**HM5403 Religion, Superstition, and Fear Portfolio**

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Early Protestant England was initially similar to the established Catholic Church with their belief in ghosts, however removed the Purgatory aspect in order to stand apart from the former Church. With ghost sightings and beliefs affecting the Protestant faith well into the 17th century. Therefore Archbishop Sandys’ claim that ‘the Gospel hath chased away spirits’ is fairly accurate in the sense of fundamental beliefs but not how it fully chased away these spirits.

For the introduction I will focus on post-Reformation attitudes of ghosts while comparing to pre-Reformation practices and beliefs. Like the Catholic beliefs in charms, rituals, and purgatory connecting this world and the next. Catholic sacraments with a strong visual representation of faith and salvation; spirituality and bodily ceremonies. With Mass for the dead an integral part of Medieval Christian worship pre-1540 along with the importance of burial position. Alongside the practice of the payment of indulgences which were marketed to have influence on your or your loved one’s afterlife and a way to “pay off” their sins to shorten time in Purgatory. These customs, traditions and practices have influenced the Reformed sect of Christianity and contemporary British culture, with ghosts in media and an influential part of society and Christianity.

Then focus on the ghosts or ‘walking spirits’ have influence in both Catholicism Pre-Reformation and in Protestantism post-Reformation. With early Reformed Church and Henry VIII’s connection to the Catholic Church in terms of beliefs which then carried over into this Reformed Church he formed. With the belief in ghosts carried through both sects of Christianity, with the Catholic belief that they come from Purgatory and are created due to a sudden or unpleasant death. Early Protestant reformists, as a way to remove themselves from the Catholic belief in Purgatory as a part of this new Reformed afterlife. However, ghost sightings persisted long after this new Reformed Church including all the way to the contemporary Church.

Then reinforce the belief in ghosts did carry through to centuries after the Reformation with the use in literature such as Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol.* And how a Protestant country and society did have its focus and belief on the ‘walking spirit’ just not so much at the beginning of the Reformed Church as a way to distinguish itself from the established Catholic Church. And bring in comparison of similarities and differences when worship shifted from Catholicism to Protestantism focusing on the idea of Ghosts.

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**‘The Gospel hath chased away walking spirits’. How accurate was Archbishop Sandys’ assessment of post-Reformation attitudes to ghosts? Answer using supporting primary evidence analysis. – 2000 words**

Belief in ghosts or “walking spirits” post-Reformation England differed from the established Catholic Church, especially in the early stages of Reformation in order to distinguish this new Reformed Church from the previous beliefs and practices. Archbishop Sandys’ assessment of post-Reformation attitudes to ghosts is accurate within the 16th century Reformed Church as these reformers ‘liked to pretend that the advent of true religion had effectively closed the book on ghosts’.[[1]](#footnote-1) The Catholic Church and its belief in wandering spirits vanishing was more of a ‘rhetorical and polemical trope in the campaign against Catholicism’[[2]](#footnote-2) than an empirical observations due to the ‘persistence of such experiences was recorded in pamphlets throughout the seventeenth century.’[[3]](#footnote-3)

Early Protestant England was initially similar to the established Catholic Church with their belief in ghosts, however removed the Purgatory aspect in order to stand apart from the former Church. With ghost sightings and beliefs affecting the Protestant faith well into the 17th century. With ghost sightings affecting both the established Catholic Church and this new, Reformed Protestant Church. Ghost stories such as those in Medieval England, ‘a ghost chooses to be laid on land belonging to the Priory rather than on that of the Abbey.’[[4]](#footnote-4) Placement of those who have passed away was significant in Catholic faith and showed the social statues of the dead. Alongside the way their bodies were actually placed within this network of graves. These practices could have been influenced by Medieval European religion, such as the Roman-British and Anglo-Saxon tradition of decapitation upon death ‘or laid face down, crushed under boulders, bound, or dismembered,’ in order to prevent the walking dead.[[5]](#footnote-5) Jacqueline Simpson claims that these ceremonies can be interpretated as a symbolic ritual of dishonouring the corpse to ‘prevent the dead from “walking”… and [those facing down] will only dig their way deeper into the ground.’[[6]](#footnote-6) With this tradition and belief being practiced across the centuries with English soldiers buried the ‘Germans face down gave the same explanation’.[[7]](#footnote-7) Suggesting that the English reformation did not chase away the belief of the “wandering spirit” as this practice believes that the corpse will rise alongside the spirit. The Byland Ghost stories, c.1400, follow a similar pattern of someone urging the ghost to explain its appearance, it replies with unforgiven sins which require absolution from the Masses and the local priest fulfils this request and ‘the ghost can rest.’[[8]](#footnote-8) These encounters were typical of pre-Reformation England with heavy influence of the Catholic belief in Purgatory and how this creates suffering of the spirits or souls which wonder the Earth in hopes for repentance and peace. Between 1066 and 1550, ghosts ‘appear in sermons or clerically sanctioned literature to put across the church’s teaching [of purgatory] or to serve the purpose of particular elements within the church.’[[9]](#footnote-9) Among Medieval Pre-Reformation ghost sightings and their answers ‘show how long it took the doctrine of Purgatory to become standardised.’[[10]](#footnote-10) The influence of the doctrine of Purgatory infiltrated all aspects of Pre-Reformation England with the belief in ghosts and in the soul carried over into Henry VIII’s new Reformed Church which developed and stayed a part of Christianity until centuries after the English Reformation of 1540.

