⁹ James, 114.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

Order of the Garter. These appointments were certainly due to the king's fondness for Katherine considering William's career up to that point had been less than illustrious and the king showed little interest in him until the spring of 1543.¹³¹ Lord Parr certainly did not want this favor to end and when Katherine agreed to marry the king, she wrote to William, "you are the person who has most cause to rejoice."¹³² But if the benefits her family could reap did not convince Katherine to marry the king, the influence her reformer friends could gain from a union with Henry did appeal to Parr.

Aware of Parr's sympathies for the evangelical cause, reformers viewed her possible marriage to the king as an avenue to regain their political influence. Reformers fell out of political favor when Catherine Howard married Henry in the summer of 1540 and the new Queen's family and their supporters gained power at court. They were happy to see the passage of the conservative Acts of the early 1540s and pleased that the king grew increasingly conservative in his old age. But with the execution of Catherine Howard in the winter of 1542, the adversaries of evangelicalism such as Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk and Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester temporarily fell from power. Now that the conservative faction was out of the king's favor, Katherine's evangelical friends argued that her marriage to the king should be interpreted as God's will and that it was the appropriate time to strike a blow for the new faith.¹³³

Katherine gave in to the pressures of her family and reformer friends and accepted the king's proposal. The rationale she used to arrive at her decision proved how far her religious beliefs had progressed towards evangelicalism. Writing to Thomas Seymour about her decision to marry the king, Katherine recalled that "God withstood my will most vehemently for a time,

¹³¹ Ibid., 103.

¹³² Ibid., 115.

¹³³ Ibid., 115.

and through his grace and goodness made that possible which seemeth to me most impossible. That was, made me renounce utterly mine own will.”¹³⁴ Susan E. James argues that this letter reveals Parr’s leaning on reformist teachings to help her arrive at a decision considering “force applied to accept God’s will in the matter of her marriage was not only a metaphysical imperative but a human one, urged by the reformers.”¹³⁵ Although Katherine accepted reformist teachings in her heart and associated with well-known reformers at court, it was not until her tenure as Queen that she became active in working to spread the new faith.

Katherine, the Queen

In the Queen’s closet at Hampton Court palace on July 12, 1543, Katherine Parr married Henry VIII and became his sixth and final wife. Although she did not enter the marriage without urging from her family and friends, Katherine accepted that her duty was to please the king in all things. In a 1544 letter to Henry, Katherine expresses her willingness to put the king’s happiness before her own when she states, “love maketh me in all things to set apart mine own convenience and pleasure, and to embrace most joyfully his will and pleasure whom I love.”¹³⁶ Although she gave up her “own convenience and pleasure” of a romance with Thomas Seymour, Katherine did receive many benefits from her third marriage. Henry showered his bride with gifts and favors, allowed her to buy numerous books and gowns, and instilled confidence in Katherine by allowing her to entertain important guests. But as Katherine soon realized, the greatest advantage she gained was her elevation to a position which allowed her to advance the spread of evangelical beliefs.

Previous to becoming queen, Katherine associated with reformers but did not take any actions or make any profession of faith which gave anyone cause to think she was an evangelical

¹³⁴ Parr, 131.

¹³⁵ James, 116.

¹³⁶ Parr, 63.

herself. In fact, many conservatives praised the new queen. Shortly following her marriage, Sir Thomas Wriothesley, who later became one of Parr's great enemies, wrote to the Duke of Suffolk that the queen was "a woman in my judgment, for virtue wisdom and gentleness, most mete for his highness; and I am sure his majesty had never a wife more agreeable to his heart than she is."¹³⁷ Katherine's pursuit of a position of the household of conservative Lady Mary even gave conservatives hope that their new queen supported the old faith. Although conservatives at court believed Parr was a possible supporter of traditional beliefs, those closest to her knew the queen's true religious leanings.

In correspondence from her early days as queen, it is obvious that close friends already recognized Parr as an evangelical. Analyzing a letter from Francis Goldsmith, one of Katherine's solicitors and a gentleman of her privy chamber, James asserts that Goldsmith's words reveal the queen's reformist beliefs. In his letter, Goldsmith recalled that when Katherine first became queen, "God had so formed her mind for pious studies that she considers everything of small value compared to Christ...Her piety cherishes the religion long since introduced not without great labor to the palace."¹³⁸ James argues that Katherine cherished a religion introduced "not without great labour to the palace," and it is obvious that Goldsmith is speaking of the evangelicalism which struggled to reassert itself after the conservative Acts of the early 1540s.¹³⁹ Additionally, Goldsmith's letter compares Katherine to the Queen of Sheba and Queen Esther of the Bible. Like the Queen of Sheba, who made a laborious journey to hear Solomon's words of wisdom, for Parr to open her heart to evangelical teaching, she had to go through a difficult experience during the Pilgrimage of Grace. Additionally, like Queen Esther, who saved her people from destruction, Parr could save the people of England by spreading the word of God on

¹³⁷ Public Records Office: SP1/180/69. Cited in James, 118.

¹³⁸ Francis Goldsmith, *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence*, 77.

¹³⁹ James, 195.

a larger scale now that she was Queen. As Goldsmith's letter reveals, Katherine's evangelical friends expected her to take full advantage of her new position to further their cause.

As Katherine became more comfortable as queen, she also became confident about expressing her reformist leanings. As her almoner, Katherine appointed the moderate reformer George Day, Bishop of Chichester. Although Day proved to be quite conservative in the face of Edward VI's radical protestant reforms, he was reform minded enough to suit Parr's needs in 1543.¹⁴⁰ Day was the first to encourage Katherine to study the works of Erasmus and to translate a book of psalms into English. Day's suggestion resulted in Parr's lifelong preoccupation with Erasmus and many of her future projects focused on translating religious works into English. Although the idea of translating religious works into English was still relatively radical in 1544, the production of approved texts in English was permitted, meaning Parr's project did not work against any tenets of the Henrican church. As she undertook the translation of *Psalms of Prayers taken out of Holy Scripture* from Latin to English, Parr expressed her distaste for Latin. In a 1546 letter to Cambridge University, Katherine protested her ignorance of the language, but as James argues, her frustration with Latin was not due to ignorance of classical languages, but because of the evangelical's emphasis on the vernacular.¹⁴¹ Evangelicals condemned Latin as the language of the inner elite who wished to exclude the majority from understanding the Gospels. It is therefore no wonder that Parr willingly partook in projects which worked to produce religious texts in English.

In many of her translations, Katherine took Catholic texts and provided them with a subtle Protestant tone. For example, in her translation of *Psalms of Prayers taken out of Holy Scripture*, a work whose earlier Latin translation was attributed to humanist John Fisher,

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 200.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 200.

Katherine does not give the speaker a voice of a religious elite, but rather a voice which could belong to any human.¹⁴² James argues that the voice in Parr's work is an individual "seeking union with the grace and forgiveness of God not only in the heaven to come but in the immediate realities of this world."¹⁴³ In April of 1545, a Latin version of *Psalms of Prayers* was published with a 'Prayer for the King' at the end. The prayer was written by Katherine and unlike the rest of the work, was in English. Although the prayer was small, it marked Katherine as a published author in the vernacular and foreshadowed her future fame as an author of religious texts written in the vernacular.

