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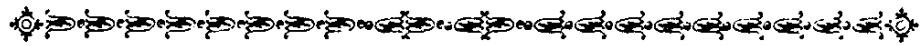
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POPULAR REACTIONS TO THE REFORMATION DURING THE YEARS OF UNCERTAINTY 1530–70

D. M. PALLISER

The Reformation provides perhaps the earliest instance in English history of conflicts over beliefs and attitudes in which ordinary people not only took sides in large numbers but also left those choices on record for posterity. Recent researches, especially at regional level, are beginning to show just how complex and fascinating those battles were. Gone is the commonplace assumption of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians that the battle was a simple one between 'Catholics' and 'Protestants', in which the 'True Church' was overthrown or revitalised according to one's prejudices; and gone too the assumption that almost everyone was passionately involved in the doctrinal issues at stake. There must have been many, lay and clerical, with the attitude of Vicar Aleyn of Bray, who kept his living from Henry VIII's reign to that of Elizabeth I. 'Being taxed by one for being a turncoat and an unconstant changeling, "Not so", said he, "for I always kept my principle, which is this, to live and die the vicar of Bray".'[1] Nevertheless, a Christian cosmological framework was accepted (outwardly at least) by almost everyone, despite the massive evidence for semi- or anti-Christian beliefs assembled by Keith Thomas and others. Given that framework, it is not surprising that the various ecclesiastical and doctrinal changes imposed by the Crown provoked strong feelings both of support and of opposition. Historians will always disagree how far the divisions reflected real doctrinal disagreement and how far they were provoked by the social, economic and political changes that were bound up with the successive church settlements; but the fact of a deeply divided country is incontrovertible.

If the 'official' Reformation may be taken for convenience to cover a series of statutes and other measures enacted between 1529 and 1559, the 'popular' Reformation has much vaguer chronological boundaries. But the period considered here is not an entirely arbitrary one. Before about 1530 small though influential groups of Lollards and Lutherans existed clandestinely in an overwhelmingly Catholic country, while after the 1570s a semi-reformed Church was accepted, willingly or

[1] T. Fuller, *The Worthies of England*, ed. J. Freeman (London, 1952) p. 23.

reluctantly, by the vast majority, and only small minorities openly dissociated themselves from it. Between those dates, however, 'the result was still unsettled and the theological positions not yet sharply and irrevocably defined; the disputants, in England at least, are neither integral Tridentines nor fully Protestant or Calvinist; they are indeed not wholly clear in their own minds where they stand, or whither the world is moving'.[2] The two generations unsure of themselves can be defined by their wills, many of which made provisions for religious rites 'if the law will suffer it'. Such bequests can be traced from 1529, immediately after the first statute affecting Catholic ritual, to at least 1572; by then the period of uncertainty was coming to an end.[3]

This chapter considers some of the evidence for the religious divisions of those years, as they are being revealed by recent researches. Older histories, in so far as they were concerned with religious dissent, concentrated heavily on those who became prominent by untypical means – martyrs, conspirators, refugees and rebels. It is now becoming possible, through research in local and diocesan records, to glimpse the opinions of much larger numbers of people, although many conclusions about the social, intellectual or geographical basis of religious disagreements must be very tentative. Much research remains to be done; and in view of the inarticulate nature of the 'silent majority' at all periods, dogmatic generalisations about popular attitudes will never be justified.

I

Since Lutheran books and ideas, and later Zwinglian, Anabaptist, Calvinist and other influences, entered England through London and the east-coast ports, it would be surprising if early Protestantism were not strongest in the south-east. A. G. Dickens has drawn attention to the importance of Lollard survival in the development of Protestantism, but the general pattern of early Protestantism can be explained largely in terms of accessibility to Continental influences. Areas receptive to the new ideas of the 1520s and 30s included London, East Anglia and Cambridge University, and (outside the south-east) districts centred on ports such as Hull and Bristol, which were, of course, in close touch by sea with the capital as well as with Europe. The bishop of Norwich said in 1530 that the gentry and commoners of his diocese were little affected by heresy, except for 'merchants and such as hath their abiding not far from the sea'. There was no geographical determinism in all this; in the south-east, Sussex and Hampshire remained almost unaffected, while Coventry and Yorkshire had their modest share of early Protestants. It may be significant, however, that one

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[2] D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, III (Cambridge 1959) p. 436.

[3] *Historical Manuscripts Commission* 12th Report, Appendix, part IX, p. 534; C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 220.

of the early Yorkshire heretics had brought back his ideas from contacts in Suffolk as a textile worker, just as the few early Lancashire Protestants can nearly all be shown to have travelled to areas of Protestant influence further south.[4]

Henry VIII's acquisition of control over the church in the 1530s provoked more opposition than was once believed. The royal supremacy was strongly resisted in both southern and northern Convocations and the Act in Restraint of Annates in the House of Lords. It is true that the abolition of papal supremacy provoked no open opposition in the country and that the fifty or so who may be called martyrs to the issue were drawn mostly from eight religious houses of strict observance. There may, however, be some truth in what apologists later said in Mary's reign, that many had consented to the new order only out of fear. G. R. Elton has drawn together evidence from many areas of men arguing in private about the supremacy and other issues and, since the evidence is only of those whose confidence was betrayed, such murmurings may have been even more widespread.

The attack on the religious houses touched more directly on everyday life, and one need not take a romantic view of them to see a close connection between their suppression and radical religious attitudes. As Latimer logically pointed out, 'The founding of monasteries argued purgatory to be, so the putting of them down argueth it not to be.' It is therefore not surprising that the first dissolutions in 1536 polarised opinion, and hostility to the suppressions can be taken as an indication of conservatism if not necessarily of articulate Catholicism. There may have been several such incidents as that in Exeter in 1537, where local women attacked the workmen suppressing St Nicholas's Priory. The strongest reaction to the dissolutions, however, occurred in the north.

