

IMAGES OF FEMALE PIETY
AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF POST-REFORMATION
CATHOLICISM IN THE
DIOCESE OF CHESTER,
c.1558 - c.1625

Volume One

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Abstract

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Images of Female Piety and the Development of Post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester, c.1558 - c.1625

This thesis demonstrates that Catholic gentrywomen were central to the direction and evolution of post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester. It was women who ensured that the traditional beliefs and practices of the medieval Church were continued, but adapted by post-Reformation Catholics. In taking primary responsibility for sheltering recusant and missionary priests in their houses, gentrywomen also acted as gatekeepers to the clergy. By providing access to priests, women ensured that the Catholic laity were able to continue partaking in sacramental devotion.

The use of gentry households as Mass centres provided opportunities for local communities to engage in group worship. By their choice of confessor, gentrywomen guided the confessional direction of Catholicism within the diocese. A woman's choice of priest determined the routines of personal piety that they constructed for themselves, their families, and their local community. Through their examples of female piety, these women inspired subsequent generations to preserve and rejuvenate Catholic beliefs and practices.

A key component of this personal piety was the use of devotional and polemical literature. Some girls were so inspired by these pious female role models that they chose to pursue religious vocations. The types of literature that children had access to was as instrumental in ensuring that they grew up to be Catholic as the religious education provided by their mothers. The popularity of religious vocations can be observed in the great numbers of Catholic gentrywomen from the Diocese of Chester who left their homes to join the exiled English convents.

There was regular contact between enclosed sisters in continental Europe and their female relatives in the Diocese of Chester that created a symbiotic Catholic kinship network. Female piety in the diocese was shaped and moulded by its contact with post-Tridentine, Counter-Reformed Europe. Female kinship networks greatly altered the direction in which Post-Reformation Catholicism developed in the Diocese of Chester.

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List of Abbreviations

APC

Acts of the Privy Council

BIA

The Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York

BIA, HC.AB

The Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, High Commission Act Books

BIA, HC.CP

The Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, High Commission Cause Papers

BIA, TRANS.CP

The Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, Transmitted Cause Papers

BL

The British Library, St Pancras, London

Concertatio

A compendium of tracts known as the *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia* published by Dr John Bridgewater in 1594 (third edition of a compendium collated by Dr John Gibbons and Fr John Fen in 1583)

CRO

Cheshire Record Office, Chester

CRO, EDA

Cheshire Record Office, Chester, Collection of papers known as the Proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Commission for the Diocese of Chester

CRO, EDC

Cheshire Record Office, Chester, Collection of papers relating to the Consistory Court at Chester

CRO, EDV

Cheshire Record Office, Chester, Collection of papers relating to visitations in the Diocese of Chester

CRO, QSE

Cheshire Record Office, Cheshire, Collection of papers known as Quarter Sessions: Depositions and Examinations

CRS

Catholic Record Society

CS

Chetham Society

HMC

Historical Manuscripts Commission

Louvain Chronicle

The Chronicle of the Augustinian Canonesses at St Monica's, Louvain

LRO

Lancashire Record Office, Preston

LRO, DDBL

Lancashire Record Office, Preston, Collection of papers known as the estate papers of the Blundells of Little Crosby

LRO, DDKE

Lancashire Record Office, Preston, Collection of papers known as the Kenyon of Peel manuscripts

ODNB

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

RH

Recusant History

THSLC

Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire

TLCAS

Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society

TNA

The National Archives, Kew, London

TNA, SPDom

The National Archives, Kew, London, Collection of papers known as the State Papers, Domestic

TRHS

Transactions of the Royal Historical Society

VCH

Victoria County Histories

WDA

Westminster Diocesan Archives, Kensington, London

N.B. In instances when an author has produced both a doctoral thesis and a published work with the same title, all page references relate to the published edition unless accompanying notes state otherwise.

Introduction

Summary of argument

This thesis is the first piece of research to comprehensively examine the role of Catholic gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester. The research demonstrates that Catholic gentrywomen shaped the character and altered the confessional direction of post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester to an extent that has been hitherto unacknowledged by historians. Previous research regarding the development of Catholicism in the diocese after the Reformation, by historians such as Christopher Haigh, J. Stanley Leatherbarrow and K.R. Wark, has emphasised the significance of the male members of the Catholic gentry in regional and national politics.¹ Such research has established that male gentry office-holders offered a degree of paternalistic protection to fellow Catholics that directly influenced their ability to sustain Catholic beliefs and practices. The importance of Catholic gentrywomen, however, has not been acknowledged. It is demonstrated here that gentrywomen significantly altered the direction in which post-Reformation Catholicism evolved in the Diocese of Chester between c.1558 and c.1625.

¹ C. Haigh, 'Catholicism in early modern England: Bossy and beyond' [review], *Historical Journal*, 45:2 (2002), 481-94; C. Haigh, *English Reformations: religion, politics and society under the Tudors*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); C. Haigh, 'From monopoly to minority: Catholicism in early modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 31 (1981), 129-47; C. Haigh, 'The continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', *Past & Present*, 93 (1981), 37-69; C. Haigh, 'The fall of a Church or the rise of a sect? Post-Reformation Catholicism in England', *Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), 181-6; J.S. Leatherbarrow, *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants, Remains, Historical and Literary, connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancashire and Cheshire*, New Series, 110, (Manchester: The Chetham Society, 1947); K.R. Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971)

Historiographical context

A broad spectrum of historiographical discussion provides the backdrop to this thesis and has informed the questions posed at the outset. This section will outline the principal areas of historiographical debate and highlight some of the key questions that have arisen out of previous research. These questions will be addressed in the course of this thesis.

One of the earliest and most pivotal discussions about post-Reformation Catholicism took place between J.C.H. Aveling, John Bossy, A.G. Dickens, and Christopher Haigh, regarding change and continuity. Aveling, Bossy, and Dickens variously suggested that there was a discontinuity between the pre-Reformation medieval church and post-Reformation Catholic practice.² The three historians suggested that the reduced presence of the Catholic clergy in England during the period between the Elizabethan Settlement and the arrival of the missionaries in the 1570s and 1580s represented a watershed for medieval Catholicism. In summary, they argued that post-Reformation Catholicism was an entirely new brand of that religion, which had been revived by the arrival of the missionaries; that there was such a great degree of change that there was a discontinuity between pre- and post-Reformation Catholicism in England.

In contrast to this, however, Christopher Haigh disagreed. In his study of Tudor Lancashire and other research, Haigh saw clear evidence

² J.C.H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe: the Catholic recusants in England from Reformation to Emancipation*, (London: Blond and Briggs, 1976); J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1975); A.G. Dickens, 'The first stages of Romanist recusancy in Yorkshire, 1560-1590', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 35:138 (1941), 157-82

of continuity within both Catholic belief and practice.³ In great part, Haigh attributed this continuity to the sustained presence of the recusant Marian clergy in that part of England. Where Aveling, Bossy and Dickens had seen an ageing group of deprived clerics, Haigh provided evidence of a vigorous group of recusant ministers who continued to provide great numbers of Catholics with access to sacramental devotion and other traditional aspects of religious practice until the arrival of the missionaries in the 1570s. The evidence presented within this research, from the Diocese of Chester as a whole, validates Haigh's argument for continuity from an early stage. There is clear evidence that recusant Marian priests were present in significant numbers throughout the diocese and that they exerted great influence over the post-Reformation Catholic community there. Haigh also presented evidence for a continuity in traditional religious practices and beliefs, which is also confirmed by the findings of this thesis.⁴ Haigh's work on Lancashire was, however, focused on the role of male gentry Catholics and did not shed much light upon the part that gentrywomen played within Catholic communities and in Catholic continuity. This thesis aims to rectify that omission and will demonstrate that Catholic gentrywomen played an equally important role in the continuity and evolution of post-Reformation Catholicism, albeit in different ways to their male counterparts.

Although religious practices were frequently forced to adapt and evolve as a necessary reaction to legal prohibition, the religious beliefs

³ C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Haigh, 'The continuity of Catholicism', 37-69

⁴ Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe*; Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*; Dickens, 'The first stages of Romanist recusancy in Yorkshire', 157-82; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*; Haigh, 'The continuity of Catholicism', 37-69

and practices exhibited by the Catholics of the Diocese of Chester demonstrate that traditional religious devotion survived extensively. Research by Eamon Duffy has outlined the devotional calendar that structured the medieval church in England.⁵ Observance of this cycle of devotion continued into the post-Reformation period. It is apparent, for example, that Catholics in the Diocese of Chester continued to follow the medieval liturgical calendar of festivals, fast days and feast days, saints' days and holy days, well into the seventeenth-century. Furthermore, sacramental worship remained at the heart of devotion. Despite difficulties regarding access to the clergy, Catholics continued to receive the Eucharist regularly.

What was unclear, however, was whether these activities continued to play an equal part in the religious lives of both men and women from the diocese, or whether they became more associated with a particular brand of female piety. The evidence presented in this research will demonstrate that traditional religious practices continued to play an important role within post-Reformation Catholicism for both men and women. However, the inevitable move away from the public sphere of the medieval church, towards the private sphere of the post-Reformation household, meant that traditional practices increasingly became the preserve of household religion – thereby becoming intrinsically linked to routines of female piety.

Sources relating to the Diocese of Chester partially support the argument made by Aveling, Bossy and Dickens that there was rejuvenation within post-Reformation Catholicism, which coincided with the

⁵ E. Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers, 1240-1570*, (London; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England. c.1400-c.1580*, (London; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

arrival of the missionaries in the 1570s and 1580s. Although the recusant Marian clergy had ensured the initial continuity of pre-Reformation Catholic beliefs and practices, numbers of surviving priests inevitably dwindled as a result of ageing clerics. What would have happened had the missionaries not arrived is unclear, but there is little doubt that the greater presence of Catholic clerics reinvigorated post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester at a grassroots level. There were far greater numbers of missionary priests in the diocese, than there had been surviving Marian clergy. However, every contemporary source indicates that missionary priests clustered markedly within Lancashire, as opposed to other parts of the diocese. Analysis of the evidence outlined in the first chapter explains why this clustering effect occurred in Lancashire. Evidence from the Diocese of Chester also challenges some aspects of the arguments put forward by Aveling, Bossy and Dickens. Chapter one therefore also assesses whether presentments for non-communication and recusancy are reliable measures of either Catholic practice or belief, or if such figures tell us more about the machinations of state authority and the ecclesiastical courts than they do about the beliefs and practices of Catholics themselves.⁶

Much has been written on the subject of Catholicism and loyalty in early modern England and this is a subject central to this thesis. Catholics had been involved in a number of plots against Queen Elizabeth I throughout the 1560s, which led to a perceived association between treasonous activity and Catholicism. The increased concern about Catholicism and political disloyalty inevitably meant that the state became

⁶ Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe*; Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*; Dickens, 'The first stages of Romanist recusancy in Yorkshire', 157-82

preoccupied by religious conformity. Recent work by Michael Questier on the viscounts Montague has considered the issue of political loyalty and conformity in detail. Questier's research confirmed that male members of the gentry adopted a paternalistic attitude towards fellow Catholics by offering them political protection and patronage.⁷ Such men used the guise of conformity to retain positions of authority. By retaining their political power, Catholic men were more able to manoeuvre circumstances to the advantage of themselves, their families, and their local communities. This thesis will consider whether the evidence from the Diocese of Chester demonstrates the same pattern.

Questier's work on the Montague family was a groundbreaking piece of research regarding Catholic paternalism and patronage; however, one cannot fail to notice that only one chapter was devoted to the influence of a Catholic woman: that concerning the widow Magdalen Browne, Viscountess Montague.⁸ In contrast to the gender imbalance that is apparent in Questier's work, sources relating to the Diocese of Chester will be analysed in this thesis to consider whether Catholic gentrywomen were able to offer protection and patronage to their fellow Catholics in the diocese. If Catholic gentrywomen were able to offer protection and patronage, they would not be able to provide it in the same ways as their male counterparts who held public office. The evidence will therefore be reviewed to determine how women were able to offer assistance.

In some respects, widows were well positioned to adopt prominent roles. Unlike men, women did not need to worry about losing positions of

⁷ M.C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550-1640*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

⁸ Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England*

social, political or economic authority, as these were not normally available to them. Although widows faced harsher financial penalties for recusancy than their married counterparts, the majority of widows were elderly and did not have young dependents whose futures might be put at risk. As a result of this, widows were often well situated to withstand the pecuniary disadvantages of maintaining a recusant household. Furthermore, unlike married women, widows were not compelled to obey the authority of their husbands; meaning that they often had greater levels of freedom in religious choice. A type of 'maternalism' has often been evident in the case of Catholic widows, so the role of widows in the Diocese of Chester also needed to be considered. It will be demonstrated that the widows of the diocese were often well positioned to adopt leading roles in Catholic communities. Furthermore, widows were also more likely to be recusants.

Evidently not all Catholic gentrywomen were recusants. Some attended Church of England services, either regularly or occasionally. Research projects conducted separately by Michael Questier and Alexandra Walsham have shown that individuals practiced church-papistry and conformity in a variety of ways and chose to do so for a wide range of reasons.⁹ There was no clear-cut divide between recusants and conformists, between non-attenders and church-papists. Rather, there was a sliding spectrum of grey areas, within which Catholics situated themselves. This thesis will examine how the Catholic gentrywomen of the Diocese of Chester exercised their religious beliefs. The evidence will

⁹ M.C. Questier, 'Catholic Loyalty in Early Stuart England', *English Historical Review*, 123:504 (2008), 1132-65; M.C. Questier, 'Loyalty, Religion and State Power in Early Modern England: English Romanism and the Jacobean Oath of Allegiance', *Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), 311-29; M.C. Questier, 'The Politics of Religious Conformity and the Accession of James I', *Historical Research*, 71:174 (1998), 14-30; A. Walsham, *Church papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in early modern England*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History, 68, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993)

demonstrate that the Catholic women of the diocese were more likely to be recusants than their male counterparts. As married women were considered to be the legal responsibility of their husbands, individual women were regularly able to escape the worst penalties of the penal laws. Similarly, married women did not face the same risks in losing positions of public authority through non-attendance at church services, as their husbands did. This meant that female recusancy was a significant problem for the Established Church within the diocese.

Within the wider historiography of post-Reformation Catholicism, relatively little attention has been directly given to the role of women. Although most of the major works cite examples of female Catholics (usually female recusants), few explicitly discuss the role of Catholic women and their contribution to the development of their religion. The major exception to this rule is John Bossy's thesis regarding matriarchy.¹⁰ Bossy's discussion of matriarchy highlighted the significance of women in the dissemination of Catholicism to succeeding generations and has been highly influential upon subsequent theory regarding a gendered interpretation of Catholic history. Despite its originality, Bossy's theory made relatively little attempt to consider women as individuals by analysing their personal piety or private beliefs. Rather, Bossy saw women more as the conduits through which children adopted their beliefs (especially the future missionaries), than as significant individuals in their own right.

Bossy's approach was the genesis of one of the two persistent trends within the historiography of post-Reformation Catholicism, which

¹⁰ J. Bossy, 'The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism', *Past & Present*, 21 (1962), 39-59; Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, pp.153-60

broadly considers women to have only been significant in their roles as either mothers or martyrs. On the whole, Bossy considered that post-Reformation Catholic communities were reliant upon the male Catholic clergy for their survival and that the role that lay Catholics – and especially Catholic laywomen – played in maintaining their religious communities was secondary. Despite the theory's limitations, evidence from the Diocese of Chester broadly supports the concept of matriarchy. It will be demonstrated that mothers were highly influential in the early consolidation of Catholic belief in their children. Furthermore, it was Catholic gentrywomen who took the lead in organising household religion and using gentry households as Mass centres for communal worship.

Turning attention to the historiography of religion in north-west England, the relevant literature becomes more scant. This thesis has been primarily informed by two works on religion specific to the north-west: Christopher Haigh's study of the Reformation in Tudor Lancashire is once again pivotal, as is R.C. Richardson's investigation of the development of Puritanism in north-west England.¹¹ The bulk of Haigh's research on Lancashire is pre-Elizabethan, meaning that its focus in great part pre-dates this study. However, many of Haigh's broader arguments remain applicable for later time periods. Haigh highlighted the confused jurisdiction with the Diocese of Chester and the influence that had upon the enforcement of religious conformity in Lancashire. This research aimed to expand upon Haigh's theory, by analysing how the complexity of jurisdictional boundaries and administrative confusion – at both parish

¹¹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*; R.C. Richardson, *Puritanism in North-West England: A Regional Study of the Diocese of Chester to 1642*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972)

level and across the diocese as a whole – made the enforcement of religious conformity so difficult. It will be demonstrated throughout this thesis that some Catholics used this jurisdictional confusion to their advantage and that women did so as frequently as men.

Researching Catholicism within the Diocese of Chester has been troublesome in many respects, as Lancashire often appears to be an isolated and homogenous county, a factor that has long overshadowed historians' knowledge and understanding of the rest of the diocese. Having completed this study, it is clear that there are major disparities between the evidence relating to Lancashire and that concerning the rest of the diocesan territories – namely Cheshire and parts of the North Riding of Yorkshire. Explaining these disparities provided this research with one of its most robust challenges – attempting to explain why post-Reformation Catholicism in Lancashire developed in such a unique way. Although the picture is undoubtedly complex, chapter one analyses some of the reasons why.¹²

This research has inevitably encountered similar difficulties to those R.C. Richardson faced when undertaking his work on Puritanism in the north-west. Richardson's work was also circumscribed by the parameters of the Diocese of Chester and laid the foundations for a diocesan study of religious history.¹³ An interesting question posed at the outset of this research was whether there were any similarities between the development of Protestant and Catholic female piety in the diocese. A great deal of emphasis has always been placed by historians upon female literacy within Protestantism, yet relatively little consideration has been

¹² Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*

¹³ Richardson, *Puritanism in North-West England*

given to the prevalence and influence of devotional and polemical literature within post-Reformation Catholicism. Chapter four rectifies this imbalance and demonstrates that the Catholic gentrywomen of the diocese were more literate than has been previously acknowledged and had access to a wide range of literary works.

More localised studies of Catholicism in the north-west of England have also informed this work. J. Stanley Leatherbarrow and K.R. Wark undertook research on Elizabethan recusancy in Lancashire and Cheshire, respectively, while John Cosgrove considered the position of the recusant gentry in Lancashire.¹⁴ All three of these county-focused studies provide solid foundations for the investigation of Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester. However, all three studies relied heavily upon state-produced documentation, especially the recusant rolls. This over-reliance upon officially sanctioned documents limits the usefulness of their research in attempting to consider personal religious beliefs and, particularly, in understanding the nature of female devotion. Despite these limitations, Leatherbarrow and Wark both presented a substantial amount of information regarding women and engaged in discussions regarding their influence upon Catholic belief and practice. Cosgrove, however, was naturally more limited by the nature of his topic to a discussion of gentry males and his work is relatively uninformative in terms of analysing the role of Catholic gentrywomen.

¹⁴ J. Cosgrove, *The Position of the Recusant Gentry in the Social Setting of Lancashire*, (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Manchester, 1964); J.S. Leatherbarrow, *Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 1947); Leatherbarrow, *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants*, The Chetham Society; K.R. Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Manchester, 1966); Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*

All three studies provided astute analyses of their respective counties, but lacked any cohesive analysis of non-recusant, female Catholics. Cosgrove, Leatherbarrow and Wark undoubtedly also highlighted the differences between Catholicism in Lancashire and Cheshire – in the former county, Catholic communities were more extensive, active, and focused on the kinship networks of the lesser gentry; in the latter county, Catholicism was less cohesive, more localised, and there was less evidence that kinship networks played a significant role. The research presented in this thesis confirms that there are evident disparities between the character of Catholicism in Lancashire and Cheshire, in terms of female kinship networks. There is a significant body of evidence to indicate that there were extensive kinship networks of Catholic women in Lancashire, yet there is little evidence of such networks in Cheshire or, indeed, elsewhere within the diocese. It appears that female kinship networks were integral to the way in which the post-Reformation Catholic community in Lancashire functioned practically.

The balance of authority between Catholic men and women within the domestic household is a subject of fundamental importance to this research. An intriguing question was whether the Catholic gentrywomen of the Diocese of Chester were able to challenge traditional gender roles by adopting positions of authority that were normally reserved for men. One of the most significant works of the last decade, Bernard Capp's groundbreaking piece of research *When Gossips Meet*, illustrated the way that women were able to use female kinship networks to challenge male

dominance within society in early modern England.¹⁵ The importance of female kinship networks within post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester is addressed throughout every chapter of this thesis, but especially in chapter five. Research by Steven Ozment addressed the issue of male authority within the household, demonstrating that fathers in Reformation Germany and Switzerland were more sympathetic figures than the stereotype.¹⁶ But how much freedom did Catholic gentrywomen in post-Reformation England really have?

This thesis has considered the issue of female agency throughout. The evidence suggests that Catholic gentrywomen had limited life choices. There were few opportunities for unmarried females, limited equity within marriage, and restricted access to education or positions of social authority for women. Attending school at the exiled English convents, or pursuing a vocation, allowed Catholic gentrywomen from the diocese the opportunity to attain a degree of independence and a level of education that were almost impossible to obtain in England. Furthermore, in the absence of a clerical hierarchy and with the growth of household religion in England, female members of the Catholic gentry in the diocese were able to adopt positions of social authority that had not previously been accessible to them. Post-Reformation Catholicism provided gentrywomen from the diocese with opportunities to transgress social boundaries and to assume roles of authority within their communities.

The evidence presented in the third chapter of this thesis examines the role that Catholic gentrywomen played in the continuity of traditional

¹⁵ B. Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England*, *Oxford Studies in Social History*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004)

¹⁶ S. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

religious beliefs and practices in the Diocese of Chester. This builds upon research by Christine Peters. Peters has published comprehensively, but of particular importance to this thesis is her research on the evolution of female personal piety during the Reformation.¹⁷ Peters considered various aspects of female devotion, but concentrated much of her attention upon the shift towards Christocentric piety and the consequences for women of that shift. The move away from devotion to the Virgin Mary and female saints, Peters argued, eased the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism in England. It is sometimes unclear how Peters' work relates to post-Reformation Catholic women in England, as the majority of her examples are (for obvious reasons) drawn from amongst Protestant women. In terms of Catholic women in the Diocese of Chester, however, the evidence presented in this thesis will demonstrate a clear continued devotion to the Virgin Mary.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this thesis is the first piece of research to comprehensively investigate the Catholic gentrywomen of the Diocese of Chester. Two other studies, however, have considered the relationship between Catholic women and their confessors. Ellen Macek and Colleen Seguin, in their separate pieces of research, considered some of the most famous names amongst English female Catholics from this period: Margaret Clitherow; Dorothy Lawson; Anne Vaux; Magdalen Browne, Viscountess Montague; and Anne Dacre Howard, Countess of Arundel.¹⁸ Although three of these women were

¹⁷ C. Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in late Medieval and Reformation England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

¹⁸ E.A. Macek, "Ghostly Fathers" and their "Virtuous Daughters": the role of Spiritual Direction in the lives of three early modern English Women', *Catholic Historical Review*, 90:2 (2004), 213-35; C.M. Seguin, *Addicted Unto Piety: Catholic Women in England*,

from the north of England – Clitherow, from York; Lawson, from Newcastle; and Anne Howard, born in Carlisle – none of the three spent any significant amount of time in the Diocese of Chester. However, Macek and Seguin both demonstrated that mutually beneficial relationships existed between Catholic women and their confessors: priests provided women with sacramental devotion and acted as their spiritual directors; in return, women were showcased by the clergy as exemplars of female piety in order to promote their different standpoints. This thesis will demonstrate that there is also evidence of such symbiotic relationships between Catholic gentrywomen and their priests in the Diocese of Chester. In return for the administration of the sacraments, Catholic gentrywomen provided priests with shelter in their households, allowed them to use their homes as Mass centres, and were able to facilitate contact with other local Catholics via female kinship networks. By undertaking such roles, as gatekeepers, Catholic gentrywomen assumed positions of authority within their communities.

Studies that have investigated the lives of Catholic women in the north of England are rare and mainly focus upon Yorkshire women. Sarah Bastow and Emma Watson are the two historians who have notably devoted research specifically to Catholic women in the north – Bastow, to the recusant women of Yorkshire, in general, and Watson, specifically to the Catholic women of the North York Moors.¹⁹ Both Bastow and Watson

1590-1690, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Duke University, 1997); C.M. Seguin, 'Ambiguous Liaisons: Catholic Women's Relationships with their Confessors in Early Modern England', *Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte*, 95 (2004), 156-85

¹⁹ S.L. Bastow, *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642: Resistance and Accommodation*, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007); S.L. Bastow, "Worth Nothing, but very Wilful": Catholic Recusant Women of Yorkshire, 1536-1642', *Recusant History*, 25:4 (2001), 591-603; E. Watson, "A stiff-necked, wilful and obstinate people": the Catholic laity in the North York Moors, c.1559-1603', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 77

noted that Catholic gentrywomen operated as part of larger kinship networks – an observation that is confirmed by the evidence contained in this thesis regarding the Diocese of Chester. The only historian to have undertaken any research regarding Catholic gentrywomen from the Diocese of Chester itself is Janet Hollinshead, who has concluded a study into the kinship networks of Catholic gentrywomen (both women religious and laywomen) from the Blundell families of Little Crosby and Ince Blundell in Lancashire.²⁰ Hollinshead's work is a comprehensive prosopographical study, but is naturally limited by the fact that her research relates to only two families from a single parish (Sefton). The extent to which her conclusions can be extrapolated is restricted as a consequence of this. Prosopography is a valuable tool that has been utilised by this thesis. The prosopographical research outlined in chapter five confirms that female kinship networks were extensive in the Diocese of Chester and that these networks linked post-Reformation Catholicism in England with continental Europe.

Chapter five focuses on women religious from the diocese. The research outlined in this chapter builds heavily upon work by Caroline Bowden and Claire Walker.²¹ Bowden and Walker have outlined the

(2005), 181-204; E. Watson, 'Disciplined Disobedience? Women and the Survival of Catholicism in the North York Moors in the Reign of Elizabeth I', *Studies in Church History*, 43 (2007), 295-306

²⁰ J.E. Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community: The Blundells of south Lancashire during the seventeenth & eighteenth centuries*, (Wigan: T. Snape and Co Ltd for the North West Catholic History Society, 2010)

²¹ C. Bowden, 'Community Space and Cultural Transmission: Formation and Schooling in English Enclosed Convents in the Seventeenth Century', *History of Education*, 34:4 (2005), 365-86; C. Bowden, "'For the Glory of God": a Study of the Education of English Catholic Women in Convents in Flanders and France in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century', *Paedagogica Historica*, Supplementary Series, Gent CSHP, 5 (1999); C. Bowden, 'The English Convents in Exile and Questions of National Identity, 1600-1688', in *British and Irish Emigrants and Exiles in Europe, 1603-1688*, (ed.) D. Worthington, (Amsterdam: Brill, 2010), 297-314; C. Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave

models of piety that existed within the exiled English convents and demonstrated that the women of those convents retained influence, despite their separation from society. Expanding upon such pieces of research, chapter five details the female kinship networks that existed amongst gentrywomen from the diocese, within the exiled convents and beyond them. The evidence demonstrates that there was regular contact between gentrywomen at the exiled convents and their kin in the Diocese of Chester. This association with Counter-Reformed Europe naturally informed the particular brand of post-Reformation Catholicism that developed and evolved in the diocese. Moreover, this interaction ensured that the models of female piety constructed by the secular Catholic gentrywomen of the diocese were influenced by post-Tridentine conventual piety.

In conclusion, this research is situated within a wide range of historiographical fields. A research project of this type – that investigates the lives of Catholic gentrywomen across an entire English diocese – has not been attempted before. Although studies of post-Reformation Catholicism have covered various geographical areas and time periods, the gendering of such research is still a relatively unusual occurrence. As such, this research comprises a wholly new type of investigation that has

Macmillan, 2003); C. Walker, 'Loyal and Dutiful Subjects: English Nuns and Stuart Politics', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, (ed.) J. Daybell, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 228-42; C. Walker, 'Priests, Nuns, Presses and Prayers: The Southern Netherlands and the Contours of English Catholicism', in *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands, c.1570-1720*, (eds.) B. Kaplan, et al, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 136-55; C. Walker, 'Recusants, Daughters and Sisters in Christ: English Nuns and their Communities in the Seventeenth Century', in *Women, Identities and Political Cultures in Early Modern Europe*, (eds.) S. Broomhall & S. Tarbin, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 61-76; C. Walker, 'Securing Souls or Telling Tales? The Politics of Cloistered Spirituality', in *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, (ed.) C. van Wyhe, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 227-44

been informed by the work of a far greater number of historians than there is space to analyse comprehensively in this introduction. Many of the other contributions have been noted in the course of the thesis itself and have been considered no less important as a result of their absence here.

Sources and methodological discussion

The difficulties in researching early modern women – particularly women practicing an illegal religion – are manifold. In the absence of much extant material produced by Catholic women themselves, state-produced documentation inevitably becomes the most plentiful body of evidence. Examination of the diocesan records housed at the Cheshire Record Office (Chester) and the Borthwick Institute for Archives (York) has provided a great deal of information regarding those Catholic women whose religious conformity was challenged by the authorities in the Diocese of Chester.

The records of the Diocesan (CRO, EDV) and Metropolitan Visitations (BIA, V.1571-2, V.1578-9, V.1590-1, V.1595-6, V.1607) of the Diocese of Chester, housed at the Cheshire Record Office, Chester, and the Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, respectively, have provided a great deal of the evidence relating to the presentment of Catholic women for non-communication and recusancy. The Correction Books of the Diocesan Visitations of Chester (CRO, EDV 1) are especially informative. Papers relating to the relatively short-lived Ecclesiastical Commission that operated within the Diocese of Chester between 1562 and c.1573 (CRO, EDA 12) have also been enlightening, if only by clarifying how ineffective

that commission was. The volume of material relating to the Commissioners in Ecclesiastical Causes is relatively small and therefore a number of further records at Cheshire Record Office have also been reviewed, including Act Books and Registers relating to the Bishops of Chester (CRO, EDA 1-3), Bishops' Transcripts (CRO, EDB), and Parish Bundles from the diocese (CRO, EDP). One collection at Cheshire Record Office that has been heavily utilised is the records of the Consistory Court at Chester (CRO, EDC); particularly the Court Papers (CRO, EDC 5), which have provided a great number of examples relating to discontent with the Established Church in the diocese, as well as material that relates directly to Catholics.

The material held at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, York includes a number of the High Commission Act Books (BIA, HC.AB) and Cause Papers relating to cases from the Diocese of Chester, which were brought before the Court of High Commission at York (BIA, HC.CP). However, relatively few cases relating to Chester were heard at the church courts at York: those that were mainly related to the areas of the diocese under the jurisdiction of the Archdeaconry of Richmond. Despite this limitation, the Cause Papers remain a valuable resource for the Archdeaconry of Richmond, as records relating to its territories are less prevalent amongst the material held at Cheshire Record Office (which in the main part originates from the Archdeaconry of Chester).

A number of other documents produced by the Church and state authorities add to the body of knowledge regarding Catholic gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester. Individual letters and reports housed at the British Library and amongst the State Papers, Domestic at the National

Archives (TNA, SPDom 12-15; TNA, DL) provided further detail regarding the lives of Catholics from the diocese – although there is no substantial body of material. Rather than the relatively uninformative mentions of ‘Jane Doe, recusant’, which can so-often to be found in visitation records, this type of documentation provides a greater degree of contextual qualitative evidence. Extensive detail, however, remains rare.

Moving beyond the parameters of state-produced documentation, the family and estate papers of Catholic families occasionally contain detail pertaining to gentrywomen from this time period. The Blundell of Crosby papers at Lancashire Record Office (LRO, DDBL), for example, provide an insight into family life at Little Crosby in Sefton parish (Lancashire) during this period. The extent to which such sources are useful in providing information about women, however, is still limited; as a relatively small proportion of the surviving documentation in collections of estate papers refers directly to women. Once again, the evidence is more contextual and implicit, rather than explicit.

Three unique sources have provided much of the detail regarding the lives of Catholic gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester that have been presented in this thesis. The first source is an account that describes the course of a raid upon Rossall Grange in Poulton-le-Fylde in January 1584 by state-appointed pursuivants. Rossall, at that time, was home to Mrs Elizabeth Allen (sister-in-law to Cardinal William Allen) and her three teenage daughters, but was seized in the name of the crown because of Mrs Allen’s religious beliefs. Despite a lengthy court dispute, the property was never returned to the Allen family. The account describing ‘The Plunder and Seizure of Rossall Grange’ was written

anonymously and was first published in the second edition of a compendium of works relating to English Catholics entitled the *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia* printed in 1588.²² The *Concertatio* was first compiled by Dr John Gibbons and Father John Fen in 1583, but was later republished as an expanded edition by Dr John Bridgewater, firstly in 1588 and again in 1594.