One week after the Latin version was published, an anonymous version of *Psalms of Prayers* was published. James attributes the anonymity of Parr's vernacular translation to the fact that the Queen was perhaps not ready to accept either the praise or the attacks which came with the production of such a radical work.¹⁴⁴ Although her name was not attached to the English version, the fact that fourteen copies "of the psalm prayers" were requested to be bound for Katherine and multiple charges appear in the queen's chamber accounts for the delivery of "a book" throughout April of 1544 suggest Parr's connection to the work.¹⁴⁵ Others also subtly recognized Katherine as the translator of the English *Psalms of Prayers*. In his dedication to the English translation of *Erasmus's Paraphrase of the Book of Acts*, Nicholas Udall credits Parr as having composed and published "many goodly Psalms and diverse other contemplative meditations."¹⁴⁶ Although Katherine's work on *Psalms of Prayers* was a careful attempt to work within the tenets of the Henrican church while also promoting evangelical causes, Parr's future

¹⁴² Ibid., 202.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 202.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 204.

¹⁴⁵ Public Records Office: E315/161, f. 46. Cited in James, 206.

¹⁴⁶ Nicholas Udall, *Erasmus's Paraphrase on Acts*, f. CCCCCXXb, cited in James, 205.

works gradually gained a more evangelical identity as she became even more comfortable with her new life as Queen.

Queen Regent of England, July-September 1544

In the summer of 1544, Henry left to lead a campaign in France and appointed Katherine Queen Regent. Not only did Katherine gain more confidence in her own political abilities throughout her time as regent, she also gained confidence in expressing her reformist ideas to the king himself. In a letter written to Henry in France on July 31, 1544, Katherine writes, “I finish this my scribbled letter, committing you into the governance of the Lord, with long life and prosperous felicity here, and, after this life, to enjoy the kingdom of His elect.”¹⁴⁷ The belief in divine election to spiritual salvation was a Lutheran teaching and James argues that “Katherine’s use of the phrase in a letter to the king at this early date demonstrates not only how far her beliefs had evolved but also how free she felt in voicing those-not always compatible-beliefs to her husband.”¹⁴⁸ Leading a war in France, Henry had little time to address his wife’s radical words. Henry’s initial failure to reprimand Katherine for her support of Lutheran ideas allowed Parr to grow even more comfortable with expressing controversial religious topics with her husband.

Katherine’s role as Regent also increasingly exposed her to one of the leading reformers of Henry’s reign, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. Parr met daily with the regency council of which Cranmer was a member. Katherine’s daily meetings with the Archbishop provided Parr an outlet to discuss her religious beliefs as well as an opportunity to discuss how to further the Reformation in England. Cranmer was influential in trying to balance the conservative Acts of the 1540s with acceptable reformist practices. For example, before he left for France, Henry demanded that the traditional practice of public processions to pray for Christendom be revived.

¹⁴⁷ Parr, 64.

¹⁴⁸ James, 211.

Cranmer convinced the king that the prayers could be said in English and that new prayers could be composed in the vernacular. With Henry's approval of new prayers written in English, Cranmer and Parr embarked on separate projects which still conformed to Henry's religious policies, but also took important steps towards reform.

In her next project, Katherine took a larger step towards reform and adopted a voice which was profoundly more evangelical than the voice of *Psalms of Prayers*. Published in 1545, *Prayers or Meditations* was a compilation of vernacular texts for personal use. Although Cranmer's work, *Litany with Suffrages to be said or sung* (1544), was intended for public devotion, the fact that he and Parr's works were both handbooks for worship made available to the literate was a step away from tradition and a move towards reform.¹⁴⁹ Using the third book of Thomas Kempis's *De Imitatione Christi*, which was translated into English by a Bridgettine monk of Syon in 1531, Katherine's *Prayers and Meditations* is a sixty-page abridgement of Kempis's work. Although Katherine used Kempis's work for inspiration, historian Janel Mueller argues that Parr's work is not merely an abridgement of Kempis's work, but rather a work which "takes shape and substance as a determined, sustained act of intertextual appropriation that constitutes a genuine claim to authorship."¹⁵⁰ The fact that *Prayers or Meditations* was reissued at least seventeen times by the end of the century during the Protestant reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I is further proof that Parr's translation should not be seen as a simple abridgement of a conservative Catholic text. By giving her translation of *De Imitatione Christi* a new voice and adding subtle Lutheran undertones, Katherine made *Prayers or Meditations* distinctly her own.

¹⁴⁹ Janel Mueller, Introduction to Katherine Parr's *Prayers or Meditations*, *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence*, 373.

¹⁵⁰ Janel Mueller, 'Devotion as Difference: Intertextuality in Queen Katherine Parr's "Prayers or Meditations" (1545),' *Huntington Library Quarterly* (1990): 175.

In her abridgement of the third book of *De Imitatione Christi*, Parr completely dismantles the monastic framework of the text and replaces the dialogue of what are obviously two male figures identified as “Jesu”, “lorde”, or “syr” and instead inserts a monologue using “I”, “me”, and “my”.¹⁵¹ Not only does this eliminate the monk who originally translated the work as the figure bringing the text to the reader, it also replaces the male voice of the original text with an individual whose gender is unclear and who is completely dependent upon God’s own word for guidance. Mueller also argues that “the salient feature’s of Parr’s speaker reflect emphasis in early Tudor Protestantism, not least yet unprobed and unproblematic presumption of the spiritual equality of all persons before God.”¹⁵² By reorienting the structure of the *De Imitatione Christi*, Parr was able to promote the reformist belief that all people, not just elite religious men, can obtain an understanding of God’s word.

In addition to making the voice of *Prayers and Meditations* non-gendered, Parr’s restructuring of the *De Imitatione Christi* also gave her text Lutheran undertones concerning how one obtains salvation. In the original text, a complicated calculation of actions one can take to obtain heaven are presented: “I wolde be above all temperall thynges/ but whether I wyll or not I am copellyd...to be subjecte unto my flesh.”¹⁵³ But in Katherine’s abridgement, she clearly rejects the existence of a calculation to obtain salvation, another Lutheran teaching, when she states “I would subdue all yvell affections, but they daily rebel and ryse against me, and wyll not be subject unto my spirit.”¹⁵⁴ Mueller asserts that the “neatly externalized dualties give way in her text to an evocation of constant inward struggle.”¹⁵⁵ Parr’s emphasis on inward struggle concerning salvation echoes Luther’s argument that performing good works does not obtain

¹⁵¹ Mueller:175.

¹⁵² Ibid.: 177.

¹⁵³ Ibid.; 183.

¹⁵⁴ Parr, 408.

¹⁵⁵ Mueller: 183.

salvation, but rather one was saved by faith alone. With the presence of Lutheran teachings in Katherine's work, it is obvious that she was becoming increasingly attracted to more radical religious thoughts throughout her queenship.