The Pilgrimage of Grace has become an umbrella term for the five northern risings in the autumn and winter of 1536–7, but is more properly used of the main rising of October 1536, which was ostensibly a protest against royal policies and in defence of the Church; the rebels adopted the device of the five wounds of Christ as a banner. The rebellions were complex affairs, and some recent writers have emphasised social and economic grievances rather than religious motives and have suggested that the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire risings were instigated by discontented nobles, gentry and senior clergy rather than being, as was once thought, spontaneous mass protests. However, C. S. L. Davies has adduced weighty evidence that popular religious protest was a significant element; and J. J. Scarisbrick's judgement is that the Pilgrimage was an 'essentially religious' movement in 'the widest sense of that adjective'. Certainly contemporaries like John Hales and Robert Parkyn, on opposite sides of the religious fence, agreed that the cause had been the Crown's religious policies and the monastic suppressions. It is surely significant that at least

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[4] A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1964), p. 69; and *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York* (Oxford, 1959), p. 48; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp. 159–77.

sixteen of the fifty-five northern houses already suppressed were restored by the rebels.[5]

If this view is correct, how can the regional character of the revolt be explained? One of the Pilgrims' ballads exhorted the 'faithful people of the Boreal region' to overthrow the 'Southern heretics' and 'Southern Turks',[6] which must have made good recruiting propaganda, but there is no reason to think that a conservative north was facing a heretical south: the royal general, Norfolk, admitted that his own soldiers thought the Pilgrims' cause 'good and godly'. Without minimising the genuine religious zeal of some Pilgrims, one can agree with R. B. Smith and M. E. James that the crucial factor in the spread of the revolts was the attitude of the local nobles and gentry. For example, the central areas of the West Riding – dominated by the Percies and Lord Darcy – rebelled, whereas Hallamshire, the domain of the loyalist Earl of Shrewsbury, did not. Similarly the Earl of Derby was able to keep Lancashire quiet, though his authority did collapse north of the Ribble where the threatened monasteries were popular.

After the Pilgrims had been tricked into surrender, Henry encountered no more overt and widespread opposition to his religious policies, though G. R. Elton's evidence from the state papers shows that, in the later thirties at least, discontent from both right and left existed in all regions. The surrenders of the greater monasteries in 1537–40 passed off with the judicial murder of four abbots and one prior, and the Wakefield plot of 1541 was easily nipped in the bud. In the south-east significant numbers were keen to move in a Protestant direction, even after government policy became more conservative. Over 500 Londoners were indicted as hostile to the Act of Six Articles in 1539; at Chelmsford there is a picture of the people flocking to hear the newly installed Bible read out in the church; and a curious incident at Yarmouth in 1541 suggests that four leading merchants had already adopted radical 'sacramentarian' beliefs.[7] On the other hand, there is little sign of

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[5] For the Pilgrimage see M. H. and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536–37, and the Exeter Conspiracy, 1538*, 2 vols (London, 1915), a full narrative from a sympathetic standpoint. The social and economic interpretation was advanced by R. R. Reid, *The King's Council in the North* (London, 1921); see also A. G. Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, and 'Secular and Religious Motivation in the Pilgrimage of Grace', in *Studies in Church History*, IV, ed. G. J. Cuming (1967), pp. 39–64. Covert gentry leadership is cogently argued for in R. B. Smith, *Land and Politics in the England of Henry VIII* (Oxford, 1970), Chapter 5, and in M. James, 'Obedience and Dissent in Henrician England: The Lincolnshire Rebellion 1536', *P.&P.*, XLVIII (1970), pp. 3–78. A reassertion of the religous element is contained in C. Haigh, *Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace* (Manchester, 1969) *passim*; D. Palliser, *The Reformation in York 1534–1553* (Borthwick Paper, No. 40. 1971) pp. 7–12; and J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968), pp. 339–46.

[6] *Ballads from Manuscripts*, ed. F. J. Furnivall (Ballad Society, 1868–72), pp. 304–6.

[7] Dickens, *English Reformation*, pp. 190, 193; *Narratives of the Days of the Reformation*, ed. J. G. Nichols (Camden Society, LVIII, 1852), pp. 349–51; R. A. Houlbrooke, 'Persecution of

Protestantism before 1547 in Devon, Cornwall or Lancashire, though A. G. Dickens has found a number of heresy prosecutions in Yorkshire.

One of the most voluminous sources for information about religious attitudes, if not always the easiest to interpret, is that of wills, which survive for large numbers of Tudor Englishmen (and women). Counting the frequency of bequests for religious purposes can give a rough idea of the relative popularity of a particular practice. W. K. Jordan's researches have shown, for instance, a decline in endowed prayers for the dead by the 1530s in Hampshire and Buckinghamshire, and their tenacious maintenance in Somerset, Kent, Norfolk, Lancashire and Yorkshire. Not all wills have bequests suitable for such analysis, but one feature of almost all Tudor wills, on which interest has more recently focused, is the 'bequest' of the soul to God as a first clause. Many such bequests are in a simple form which reveals nothing of doctrinal belief, but some testators made clearly traditional bequests – associating Our Lady and All Saints with God – or firmly Protestant statements, expecting salvation through faith in Christ alone. From the later 1530s such bequests vary socially and regionally in sufficient numbers to be worth using as evidence of religious change. Unfortunately the problems raised by analyses of will formulae are also considerable.[8] The most obvious difficulty lies in differentiating between personal statements of faith and those suggested to the dying man by the writer of the will, often a parish priest or clerk; though even in those cases local variations in will formulae still reflect differences of belief.

Analyses of wills of the later years of Henry VIII are not numerous enough to reveal a clear pattern. Published samples of wills from London and the north for 1537–47 are not dissimilar: the proportion of testators omitting the traditional mention of Mary and the saints was twenty-four per cent among Londoners and twenty-two per cent in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. In a comprehensive count of York citizens' wills in the same period, however, the proportion was only four per cent. The difference between the county and city figures may be due partly to a bias of the county sample towards wills of gentry, who included several early Protestants, and partly to early Protestantism among the textile workers of the West Riding; but in any case A. G. Dickens has rightly warned against presenting such results in a 'spirit of statistical pedantry'. Firmer guides to the growth of Protestantism are perhaps the wills of those who made bequests in solefideian form before this became common and who were plainly making personal declarations of faith. Such a man was Alderman Monmouth of London, who had been in trouble for heresy in 1528 and who in his will (November 1537) trusted in his salvation solely through the merits of Christ's passion. As if to make his views crystal clear, he also

Heresy and Protestantism in the Diocese of Norwich under Henry VIII', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxxv (1973), p. 319.