The account of the raid on Rossall was first included in the two later Bridgewater editions. More recently, the account was translated and reprinted in *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* by Henry Foley in 1877 and also subsequently in a volume on the history of Poulton-le-Fylde, which was produced by Henry Fishwick for the Chetham Society in 1885.²³ The *Concertatio* account is hagiographical in tone, yet other sources corroborate the sequence of events contained within it. This account is unique, in the respect that it provides an unusually detailed account of a wholly female Catholic household and of the type of difficulties that they faced as a result of both their religion and their gender. In the course of this thesis, direct quotes refer to page numbers from the Chetham Society volume edited by Henry Fishwick.²⁴

A second unique source is provided by the Chronicle of the Augustinian Canonesses of the English convent of St Monica's in

²² Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange and Todderstaffe Hall, the Residence and Estates of Mrs. Allen, the Widow of the Brother of Cardinal Allen', (trans. J. Gillow) from Dr Bridgewater's *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia*, printed in *The History of the Parish of Poulton-le-Fylde in the County of Lancashire*, (ed.) H. Fishwick, *Remains Historical and Literary connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester*, 8, New Series, (Manchester: C.E. Simms for the Chetham Society, 1885), pp.136-57

²³ Fishwick, *The History of the Parish of Poulton-le-Fylde*, pp.136-57

²⁴ Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange', pp.136-57

Louvain.²⁵ The Chronicle recounts in narrative form a history of the lives of members of the convent, mostly written upon the event of their deaths. Recounted by anonymous members of the exiled English convent, the tone of the text is deeply hagiographical. This is hardly surprising, given that the purpose of the Chronicle's construction was to provide religious inspiration to the sisters. However, the contents are consistent with the information that is available from other contemporary sources. As such, there is little reason to doubt the factual aspects of the account. Much of the Chronicle relates to the lives of the nuns during their time at the convent; however, it also contains a wealth of information regarding the hardships faced by the women in England before their enclosure. The information provided about the lives of these nuns, both before and after they joined the faith, grants an unparalleled insight into the lives of Catholic gentrywomen from the Diocese of Chester.

The Chronicle describes the wide-ranging difficulties that Catholic women from the diocese faced as a result of England's penal laws, including: financial hardship, arrest, imprisonment, the sequestration of property, and the removal of their children to Protestant households. The evidence contained within the Chronicle demonstrates that childhood experiences were instrumental in shaping the religious vocations of these women. Similarly, the account also makes explicit the extent to which examples of female piety – provided by mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, cousins, or family friends – were central to the way in which children learned to be Catholic. Catholic women provided exemplars of

²⁵ Douai Abbey Archives, Reading, Augustinian Canonesses formerly of St Monica's, Louvain, MS Louvain Chronicle, MS C 2; A. Hamilton (ed.), *The Chronicle of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, at St. Monica's in Louvain now at St Augustine's Priory, Newton Abbot, Devon*, 2 vols., (Edinburgh: Sands, 1904)

female religious devotion that, in turn, were imitated by children. A transcript of the original manuscript was utilised in the course of this research, but all page references relate to the printed volume produced by Dom. Adam Hamilton, for ease of reference. The information contained within the Louvain Chronicle has been compared and contrasted with the *Responsa* volumes for the English College at Rome and the Douay Diaries, both preserved by the Catholic Record Society, which tell us about the early lives of male Catholics from the diocese.²⁶

The third and final manuscript that has provided a great deal of information for this thesis is the account of the apostate priest Thomas Bell, which is now housed at Westminster Diocesan Archives.²⁷ This extensive document, which comprises of 33 folios, consists of the information provided to the state authorities by Bell upon the occasion of his apostasy. The document, believed to have been produced in 1590, lists the Catholic households in Lancashire where Bell ministered during his decade of missionary activity in that county. This document provides an exceptional level of detail regarding Catholic gentrywomen, compared with similar testimonies provided by other Catholic priests. In some parts of the manuscript, Bell even goes so far as to prioritise the discussion of female members of the household over the provision of information about

²⁶ E.H. Burton & T.L. Williams (eds.), *The Douay College Diaries Third, Fourth and Fifth, 1598-1654, with the Rheims Report, 1579-80, volume I*, Catholic Record Society, 10, (London: Printed for the Society by J. Whitehead & Son, Leeds, 1911); E.H. Burton & T.L. Williams (eds.), *The Douay College Diaries Third, Fourth and Fifth, 1598-1654, with the Rheims Report, 1579-80, volume II*, Catholic Record Society, 11, (London: Printed for the Society by J. Whitehead & Son, Leeds, 1911); A. Kenny (ed.), *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome Part one: 1598-1621*, Catholic Record Society, 54, (Newport: Printed by R.H. Johns Limited, 1962); A. Kenny (ed.), *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome Part two: 1622-1685*, Catholic Record Society, 55, (Newport: Printed by R.H. Johns Limited, 1963); T.F. Knox (ed.), *The First and Second diaries of the English College, Douay and an appendix of unpublished documents, edited by the Fathers of the Congregation of the London Oratory; with an historical introduction by Thomas Francis Knox*, (London, 1878)

²⁷ W[estminster] D[iocesan] A[rchives], A Series, IV, ff.429-52

their male counterparts. The number of times where Bell refers to Catholic widows is particularly interesting, as it demonstrates that widows – being more financially independent – were able to exert their religious choices with a greater degree of freedom than their married or single peers. Bell regularly refers to widows as being the most troublesome of his former flock. The evidence within the manuscript, at the very least, indicates that Bell had frequent contact with Catholic women in gentry households. Indeed, in many cases women seem to have been his primary point of contact. While he often refers to ‘troublesome’ women, it is also interesting to note that it is women who are most-regularly described as being the priest’s ‘friends’.

The Bell manuscript establishes that it was women who undertook leading roles within the organisation of religious devotion, both for the family and the local community. In most instances, the inferences are subtle, rather than explicit, but the centrality of gentrywomen within the Catholic communities of the Diocese of Chester is evident throughout. The Bell manuscript has not been widely utilised by historians and hardly any reference has been made in relation to the content regarding women. In their most recent collaborative work, Peter Lake and Michael Questier made extensive use of the manuscript to inform their knowledge of religious policy in the north of England.²⁸ However, Lake and Questier failed to explicitly acknowledge or analyse the wealth of material that the manuscript provides regarding Catholic women. Rather, their work focused on the information that Bell provided about Catholic men. Given

²⁸ P. Lake & M.C. Questier, ‘Margaret Clitherow, Catholic Nonconformity, Martyrology and the Politics of Religious Change in Elizabethan England’, *Past & Present*, 185 (2004), 43-90

that the main focus of their research related to the Catholic martyr Margaret Clitherow, it is somewhat surprising that they chose to devote so little attention to the contextual information that Bell provides about other Catholic women.

Beyond the parameters of manuscript material, a further source has proven invaluable to this research. The online database constructed by the AHRC-funded Who Were the Nuns? (WWTN) research project based at Queen Mary, University of London (2008-2011) and the subsequent printed volumes published in conjunction with it have been indispensable.²⁹ The microstudy of nuns from the Diocese of Chester at the exiled English convents that is outlined in chapter five would not have been possible without it. Through the construction of a prosopographical database, the WWTN project ensured that it is possible to trace almost all the women who were members of the exiled English convents in continental Europe between the sixteenth- and eighteenth-centuries. The collation of this material has provided an unrivalled opportunity to study the kinship networks that were constructed between enclosed nuns and their Catholic relatives back in England.

The fact that such kinship networks were maintained to so great an extent establishes that there was a far greater degree of contact between Counter-Reformed Europe and post-Reformation Catholics in England than has previously been acknowledged. It provides irrefutable evidence of the contact that post-Tridentine piety had with English Catholicism and the extent to which the former inevitably altered the character of the latter.

²⁹ 'Who Were the Nuns? A Prosopographical Study of the English Nuns in Exile, 1600-1800' – an AHRC-funded research project. More information about the project is available, along with the prosopographical database: <http://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/index.html>

The degree to which post-Reformation English Catholicism was informed by regular contact with English Catholic exiles living in continental Europe is a topic that has only recently received detailed attention from early career scholars such as Katy Gibbons.³⁰ The prevalence of such sustained contact is evidenced throughout this thesis.

Thesis structure

Chapter one demonstrates that the jurisdictional complexities, both temporal and ecclesiastical, within the Diocese of Chester during this period made it difficult for state-appointed authorities to enforce religious conformity. The presence of male members of the Catholic gentry within the administration of temporal authorities such as the Duchy of Lancaster and the county palatinates of Chester and Lancaster only served to exacerbate the problem. Catholic men who held office were able to offer paternalistic protection towards fellow Catholics and thereby hindered the enforcement of religious conformity even further. The diocese was ecclesiastically complicated, with many detached parochial territories. Much of the bishopric was beyond the remit of key temporal agencies of authority in the north of England, including the Council in the North. The

³⁰ K. Gibbons, “‘An Unquiet Estate Abroad’: the religious exile of Catholic noble and gentlewomen under Elizabeth I”, in *Women on the Move: Refugees, Migration and Exile*, (eds.) F. Reid & K. Holden, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 43-58; K. Gibbons, *English Catholics Exiles in Late Sixteenth-Century Paris*, (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011); K. Gibbons, ‘No home in exile? Elizabethan Catholics in Paris’, *Reformation*, 15 (2010), 115-31; K. Gibbons, ‘Saints in Exile: The cult of St Thomas of Canterbury among Elizabethan Catholics in France’, *Recusant History*, 29 (2009), 315-40; K. Gibbons, *The Experience of Exile and English Catholics: Paris in the 1580s*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of York, 2006); K. Gibbons, “‘Une place réservée’? Catholic exiles and contested space in later sixteenth century Paris”, *French Historical Studies*, 32 (2009), 33-62

diocese in totality was outside the direct authority of the crown – falling instead within the jurisdiction of the Duchy of Lancaster. The detection and presentment of Catholics by state-appointed authorities was therefore made extremely difficult as a result of a unique combination of factors. Additionally, the research presented in this chapter highlights the difficulties, firstly, in identifying who was Catholic and, secondly, in attempting to quantify the pervasiveness of Catholicism in the diocese. The chapter concludes that it is necessary to move beyond documentation produced by state-appointed authorities, such as recusant and non-communicant records, in order to gain a more accurate understanding of the significance that gentrywomen had within the development of post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester.

The second chapter establishes the centrality of Catholic gentrywomen in maintaining and caring for the great numbers of recusant and missionary priests who worked in the Diocese of Chester during this period. Evidence indicates that it was gentrywomen who had the most sustained contact with the Catholic clergy, sheltering them within their homes and arranging for the gentry household to be used as a Mass centre for the local community. By taking primary responsibility for these daily practicalities, women acted as gatekeepers to the clergy – and thereby to the sacramental devotion that children, other family members, household servants, and Catholics in the local community required. Catholic gentrywomen also influenced the confessional direction of post-Reformation Catholicism in the diocese through their choice of household chaplain. As it was the women of gentry households who had the most sustained contact with chaplains, Catholic gentrywomen directly

determined the style of Catholic worship and sacramental devotion that was experienced by great numbers of people by their choice of priest.

Chapter three demonstrates the influence of female piety upon the character of post-Reformation Catholicism. It establishes that the Catholic women of the Diocese of Chester constructed their own brand of post-Tridentine religious devotion, which was based within the sphere of the private household and continued to heavily incorporate pre-Reformation beliefs and medieval religious practices. The Catholic gentrywomen of the diocese placed great emphasis upon cyclical worship and sacramental devotion. Dedication to the Virgin Mary; the observance of saints' and holy days; feasting and fasting; the retention of relics, icons, and images; the use of the rosary; almsgiving and many other traditional religious practices were regularly observed by the Catholic gentrywomen of the diocese during this period. There is also evidence of both conscious and subconscious attempts to imitate conventual piety, including the observance of canonical hours of prayer and adherence to monastic vows. The gentrywomen who constructed these models of female piety, particularly recusant women, were used as role models and exemplars by Catholic clerics. In the intra-Catholic debates between the clergy during this period, images of female piety were utilised to promote different confessional standpoints and, thereby, as tools for conversion.

The fourth chapter establishes the importance of the religious education of children and analyses the way that access to a Catholic education differed for girls and boys. This chapter also addresses the centrality of Catholic literature in consolidating Catholic belief. It was education – whether within the household, with Catholic schoolmasters, or

at the exiled English convent schools – that created the foundations of Catholic belief and ensured the dissemination of Catholicism to subsequent generations. It was also religious education that determined the survival of post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester. Chapter four also considers the significance of devotional and polemical literature and establishes that key Catholic texts were easily accessible to women within the diocese. Authors from the diocese wrote a great number of the most popular contemporary books and there is evidence to suggest that many of these volumes were produced within the diocese itself, at a secret printing press. It can be established that Catholic gentrywomen had access to these literary works and were undoubtedly influenced by their content. Furthermore, everything suggests that Catholic gentrywomen were as highly literate as their Protestant counterparts.

Chapter five emphasises the impact and centrality of female piety within post-Reformation Catholicism, by establishing the numbers of women from the Diocese of Chester who left England to join the exiled convents in continental Europe. There is overt evidence that female kinship networks existed between Catholic women and that regular contact was maintained between enclosed women at the exiled English convents and their female kin in England. In some families, great numbers of women joined the same convents and it is apparent that the presence of family members at a particular religious house was a significant factor, in both the initial choice to pursue a vocation and of the religious order and convent that was chosen. The symbiotic relationship between enclosed sisters and lay gentrywomen from the diocese served to inspire the

missionary cause in England and ensured regular contact between English Catholics and post-Tridentine practices, which were beginning to prove popular in Counter-Reformed Europe.

In conclusion, this thesis argues that Catholic gentrywomen were central to the survival of traditional religious beliefs and practices and that they strongly influenced the way that post-Reformation Catholicism evolved and developed in the Diocese of Chester. As a result of the increasing importance of the gentry household within Catholicism, women began to inadvertently act as gatekeepers, providing access to priests and sacramental devotion. Through their choice of chaplain, women directed the confessional allegiance of great numbers of Catholics. In the absence of a clerical hierarchy and with the advent of household religion, Catholic gentrywomen also increasingly assumed positions of social responsibility within their religious communities.

There is tangible evidence that there was continuity in pre-Reformation beliefs and medieval religious practices. Through the construction of routines of devotion and the imitation of conventual piety, gentrywomen ensured that Catholicism was disseminated to subsequent generations. The example of female piety also inspired Catholic daughters to pursue religious vocations at the exiled English convents and symbiotic kinship networks can be clearly identified between enclosed sisters and their unenclosed kin. In all of these respects, Catholic gentrywomen were central to the survival of Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester and its transmission to subsequent generations. Because it was forced to adapt and evolve, post-Reformation Catholicism could not have endured without the assistance of Catholic gentrywomen.

Chapter One

Catholicism and the Enforcement of Religious Conformity in the Diocese of Chester

Introduction

The research presented in this chapter demonstrates that the jurisdictional and administrative complexities that existed in the Diocese of Chester during this period led directly to the poor enforcement of religious conformity by the Church of England and state authorities. As a result of this, Catholicism was able to survive and evolve in this diocese more easily than elsewhere in England. The evidence demonstrates that it was in the areas where ecclesiastical and temporal boundaries were the most confused that Catholics were able to evade detection for recusancy or non-communication most easily. As women were more likely to be recusants and non-communicants than their male counterparts, as a result of the harsher legal penalties faced by men, these circumstances had an especially great impact upon female Catholics in the diocese. Ecclesiastical confusion was common both at parish level, with detached parochial territories a regular occurrence, and across the diocese as a whole. Furthermore, temporal jurisdiction was also complex as a result of the presence of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Palatine Counties of Chester and Lancaster within the diocesan territories. Catholic men were frequently appointed to positions of authority, for instance as Ecclesiastical Commissioners, Justices of the Peace, sheriffs, churchwardens, or duchy

and palatine officers. Some of these men were openly Catholic and were regularly presented for their recusancy, while the true religious allegiance of others is more difficult to ascertain. Through their positions in local government, these conformist men offered paternalistic protection to other Catholics and heavily influenced the extent to which those who did not conform to Church of England practices were detected and punished.

The great level of devotion to Catholicism that can be observed in the Diocese of Chester during this period was a consequence of a combination of factors. A high percentage of the gentry families of the diocese were Catholic. John Bossy has established that the gentry household was the focal point of seigneurial Catholicism and the evidence relating to the Diocese of Chester supports that argument. The kinship networks that existed between Catholic gentry families in the diocese were the reason that post-Reformation Catholicism was able to flourish more easily there. The ability of the gentry to shelter great numbers of recusant and missionary priests meant that their houses could be used as Mass centres within local communities, thereby ensuring the regional dissemination of the faith. Such a high percentage of gentry families in the diocese were Catholic that the state authorities had little alternative but to appoint men with questionable religious beliefs to positions of authority, thereby further compounding the problem.

Finally, this chapter demonstrates that presentments of recusants and non-communicants are not a reliable measure by which to quantify the pervasiveness of Catholicism within the Diocese of Chester. An analysis of presentments for recusancy and non-communication in Lancashire from 1613, listed in one surviving manuscript, determines that such figures tell

us more about the way that the authorities presented those who failed to conform, than they do about Catholics themselves and the nature of their beliefs and practices. Examination of the presentments demonstrates that two adjacent parishes frequently presented radically different numbers of people. This indicates that it was the assiduity of churchwardens and the incumbent of the parish that determined the degree of emphasis that was placed upon religious conformity in a particular area. Those parishes where Puritan ministers held benefices, tended to be the parishes that returned the greatest number of recusants and non-communicants. Furthermore, the way that 'Catholics' were identified and classified by the church authorities was often arbitrary. Some parishes presented over a thousand recusants, but no non-communicants, while other parishes revealed the inverse trend. For example, in 1613, Kirkham parish reported 338 recusants, but under 50 non-communicants. Conversely, the neighbouring parish of Preston reported under 100 recusants, but over 1,000 non-communicants.¹ Such radical distinctions indicate that it was the way that churchwardens defined and categorised non-conformists that varied, rather than the behaviour and practices that individuals exhibited. It is for this reason that presentments for recusancy and non-communication are of limited use to historians in considering the character and pervasiveness of Catholicism within the Diocese of Chester.

The enforcement of religious conformity was a consideration of fundamental importance to the state authorities in the reigns of both Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. Ensuring that their subjects attended Church of England services was a matter, not only of religious belief, but

¹ B[ritish] L[ibrary], Lansdowne 153/10, 'An abstract of the presentment of recusants, non communicants, and communicants in the county of Lanc. Anno Doi 1613', ff.56-7

also of political loyalty. The question of female conformity was especially important, as – in their domestic roles – it was women who moulded the religious beliefs of children, as well as Catholic servants, tenants, neighbours, and members of wider kinship networks. Although women during this time period are generally perceived to have had little social authority, the level of concern that was exhibited about female conformity at a national level infers an unspoken acknowledgement by the state that women had a far greater impact upon the religious beliefs and practices of others than has been previously recognised by historians.

As a consequence of their central position within the domestic household, women acted as gatekeepers by controlling access to priests. Attempting to enforce the church attendance of women, therefore, was a crucial issue during this period: one that it appears was ineffectively implemented in the Diocese of Chester. The poor enforcement of religious conformity in the diocese allowed women a greater level of freedom to preserve Catholic beliefs and to maintain Catholic practices. Most importantly, it allowed women – through the medium of their priests – to procure converts. Gentrywomen exerted a greater level of influence upon the development of Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester than in other parts of England, allowing them the latitude to shape and direct the character of the post-Reformation Catholic community.

Part One: Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Administrative Confusion in the Diocese of Chester

Jurisdiction within the Diocese of Chester was complex, making the administration of the district and particularly the enforcement of religious conformity onerous. This problem was widespread throughout both the ecclesiastical and the temporal structures of the diocese and it was often unclear who held authority, where they held it, and in what capacity. Much of the ecclesiastical confusion that existed within the Diocese of Chester was due to the fact that the diocese was a new bishopric – created during the reign of King Henry VIII and signed and sealed on 4 August 1541. The new see comprised of the former Archdeacons of Chester and Richmond: the Archdeaconry of Chester had previously been part of the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, and that of Richmond had belonged to the Diocese of York (see map one, below). Although the new diocese was initially placed under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury and within the Southern Province, shortly after its creation, in 1542, it was transferred to the administration of the Archbishopric of York and the Northern Province. The new diocese was the second poorest in the country; only the Bishop of Rochester received a lower stipend and the geographical area of that diocese was less than one-tenth of the size of the Diocese of Chester.²

The Diocese of Chester held ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the entirety of two temporal counties, and partial jurisdiction within five others – including parts of two Welsh counties. Before the creation of the new

² C. Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.1, 7

diocese in 1541, the county of Lancashire had been split between the two dioceses that preceded it. However, the Palatine Counties of Chester and Lancaster were both entirely within the remit of the new see. Large swathes of Cumberland and Westmorland to the north, the North Riding of Yorkshire to the east, and a few Welsh parishes in the south, were all also part of the new bishopric. The two former Archdeaconries of Chester and Richmond – which were divided by the natural boundary of the River Ribble – were retained for administrative purposes. Despite being the second poorest in the country, the new diocese was also the third largest. The diocese was 120 miles long and 90 miles wide and covered an area of over 5,200 square miles. Only the Dioceses of Lincoln and York covered greater geographical areas.³

The two archdeaconries of Chester and Richmond were further subdivided into twenty deaneries (see map one, below). The Archdeaconry of Richmond, which comprised the northern half of the diocese, contained eight deaneries: Amounderness, Boroughbridge, Catterick, Copeland, Furness, Kendal, Lonsdale, and Richmond. This territory included much of northern Lancashire (mostly in Amounderness and Lonsdale), as well as southern parts of Cumberland and Westmorland (in Copeland, Furness, and Kendal), and large areas of the North Riding of Yorkshire (Boroughbridge, Catterick, and Richmond). The Archdeaconry of Chester contained twelve deaneries: Bangor, Blackburn, Chester, Frodsham, Leyland, Macclesfield, Malpas, Manchester, Middlewich, Nantwich, Warrington, and Wirral. Blackburn, Leyland, Manchester, and

³ *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1541-1857, Vol.11: Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Manchester, Ripon, and Sodor and Man dioceses*, (2004), pp.33-4; Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance*, pp.1, 7; R.C. Richardson, *Puritanism in North-West England: A Regional Study of the Diocese of Chester to 1642*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), p.7

Warrington were all in Lancashire, while the rest of the deaneries were entirely in Cheshire; except for a few southern parishes in Bangor, Chester, and Malpas deaneries, which belonged to the Welsh counties of Denbighshire and Flintshire. According to Bishop Chadderton in 1586, the entire diocese contained around 248 parishes.⁴



Map One - Map of the Diocese of Chester, showing deaneries and archdeaconries

⁴ T[he] N[ational] A[rchives], S[tate] P[apers] Dom[estic] 12, 189/12; Richardson, *Puritanism in North-West England*, pp.1-3

Temporal jurisdiction of the Diocese of Chester was also divided into a confused array of territories. The diocesan lands were temporally apportioned, as in other regions, primarily along the lines of hundred boundaries (see map two, below). Thirteen hundreds lay entirely within the diocesan boundary – six in Lancashire (Amounderness, Blackburn, Leyland, Lonsdale, Salford, and West Derby) and seven in Cheshire (Broxton, Bucklow, Eddisbury, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Northwich, and Wirral). The remaining territories of the diocese were partially within hundreds or wapentakes in Cumberland, Westmorland, the North Riding of Yorkshire, and a few parishes were in Wales. In some parts of the diocese the ecclesiastical and temporal administrative units comprised of identical territory. For example, in Lancashire, Salford Hundred and Manchester Deanery contained the same parishes and townships, as did West Derby Hundred and Warrington Deanery. Further north in Lancashire, however, the situation was less clear-cut. Lonsdale Hundred, for instance, contained parishes within the deaneries of Amounderness, Copeland, Furness, and Lonsdale, causing the temporal and ecclesiastical jurisdiction in that area to be far more confused than in other parts of the diocese.⁵

⁵ Richardson, *Puritanism in North-West England*, pp.1-5



Map Two - Map showing the hundreds of the Diocese of Chester

The leading magnate in the region was the Earl of Derby, a hereditary title held during this period by the Stanley family. Many of the regional powers of Lancashire were consolidated under the title of Derby, including the Lord-Lieutenancy of the county. The third earl, Edward Stanley, was the only major northern peer to retain his title into the Elizabethan period. Despite the fact that his third marriage to Margaret Barlow linked him to one of the most notorious Catholic families in the county, the Barlows of Barlow Hall (south Manchester), and that he may have leaned towards traditional beliefs and practices, the third earl kept to the sidelines and ultimately remained loyal to the crown. Edward Stanley was politically loyal, yet he was also inherently conservative in nature and only reluctantly participated in the suppression of Catholicism within the county. The third Earl of Derby and Bishop Downham adopted a policy that, broadly speaking, preserved the status quo. The fifth Earl of Derby, Ferdinando Stanley, a noted patron of the arts, most notably participated in enforcing conformity within the Diocese of Chester by suppressing the so-called Hesketh Plot against Queen Elizabeth I in 1593. In 1591, the Privy Council had written a letter to the fifth earl, offering their thanks for his dedication towards the eradication of Catholicism. The council commended his enthusiastic arrest of recusants, but also the measures taken 'pryvatelye in refermacion of your owne Tenaunts from there wyl fullnes in not resortinge to ther parishe churches'. His efforts appear to have been especially appreciated, as it was recognized that he was dealing with a diocese 'which was allmoste overflowed' with 'obstynate'

Catholics.⁶ The fifth Earl's true religious and political allegiances are not clear, but the evidence would appear to suggest that he was politically loyal. It has been suggested that his unexpected death after a short and brutal illness in 1594 was the result of poisoning by Catholics who were extracting revenge for the Earl's destruction of the Hesketh Plot.⁷

Aside from the earls of Derby, the gentry of the diocese were relatively poor (in comparison with their counterparts in southern England) and were offered few positions in national government. When they acquired positions of national importance, office-holders from the Diocese of Chester were often sidelined. Even the third Earl of Derby, when he was finally offered a place on the Privy Council under the Marian regime, was forbidden from attending their London sessions unless expressly invited.⁸ The Stanleys of Hooton (Cheshire), kinsmen of the earls of Derby, were also renowned for their Catholicism. Sir William Stanley was for some time in the service of the third Earl of Derby before receiving acclaim for his service in Ireland and notoriety for his surrender of Deventer in the Netherlands to the Spanish in 1587.⁹ William's wife Elizabeth (née Egerton) and daughter Jane were repeatedly presented at

⁶ L[ancashire] R[ecord] O[ffice], DDKE acc.7840 HMC [Kenyon of Peel Manuscripts], f.134r

⁷ J.J. Bagley, *The Earls of Derby 1485-1985*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985); B. Coward, *The Stanleys: Lord Stanley and Earls of Derby 1385-1672*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); W. Jeffcoate, 'Why did the 5th Earl of Derby die?', *The Lancet*, 357 (2001), 1876-9

⁸ J. Booker, *A History of the Ancient Chapels of Didsbury and Chorlton in Manchester Parish*, (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1857), pp.253-93; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.87-97, 104-6, 129, 141, 252; C. Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 1969), p.482; J.S. Leatherbarrow, 'Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 1947), p.17

⁹ K.R. Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), p.165

visitations for absenteeism, non-communication, and recusancy before the family's exile to the Spanish Netherlands in 1606.¹⁰

For a diocese that covered such a large geographical area, the Diocese of Chester had only a relatively small number of gentry families. In Yorkshire, research by historians such as Sarah Bastow and J.T. Cliffe has identified far greater numbers of gentry families than there were in the Diocese of Chester. Christopher Haigh's research into the heralds' visitations for Lancashire has shown that out of a population of c.95,000-100,000 Lancastrians, there were only around 120 gentry families – an extremely low number for such a large geographical area.¹¹ However, a great number of the gentry families of the diocese held Catholic sympathies, were linked by kinship networks, and clustered in south Lancashire. Great numbers of these gentry families sheltered missionary priests and allowed their homes to be used as Mass centres for their local communities. Families such as the Blundells, Shireburnes, and Swarbricks were recognised as supporters of Catholicism well beyond the boundaries of their own county and, indeed, their country.¹²

¹⁰ C[hester] R[ecord] O[ffice], EDV [Visitation Records] 1, 10/38; CRO, EDV 1, 10/39; CRO, EDV 1, 12a/28; CRO, EDV 1, 12b/55

¹¹ S.L. Bastow, *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642: Resistance and Accommodation*, (Lewiston; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007); J.T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*, (London: Athlone Press, 1969); Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.94-6, 107; Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', pp.474, 484-94

¹² J. Callow & M. Mullett, 'The Shireburnes of Stonyhurst: memory and survival in a Lancashire Catholic recusant family', in *Region, religion and patronage: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, (eds.) R. Dutton, A. Findlay & R. Wilson, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 169-85; T.E. Gibson (ed.), *Crosby records: a chapter of Lancashire recusancy, Containing a relation of troubles and persecutions sustained by William Blundell, of Crosby Hall, Lancashire, esq. (1560-1638), and an account of an ancient burial ground for recusants, called the Harkirke, and of coins discovered there*, (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1887); J.R. Robinson, 'Recusants of Lancashire and loyalty to the King: Fosters, Charnocks, Houghtons, Daltons and Holdens in the 17th century', *Catholic Ancestor*, 9:5 (2003), 179-88; M. Sena, 'William Blundell and the networks of Catholic dissent in post-Reformation England', in *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*, (eds.) A. Shepard & P. Withington,

The neighbouring county of Cheshire, however, had even fewer numbers of gentry families, making Lancashire's gentrified community look positively lively in comparison. For some time it was thought that a document known colloquially as *Lord Burghley's Map of Lancashire* marked the location of Catholic gentry households. More recent research, however, has questioned this assumption. Shannon & Winstanley have demonstrated that many of the houses marked with a cross on the map do not have any proven links with Catholicism. Some of the marked households were certainly owned by recusant families, such as the Allens of Rossall Grange, Poulton-le-Fylde (birthplace of Cardinal William Allen, founder of the first English College at Douai). However, many have no known connection to Catholicism and some, such as Edmund Hopwood, were undoubtedly Puritan. Shannon & Winstanley hypothesised that the crosses marked on the map may simply have been Burghley's method of checking names off a list. The function of a list containing such a varied array of households remains unknown.¹³

Some areas were notorious amongst contemporaries for being home to great numbers of Catholic women. The parishes of Garstang and St Michael on Wyre in Amounderness Deanery, for instance, was described as the residence of 'as manye Farmers, & notorious Recusantts, as will make two graunde juryes'. The author continues on to list a number of 'gentlewomen' from the two parishes who were recusants. Amongst them were Elizabeth Tyldesley, a widow of Myerscough;

(Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 54-75; D. Swarbrick, 'Swarbricks and the parish of Kirkham, Lancashire', *Catholic Ancestor*, 11:3 (2006), 170-80

¹³ Gibson, *Crosby records*; A.C. Parkinson, *A History of Catholicism in the Furness Peninsula, 1127-1997*, (Lancaster: University of Lancaster, 1998); W. Shannon & M.J. Winstanley, 'Lord Burghley's Map of Lancashire Revisited, c.1576-1590', *Imago Mundi*, 59:1 (2007), 24-42

Dorothy, wife of Thomas Brockholes, esquire, of Claughton; Anne, wife of Mr Travers of Natbie; Jane, wife of Mr Twinge of Kirkland; Anne, wife of Walter Rigmaiden; Anne, wife of Henry Butler, esquire, of Rowcliff; Elizabeth, wife of William Butler, son and heir of the aforesaid Henry Butler; and Isabel, wife of William Kirkby, esquire, of Rowcliff.¹⁴ The women's husbands were (according to the document) said to be conformists, but attending church no more than once a month. The author continued on to suggest that the churchwardens ought to encourage the gentlewomen to conform and that if they did not, 'then the gentlewomen, withe their husbandes, bee removed to the severall howses of Gentlemen knoune to be well affected, & resolute in Religion established: there to bee honestlie & well used with all pleasures, & recreacions conveniente duringe their obstinancie'.¹⁵

The small number of gentry families in the diocese meant that there was limited choice of gentlemen of suitable status when it came to the appointment of regional officials such as JPs and sheriffs. Thomas Walmesley, for example, was responsible for prosecuting Catholics – despite the fact that both his wife and father were convicted recusants and that his own religious beliefs were questionable. In 1590, Walmesley had attempted to place greater emphasis upon Protestant, rather than Catholic non-conformity.¹⁶ In Lancashire, the gentry held the rights of presentment to over half of the county's benefices in 1560, which enabled the surreptitious appointment of incumbents sympathetic towards Catholicism.