Analyzing Parr's *Prayers or Meditations*, *Prayers of Psalms*, and her letter to Henry, one is able to track the progression of Katherine Parr's faith. Initially a timid reformer when she became queen, Parr's texts only had subtle evangelical undertones. But after gaining confidence as Regent and becoming comfortable pushing her husband's religious boundaries, Katherine began producing and attaching her name to texts which carry stronger evangelical tones as well as Lutheran teachings. Both *Prayers or Meditations* and *Psalms of Prayers* contributed to Cranmer's attempt to popularize Protestant ideas and marked Parr as a supporter of the new faith.¹⁵⁶ Not only did Katherine assume an increasingly active role in producing English vernacular propaganda, she also became a part of the successful Protestant tactic of using the printed page as a weapon of popular propaganda.¹⁵⁷ Like those who urged her to marry the king wished, Katherine was now utilizing her elevation to queen to promote the spread of the new faith. Just as she became attracted to reform by those who surrounded, Parr also began to influence those closest to her, namely, Catherine Willoughby, to accept reformist teachings.

Catherine Willoughby, 1537-1545

Despite her husband's appointment of evangelical ministers to his household and her exposure to reformist teachings upon her arrival to court, Catherine Willoughby's closest friends and associates remained predominantly Catholic throughout the mid-1530s. Unlike Parr, who was so greatly traumatized by the Pilgrimage of Grace that she parted ways with the old faith, Willoughby's experience, although unpleasant, was not horrific enough for her to open her heart

¹⁵⁶ Mueller: 177.

¹⁵⁷ William A. Clebsch, *England's Earliest Protestants, 1520-1535* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 585.

to evangelicalism. In the years following the Lincolnshire Rising, however, the death of close Catholic influences slowly chipped away at Catherine's will to cling to the old faith. Instead of a sudden and violent event like Pilgrimage of Grace, the gradual loss of loved ones eventually caused Willoughby's acceptance of evangelicalism. Because it was a series of events which eliminated the conservative influences in her life, Catherine Willoughby's pursuit of a "higher level of spiritual maturation" progressed at a much slower pace than Katherine Parr's.¹⁵⁸ But as her Catholic support network eroded and her circle of friends came to include more reformers, Catherine Willoughby slowly transformed into an advocate for reform.

Unlike Katherine Parr who did not experience a devout Catholic lifestyle until she married Lord Latimer, Catherine Willoughby was surrounded by conservative Catholic influences from an early age. Although her father, Mary Tudor, sister of the king, and Catherine of Aragon all passed away when Willoughby was still relatively young, some ardent supporters of the old faith, namely, Francis Stoner, continued to surround Catherine until the late 1530s. Stoner, a priest and one of the men Lord Willoughby entrusted to administer his daughter's inheritance, remained a close and loyal friend to the Willoughbys throughout Catherine's young adult life. Stoner aided Lady Willoughby in the management of her Lincolnshire estates and was such an efficient surveyor for the Willoughbys that he was threatened by unhappy tenants during the Lincolnshire Rising. Because her father died when she was so young, Stoner was a father figure to Catherine. Evidence of Stoner's affection for Catherine and Lady Willoughby can be found in his will where Stoner "left plate and money to his executrix the dowager lady, and to Duchess Catherine."¹⁵⁹ When Stoner passed away in 1537, Catherine lost not only a family friend, but also the man who was a constant father-figure since her birth. Catherine grieved over

¹⁵⁸ Macek, 75.

¹⁵⁹ Public Records Office: 11/26/8. Cited in Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 154.

Stoner's loss, but his death was just the first in a series to come which slowly eroded Willoughby's Catholic family and friends.

In 1539, Catherine lost the individual who had the most influence on her loyalty to Catholicism and to conservatives at court; her mother. Maria de Salinas's loyalty and devotion to Catherine of Aragon, even in the face of threats from the king, was an example to her daughter of how Catherine should conduct herself in the face of reformist pressures at court. Willoughby's friendship with Mary Tudor, Queen Catherine's daughter, was undoubtedly fostered by the close connection their mothers' shared and placed Catherine amongst the conservative Catholics at court in the mid-1530s. Throughout her childhood her mother's time was spent away from her daughter to serve the queen, but time lost between mother and daughter was made up when Salinas came to live with her daughter and son-in-law following Catherine's marriage to Charles Brandon. Now Catherine's time was not only spent with conservatives at court, but also with her conservative mother at home. Because she often found excuses to leave court where large groups of evangelicals gathered, Catherine spent a good majority of the early years of her marriage in daily contact with her mother whose opinion she valued above all others. But with her mother's death in 1539, Catherine's role-model, whose unyielding loyalty to Catherine of Aragon and to the old faith strengthened her daughter's determination to retain her Catholic roots, was gone.

After her mother's death, Willoughby grew closer to her husband, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. Because Maria de Salinas trusted and held Brandon in high opinion while she was alive, Catherine Willoughby also willingly trusted her husband. While Katherine Parr felt she could not rely on her husband after he failed to protect her during the Pilgrimage of Grace, Willoughby's trust in Brandon led her to rely heavily on him following her mother's death. After the loss of close Catholic family and friends, Brandon became the most important and influential

person in Catherine's life. As a result of growing closer to her husband, Catherine's loyalties at court slowly began to shift away from conservative Catholics and towards those with whom Brandon associated.

Even though Brandon's actions in the early 1530s indicate that his sympathies were with Catherine of Aragon and the conservative Catholics at court, Brandon placed more importance on his political reputation rather than his faith. The Duke's role in putting down the 1536 rebellion garnered praise from the king but also demonstrated to others that loyalty to the king was Brandon's main priority. Previous to the Lincolnshire Rising, Brandon's religious leanings indicated neither a preference for conservatism or for evangelicalism. Because Brandon's religious beliefs were ambiguous to those around him and quite possibly were unclear even to himself, Franklin-Harkrider argues that it was Brandon's allegiance to Henry, not any evangelical zeal which determined his role in the rebellion.¹⁶⁰ Brandon's decision to support the crown's religious policies throughout the Lincolnshire Rising resulted in honors which ensured that Brandon remained close to the crown and continued to support its interests. In 1537 Brandon was present at the christening of Prince Edward and his daughter, Frances, led the ladies of honor at Queen Jane's funeral.¹⁶¹ Additionally, Brandon accepted the position of the great mastership in 1539. Formerly called the lord stewardship of the royal household, the position of great master gave Brandon precedence over others such as the lord chamberlain.¹⁶² As he became even closer to the king, Brandon's allegiances at court shifted towards those who were also willing to support the King's policies no matter what. Just as her mother's priority of devotion to Catherine of Aragon influenced Willoughby to form a relationship with conservatives at court, so too did

¹⁶⁰ Franklin-Harkrider, 38.

¹⁶¹ Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 177

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 179.

Brandon's devotion to the king influence Catherine to grow closer to her husband's allies at court.