[8] M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 320–44.

left money for thirty-one sermons supporting the royal supremacy. A Bristol merchant's widow also made a Protestant will in 1537, and two men of Halifax (Yorkshire) in 1538, while several parishioners of Thornbury (Gloucestershire) did so in the 1540s, apparently influenced by their parish priest. On the other hand, no such will was made by any York citizen until 1547, and of five Cambridgeshire villages only one shows such wills as early as the 1540s.[9]

With the removal of Henry VIII's heavy hand in 1547, a Protestant party could emerge into the open and begin, with government support, to take the initiative. Thomas Hancock, preaching in Poole, Dorset, in 1548, found keen supporters: 'they were the first that in that part of England were called Protestants'. One indicator of religious radicalism was the destruction of images and stained glass, which was widespread in London, Essex and Norwich from the beginning of Edward's reign. Less radical areas took no action until the general order for removal of images in February 1548, while very conservative communities like Oxford and York seem to have made only a token compliance even then. Unfortunately the most recent study of iconoclasm raises the question of regional variations without answering it, and much local research is needed before it can be assessed.[10]

A partial, although not entirely satisfactory, picture of the most conservative areas can be drawn from the extent of the rebellions in 1549. Protector Somerset wrote on 11 June that rebels had assembled 'in the most parts of the realm...and first seeking redress of enclosures, have in some places by seditious priests and other evil people set forth to seek restitution of the old bloody laws'. In fact one revolt, in Norfolk, had almost purely economic motives, but that in the west country was in the main a protest against the first Edwardian prayer book. It engulfed much of Devon and Cornwall, besides attracting sympathy in Somerset and Dorset. The rebels, marching like the Pilgrims of Grace behind a banner of the five wounds of Christ, issued fifteen demands including the restoration of 'our old service' in Latin and the execution of heretics, and including only one non-religious clause. No other Tudor rebels made such overwhelmingly religious demands and the hostile eye-witness Hooker admitted that 'the cause thereof...was only concerning religion'. The same summer saw a serious Catholic rising in Oxfordshire as well as a limited revolt in East Yorkshire against the suppression of chantries. The Venetian ambassador referred obscurely to other rebels in 'Arvaschier' (Warwickshire or Derbyshire?) demanding the restoration of Henry VIII's religious settlement, and it may be that

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 334–41; Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, pp. 171–2; Palliser, *Reformation in York*, pp. 19–21, 28, 32; K. G. Powell, 'Beginnings of Protestantism in Gloucestershire', *T.B.G.A.S.*, xc (1971), p. 144; J. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, I (1721), pp. 316–19 and Appendix, pp. 249–52.

[10] J. Phillips, *The Reformation of Images: The Destruction of Art in England, 1535–1660* (Los Angeles, 1973), pp. 8, 187.

other local revolts have yet to be identified; one contemporary spoke of 'many more shires' rebelling in July 1549 'for maintenance of Christ's church'. The rebel areas were not solidly Catholic, as will be seen, and other areas which did not take the extreme step of rebellion were just as conservative as the west country. A Privy Councillor admitted that same year that 'the old religion is forbidden by a law, and the use of the new is not yet printed in the stomachs of eleven of twelve parts in the realm'.

There is abundant evidence of the strength of conservatism in Hampshire, Sussex and the Welsh marches in Edward's reign and well into that of Elizabeth. The north also remained generally conservative, despite pockets of Protestantism in the textile areas of Lancashire and the West Riding. The lack of a serious northern revolt in 1549 can be attributed partly to the savage repression of the Pilgrimage and partly to a subordination of religious to civic loyalties, but it does not indicate active support for the Edwardian reforms. A south Yorkshire priest testifed that in 1550 the region 'from Trent northwards' was lagging behind 'the south parts' in abolishing stone altars and Catholic ceremonial. A scheme for itinerant government preachers in 1551 shows clearly the unreliable areas – Devon, Hampshire, Wales, Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Scottish borders. At the other end of the religious spectrum, it is a fair assumption that in those towns which displayed zealous Protestantism almost as soon as Elizabeth ascended the throne – Coventry, Colchester, Ipswich, Leicester and others – Protestantism must have been firmly established before 1553.

Another rough index of religious sympathies is the incidence of clerical marriage. It was legalised in February 1549, though some early Protestant clergy in Suffolk had married as early as 1536–7. The numbers who took advantage of it between 1549 and 1553 can be approximately established by the deprivations of married clergy in Mary's reign. At one extreme was London, where nearly a third of the parish clergy married, followed closely by Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk with a quarter or more, and Cambridgeshire with one in five. In Lincolnshire and the diocese of York the proportion was only one in ten, and in Lancashire less than one in twenty.[11] As with will formulae, the figures should not be treated with too much respect, for the correlation between the religious outlook of the clergy and their propensity to marriage was not a close one. Nevertheless, conservative laymen were generally hostile to clerical marriage both in Edward's reign and later. In Cornwall and Lancashire married ministers were cold-shouldered throughout Elizabeth's reign, though such hostility was traditionalist rather than Catholic and was, of course, shared by the Queen herself.

[11] A.G. Dickens, *The Marian Reaction in the Diocese of York* (St Anthony's Hall Publication, No. 11, 1957), pp. 15–19 and *English Reformation*, p. 245; Houlbrooke, 'Persecution of Heresy', p. 317: Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 244; R. B. Walker, 'Reformation and Reaction in the County of Lincoln, 1547–58', *Lincolnshire Archaeological and Architectural Society*, IX (1961), p. 57; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 181.

The ease with which the Catholic Mary I succeeded to the throne in 1553 was, it is now accepted, owing to her legitimate hereditary claim and not to her religion. Early in the reign there was popular agitation in Kent and Essex for the restoration of Protestant worship; and Wyatt's rebellion in early 1554, though ostensibly a political protest, had a covertly Protestant aim, if some of his own remarks can be believed. He received strong support in Kent – though even there Canterbury, under a Catholic mayor, fortified itself against him – and his success was also said to be 'joyous to the Londoners', though he failed to take the capital. More important, his fellow conspirators completely failed to raise Devon, Herefordshire and the Midlands.[12] That may reflect loyalism rather than religious feeling, but studies of Lancashire and York suggest positive enthusiasm for the Queen's restoration of Catholicism. The York corporation hailed the accession of Mary as a 'godly' ruler – a term they did not repeat for her sister in 1558 – and there was even a rumour after the defeat of Wyatt that Mary would move her capital from London to York 'to be among Catholic people'.[13] After a generation of uncertainty, however, no area was homogeneous in its religious sympathies; Lancashire and Yorkshire both numbered small but dedicated Protestant minorities, like the 'busy fellows of the new sort' prosecuted at Leeds, and a large minority of A. G. Dickens's Yorkshire wills sample was non-traditional.