¹⁴ LRO, DDKE, acc. 7840 HMC, ff.22v-23r

¹⁵ LRO, DDKE, acc. 7840 HMC, f.24

¹⁶ J. Cosgrove, 'The Position of the Recusant Gentry in the Social Setting of Lancashire', (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Manchester, 1964); Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.106, 265, 284-6, 320; Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', pp.488-9; Leatherbarrow, 'Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants', p.41

A shortage of clergy in the county (despite high-levels of ordination) meant that if great numbers of men were deprived for religious misconduct, this would have led to an impractical clerical deficit in the Established Church. This may partly explain Bishop Downham's apparent reluctance to deprive those members of the clergy (as many as one in five) presented at visitations for clerical misdemeanours, such as continuing to perform services structured in a pre-Reformation style. The fact that religious conservatives and recusants penetrated to the very heart of the secular and ecclesiastical administrative regimes clearly influenced the rate and severity of presentments. As Haigh has written, 'the detection machinery was defective'.¹⁷

The geography of the Diocese of Chester was an important factor in creating an environment where Catholicism was more easily fostered. Research by Christopher Haigh has established that the region was sparsely populated, with only around 95,000 people living in Lancashire by 1563, increasing to around 100,000 by 1600.¹⁸ Haigh further established that parishes were large, with an average size of 33 square miles – seven or eight times the national average.¹⁹ The substantial size of the parishes in the region led to the maintenance of a great number of chapels-of-ease, which Haigh estimated comprised two-thirds of all Lancastrian church buildings. Clerical supervision was difficult because of the complexity of

¹⁷ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.24, 213-6; Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', p.488; Leatherbarrow, 'Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants', p.30

¹⁸ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.1, 22; Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', p.474

¹⁹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p.22

parochial territories in Lancashire. It was for this reason that religious change was adopted so slowly in the county.²⁰

The geographical location of the diocese, in close proximity to the Scottish border, also created a feeling of unity against the traditional enemy, the Scots – against whom troops were regularly mustered in the name of the Duchy of Lancaster.²¹ The diocese heavily maintained some characteristics of medieval feudalism, including mustering and retaining; a fact that sits well with John Bossy's hypothesis that post-Reformation Catholicism was adopted most successfully in those communities where seigneurial powers remained widespread.²² The region was isolated geographically, as well as politically. Roads were in poor condition and led only to the far north of England, Scotland, and (via Liverpool) to Ireland – places that few people, aside from soldiers and tradesmen, would ever have any wish or need to visit. The landscape itself was inhospitable, with impasses created by natural obstacles such as the river Mersey (at times of flood) and the Pennines. Complaints about the hazardous Lancastrian landscape persisted throughout the period, with constant calls for new bridges or better roads.²³ Even Bishop Downham complained of the harsh environment, blaming the poor conditions for the premature demise of his

²⁰ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.264-5; Leatherbarrow, 'Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants', p.31

²¹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.51, 94, 142-3; Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', pp.475-81

²² J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1975); Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', pp.475-81

²³ LRO, DDKE acc.7840 HMC/136 (1632); LRO, DDKE acc.7840 HMC/145 (1633); CRO, EDC [Consistory Court Papers] 5, 1587/39

horse.²⁴ As a result of all of these factors, the Diocese of Chester was geographically distinctive in comparison with the rest of England.²⁵

Some of the bishops of the diocese were more assiduous in their enforcement of religious conformity than others. After the deprivation of Bishop Cuthbert Scott by Queen Elizabeth I in 1559, the episcopal seat at Chester was left vacant until the appointment of Bishop Downham in 1561. Throughout his episcopacy, Bishop Downham was plagued by accusations of laxity; particularly in relation to the detection of Catholics. In 1568, Queen Elizabeth I directly challenged Downham regarding his inaction in a letter that contained the stinging rebuke: 'we find great lack in you'. Spurred into action, the bishop conducted his first (and last) episcopal visitation of the diocese. Downham claimed that the people of his diocese were 'very tractable and obedient' overall, but that he found the whole experience of the visitation so exhausting that he hoped that he would 'never be troubled again with the like'.²⁶ After Downham's death a decade later in 1577, the bishopric remained vacant for two years until Bishop William Chadderton was appointed as Downham's episcopal successor in 1579. Bishop Chadderton held the post until 1595, when he was translated as a result of his appointment as Bishop of Lincoln.²⁷ It was only with the appointment of Bishop Chadderton that the enforcement of religious conformity within the diocese began to be approached in a more methodical manner. Religious conformity in the diocese was never

²⁴ TNA, SPDom 12, 48/75

²⁵ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.87-97; Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', pp.466-98; Leatherbarrow, 'Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants', p.22

²⁶ TNA, SPDom 12, 48/73-5

²⁷ *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1541-1857: vol.11*, pp.37-52

again treated with such inattention as it had been under Bishop Downham.²⁸

Some of the most high-ranking ministers in the Established Church of the Diocese of Chester expressed Catholic sympathies or even failed to conform themselves. Thomas Bland, Dean of Catterick, Kendal, Lonsdale, and Richmond (four of the diocese's largest northern deaneries – two in Lancashire and two in the North Riding of Yorkshire) was presented to the 1571 visitation for hearing Mass and sheltering recusant priests in his home.²⁹ The fact that such high-ranking officials within the Established Church could not be trusted to enforce religious conformity and were even failing to conform themselves was a significant problem for the Church of England and the state authorities. The permeation of the secular and ecclesiastical administrations with Catholic sympathisers ensured that the enforcement of the religious settlement in the diocese was complex. Indeed, the situation was so bad that the High Commission at York was forced to intervene in diocesan affairs from 1568 onwards. Bishop Downham was the subject of an enquiry headed by Archbishop Grindal. Similarly, Bishop Barnes of Carlisle was appointed to lead an external visitation of the Diocese of Chester, at which far greater numbers of

²⁸ Chadderton was succeeded as bishop in turn by two men translated from the see at Bangor - firstly, Bishop Hugh Bellot in 1595, who died while in office after only a year, and subsequently by Bishop Richard Vaughan who retained his seat until 1604 and his appointment as Bishop of London. The Jacobean appointments to the episcopal seat at Chester were, respectively: Bishop George Lloyd (1605-15), who died in office; Bishop Thomas Morton (1616-18), who continued on to hold the bishoprics of Lichfield and Coventry and then Durham; and, lastly, Bishop John Bridgeman, who held his seat from 1619 until his deprivation in 1646.

²⁹ B[orthwick] I[nstitute for] A[rchives], HC.AB [High Commission Act Book] 6, ff.64-5

Catholics were presented than had been previously – including the aforementioned Dean Bland.³⁰

In order to attain a greater income, many clerics held more than one diocesan office, resulting in a consolidation of power. Much of the responsibility of day-to-day administration fell to the deans. The eight large deaneries of Lancashire – Amounderness, Blackburn, Furness, Kendal, Leyland, Lonsdale, Manchester, and Warrington – had greater numbers of parishes than any other county. As a result of this, the deans' parish-level supervision was poorly focussed. Lancashire also had fewer clerics, in proportion to its population, than anywhere else in England. Christopher Haigh has estimated that there was one member of the established clergy for between every 234 and 310 members of the laity in Lancashire, compared to between 1:50 and 1:100 in other counties during this period.³¹

Further research by Haigh found that the deaneries with the greatest levels of presentments for recusancy were, respectively: Warrington, Amounderness, Leyland, and Blackburn. The recusancy figures indicated that Manchester Deanery was broadly more Protestant than the rest; whereas the three northern deaneries of Furness, Kendal, and Lonsdale had no widespread evidence of either Catholicism or Protestantism. It appears that the geographical isolation of the three northernmost deaneries from ecclesiastical supervision led to fewer numbers of presentments for recusancy there. Comparatively, the four deaneries with the greatest numbers of presentments for recusancy were

³⁰ Cosgrove, 'The Position of the Recusant Gentry'; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.234, 254, 257, 282

³¹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.7, 13-28, 44

also the areas where great numbers of Catholic gentry families were clustered and that were in the closest proximity to the seats of ecclesiastical power at Chester and Richmond.³²

In the absence of effective secular and ecclesiastical administrative structures that could enforce obedience towards the religious settlement, the role of the Established Church in procuring converts to Protestantism became even more crucial. Heretical movements had found little success in the diocese during the medieval period and, in a similar manner, the Henrician Reformation did not make a great impact. Traditional religion and the status quo held many advantages in the Diocese of Chester. However, some Protestant converts were obtained in the south-east of the diocese during the reign of King Edward VI as a result of the influence of university-educated Reformers, such as John Bradford and the martyr George Marsh. Increasing population-density in Manchester Deanery led to the development of the textile trade and, subsequently, to greater prosperity in the region.³³ It was as a result of this increased prosperity that greater numbers began to attend the universities and Inns of Court from the 1540s onwards. The Diocese of Chester had strong links with Oxbridge colleges (notably St John's at Cambridge and Brasenose at Oxford) where Reformist beliefs held sway. The exposure of students from the diocese to some of England's greatest Protestant thinkers facilitated the conversion of family members, once they eventually returned to their native counties. Concurrently, the development of wool-cloth manufacturing in east Lancashire led to increased trade links with the

³² Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.316-32

³³ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.76-86, 165-77; Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', pp.233-83, 500-54; Leatherbarrow, 'Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants', pp.13-15

West Riding of Yorkshire, London, and the coastal ports of southern England. Whereas, in the rest of the diocese, the development of the linen-cloth industry led to trade links with Ireland and other Catholic countries (via Liverpool and Chester), in east Lancashire the textile-trade links were to the east and south – to Reformist areas of England and to Protestant areas of continental Europe.³⁴

Christopher Haigh used evidence provided by recusancy statistics to argue that these factors led to the development of a small Protestant enclave in the east and south-east of the diocese, centering on Manchester Deanery / Salford Hundred. Haigh consolidated his argument by providing evidence that this area had greater numbers of Puritan-leaning incumbents and preachers than other deaneries in the diocese throughout the Elizabethan period. However, Haigh's theory about the development of a Protestant enclave can also be challenged by documents that demonstrate that a significant number of parishioners from Salford Hundred were imprisoned at the Fleet in Manchester for recusancy.³⁵ There were a number of determinedly Catholic families in Salford Hundred throughout this period, most notably the Barlows of Barlow Hall, but also the Andertons of Lostock, the Hiltons of the Park, and the Orrells of Turton Tower.³⁶ Furthermore, Protestant ministers and preachers met with widespread resistance and often open hostility from the inherently conservative parishioners of the diocese. The appointment in 1599 of four Queen's Preachers to serve Lancashire would seem to

³⁴ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.165-77, 295-315; Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', pp.500-54

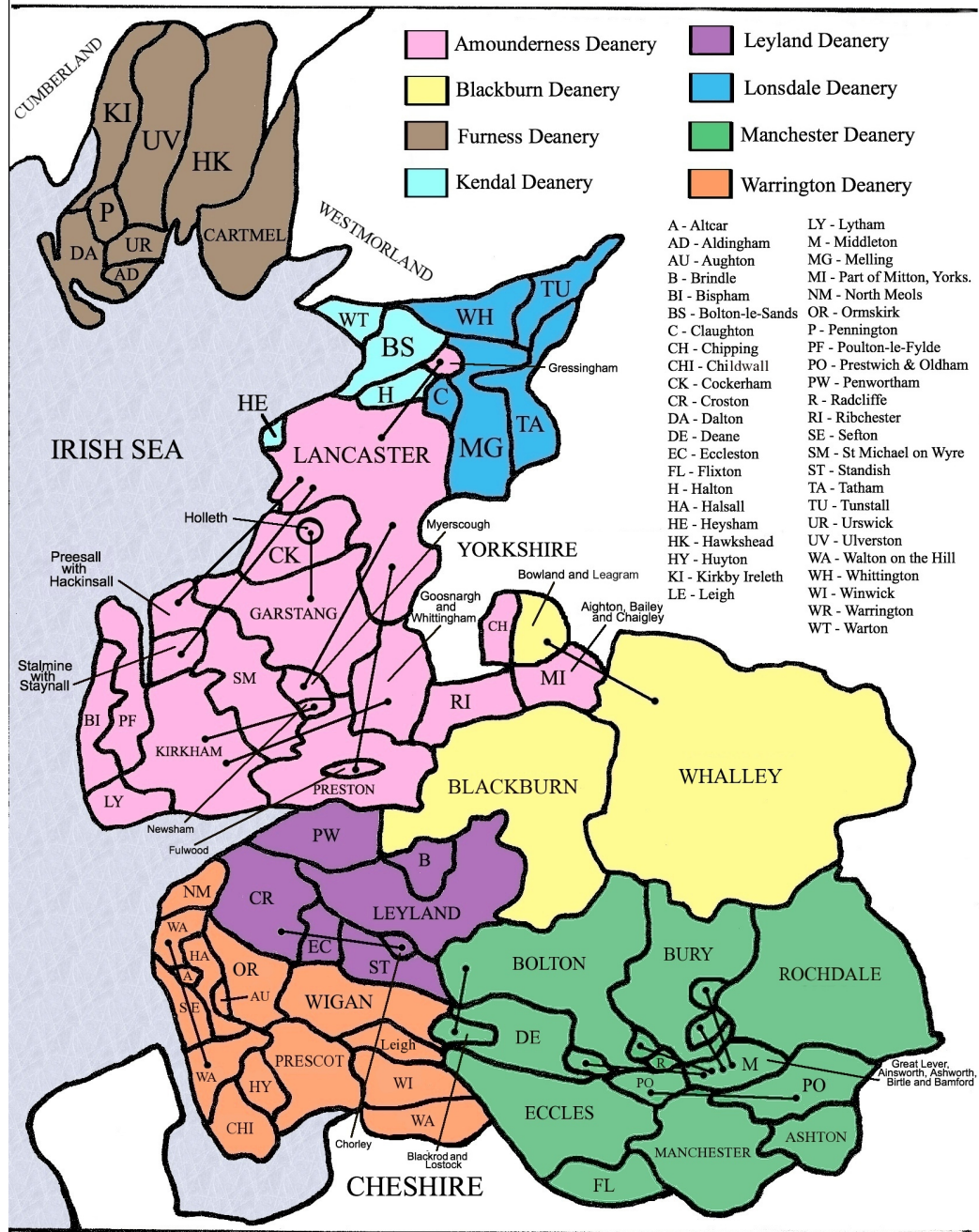
³⁵ LRO, DDKE, acc.7840 HMC, ff.124-6

³⁶ J. Booker, *A History of the Ancient Chapels of Didsbury and Chorlton*; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.243, 295-315; Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', pp.500-54; Leatherbarrow, 'Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants', p.7

confirm the lack of progress Protestantism had made. In February 1590-91, the Ecclesiastical Commissioner Edmund Hopwood wrote to the Archbishop of York, John Piers, regarding the appointment of Queen's Preachers in the county, bemoaning: 'howe destitute lances [Lancashire] is of preachers.' Hopwood continued to beg the archbishop to, 'finde out some good means to relieve these moste greate and pytiefull wants,' suggesting that two preachers should be placed in permanent residence at Liverpool and Preston where there were particular problems. Local residents, he argued, should pay for these two posts. In the first case, the money for the preacher at Liverpool should be sought from Richard Mollineux of Sefton, nephew to the parson of Sefton, Alexander Mollineux. In the latter case, the preacher at Preston should be paid for by the leading gentry family of the parish, Mr Houghton, whose mother was described as a 'recusant of seven yeares standinge'. Hopwood stated that there was no place 'more fitt for a weekly lecture' than Preston.³⁷

³⁷ LRO, DDKE acc.7840 HMC, f.111v

Deaneries and Parishes of Lancashire, c.1600



Map Three - Map showing the deaneries and parishes of Lancashire, c.1600

Religious conformity in the diocese was hindered further as a result of the jurisdictional confusion that was apparent at parish level. The existence of detached parochial territories meant that some areas were geographically distant from the main body of their parish. When chapelries were located far from their parish church, the enforcement of religious conformity by the incumbent and churchwardens was far more difficult. These widespread problems were only exacerbated where pluralist and absentee clergy were found. The extent of the difficulties faced is particularly evident when considering a map of Lancashire. Looking at map three (see above) one can see, for instance, that Lancaster parish contained a number of detached areas. In 1604, an unknown writer recorded how 'there are many Parochiall chappells, Hamletts, and forrests belonging to Lancaster & farr distant from their mother Church.'³⁸ To the north of Lancaster, Gressingham chapelry was geographically separated from its own parish by the parishes of Cloughton and Halton. Towards the south-west of Lancaster, two detached areas of land belonging to that parish – Preesall with Hackinsall and Stalmine with Staynall – were located far from their mother parish, near the Fylde peninsula. Furthermore, Myerscough was sandwiched between Garstang, St Michael on Wyre, and Preston parishes, while the Forest of Fulwood was entirely surrounded by Preston parish.

Considering an example on the outskirts of Lancashire, the jurisdictional confusion surrounding Mitton parish was aggravated by the fact that the townships of Aighton, Bailey and Chaigley were cushioned between Whalley parish and a piece of land containing the townships of

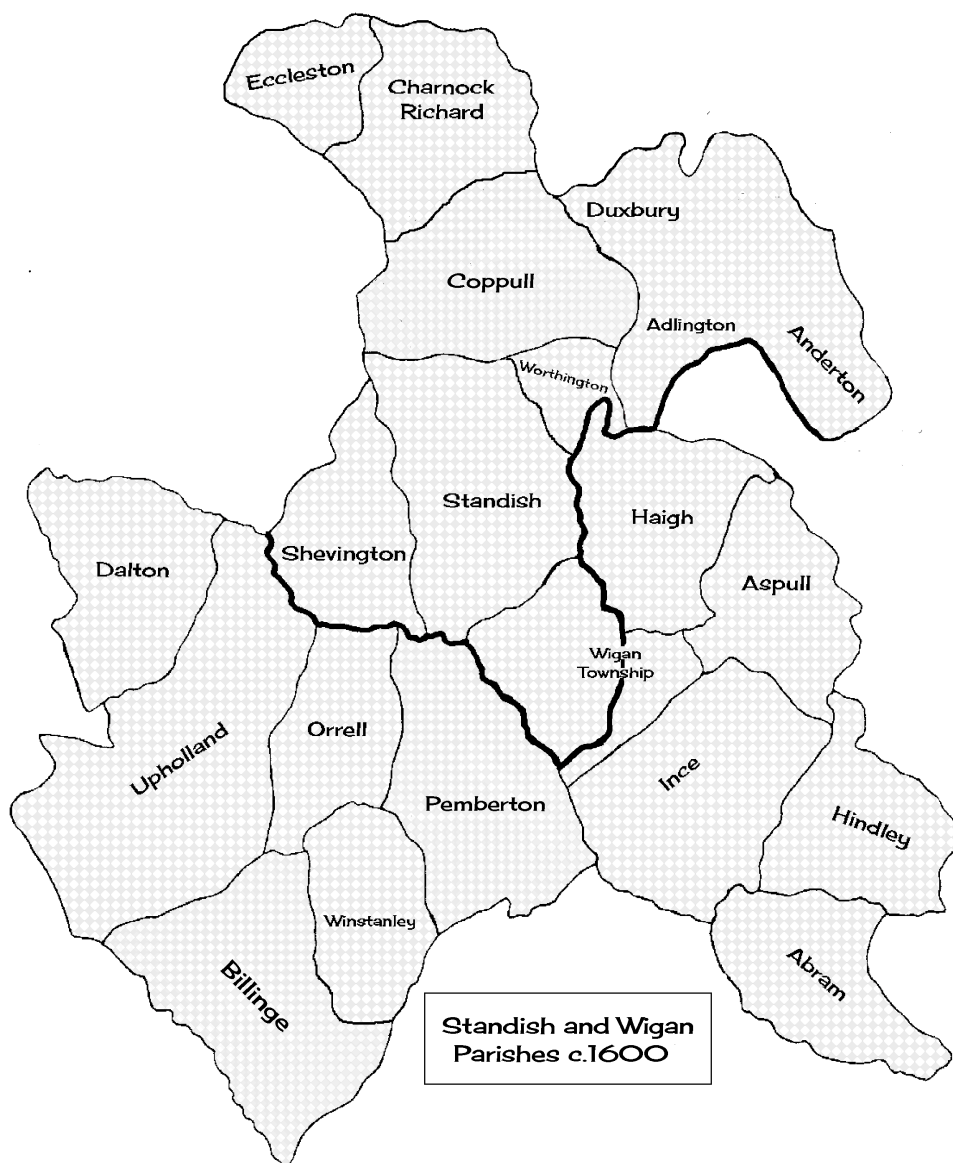
³⁸ LRO, DDKE acc.7840 HMC/14, f.27r (1604)

Bowland and Leagram (which was physically detached from Whalley). The two parishes of Mitton and Whalley were therefore intertwined with one another and it was not always clear who held jurisdiction in which area. Similar levels of confusion abounded elsewhere, with detached lands comprising parts of the parishes of Bolton, Croston, Garstang, Kirkham, Prestwich and Oldham, and Walton on the Hill – townships from all of these areas were geographically exiled from their mother parishes.

Perhaps the most confusing jurisdictional state of affairs existed in the parish of Middleton, where the main body of the parish was supplemented by detached areas of land containing the townships of Ainsworth, Ashworth, Birtle, Bamford, and Great Lever, which were scattered across the central band of Manchester Deanery. On the whole, deaneries remained homogenous, although the occasional peculiarity existed – such as the parish of Heysham, which belonged to Kendal Deanery, but was geographically located within the boundaries of Amounderness Deanery. Similarly, Gressingham – already separated from its mother parish of Lancaster – was further jurisdictionally confused by its geographical location; sandwiched between the deaneries of Kendal and Lonsdale, rather than in the deanery (Amounderness) to which it administratively belonged. Sometimes it was unclear who held jurisdiction and it was necessary to petition the superior courts for clarification. For example, in 1599 the Deans of Blackburn, Chester, Frodsham, Macclesfield, Manchester, and Warrington, along with Richard Vaughan, Bishop of Chester, appealed to the Consistory Court at York for assistance in clarifying the geographical boundaries of their respective deaneries.³⁹

³⁹ BIA, TRANS.CP [Transmitted Cause Papers] 1599/1

To provide a further example, the jurisdiction within Standish and Wigan parishes was particularly complex. In summary, the parish of Standish was located within Leyland Hundred and Deanery, while most of the parish of Wigan was within West Derby Hundred and Warrington Deanery.



Map Four - Map of Standish and Wigan Parishes

The township of Wigan belonged to Wigan parish, and therefore to West Derby Hundred and Warrington Deanery. This is exactly what would be expected and at this point matters appear fairly straightforward. However, parts of Wigan township were geographically detached from the parish and were actually situated within Standish parish and subsequently within Leyland Hundred and Deanery. Parts of the township were therefore physically cut off – by river – from the parish (Wigan), hundred (West Derby) and deanery (Warrington) to which they administratively belonged. The jurisdiction there was further complicated by the fact that the township of Aspull – which was geographically situated within in the parish of Wigan – was actually under the administration of Salford Hundred and Manchester Deanery. This was the inverse situation to what one would naturally expect. (See maps three and four above for much-needed clarification.)

Both Standish and Wigan parishes were home to large numbers of gentry families who could generally be classified as leaning towards Catholicism, including: the Worthingtons of Worthington Hall and Blainscough Hall; the Standishes of Standish Hall; the Bradshaighs of Haigh Hall; the Andertons of Birchley Hall; and the Houghtons of Park Hall. All of these houses can be shown to have regularly housed Catholic priests.⁴⁰ This thesis argues that this fact is not a coincidence, but rather that Catholicism was able to flourish there as a natural consequence of the jurisdictional confusion which was at work in that area.

The enforcement of religious conformity was also complicated as a result of jurisdictional confusion in east Lancashire. Temporally, the

⁴⁰ W[estminster] D[iocesan] A[rchives], A Series, IV, ff.429-56

parishes of Chipping and Ribchester belonged to Blackburn Hundred. Ecclesiastically, however, the two parishes were under the remit of Amounderness Deanery, rather than Blackburn Deanery – where one might naturally assume that they belonged. A list of Lancashire parishes from 1604 summarises the region thus: ‘that Chippin, Stidd, and Ribchester, albeit they are sett down as in the hundred of Amoundernes because they are of that Deanery yet they doe properly belong to the hundreth of Blackburne.’⁴¹ The situation was evidently confusing even for contemporaries and sometimes required clarification. To consider a further example from that area, the townships of Aughton, Bailey, and Chaigley belonged to Mitton parish in the North Riding of Yorkshire, but jurisdictionally were under the ecclesiastical remit of the Diocese of Chester, rather than the Diocese of York as one might logically deduce. The three townships were geographically surrounded by one parish, but were administrated by a separate parish and a separate diocese than that proximately surrounding them.⁴² A number of prominent Catholic families lived in this area, including the Shireburnes of Stonyhurst whose primary estate was located in the township of Aughton.⁴³ Once again the link between jurisdictional confusion and the presence of Catholic households is to be found.

The complex ecclesiastical and temporal jurisdiction of many areas within the Diocese of Chester made enforcing religious observance there difficult and it can be demonstrated that examples of Catholic activity are

⁴¹ LRO, DDKE acc.7840 HMC/14, f.28r (1604)

⁴² J. Brownbill & W. Farrer (eds.), *The Victoria History of the County of Lancaster*, 8 volumes, (London: Constable, 1906-1914), esp. vol.4, pp.57-112, vol.6, pp.182-234, vol.7, pp.1-51

⁴³ V[ictoria] C[ounty] H[istory], *Lancashire*, vol.7 (1912), pp.1-20

repeatedly to be found in those parishes where sources of authority were the most confused. In 1603, for example, it was reported to the Bishop of Chester that an 'old priest' was being harboured in Chipping and that the recusant James Bradley was 'reported to be a leader of priests to men's houses' there. These regional difficulties evidently persisted over time, as from 1630 onwards a number of recusants from the area including John Bradley, Grace Fairclough and Richard Singleton had their goods sequestered.⁴⁴

Leading Catholic families lived in those parishes with the most confused jurisdiction, notably: the Andertons of Lostock; the Charnocks of Fulwood; the Gillibrands of Chorley; the Hiltons of Hilton Park in Prestwich, and Oldham; and the Rigmaidens of Weddicar in Garstang. Examples such as these demonstrate that it was in areas of temporal and ecclesiastical jurisdictional confusion that Catholicism was able to flourish because of administrative loopholes. Because there was less risk of detection and greater possibility for the evasion of arrest, Catholics – and Catholic women in particular – were able to exercise greater religious freedom in these areas. It was as a result of greater freedom to shelter priests and to use gentry houses as Mass centres for local communities that Catholic women were able to alter the direction in which post-Reformation Catholicism evolved and developed.

⁴⁴ VCH, *Lancashire*, vol.7 (1912), p.32

Part Two: The Duchy of Lancaster, the Palatine Counties of Chester and Lancaster, and Temporal Jurisdiction

Those responsible for enforcing religious conformity in the Diocese of Chester faced further difficulties as a result of the complicated temporal jurisdiction within its parameters. The Diocese of Chester was unusual in the fact that its ecclesiastical boundaries were entirely located within the temporal administrative confines of the Duchy of Lancaster, which held devolved independence from the crown. Within both the diocese and the ducal territories, the two Palatine Counties of Chester and Lancaster comprised a further source of independent authority. This level of complexity made the hierarchy of temporal officials extremely confused and meant that there was no single source of state authority in the region.

The Duchy of Lancaster originally referred to those territories seized during the Barons' War, which were granted to Edmund Crouchback by his father King Henry III in 1265. Edmund was appointed the first Earl of Lancaster and the ducal lands passed from Edmund to two of his sons, in turn, and ultimately to his grandson, Henry of Grosmont. Henry was named first Duke of Lancaster under a charter granted by King Edward III on 6 March 1351. From Henry, the dukedom passed to John of Gaunt, son of Edward III, in 1362. In 1399, the ducal lands became linked to the crown after Henry Bolingbroke, who held the ducal title at the time, acceded to the throne. Although the duchy and the crown were linked, wisely, the administration of the duchy remained independent from the crown. Keeping the ducal inheritance separate from the monarchy was a

legal precaution, as it meant that, should the Lancastrian hold on the crown ever slip, the ducal territories would not be forfeited.⁴⁵

Lancashire was granted the rights of a palatine county in 1351, under the same charter that named Henry Grosmont the first Duke of Lancaster. At this point the Duchy of Lancaster and the Palatine County of Lancaster referred to one and the same thing. As Somerville has pointed out: 'The creation of Lancashire as a County Palatine in the fourteenth century gave the Duchy additional powers within the county. This included the right to appoint sheriffs, justices of the peace and other roles appointed by the Crown in other parts of the realm.'⁴⁶ By 1399, however, additional Lancastrian inheritances meant that the ducal territories had expanded far beyond the boundaries of the Lancashire palatinate. The ducal possessions now included the neighbouring Palatine County of Chester, as well as more geographically distant areas, such as the Honour of Tutbury in Staffordshire. Therefore, after 1399 the Duchy of Lancaster came to refer to all ducal possessions, of which the Lancashire palatinate was only one part. Somerville has clarified the point, stating that 'a centuries-old use of the phrase Duchy of Lancaster to connote the whole complex of the Lancastrian and associated estates has confused many writers who have not realized that before 1399 the duchy of Lancaster meant only the county palatine.'⁴⁷

⁴⁵ E. Baines, *The History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster*, (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1868-70), 2 vols.; R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster, vol.1, 1265-1603*, (London: Chancellor and Councilor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1953)

⁴⁶ Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, vol.1, p.143

⁴⁷ H. Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster: Public Authority and Private Power, 1399-1461*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, vol.1, p.142

Although the ducal possessions expanded beyond the boundaries of Lancashire, the rights and privileges awarded to that palatine county were not extended to all of the ducal territories. For example, men from outside of the Lancashire palatinate were never appointed as Justices of the Peace by the duchy. Similarly, the ducal and palatinate courts only carried authority within their respective boundaries and held jurisdiction only over individuals that were resident therein.⁴⁸ Palatine counties were generally established in frontier regions, where devolved powers might be necessary for the swift defence of the border. County Durham, for instance, was granted its initial independence by William the Conqueror and had attained the rights and privileges of a palatine county by the thirteenth century, in order that it might better defend its northern border against the Scots. In Durham, the bishop became known as the Prince-Bishop, who adopted powers akin to those of regent within the county. Similarly ancient was the Palatine County of Chester, which was ruled *jura regalia* by the earls of Chester in order to defend against the Welsh in the Marches.⁴⁹

Lancashire was created a palatine county at a much later date than either Durham or Chester, in 1351. Despite this, the county held the same rights and privileges as its predecessors. In the Palatine Counties of both

⁴⁸ W.J. Jones, 'Palatine Performance in the Seventeenth Century', in *The English Commonwealth, 1547-1640: Essays in Politics and Society presented to Joel Hurstfield*, (eds.) P. Clark, A.G.R. Smith & N. Tyacke, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), pp.200-4; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, vol.1, p.143; Somerville, 'The Palatinate Courts in Lancashire', pp.54-64

⁴⁹ G.T. Lapsley, *The County Palatine of Durham: A Study in Constitutional History*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1900); Somerville, 'The Palatinate Courts in Lancashire', p.54; J.B. Yates (ed.), 'The Rights and Jurisdiction of the County Palatine of Chester, the Earls Palatine, the Chamberlain, and Other Officers: And Disputes Concerning the Jurisdiction of the Court of Exchequer with the City of Chester, &c', *Chetham Society*, First Series, 37, *Chetham Miscellanies*, 2, (Manchester: The Chetham Society, 1856)

Chester and Lancaster the King's Writ carried no weight unless it was reissued under the palatine seals. There were a few limitations to this independence, including the monarch's right to offer pardon and correct legal error, if they so chose. After both palatinates became linked to the crown in 1399 (as a part of the Duchy of Lancaster), a legal peculiarity came into effect. Although Chester and Lancaster were both nominally owned by the crown, the legal processes of the palatine counties remained independent. Ironically, the connection between the duchy and the crown actively prevented the palatine counties of Chester and Lancaster from losing their autonomy. Because they were linked to the crown, the two palatine counties within the duchy remained impervious to the Act of Resumption (1536), which had greatly limited the independence of the palatinate of Durham.⁵⁰ This had far-reaching implications for the enforcement of religious conformity within the palatine territories.