The Reformed English Church’s beliefs on ghosts or “wandering spirits” and their ‘concern with the salvation and immortality of the soul seems to have mutated into a concern to ensure a metaphorical immortality in human memory.’[[11]](#footnote-11) Ghost sightings continued into early Protestant England, and ‘According to the Elizabethan Bishop of Lincoln, Thomas Cooper, the various agents of Antichrist had “bewitched the world, now these many years, by spirits, ghosts, goblins, and many vain apparition.’[[12]](#footnote-12) This shift in beliefs of souls or the wandering spirit remained close to the Catholic Church’s interpretation seen in literature in Tudor and Stuart England such as William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and more into the contemporary with Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. Literature throughout Protestant England reflect the remaining belief of “wandering spirits” described by Archbishop Sandys and how prevalent the relationship between the living and the dead remained after the Break from Rome in 1540. However, the move away from charms, Masses for the dead, indulgences and Purgatory suggest that English Reformers wanted to be set apart from the established Catholic Church. To appear completely separate from the former Church, with the ‘clash between clerical and secular views.’[[13]](#footnote-13) In order to be free of the strict control of Rome, with the ‘growing use of coffins in the 16th and 17th centuries, which also seems to evidence respect and value for the dead body.’[[14]](#footnote-14) Contrasting the medieval England practice of dismembering the body, with an increase in respectful burials with ‘Convent burial obviously ceased, but the importance of location, within and outside the church, remained.’[[15]](#footnote-15) Therefore, Archbishop Sandys’ claim that “the Gospel hath chased away spirits” is fairly accurate in the sense of fundamental beliefs but not how it fully chased away these spirits. As this Reformed English Church’s practice of funeral still held the person in mind and how they are respected will affect their afterlife. With an increase in circumstantial death contributing to the existence of “wandering spirits”. Although the gathering of clergy, neighbours, and kin around the deathbed ‘were no longer expected to “commend” the departed soul to its maker, not to offer prayers in order to speed its progress through a purgatory’ as the new Protestant Church declared that this practice was ‘a fond thing, vainly feigned, and grounded upon no warrant of scripture’.[[16]](#footnote-16) Shifting towards a scriptural-based religion and away from superstitious charms, Mass for the dead, and transubstantiation.