The best-remembered dissidents in Mary's reign are, of course, the exiles and the martyrs. Both were tiny minorities in a population of some three million, but they were highly influential and their geographical distribution is likely to be similar to that of the larger body of Protestants who did not carry their opposition so far. Christina Garrett counted 472 men, nearly all gentlemen, clergy or merchants, who fled to the Continent; of 350 whose residence she fairly firmly established, two out of five came from London and Middlesex, Kent, Sussex, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk.[14] The 300 heretics burned between 1555 and 1558, mainly humbler folk, were even more concentrated; over three-quarters were burned in those six counties, through not all the victims suffered in their home county. The chief difference between the two groups, apart from their social composition, is that the exiles were drawn from a wider catchment area. There was no sizeable body of martyrs outside East Anglia and the Home Counties except at Bristol, where Foxe names seven but where recent research can confirm only four.[15] Devon and Cornwall, which contributed about thirty-five exiles, witnessed only one martyrdom; Lancashire and Yorkshire provided only one martyr but nearly forty exiles. The excessive

[12] D. M. Loades, *Two Tudor Conspiracies* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 12–127, map opposite p. 284.

[13] *York Civic Records*, ed. A. Raine, 8 vols (York Archaeological Society, 1939–53), v, p. 92; P. F. Tytler, *England under the Reigns of Edward VI and Mary* (1839), II, p. 309 (translated).

[14] C. H. Garrett, *The Marian Exiles* (Cambridge, 1938).

[15] For doubts about the Bristol martyrs see K. G. Powell, *The Marian Martyrs and the Reformation in Bristol* (Bristol, 1972).

concentration of martyrs in the south-east probably reflects not so much the distribution of heresy as the zeal of ecclesiastical authorities. Pole of Canterbury and Bonner of London were proverbial for their hunting down of heretics, whereas other bishops like Tunstall of Durham and Heath of York were averse to persecution. Margaret Spufford, speaking of 'the depth of the reception of Protestant feeling' in Cambridgeshire, suspects that 'lenient administration of the diocese' was responsible for restricting the number of martyrs there to three.[16]

Episcopal zeal cannot, however, entirely explain away the special place of London and East Anglia in the story of early Protestantism. The capital, scene of sixty-seven burnings, was notorious for its sympathies. Pole complained to the Londoners 'that when any heretic shall go to execution, he shall lack no comforting of you, and encouraging to die in his perverse opinion'. Certainly London takes first place in the number of known underground Protestant congregations under Mary; and the next largest congregation recorded was in Colchester, a town notorious as 'a harbourer of heretics'. There is also the astonishing fact that four Essex parishes continued using the proscribed Edwardian services until 1555 without being disturbed.[17] The same geographical pattern was apparent when Elizabeth came to the throne. Iconoclasm in 1559, for instance, was most promptly and zealously pursued in London, 'with such shouting, and applause of the vulgar sort, as if it had been the sacking of some hostile city'. In the west country, on the other hand, the populace was devoted to the 'votive relics of the saints' and reluctant to destroy images.[18]

It is difficult to avoid writing history with hindsight. The religious opposition to Mary is often over-written because she died before her regime was firmly established; that facing Elizabeth I is perhaps still underestimated because her settlement ultimately endured. In 1562 the Bishop of Carlisle said that 'every day men look for a change', and a Yorkshire gentleman was confident 'that the crucifix with Mary and John should be set up again in all churches' before Christmas.[19] For the first decade of her reign Elizabeth moved warily, and only after the rising of the northern earls in 1569, a last, forlorn Catholic revolt, did she impose a tighter religious discipline. Like all the Tudors, she had to co-operate with the J.P.s who enforced law and order in the shires and they were very divided, as a series of reports on J.P.s' loyalties sent in by the bishops in 1564 reveals.[20] Roughly 431 J.P.s

16 Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 248n.
17 Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, III, Appendix, p. 248; Dickens, *English Reformation*, pp. 272–7; D. M. Loades, 'The Enforcement of Reaction, 1553–1558', *J.E.H.*, XVI (1965), p. 62.
18 Hayward's Annals of the *First Four Years of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. J. Bruce (Camden Society, VII, 1840), p. 28; *The Zurich Letters*, ed. H. Robinson (Parker Society, 1842), I, p. 44.
19 P. McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (London, 1967) p. 47; *York Civic Records* VI, p. 42.
20 'A Collection of Original Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council, 1564', ed. M. Bateson, *Miscellany*, IX (Camden Society, new ser., LIII, 1895).

throughout England were described as favourable to the Elizabethan settlement; 264 as indifferent or neutral; and 157 as hostile. 'It was a sufficient majority among those who mattered', comments A. L. Rowse – but not in all counties. In Sussex there were only ten 'favourers' to fifteen 'mislikers'; in Staffordshire ten 'no favourers' out of seventeen; and in Lancashire six 'favourable' to eighteen 'not favourable'; four of the Lancashire non-favourers were still active justices as late as 1583. The benches in corporate towns were nearly all more conservative than the justices in the shires; the entire Hereford council was unfavourable or 'neuter', and all but two of the York aldermen. Widespread Catholic survivalism was revealed in diocesan visitations like those of York in 1567 and Chichester in 1569. In many places in Sussex chalices were kept 'looking for to have mass again'. Against these, there were radicals in other areas moving well to the left of the 1559 settlement. Independency was being tolerated in East Anglia as early as 1561, and what Patrick Collinson calls 'London's Protestant underworld' gave rise to a separatist church by 1567.[21]

By the 1570s the 'Established Church' was indeed firmly established, though assailed from both left and right. Even if Catholic recusancy of the Counter-Reformation type is beyond our brief, it is worth looking briefly at the tenacious maintenance of the older religious ways by a dwindling number of 'survivalists', who are not to be confused with the new Catholic recusants. These remained longest in what puritans were coming to call 'the dark corners of the land'. Chester, Boston, Wakefield and York, for example, kept up their medieval miracle plays until the 1570s, although so did Chelmsford in Essex. Many Catholic traditions were reported from the northern dioceses, and Archbishop Grindal found the northern province so conservative in 1570 as to seem 'another church, rather than a member of the reste'.[22] Gradually he and his ally the Earl of Huntingdon, Lord President of the Council in the North, enforced conformity, though Lancashire's exemption from the Council's jurisdiction made it something of a sanctuary for Catholics. The very last open cases of survivalism can be traced in wills – Catholic phraseology by the middle of Elizabeth's reign, by a dwindling number of testators mainly in the north, can indicate only their stubborn devotion to the old ways, coupled of course with a tolerance in the northern church courts towards registering such wills. Among the last testators known to have left their souls to God, the Blessed Virgin and the saints, in full medieval form, were an alderman of Newcastle (1582), Lady Wharton of Healaugh near York (1583), and a York alderman's widow (1585). The offending phrase has been deleted in the registered copy of the Newcastle will, but the two wills in the York register have been left uncensored. In 1575 a Duchy of Lancaster

[21] J. S. Purvis, *Tudor Parish Documents* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 15–34; R. B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex* (Leicester, 1969), pp. 42–6; C. Cross, *The Royal Supremacy in the Elizabethan Church* (London, 1969), p. 100; P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967), pp. 84–91.