The palatine counties also had extensive legal independence from other English courts, which created an additional difficulty when the authorities attempted to secure an individual's religious allegiance to the Church of England. In Lancashire, for example, the three palatine courts held superiority within the county's boundaries. These were the Crown Court, the Court of Common Pleas, and the Chancery Court. By the seventeenth-century, it was commonplace to appoint two local men as the superior judges of the Lancashire courts – usually men who also served on the northern assizes circuit. In the Chester palatinate, the judges were chosen from the North Wales circuit.

⁵⁰ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp.1-38; Lapsley, *The County Palatine of Durham*, p.196; Somerville, 'The Palatinate Courts in Lancashire', pp.54-5

In addition to the county courts, the Court of Duchy Chamber also served the region, although it was materially located in London. Many of the more prominent legal cases that arose in north-west England were ordered by the duchy to be heard at its own court in the capital. Somerville has claimed that, 'the Duchy court was somewhat jealous of its subordinate in Lancashire, considering that the latter should deal only with minor matters not fit for the dignity of the Duchy Court.'⁵¹ Because so many of the region's gentlemen were Catholic, duchy office-holders were regularly appointed whose religious beliefs were questionable, such as the protonotary of the duchy, James Anderton.

A high proportion of legal cases were heard locally, rather than at courts in London, meaning that regional justice regularly prevailed. By the beginning of the seventeenth-century, the number of cases heard in the regional courts had increased dramatically. There were some advantages to bringing suit locally, rather than at the duchy court or at Westminster. Firstly, the palatine courts provided justice on the doorstep. It was much more convenient for an individual to travel to Lancaster or Preston, rather than to London. It was also cheaper and speedier – particularly after the palatine courts began to sit outside of assizes weeks. The records demonstrate that the palatine court at Chester issued around 300 orders and decrees per year. Even the duchy court, which despite its London location dealt only with cases involving duchy tenants or possessions, heard more cases than the Exchequer at Westminster.⁵²

⁵¹ Somerville, 'The Palatinate Courts in Lancashire', pp.55-6, 61, 190

⁵² For an outline of contemporary perceptions of the County Palatine of Chester, see 'The Rights & Jurisdiction of the County Palatine of Chester. The Earls Palatine. The Chamberlains & other Officers. And Disputes concerning the Jurisdiction Of the Exchequer Court wth the City of Chester &c.', CRO, DDX 2; Jones, 'Palatine Performance in the

Catholics manipulated the limitations of the regional courts to their own advantage. One significant point that was exploited was the fact that the privileges of the palatine courts were limited to within the confines of their own county boundaries; they held no legal jurisdiction elsewhere. This was a problematic issue for those attempting to resolve cases, as 'a single witness beyond reach might necessitate recourse to another court in order to secure examination'. For Catholics, this was the type of loophole that could be employed in order to purposefully cause delays. All of this jurisdictional bureaucracy caused problems for the state authorities when 'some individuals moved back and forth across palatine boundaries'. Cases that involved disputed lands frequently dealt with territory that was beyond the pale; for instance, territory that included land in both Cheshire and Lancashire. In such a situation the case could not be 'embraced by one palatine jurisdiction' and therefore it could not be resolved conclusively in either court.⁵³

As a result of these circumstances, it was not unusual for litigants to seek redress both at the palatine courts and at the duchy court or Westminster. This was an inevitable consequence of the jurisdictional mosaic that existed within the region. Conflict between the courts was normal and a dispute existed between the Manchester Court Leet and the Hundred Court of Salford that continued for almost two centuries. The legal confusion caused by the Duchy of Lancaster, and in particular by the two palatine counties, was cited as the cause of lawlessness within the

Seventeenth Century', pp.192-3; Somerville, 'The Palatinate Courts in Lancashire', pp.61-

2

⁵³ Jones, 'Palatine Performance in the Seventeenth Century', pp.200-1

Diocese of Chester; a fact that allowed Catholics ample opportunity to evade religious conformity.⁵⁴

The legal situation was byzantine throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean period and failed to improve as time passed. During the Civil Wars, an anonymous tract written around 1645 cited numerous criticisms of the Chester and Lancaster palatinates and partly attributed to them the lawlessness of the region.⁵⁵ The author stated that the 'priviledges and liberties' of the palatine counties were actually the cause of much anarchy within the region, so that: 'the condition of the said County [Lancashire and Cheshire] is farre more miserable, and in greater thraldome, then in any other County whatsoever in the Kingdome.'⁵⁶ The writer continued that it was hard for either 'forreigner or inhabitant' to obtain justice against any who were '*amici Curia*'. The pamphlet claimed that an inability to appeal to superior courts at Westminster meant that litigants were often left 'remedillesse'. The close proximity of the Court of Exchequer also meant that 'multitudes of suits were occasioned ... twice as many as any other County not Palatine.'⁵⁷ The legal situation within the palatine counties also made the situation difficult for those who sought redress against an inhabitant of the palatinate at the Westminster courts. The anonymous author wrote that:

⁵⁴ Jones, 'Palatine Performance in the Seventeenth Century', pp.191-2, 201; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, vol.1, pp.321-2

⁵⁵ Anon, *Severall reasons wherefore the inhabitants of the county palatine of Chester and Lancaster; as also, all forreigners are now prejudiced and tyrannized over, by reason of the pretended priviledges and liberties of the said county. So that the condition of the said county is farre more miserable, and in greater thraldome, then any other county whatsoever in the kingdome*, (London: Printed for E.E. according to Order, Anno Dom. 1645/6)

⁵⁶ Anon, *Severall reasons*, Frontispiece

⁵⁷ Anon, *Severall reasons*, pp.2-4

if any Londoner or other Forreigner should happen to sue any of the Inhabitants within the said County, in any of the Courts at Westminster, and should afterwards come into the County about the execution of any Processe, Order, or other occasion, then presently an Attachment *pro fractione libertas* must be executed upon him, and he enforced to lose his Debt, make some unjust composition, or be sent to the Castle, unlesse he had better credit and friends than usually strangers found there.⁵⁸

There was also little way of punishing errant sheriffs and other palatine officers, as they were answerable to the Duchy Chamberlain rather than to Westminster and the superior courts. The pamphlet concluded that, 'there will be found nothing but generall inconveniences, only some private accommodation, giving principall Officers liberty to pleasure their friends and tyrannize over the rest... a little volume will not contain the abuses and intollerable sufferings, occasioned by the said County-Palatine.'⁵⁹ Although this example is later than the focus of this research (and must be considered within the hostile context of the civil wars), it provides an insight into the sense of lawlessness that was perceived within the region as a result of the deep-rooted vagaries of the legal system. By observing and utilising the persistent conflicts between the various courts and utilising their overlapping jurisdiction, Catholics were able to evade detection for their religious non-conformity.

The administration in the Diocese of Chester was complex in other respects aside from the legal system. Unlike Durham, the palatine counties of Chester and Lancaster continued to elect MPs to Westminster; thereby granting their residents the opportunity to retain political influence

⁵⁸ Anon, *Severall reasons*, p.4

⁵⁹ Anon, *Severall reasons*, pp.4-5

on a national scale (although, in practice, northern MPs were frequently marginalised). One crucial political exemption, however, was the exclusion of the palatine counties from the jurisdiction of both the Council in the North and the Council in the Marches. Despite its designation as a Prince-Bishopric, Durham – unlike Lancashire and Chester – remained firmly under the observation of the Council in the North, the main source of state authority in the north of England.

The Council in the North first originated during the medieval period and was reintroduced at York by King Henry VIII in 1536 following the Pilgrimage of Grace. During Elizabeth's reign, concerns regarding the enforcement of religion only increased and Ecclesiastical Commissions became the main purveyor of religious conformity. According to Philip Tyler, the establishment of the High Commission at York indicated 'the extent to which the Crown was becoming concerned about the problems of royal government in the north'.⁶⁰ It was necessary to establish a separate Ecclesiastical Commission for the Diocese of Chester as early as 1562.⁶¹ Concern was widespread about the political loyalty of Catholics. In 1584, mustering for war in Ireland occasioned the Privy Council to write to the sheriff and justices of Lancashire to comment on the state of religion in that county:

⁶⁰ R.R. Reid, *The King's Council in the North*, (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975); P. Tyler, 'The Significance of the Ecclesiastical Commission at York', *Northern History*, 2 (1967), 27-44

⁶¹ F.W. Brooks, *York and the Council of the North*, (London: St Anthony's Press, 1954); Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance*, p.212; Jones, 'Palatine Performance in the Seventeenth Century', pp.193-4; Reid, *The King's Council in the North*

ther be within that county Certaine gentlemen & others that [are] recusantes, who, [are] notwithstanding that in pointes of religion they doe not Shew them Selves so conformable as appertainethe and her Majestie most earnestlie desyrethe, yet in all ther matters, when they are charged with undewtifffulness, they doe profess all dewtiful affection unto her highnes, so farre furthe as to adventure bothe ther lyves and goodes in Her Majestie's service.⁶²

By 1568 it was apparent that the Ecclesiastical Commission was not effectively enforcing the religious settlement in the Diocese of Chester. Seven of the 21 members of that commission were removed from office. Three were Lancastrians who were 'suspect in religion' – two of them were convicted recusants.⁶³ Many Justices of the Peace were equally lax in the enforcement of Elizabethan religious policy. In 1564, Bishop Downham claimed that only six of the 25 JPs in Lancashire could be trusted in religion and even two of those remained doubtful.⁶⁴ The list of unfavourable JPs included names from some of the county's most esteemed gentry families, including: Thomas Hesketh, Richard Mollineux, William Radcliffe, Richard Shireburne, and John Southworth.⁶⁵ By 1583, almost twenty years later, half of the 'unfavourable' JPs who were still alive remained in office. Many of these JPs proved to be immovable and a further list of Justices of the Peace for Lancashire demonstrates that two of the JPs, Hesketh and Mollineux, still held their positions over thirty

⁶² LRO, DDKE acc.7840 HMC [no reference] (27 Aug 1584), f.74v

⁶³ TNA, SPDom 15, 13/271

⁶⁴ Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance*, pp.212-13; R. Sharpe France, 'Lancashire Justices of the Peace in 1583', *The Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 95 (1943), 131-3; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, vol.1, p.324

⁶⁵ Cosgrove, 'The Position of the Recusant Gentry', pp.49-50; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, vol.1, p.324

years later, in 1595. The 1595 list of JPs presented 42 men and is scattered with the names of those who are known to have had contact with Catholic priests, including James Anderton, Richard Bold, Richard Houghton, and Edward Standish.⁶⁶

The situation was no better in terms of the diocese's sheriffs. Nine of the first ten Elizabethan sheriffs of Lancashire were 'conservative' in their religious beliefs. For example, John Southworth was Sheriff of Lancashire and was listed as 'unfavourable' in religion in the 1564 list.⁶⁷ Another list of Lancashire justices who favoured Catholicism that was compiled in 1591 demonstrates that several of the JPs were untrustworthy at that time, including Richard Shireburne; of whom it was said that 'his wife and family for the most part seldom come to Church and never communicate'. Furthermore, some of Shireburne's daughters had been married and it was 'not known by whom but suspected by mass priests.' Shireburne was a significant figure, thought by contemporaries to be 'an intelligencer to the Papists of Lancashire as appeareth by a letter lately delivered to their lordships.'⁶⁸ The apostate priest Thomas Bell (of whom we will hear more later) spent many years working on the Lancashire missionary circuit and recounted that he had heard George Ashe say that Richard Shireburne 'doth greatlie beare with all Recusants' and that they 'live in much quietnesse by his meanes'.⁶⁹ Shireburne's appointment to the Commission of the Peace evidently allowed him the opportunity to offer effective paternalistic protection to his fellow Catholics.

⁶⁶ LRO, DDKE acc.7840 HMC, f.16r; WDA, A Series, IV, ff.429-56

⁶⁷ Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance*, pp.212-13; Cosgrove, 'The Position of the Recusant Gentry', p.53

⁶⁸ TNA, SPDom 12, 240/41; Cosgrove, 'The Position of the Recusant Gentry', pp.60-2

⁶⁹ WDA, A Series, IV, f.452

The same Catholic family names persist amongst lists of state officials and the influence of these men upon others can repeatedly be traced. For example, of John Radcliffe it was said that, 'his wife being very well trained in the truth of religion, since his intermarriage with her, is revolted to Popery, and seldom or never cometh to the Church'. Both Radcliffe and Shireburne were members of the Ecclesiastical Commission, as well as JPs.⁷⁰ Similarly, John Mollineux was not only a JP, but also steward of the Hundreds of Blackburn, West Derby and Salford. It was reported that: 'his wife and family are very evilly disposed, and [he] retaineth in his service gentlemen of very good countenance the most notorious papists of that end of Lancashire. As [t]he Blundells, Irelands and others.'⁷¹ In 1590 James Anderton, the duchy protonotary, was described as 'backward [in religion] and his wife a recusant'. Similarly, Edward Rigby, feodary, and clerk of the crown, was 'evil given in religion' and Edward Bradyll, surveyor of the woods in the north, was said to be 'as badde as any' in terms of his religion.⁷²

Enforcing religious and political loyalty amongst the Commission of the Peace and the Ecclesiastical Commission was crucial, as effecting religious conformity without trustworthy JPs or Ecclesiastical Commissioners was almost impossible. Indeed, the unknown author of a letter written in October 1595 concerning 'Papists in Lancashire' took great pains to express his distrust of the majority of his peers, writing that he dared not entrust letters 'to any commissioners, concerninge takinge of Preestes, & Seminaries, &c., except Edmund Fleetewoodde, Nicholas

⁷⁰ Cosgrove, 'The Position of the Recusant Gentry', pp.60-1

⁷¹ TNA, SPDom 12, 240/41; Cosgrove, 'The Position of the Recusant Gentry', p.61

⁷² TNA, SPDom 12, 235/4; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, vol.1, p.324

Banister, John Bradshaigh, John Wrightington, and Edmund Hopwodde'. These were the only five amongst the commissioners that he trusted 'would spende all the Buttons att their Doublets, to purge Lancashyre from Idolatrie, Papistrie, sedicious Seminaries & theyr favorytes'.⁷³

The most important duchy official during this period was the chancellor. The chancellor of the duchy and of the county palatine was, by the Elizabethan period, usually the same person. Although, as Jones has stated, 'there can be no doubt as to which was his more important function' – his role as the chancellor of the duchy.⁷⁴ The chancellor's obligations towards the duchy far outweighed those he owed to the Lancashire palatinate and forced him to live outside of the county in London. It became usual, therefore, for the chancellor to appoint someone to act as his deputy within Lancashire. This office became known as the vice-chancellor in the county palatinate. The men appointed to this position held great sway within regional authority. They were almost always prominent members of the Lancashire gentry. They were also often Catholic.⁷⁵

The vice-chancellor held great power within Lancashire and across the diocese as a whole and it therefore became increasingly important to the state authorities that he and all other duchy office-holders could be trusted in matters of religion.⁷⁶ It can be demonstrated, however, that this was not always the case. In 1591, Richard Bradyll, vice-chancellor of the County Palatinate of Lancaster, JP, and deputy to Her Majesty's Attorney in the county, was described thus: 'His wife and family are very ill disposed

⁷³ LRO, DDKE acc.7840 HMC, f.24r

⁷⁴ Jones, 'Palatine Performance in the Seventeenth Century', p.193

⁷⁵ Somerville, 'The Palatinate Courts in Lancashire', p.60

⁷⁶ Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, vol.1, p.325

and seldom or never come to church'.⁷⁷ Even a cursory examination of duchy officials appointed to serve the Lancashire palatine reveals that a great number of office-holders were convicted recusants or were purported to have been Catholic sympathisers by their contemporaries.⁷⁸ For example, it is apparent that the religious allegiance of the Vice-Chamberlain of the Palatine County of Chester and Ecclesiastical Commissioner, William Glasier, was questionable. In 1592, Glasier's wife Elizabeth was sent to the Chester Commission for examination regarding her association with Catholic prisoners.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Hugh Glasier, son of William and Elizabeth, was also suspected of being Catholic – despite his appointment as the Mayor of Chester. Hugh Glasier's wife, Mary, was also presented for absenteeism and non-communication at visitations in both 1598 and 1601.⁸⁰

In conclusion, the ecclesiastical and temporal administrative structures within the Diocese of Chester were multi-layered and complex. This jurisdictional mosaic made local governance, state supervision, and the enforcement of the religious settlement extremely difficult during the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. The population of local government, at every level, with Catholic men – Justices of the Peace, Ecclesiastical Commissioners, duchy and palatine officials etc – did nothing to ease these difficulties. In many cases, Catholics had ample opportunity to obstruct the hegemony of orthodox religion in the diocese. This can be clearly seen in the case of men such as John Southworth or Richard

⁷⁷ TNA, SPDom 12, 240/41; Cosgrove, 'The Position of the Recusant Gentry', p.62

⁷⁸ Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, vol.1, part II - list of office holders pre-1603; Somerville, *Office-holders in the Duchy and County Palatine*

⁷⁹ CRO, QSE [Quarter Session Records] 4/15

⁸⁰ CRO, EDV 1, 12a/29; CRO, EDV 1, 12b/54

Shireburne. The political protection and patronage that men such as Southworth or Shireburne were able to offer to their fellow Catholics – both male and female – made the enforcement of religious conformity more difficult in the Diocese of Chester than in other parts of England. The evidence demonstrates, therefore, that the unique ecclesiastical and temporal administrative structures of the Diocese of Chester after 1541 greatly influenced the extent to which its residents were able to retain access to priests and maintain Catholic beliefs and practices.

Part Three: Identifying and Counting Catholics

One of the greatest problems faced by historians of post-Reformation Catholicism is that there is no straightforward way to define who was a Catholic and who was not. On first examination, the simplest and most easily quantifiable method of determining who was a Catholic in the Diocese of Chester would be to examine the recusancy rolls.⁸¹ Although these are an easily quantifiable resource for anyone studying the history of Catholicism, there are deep-rooted problems with their utilisation, which ultimately serves to undermine their value.⁸² A detailed analysis of one official record is undertaken here, which demonstrates that recusancy and non-communication presentments are an inherently flawed source. Documents such as these provide us with an indication of the individuals whose recusancy or non-communication was detected, reported, and

⁸¹ Anon., 'Recusant Rolls nos. 2, 3 and 4 (1593-6): English Abstract by H. Bowler', *Catholic Record Society*, vols. 57 & 61 (1965-70); J.A. Williams, 'A Short Guide to Records, 11: Recusant Rolls', *History*, 50 (1965), 193-6

⁸² See for example the analysis of problems with recusancy records in Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*

registered; however, they tell us nothing about the motivations of those people. Nor do they provide any enlightenment regarding the individuals who evaded presentment. This type of source reveals little about the nature and character of post-Reformation Catholic belief in the Diocese of Chester. In order to uncover any detail regarding the realities of life for Catholic women and the foundations of their religious beliefs, it is necessary to move beyond the limitations of state-produced documentation.

The first fundamental problem that historians encounter when reviewing presentment records, is establishing which non-attenders were Catholic and that individuals had chosen not to conform for other reasons. Because someone had failed to attend services at their parish church, it does not necessarily mean that an individual should be identified as a Catholic. There are a number of alternative explanations that might explain their absence. An absentee could well be someone who was avoiding proscribed services because of their religious beliefs; yet those failing to attend church services could just as easily have been Puritan, as Catholic. A plethora of obligations and commitments could also explain why people chose to miss church services. At a time when society was riddled with disease and with little medical treatment available, chronic illness was common.⁸³ Equally, many homes, especially in areas with geographically dispersed populations, were located a considerable distance from their parish church.⁸⁴ Travelling long distances could easily

⁸³ R.S. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society in England, 1550-1860*, 2nd Edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

⁸⁴ CRO, EDC 5, 1587/39 (Staveley); Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*

explain the absence from church services of elderly or infirm parishioners who could not undertake such journeys.

The dispute over whether the chapel at Staveley, around five miles outside of Kendal (in what is now Cumbria), should be designated a parish church supports this argument. Some of the residents of Staveley claimed that the way to the parish church at Kendal was often blocked by high waters, which made the route impassable, and stated that this was the reason why they had been forced to miss services frequently. The authenticity of this complaint was challenged by a number of the other parishioners living near Staveley, who petitioned both the Bishop of Chester and the Archbishop of York in response to these 'sinister peoples and absurde dealings' to argue that their claim was false. The parishioners testified that the justifications for the petition were fabricated and that none of the parishioners faced any difficulties whatsoever in reaching the parish church at Kendal. The deponents insisted that there were 'nether flouded rivers nor watters in the directe waye from the said chappell of Staveley ... but that be and have bene easye to be passed att all tymes of the yeare'. Their statement continued on to assert that there were, 'no watters att all but two or three little beκες or brookes ... easefull to passe over with sufficiente bridges on them ... all this we will be redye to depose upon and boke othes yf nede requires when or wheresoever'. The document is signed by upwards of 45 local residents.⁸⁵ The true motivations behind the request for a new parish church are unknown. However, it is not implausible that Catholic non-conformity was a motivating factor.

⁸⁵ CRO, EDC 5, 1587/39, f.3 (Staveley)

Returning to the problem of absenteeism, there were an assortment of other reasons why even the most devout Protestants would absent themselves from services. Although, in theory, valid explanations such as illness or infirmity were taken into account by churchwardens before a presentment for recusancy was considered, there is no evidence to confirm that such preliminary checks were undertaken in practice. It cannot be substantiated that all non-attenders were Catholics, just as we cannot ascertain that those individuals who regularly attended Church of England services were not also observing Catholic practices within the privacy of their own homes.

An analysis of presentment figures from Lancashire, listed in a document dating from 1613, demonstrates more lucidly some of the problems with the collection and quantification of this kind of data and its subsequent use to demonstrate the prevalence of Catholic belief at this time.⁸⁶ The manuscript, which is now housed at the British Library, lists numbers of recusants and non-communicants presented by the churchwardens of each parish in Lancashire; sometimes in comparison with the total number of communicants. By plotting these presentments onto maps of Lancashire's parishes (see maps five & six, below), it is possible to compare patterns and trends across the county.

Examining those parishes for which figures are listed, it is notable that some of the most isolated regions in the north of the diocese presented very low numbers of people for recusancy or non-communication. The five most north-westerly parishes returned particularly low numbers: Pennington and Ulverston presented no

⁸⁶ B[ritish] L[ibrary], Lansdowne 153/10, 'An abstract of the presentment of recusants, non communicants, and communicants in the county of Lanc. Anno Doi 1613', ff.56-7

recusants; Kirkby Ireleth, one; Aldingham, two; and Dalton, only fourteen. None of those parishes presented any non-communicants. The number of communicants listed for each parish were, respectively: Aldingham (562), Dalton (1300), Kirkby Ireleth (409), Pennington (137), and Ulverston (1600).⁸⁷ Although these parishes were rural and therefore sparsely populated, the extremely low numbers of presentments for recusancy and non-communication are nevertheless puzzling – do they signify that there were virtually no Catholics in that part of the diocese, or simply that they were not being detected and presented by their churchwardens?

⁸⁷ BL, Lansdowne 153/10

Legend:

- NO DATA
- 0-20
- 21-50
- 51-80
- 81-100
- 101-200
- 200+

Districts and Abbreviations:

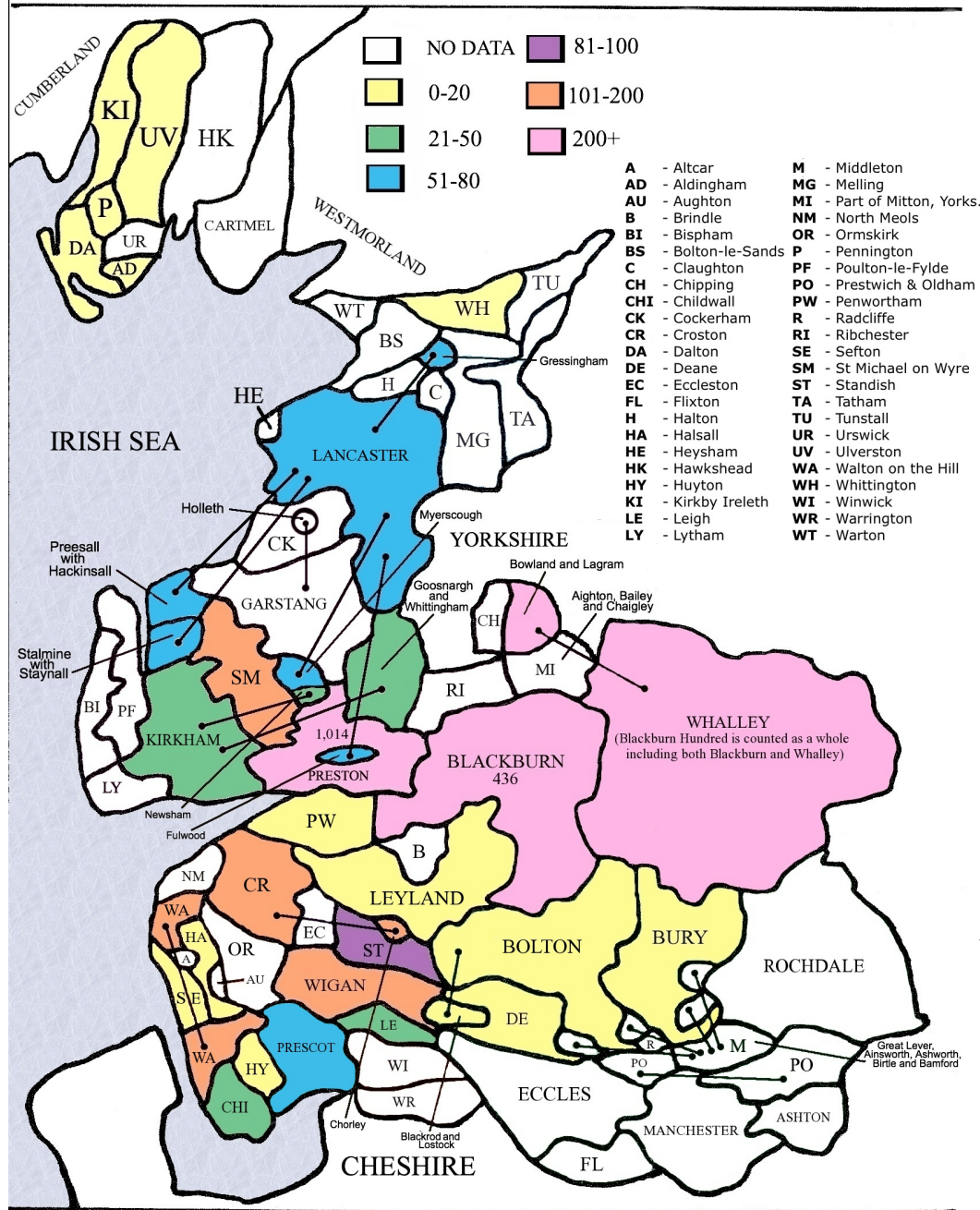
- A - Altcar
- AD - Aldingham
- AU - Aughton
- B - Brindle
- BI - Bispham
- BS - Bolton-le-Sands
- C - Claughton
- CH - Chipping
- CHI - Childwall
- CK - Cockerham
- CR - Croston
- DA - Dalton
- DE - Deane
- EC - Eccleston
- FL - Flixton
- H - Halton
- HA - Halsall
- HE - Heysham
- HK - Hawkshead
- HY - Huyton
- KI - Kirkby Ireleth
- LE - Leigh
- LY - Lytham
- M - Middleton
- MG - Melling
- MI - Part of Mitton, Yorks.
- NM - North Meols
- OR - Ormskirk
- P - Pennington
- PF - Poulton-le-Fylde
- PO - Prestwich & Oldham
- PW - Penwortham
- R - Radcliffe
- RI - Ribchester
- SE - Sefton
- SM - St Michael on Wyre
- ST - Standish
- TA - Tatham
- TU - Tunstall
- UR - Urmston
- UV - Ulverston
- WA - Walton on the Hill
- WH - Whittington
- WI - Winwick
- WR - Warrington
- WT - Warton

Other Labels:

- CUMBERLAND
- IRISH SEA
- CARTMEL
- WESTMORLAND
- Grossingham
- LANCASTER
- YORKSHIRE
- Garstang
- Kirkham
- Preston
- Blackburn
- Whalley (Blackburn Hundred is counted as a whole including both Blackburn and Whalley)
- Bolton
- Bury
- Rochdale
- Manchester
- Ashton
- Cheshire
- Chorley
- Blackrod and Lostock
- Great Lever, Ainsworth, Ashworth, Birlee and Bamford
- Stalmine with Slaynall
- Preesall with Hackinsall
- Holleth
- Myerscough
- Goosnargh and Whittingham
- Bowland and Lagram
- Aughton, Bailey and Chalgley
- Newsham
- Fulwood
- 338
- 294

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LANCASHIRE NON-COMMUNICANTS, 1613



Map Six - Map plotting numbers of non-communicants presented from Lancashire parishes in 1613, as listed in British Library, Lansdowne 153/10

In the south-easterly parishes of Manchester Deanery, focusing around Middleton parish and including Deane, Bolton, Bury, and Rochdale parishes, it can be noted that the figures for presentments are once again very low. Bury presented no recusants or non-communicants, while Bolton presented only fifteen recusants and not a single non-communicant. Neither parish recorded numbers of communicants, but Bury was described as 'a greate parish in which there are manie dutifull subjects'.⁸⁸ A similar trend continues for the parishes of Eccles, Flixton, and Manchester, which presented fewer than five recusants apiece. Non-communicants are not listed for those three parishes; however, together they are described as having encompassed at least 6,000 communicants.⁸⁹ One explanation for the disparities that can be discerned in this area, is the fact that Manchester Deanery was the area in Lancashire that gravitated most strongly towards Protestantism and especially Puritanism. Christopher Haigh and R.C. Richardson both suggested that this was as a result of urbanisation and the proto-industrialisation of the localised region.⁹⁰ The low number of presentments evidenced here is consistent with that argument. However, it does not seem probable that this was the sole explanation for the miniscule numbers of presentments that were recorded.

The parishes that returned the greatest number of presentments for recusancy and non-communication were Kirkham, Prescott, and Preston. Although the presentments in Blackburn were also high, the figures were

⁸⁸ BL, Lansdowne 153/10, f.56r

⁸⁹ BL, Lansdowne 153/10

⁹⁰ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.243, 295-315; Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', pp.500-54; Richardson, *Puritanism in North-West England*

collated over the entirety of Blackburn Deanery. Both Blackburn and Whalley parishes (which comprised the deanery) were extremely large; therefore the numbers of individuals presented are not as anomalous as they initially appear. Returning to Kirkham, Prescott, and Preston – the only one of the three parishes for which the number of communicants was listed is Prescott, with 2,035. In Prescott, therefore, it can be calculated that the total number of presentments (202 for recusancy and 39 for non-communication) represented around 10% of all parishioners. This pattern remains representative if we include the figures for Farnworth Chapelry that was a part of Prescott parish, but which was counted separately in the manuscript. Farnworth presented 92 recusants and 28 non-communicants and the number of communicants listed was 1,217. If we consider Prescott and Farnworth together, therefore, the figures translate to 294 recusants and 67 non-communicants – a total of 361 presentments in relation to 3,352 communicants (once again, around 10%).⁹¹

Turning attention to the numbers for Preston, there were 70 presentments for recusancy and 600 for non-communication. This parish also included Broughton Chapelry, for which the presentments are separately listed as 20 for recusancy and 414 for non-communication. Together this gives Preston parish total presentment figures of 90 for recusancy and 1,014 for non-communication. The number of communicants is not listed for either Preston or Broughton Chapelry so we cannot calculate what percentage of the total parishioners this represented. Kirkham parish presented 175 recusants, yet not a single non-communicant. Communicants, once again, are not listed for that

⁹¹ BL, Lansdowne 153/10

parish. Such great numbers of presentments in relatively small parishes initially appears to be anomalous; however, if we consider that the parishes of Kirkham, Prescott, and Preston (including Broughton Chapelry) were all ministered to by Puritan clerics in 1613, the figures become less surprising.