Friend and Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Katherine Parr

Brandon realized the political importance of remaining close to those rising in prominence at court and therefore fostered friendships with the Dudley, Seymour, and Parr families. According to Franklin-Harkrider, Brandon regularly visited Beauchamp Place, home of the Seymours and became so close with the family that he acted as godfather for Edward Seymour's son.¹⁶³ Brandon, John Dudley, William Parr, and Edward Seymour campaigned together against France and Scotland in the 1540s, further strengthening Charles's ties to these evangelical families.¹⁶⁴ As Brandon grew closer to these families, Catherine also developed friendships with the women of these reformist families, namely, Katherine Parr.

Her husband's connections increasingly exposed Willoughby to evangelical individuals prior to 1543, but her appointment to Parr's household was undoubtedly the catalyst in Willoughby becoming enveloped in an evangelical social circle and environment. As a member of the Queen's household, Willoughby was expected to attend sermons on a daily basis in which evangelical beliefs, such as the authority of scripture and the evils of the Catholic Church, were emphasized by the preachers. Discussion of religious ideas was also an integral part of Willoughby's daily life in the Queen's service. Parr ordered *Prayers or Meditations*, the work in which she included Lutheran teachings on salvation, to be distributed to the women in her household so that it may be used as a focus for vigorous debate on controversial theological issues such as sin and salvation.¹⁶⁵ As a lady-in-waiting to Katherine Parr, Catherine Willoughby was constantly exposed to evangelical teachings and all of her time was spent with those who

¹⁶³ Franklin-Harkrider, 47.

¹⁶⁴ Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 188.

¹⁶⁵ Franklin-Harkrider, 49.

advocated reform. Eventually, the evangelical women in Parr's household replaced the Catholic support network Catherine had lost and helped foster the Duchess's growing attraction to the new faith.

When she came into Katherine Parr's service in the summer of 1543, Catherine Willoughby was acquainted with, but not a close friend of the members of the Seymours' reformist circle.¹⁶⁶ But following her appointment to the Queen's household, Catherine came in constant contact with the evangelical women of Parr's household which included Lady Joan Denny, Jane Dudley, Lady Lisle, and Anne Seymour, countess of Hertford and later Duchess of Somerset. By the spring of 1544 Willoughby was frequently exchanging letters with Anne Seymour, visiting the Seymour family, and even sent a horse as a gift to Anne's husband, Edward, in 1544. In 1545, Catherine served as godmother to John and Jane Dudley's daughter and also hosted a reception for the christening at her London home, Suffolk Place.¹⁶⁷ Willoughby's fellow ladies-in-waiting were advocates for promoting evangelical causes, and according to James, "the glue that bound together this inner circle around the queen was a combination of blood ties, self-advancement, an interest in scholarly pursuits and a missionary zeal to define and disseminate the tenets of the new religion."¹⁶⁸

During her time as a lady-in-waiting Willoughby started to display openly an attitude which suggested she had cut her ties to Catholicism all together. Her behavior towards conservative Catholics at court, especially towards her godfather, Bishop Gardiner, became less than congenial. Besides the deterioration of her relationship with conservatives at court, it was obvious from her choice of literature that the religious debates and preaching the Duchess

¹⁶⁶ Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 198.

¹⁶⁷ Longleat House, Seymour Papers IV f. 66; BL Harleian MS 283 f. 175; LP vol. 19, pt. 2, 688 and vol. 20, pt. 2, 899, 900. Cited in Franklin-Harkrider, 49.

¹⁶⁸ James, 156.

experienced in Parr's household had helped move Catherine's interests away from Catholic doctrine and towards evangelical texts. By 1546, she had acquired a copy of William Tyndale's *New Testament*, and her library included other 'naughty books' on evangelical topics.¹⁶⁹ If her disrespect towards conservative individuals and purchase of controversial texts was not enough evidence that Willoughby's religious leanings had obviously shifted towards reform, the invitation of prominent evangelical preachers into her home most certainly conveyed that she was now a supporter of the new faith.

Before the end of the 1540s, Catherine Willoughby lost another loved one who played a prominent role in shaping the Duchess's religious beliefs; her husband, Charles Brandon. Although his connections at court and the evangelical ministers he appointed to his household provided Willoughby with her first contact with evangelical teachings, Brandon himself was never fully committed to evangelicalism. Brandon's chaplains included reformers such as Alexander Seton and John Parkhurst, but conservative beliefs were also represented among his chaplains by men such as Alfonso de Salinas who went on to become a prebendary of Westminster in the reign of Mary I.¹⁷⁰ Brandon's request for dirges from his chaplains and the priests at Tattershall College in his will reveal that like Henry, the duke still preferred certain traditional practices and by Gunn argues he was attached to what Brandon called the "aunciaunt and laudable custome of the church of England."¹⁷¹

In the wake of her husband's death, Catherine's actions further clarified to those around her that she was now a supporter of reform. In August 1545, Catherine reorganized her household and elevated evangelicals to her circle of advisors. As a wealthy heiress, Willoughby

¹⁶⁹ For Willoughby's library, see 'Goods and Chattells of Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk'. NRO Savile Family Papers DD SR 215/62. This list mentions Willoughby's ownership of a chest of evangelical works, but does not specify their titles. For more on this topic see Franklin-Harkrider, 49.

¹⁷⁰ Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 200.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

was able to purchase the wardship and marriage of her eldest son Henry Brandon and as observed by Franklin-Harkrider, six of the seven men who stood surety for her payment were among the most prominent evangelicals at court: Sir John Gates, Sir Philip Hoby, George Owen, the king's physician, Sir Ralph Sadler, William Herbert, and Sir Anthony Denny.¹⁷² Though her husband was not a conservative Catholic, his death freed her to include in her household those who shared her evangelical views, and also allowed the Duchess to adopt more radical religious views without the fearing that her decisions might affect her husband's political career.

Since Catherine Willoughby grew up with such a strong Catholic support network and Katherine Parr grew up with no such thing, Parr's conversion to evangelicalism was a rapid one brought about by the opening of her mind to new beliefs thanks to the terror she experienced during the Pilgrimage of Grace. On the other hand, the elimination of Willoughby's conservative loved ones was necessary for her to allow herself to be attracted to the evangelical teachings which surrounded her in her early days at court. As each death of a loved one severed Willoughby's ties to the old faith, her heart was slowly opened to the doctrines of the new faith. Despite the different rates at which Parr and Willoughby converted to evangelicalism, by 1546 they were both recognized by contemporaries as women "well affected" to the evangelical cause and described as "great professors and patronesses of true religion."¹⁷³ Unfortunately, as recognized patronesses of the new faith, both women would soon fall victim to attacks from the conservative faction in their attempt to eradicate religious reformers at court.

¹⁷² Franklin-Harkrider, 51.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 40.