[22] *The Remains of Edmund Grindal*, ed. W. Nicholson (Parker Society, 1843), p. 326.

official asked for prayers for his soul; in 1581 another Lancastrian left his parish priest 10s to pray for him; and in one Lancashire parish prayers for the dead were still recited at funerals in the 1590s.[23]

II

The evidence presented so far has partly confirmed the traditional textbook picture of a south and east more receptive to Protestantism during the period of uncertainty, and a north and west less so. As a crude generalisation, with many exceptions allowed, it may be acceptable. The inhabitants of London and the east-coast ports, after all, were in regular contact with the continental reformed churches, like Humphrey Monmouth and other London merchants who imported forbidden Lutheran books, or the Hull sailors who visited Bremen and Friesland in 1528 and witnessed Lutheran services. The west-coast ports traded more with the Catholic lands of Spain, Portugal and Ireland, though Bristol developed nevertheless into an early Protestant centre, as did landlocked Coventry. Something should be allowed too to T. M. Parker's claim that the greater prosperity of lowland England 'gave men more time for thought and bound them less to tradition, which always flourishes most where life is hard and experiment dangerous to existence'.[24] At any rate, some recent regional studies would appear to support the correlation: J. E. Oxley, M. Spufford and F. Heal have depicted Essex and Cambridgeshire as much more receptive than A. L. Rowse's Cornwall or Christopher Haigh's Lancashire. Many more such studies are needed for other areas, however, and it is clear that such a geographical correlation is a loose one at best. Christopher Haigh suspects that conservative Lancashire (apart from its south-east corner) was not so very different from other parts of England,[25] and Roger Manning's study of Sussex, with its strong conservatism until the 1570s, is certainly a warning against assuming that Protestantism could be easily enforced even in the south-east. Conversely, A. G. Dickens's studies showed some time ago that the north was far from being the uniformly reactionary region of popular tradition, and that Beverley, Halifax, Hull, Leeds, Rotherham and Wakefield all housed significant Protestant communities before 1558. As a further blow to geographical determinism, the radical Halifax was a clearly upland parish, whereas the city of York, in an outlier of lowland England, proved obstinately conservative. Furthermore, where highland areas did prove more difficult to control, administrative rather than physical barriers were often to blame. Much of the west midlands and the north formed before 1541 two huge dioceses, York and Lichfield, and though

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[23] R. Welford, *History of Newcastle and Gateshead*, III (1887), p. 33; J. Hunter, *Hallamshire* (2nd edn. 1869), p. 82; B.I.Y., PROB reg. xxxiv, fo. 49; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp. 220–1.

[24] T. M. Parker, *The English Reformation to 1558* (London, 1950), p. 24.

[25] Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. vii.

the creation of the see of Chester was a step in the right direction, Chester proved to be a most unsuitable centre, especially for controlling Lancashire, and was inadequately financed. Moreover, much of the north and west was divided into large parishes where detections of heresy and recusancy were inevitably difficult.

Perhaps the promising lines of future research are those concentrating on religious belief at the most local level, for regional studies have too coarse a mesh. Broad generalisations can be made about the distribution of conservatives and radicals but any determinist view based on geography or economic and social structure would ignore the vital role of committed individuals. The influence of Latimer in Bristol and Gloucester in the 1530s, or of Bernard Gilpin in County Durham in Elizabeth's reign, are but two examples of the enormous influence of dedicated clergy in changing the local religious climate. Indeed, it was similar zeal by committed laymen, in Claire Cross's view, which made impossible any return to religious uniformity at the end of the period of uncertainty. A small number of influential nobles and gentry used their patronage to present zealous Protestants to church livings in Suffolk, Leicestershire and other counties; and both Protestant and Catholic gentry retained as chaplains men unacceptable to the established ministry. 'In the last resort the state failed to compel the laity into uniformity because the zealots, both Catholic and Protestant, disregarding the parochial system, made their own households into centres of evangelism.' The negative influence of a local magnate could be equally crucial. The third Earl of Derby, who dominated Lancashire, played a waiting game in both 1536 and 1569, and though he did not in the event throw his considerable weight behind either rising, he did not actively work for the Crown either.[26]

Coupled with a realisation of the importance of the individual is a recognition that almost no area was entirely homogeneous in its religious beliefs between the 1530s and the 1570s: many villages were bitterly divided, while in the larger towns total uniformity was almost impossible to attain. G. R. Elton's survey of opinion in the 1530s identifies serious divisions between conservatives and radicals in Bristol, Rye and Gloucester as well as three Oxford colleges. Bristol remained deeply divided for another generation despite, or perhaps because of, the presence of zealous Protestants on the city council from an early date. The Catholic Roger Edgeworth, preaching at Bristol early in Mary's reign, said that, 'Here among you in this city some will hear mass, some will hear none...some will be shriven, some will not, but for fear or else for shame...some will pray for the dead, some will not, I hear of much dissension among you.' Similarly, when the married vicar of Orwell, Cambridgeshire, mocked the mass that he had to reintroduce he drew strong support from some parishioners but deeply offended others.[27]

London was large enough to hide a multitude of opinions and recorded dissent

[26] Cross, *Royal Supremacy*, p. 95–114; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, entries indexed under Stanley, Edward.
[27] Powell, *Marian Martyrs*, pp. 8–9; Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 244–5.

there may have been only the tip of the iceberg. True, most of it was radical dissent, from the bricklayer who annoyed his neighbours in the late 1530s by preaching from his window and his garden fence, to the exercises 'after Geneva fashion' being held in a church by 1559. Yet London, like Bristol, had its splits between right and left: when feasts were being abrogated by the government in 1549 and 1550 'some kept holy day and some none', and the same divisions were manifested when the festivals were restored in 1554. The Venetian ambassador clearly over-simplified when he said that the Londoners were the most disposed to obey the inconstant laws on religion, 'because they are nearer the Court'.[28] London's teeming population – it was at least ten times the size of any other English town – probably more than counteracted the pressure for conformity from the government at Westminster or the archbishop at Lambeth. After all, the capital of the northern province, York, showed no disposition to change its religion with its successive archbishops, despite the presence of their church courts in its midst, and remained as consistently conservative as London was radical.