Protestant Reformists such as Ludwig Lavater claimed that “there were farre more of these kinds of apparitions and myracles seen amongst us, at such tyme as we were given unto blindnesse”[[17]](#footnote-17) Lavater’s statement can be interpreted to be a critique of Catholic traditions and beliefs in ghosts and miracles, the superstitiousness of Catholicism, and that this was a distraction from the true faith of Protestantism. As this statement suggests that at that time, they were blind to the true religion due to apparitions distracting them as they were ‘personal appearance by the devil or one of his minions.’ As for many Protestant reformers ‘visitations of ghosts were elaborate frauds perpetuated by popish priests’[[18]](#footnote-18) This suggests that Lavater believed Catholicism had blinded Christians from God’s light and focus on the wandering spirits with practices such as Mass for the Dead, therefore being deceived by the devil. Peter Marshall declared that ‘ghosts were not some accidental waste-product of the popish purgatory, but the foundation of the whole edifice.’[[19]](#footnote-19) Mass for the dead an significant part of Medieval Christian worship pre-1540 along with the importance of burial position. These Masses present the most significant difference in Catholic and Protestant worship, which could be seen as a rejection of “wandering spirits”, as Archbishop Sandys claims as at face value this Reformed Church and its practices are significantly different from the Catholic Church. With Protestantism not seemingly valuing the dead and the lack of Purgatory, with the focus more on personal faith rather than outward and extravagant faith with the clerical uniforms, alters and reed screens. This personal based faith focused on relationships with each other and with God, therefore a more respectable burial performed and actions over faith to avoid Hell without the existence of Purgatory to be cleansed in the afterlife. With Mass for the dead being a key part of Medieval Catholic worship pre-1540 along with the importance of burial position. Alongside the practice of the payment of indulgences which were marketed to have influence on your or your loved one’s afterlife and a way to “pay off” their sins to shorten time in Purgatory. These customs, traditions and practices have influenced the Reformed sect of Christianity and contemporary British culture, with ghosts in media and an influential part of society and Christianity. With the belief in ghosts carried through both sects of Christianity, with the Catholic belief that they come from Purgatory and are created due to a sudden or unpleasant death. Early Protestant reformists, as a way to remove themselves from the Catholic belief in Purgatory as a part of this new Reformed afterlife. However, ghost sightings persisted long after this new Reformed Church including all the way to the contemporary Church.

William Shakespeare’s plays often include an apparition throughout both the Tudor and the Stuart era, with plays such as *Hamlet* in c.1603. In Act I Scene V, the Ghost describes their fate to be a ‘sulphurous and tormenting flames. Must render up myself.’[[20]](#footnote-20) This reinforces the belief in Hell for both Catholic and Protestant sects and could also suggest the existence of Purgatory for Catholic audience members. Shakespeare’s ghost in Hamlet asks that they ‘lend thy serious hearing, To what I shall unfold.’ This seems to be a theme in post Reformation literature as these apparitions give warnings to the characters as a warning to the audience on how to live their lives without becoming a “wandering spirit” or damned to Hell. This play describes the Ghost as ‘doom’d’, ‘knotted and combined locks to part’, in ‘eternal blazon’ and to ‘revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.’[[21]](#footnote-21) These descriptions resonate with the ghost sightings of the 1600s to be as a warning and a call to help the spirit rest which resonates more with a Catholic view of the dead and the relationship between them and the living. The ghost being bound by ‘locks’ is reinforced in Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol,* with the ghostly character of Marley being wrapped in chains binding him to suitcases and chests representing his guilt. Both these characters act a warning to the main protagonist and to the audience as instructions on how to live a good Christian life with ties between the Catholic and Reformed Church.

Early Protestant England was initially similar to the established Catholic Church with their belief in ghosts, however removed the Purgatory aspect in order to stand apart from the former Church. With ghost sightings and beliefs affecting the Protestant faith well into the 17th century. Therefore, Archbishop Sandys’ claim that ‘the Gospel hath chased away spirits’ is fairly accurate in the sense of fundamental beliefs but not how it fully chased away these spirits. With the burial rituals and positions transferring across both the established Catholic and the Reformed Protestant sects of Christianity alongside the ghost sightings. These apparitions sending messages, asking for forgiveness, asking for a new burial plot, asking for revenge, or as a warning. All these things a ghost or apparition has asked for reflect the sect of Christianity in power at the time of its sighting. Demonstrating the mass influence both Catholicism and Protestantism had at the time from the Pope and his clergy to the Protestant reformers preachers and congregation. Following through to the contemporary with warning becoming more and more prevalent as the Reformed Christian Church is developed in England. With William Shakespeare’s Hamlet and Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol demonstrating the influence of the monarch and the religion they follow, the Church itself and the ability to mould the audiences beliefs, practices, rituals and almost allegiance with the Church. By demonstrating how someone can become a good Christian and what to do in order to achieve Heaven and eternal salvation. Therefore Archbishops Sandys’ claim that “The Gospel hath chased away walking spirits” is true to a certain extent. With the established, traditional view on these spirits seemingly having a more distinct connection between the living and the dead than that of a Protestant Church via indulgences, Masses for the dead and the way they buried them in order to not experience the living dead. In contrast with the Protestant Reformed Church’s relationship being as the ghosts as a warning and the increase in respectful burials in the 16th and 17th centuries with the increase use of coffins abandoning the idea to bury them facing down in order for them not to rise as the living dead.

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