CHAPTER 4

“CHERISHING A SERPENT IN HIS BOSOM”

Just as Catherine Willoughby and Katherine Parr’s contemporaries began to recognize them as ardent supporters of reform, trouble began brewing on the horizon for those who advocated the new faith. For evangelicals who argued that opposition to vernacular Bibles implied support for Rome, the King’s Book, which prohibited poorer men and all but the richest women from reading scripture and was implemented in 1543, was a devastating blow to the evangelical cause. The success of the *Six Articles of Faith, The Necessary Doctrine and Erudication of a Christian Man*, and the fact that the Episcopal bench continued to be dominated by conservatives seemed to indicate that Henry was adamantly opposed to radical evangelicalism in the Church of England.¹⁷⁴ Like the conservatives, the king feared that Bible reading had led to a resurgence of heresy and the crown’s relapse into traditional ecclesiastical policies gave enemies of evangelicalism hope that an attack on powerful evangelicals at court would be accepted, and possibly even supported by Henry.

Comforted by the fact that the king had taken a step back towards conservative doctrine in the early 1540s, conservatives such as the Duke of Norfolk and Stephen Gardiner were mistakenly convinced that Henry would no longer protect prominent evangelicals. Although Henry had no intention of letting radical evangelicals dominate the Church of England, he also had no intention of letting the traditionalist faction grow too powerful.¹⁷⁵ Historian David Loades argues that the inconsistencies of religious policy which emerged in Henry’s later reign were “less the result of a fluctuating factional conflict than of the genuine doubts and uncertainties in

¹⁷⁴ James, 255.

¹⁷⁵ Shagan, 198.

Henry's own mind."¹⁷⁶ Whether it was a factional conflict or Henry's internal religious conflict, the king's actions made it unclear how far he wanted to take his conservative religious program.

A prime example of courtiers misjudging the king's intentions regarding the furthering of conservative power is the attempted overthrow of Archbishop Cranmer. Considered the most powerful leader of religious reform, Cranmer's enemies planned an ecclesiastical coup d'état to remove Cranmer and his clients and burn them at the stake in April 1543.¹⁷⁷ In what became known as the Prebendaries' Plot, Stephen Gardiner organized prominent Catholics to gather evidence of Cranmer's heresy. After doing nothing for months with the evidence put before him, Henry confronted Cranmer in July with the allegations made against the Archbishop and told Cranmer to investigate the charges himself.¹⁷⁸ Afterwards, the council surprisingly still believed that if they arrested the Cranmer on their own authority, the evidence presented would be enough to change the king's mind once Cranmer was in custody. This situation was similar to Cromwell's arrest three years earlier, but as Loades explains, the king's opinion of Cromwell and Cranmer at the time of their respective arrests was quite different. Whereas Cromwell had fallen out of Henry's favor before his arrest, Cranmer had just been saved from the Prebendaries' Plot by the king earlier in the year.¹⁷⁹ Hearing of the impending arrest in November, Henry gave the Archbishop a signet ring as a sign of his support and allowed Cranmer to appeal to him directly rather than to the council. Soon after, Cranmer's persecutors begged Henry for forgiveness for their role in the investigation. Cranmer emerged from the attacks against him confident that he had the king's confidence and soon after published *Litany with Suffrages to be said or sung*, a vernacular handbook for public worship. Following Henry's support of Cranmer and approval of

¹⁷⁶ David Loades, *Intrigue and Treason: The Tudor court, 1547-1558* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), 10.

¹⁷⁷ Shagan, 198.

¹⁷⁸ Loades, 13.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

the Archbishop's inherently evangelical handbook, conservatives became concerned that reformers would soon dominate court politics.

Inconsistent in his favors towards conservative and evangelical causes, conservatives became worried that Henry would put power in the hands of radical reformers by designating a reformer as protector or regent for his son, Edward. Insistent that something be done to ensure that power passed to conservatives following Henry's death, a plan soon emerged to expose the heresy of the court evangelicals and lead Henry to believe that only his conservative councilors could be trusted. Led by the duke of Norfolk and Bishop Gardiner, conservatives began plotting the downfall of another individual who if exposed as a heretic, would cause the king great distress; Queen Katherine Parr.

The Queen's Beliefs, 1545-1547

In addition to her patronage and her publication of increasingly evangelical works, the development of Katherine Parr's religious beliefs in the later part of Henry's reign marked her as an easy target for conservatives. Before 1543, Katherine expressed attachment to the sixteenth-century Christian tendency known as 'Erasminianism' which emphasized unity through an adherence to the traditional structure of Latin doctrine.¹⁸⁰ But throughout her queenship, Katherine increasingly found herself attracted to more radical ideas of reform attributed to Lutheranism. In addition to the Lutheran undertones of *Prayers or Meditations* and her July 31, 1544 letter to Henry, the queen began incorporating Calvinistic aspects into her writings. In 1544, Nicholas Udall translated Italian Calvinist Bernardino Ochino's attack on the papacy, *Tragoedia de Papatu*, for the Queen and when writing of England's campaign against France,

¹⁸⁰ William P. Haugaard, "Katherine Parr: The Religious Convictions of a Renaissance Queen," *Renaissance Quarterly* (1969): 349.

Katherine often invoked imagery popular among Calvinists.¹⁸¹ John Calvin used war as a metaphor for the struggles of obtaining a reformed Christian Church with the Goliath of Rome and within her prayer “Praier for men to saie enter yng into battayle”, Katherine describes England as “being but a little one, unarmed and unexpert in feats of war but, armed with courage and strength by God, going forth with his sling to set upon and overthrow the great huge Goliath.”¹⁸² James argues that the most radical aspects of this prayer were in its “very creation and publication. These demonstrate a startling and unprecedented public display on the part of the queen.”¹⁸³ With such a public display of subtle Calvinistic and Lutheran leanings and an obvious passion for patronage of vernacular works, Katherine attracted the attention of the conservatives determined to bring down reformers.

“A doctor... to instruct us”

Throughout 1546, Norfolk and Gardiner devised a plan to expose the supposed heresy of Queen Katherine and members of her household. In the spring of 1546, prosecutions for heresy increased and rumors circulated that the queen was Gardiner and Norfolk’s next victim. Reacting to the tensions and rumors, Katherine gathered a group of loyal friends and fellow reformers to be by her side, including her uncle, Sir William Parr of Horton, Anne Stanhope, Lady Denny and Catherine Willoughby. In the following months, all of these women were mentioned as possible heretics and along with the queen, became targets of the conservative party’s attack against prominent evangelicals.

In the years leading up to her near arrest in 1546, Katherine’s success as regent and freedom to discuss religious issues with her husband lulled the Queen into a sense of overconfidence in how far she could push the king’s religious boundaries. Throughout her

¹⁸¹ James, 207.

¹⁸² Parr, 419. James, 209.

¹⁸³ James, 210.

husband's 1544 campaign in France, Katherine proved to be an efficient and successful regent. While Catherine of Aragon, the only other wife of Henry ever appointed regent, wrote letters full of worry for Henry's health and lack of underwear, Parr's correspondence showed concern for the availability of money, transport, and supplies for the king's campaign.¹⁸⁴ The Queen's actions as regent earned her praise and comparison to Penelope, Odysseus's faithful regent who successfully ruled her husband's estates during the Trojan War. Although her regency made her more comfortable in her role as queen, Katherine's time as regent also made her too comfortable in discussing religious topics, sometimes controversial ones, with her unpredictable husband. In her letters to the king during his campaign, Katherine implied belief in Lutheran doctrines concerning salvation and Henry failed to rebuke her. Lack of punishment from her husband for supporting such radical beliefs led to Katherine's habit of often discussing religion with Henry. By the summer of 1546, conversations between the king and queen concerning religion coincided with a decline in not only Henry's health but also a conservative plot to rid the court of prominent evangelicals.