The most vivid picture of urban division, if not the most objective, comes from the autobiography of Thomas Hancock, a Hampshire-born Protestant clergyman. In 1548 he preached against the mass in Salisbury, stirring up so much dissension that Protector Somerset forbade him to preach at Southampton. 'My lord said unto me that Hampton was a haven town, and that if I should teach such doctrine as I taught at Sarum the town would be divided, and so should it be a way or a gap for the enemy to come in.' Soon afterwards Hancock became curate of Poole in Dorset, where he found strong support, though his blunt attacks on the real presence again provoked violent controversy. A group led by a former mayor, 'a great rich merchant, and a ringleader of the Papists', attacked him in his church and the then mayor had to protect him physically. Such, at least, is what Hancock recorded long after the event, though his picture of zeal on both sides may have been magnified with distance. He proudly records a Salisbury draper's boast that 'a hundred of them would be bound in £100' as sureties for him, but his own artless testimony shows that their zeal was only moderate. When the chief justice reasonably preferred ten sureties of £10 each, the draper replied that 'it would grieve them to forfeit £10 apiece but in that quarrel to forfeit 20s apiece it would never grieve them'. Nevertheless, the picture of violent opposition to Protestant preachers in the region is corroborated from other sources: Bale, for instance, said in 1552 that attacks were being made on 'Christ's ministers' in many areas, 'chiefly within Hampshire'.[29]

Even further west, notorious to contemporaries as a region 'where popery greatly

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[28] G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 162–4; McGrath, *Papists and Puritans*, p. 81; *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, v, p. 345; *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London*, ed. J. G. Nichols (Camden Society, LIII, 1852), pp. 67, 89.

[29] *Narratives of the Reformation*, pp. 71–84, 315–16.

prevailed', Protestants were numerous enough to demolish any idea of uniform Catholicism. At Bodmin in 1548, schoolboys fought mock battles in gangs representing the old and new religions, and the western rising of 1549 received general but by no means unanimous support. Raleigh's father, who was alleged to have browbeaten an old woman near Exeter for telling her beads, was threatened with death by the rebels but rescued by 'certain mariners of Exmouth'. Exeter itself provides perhaps the best example of conflicting loyalties within a city. During the rising, according to Hooker's eye-witness account, the majority of citizens were Catholic, yet the city was firmly defended against the rebels because the magistrates, 'albeit some and the chiefest...were well affected to the Romish religion', put first 'their obedience to the King...and safety of themselves'. When, however, the city was tempted to join a Protestant rebellion five years later, the sheriff of Devon took no chances. Two aldermen known to be Catholics were given emergency powers to defend it, 'for as much as the mayor of Exeter and his brethren were of several religions'.[30] The precautions may have been unnecessary, for faced with a rebellion most town corporations thought of 'obedience' and 'safety of themselves' whatever their religious persuasion. Solidarity of the governing body was put before ideology, and, no doubt, one fear at the back of the aldermen's minds was the disorder and looting that might be unleashed by any surrender to a rebel army. Hence the London corporation held the city firmly against Wyatt, despite the widespread support he apparently enjoyed among lesser citizens, just as York held out strongly against the Catholic earls in 1569, although some of its leading aldermen had Catholic sympathies.

It should occasion no surprise that the reception of Protestantism, like that of any new belief or ideology, had an uneven impact; making its way in a complex society divided by rivalries between individuals, families, social groups and entire communities, it was almost certain to become entangled with existing dissensions. If one man or group adopted Protestantism, that might ensure that his or their enemies remained Catholic: or – which was not always the same thing – if one rebelled, another might be the more zealous in loyalty. Such considerations applied especially in districts where lords and their tenants did not trust one another. Some gentlemen might remain aloof from a rebellion out of prudence or out of contempt for the social status of the rebel leaders; both reactions can be seen among the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire gentry in 1536. Rebel commoners might use the cloak of revolt to work off grudges against their lords; or arrogant lords might use the opportunities of religious uncertainty to bully tenants. The purchaser of a monastic manor in Sussex was accused of harassing his tenants and boasting, 'Do ye not know that the King's Grace hath put down all the houses of monks, friars and nuns? therefore now is

[30] A. L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall* (2nd edn, London, 1969), p. 262; J. Hooker, *The Description of the Citie of Excester* (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1919), pp. 62–3, 67–8, 71.

the time come that we gentlemen will pull down the houses of such poor knaves as ye be', though it is fair to add that he denied the charge.[31]

The alignment of religious and social groups would depend on the local situation. At St Neots (Huntingdonshire) in 1547 conservative gentry confronted radical commoners: the parishioners removed images illegally, and the local gentlemen vainly ordered their restoration. In the west country the situation was often reversed: the 1549 rising had strong overtones of social protest by the Catholic rebels against the gentry. Likewise in Mary's reign it was the Cornish gentry who led opposition to her policies, while the 'stupid and backward-looking peasantry', to use A. L. Rowse's uncharitable phrase, remained loyal. An analysis of the abortive risings of 1554 suggests that the distinction between gentry and commons was more explicit in Devon than in any other area. One might conclude from studies like A. L. Rowse's that the gentry, with their superior education, were more open to new ideas than a stubbornly conservative peasantry, but this would be an unjustified inference. Commons as well as gentry could follow sophisticated arguments. Sir Francis Bigod, stirring an assembly of Yorkshire commons to renewed revolt in 1537, used technical arguments against the validity of the King's pardon which were obviously well understood. A Cambridgeshire husbandman travelled to Colchester about 1555 to discuss Pauline theology with fellow Protestants, and, on failing to satisfy his conscience, seriously considered travelling to Oxford to consult Ridley and Latimer.[32]

Social and economic grievances have also been emphasised as underlying the Pilgrimage of Grace. A. G. Dickens has drawn attention to several riots and quarrels in York just before the rising 'over issues unrelated to the ecclesiastical polity of the Crown', though at least one was apparently an accusation by one merchant against another for disloyalty to the royal supremacy. Aldermen and lesser freemen were certainly at odds over enclosures in May 1536, yet were apparently almost united in admitting the Pilgrims without resistance in October. However, York may not have been typical of northern communities and more research is needed on the Pilgrimage as a whole. In Lancashire it was indeed largely a religious protest, but the risings in Cumbria, and probably those in Craven and Richmondshire, had the characteristics of peasant rebellions.