Alan Dunbabin conducted a detailed analysis of the strained relationship that existed between the Puritan incumbent Thomas Meade and the Catholics of Prescott parish.⁹² A similar dynamic between a Puritan minister and Catholic locals seems to have been at work in both Kirkham and Preston at this time.⁹³ The vicars of Kirkham and Preston in 1613 were Anthony Greenacres and John Paler, respectively. The Puritan incumbents of these three parishes may simply have been more assiduous in pursuing presentments and in recording their figures, than their non-Puritan counterparts were. Therefore, although the figures for the three parishes initially appear to be anomalous, there is a rational explanation for the apparent incongruence.

Other historians have observed inconsistencies in the number of individuals presented for recusancy and non-communication across regions. Christopher Haigh, for example, established that two Lancashire parishes sharing a border could have completely different levels of recusancy presentments. Analysis of the 1613 presentments demonstrates that this theory holds weight – some parishes presented few individuals, while an adjacent parish presented far greater numbers. On

⁹² A. Dunbabin, 'Post-Reformation Catholicism in the parish of Prescott, Lancashire, from the Elizabethan Settlement to the Civil War', (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Manchester, 1981)

⁹³ VCH, *Lancashire*, vol.7 (1912), pp.72-91, 143-50; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p.315

consideration, it seems improbable that one parish had an apparently vibrant Catholic community while another, only a mile or two away, did not. It is more probable than not that the churchwardens and incumbents of the former parish simply performed their duties more assiduously than those of the latter. Two neighbouring parishes were highly unlikely to have had radically different socio-economic microclimates that would explain differences in presentment levels. The variation could, however, perhaps be explained by certain factors – such as population density, the number of townships in the parish, or the number of gentry households. However, on the balance of probabilities it seems more likely than not that the variations can be explained by the relative commitments of the parish incumbents and their churchwardens.⁹⁴

Recusancy and non-communication figures tell us more about the processes of reporting and recording, than they do about the true prevalence and nature of Catholicism in Lancashire in 1613. The fact that there were no non-communicants presented in Kirkham parish, but 1,014 in the adjacent parish of Preston suggests that the decisions taken by incumbents and churchwardens on how to define those they were presenting were more important in the recording process than the actual activities, behaviour, and beliefs of those accused. Official figures can be quantified and analysed in any number of statistical ways, but they tell us little about the beliefs of the individuals involved – whether they were practicing Catholics; or Protestants who, for whatever reason, did not attend divine service or failed to communicate. The figures are thought-provoking and may accurately reflect the true extent of Catholic practice,

⁹⁴ Dunbabin, 'Post-Reformation Catholicism in the Parish of Prescot', pp.2-3; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.316-19

but they cannot be relied upon to provide truthful elucidation. They tell us less about post-Reformation Catholicism, than they do about the legal and ecclesiastical machinations of the Protestant state and the efficacy of Puritan ministry.

Non-attendance at church services was an established phenomenon that had been problematic for the medieval Church long before the advent of Protestantism. The Whalley Act Book, for example, demonstrates that presentments to the church courts for non-attendance were very common in Whalley before the Act of Supremacy of 1536. In apparent contradiction to this fact, the Act Book indicates that heretical belief was all but unheard of in medieval Whalley. Pre-Reformation non-attendance was not often linked to religious objection. In actuality, the Act Book most often attributes non-attendance to Sabbath-breaking activities such as gardening and house building, rather than to religious disaffection. Several families, such as the Marcrofts of Rossendale, were repeatedly cited for their avoidance of services due to domestic matters. Heresy is not once mentioned as a motivating factor, with absentees often being categorised by the recorder as something more akin to what we would now refer to as agnostic. There were non-religious motivations for failing to attend services in the pre-Reformation Church and the same can be said of the post-Reformation Church. Although the manner in which non-attenders were categorised by the Church of England changed after the Reformation, this does not mean that the motives for non-attendance necessarily did.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ M. Lynch et al (eds.), *Life, Love and Death in North-East Lancashire, 1510-1537: a Translation of the Act Book of the Ecclesiastical Court at Whalley*, (Manchester: Chetham

There are many alternative methods that historians can use in attempting to determine whether an individual was Catholic, yet they are all, invariably, problematic. Some historians, for instance, have equated the definition of 'Catholic' with the term 'traditionalist'. For example, Dunbabin cited a great number of examples from Prescott that demonstrates how the inhabitants had retained traditional religious practices, such as devotion to the rosary, and used this as evidence of their Catholicism. Using the term 'traditionalist' to equate with a person's definition as a 'Catholic' sits well with Haigh's argument for continuity between pre-Reformation and post-Reformation religious practice. However, it is debatable whether an individual's use of the rosary supports their categorisation as a post-Reformation 'Catholic', or merely as someone who was maintaining a traditional religious practice because it was what they had always known. To a degree, such a distinction is a moot point, as it rests on the plausibility of determining whether people used the rosary as a conscious expression of their Catholic belief, or simply because that was what they and their families had always done – the two, in all likelihood, amounted to the same thing. The question of self-definition is important, but there is rarely evidence available that could conclusively prove the point either way. It is only possible to say that evidence of either recusancy or non-communication and traditional religious practices in conjunction, as Dunbabin found in Prescott, provides persuasive evidence that great numbers of the parishioners there considered themselves to be Catholic.⁹⁶

Society, 2006), pp.42, 75, 82, 84, 87-8, 141, 147, 157-8, 165, 169, 176, 181, 195, 198, 206, 242

⁹⁶ Dunbabin, 'Post-Reformation Catholicism in the parish of Prescott'

The distinction between 'recusant' and the 'non-communicant' has often been a factor that has influenced the individuals that historians have categorised as 'Catholic'. However, the process by which churchwardens made a presentment was convoluted and the list of presentments from 1613 demonstrates that there were clearly vagaries in how churchwardens defined recusants and non-communicants. There were many stages at which a practicing Catholic might evade being listed amongst the presentments of their parish. There are a number of reasons why churchwardens might choose not to present someone. Some may have had no set list of the individuals residing in their parish. They would therefore be ignorant of who ought to be at services in the first place. This was more likely in densely populous areas where it would be difficult to keep track of a great number of people; but also, conversely, maintaining an accurate list would also be problematic in places where the population was geographically dispersed over a large area.

Once he had his list, a churchwarden then needed to identify who had not been present at each service. This sounds easier in theory than it sometimes must have been in practice. Some families lived closer to another chapel than they did to their own parish church and could claim to have attended services at that church, rather than their own. This was especially common in places where parishes covered large geographical areas, as in Lancashire. This may be one explanation why the parishioners of Staveley, who we encountered earlier, argued that they wanted to have their chapel-of-ease appointed as a parish church.⁹⁷ In a time where communication was difficult and slow, it would be almost

⁹⁷ CRO, EDC 5, 1587/39, f.3 (Staveley)

impossible for churchwardens to prove that parishioners had not attended services elsewhere.⁹⁸

Evidence demonstrates that some Catholics purposefully utilised the loophole described above in order to evade presentment. When challenged about their non-attendance at church services, the Standish family told their churchwarden that they had not been in residence at their eponymous estate at the time, but that they were at their second home at Wolfax, Northamptonshire, and had attended services there.⁹⁹ Even if they doubted the truthfulness of such claims, it was difficult for churchwardens to disprove them conclusively. The Blundells of Little Crosby also purposefully moved between locations to avoid detection.¹⁰⁰ Geographically relocating was not an uncommon tactic for Catholics to deploy. Maria Lawton, wife of William Lawton of Church Lawton (Chester), was reported to have crossed the diocesan boundary in order to seek refuge from prosecution.¹⁰¹ Both Maria and her daughter (of the same name) were repeatedly presented for absenteeism and recusancy.¹⁰² Similarly, in 1581 Bishop Chadderton complained to the Privy Council that two women from the Diocese of Chester had evaded presentment and prosecution by seeking refuge across the border in the adjacent Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield. The Privy Council issued an order that a thorough search be made for the two women ('Mrs. Davenport to Buxtons and Mrs. Lawton to Batterley') and ordered that they return to their own

⁹⁸ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*

⁹⁹ Cosgrove, 'The Position of the Recusant Gentry', p.116

¹⁰⁰ Gibson, *Crosby records*

¹⁰¹ APC, 1581-2, 123 (Acts of the Privy Council, vol.13)

¹⁰² CRO, EDV 1, 8/85; CRO, EDV 1, 10/108; CRO, EDV 1, 12a/55; CRO, EDV 1, 12b/72

diocese.¹⁰³ By using evasory tactics such as these, Catholics would potentially be able to avoid both attendance at church services and also presentment for their absence.

In small communities, it was highly likely that churchwardens would be called upon to present relatives and lifelong friends for their non-conformity. It was also usually members of the gentry who appointed churchwardens to their posts. If the local gentry family was Catholic – which, as we have seen, was probable in Lancashire – then it is extremely unlikely that they would have chosen a Puritan parishioner to act as their churchwarden. On the balance of probabilities, it is more likely than not that someone sympathetic to Catholicism, or at least towards traditional practices, would have been their first choice for an appointment. As has already been demonstrated, there is evidence of a surprising degree of sympathy towards Catholicism amongst Church of England clerics in the Diocese of Chester – even amongst high-ranking officials, such as the deans.¹⁰⁴

If an individual was ultimately presented to a visitation, they could choose simply not to appear or to ignore the court's penalties; a technique that proved to be a surprisingly effective strategy.¹⁰⁵ On occasion the authorities, particularly in the case of women, might also blatantly ignore recusancy or non-communication. Women were more likely to be recusants than their male counterparts, as they faced fewer legal penalties for their non-attendance. However, as a general rule it was usually men who were targeted for arrest during raids by pursuivants, while female

¹⁰³ APC, 1581-2/123 (4 July 1581) (Acts of the Privy Council, vol.13)

¹⁰⁴ See earlier discussion of Thomas Bland, Dean of Catterick, Kendal, Lonsdale, and Richmond, pp.48-9

¹⁰⁵ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*

family members were overlooked. In February 1591, for example, Ferdinando Stanley, the fifth Earl of Derby, wrote of the arrangements for the forthcoming arrest of recusants, stating that: 'upon Wednesdaye nexte' all should be arrested; 'knights, esquires wives & daughters' only excepted.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, when a shortage of funds to maintain the prison necessitated the release of inmates from the New Fleet in Manchester, Francis Walsingham suggested to the fifth Earl of Derby that the 'most inoffensive poor recusants (as women as such like)' should be released first.¹⁰⁷

Ultimately, absenting oneself from Church of England services was only one method in which Catholics could express their faith. A range of options was available, aside from recusancy. Catholics might only occasionally absent themselves from official services – attending only as often as was necessary to avoid presentment and the subsequent financial penalties. Those who attended as infrequently as possible can be loosely defined as conformists or church-papists. There is a wide spectrum of grey within this categorisation. Independent pieces of research by both Michael Questier and Alexandra Walsham have demonstrated that the theological beliefs of church-papists were roundly Catholic and it was generally practicality that motivated them to conform. Conformity was more common amongst male members of the gentry, who had more to lose through prosecution for recusancy and who were statistically far more likely to be targeted by the state authorities. Lack of

¹⁰⁶ LRO, DDKE acc.7840, HMC, f.122

¹⁰⁷ 'Walsingham to Derby 30 June 1582' printed in F. Peck, *Desiderata curiosa: or, A collection of divers scarce and curious pieces relating chiefly to matters of English history* (etc.), (London: Printed for Thomas Evans in the Strand, 1779), 2 vols.; Rev. D. Lannon, 'Manchester's New Fleet Prison or House of Correction and Other Gaols for Obstinate Recusants', *Recusant History*, 29:4 (2009), 459-86

public status and assets owned in their own right meant that married gentrywomen (and poorer Catholics) had relatively little to lose by non-attendance and therefore had less motivation to conform. The one exception to this rule was widows who owned property outright. Catholic widows were sometimes placed at greater financial risk by not conforming than married women.¹⁰⁸

One type of non-communication was for Catholics to attend Church of England services, but to then refuse to listen to the service. Stopping up their ears with cotton wool, singing, talking over the sermon, or refusing to stand at certain parts of the service were all ways of attending Protestant services and avoiding prosecution, while still expressing disaffection with the Church of England.¹⁰⁹ Thomas Greaves and others from the parish of Childwall (Lancashire), for example, were presented in 1592 for talking in the churchyard during services and sermons.¹¹⁰ Women could express their dissatisfaction in a manner unique to their sex, by refusing to be churched – as the wife of John Leigh of Prescott did in 1592.¹¹¹

The ambiguities in defining who was a Catholic and who was not confirms that lists of recusants and non-communicants cannot be relied upon to provide an accurate measure of the pervasiveness of Catholicism within the Diocese of Chester. Those individuals who were presented as

¹⁰⁸ P. Lake & M.C. Questier (eds.), *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660*, *Studies in Modern British Religious History*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000); M.C. Questier, 'The Politics of Religious Conformity and the Accession of James I', *Historical Research*, 71:174 (1998), 14-30; M.C. Questier, 'What Happened to English Catholicism after the English Reformation?', *History*, 85:277 (2000), 28-47; A. Walsham, *Church papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England*, *Royal Historical Society Studies in History*, 68, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993)

¹⁰⁹ Walsham, *Church papists*

¹¹⁰ CRO, EDV 1, 10/115

¹¹¹ CRO, EDV 1, 10/125

recusants and non-communicants comprised only a small percentage of those who held Catholic beliefs or who embraced traditional religious practices. Attempting to quantify the number of Catholics in Elizabethan and Jacobean England is therefore an informative exercise, but one that tells us more about the state, than it does about the subtle diffusion and evolution of the Catholic faith under prohibition: particularly in relation to women. As James Cosgrove so astutely wrote, 'recusancy figures are no reliable guide to the Catholic population of England – the more so because the secret nature of the "floating belt of neutrals and sympathisers" makes the whole subject particularly unrewarding to the statisticians'.¹¹²

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the complexities surrounding ecclesiastical and temporal boundaries, as well as the jurisdictional and administrative confusion, which existed within the Diocese of Chester made the enforcement of religious conformity by state and church authorities more difficult than elsewhere in England. This confusion, along with the paternalistic presence of Catholic men in positions of regional authority, made evading detection easier for the Catholics of that diocese. The presence of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Palatine Counties of Chester and Lancashire within the diocesan boundaries also meant that large swathes of land fell beyond the remit of the key agencies of national and regional authority in northern England. Devolved power was influential throughout the diocese and the presence of great numbers of

¹¹² Cosgrove, 'The Position of the Recusant Gentry', p.36

the Catholic gentry amongst the ranks of regional office-holders ensured that Catholicism endured. As a result of the political protection offered by their male kin, the Catholic women of the Diocese of Chester were able to shelter recusant and missionary priests with a greater degree of freedom and could enable gentry households to be used as Mass centres.

Analysis of one sample of presentment figures, and of how historians try to identify Catholics, has demonstrated that official documentation is of limited use in identifying the diverse range of religious beliefs and practices undertaken by post-Reformation Catholics. This is particularly true in the case of women. The labels 'recusant' or 'non-communicant' do not greatly aid our understanding of the multifaceted nature of female Catholic belief and practice. In order to develop a more pellucid view of the role of women in the maintenance, evolution, and dissemination of Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester, it is necessary to transcend the parameters of quantifiable records, such as recusancy and non-communication presentments, and consider more qualitative sources of information.

Chapter Two

Women, the Clergy, and Catholic Communities

Introduction

This chapter demonstrates that in the absence of an established Catholic Church and with the development of household religion, Catholic women and their kinship networks became central to the survival and evolution of post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester. The absence of a clerical hierarchy in England necessitated a move from the public sphere of the church, to the private sphere of the household. As a result of the importance of household religion, Catholic gentrywomen began to act as gatekeepers to the clergy, sheltering priests within their homes and facilitating the access that they had to great numbers of people through communal worship at Mass centres in private houses. By acting as facilitators in this manner, Catholic gentrywomen were able to subtly transgress some of the social boundaries normally encountered by women and assume positions of authority within their communities.

Historians including J.C.H. Aveling, John Bossy, and A.G. Dickens have claimed that the arrival of missionaries in the 1570s and 1580s reinvigorated a failing religion and created a new brand of Catholicism. However, evidence pertaining to the Diocese of Chester contradicts this argument, demonstrating that Marian priests remained active throughout the period between the Elizabethan Settlement and the arrival of the missionaries. The continued presence and influence of priests ensured

that the Catholics in this diocese enjoyed uninterrupted access to sacramental devotion – but in the private household, rather than in public.

The arrival of seminary and Jesuit priests undoubtedly reinvigorated post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester, by replacing ageing and deceased Marian clerics with younger priests. Many of the missionaries who are known to have worked in the diocese returned to the areas where they had been born in order to minister to local families. Converts, who were acquired as a result of the widespread discontent that was growing regarding the Established Church, also rejuvenated post-Reformation Catholicism. It was this discontent that ensured that demand for Catholic priests in the diocese remained high.

In the majority of cases, it was women who took primary responsibility for harbouring and caring for priests. To preserve their positions of political and social authority, Catholic men were forced to deny knowledge of priests and to adopt a guise of conformity. As a result of this necessity and in their roles as household managers, it was naturally women who had the most sustained contact with priests. The use of gentry houses as Mass centres within local communities was facilitated by Catholic gentrywomen, who utilised their kinship networks to relay messages and to move priests from one location to another. Female kinship networks allowed priests to move securely between Catholic households with minimised risk. Communal worship was critical to ensuring the dissemination of Catholicism: geographically, throughout the diocese, and temporally, to subsequent generations. As a result of the constrained circumstances within which Catholic priests were forced to operate, gentrywomen became key figures in ensuring the survival of post-

Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester. Had gentrywomen not acted as gatekeepers, sacramental devotion would not have been possible. Without sacramental devotion, Catholicism would not have survived in its traditional form and post-Reformation Catholicism could not have evolved or developed in such a fruitful manner.

Marian Priests and their contact with Gentry Households

Recusant Marian priests were the group of clerics who ensured the initial continuity of Catholic religious practice in the Diocese of Chester, during the period between the accession of Queen Elizabeth I and the arrival of the first Catholic missionaries in 1574. The extent to which Marian priests retained their influence in Protestant England has been a principal consideration within the historiography of post-Reformation Catholicism. Both John Bossy and Christopher Haigh recognised that Catholic religious practices were forced to adapt in response to a shift in established religion in England. One of the key disagreements between the two historians, however, concerned the significance of Marian priests during the period after the Elizabethan Settlement, but before the arrival of the missionaries in the 1570s and 1580s. Bossy argued that there was a graduated decline in Catholic religious belief and practice in England between 1559 and 1574, due to the increasing scarcity of Catholic priests and the consequential deprivation of access to sacramental devotion. As a result of this stagnation, Bossy claimed that the arrival of the missionaries after 1574 triggered the development of a new rejuvenated brand of Catholicism. In contrast to this, Haigh presented evidence that the Marian

clergy during that time, in Lancashire at least, were more prevalent and wielded far greater influence than Bossy had acknowledged. Haigh further argued that there were clear signs of continuity within Catholic religious practices between the Henrician period and the arrival of the missionaries.¹ The evidence from the Diocese of Chester as a whole corroborates Haigh's argument for continuity in religious belief, with some clear aspects of change in relation to Catholic practice.

Marian priests continued to minister to Catholics in the Diocese of Chester during the fifteen-year period before the arrival of the missionaries. Furthermore, they remained a significant presence even after the Jesuits and seminary priests arrived in the diocese. The greater part of the surviving body of evidence relates to recusant priests who worked in Lancashire, but it is nevertheless apparent that the Marian clergy remained active across the diocese as a whole. For example, the 'old Priest' James Hargreaves, the deprived vicar of Blackburn, lived with the Skillicornes of Preese (Kirkham Parish, Lancashire) almost continuously from the point of his deprivation until his death in the 1580s. The majority of Hargreaves' contact was with Mrs Skillicorne and her daughter Mrs Rogerley and it was said that the two women regularly 'frequented Masses, Sermons &c'.² It was easier for gentrywomen to offer support to Marian priests, than it was for their fathers and husbands,

¹ J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1975); C. Haigh, 'Catholicism in early modern England: Bossy and beyond' [review], *Historical Journal*, 45:2 (2002), 481-94; C. Haigh, *English Reformations: religion, politics and society under the Tudors*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); C. Haigh, 'From monopoly to minority: Catholicism in early modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 31 (1981), 129-47; C. Haigh, 'The continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', *Past & Present*, 93 (1981), 37-69; C. Haigh, 'The fall of a Church or the rise of a sect? Post-Reformation Catholicism in England', *Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), 181-86

² W[estminster] D[iocesan] A[rchives], A Series, IV, f.432

as women rarely held positions of authority in society or politics that would be placed at risk by their illegal behaviour. It was commonplace for Catholic men to feign ignorance regarding the true identity of priests when they were in their homes. For instance, Mr Tyldesley of the Morleys (Leigh Parish, Lancashire) who was described as an 'old man' regularly received priests into his home, including the 'olde Priest' Mitchell. Mr Tyldesley invited priests to stay in his home and to eat with him at his table, yet he 'would not seeme to know who or of what condition they were'.³ In the event of a raid upon his house by pursuivants, Mr Tyldesley would deny that he had harboured priests on the grounds that he was not aware of their true identity as members of the Catholic clergy.

In order to ensure that denials of knowledge were more convincing, sometimes they held an element of truthfulness. It was usually women who took responsibility for sheltering priests and sometimes they seem to have done so completely independently of their husbands. However, on occasion the declarations made by men that they had not known what their wives had been doing are less convincing. For example, the apostate priest Thomas Bell, who worked for a number of years as a missionary priest in Lancashire, claimed that Richard Mollineux of Sefton Hall (Sefton Parish, Lancashire) knew 'right well that his wife heareth many a Masse at his house', although he pretended not to. Like Mr Tyldesley, Mollineux dined with priests when they stayed at his house and 'saieth they bee welcome, in that they are his wifes friends' – that is to say, that their presence had nothing to do with him and that he knew nothing of who they really were. The phrase 'his wifes friends' is telling, as it makes

³ WDA, A Series, IV, f.439

the clear suggestion that it was primarily at his wife's behest that priests were harboured within Sefton Hall.

The priests who were sheltered at Sefton Hall 'as if they were in sanctuarie at Rome' included the Marian priest James Baylie, who was household chaplain to the Mollineux for many years. Richard Mollineux was described as 'noe small ennemie to the state' and it was said that because of him that 'noething dare bee done in that coast without peculier authoritie'. His outward conformity was therefore necessary in order to preserve his political power, without which the paternalistic protection that he offered to fellow Catholics would not have been possible.⁴ Outward displays of ignorance and conformity were regularly adopted by the male members of the gentry, but were not necessary for gentrywomen, who were normally shielded from public scrutiny and positions of social authority.

An example can be provided by Mrs Lathom of Parbold (Croston Parish, Lancashire), who was described as an 'olde recusante'. It was said that 'an olde priest hath ever been kept' in her house 'her husband knowing the same' and that the chaplain was kept in the house 'to saye Masses, heare Confessions &c'.⁵ It is significant to note that it was the woman of the house who is referred to as the primary point of contact. The phraseology is implicit, but the indication is certainly that Mrs Lathom took the lead in organising Catholic worship within that household, rather than her husband. In this case, Mrs Lathom's husband was certainly aware of the presence of the priest in his house and appears to have approved of it; however, it was claimed that the priest was there at Mrs

⁴ WDA, A Series, IV, f.448

⁵ WDA, A Series, IV, f.451

Lathom's behest, rather than her husband's. Although the majority of men seem to have been both aware and supportive of the presence of priests in their houses, in some cases it is unclear whether they knew or approved.

The Bolds of Bold (Prescot Parish, Lancashire) sheltered two Marian priests in their house – John Murren (alias John Morwen), former chaplain to the Bishop of London, Edmund Bonner, and another priest known variantly as Kinley or Lakin/Laykin. Contemporaries questioned the religious allegiance of Mr Richard Bold, yet his true beliefs remain unknown. However, following his apostasy Thomas Bell stipulated to the state authorities that Mrs Bold should be examined 'streictlie' and used 'sharplie if gentle meanes will not serve' if they wished to discover the truth about the presence of priests in her house. If such methods were used, Bell did not doubt that she would 'utter all'. In contrast to this, Bell stated that he was uncertain as to whether Mr Bold knew of the presence of the priest Thomas Worthington in his house, 'who hath been there sundrie tymes'. Bell claimed that 'whether Mr Bould him selfe was thereto privie, or not, I know not certainly'. He thought that it was more likely than not that he must have known, but that he still was not sure: 'marrie I rather hould th'affirmative, the negative, though neither of both to be demonstrative'.⁶ Here, the assertion is more explicitly stated than in the previous example – it was Mrs Bold who took primary responsibility for sheltering priests and who would be able to disclose information under interrogation, while her husband either did not know what was going on in his own home or feigned ignorance on the matter.

⁶ WDA, A Series, IV, f.453

Some Examples of Marian Priests at Work in the Diocese of Chester

The two Marian priests who were sheltered by Mrs Bold, Kinley and Murren, were both deeply influential figures within the Catholic community of the Diocese of Chester and were active participants on the region's Mass circuit until the 1580s. After the Elizabethan Settlement, Murren immediately established a strong opposition to the Established Church and in 1561 a broadsheet entitled 'An Addicion, with an Apologie, etc.' was published in Chester under his name, which attacked the new religion. Christopher Haigh uncovered evidence that suggests that in 1566 Murren began administering oaths of loyalty to the Pope to his flock and was advocating non-attendance at church services.⁷ However, evidence contained within the Thomas Bell manuscript, produced around 1590, contradicts the assertion that Murren always promoted recusancy. Bell claimed that 'the said Murren defended goeing to church and Kinley expugned the same in open audience'.⁸

If Murren's stance on conformity did shift over the course of time, as is suggested, it is unclear when exactly this change in position occurred. However, there is a strong case to suggest that the years of clandestine ministry and experience of the hardships faced by his Catholic flock may have altered the priest's attitudes towards conformity. Murren spent his latter years as chaplain to Lady Mary Egerton at Ridley (Bunbury Parish, Cheshire) where he was 'for the mooste parte of hir Majestie's reigne'.⁹

⁷ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p.250

⁸ WDA, A Series, IV, f.453

⁹ T[he] N[ational] A[rchives], S[tate] P[apers] Dom[estic] 15, 27/94

When Murren's sojourn with Lady Egerton began is unclear, but he was definitely with her throughout the early years of her widowhood until his arrest and imprisonment at the New Fleet in Salford in 1583. Interestingly, given the proclamations that he had made in favour of conformity, Lady Egerton was a prolific recusant throughout the time that Murren lived with her at Ridley and continued her non-attendance long after his death.¹⁰

The Marian priest Kinley was also an important figure on the Mass circuit of the Diocese of Chester. Kinley's presence is recorded in relation to a great number of Catholic households where women appear to have taken the lead in both participating in and arranging sacramental devotion. Kinley was to be 'most commonly' found with the Irelands at Lydiate (Halsall Parish, Lancashire); where even Mrs Ormiston, the parson's wife and a 'longtyme recusant', was known to hear Mass.¹¹ Kinley 'oft resorted' to Whittingham Hall (Goosnargh, part of Kirkham Parish, Lancashire), where Whittingham's wife and daughter-in-law were both 'notorious Recusants' who as much as they could relieved 'all priests promiscue' and heard Masses.¹² Kinley was also often to be found at Standish Hall (Standish Parish, Lancashire) where Mrs Worthington, of neighbouring Worthington Hall, frequently attended Mass.¹³ Similarly, Mr James Anderton of Lostock Hall (Lostock, Bolton Parish, Lancashire), his mother, and his wife 'were sometymes recusantes' and received Mass and confession 'especiallie of Kinley'.¹⁴ If further evidence of Kinley's

¹⁰ D. Lannon, 'Manchester's New Fleet Prison or House of Correction and other gaols for obstinate correction', *Recusant History*, 29:4 (2009), pp.477, 479; K.R. Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), pp.148, 176-7

¹¹ WDA, A Series, IV, f.433

¹² WDA, A Series, IV, f.444

¹³ WDA, A Series, IV, ff.444, 446

¹⁴ WDA, A Series, IV, f.450

persistent presence within the region's Catholic community was necessary, this comes in the form of a conversion narrative that stated the bearer had been – 'fyrste broughte into Lancashire by an olde Preeste called Laykin, alias Knyleye' and who was 'for the space of twentye yeares' after his conversion 'an obstinate Recusante, & of great credytt amongste that crewe'.¹⁵

Other Marian priests known to have worked within the diocese include a Father Richard who lived at Westby. Widow Clifton resided at Westby (Kirkham Parish, Lancashire) at that time and it is probable that this Father Richard acted as her chaplain. Another Father Richard was said to have lived at 'Broughton'. This was most probably with the Singletons at Broughton Tower (Preston Parish). There was a Father Miles at Salesbury, who was almost certainly living with the Talbot family (Blackburn Parish). Yet another Father Richard lived at Speke – the most prominent Catholic residents of that town being the Norris family of Childwall parish. A further Marian priest was said to be at Samlesbury, home to the Southworths of Blackburn parish, but his name is unknown. These are only a few of the Marian priests known to have worked in the Diocese of Chester, both before the arrival of the missionaries and after.¹⁶ Christopher Haigh has calculated that in the years between 1568 and 1571, a decade into the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, there were at least 56 known Marian clergy at work in Lancashire alone – 29 of whom continued to hold benefices beyond the end of the Marian regime.¹⁷

¹⁵ L[ancashire] R[ecord] O[ffice], DDKE/acc. 7840 [Kenyon of Peel Manuscripts] HMC, f.24r

¹⁶ WDA, A Series, IV, f.456

¹⁷ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.248-9

There is an identifiable trend of Marian priests who chose to live as chaplains under the protection of Catholic gentrywomen, especially recusant widows. Several examples have already been cited, notably Father Richard who lived with Widow Clifton at Westby and John Murren who spent the latter years of his life with Lady Egerton at Ridley.¹⁸ In similar fashion, the Marian priest William Worthington spent many years living under the protection of Lady Warburton of Congleton (Congleton Chapelry, Astbury Parish, Cheshire). Worthington lived with Lady Warburton in the guise of working as her butler under the assumed name Watkins.¹⁹ Those Marian priests who had lost their benefices and who did not benefit from the pecuniary support that was available to young missionaries via the continental seminaries, often had little option but to become household chaplains. Gentry widows were well situated to provide financial support to recusant priests and to offer them their patronage and protection.