By January, 1546 Henry's health was declining as was his ability to tolerate his wife chiding him on religious topics. James argues that "it was not Katherine's pre-occupation with religious matters that was at fault, but her lack of sensitivity to the time and place and particularly to her husband's moods" which soon led to trouble for the queen.¹⁸⁵ Katherine's decision to argue with Henry on religious topics was ill-timed not only because of the king's poor health, but also because of the political alliance the king was pursuing with Charles V. England's religious practices such as Cranmer and the queen's support of changes to the liturgy, opposition to religious images, and hostility towards genuflection before the cross would not

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 168.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 256.

please the Catholic Charles V and thus made Katherine's religious arguments even more exasperating to Henry.¹⁸⁶

In early 1546, at a time when the king felt particularly ill, Katherine engaged in an argument over religion with Henry which nearly resulted in disaster for the queen and those closest to her. After Katherine left the room, the king irritably exclaimed, "a good hearing it is when women become such clerks, and a thing much to my comfort, to come in mine old days to be taught by my wife!"¹⁸⁷ Overhearing the king, Gardiner interpreted Henry's remarks as the opportunity the conservatives were waiting for; the king was finally tiring of his wife and now was the time to bring about her downfall.

As Gardiner and his colleagues embarked on a slander campaign against the queen in the winter of 1546, Katherine began to take precautions to protect herself from the conservative threat. As well as calling her closest friends to be by her side, there is evidence in her chamber records that in mid-February, Katherine ordered new coffers for her chamber with new locks and metal hinges.¹⁸⁸ Parr was later accused of possessing forbidden books, and these new coffers were possibly purchased to hide the prohibited items from Gardiner's spies. In 1544, the queen personally intervened for Edward Cobbe, a publisher accused of printing heretical books and Katherine was sure her protection of Cobbe would be remembered by Gardiner and his colleagues. In May, when the council began to enquire about the illegal import of heretical books and to prosecute those in possession of such works, Katherine took further precautions and had her uncle smuggle her collection of books out of the palace.¹⁸⁹ As the spring of 1546 progressed,

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 266.

¹⁸⁷ Foxe, 1462.

¹⁸⁸ Public Records Office: E314/22, f. 44. Cited in James, 265.

¹⁸⁹ James, 268.

not only were the books Katherine possessed under attack from the council, but also the people she cared for.

Besides persecution for possession of heretical books, the investigation of supposed heretics at court soon focused on those close to Katherine and caused the queen even more unease. In May, a series of arrests of outspoken reformers ensued. Lord Thomas Howard was charged with “disputing indiscreetly of Scripture with other young gentlemen of the court” and clemency was offered if he “would confess what he said in disproof of sermons preached in Court last Lent and his other talk in the Queen’s chamber and elsewhere in Court concerning Scripture.”¹⁹⁰ It is significant that the Queen’s chamber was mentioned in Howard’s interrogation and the subsequent interrogations of others associated with Katherine all indicated that Parr was the intended target for Gardiner’s campaign against reformers. Richard Worley, a yeoman of the queen’s chamber, Dr. William Huicke, a family member of the queen’s physician, and Johan Bette, family member of the queen’s courier, Richard Bette, were all called in for questioning. Even though Huicke was charged “for erroneous opinions” and Johan Bette was condemned to death for violation of the *Six Articles*, none of these interrogations provided strong enough evidence for Gardiner to present an argument before the king concerning Katherine’s heresy.¹⁹¹ But with the arrest of Anne Askew, charged with preaching heretical beliefs on June 13, Gardiner thought he finally possessed the tool he needed to bring about Katherine’s demise.

Torture and Execution of Anne Askew

A self-proclaimed religious prophet from Lincolnshire, Anne Askew was arrested for preaching sacramenterianism, the belief that Christ’s presence in the Eucharist was symbolic and not physical, a view considered heretical even by English moderates. Askew was previously

¹⁹⁰ Acts of the Privy Council: I, 1542-1547, p. 400. Cited in James, 266.

¹⁹¹ Letters and Papers, 21, I, no.845. Cited in James, 269.

arrested in 1545 for heresy, but when no witnesses testified against her, she was released.

Following Askew's arrest in 1546, Gardiner became interested in her case when it became clear that Anne was a friend of many of the women in Parr's circle. While in prison, Askew received money from Anne Stanhope and Lady Denny and according to Askew's nephew, she often wrote to Parr in an attempt "to enter into discourse with the principal of the land, namely with Queen Katherine Parr herself."¹⁹² Additionally, Catholic author Robert Parsons alleged that Catherine Willoughby arranged interviews between Anne Askew and Katherine Parr where Askew distributed prohibited writings.¹⁹³ Gardiner hoped that an intense interrogation of Askew would finally provide him with enough evidence to incriminate the queen and her circle.

Askew was put on the rack and tortured in an attempt to draw out a confession which would confirm Gardiner's suspicions that "the queen, Katherine Parr, was an articulate, convinced Protestant, sheltering many other convinced Protestants beneath her skirts."¹⁹⁴ Repeatedly tortured, Gardiner pressed Askew to name Stanhope, Lady Denny, and Willoughby as her patrons and fellow heretics. Askew recorded her interrogations in *Examinations* and John Bale published the work in Germany in 1546. Askew recalled that Willoughby's name was mentioned in her in her interrogation:

then came master Rich and one of the council, charging me, upon my obedience, to shew unto them if I knew man or woman of my sect. My answer was that I knew none. Then they asked me of my lady of Suffolk [Catherine Willoughby], my lady of Sussex, my lady of Herford, my lady Denny, and my lady Fitzwilliam. I said, that I should pronounce anything against them, I were not able to prove it.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² James, 271.

¹⁹³ Franklin-Harkrider, 50.

¹⁹⁴ Paul F.M. Zahl, *Five Women of the English Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 34.

¹⁹⁵ John Bale, *Select Works of Bishop Bale*, edited for the Parker Society by the Rev. Henry Christmas, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1849), 220.

By the time of Askew's torture, Willoughby's religious beliefs and those of her fellow ladies-in-waiting were decidedly evangelical if not bordering on Lutheran and Calvinistic tendencies like those of their mistress. It is doubtful that Gardiner ever dreamed he would ever pursue the arrest of his own goddaughter who so adamantly clung to her Catholic upbringing and conservative friends in the face of rising evangelical power in the 1530s. But the fact that Willoughby's actions and associations marked her as a prime candidate for possible charges of heresy is a testament to how much her religious leanings had transformed by the mid-1540s.