Religious disputes could undoubtedly become an element in quarrels between rich and poor in town as well as countryside. At Rye, between 1533 and 1538, the vicar behaved in a provocative way — attacking 'heretics'; refusing to obey the new liturgical regulations; splitting the town into two factions; and, if his enemies can be believed, openly defending papal supremacy. Cromwell had for years to deal with

[31] *Tudor Economic Documents*, ed. R. H. Tawney and E. Power (London, 1924), I, pp. 20–1, 28.
[32] W. K. Jordan, *Edward VI: The Young King* (London, 1968), p. 150; Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall*, p. 318; Loades, *Two Tudor Conspiracies*, pp. 44–5; Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, p. 99; Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 246–8.

the complaints of the rival factions, yet, when he finally stepped in, the vicar was only removed to another parish and no charges of treason were brought. The reason, apparently, was that he was strongly supported by the mayor and jurats and seventy-five 'worthy men' of Rye, whereas his enemies were 'very simple and of small substance'. 'It is clear enough', comments G. R. Elton, 'that the divisions here ran not only between adherents of the old and the new way in religion, but more especially also between the rulers of Rye and the poorer sort.' There are hints of a similar pattern at York forty years later, when Mayor Criplyng (1579–80) was in trouble with the authorities of Church and State for attacking the clergy and not presenting recusants. Criplyng, apparently a survivalist rather than a recusant, was hastily disowned by his fellow aldermen when his supporters put up 'filthy and lewd' posters in the streets, and there are indications that a group of committed Protestant merchants were taking over the city council, while Criplyng was supported by some of the poorer citizens.[33]

Criplyng's case is a reminder that Tudor rulers could enforce their policies only with the co-operation of unpaid officials in the localities. All statistics of religious offenders, therefore, reflect the zeal or success of those who presented them – clergy, churchwardens, J.P.s, gentry, private citizens – as much as the actual distribution of dissent. The justices were vital to the process of enforcing uniformity, certainly after 1559, and apparently there never was a thorough purge of Catholic J.P.s in Elizabeth's reign. In Yorkshire the J.P.s did not administer the oath of supremacy even to one another until 1562, and the Bishop of Winchester had great difficulty persuading his fellow justices to certify recusants. Much depended on the relationship of the bishop with the 'county community' of nobles and gentry. In Norfolk, Bishop Parkhurst (1560–75) deferred to the conservative Duke of Norfolk (d. 1572) as long as he lived, but in the last three years of his life was able to follow his own inclinations and to pack the bench with radical Protestants. His successor Bishop Freake (1575–85), however, appointed J.P.s 'backward in religion' to control the puritans. Richard Curteys of Chichester (1570–82), the first bishop to make real inroads into the ingrained conservatism of Sussex, attempted to do for that county what Parkhurst had done for East Anglia, but his 'fanaticism and inquisitorial methods clashed with the attitude of pratical tolerance that the Sussex gentry felt was dictated by the special conditions of local politics'. He attacked a group of crypto-Catholic justices, only to find that the bench united against him despite their religious divisions. When he pressed some of them to swear that they 'kept no company with any that were backward in religion' they replied that 'we cannot take knowledge of every man's religion and conscience that cometh into our company'.[34]

Diversity of opinion was true of the nobles and gentry throughout the period of

[33] Elton, *Policy and Police*, pp. 20–1, 85–90; D. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979).
[34] J. H. Gleason, *The Justices of the Peace in England, 1558–1640* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 68–72; R. B. Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', *H.J.*, xv (1972), p. 25; A. Hassell

uncertainty, though the approximate statistics in recent studies relate only to the end
of the period. It has been estimated that of sixty-six peers in 1580, twenty-two were
committed Protestants, twenty recusants and twenty-four relatively indifferent; that
among office-holding gentry in Sussex in the 1560s known Catholics outnumbered
Protestants two to one; and that of 567 families of Yorkshire gentry in 1570, 368
(sixty-five per cent) were still Catholic.[35] Given such divisions, and the common
preference for social solidarity among the gentry over religious opinions, the
lukewarm prosecution of successive settlements in many counties is scarcely
surprising. The gentry not only dominated the commissions of the peace but were
also prominent on the mixed lay–clerical ecclesiastical commissions favoured by
Elizabeth as instruments of religious uniformity. Christopher Haigh has shown that
in Lancashire, at least, the ecclesiastical commission and the bench of justices were
both unreliable instruments, including crypto-Catholic gentry and even open
recusants. Nor should one neglect the lesser lay officials, the churchwardens, whose
office it was to enforce church attendance. Over half the recusants returned in Cheshire
in 1578 lived in nine parishes where the wardens had not been imposing the statutory
fines for non-attendance.[36] In fact several recent studies suggest that the visitation
procedures could cope only with minority problems: if a group of offenders were
generally supported by the other parishioners, they would be unlikely to be
presented. That suggests the depressing possibility that the records indicate only the
distribution of small minorities of dissenters and that areas of widespread dissent
might often pass unrecorded. There must have been strong social pressure on
churchwardens not to betray their neighbours; and it is remarkable how often
heretics presented were immigrants from other parts of England or from overseas.
Given the parochial loyalties of the age, a 'foreigner' must always have stood more
danger of arrest than a native.

The role of the senior clergy was, of course, equally vital in enforcing the
successive settlements. Mary and Pole are often criticised for dying with five sees
vacant, so making Elizabeth's settlement easier; it is less often remarked that Elizabeth
unwisely left many more sees vacant after the Marian bishops were deprived, both
to save money and to bargain for advantageous land exchanges with the bishops
elect. Of the twenty-two English sees, sixteen were unfilled at the end of 1559 and
nine were still vacant a year later; Oxford, the last, was not filled until 1567. Some
of the longer vacancies were in the north and west and they gave Catholic survival

Smith, *County and Court: Government and Politics in Norfolk 1558–1603* (Oxford, 1974), pp.
206–8, 226–8; Manning, *Religion and Society*, pp. 61–125.

[35] L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558–1641* (Oxford, 1965), p. 741; Manning, *Religion and
Society*, p. 259; J. T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Oxford,
1969), p. 169.