In Cheshire, K.R. Wark found evidence of 40 priests that were active in that county during the Elizabethan period, of whom at least nine had been ministers under the Marian regime. The recusant Marian priests known to have worked in Cheshire were Richard Bannister, John Bushell, John Culpage (alias Coppage), Richard Hatton, Thomas Houghton, John Maddocks, John Murren, Richard Sutton, and William Worthington.²⁰ Although relatively little detail is known about many of the Marian priests, it is worth noting the influence of Collegiate Churches upon their activities. John Bushell had been a chantry priest at Bunbury Collegiate Church

¹⁸ WDA, A Series, IV, f.456; TNA, SPDom 15, 27/94

¹⁹ TNA, SPDom 12, 175/110; Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, pp.177-8

²⁰ Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, pp.174-8

before his deprivation. Similarly, John Culpage was a former fellow of Manchester College, alongside two prominent figures in the early development of clerical recusancy in the Diocese of Chester – Richard Hart and Laurence Vaux, the deprived Warden of the College.²¹

The religious loyalties of members of the Collegiate Church at Manchester were questioned during the Metropolitan Visitation of the Diocese of Chester led by Archbishop Grindal in June 1571. A series of articles were put to the fellows of the College, the first of which was ‘whether there be any minister or member of or in the said colledge or collegiate church that ys Knowen, or vehementlie suspected not to be of sounde Religion, or that favoureth or maintayneth any papistry’.²² A number of other articles questioned whether any of the fellows failed to attend divine service or to receive communion, and whether any ‘in the ministration of the Sacraments use anye rite or ceremonie other then that which ys appointed’.²³ The suspicions of the visitors were confirmed by the testimony of Richard Hall, clerk and fellow of Manchester College, who responded to the articles by informing the visitors that another of the fellows, Mr Danyell, had ‘practysed papisticall doctrine and therefore ys to be suspected of papistree’. Hall also questioned the conformity of the fellows John Smyth, John Glover, and Charles Hogg.²⁴

The visitation officials had reasonable grounds on which to suspect the loyalties of the fellows of the Collegiate Church, as it was the former Warden of Manchester College Lawrence Vaux who had been chosen by papal delegates to work alongside William Allen to promote non-

²¹ Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, pp.174-5

²² B[orthwick] I[nstitute for] A[rchives], V.1571-2, [Visitation Papers], folio numbered 7

²³ BIA, V.1571-2, folio numbered 7

²⁴ BIA, V.1571-2, folio numbered 4

attendance at Church of England services throughout the Diocese of Chester.²⁵ The impact of the Allen-Vaux mission was significant and Vaux clarified his position to the inhabitants of the diocese in a letter of November 1566. In this letter, Vaux stated that 'all such as offer children to the baptism now used or be present in the communion or service now used in churches in England, as well the laity as the clergy, do not walk in the state of salvation'.²⁶ The message put forward by Allen and Vaux was unequivocal – receiving communion or otherwise attending Church of England services was unacceptable behaviour for Catholics living in the Diocese of Chester and 'no exception nor dispensation' would be granted to any member of the laity.²⁷

By the 1580s and 1590s, the indications that Marian clerics were still active in the diocese become less frequent. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, the advanced age of many of those who had served the church during the reign of Queen Mary I meant that few survived into the latter years of Elizabeth's reign. Secondly, the passing of the *Jesuits Act* (27 Eliz. 1. c.2) in 1584 outlawed the presence of Catholic priests in England and ordered that any who remained should vacate the realm within 40 days. As a consequence of that statute, great numbers of the Catholic clergy either fled the country or were deported directly from English prisons. Wark calculated that around 70 priests were banished from England within a year of that statute, including around 20 from the northern prisons – many of whom were extremely elderly.²⁸

²⁵ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp.248-9

²⁶ T.G. Law (ed.) *Vaux's Catechism*, *Catholic Record Society*, 4, New Series, (1885), 33-4

²⁷ Law, *Vaux's Catechism*, pp.33-4

²⁸ Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, p.175

Despite the inevitable decline in numbers, the evidence available demonstrates that Marian clerics remained active in administering sacramental devotion throughout the fifteen years preceding the arrival of the missionaries in 1574 and that many continued to minister beyond that. The opportunity for recusant Marian priests to gain access to large numbers of Catholics was granted, in large part, by Catholic gentrywomen, who acted as gatekeepers to the clergy. It was Catholic gentrywomen, therefore, who ensured the continued availability of sacramental devotion in the Diocese of Chester in the years immediately following the Elizabethan Settlement. In doing so, these women assumed positions of social authority for themselves, within Catholic communities.

Discontent with the Church of England and the Arrival of Catholic Missionaries

The arrival of seminary priests from 1574 and the Jesuits from 1580-1 came at a time when dissatisfaction with the Established Church was widespread in the Diocese of Chester and clerical abuses were rife. Examples from the diocese show that Church of England ministers were regularly accused of misconduct; including drunkenness²⁹, fathering children outside of wedlock³⁰, lechery³¹, and a cornucopia of other clerical

²⁹ C[hester] R[ecord] O[ffice], EDC [Consistory Court Papers] 5, 1576/40 (Little Neston); CRO, EDC 5, 1603/65 (Frodsham)

³⁰ CRO, EDC 5, 1594/15 (Warrington)

³¹ CRO, EDC 5, 1571/10 (Middlewich)

misdemeanours.³² The extent to which the clergy of the Established Church in the diocese expressed a predilection for traditional religious practice is also of particular note. Over 30 years after the Elizabethan Settlement, Church of England ministers were still being accused of having conservative leanings. In 1591, Henry Anean, tanner, accused the vicar of his parish in Chester with the words: 'what doth Mr Brodman think that I am, a papist ... if there is any papistry in Chester it is in him'.³³ The frequency with which cases such as this occurred, indicates that there was widespread concern amongst those parishioners who were loyal to the Church of England that their ministers preferred traditional religious practices.

Numerous examples illustrate that Church of England ministers regularly failed to fulfill their clerical obligations with any alacrity. For example, the non-payment of church dues by parishioners was common and many of the clergy made little effort to enforce the collection of payments.³⁴ When their non-payments were questioned in 1600, the residents of one parish argued in their defence that 'no one in living memory ever made payments to Prestbury'.³⁵ Such a response would suggest that there was a long-standing disregard for the collection of church dues by the clergy in that parish. Furthermore, it was not only amongst the parish level clergy that such misdemeanours are recorded. Higher-ranking officials also failed to fulfill their obligations. In 1610, for

³² CRO, EDC 5, 1582/39 (Weaverham); CRO, EDC 5, 1596/68 (Winwick); CRO, EDC 5, 1597/77 (Winwick); CRO, EDC 5, 1604/24 (Manchester); CRO, EDC 5, 1604/28 (Aughton); CRO, EDC 5, 1614/7 (Ribchester); CRO, EDC 5, 1621/16 (Prescot); CRO, EDC 5, 1626/51 (Bunbury)

³³ CRO, EDC 5, 1591/2 (Chester)

³⁴ CRO, EDC 5, 1582/27 (Bolton); CRO, EDC 5, 1582/58 (Alderley); CRO, EDC 5, 1584/5 (Standish); CRO, EDC 5, 1600/6 (Prestbury); CRO EDC 5, 1610/18 (Stockport)

³⁵ CRO, EDC 5, 1600/6 (Prestbury)

instance the rural deans refused to pay their contributions towards church repairs in Stockport.³⁶

General disorder within the diocese was regularly recorded and disturbances at Church of England services were common. Much of the disorder took place inside parish churches³⁷, examples of which included: bringing a horse into the church and refusing to take an oath³⁸; throwing a hat in church and mocking prayers and scripture³⁹; disrupting services⁴⁰; removing the church register without consent⁴¹; lying down on pews so that others were forced to sit upon them⁴²; and even bringing a maypole into the Church⁴³. Disturbances were also common in the general vicinity the church. Examples include parishioners leaving church services to talk and loiter in the churchyard, which happened at Sandbach in 1575⁴⁴; men brawling in the churchyard at Dodleston on Easter Monday in 1606⁴⁵; and parishioners observed playing pipes on the Sabbath at Mobberley in 1597⁴⁶. The disturbance of graves in churchyards was also common⁴⁷. So was the presentation of multiple parishioners for non-communication and recusancy⁴⁸. The extent to which this type of behaviour was motivated by religious discontent, as opposed to general mischief making,

³⁶ CRO, EDC 5, 1610/18 (Stockport)

³⁷ CRO, EDC 5, 1576/40 (Neston)

³⁸ CRO, EDC 5, 1576/44 (Congleton)

³⁹ CRO, EDC 5, 1590/16 (Ashton on Mersey)

⁴⁰ CRO, EDC 5, 1605/16 (Prescot)

⁴¹ CRO, EDC 5, 1606/10 (Rossendale)

⁴² CRO, EDC 5, 1607/29 (Preston)

⁴³ CRO, EDC 5, 1625/13 (Kendal)

⁴⁴ CRO, EDC 5, 1575/12 (Sandbach); CRO, EDV 1/10 (Childwall), ff.115-6

⁴⁵ CRO, EDC 5, 1608/69 (Dodleston)

⁴⁶ CRO, EDC 5, 1597/101 (Mobberley)

⁴⁷ CRO, EDC 5, 1586/66 (Wotton); CRO, EDC 5, 1604/45 (Wigan); CRO EDC 5, 1613/41 (Leigh)

⁴⁸ CRO, EDC 5, 1588/2 (Chester); CRO EDC 5, 1597/82 (Shotwick); CRO EDC 5, 1597/101 (Mobberley)

is unclear; but hostility towards Church of England ministers was certainly prevalent. In 1576, for example, William Ball of Chester claimed that preachers should be put in prison with irons on their feet. Furthermore, by 1603 many, including Thomas Middleton of Frodsham, still hoped 'to see religion changed within a month'.⁴⁹

In one case, there is evidence that parishioners went so far as to attempt to remove their vicar and replace him with a man who was reputed to be a Catholic schoolmaster. In 1597, Thomas Hunsley, preacher and vicar of both Boroughbridge chapelry and its mother parish Aldborough, appealed to the High Commission at York regarding the behaviour of three of his parishioners: Thomas Smithson, Williams Nicholls, and John Thomson (the alleged schoolmaster). All three men, Hunsley claimed, were widely considered to be Catholics. The conflict reached its climax when almost all of Hunsley's parishioners failed to attend evening service on Trinity Sunday because they were watching a running race between a local man and a competitor from Topcliffe.⁵⁰ After the race was over, the parishioners assembled at their parish church, demanding that the bell that had called them to evening service should be rung again. In addition to this, the villagers proposed that their local schoolmaster, John Thomson, who was reputed to be a Catholic, should read the service instead of their vicar. Once Hunsley had denied their entreaties, the parishioners demanded the key to the church. After Hunsley refused to give the villagers what they wanted, Smithson, Nicholls, and others 'tooke the key of the Chappell doore from the saide Clerke, and discharged him of his office of clerkship, as if were in their power to place or displace the

⁴⁹ CRO, EDC 5, 1576/14 (Chester); CRO, EDC 5, 1603/65 (Frodsham)

⁵⁰ BIA, HC.CP [High Commission Cause Papers] 1597/9, f.1

Clerke'. The parishioners went further still, by undermining their curate's authority. Hunsley claimed that Smithson, Nicholls, and others had 'unlawfully & defacto elected & appointed the said John Thomson to be their parrish clerke'.⁵¹

The three men and other sympathetic parishioners had gone so far as to appeal to the Archdeacon of Richmond to have Thomson officially appointed; however, their efforts were foiled when Hunsley told them that 'the said parishe and chappellrye were & are of the jurisdiction of the Deane & Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Yorke' rather than the Diocese of Chester. All parties involved appear to have been confused about who held jurisdiction in their parish. Despite these initial setbacks, John Thomson – the suspected Catholic schoolmaster – nevertheless seized control of the parish church. Hunsley recounted how 'upon Sundaye last beinge the feaste daye of Sainte John the Baptiste' he had gone to the parish church at nine in the morning after 'the said John Thomson had ronge and tolled the morning prayers'. Hunsley demanded that Thomson return the village service books, which the villagers had taken from him so that Thomson could lead the congregation. Hunsley's demand was to no avail, however, as 'the said Thomson then & there openlye ... refused to deliver them'.⁵²

Although such overt examples of parishioners attempting to oust Church of England ministers and replace them with Catholics are rare, a case such as this demonstrates that discontent with the Established Church was pervasive within that parish. The designation of the parish of Aldborough as an ecclesiastical peculiar belonging to the Dean and

⁵¹ BIA, HC.CP.1597/9, f.2

⁵² BIA, HC.CP.1597/9, f.4

Chapter of York, yet situated within the territorial boundaries of the Diocese of Chester, was one factor that contributed towards jurisdictional confusion, which the parishioners subsequently tried to use to their advantage. Opposition to the Established Church was widespread in Aldborough parish and sympathy towards Catholicism appears to have abounded.

The deep-rooted discontent with the Church of England explains why demand for Catholic priests remained so high in the Diocese of Chester. The Jesuit priest John Gerard S.J. claimed that it was more straightforward to obtain converts in some parts of England, than in others, and that his home county of Lancashire was one of the easiest. Gerard wrote that he was able to procure converts in all parts of the country, but there was a great difference between the counties where he worked later in his life (Essex and Suffolk) and the place where he had grown up and ministered to in his youth – where ‘a large number of the people are Catholics’ and ‘nearly all have leanings towards Catholicism’. Gerard claimed that in Lancashire it was ‘easy to make many converts and to have large congregations at sermons’. Upon one occasion, the Jesuit recounted, he had seen ‘more than two hundred present at Mass and sermon’ in that county. Despite the apparent ease with which the people of Lancashire were attracted to Catholic services, Gerard stated that they were just as easily averted at signs of trouble; yet ‘when the alarm is over, they come back again’. In Essex and Suffolk, in contrast, the ‘Catholics were very few’ and ‘were mostly from the better classes’. Gerard repeatedly emphasised the importance of the gentry in ensuring the dissemination of Catholicism. As a result of his youthful experiences of

the Diocese of Chester, he claimed that he had learned that the best way to procure converts was to 'bring the gentry over first, and then their servants, for Catholic gentle folk must have Catholic servants'.⁵³

The demand for Catholic priests in the Diocese of Chester remained unchanged. The Lancashire Puritan Edmund Hopwood wrote to his godson Edmund Schofield, the former parson of Padiham, to report that 'all fantastical and schismatical preachers ... resorte into this corner of Lankeshier'.⁵⁴ Some parts of the diocese were more troublesome to the authorities than others, he stated. In the parishes of Garstang and St Michael's, for example, there were 'as many farmers, notorious recusanttes, as will make two graunde jureys'. The people in those two parishes were 'for the moste part ... infected withe papistrie, or placed by papistes, or their favorites of the baddeste sorte'. Hopwood singled out the gentrywomen of those parishes as especially obstinate. He claimed that the Catholic women of Garstang and St Michael's frequented 'shryvinge, massinge ... releve papishe preestes or seditious seminaries, to the perill of their soules, great danger of theyr husbandes, and utter spoyle of their husbandes simple seduced tenants and neighbours'. Hopwood felt that it would ultimately be necessary to purge Lancashire 'from idolatrie, papistrie, seditious seminaries, and theyr favorytes'.⁵⁵ According to contemporaries, other parts of the diocese, aside from Lancashire, also had a reputation that was equally notorious. The seminarist Thomas Bell wrote, for example, that 'seminarie priests have

⁵³ J. Gerard, (trans. P. Caraman), *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, (London: Longmans, 1951), pp.32-3; For Catholicism in Essex, see: J.E. Kelly, 'Kinship and Religious Politics among Catholic Families in England, 1570-1640', *History*, 94:315, 328-43

⁵⁴ LRO, DDKE/acc. 7840, HMC/25 (7 August 1609)

⁵⁵ LRO, DDKE/acc.7840 HMC/24 (24 November 1595)

ridden as freely through Kirk[h]am; as if they had bin in Roome. both gentlemen & gentlewomen rideing openlye in there companie'.⁵⁶

The arrest of Catholic priests and the harassment of lay Catholics by the state was relatively commonplace in the Diocese of Chester, with raids on private houses by pursuivants occurring with regularity. In the wake of a period of civil unrest in the diocese, during which more than 80 Catholics were arrested, Richard Vaughan, Bishop of Chester wrote to the Secretary of State, Sir Robert Cecil, in 1599 claiming that his diocese was 'full of Seminary priests' and those who harboured them. Vaughan claimed that men such as Edward Eccleston of Eccleston, William Blundell of Crosby, Henry Lathom of Mosborrow, and Henry Travers of Hardshaw gave 'countenance to all lewd practices'. Bishop Vaughan continued on to claim that there was 'no hope of any reformation or good obedience' there and that the people were 'led by their priests with great hopes of a better time shortly to ensue'.⁵⁷

Missionaries from the Diocese of Chester

It is apparent that a large percentage of the missionary priests known to have worked in the Diocese of Chester were also born there and had joined the English Colleges and other seminaries before returning to England. The extent to which missionary priests ministered to their own immediate family members, wider kinship networks, and local communities

⁵⁶ WDA, A Series, IV, f.455

⁵⁷ TNA, SPDom 12, 274/25; 'Letter from Richard [Vaughan], 'Bishop of Chester to Secretary Cecil, 31 January 1599', printed in *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus: Historic facts illustrative of the labours and sufferings of its members in the sixteenth and seventeenth century*, vol.1, (ed.) H. Foley, (London: Burns and Oates, 1875), pp.641-2

demonstrates that a symbiotic relationship existed between priests and the Catholic gentry in the Diocese of Chester. The childhood experiences of priests and nuns, who had attended Mass in gentry houses, naturally influenced their subsequent decision to pursue religious vocations. In return for this childhood inspiration, priests frequently returned to their native diocese in order to minister to those who had shaped their nascent religious beliefs. This pattern created a cyclical effect, which ensured the generational dissemination of Catholicism. Sadly, as almost all nuns remained enclosed, the same cycle was not established in the case of Catholic women (aside from the exceptional exemplars that were latterly provided in the form of the Mary Ward Sisters). However, a different sort of cyclical pattern was identified for Catholic gentrywomen that will be outlined in detail in chapter five.

One returning missionary priest was Christopher Southworth, the son of John Southworth of Samlesbury. After his capture in England during Lent in 1587, a statement was produced that recorded Southworth's examination, led by Richard Topcliffe. This document, dated 1 July 1587, stated that Southworth was aged 30 and had travelled to the continent seven years previously and had joined the clergy three years after that. Southworth had returned to England shortly before Christmas 1586, in a boat from Boulougne and had travelled with an acquaintance from the Diocese of Chester – Mr John Barton, son of Mr Richard Barton of Barton Row. The young Barton accompanied Southworth, although the priest 'saythe of his conscience' that his companion was 'neither preeste nor Jesuyte; lay or Spriall [spiritual] of his knowledge or hearesaye'. Southworth arrived at Dover with 'goulde and silver' worth 'aboute xl li'

(£40). With regard to his activities, Southworth described how he had 'sayde masses harde confession & gevenn Pennance and absolution but never reconcyled any sinse his comminge over'. The document also established that Southworth had been granted unusual privileges relating to the 'Authoritie of a Busshopp', which included the right to 'blesse and consecrate all things belongine to the Alter ... Chattyles; Superaltares; Apparrell of Vestementes'. Furthermore, it stated that Southworth had the 'powre further to dispence with Catholiques then other ordenary Preistes cane'.⁵⁸

Another missionary priest born in the Diocese of Chester was James Clayton, who was also born in Lancashire. A letter sent by John May, Bishop of Carlisle, to Lord Burghley in 1591 recorded the questions that had been put to Clayton, who was imprisoned in Carlisle Castle for his religion that year. During his examination by a number of dignitaries, including 'the right honorable the L. Scroope, the L. Bisshopp of Carlisle, Richard Lowtrer Esquire and Thomas Fairfax preacher', Clayton's interrogators 'demaunded in what houses & withh what persons he hath conversed for the space and when these sixe last yeres past when he hath vagrantlie travailed frome place to place'. Clayton responded by listing a number of the gentry houses in his native diocese at which he had sought refuge during his time there. Clayton had stayed with the Towneley family at Towneley, the Talbots of Salesbury, the Standish

⁵⁸ B[ritish] L[ibrary], Additional MS 63742, ff.78-9

family of Standish, as well as 'Mr Clifton ... Mr Harogeton ... Mr Rigmauden ... [and] Mr Henrie Kirkbie in Lacashier'.⁵⁹

The examples provided by James Clayton and Christopher Southworth demonstrate that missionary priests commonly felt an impetus to return to their native diocese in the course of the Mission. However, sources demonstrate that not all missionaries sought out comfortable positions as private confessors in gentry households belonging to family friends. On the contrary, some missionary priests actively pursued the least lucrative positions, moving from household to household. The itinerant ministry undertaken by many missionary priests confirms that a great number of Catholic households were able to enjoy relatively frequent contact with the clergy and received the sacraments with regularity. A letter written by Robert Parsons S.J. in 1584 confirms this. The letter recounts how 'a priest of the name of Worthington [probably Thomas Worthington S.J.] has written from the county of Lancaster that fifty houses of the gentry were searched and ransacked by the heretics on the same night in that one county'. These raids took place under the authority of detecting priests and serves to clarify how great a number of gentry families in the diocese were suspected by the state authorities of sheltering missionaries. Despite the fact that Parsons claimed that 'rarely one of those houses was without priests', no priests were captured that night – 'though some suffered much in their flight'.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ BL, Lansdowne 68/38, ff.84-6; The bishop is referred to in the manuscript as John Lon, but as the date of 1591 is well inside May's tenureship, we may safely assume that this relates to May.

⁶⁰ 'An account, in the form of a letter of Father Robert Parsons to Father Alphonsus Agazzari, in which he gives a relation of the state of affairs in connection with religion in England. (Dated Paris, September 28, 1584.)', in Foley, *Records of the English Province*, p.637; This was possibly Thomas Worthington, for whom see: A.J. Loomie, 'Worthington, Thomas (1549–1626)',

Chaplains in the Gentry Household and the Care of Missionaries by Catholic Women

Not all missionaries were itinerant priests. As has already been demonstrated, some adopted the role of chaplain in gentry households. The obligations of household chaplains are described in some detail by the Jesuit John Gerard S.J. who spent much of his childhood at the family estate (which was then in the hands of his father Thomas Gerard) at Bryn in Lancashire. Gerard described how his 'first concern' as a chaplain was 'to see that the whole house came to the sacraments frequently.' Gerard bemoaned the fact that many members of the gentry had become complacent and that the majority only attended Mass 'perhaps four times a year at most'. During a time of Catholic prohibition, receiving the Eucharist four times a year could still be considered to have been an achievement. However, Gerard declared that, thanks to his constant presence in a household as chaplain, some families were able to hear Mass more frequently, sometimes as often as 'every week'. Gerard also described how, on feast days and usually on Sundays, he would preach and instruct 'all how to examine their conscience' and teach 'those who had the leisure for it the way to meditate'. Another practice that Gerard considered to be important was the reading of 'ascetical books', which often took place at the dinner table if there were no household guests. Gerard would take his meals with the family, 'often in clerical dress'. This reference to the

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2012 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29993, accessed 16 March 2014]

wearing of clerical dress at dinner is intriguing, as Gerard also wrote that he, 'of course', had a soutane and biretta with him, but that he had been forbidden by the Jesuit Superior Henry Garnet S.J. to wear them 'except in chapel' – presumably to reduce the risk of detection in the event of an unexpected raid by the state-appointed authorities.⁶¹

Gentrywomen, who already took responsibility for the domestic arrangements of the household, also usually undertook the care of missionaries. It is worth noting that for many of these gentrywomen priests were blood relatives, lending a further dimension to relations between the laity and the clergy. For example, in 1616, Elizabeth Marcrofte, the wife of James Marcrofte, the curate of Clitheroe, accused John Birtwisle of Huncote and his wife Dorothy (née Worthington) of being recusants and of trying to convert her to Catholicism. Marcrofte also accused the Birtwises of harbouring four priests in their house: two seminaries named Huthersall (alias Heath) and Kirkham, and two Jesuits, John and Peter Worthington, who were brothers to Mrs Birtwisle. Marcrofte also accused the vicar of Whalley, Peter Ormerede, of having spoken with the seminary priest Huthersall for three hours at the Birtwises' house. Ormerede denied having spoken to the seminary priest, but rather claimed that he had gone to the house 'for the most part ... to conferre with his said kynsman [John Birtwisle] touching his Religion' and to conform him to the Church of England. Dorothy Birtwisle denied that she had encouraged Elizabeth Marcrofte to pursue recusancy, or that she had sheltered seminary or Jesuit priests in her home. Birtwisle confirmed that she did have two brothers, John and Peter Worthington, but that whether

⁶¹ Gerard, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, p.32

'they were priests or no' or whether they were 'livinge or no ... she cannot tell'. Dorothy denied that 'eyther of them were lodged or relieved in her husband's house since they were priests'.⁶²

Similarly, Aloysa Haydock of Cottam Hall, near Preston, had three immediate family members who were priests. Having so many members of the Catholic clergy within her immediate family ensured that – in the eyes of her contemporaries – she was a member 'of the noble race of Haddock'. Aloysa's father Ewan (Vivian) Haydock and her brother Richard left England for Douai in 1573. Ewan was ordained in 1575, followed by Richard in 1577. Another of Aloysa's brothers, George, also studied at Douai and was martyred at Tyburn in 1584. All three of the Haydock clergy were described by a contemporary source as the 'most holy priests of Christ.' The Haydocks were not only neighbours, but also immediate relatives of the Allens at Rossall Grange. Aloysa's maternal aunt was Elizabeth Allen, wife of George Allen, and sister-in-law to Cardinal William Allen.⁶³

Examples such as these demonstrate that many of the Catholic gentrywomen of the Diocese of Chester were directly related to priests. Furthermore, it can be established that these kinship networks facilitated the shelter of priests and the priests' movement between gentry households. The example of Elizabeth Allen clearly illustrates this. Mrs Allen received word that a series of raids by state-appointed pursuivants

⁶² LRO, DDKE/acc. 7840, HMC/35 (21 December 1616) - Witnessed by Raph Asheton, Roger Nowell, and John Braddell.

⁶³ Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange and Todderstaffe Hall, the Residence and Estates of Mrs. Allen, the Widow of the Brother of Cardinal Allen', (trans. J. Gillow) from Dr Bridgewater's *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia*, printed in *The History of the Parish of Poulton-le-Fylde in the County of Lancashire, Remains Historical and Literary connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester*, 8, New Series, (Manchester: C.E. Simms for the Chetham Society, 1885), p.147

had taken place in the parish of Prescott over the Christmas holiday in 1583. After hearing of this, Allen made preparations to protect her family and George Bramley, 'a pious and venerable priest' who was in permanent residence at Rossall Grange. Mrs Allen, along with Mrs Coniers, a kinswoman of her late husband's from Yorkshire, relocated to 'her accustomed place of retreat' where she had sought refuge 'on Christmas day and the following days'. By withdrawing to 'more secret spots', Mrs Allen hoped to avoid being 'taken unexpectedly in the quiet night-time by these hungry brigands', who most often chose to launch their raids in surprise attacks under the cover of darkness. After seeking shelter in a different location each night, in the mornings she returned home to receive the Eucharist, 'in order to obtain in her holy contest more strength of soul against the enemy of truth'.

It is interesting to note that, although Mrs Allen fled the familial home, her priest does not seem to have. This would imply that the priest's hiding place at Rossall Grange was considered sufficiently secure. This example also demonstrates that, although Elizabeth Allen evidently had the support of a great number of male relatives, neighbours and tenants – who came readily to her aid at a later point – she initially chose to implement protective measures for herself and her family with assistance from only one female kinswoman and her three young daughters. Frequently, it was female kinship networks, rather than male ones, which oiled the mechanisms of missionary activity and Catholic worship in the Diocese of Chester.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange', pp.138-9

The Bell Manuscript

A great deal of detailed information regarding the role of Catholic gentrywomen from the Diocese of Chester in caring for recusant and missionary priests can be found in a document containing information given to state authorities by the apostate priest, Thomas Bell, alias Thomas Burton. Born near Thirsk (in the North Riding of Yorkshire, which was under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of York, rather than Chester) around 1551, Bell spent a brief period of time in the Established Church as curate of Thirsk, before converting to Catholicism in 1570. Bell was imprisoned at York Castle gaol for his religion, but by 1576 had somehow found his way to the continent. The young Bell studied at Douai and the English College at Rome before joining the clergy. Bell embarked on the English Mission in May 1582 and undertook ministry mainly in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Bell was also an active participant in the intra-Catholic debates that progressively escalated between the seminarist clergy and the Jesuits, ultimately resulting in the Archpriest and Appellant Controversies. Living for a great deal of his time in the Diocese of Chester, under the protection of Miles Gerard of Ince, Bell was extremely active on the missionary circuit throughout the 1580s. A fierce proponent of church-papistry, Bell engaged in bitter debates with a number of prominent figures within the missionary community, most notably with the Jesuit Superior Henry Garnet S.J.⁶⁵ and the Lancastrian Cardinal William

⁶⁵ Thomas M. McCoog, 'Garnett, Henry (1555–1606)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10389, accessed 16 March 2014]

Allen⁶⁶. Ultimately marginalised and disliked by most of his peers within the Catholic clergy, in 1592 Bell took the decision to turn himself in to the Protestant authorities and to apostatise.⁶⁷ One consequence of Bell's conversion was his examination by John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, during which he conveyed a great deal of information about his activities in Lancashire; providing detail of the houses at which he had ministered and about the individuals who had provided him with shelter and other assistance. A copy of the lengthy document that records this examination survives at Westminster Diocesan Archives.⁶⁸

In the course of its 33 folios, the Bell manuscript lists the households that the priest had visited during his decade on the Lancashire Mission. In their latest collaborative work, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow*, Peter Lake and Michael Questier make substantial reference to Bell and his influence upon the direction of religious policy in northern England. In their analysis of the manuscript, however, Lake and Questier do not overtly acknowledge or discuss one of the most noticeable features of the document – the regularity with which it refers to Catholic gentrywomen. In the manuscript, Bell lists each of the houses at which Catholics resided in Lancashire, before saying a few words about each house and its occupants. Unusually for such a document, in many cases the women of the household are explicitly named – either alongside their sons and husbands, or sometimes as the only individual singled out for

⁶⁶ E. Duffy, 'Allen, William (1532–1594)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/391>, accessed 16 March 2014]

⁶⁷ A. Walsham, 'Bell, Thomas (b. c.1551, d. in or after 1610)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2026>, accessed 16 March 2014]

⁶⁸ WDA, A Series, IV, ff.429-52

mention.⁶⁹ The testimony of the Lancashire missionary priests James Clayton and Christopher Southworth, which was outlined earlier in this chapter, demonstrates that other captured Catholic priests who were forced to reveal names under examination almost universally named only men, rather than women. This fact makes the Bell manuscript all the more curious.

Why Bell chose to explicitly name so many Catholic gentrywomen is an intriguing question. The most obvious explanation is that it was women with whom he had the most contact when he visited households, as it was women who took primary responsibility for organising household religion. The credibility of this argument is undermined, however, by the fact that testimony by other priests named so few women. The disparity could be explained by the fact that Bell was hardly reticent in disclosing information: he even went so far as to provide his interrogators with tips on where best to look for priests in houses during raids. Furthermore, Bell's use of language in describing the majority of his former co-religionists is not favourable. The priest exhibited little reluctance in turning away from Catholicism and even delivered Protestant sermons to some of his former flock at Standish and Wigan. Despite this fact, Henry Garnet S.J. did assert that Bell was unable to utter little on the occasions of these sermons aside from the stock phrase 'be good subjects'; which possibly lends some credence to the argument that Bell harboured a measure of guilt over his decision to apostatise and inform upon his old friends.⁷⁰ However, given that Bell and Garnet deeply disliked one another, it would

⁶⁹ P. Lake & M.C. Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow: Persecution, Martyrdom and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England*, (London: Continuum, 2011)

⁷⁰ Lake & Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow*, pp.135, 228 (fn.24)

be wise not to afford too much weight to Garnet's account. On balance, the most credible explanation is that Bell described the contact he had with the gentry, paying little regard to the gender of those he discussed. Whatever the reasons, detailed examination of the Bell manuscript provides historians with a deeper understanding of the way in which Catholic gentrywomen contributed to the development of post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester.

The Gentry Household, Kinship Networks, and Communal Worship

The Bell manuscript demonstrates that a great number of gentry households in Lancashire operated as Mass centres and that it was frequently Catholic gentrywomen who were responsible for organising communal worship through the medium of kinship networks. Bell recounted how 'solemn Masses' had been 'songe, 12 or 11 Priestes being present' at the house of the widow Alice Clifton of Westby.⁷¹ Bell also claimed that the house of Edward Standish of Standish was another place where, 'great multitudes of people flocked together to heare Masses & Sermons'. According to Bell, 'the Chamber hath been full manie tymes while I there did preache'.⁷² Dorothy Worthington (née Charnock), wife of Richard Worthington of Blainscough Hall, also in the parish of Standish, was singled out by Bell as a particularly troublesome Catholic and evidence shows that she was presented to the Metropolitan Visitation for her recusancy in the same year as the Bell manuscript was originally

⁷¹ WDA, A Series, IV, f.432

⁷² WDA, A Series, IV, f.444; Edward Standish (d.1603) was married to Ellen Radcliffe of the Radcliffes of Ordsall

produced.⁷³ Bell described how ‘five or six Priests all Seminaries have mett there [at Blainscough Hall] sundrie tymes togeather, & said soe many Masses as they were priests all on one daye’. He continued on to claim that ‘sundrie tymes high Masse hast been songe with Deacon & Subdeacon’ at Blainscough Hall and that ‘two preachings in one daye’ had taken place with ‘hundreds of people being assembled at the same tyme’. Bell expressed a degree of incredulity at the audacity of the Worthingtons, claiming that such events were ‘as boaldlie done as if it had been done before the Pope in Rome’.⁷⁴

Bell also described how Dorothy’s brother, William Charnock, ‘dealt with the same Priests, & in the same manner as his Sister did, hee is a verie wise fellow & can detecte many thinges’. Dorothy and Richard Worthington of Blainscough were the parents of no less than four priests – three Jesuits and a seminary priest – and Richard was also the brother of Thomas Worthington S.J., third President of Douai College. Just a few miles away, at Euxton, Bell’s account stated that Mrs Anderton ‘lodged & relieved all priests Seminaries & others promiscue’. The mother of Richard and Thomas Worthington was Isabel Anderton of Euxton, a fact that establishes that the Andertons, Charnocks, and Worthingtons were linked by a large and extensive kinship network. Bell described how, when he and the seminary priest Worthington (almost certainly Thomas Worthington S.J.) both preached at Euxton on the same day ‘many people were there present at our Masses & Sermons’.⁷⁵ Examples such as these illustrate that familial ties and geographical proximity were both important

⁷³ WDA, A Series, IV, f.445; Richard Worthington died in 1590, while imprisoned in the Castle at Lancaster for his religion.