Katherine Parr's Near Arrest: July, 1546

Although Anne Askew refused to incriminate the Queen and her ladies-in-waiting, Gardiner was determined to expose Katherine's supposed heresy; a determination which eventually backfired upon the Bishop. When Henry's health and patience once again deteriorated in July, Gardiner decided to reveal to the king that:

he, with others of his faithful councilors, could within short time disclose such treasons, cloaked with this cloak of heresy, that his Majesty should easily perceive how perilous a matter it is to cherish a Serpent within his own bosom.¹⁹⁶

Upon hearing this, Henry gave Gardiner the impression that if he were able present concrete charges against the Queen, he would listen to the Bishop's case. A few days before the Queen's planned arrest, Katherine somehow gained possession of a sheet of paper containing the accusations against her. Immediately taking action, Katherine ordered her ladies to destroy any books they may still be hiding and then visited the king in an attempt to gauge Henry's current mood. In Henry's presence, Katherine passionately spoke of a wife's duty to submit to her husband and that all of her opinions were inferior to the superior wisdom of her lord.¹⁹⁷ Henry's reply, "you are become a doctor, Kate, to instruct us, and to be instructed or directed by us", did

¹⁹⁶ Foxe, 1462.

¹⁹⁷ James, 278.

little to comfort Parr.¹⁹⁸ Katherine immediately explained that if she had ever argued with the king or seemed to oppose him, it was meant to take his mind off of his pain.¹⁹⁹ This response pleased Henry who replied, “and is it even so sweet heart? Then, perfect friends we are now again, as ever any time heretofore.”²⁰⁰ With her quick thinking and clever words, Katherine Parr saved herself and her ladies-in-waiting from charges of heresy and possible execution.

The king’s actions following his reconciliation with the queen continued to confuse and frustrate his councilors. The king’s unhappiness with the conservatives following their failed plot resulted in the king publicly humiliating the conservative leaders on the day of the Queen’s arrest. Henry deliberately did not inform Norfolk and Lord Wriothesley of his reconciliation with the queen and when they came to arrest Katherine, Henry demanded how dare they fill his mind with malicious lies and deceit. Norfolk and Wriothesley retreated from the king’s presence puzzled by what had just taken place since only days before it seemed they had Henry’s support. Gardiner would have never carried his plans against the Queen and her circle as far as he did if he did not believe he was in line with the king’s policies. David Loades argues that the conservatives and reformers confidently pursued their goals at the same time not because they “had agendas of their own, but their importance was due to the fact that they reflected different aspects of the king’s personality.”²⁰¹ Henry’s moodiness and flip-flop of support between conservative and reformist doctrine influenced both parties to pursue their goals when the king’s ever-changing favor swung in their direction. Unfortunately for the conservatives, underestimating Katherine Parr’s knowledge of how to win her husband over and their poor judgment of the extent of the king’s unhappiness with his wife resulted in their own self-destruction.

¹⁹⁸ Foxe, 1462.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Loades, *Intrigue and Treason*, 16.

Although the king's actions implied uncertainty about how traditional he wanted the Church of England to be, James argues that the conservative's attack on Katherine resulted in their permanent fall from favor.²⁰² By November, John Dudley, Lord Lisle, husband of Katherine's persecuted lady-in-waiting, Jane Guildford, felt confident enough in his position to strike Gardiner in the face at a council meeting.²⁰³ In December, the Duke of Norfolk, Gardiner's fellow conservative, was arrested and only escaped execution when Henry died the day before the duke was to be executed. Upon the king's death in January 1547, the conservatives were struck their biggest blow to date when Henry hand-picked Anne Stanhope's husband, reformer Edward Seymour, to lead the regency council for his nine-year old heir. Under the guidance of this reformist dominated council, Edward VI's reign saw England shift further towards Protestantism than ever before with the repeal of the *Six Articles of Faith*, the legalizing of clerical marriage, and the abolition of the Mass by Cranmer's revised *Book of Common Prayer*.

Although the reformers were triumphant and Katherine Parr and Catherine Willoughby were never accused of heresy in the summer of 1546, the fact that they were even suspected of heresy is testimony to how far their religious beliefs had shifted from the old faith. Especially in the case of Catherine Willoughby, who moved in conservative circles and clung to Catholicism throughout the 1530s, it would have been laughable to those who knew her in her early days at court to predict she could become a possible candidate for the stake. Although their beliefs nearly resulted in their arrest and possible demise in the summer of 1546, the ascension of Edward VI in 1547 was a breath of fresh air to evangelicals who for so long carefully tried to express their faith within the tenets of the Henrican church. Now living under a monarch who

²⁰² James, 279.

²⁰³ Ibid., 279.

advocated for radical reform of the Church of England, Parr and Willoughby flourished as godly patronesses of the new faith.

EPILOGUE

The ascension of Edward VI and the radical reforms of his reign allowed Willoughby and Parr a freedom to express their religious beliefs which they had never enjoyed before 1547. Both women continually sought to further the new learning and to study the Scripture in detail. Although Parr traveled uncomfortably along the road of orthodoxy for most of her early life and Willoughby clung to her Catholic roots well after evangelicals gained power at court, neither woman ever returned to the Catholic fold. Even after their near arrest in 1546 Parr and Willoughby firmly remained devoted to reform. Throwing off the shackles of fear which restrained them from fully expressing their religious beliefs in the reign of Henry VIII, Willoughby and Parr stepped fully into the spotlight as prominent reformers in the reign of Edward VI and willingly expressed their beliefs until the end of their lives.

Although she did not live long following Henry's death, Katherine Parr made a final contribution to reformist literature before her death in 1548. In 1547, Katherine Parr laments her own sins, gives advice on proper religious practices, and openly proclaims her reformed faith in her last published work, *Lamentations of a Sinner*. Although it was written during Henry's reign, *Lamentations* was kept a secret due to the presence of passages which would have enraged the king, such as the proclamation of the impotency of worldly princes, the worthlessness of human law and the willingness of evil men to subvert and manipulate law to obtain their selfish goals. Additionally, within *Lamentations*, Katherine officially breaks from Erasmian Christianity and publicly embraces the Lutheran doctrine on predestination and the kingdom of God's elect as well as condemning sins such as pride, love of riches and honor, ignorance, superstition, and

denounces false ministers of God's word.²⁰⁴ A clear testament to Katherine's reformed faith is found in the passage of *Lamentations* which states:

Therefore, inwardly to behold Christ crucified upon the cross, is the best and godliest meditation that can be. We may see also in Christ crucified, the beauty of the soul, better than in all the books of the world...St. Paul saith, we be justified by the faith in Christ, and not by the deeds of the law...This dignity of faith is no derogation to good works, for out of this faith springeth all good works.²⁰⁵

Through *Lamentations*, Parr was finally able to express all of the insecurities she felt as a member of the old faith and rejoices in her new life as a woman who has thrown away the superstitions of the past and has embraced the new learning.