[36] K. R. Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire* (Chetham Society, 3rd ser., XIX, 1971), pp.
16–17.

or revival precious extra time to become more firmly established. Lichfield was not filled until March 1560, when Bishop Bentham found Catholic furnishings still retained in many Shropshire churches. At York 'the hard core of the central ecclesiastical administration' was shattered in 1559 and not repaired for two years, a crucial delay in the view of Hugh Aveling. Chester (which included Lancashire) was administered by a Catholic commissary until February 1561. Even when bishops were at last appointed – Young to York and Downham to Chester – both proved very weak instruments of uniformity. Archbishop Parker saw the danger of vacant sees clearly and complained that 'whatsoever is now too husbandly saved will be an occasion of further expense of keeping them down if (as God forfend) they should be too much Irish and savage'.[37] The position would have been worse if the Queen had accepted a scheme to keep Chester permanently vacant and pocket its revenues; she contented herself with an eighteen-year vacancy at Ely, a safely Protestant see. Nor should one neglect the vital importance of the right cathedral appointments to assist the bishops in enforcing conformity. Indeed, in Dr James's view, it was the Durham cathedral chapter which successfully established Protestantism in a very conservative diocese. These zealous graduates were theological elitists, chiefly concerned to win over the educated. Bernard Gilpin, for instance, remained unmoved when he offended 'the plebeians' by his opinions, commenting that he 'never desired the love of the vulgar'. Contempt for the religious opinions of humble folk, for which Foxe castigated the Marian bishops, was no monopoly of Catholic clerics.

Still more important than the senior clergy as moulders of opinion must have been the mass of parish clergy and unbeneficed chaplains. Despite widespread anticlericalism and a growing tendency of parishioners to form their own theological opinions, the parish priest was the most literate and knowledgeable man in many rural communities, with the possible exception of the lord of the manor, and the character and example of both must have been crucial in many villages. It is clear that every settlement was hampered by the incumbency of clergy appointed under a previous regime. The 9000 parish priests suffered no major purges except for perhaps 2000 in 1554 (many of whom were simply transferred to other parishes after abandoning their wives) and a few hundred in 1559. Admittedly, the continuity of personnel was maintained because most clergy, like Aleyn of Bray, conformed outwardly to every settlement. A revealing anecdote from Exeter tells how in Edward's reign the rector of St Petrock's vowed never to say mass again; yet in 1554 his friend Mayor Midwinter – a Protestant – found him robed for mass. Midwinter 'pointed unto him with his finger remembering as it were his old

[37] M. R. O'Day, 'Thomas Bentham', *J.E.H.*, XXIII (1972), p. 145; J. C. H. Aveling, *Catholic Recusancy in the City of York 1558–1791* (Catholic Record Society, 1970), p. 20; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 210.

protestations...but Parson Herne openly in the church spake aloud unto him, "It is no remedy, man, it is no remedy"'.[38] Or there was the ex-friar who as late as 1583 was a parish priest in Berkshire, when he was reported for saying that 'if ever we had mass again he would say it, for he must live'.[39]

Yet if most priests did not openly defy successive settlements, the presence of many traditionalist priests under Edward, of crypto-Protestants under Mary and crypto-Catholics under Elizabeth must have been a strong influence in hampering uniformity. Such was Thomas Dobson, the Cambridgeshire priest already mentioned. He conformed to Mary's restoration of the mass but 'before he came to the altar, he used himself unreverently, saying "We must go to this gear" with laughter'; despite this and other offences he was merely transferred to a neighbouring parish after being disciplined. A survivor of the opposite type was Robert Parkyn, the south Yorkshire vicar. He conformed with great inner reluctance under Edward (continuing to say prayers for the dead in secret); welcomed the Marian reaction joyfully; but conformed again to the 1559 settlement and retained the living till his death in 1570. There were many like-minded priests in conservative areas.[40]

The presence and character of the manorial lord must, in the countryside, have been almost as crucial as that of the priest. Alan Everitt has suggested that later non-conformity can often be correlated with a weak manorial structure or with settlements without a resident lord. Margaret Spufford agrees, though she points out that the difference between large and small settlements was perhaps the crucial factor, small settlements usually having a stronger manorial structure and being easier to control; and she warns against determinism in this as in other areas.[41] No similar study has yet been made for the sixteenth century, but it would be surprising if the pattern of lordship did not prove to be of major importance.

One larger question concerns the extent of continuity in popular religious beliefs. Was there, for instance, continuity in certain areas from Lollardy to Protestantism and later to separatism, or in other areas from late medieval orthodoxy to Catholic recusancy? A. G. Dickens has drawn attention to a correlation between Lollard and puritan areas in Yorkshire, especially in the ports and textile towns, though R. Knecht has suggested that an entrenched native heresy might actually be a repellent to Protestantism.[42] There are similar difficulties in making connections between pre- and post-Reformation Catholicism, though Lancashire seems to furnish a textbook

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[38] W. T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540–1640* (Cambridge, Mass, 1958), pp. 191–2.

[39] W. H. Jones, *Diocesan Histories: Salisbury* (London, 1880), p. 194.

[40] Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 244, 249; A. G. Dickens, 'Robert Parkyn's Narrative of the Reformation', *E.H.R.*, LXII (1947), pp. 58–83; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp. 212, 217–18.

[41] Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 306–15.

[42] Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, p. 247; R. J. Knecht, 'The Early Reformation in England and France', *History*, LVII (1972), p. 7.

example. Both Jordan and Haigh point as an explanation to the backward state of the county, so that Catholicism was still a vital, almost missionary, influence there when it had already become stereotyped and mechanistic in other areas. Hence Protestantism was able to make little headway 'especially as the political and social structure of the county was as underdeveloped as its religion'.[43] Outside Lancashire, however, continuity on a large scale has yet to be proved, and to expect it in many districts would be to lack faith in the possibility of conversions in large numbers. A. G. Dickens is sceptical of continuity between late medieval orthodoxy and Elizabethan recusancy, or between Marian heresy and Elizabethan puritanism: 'New leaders and new ideas bulk larger than old survivals.'[44]

The need for many more local studies has, it is hoped, been amply demonstrated. Not only is too little known of popular opinion, but also of its variety, which can only with difficulty be forced into the strait-jacket of 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' labels. How does one classify the testators who bequeathed their souls in full Catholic form but then added their hope of salvation solely through the merits of Christ's passion?[45] How far can one allocate the Yorkshire cases of 'tavern unbelief' to Protestant heresy and how far to age-old scepticism? Keith Thomas emphasises the oft-forgotten facts that not all Englishmen went to church, 'that many of those who did went with considerable reluctance, and that a certain proportion remained... utterly ignorant of the elementary tenets of Christian dogma'. The story of the popular Reformation, when it can eventually be properly retold, will probably be much more complex than can yet be imagined.

[43] Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 139.
[44] A. G. Dickens, 'The First Stages of Romanist Recusancy in Yorkshire', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, xxxv (1940–3), pp. 180–1, and *Marian Reaction*, ii, p. 14.
[45] Such wills have been observed between 1549 and 1586; the latest noted in York is B.I.Y., PROB reg. xxiii, fo. 223.