⁷⁴ BIA, V.1590-1, CB.2, f.58r; WDA, A Series, IV, f.445

⁷⁵ WDA, A Series, IV, f.445

factors in facilitating communal worship. Similarly, it is also crucial to note that such a large percentage of the Catholic families in the Diocese of Chester were being ministered to by priests who were also either immediate family members or extended kin.

A further point it is important to acknowledge is that some of the women who are mentioned explicitly by Bell – such as, for example, the aforementioned Alice Clifton – as the organisers of communal worship and who used their homes as Mass centres were all widows during the time that Bell worked alongside them. In the absence of male authority figures within the household, these women were able to adopt the status of community leaders – a role that had previously been reserved for their husbands or other male relatives. Texts such as the Bell manuscript demonstrate that it was often women who took the lead in the organisation of household religion and the religious education of children within the family unit, while it was normally men who adopted the role of religious protector within the wider community. Michael Questier's study of the Viscounts Montague, for example, focuses almost exclusively on men – the widow Magdalen Browne, Viscountess Montague, being the sole exception.⁷⁶

The significance of kinship networks, and particularly of female relatives, in sheltering missionary priests is evident throughout the Bell manuscript. Numerous examples make it clear that female kinship networks were central to the survival of Catholic communities of the Diocese of Chester. Elizabeth Allen and her daughters had regular

⁷⁶ M.C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550-1640*, *Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

contact with two of her ordained brothers-in-law, Ewan Haydock and Cardinal William Allen, and two nephews, George and Richard Haydock.⁷⁷ The influence of Cardinal Allen amongst his kin was widespread amongst his relatives. Anthony Travers of Preston recounted how, before his kinsman ‘mr allen fledd beyond the seas’, he had persuaded him that the established religion in England was ‘an untrue doctryne and false and that he fled for the same purpose and therfore willed this kindred to beware of the doctryne’.⁷⁸ Indeed, Bell recounted that those members of the Haydock family who had not been ordained, Mr Haddock of Cottam & his wife, ‘dealt with all priestes promiscue in as zealous manner as anie other have done in whatsoever respecte’.⁷⁹ Similarly, Agnes Worthington, maid to Mrs Halsall, was ‘acquainted by her Brother Worthington’s meanes with all Seminarie priests in the Shire’. Agnes Worthington was part of such a wide kinship network that she could ‘detecte wounderfull thinges’ for the state ‘& will doe it noe doubt before she feelee the racke’.⁸⁰ In a similar manner, the confessional allegiance of ordained relatives often influenced the sort of priests who were welcomed within particular gentry households. For example, the Gerard family at Bryn and the High Carre sheltered the Jesuit priest George Blackwell S.J. for over seven years; a fact that is unsurprising, when one considers the fact that Gerard’s son, John, was also a Jesuit priest.⁸¹

It was not just blood relatives who entered into Catholic kinship networks. Marie Blake, the wife of a servant of Thomas Gerard of Bryn,

⁷⁷ WDA, A Series, IV, f.432

⁷⁸ BIA, HC.CP, ND/1, f.3v

⁷⁹ WDA, A Series, IV, f.451

⁸⁰ WDA, A Series, IV, f.453

⁸¹ WDA, A Series, IV, f.436

was 'sometime a Recusant' and was also the sister of Richard Mollineux of Hawkley Hall (Wigan parish, Lancashire) – a fact that connected the Mollineux with the Gerard family. Richard Mollineux and his wife were also both recusants who 'dealt with all Priests promiscue, & manely with Gaile' and Bell.⁸² Individuals who worked for gentry families usually adopted the religious beliefs of their employers and their families often followed in turn. For instance, the Houghtons of the Park 'lodged and relieved manie Seminarie priests' including Johnson, Woodroffe, and Dakins. The schoolmaster employed by the Houghtons, along with his wife and children, were also recusants.⁸³ In other cases, the bonds of female friendship were what linked individuals into kinship networks. For example, 'widowe Clifton the elder, Jane Anderton her sister, & Anne Southwarke' all received Mass from Thomas Bell at the same time, at a farm belonging to Edward and William Croft near Cockermouth. Edward Crofte was 'the perversest papist in the whole countrie' and knew 'all priests generallie'.⁸⁴ Similarly, George Ashe of Ashe was a 'notorious papist', as were his wife and daughter. The Ashe household 'lodged manie a Seminarie Priest' and Bell thought that the Ashe family knew 'all priests that are lately come into England.' Although the family was poor, this did not stop priests from resorting to their house. When seminary priests sought shelter with the Ashe family, they made 'theire owne charges, & relieve both them selves & all his house, for they have monie at will'.⁸⁵

⁸² WDA, A Series, IV, f.451

⁸³ WDA, A Series, IV, f.445

⁸⁴ WDA, A Series, IV, f.441

⁸⁵ WDA, A Series, IV, f.452

There are examples of whole communities that united together to support one another and to offer protection to missionary priests. In the parish of Kirby Ravensworth in Richmond Deanery, the inhabitants worked together to protect the alleged seminary priest Peter Harrison after his seizure by pursuivants during a raid upon the house of the recusant Francis Goodricke and his wife.⁸⁶ Of the Goodricke household it was said that '6 popishe recusants' met there for the purpose of being instructed and directed by the said Harrison in popishe but unsound pointe of Religion'.⁸⁷ After the arrest of Harrison, the pursuivant Roger Blanchard (who had been appointed by the Ecclesiastical Commission) was in the process of transferring his prisoner to be presented to the Justices of the Peace at Richmond.

The pursuivants were escorting their captive 'on foote towards Richmond' when they passed James Barton, a Catholic sympathiser, in a lane. Harrison called for assistance and Barton shouted to the pursuivants that they were 'all Rogues and Villaines'. Barton demanded to see some authority for Harrison's arrest and, as Blanchard was taking his papers from his pocket, Barton 'violently and suddenly drew forth the said Roger Blanshard owne person and stroake at the said Roger and cut him in the haid a great and grevius wound laboring and indeavouring as much as he could that the said Harrison might escape'. There was a great 'tumult and uproare' as a group of 'disorderly persons' assisted James Barton in his rescue mission. With 'riotous maeuvering', a great number of the parishioners of Kirby Ravensworth 'arrived with staves swords and

⁸⁶ BIA, HC.CP, 1624/6; BIA, HC.CP, 1624/7; BIA, HC.CP, 1624/22

⁸⁷ BIA, HC.CP, 1624/6, f.1v

pichforks' and thereby ensured Harrison's escape from the pursuivants.⁸⁸ Extreme examples such as these are unusual, but they illustrate that communities could be united by their Catholicism and in their support of missionary priests.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter has demonstrated that Catholic gentrywomen and female kinship networks were of fundamental importance in ensuring that communities had continued access to Catholic priests and sacramental devotion. Contrary to what many historians such as Aveling, Bossy, and Dickens have argued, the evidence shows that Marian priests remained active in the diocese during the period between the Elizabethan Settlement and the arrival of missionary priests in the 1570s and 1580s. The sustained presence of recusant priests during this period determined that there was continuity within Catholicism across the diocese and supports the arguments presented by Christopher Haigh. However, the arrival of seminary and Jesuit priests ensured the reinvigoration of sacramental devotion, which would otherwise have remained unsupported after the death of Marian priests. Discontent with the Established Church meant that the demand for Catholic priests in the diocese remained high and there were even attempts in some parishes to oust Church of England ministers and replace them with Catholics. In the absence of access to parish churches, it was gentry households that provided the new location for communal worship and some priests lived in

⁸⁸ BIA, HC.CP, 1624/6, f.2v

residence at such houses as chaplains, while others lived itinerant lifestyles, moving between locations across the diocese. In each case, it was predominantly gentrywomen who took responsibility for the care and shelter of priests.

Catholic men were required to maintain a guise of conformity in order to preserve their positions of political and social authority and frequently denied any knowledge that priests had been in their houses. In order to make sure that their husbands could plead ignorance to such matters, women undertook leading roles in sheltering priests and in the organisation of communal worship. The use of gentry households as Mass centres was facilitated by female kinship networks, which allowed priests to move between houses with greater ease. For Catholic communities, gentrywomen acted as gatekeepers to the clergy – facilitating the access that the majority had to priests and to sacramental devotion.

It is critical to address issues of female agency and to question how much freedom women had in undertaking roles as gatekeepers. Did gentrywomen make conscious choices to exploit the opportunities provided by the absence of a clerical hierarchy, in order to carve out positions of social authority for themselves? Or did they adopt roles as gatekeepers by default, as an extension of their position within the domestic household? Clearly, there was no mass conspiracy between the Catholic gentrywomen of the diocese to pursue a feminist agenda by seizing control of the post-Reformation church. Rather, one gets the sense that degrees of agency varied between women. Reading the subtext of what was happening, some gentrywomen seem to have been

acutely conscious of the opportunities to acquire some social authority for themselves. Many gentrywomen experienced hardship as a consequence of their religion and were forced by circumstances to demonstrate great personal resilience. However, it is telling that in many of the examples where gentrywomen appear to have adopted the most prominent positions within the post-Reformation Catholic community – Elizabeth Allen, Emilia Blundell, and Alice Clifton – male figures of authority (aside from the clergy) are notably absent in their lives.

When they were widowed or their husbands were imprisoned, women had greater autonomy to act as they saw fit. Alternatively, one could argue that these women had no alternative but to make decisions without a secular male influence. Furthermore, by seeking out regular contact with the clergy, it is arguable that these Catholic gentrywomen may have been seeking to replace a secular male presence with a religious one. Whatever the motivation, it is beyond dispute that the evidence indicates that gentrywomen played a greater role within Catholicism after the Reformation than they had before. Without the assistance that gentrywomen were able to provide to the Catholic clergy in the Diocese of Chester, post-Reformation Catholicism would not have survived or evolved in the manner that it did.

Chapter Three

Catholicism, Religious Experience, and Personal Piety

[S]he ... lived to her death a most godly & vertuous life communicating every Thursday besides Sundays & holy days, & fasting every Wensday except when St Elizabeths day fel thereon whose name she had. As also she rose daylie at 4 in the morning & from five til nine continued in the Church at her prayrs & upon holy days passed almost all the time in her devotions. She afflicted her body with sharp hearcloth & other pennances & would give some almes to all that asked it of her. Wherefore when she went to Church the beggers attended about her, but the boyes or children she would not give almes unto til they had heard Mass in her sight, which they for to get money were contented to do. She also spon hard upon workdays & kept silence at her work saying som prayers, & all the linnen which made of her spinning she distributed wither unto religios or needy persons.¹

The Louvain Chronicle, describing the devotions of Mrs Elizabeth Allen of Rossall Grange.

Introduction

Religious devotion was expressed in a variety of ways and it is worth taking a moment to define exactly what is meant by the term 'piety'. *The Concise English Dictionary of English Etymology* tells us that in the sixteenth-century the word 'piety' was used to indicate 'faithfulness to filial (or similar) duties'. This definition had developed during a time of

¹ A. Hamilton (ed.), *The Chronicle of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, at St. Monica's in Louvain now at St Augustine's Priory, Newton Abbot, Devon* (Edinburgh: Sands, 1904), vol.1, pp.123-4; The Hamilton volumes are the most thorough printed source currently available. This thesis cites page numbers from those volumes.

medieval Catholicism hegemony and hinged upon the instinctive religious subordination of the laity – and particularly of laywomen – to the uniformly male clerical hierarchy. After the Reformation, the meaning of the word ‘piety’ evolved somewhat, in order to accommodate the development of Protestantism. By the seventeenth-century, the etymological dictionary lists the definition of ‘piety’ as, ‘devotion to religious duties’.² These definitions reflect the change that had taken place within post-Reformation Catholicism – submission to the clergy was no longer a necessity when undertaking acts of piety. In response to Protestantism, Catholic piety had moved from the public sphere of the parish church, to the private realm of the household. Acts of piety could be personal, as well as public. For post-Reformation Catholics, however, priests remained central within a sacramental faith in order that members of the laity could fulfill their religious obligations. Catholicism was, and still is, by definition, a sacramental faith and, as such, priests remained necessary as the intermediaries between the laity and God. However, given the practical difficulties of acquiring access to priests during this time of religious prohibition, Catholic worship was forced to adapt in order to involve a greater degree of personal devotion.

Lay Catholics were instrumental in ensuring the survival of religious practices that pre-dated the Reformation. By continuing to prioritise sacramental devotion and encouraging the continued veneration of icons, images, and relics, as well as the use of the rosary in religious worship, lay Catholic ensured that medieval cycles of devotion persisted. A style of religious worship that otherwise would have been lost was continued and

² T.F. Hoad, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)

disseminated to subsequent generations. Sacramental devotion remained key to routines of personal piety in the Diocese of Chester. Regular receipt of the Eucharist, confession, and the performance of Catholic baptisms and marriages were the cornerstones of piety. In their roles as gatekeepers to the clergy, who gentrywomen chose to give their clerical allegiance to had the potential to influence the religious beliefs of great numbers of people, including their husbands, children, household servants, wider kinship networks, and local communities.

Catholic gentrywomen expressed their personal piety in some ways that were specific to their gender – such as through handicrafts. Although gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester do not seem to have enjoyed a particular brand of Catholic feminine piety, some pious acts were distinctly female. For example, it will be demonstrated that the routines of piety that were constructed by some gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester imitated that of enclosed sisters. Attempts were made by Catholic gentrywomen to imitate observance of the canonical hours of prayer and aspire towards monastic vows and virtues. Such evidence demonstrates that the construction of routines of personal piety allowed some Catholic gentrywomen a degree of religious autonomy that had been hitherto unavailable to them under the supervision of an English clerical hierarchy.

Sacramental Devotion and Clerical Allegiance

Sacramental devotion was the cornerstone of personal piety in the Diocese of Chester during this period. Catholic marriages conducted by recusant or missionary priests, for example, were very common.

Furthermore, the confessional direction in which Catholicism developed in particular communities within the diocese was influenced by which members of the clergy were chosen to administer the sacraments. On the occasion of her marriage to William Blundell in 1585, for instance, Emilia Norris is known to have favoured seminary priests. On her wedding day, Emilia made her confession to the seminary priest James Ford, who was the Blundell family chaplain at Little Crosby. A seminary priest, Thomas Bell, also made the marriage sermon. The identity of the priest who conducted the marital Mass is unknown, but there is indication that it may have been led by a seminary priest named Worthington, as Bell records that Mrs Hilton of Park Hall gave shirts to both men in celebration of the occasion.³ This Worthington was almost certainly Thomas Worthington, although his presence at that wedding meant that he must have made a fairly swift return to England following his banishment abroad in January 1585.⁴ Worthington joined the Society of Jesus on his deathbed, but was a seminarist for most of his life.

Little Crosby certainly seems to have allied itself strongly with seminary priests, as Bell also recorded that 'all Seminaries have had concourse unto that house in tyme past, & at this present day [c.1590]'. Events such as the marriage of Emilia Norris and William Blundell were influential within their local community and across the diocese as a whole. The Blundell and Norris families were both part of much larger kinship networks and their decision to ally themselves primarily with seminary priests, rather than with Jesuits or Marian priests, inevitably would have

³ W[estminster] D[iocesan] A[rchives], A Series, IV, ff.433, 451

⁴ G. Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests: a dictionary of the secular clergy of England and Wales, 1558-1850*, vol.1: Elizabethan, 1558-1603, (Ware; Ushaw: Ushaw College, 1969), pp.387-8

influenced the religious beliefs of great numbers of people. Sacramental rites such as marriages were usually well attended and this ensured that great numbers of people had contact with the priests that were present. Bell recounts that 'verie manie' were present at the marriage ceremony of Emilia and William.⁵ Such occasions provided an excellent opportunity for great numbers of Catholic parishioners to receive the Eucharist and to confess and it was commonplace for several priests to be in attendance.

Confession and penance was a second sacramental rite that was commonly administered by priests to Catholics in the Diocese of Chester. Elizabeth Allen regularly 'afflicted her body with sharp hearcloth' and undertook other unnamed penances as part of her religious devotions. Some gentrywomen of the diocese, however, were more reluctant to partake in penance than Mrs Allen. The Lancashire gentrywoman Mrs Byrom of Byrom was persuaded to convert to Catholicism by the combined efforts of Mrs Houghton of the Lea, the seminary priest Thomas Bell, and Mrs Houghton's chaplain Kerclawe (whose true identity has thus far proven to be unidentifiable). Thomas Bell recounted how Mrs Byrom had been brought 'in a goode towardnesses to reconciliation, confession onelie excepted ... wherein shee doubted most as she saide'.⁶ Presumably Mrs Houghton and the priests resolved her qualms fairly promptly, as Mrs Byrom's conversion followed swiftly after. Some women of the diocese were only officially reconciled to the Catholic Church at the end of their lives, presumably in order to receive the last rites. Mrs Robert Hesketh of

⁵ WDA, A Series, IV, f.433

⁶ WDA, A Series, IV, f.453

Rufforth, for example, only 'in her late sicknesse was reconciled ... her husband knowing & permitting the same'.⁷

Baptisms performed by Catholic priests were also common throughout the Diocese of Chester. In a letter dated 1611, Claud Hamilton and Walter Allisen wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 'concerning recusants who baptize their children in private houses'. The document speaks of children that the author believed 'were baptyzed by popishe preests, who doe swarme in these parts'. The list of those whose children had been baptised by Catholic priests included: three children of the Holdens of Witton, all the children of the Talbots at Salesbury, the children of the Sharpleys at Baldeston (presumably Osbaldeston), and those of the Bradeleys of Osbaldeston. All the families that are listed are described as 'nowed and notoryous recusants'. In some places, baptisms were performed with more frequency than elsewhere. For example, at Samlesbury, home to the Southworths, there were said to be multiple illegal marriages and baptisms being performed by priests – up to twenty over the course of seven years.⁸

In the 1590s, William Leigh of Prescott (Lancashire) was presented to the Diocesan Visitation because it was not known who had baptised his child⁹ and it was also recorded that it was not known where the child of Ralph Williamson of Sefton (Lancashire) was baptised or where his wife was churched.¹⁰ It is worth noting that the evidence demonstrates that

⁷ WDA, A Series, IV, f.451

⁸ B[ritish] L[ibrary], Lansdowne 153/47, f.132. This document is variously dated as either 1611 or 17 July 1612. If we assume that the latter date is more accurate, the archbishop is presumably George Abbot, who acceded the post after Richard Bancroft in March 1611.

⁹ C[hester] R[ecord] O[ffice], EDV [Visitation Papers] 1, 10/125

¹⁰ CRO, EDV 1, 10/126

Church of England clergy were sometimes complicit in Catholic baptisms well into the reign of King James I. In 1615, John Morres, the Vicar of Blackburn, accused the Vicar of Ribchester, Henry Norcrosse, of performing sham Church of England baptisms for Catholics. Two parishioners from Ribchester testified against their vicar, saying that he 'did goe into the Church of Rybchester with certayne recusants children & made shewe as though he hadd baptised the sayd children & did register the same for Baptised & yett never did ytt butt ... the sayd children were baptised by some popishe preests'.¹¹

The fact that Church of England ministers were sometimes complicit in the performance of Catholic sacramental rites says much about the extent to which traditional belief and religious practice prevailed in many areas of the Diocese of Chester. It was established in chapter one that Ribchester was one of the parishes where the temporal and ecclesiastical administration was particularly confused. Evidence such as this appears to demonstrate that the collusion of members of the Established Church was sometimes instrumental in ensuring continuity in the performance of traditional sacramental rites.

The Continuity of Traditional Religious Practices

In the same way that the sacraments continued to be administered by Catholic priests, other traditional religious practices also survived in the Diocese of Chester. It has been established that Catholic clerics remained prevalent and active across the diocese throughout the period after the

¹¹ CRO, EDC [Consistory Court Papers] 5, 1614-15/7 (Ribchester), f.1

accession of Queen Elizabeth I. Despite this, regular access to priests could not be guaranteed and post-Reformation Catholics were forced to embrace acts of private devotion to a far greater degree than had previously been commonplace. Routines of personal piety contained a wide array of traditional religious practices that had originated in the medieval church, a number of which are outlined below.

The use of the rosary remained popular, as did other vestiges of medieval Catholicism, such as the use of primers and *horae*, and the retention of icons, images, and relics.¹² Thomas Bell recorded how some beads of 'Redd Corrall worthe 2 sh: 8d:' belonged to Mrs Byrom of Byrom. Although the meaning of the Bell manuscript appears unclear in this section, it seems probable that these beads were rosary beads either purchased by Mrs Byrom, or presented to her as a gift upon her conversion.¹³ Had they been purchased for any other function aside for their use as rosary beads, it seems improbable that Bell should have made reference to them. Similarly, Catholics in the Diocese of Chester retained a great number of medieval devotional books. Elen Myers of St Michael's parish in Chester was presented before the visitation of Archbishop Sandys' in 1578-9 alongside John Whytehead for the use of 'latyn prymers'.¹⁴ In a similar manner, during Archbishop Hutton's visitation of 1595-6, Jane Davye of St Bridget's parish in Chester was

¹² C. Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in late Medieval and Reformation England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); E. Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers, 1240-1570*, (London; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England. c.1400-c.1580*, (London; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

¹³ WDA, A Series, IV, ff.453-4

¹⁴ B[orthwick] I[nstitute for] A[rchives], V.1578-9, CB.3, f.19; BIA, V.1578-9, CB.2, f.36v

presented alongside her husband Edward for 'kepyng of popishe reliques as a superaltary [supaltary] and popishe books'.¹⁵

Margaret Aldersey of Chester was brought before the Ecclesiastical Commission at least three times over the course of thirty years for her recusancy and other misdemeanours. In 1562, Aldersey was questioned regarding the concealment of a religious image that she admitted she had sold and stated that she had arranged for it to be 'convayed ... away bie a Spaniard'. She was also reprimanded for her use of a Latin Primer. In 1571, Aldersey was brought before the Commission again and told to 'bringe in a Latin Primer boke' – presumably the same book that she was still using.¹⁶ The recusant Anthony Travers of Preston was also said to have 'Bookes against the Religion in this Realme' in the early 1570s.¹⁷ Towards the end of the Jacobean period, the recusants Francis Goodriche and his wife of Kirby Ravensworth parish were reported in 1624 to have kept in their house 'sundry popishe bookes'. The High Commission recorded that these books were 'pernicious [and] hurtfull to and repugnant to the true and sincere religion nowe established in this Realme'. They were also said to be an 'evill example' to others.¹⁸

Other traditional religious practices appear to have been common throughout the diocese. At Tilston parish in Malpas Deanery, Ralph Leache was presented to the 1578 visitation because he was encouraging

¹⁵ BIA, V.1595-6, CB.3, f.2v; A supaltary or superaltary was a stone slab designed for use as an altar top that Catholic priests transported with them during their time on the English Mission.

¹⁶ CRO, EDA [Ecclesiastical Commission Papers] 12, 2/2, 81, 82 & 132

¹⁷ BIA, HC.CP, ND/1, f.1v [no date, but can be dated to the incumbency of Archbishop Grindal, 1570-6]

¹⁸ BIA, HC.CP, 1624/6, f.1v

the parishioners to 'saie a Pater Noster and de Profundis for the deade'.¹⁹ At Holy Trinity parish in Chester there were a series of disputes put before the same visitation about the correct type of communion wafers to be used and the minister of the parish, John Blaken, was accused of using excessive zeal in his services to mark fast days and holy days.²⁰ Furthermore, at Grappenhall parish, in Frodsham Deanery, the parishioners had retained a number of pre-Reformation vestments, including: 'a cope of read velvet imbrodered with gold'; another cope of white, black and green satin; three vestments; a banner; as well as three candlesticks and two crosses that had been removed from the parish church.²¹ The list of traditional practices still in evidence in 1578 is even more substantial for the parish of Weaverham, also in Frodsham Deanery, where the parishioners could not be stopped from 'ringinge the bells on All Saints' Daie' and refused to use the officially sanctioned bread during communion. In Weaverham, it was said that the preservation of traditional practices was heavily influenced by the presence of 'an olde noonne' who was described as an 'evell woman' who 'teacheth false doctrine'.²²

Attachment to religious imagery also remained strong throughout the diocese and Catholic families secretly kept many icons, images, and relics, which were considered iconoclastic by the Protestant regime. In 1567, the parishioners of Aysgarth in Catterick Deanery were reported to the High Commission at York for secreting a number of religious images. Images of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist were discovered that had been hidden in the rood loft of the parish church. Furthermore, Adam

¹⁹ BIA, V.1578-9, CB.3, f.8

²⁰ BIA, V.1578-9, CB.3, f.19v

²¹ BIA, V.1578-9, CB.3, f.29r

²² BIA, V.1578-9, CB.3, ff.29v-30r

Kirkbye, a husbandman of the parish, testified that he knew 'that two Images called Mary and John were hid in a lime kylne with in the churchyard of Askath [Aysgarth]', which were 'afterward found undefaced'.²³ It was not known who had hidden the images there or who amongst the parishioners knew about them. Aysgarth is located in an area renowned for limestone quarrying and its parish churchyard is one of the largest in England. Religious images concealed within a lime kiln there were highly unlikely to have been discovered by accident, so the parishioners' choice of hiding place was sensible. Whether the images of the Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist in the rood loft and those found in the lime kiln were the same two icons, or different ones, is unclear. However, given the unusual locations where the images were found, it seems more likely than not that they had been concealed for the purpose of continued religious veneration.

Research by historians such as Peter Brown and Eamon Duffy has demonstrated the importance of the Virgin Mary and the Cult of the Saints within medieval Catholicism.²⁴ However, despite the shift from Marian to Christocentric devotion that occurred after the Reformation, many aspects of medieval religion continued to be incorporated into post-Reformation Catholicism. Bridget Heal has shown, for instance, that the Cult of the Virgin Mary remained extremely popular within Germany after the Reformation.²⁵ Similarly, Christine Peters has analysed how medieval religious beliefs were adapted and evolved to reconcile themselves with

²³ BIA, HC.CP, 1567/1, f.2v

²⁴ P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function within Latin Christianity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*

²⁵ B. Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany: Protestant and Catholic Piety, 1500-1648*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

both the Church of England, and post-Reformation Catholicism, in England.²⁶ There is no question that a particular devotion to the Virgin Mary remained important to Catholics across the Diocese of Chester – especially to women – and the same trend can be seen throughout England as a whole. Dorothy Lawson of Newcastle was, ‘singularly devoted to the Blessed Virgin’.²⁷ Similarly, Grace Fortescue devoted both herself and her household to the Blessed Virgin.²⁸

As well as the Virgin Mary, individual saints were also singled out for veneration. These were sometimes chosen randomly, but were more frequently venerated for a particular reason. The account of the life of Mrs Allen, an extract from which introduced this chapter, demonstrated that Elizabeth chose to feast in order to celebrate the holy day of her namesake.²⁹ Pilgrimage also remained important, with journeys being an annual tradition within some families. St Winifred’s Well at Holywell in Wales remained a popular pilgrimage destination for many Catholic families living in the Diocese of Chester. The relatively close geographical proximity of the shrine to the diocese made it a convenient choice – even the Gunpowder Plotters found time to visit the shrine in 1605.³⁰

State-appointed pursuivants were always alert in their efforts to discover relics, icons, images, and other religious paraphernalia during searches of Catholic households in the Diocese of Chester. Sometimes it

²⁶ Peters, *Patterns of Piety*

²⁷ W. Palmes, *The Life of Mrs Dorothy Lawson of St. Anthony’s near Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in Northumberland*, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: J.G. Forster & Co., 1855), p.38

²⁸ J. Gerard (trans. P. Caraman), *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, (London: Longmans, 1951), p.163

²⁹ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.123

³⁰ G. Redworth, *The She-Apostle: The Extraordinary Life and Death of Luisa de Carvajal*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.108; M.C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550-1640*, *Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.96

was not just houses that were searched, but also people. During a search of Mrs Lathom's home at Mosbarrow in Lancashire, the pursuivants conducted an invasive search of her 'bosom and pockets, and even tore open and examined her under-garments', looking for Agnus Dei, rosaries, crosses, or 'anything else of that kind hidden about her body'.³¹ To minimise the likelihood of such items being discovered, some houses had dedicated chambers where relics, icons, images, and books could be hidden. A secret chamber was said to exist at the home of Thomas Gerard at the High Carre where books, vestments, chalices, supaltaries, and 'manie other things of Importance' were hidden.³² A similar hidden room must have been in existence at Birchley Hall, as a pewter chalice and vestments were kept there along with books (presumably those produced by the printing press at work there).³³

Such hidden chambers were not unusual, as comprehensive research by Michael Hodgetts has established. Some priests, such as the Jesuit Nicholas Owen S.J., specialised in the construction of priest-holes and other hidden spaces.³⁴ Although it is, by its very nature, difficult to confirm, it appears that some of the most prominent Catholic families of the diocese secreted away an array of pre-Reformation religious paraphernalia when under threat from the Protestant authorities. For example, there is evidence to suggest that the former Warden of Manchester College, Lawrence Vaux, bequeathed a number of pre-

³¹ Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange', p.138

³² WDA, A Series, IV, f.436

³³ A.J. Hawkes, 'The Birchley Hall Secret Press', *The Library*, 4th Series, 7:2, (1926), p.149; F.O. Blundell, *Old Catholic Lancashire*, (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1935-41), vol.1, p.2

³⁴ M. Hodgetts, 'Elizabethan Priest Holes: 5, the North', *Recusant History*, 13 (1976), 254-79; Nicholas Owen is sometimes also referred to as Nicholas Oven.

Reformation treasures to the Standish family at the time of his deprivation in order to ensure their preservation. It has been suggested by J. Stanley Leatherbarrow that these included Vaux's library, a pre-Reformation chalice and chasuble, and possibly a communion plate, some of which may have come directly from the Collegiate Church.³⁵

After the seizure of Rossall Grange by state authorities in 1584 and its occupation by state-appointed officials, some 'plate and other thinges' belonging to Elizabeth Allen were transferred to the Skillicornes at Preese. Thomas Bell records that 'these thinges were conveyed away by night, when the keepers of the house were a sleepe'. Mr Skillicorne said he would send 'each thinge' to Mrs Allen, but Bell recounted: 'Whether hee did or noe I cannot tell'.³⁶ Whether these items were religious in nature is unclear, but due to the secretive manner in which they were stolen away from Rossall, it is probable that at least some of them were.

The Imitation of Conventual Piety and Aspiration Towards Monastic Vows and Virtues

Evidence relating to the Diocese of Chester demonstrates that there was both a conscious and subconscious effort amongst secular Catholic gentrywomen to imitate routines of conventual piety, such as observation of the canonical hours of prayer and an aspiration towards monastic vows and virtues. Secular female piety may be distinguished from conventual piety in two main respects. Firstly, secular Catholic women remained

³⁵ J.S. Leatherbarrow, *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants, Remains, Historical and Literary, connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 110, New Series, (Manchester: The Chetham Society, 1947), p.11

³⁶ WDA, A Series, IV, f.432

unenclosed and in the sphere of the domestic household and, secondly, the majority of secular women married and raised children, whilst their enclosed counterparts (for the most part) had never done so. The life experiences of secular Catholic women were therefore usually quite different from women who had chosen to enter convents. However, in some respects, the personal piety of secular women was not as far-removed from that of their enclosed sisters as might be expected.

Research by historians such as Claire Walker and Caroline Bowden has demonstrated what the everyday religious practices of nuns in the exiled English convents during this period were.³⁷ Adherence to the canonical hours of prayer and the use of liturgical texts were the cornerstones of convent life for members of contemplative orders. Regular routines of prayer were what structured the days, weeks, and years for enclosed sisters. Similarly, nuns adhered to the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and observed religious virtues such as charity, humility, and hard labour. Upon initial consideration, the life of secular Catholic gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester seems far removed from such a lifestyle, but the evidence indicates that laywomen often imitated the daily routines of enclosed nuns to as great an extent as their domestic lives would allow.