After Edward VI's accession in January 1547, Willoughby enthusiastically supported the government's attack on Catholic practices and made it clear her beliefs were no longer influenced by the conservative practices and individuals of her early life. Following 1547, Willoughby forged personal ties with a diverse group of reformers and supported ministers such as Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley and scholars such as Roger Ascham, John Cheke, and Thomas Wilson."²⁰⁶ The Duchess regarded Latimer and John Parkhurst as close friends and also played a hand in financing the publication of their sermons. Hugh Latimer recognized Willoughby's contribution to the promotion of reform and dedicated his work, *The First Sermon of Master Hugh Latimer...Before the King's Majesty* to her in 1549. Read states, "many whose thinking and writing and preaching were basic to the Protestant Reformation owed much to her generosity and religious zeal and to the stimulus of her eager mind."²⁰⁷

Willoughby also promoted the circulation of Bibles written in English and financed the education of new evangelical ministers to "spread the Gospel and instruct parishioners in

²⁰⁴ Mueller, *Complete Works of Katherine Parr*, 427.

²⁰⁵ Parr, 256-260.

²⁰⁶ Franklin-Harkrider, 63.

²⁰⁷ Read, 9

evangelical doctrine.”²⁰⁸ Willoughby ensured that many of these schools for evangelical ministers were founded in her home county of Lincolnshire, and as one reformer, John Olde, stated, “the growing Protestantism in Lincolnshire in 1547 was due to “the helping forwardness of that devout woman of God, the Duchess of Suffolk.”²⁰⁹ The ascension of Edward VI allowed Willoughby to express her fervid passion for reform and the freedom to use her wealth and connections at court to advance the reformist causes she believed in.

Just as the deaths of influential Catholics marked the beginning of Willoughby’s religious conversion, the deaths of family members in Willoughby’s later life marked the final stage in her religious evolution. In 1551, Willoughby lost both of her sons by Charles Brandon within an hour of each other after the outbreak of the sweating sickness.²¹⁰ A letter to Willoughby’s close friend, William Cecil, shortly following the incident provides evidence that Willoughby drew strength from her Evangelical faith to overcome the grief she experienced following her sons’ deaths. Willoughby wrote to Burghley:

I give God thanks, good Master Cecil, for all His benefits which it hath pleased him to heap upon me; and truly I take this last punishment not for the least of His benefits, inasmuch as I have never been so well taught by any other before to know His power, His love and mercy, mine own weakness and that wretched state without Him I should endure here. And to ascertain you that I have received great comfort in Him.²¹¹

Whereas the death of Catholic figures resulted in the decline of Willoughby’s allegiance to the Catholic Church, the death of her sons in 1551 strengthened her evangelical convictions and gave her hope in hard times.

Following the death of her sons, Willoughby made it obvious that her beliefs were firmly aligned with her fellow reformers when in 1552, Catherine asked Hugh Latimer to her home to

²⁰⁸ Franklin-Harkrider, 46.

²⁰⁹ Franklin-Harkrider, 75.

²¹⁰ Zahl, 78.

²¹¹ Cecil Papers. Hist. MMS Comm. *Cal. MSS, Hatfield House, 1883-1971*, Volume 22.

instruct her household on the nature of communion. Franklin-Harkrider argues that this request is significant because it is the clearest evidence of her Willoughby's rejection of transubstantiation, one of the most significant doctrines of Catholicism. After hearing Latimer preach on the nature of communion, Willoughby declared that the 'corporal eating' of Christ was a dangerous sacrilege and that she would live by spiritual nourishment alone.²¹² This declaration verified that the network she was immersed in due to her husband's connections at court had indeed influenced the Duchess and shifted her religious beliefs to be those of an Evangelical reformer.

Until her death in 1580, Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk remained an advocate for reform of the Church, even in the face of adversity. In 1552, the Duchess took Richard Bertie as her second husband. Bertie, a friend of Hugh Latimer and Willoughby's gentleman usher, held the same passion and fervor for religious reform as his new wife.²¹³ Upon the ascension of Mary I in 1553, Bertie was interrogated by Bishop Gardiner, who was unwilling to forgive Willoughby's taunting while he was in the Tower during the reign of Edward VI. Following his interrogation, Bertie fled to the continent with his new wife and their household. While in exile in Poland, Willoughby still made the effort to send alms to her friends, such as Latimer, who were locked in the Tower. Willoughby did not attempt to conceal her identity when sending the alms. Read credits this bold action to the fact that "her friends, the friends of what she believed in so completely, were in trouble, and she would do all she could to help them, no matter what the cost to herself."²¹⁴ Evidence of Willoughby's unyielding friendship can be seen in her letter to Cecil in November, 1549 when he found himself locked in the tower due to his close ties with the recently overthrown Lord Protector of England, the Duke of Somerset. Willoughby's letter stated that she was not "suffering from the common infection of feigned friendship...though the

²¹² Franklin-Harkrider, 5.

²¹³ Levin, 288.

²¹⁴ Read, 98.

place fail you to do me such pleasure and commodities as always I have found you most ready to do, yet I shall never fail you.”²¹⁵ Therefore, not only was the Duchess of Suffolk a strong advocate for reform, she was also a great ally to anyone else who supported the cause.

Throughout her exile, Catherine became even more deeply committed to reform and upon her return to England in 1559, she expressed her disappointment in the Elizabethan Settlement. Franklin-Harkrider argues that correspondence between Willoughby and her Protestant contacts on the continent suggest that the experience of exile “heightened men and women’s commitment to Reformed ideology.”²¹⁶ This heightened commitment instilled in her while in exile pushed Catherine to advocate for further reform in England and to express her annoyance concerning Elizabeth’s reservations about clerical marriage and continued use of ornaments and vestments. Willoughby expressed her frustration to her friend William Cecil urging him to remove all Catholic practices from England warning him that when men let “worldly devices” hinder their “hot zeal to set forth God’s true religion”, God’s judgment would be harsh.²¹⁷ Articulating her unhappiness with the Elizabethan Settlement until her death in 1580, Catherine’s complaints and letters to Cecil are further evidence of the extreme shift Catherine’s religious leanings had taken away from Catholicism and towards reform throughout her life.

Although their religious conversions progressed at much different rates and came about for dissimilar reasons, both Catherine Willoughby and Katherine Parr were prominent advocates for religious reform by the time of their respective deaths. For someone like Katherine Parr, whose family’s piety was basic for the times and in constant contact with reformers for the majority of her life, a traumatic event such as the Pilgrimage of Grace was the only catalyst needed to open her mind to reform. On the other hand, for Catherine Willoughby, whose

²¹⁵ Cecil Papers. Hist. MMS Comm. *Cal. MSS, Hatfield House, 1883-1971*, Volume 22.

²¹⁶ Franklin-Harkrider, 19.

²¹⁷ National Archives, SP 12/3/9. Cited in Franklin-Harkrider, 74.

family's loyalties and piety were deeply rooted in the old faith, the gradual elimination of Catholic influences, the position at court her marriage placed her in, and the people with whom she came in contact throughout her adult life served as influences in the Duchess's delayed transformation into one of the leading advocates for reform of the Church of England. Despite the differences in the origin of their new faith, the conversions of Catherine Willoughby and Katherine Parr were a direct result of the influence of those with whom they came in contact and the events which shook their confidence in the old faith. These contacts and events helped produce two individuals who, by the end of their lives, were considered some of the most prominent evangelical reformist women in sixteenth-century England.

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