³⁷ C. Bowden, "For the Glory of God": a Study of the Education of English Catholic Women in Convents in Flanders and France in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century', *Paedagogica Historica*, Supplementary Series, Gent CHSP, 5 (1999), 77-95; C. Walker, *Gender and Politics in Seventeenth-Century English Convents: English Convents in France and the Low Countries*, (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); C. Walker, 'Loyal and Dutiful Subjects: English Nuns and Stuart Politics', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, (ed.) J. Daybell, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 228-42; C. Walker, 'Recusants, Daughters and Sisters in Christ: English Nuns and their Communities in the Seventeenth Century', in *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, (eds.) S. Tarbin & S. Broomhall, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 61-78

One of the most important aspects of the research undertaken by Claire Walker was the way in which she demonstrated that English nuns at the exiled convents frequently remained in surprisingly close contact with their unenclosed relatives and friends back in England. Many of the nuns corresponded regularly with their female relatives – sisters, mothers, aunts, and cousins.³⁸ It will be demonstrated in chapter five that the same patterns can be observed amongst unenclosed women and nuns who originated from the Diocese of Chester. The symbiotic relationship between English nuns and their unenclosed female kin explains why there are suggestions of a conscious imitation of, and aspiration towards, the traditional monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience by secular Catholic women from the diocese. Although each woman's brand of personal piety was unique, there is evidence of a broad consensus that these three vows, along with a number of other religious virtues, should be observed as far as was possible in the domestic sphere. The additional virtues that women appear to have aspired towards included a general attitude of morality, humility, commitment to the true faith, charity, hard labour, and the avoidance of idleness.

Turning once again to the example of Elizabeth Allen, it is evident that she made a conscious attempt, firstly, to sustain traditional medieval religious practices and, secondly, to construct a pattern of personal piety within the secular environment of the gentry household that imitated the enclosed conventual space. Elizabeth Allen (d.1609) was a member of the Lancashire gentry from Poulton-le-Fylde – wife of George Allen (d.1579) and sister-in-law to Cardinal William Allen, founder of the English

³⁸ Walker, 'Recusants, Daughters and Sisters in Christ', 61-78

Colleges at Douai-Rheims and Rome. Two of Elizabeth's daughters and two of her granddaughters professed and all allied themselves with the Augustinian Canonesses at Louvain. Elizabeth's daughters Helen and Jane both initially professed at the Flemish convent of St Ursula's in Louvain, but Jane died before the move to the English convent of St Monica's in the same town).³⁹

After the death of her husband in 1579 and the seizure of her property by the crown in 1584, Elizabeth sought refuge on the continent, relocating her family first to Rheims, where her brother-in-law William Allen was at that time, and later to Louvain. After the loss of her assets, Elizabeth and her family subsisted upon a pension of 80 crowns per month that was granted by the Spanish crown in recognition of her devotion to the Catholic faith.⁴⁰ Elizabeth Allen is an apposite example, because throughout her life we can trace the impact of the evolution of English Catholicism – the introduction of recusancy statutes and their impact upon her family and household; the relocation of the English Catholic clergy to seminaries and colleges in continental Europe, including her brother, cousin, and nephews; the development of the English clerical mission, through evidence of priest-harbours at Rossall Grange; the creation and rapid expansion of the English convents in France and Belgium, through the presence of her daughters and granddaughters at Louvain; and the

³⁹ Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange and Todderstaffe Hall, the Residence and Estates of Mrs. Allen, the Widow of the Brother of Cardinal Allen', (trans. J. Gillow) from Dr Bridgewater's *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia*, printed in *The History of the Parish of Poulton-le-Fylde in the County of Lancashire*, (ed.) H. Fishwick, *Remains Historical and Literary connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester*, 8, New Series, (Manchester: C.E. Simms for the Chetham Society, 1885), pp.136-57; WWTN database reference numbers for Helen and Jane Allen are LA003 and LA002, respectively.

⁴⁰ T[he] N[ational] A[rchives], S[tate] P[apers] Dom[estic] 12/248 (dated 21 March 1594); Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, pp.144-5

exile of English Catholics to the continent, which ultimately resulted in her burial at the convent of St Monica's.

If we examine Elizabeth Allen's routines of personal piety, it is clear that she imitated conventual and medieval religious practices in a number of ways. Firstly, Allen observed a variant of the canonical hours of prayer that were practiced by the monastic orders. Prayer structured along the lines of the liturgical hours did not easily fit into the life of a gentrywoman responsible for attending to the demands of a domestic household. Despite the limitations inevitably placed upon her by family life, Allen 'rose daylie at 4 in the morning & from five til nine continued in the Church at her prayrs'. Secondly, she communicated with regularity 'every Thursday besides Sundays & holy days'.⁴¹ Allen was able to receive communion with such relative ease because the seminary priest George Bramley spent many years acting as the family chaplain at Rossall Grange.⁴²

Allen's routines of personal piety also included an array of other devotions. These included traditional medieval Catholic practices such as fasting, which she undertook 'every Wensday except when St Elizabeths day fel thereon whose name she had' and penance, where 'she afflicted her body with sharp hearcloth'.⁴³ Alms-giving was also important to Allen and she 'would give some almes to all that asked it of her'. Such acts of charity exemplified a further religious virtue. Allen was also an active proselytiser, paying special attention to children – to whom she 'would not give almes unto til they had heard Mass in her sight, which they for to get

⁴¹ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.123

⁴² WDA, A Series, IV, f.432; Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests*, vol.1, p.47

⁴³ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.123

money were contented to do'.⁴⁴ Hard labour and silence were also significant virtues within Allen's personal devotions. It is recorded that she 'spon hard upon workdays & kept silence at her work saying som prayers' and that all of the products of her labours she 'distributed wither unto religios or needy persons'.⁴⁵

Humility and obedience were religious virtues that proved to be controversial amongst the Catholic gentrywomen of the Diocese of Chester. For some gentrywomen, these were inherent acts of piety. Thomas Bell recounted, for example, that Anne Southworth of Samlesbury was, 'as a sworne sister to the Confraternitie, whome the Jesuite Mushe commanded to pull of [sic] his bootes in token of humilitie'.⁴⁶ If we are to take Bell's account literally, Anne Southworth's desire to demonstrate humility towards her confessor was translated into an action that was both physically and psychologically subservient to her clerical superior. Humility and obedience were often perceived as expressions of loyalty towards the missionary clergy. In contrast to this, however, there are indications that some of the female Catholics of the diocese found the emphasis that the Jesuit clergy placed upon humility and obedience distasteful. Thomas Bell recounts how Lady Lucy Stanley of Winwick displaced John Mush S.J. from his position as her chaplain and chose a seminary priest, James Cowpe, as his successor. The cause of this shift in allegiance is unrecorded, but Lady Stanley's displeasure with the Jesuit

⁴⁴ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, pp.123-4

⁴⁵ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.124

⁴⁶ WDA, A Series, IV, f.442

was such that from that point all would 'bee refused whoe bring commendacions from Mushe or anie other Jesuite'.⁴⁷

Beyond the parameters of the diocese, we can see that the imitation of conventual piety and religious vows and virtues persisted and continued to be marked by the influence of Jesuit confessors. For example, the autobiography of the Lancashire-born Jesuit John Gerard records that the convert Lady Mary Digby of Buckinghamshire wished 'to go about in poor clothes and observe true poverty, wherever she might be'. Digby also claimed that she would, 'devote her life to good works, and observe perpetual chastity and exact obedience'.⁴⁸ Mary Digby's wishes, however, were limited by a proviso – she would only adopt the lifestyle towards which she aspired in the event that she should be widowed. Self-evidently, for married women there were difficulties with observing a vow of chastity; however, there was also an inherent conflict between demonstrating obedience towards their husbands and obedience towards the clergy. Time that was spent in religious observance was not being devoted to household chores or to caring for family. The conflict between religious and domestic responsibilities is evidenced nowhere more clearly than in the case of Margaret Clitherow, whose confessor and biographer John Mush S.J. recorded her infamous proclamation that she would rather be in prison than at home, because she had more time to devote to her religion there than she did in her own house.⁴⁹

For the gentrywomen of the Diocese of Chester there was also an inherent contradiction between their relative wealth and any aspirations

⁴⁷ WDA, A Series, IV, f.439

⁴⁸ Gerard, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, p.169

⁴⁹ J. Mush, *Life and Death of Margaret Clitherow, the Martyr of York*, (ed.) W. Nicholson, (London: Richardson, 1849), p.77

towards poverty and manual labour. Elizabeth Allen's regular alms-giving and long hours spent spinning clothing for the clergy were gestures of charity and humility – in other words, this provided a way that she could reconcile her socially privileged position. In a similar fashion, John Gerard S.J. recounted that Jane Wiseman of Braddocks in Essex spent much of her time 'attending to her own wants like a servant girl,' doing all of the household chores herself. Gerard wrote that she partook in these activities (which he claimed were far below her status) not only as a means of attaining true humility, but also to save money. The money that she saved through her own thrift, she subsequently used to charitably endow Catholics who were less fortunate.⁵⁰ To provide one further example, as an expression of humility during her early life Ripon-born Mary Ward, founder of the first apostolic conventual order for English women, regularly dressed as a maid to go about her chores. For Ward, true humility could only be attained if she was not recognised as a member of the gentry by strangers.⁵¹

One of the most conventional acts of piety in the Diocese of Chester during the post-Reformation period appears to have been alms-giving. Alms-giving was traditionally an act of charity; however, as has already been demonstrated, Elizabeth Allen regularly gave alms to young children on the condition that they heard Mass. In this instance, alms-giving appears to have been utilised as a method of proselytisation in an attempt to procure converts. The centrality of alms-giving amongst Catholic gentrywomen across the Diocese of Chester is apparent. Mrs

⁵⁰ Gerard, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, p.52

⁵¹ H. Peters (trans. H. Butterworth), *Mary Ward: A World in Contemplation*, (Leominster: Gracewing, 1994), p.47

Skillicorne of Preese, for example, financially 'relieved manie' and was also responsible for distributing the money that her husband bequeathed to her 'to bestowe on Priestes for his soule'.⁵² Similarly, Mrs Stanley of the Crossehall was responsible for distributing the 40 shillings that 'her husband Clifton bequeathed by his will (but it was not recorded for feare of the lawe)' and that he had stipulated should be 'given to Seminarie priests, & other Recusants'.⁵³

Examples such as these demonstrate that there was a conscious imitation of conventual piety, of monastic vows, and of religious virtues by the Catholic gentrywomen of the Diocese of Chester. Although the structures of piety that were devised for enclosed women were not compatible with secular lives that included the presence of husbands and children, the gentrywomen of the diocese adapted their routines to fit around their domestic responsibilities. The example of this type of personal piety could inspire other members of the laity; as secular gentrywomen had, in turn, been inspired by their enclosed sisters. Furthermore, some acts of piety such as alms-giving could be utilised as tools of conversion.

Proselytisation and Alternative Acts of Piety

A number of the more unusual activities undertaken by the Catholic gentrywomen of the Diocese of Chester were also parts of their routines of personal devotion. Research conducted separately by Ellen A. Macek and Colleen Seguin has demonstrated how great an influence confessors and

⁵² WDA, A Series, IV, f.432

⁵³ WDA, A Series, IV, f.434

chaplains could have upon Catholic gentrywomen.⁵⁴ Missionary priests used their influence over lay Catholics to consolidate their own positions regarding the future of the English Mission. In turn, Catholic gentrywomen were able to influence the confessional allegiance of others through their choice of confessor. Demonstrating commitment to the dissemination of the faith was a crucial issue for all post-Reformation Catholics: one that manifested itself in the intra-Catholic debates over recusancy and church-papistry.⁵⁵ For gentrywomen, therefore, a public declaration of faith and proselytisation could constitute an act of piety in itself.

During a raid by pursuivants in 1584, Aloysa Haydock⁵⁶ of Cottam Hall in Lancashire (a niece of Elizabeth Allen) refused to desist in her prayers for the Pope and missionary priests, despite what was termed by an anonymous contemporary chronicler as the 'savage howlings of ... raving wretches'.⁵⁷ The incident gained some notoriety amongst Haydock's Catholic neighbours (including the Allens at Rossall Grange) as an act of great piety; all the more so because Aloysa was known to be of a sickly nature and prone to epileptic fits. Because of her poor health, Aloysa's strength and bravery in publicly declaring her faith in the face of

⁵⁴ E.A. Macek, "Ghostly Fathers" and their "Virtuous Daughters": the role of Spiritual Direction in the Lives of Three Early Modern English Women', *Catholic Historical Review*, 90:2 (2004), 213-35; C.M. Seguin, 'Addicted Unto Piety: Catholic Women in England, 1590-1690', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Duke University, 1997); C.M. Seguin, 'Ambiguous Liaisons: Catholic Women's Relationships with their Confessors in Early Modern England', *Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte*, 95 (2004), 156-85

⁵⁵ M.C. Questier, 'Catholic Loyalty in Early Stuart England', *English Historical Review*, 123:504 (2008), 1132-65; M.C. Questier, 'The Politics of Religious Conformity and the Accession of James I', *Historical Research*, 71:174 (1998), 14-30; A. Walsham, *Church papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England*, *Royal Historical Society Studies in History*, 68, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993)

⁵⁶ The 'Haydock' family are also variously recorded as the Haddocks, Chaddocks, Chardocks, or, most usually, the Charnocks. Aloysa is sometimes referred to as Alice, but more regularly as names similar to Eloise.

⁵⁷ Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange', pp.146-7; 'Certamen D. Alanae', *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia*, seventeen unnumbered folios towards the centre of the volume.

such opposition was considered by her contemporaries to be an extremely pious act.⁵⁸ As a woman of some infirmity, Aloysa would have had little opportunity to perform acts of piety such as fasting, undertaking long hours at prayer, or hard labour, for fear of damaging her health. Aloysa was born into a family of prolific Catholic priests and martyrs – her father and two brothers were seminarians, one brother was executed, and she was the niece of Cardinal William Allen. As such, undertaking alternative acts of piety may have acquired a greater degree of significance for Aloysa, than for other Catholic gentrywomen.⁵⁹

Under certain circumstances, some unlikely activities can be considered to have been acts of piety. Needlework was a popular pastime and a very necessary skill that all early modern gentrywomen would have learned during childhood. However, as well as a handicraft and a functional chore, it can also be considered to have been a pious activity in some cases. Firstly, idleness was considered a sin that was to be avoided at all costs. Keeping busy with any sort of labour was a virtue to aspire towards. Furthermore, St Teresa recommended needlework as an appropriate employment for nuns. Such a skill can therefore be considered as an act of domestic piety, as it has already been demonstrated that laywomen regularly emulated the routines of devotion undertaken by their enclosed sisters.⁶⁰ Many Catholic gentrywomen also used their needlework skills to provide assistance to priests in a practical manner, by producing vestments and basic clothing for the missionary

⁵⁸ Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange', pp.146-7; *Concertatio*

⁵⁹ Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests*, vol. 1, pp.4-5, 157-60

⁶⁰ Redworth, *The She-Apostle*, p.132

clergy. For instance, Mrs Hilton of Hilton Park in Lancashire made shirts for two missionary priests that she was sheltering in her home.⁶¹

During the later part of her life, Elizabeth Allen of Rossall Grange made regular donations of vestments and altarcloths to the Augustinian Canonesses at Louvain. Given the aforementioned account of her spinning and producing linen, one may safely assume that she produced these herself.⁶² Similarly, Jane Wiseman of Essex 'made vestments and other things for the altar and sent them to different people'.⁶³ It was not only needlework that provided a practical contribution. There are frequent references to Catholic gentrywomen making both tangible and symbolic contributions that aided missionary activity. Although she did not physically produce it herself, John Gerard S.J. described how his recent convert Grace Fortescue of Buckinghamshire commissioned and paid for the production of 'a heart of gold ... very finely wrought' that she planned to send to Loreto.⁶⁴ Similarly, the Spanish noblewoman and honorary Londoner Luisa de Carvajal busied herself making hosts for the Mass at the Spanish Embassy chapel. This was a humble yet important task, as upwards of 400 people were known to have received communion at one time in the Embassy chapel.⁶⁵ When the end purpose was to provide charitable or devotional aid, this type of domestic work must be included amongst acts of personal piety, as it served to practically support the English Mission.

⁶¹ WDA, A Series, IV, f.433

⁶² Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, pp.67, 124

⁶³ Gerard, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, p.52

⁶⁴ Gerard, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, p.163

⁶⁵ Redworth, *The She-Apostle*, p.148

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the personal piety of Catholic gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester comprised of a diverse range of thoughts and actions. Acts of piety included some things, such as needlework, which would not ordinarily be considered to have any religious connotations. What we define as acts of 'personal' piety are quite distinct from communal acts of worship normally associated with Catholicism – such as the Eucharist, marriage celebrations and feasting. However, the practicalities of living in post-Reformation England, when all church services had been officially Protestantised, meant that Catholics were increasingly forced to undertake personal acts of piety in the private sphere of the domestic household.

There is no sense in the Diocese of Chester of a particularly feminine brand of personal piety. Gentrywomen appear to have continued to undertake a number of traditional religious practices – but it is evident that men did too. It is clear, however, that some aspects of personal piety were more associated with women, than with men. This seems to have been a result of post-Reformation Catholicism's increasing association with household religion, than an indication that Catholic gentrywomen were more pious than their male counterparts.

It is thought provoking to note that some Catholic gentrywomen emulated conventual piety, by imitating observance of the canonical hours. The absence of a clerical hierarchy in England meant that post-Reformation Catholics had a greater degree of influence over the way that they practiced their religion – this was especially true of Catholic

gentrywomen. Where in the medieval Church the parish priest had determined the structure and nature of religious worship, within post-Reformation Catholicism Catholics had a modicum of control over the way that they worshipped and when they did so. The increasing opportunities to define your own style of personal piety must have been particularly liberating for women, who had hitherto had little independence, particularly within religion. The expansion of household religion meant that Catholic gentrywomen could decide when they worshipped – they could schedule private prayer around household chores. Furthermore, women could decide what additional acts of personal piety they wanted to undertake. There was also an element of choice about your priest. Whereas before the Reformation there was only one parish priest, now lay Catholics were able to choose between competing clergy. If you did not particularly like the way that a Jesuit priest worshipped, you could switch to a seminarist priest, or vice versa. Certainly in the Diocese of Chester, there seems to have been no shortage of priests to choose from.

The extent to which Catholic gentrywomen exercised a free choice in such matters is debatable. Female agency remained tempered by a patriarchal society and male social dominance, even within post-Reformation Catholicism. However, once religious practice for Catholics had become firmly ensconced in the household domain and was being undertaken on female turf, it was inevitable that women acquired greater autonomy. Many Catholic gentrywomen utilised the opportunity to construct routines of piety that suited their lifestyle and their aspirations, thereby obtaining for themselves a degree of self-determination that had hitherto been unobtainable.

IMAGES OF FEMALE PIETY
AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF POST-REFORMATION
CATHOLICISM IN THE
DIOCESE OF CHESTER,
c.1558 - c.1625

Volume Two

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Chapter Four

Religious Education, Catholic Literature, and the Consolidation of Catholic Belief

Introduction

The research presented in this chapter demonstrates that the events experienced during childhood created the foundations of Catholic belief that were consolidated and developed later in life. Hardship was commonplace for Catholics during childhood, as a consequence of familial religious beliefs. It was not unusual for Catholic children to experience the imprisonment of one or both parents and the sequestration of family homes occurred with relative frequency. In some cases, children were removed from their families and fostered by Protestant couples in order to impede the transmission of Catholic belief from parent to child. The previous chapter demonstrated the way that religious example established by routines of female piety directly compounded children's Catholic beliefs. Stopping the dissemination of Catholicism from mother to child became a matter of great importance to the Protestant state.

Catholic education was sometimes available in a more structured manner, but initially only for boys. In the Diocese of Chester, Catholic schoolmasters frequently strengthened the religious beliefs that children had already absorbed in the domestic environment of the gentry household. The pervasive presence of Catholic schoolmasters in the diocese meant that access to suitable teachers was relatively easy for

members of the Catholic gentry. It was especially easy in Lancashire, where greater numbers of gentry households meant that Catholic families were better equipped to shelter Catholic schoolmasters in the same way that they were able to house priests. Sometimes Catholic schoolmasters were priests. Similarly, a great number of Catholic boys received a Catholic education at seminary schools in continental Europe.

A formal religious education was not available for Catholic girls until the development of convent schools in continental Europe. The schools that developed at the exiled English convents were designed to equip Catholic girls with the skills that would be essential to them later in life. Whether they married and created a secular Catholic household of their own, or if they pursued a religious vocation, religious schools provided girls with the requisite skills to disseminate the faith. Chapter five will demonstrate that many of the girls who attended these Catholic schools continued on to profess.

Catholicism was also consolidated by the pervasive presence of Catholic literature in the Diocese of Chester. Evidence from the exiled convents indicates that Catholic gentrywomen from the diocese were highly literate. Some individuals are known to have had access to a great number of religious texts. Some of these texts were specifically marketed to appeal to women and contributed to the construction of models of female Catholic piety.

Learning to be Catholic and Childhood Hardship Resulting from the Penal Laws

Children in the Diocese of Chester first learned how to be Catholic primarily through imitation of the pious example of female relatives. The routines of personal piety constructed by Catholic women, which were outlined in the previous chapter, served to inspire children to embrace the same faith as their mothers and other female family members. Furthermore, the evidence presented in the next chapter confirms that, in many cases, children not only adopted the same religious beliefs and practices as their female role models, but also chose to pursue religious vocations.

It was through the imitation of routines of personal piety and participation in familial and communal worship that children first received a religious education: they learned what it meant to be a Catholic. Routines of household piety varied drastically, but sacramental devotion was at its heart. In the absence of priests, it was still possible for a Catholic mother to provide her children with a religious education by undertaking religious practices, such as use of the rosary or the study of devotional literature. Cyclical devotion was important and observance of saints' and holy days structured the year.

A number of accounts demonstrate that children who grew up in Catholic households experienced the legal ramifications of practicing their religion from a young age. The hardships faced by Catholics were extensive and varied. The arrest of a parent for recusancy, for instance, was a relatively common experience for Catholic children. The case of

William Blundell and his wife Emilia (née Norris) of Little Crosby, for example, provides a good case study of the disruption that legal penalties caused to some Catholic families in the Diocese of Chester.¹

Throughout the 1590s, a cyclical pattern of raids, searches, arrests, and imprisonment became routine for the Blundells of Little Crosby. In 1590, the seminary priest Richard Woodroffe was discovered during a raid by pursuivants on the house, resulting in the imprisonment of William Blundell and his father Richard Blundell at Lancaster Castle. Richard died during the course of his incarceration in 1592.² Clearly Richard had been imprisoned for a longer period of time than his son, as William was arrested again in 1592, that time alongside his wife Emilia. 1592 marked the birth of the couple's daughter, Margaret, who would later profess at the Augustinian convent in Louvain.³ In 1592 William Blundell was imprisoned for a further three years, this time at the Gatehouse in London. Having been incarcerated at the other end of the country, it seems improbable that William saw much of his daughter Margaret during the first three years of her life. During her husband's imprisonment, Emilia Blundell was left to manage the Little Crosby estate alone whilst raising her children.

In 1598 Little Crosby Hall was searched again, leading to the interrogation of Emilia Blundell by the Bishop of Chester, Richard Vaughan, at Chester Castle. In addition to this, William was again exiled from his home to the south of England. After this, the couple did not

¹ L[ancashire] R[ecord] O[ffice], DDBL [Blundell of Crosby Papers], 55/78; LRO, DDBL, 55/79

² LRO, DDBL, 30/1

³ J.E. Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community: The Blundells of south Lancashire during the seventeenth & eighteenth centuries*, (Wigan: T. Snape and Co Ltd for the North West Catholic History Society, 2010), pp.41-2

officially live together at Little Crosby again until 1603, when they returned home under the protection of a pardon purchased from King James I. Again, it seems likely that the Blundell children saw relatively little of their father during those five years and Emilia Blundell was once again responsible for the Little Crosby estate.⁴ Over twenty years later, in 1624, Emilia Blundell was once more in trouble with the law, after a dispute that arose during the seizure of some cattle in lieu of payment for a recusancy fine.⁵ Emilia was described around that time as being, 'a convicted recusant and an obstinate woman and of a practicing factious and unquiet spirit'. After several further attempts to seize cattle over the next few years, Emilia Blundell's case eventually reached the Star Chamber, where the Blundells of Little Crosby were fined £2000 (later negotiated down to £250). The repeated financial penalties imposed as a result of their Catholicism must have placed the Blundell family under great strain.⁶

The Louvain Chronicle records how Emilia and her husband were forced to flee from Little Crosby on multiple occasions when it was raided by pursuivants. At the time of the raid upon the house that resulted from the testimony of the apostate priest Thomas Bell in 1590, Emilia and William happened to be absent from Little Crosby and evaded capture. A short time after Emilia, however, 'becoming weary of her long stay from home, put herself into the hands of the pursuivants, who threw her into

⁴ LRO, DDBL, 30/1; LRO, DDBL, 30/2

⁵ LRO, DDBL, 24/11

⁶ T.E. Gibson (ed.), *Crosby records: a chapter of Lancashire recusancy, containing a relation of troubles and persecutions sustained by William Blundell of Crosby Hall, Lancashire, Esq. (1560-1638) and an account of an ancient burial ground for recusants, called the Harkirke, and of coins discovered there, Remains historical and literary connected with the Palatine counties of Lancaster and Chester*, 12, New Series, (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1887), pp.40-2; Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community*, pp.41-2; F. Tyrer, 'A Star Chamber case: Assheton v. Blundell, 1624-31', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 118, (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1967), 19-37

prison'.⁷ Although the authorities had little evidence against her and a number of friends testified to her good character, she was kept imprisoned for sixteen weeks. The fact that such treatment was considered by Emilia to be the preferable option speaks volumes about the type of experiences that were considered normal for the Blundells. Who was responsible for the care of the Blundell children during Emilia's imprisonments is not clear.⁸

Despite their personal difficulties, the Blundells of Little Crosby continued to provide unfaltering support for local Catholics living on their estates and in the general area of Sefton parish. For example, part of the Little Crosby estate was set aside for use as a Catholic graveyard, after a local woman was refused burial in the village churchyard because of her adherence to traditional religion. The woman's body had been interred in a grave on unconsecrated ground, which was continually being disturbed by passing horses. Appalled at the poor treatment of Catholic parishioners by the Established Church, the Blundells set aside a piece of their own land for the woman's burial.⁹

After the burial of this Catholic parishioner of Sefton, it was said that 'all the poor Catholics that died thereabouts were buried there, and amongst them some had stones on their graves with crosses, according to the Catholic manner, which were put there by their relations ... but with leave from his wife [Emilia Blundell] only.'¹⁰ The fact that it was Emilia Blundell, rather than her husband, who granted permission for the erection

⁷ A. Hamilton (ed.), *The Chronicle of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, at St. Monica's in Louvain now at St Augustine's Priory, Newton Abbot, Devon*, (Edinburgh: Sands, 1904), 2 vols.

⁸ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, pp.138-42, 153-4

⁹ LRO, DDBL, 24/12

¹⁰ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.153

of tombstones in the Catholic graveyard confirms that Emilia had been left responsible for the management of the estate at Little Crosby. Accountability for the graveyard was significant, as it is recorded within the Blundell annals that almost a hundred local Catholics were buried in the makeshift cemetery, which came to be known as the Harkirk. One of the most striking events to occur at Little Crosby was the destruction of this Catholic burial ground by state-appointed officials. 80 people had been buried in the graveyard when the High Sheriff and 30 of his men set upon it, breaking open graves, kicking over tombstones, and removing crosses. As a consequence of this, William Blundell was fined £1,000 for conducting illegal burials and a further £1,000 for praemunire.¹¹

The example of Emilia and William Blundell demonstrates the sort of experiences that the children of Catholic parents experienced on a regular basis. Such experiences must have inevitably shaped the beliefs and aspirations of adolescent Catholics. Margaret Blundell, the daughter of Emilia and William, pursued a religious vocation and professed at the Augustinian convent of St Monica's at Louvain in 1615. Having considered Margaret's childhood experiences, her decision to join a convent comes as no great surprise. Such experiences shaped Margaret's own religious beliefs and ultimately her decision to join the Augustinian Canonesses at Louvain. The Louvain Chronicle describes Margaret's parents as 'good & vertuous persons' who brought up 'their children in the fear of God'. It would seem that a religious vocation was

¹¹ Gibson, *Crosby Records*, pp.40-2; Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.153

actively encouraged, as 'the mother [Emilia] would oftentimes assay her daughters if they would be Religious'.¹²

Helen, Jane, and Mary Allen experienced similar troubles during their childhood at Rossall Grange, Poulton-le-Fylde. The Allen daughters faced a particularly unpleasant incident in January of 1584 when their home was raided by pursuivants. At the time of the raid, the three girls (none of whom was more than sixteen years old) were forced to take responsibility for the house and servants because their widowed mother, Elizabeth Allen, was away from home. The pursuivants forced their way into the house and began to search it. An anonymous account that was originally printed in the contemporary compendium the *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia* recounts the course of events during the raid upon Rossall in great detail.¹³

One of the first things that the pursuivants did after they had forced their way into the house was to vandalise a portrait that they believed (incorrectly) was of the girls' uncle Cardinal William Allen. The *Concertatio* describes how the pursuivants 'hurled innumerable revilings and bloodthirsty speeches' and 'defaced his portrait in a marvellous manner with their knives and daggers' before throwing it on the floor and trampling 'it under foot'.¹⁴ The pursuivants continued on to search Rossall from top to bottom, seizing what cash they found and taking away clothes and

¹² Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.154

¹³ J. Gibbons, *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia adversus Calvinopapistas et Puritanas sue Elizabetha Regina, quorundum hominum doctrina & sanctitate illustriam renovate & recognito*, (ed.) Dr Bridgewater, (Treves: H. Bock, 1594)

¹⁴ Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange and Todderstaffe Hall, the Residence and Estates of Mrs. Allen, the Widow of the Brother of Cardinal Allen', (trans. J. Gillow) from Dr Bridgewater's *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia*, printed in *The History of the Parish of Poulton-le-Fylde in the County of Lancashire*, (ed.) H. Fishwick, *Remains Historical and Literary connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester*, 8, New Series, (Manchester: C.E. Simms for the Chetham Society, 1885), p.141

jewellery that belonged to the sisters. The officials also arrested two of the household servants.¹⁵ The men seized control of Rossall Grange and refused to leave until Mrs Allen returned. Until that point Helen, Jane, and Mary Allen would be kept under lock and key as quasi-hostages. Mary Allen was no more than ten years old at this time.¹⁶

The experience would undoubtedly have been extremely daunting for such young women to have to deal with on their own and the author of the *Concertatio* praises the Allen daughters for imitating 'their mother's zeal and prudence' in their response to the difficult situation.¹⁷ When the sisters received word that they were to be moved away from Rossall, they 'eagerly strove after every opportunity to escape, especially as they had already learned from various examples how dangerous a thing it would be to fall into the hands of the heretics at such a sorrowful time'.¹⁸ Raids upon other Catholic households in preceding weeks, including the search of Blainscough Hall in Wigan, home to the Worthington family, had demonstrated the extent to which state-officials were targeting Catholic families at that time.

Under house arrest, the Allen sisters waited for their opportunity to steal the house keys from the sheriff's men and take their chance to escape. After nightfall on their fourth day of their imprisonment the girls:

¹⁵ T[he] N[ational] A[rchives], DL [Duchy of Lancaster records] 44/356

¹⁶ Fishwick, 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange', pp.136-57

¹⁷ Fishwick, 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange', p.147

¹⁸ Fishwick, 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange', pp.147-8

drew back the bolt and opened the door, and hastened to the nearest ferry, where they embarked in a boat, which they had found as it were made ready for them by God's providence, and immediately crossed over to the other side of the river, and thence wandering along by-ways, and scarce daring to trust themselves to any one's hospitality on account of the cruelty of their adversaries who were in pursuit of them, and who searched into every corner, they at length reached their mother, whom they found wavering between hope and fear, after a fortnight's pitiable wandering.¹⁹

There is enough corroborative evidence from other sources, such as the Louvain Chronicle, to suggest that the course of events described here is a broadly accurate account of events.²⁰ The sisters almost certainly found their mother at their uncle's house in Warrington, where it is known they were staying towards the beginning of February 1584.²¹ Soon afterwards Elizabeth Allen took her two eldest daughters into exile, first to Rheims and then Louvain. The youngest daughter Mary does not appear to have travelled with her sisters at that time, perhaps because of her young age. It is possible that she stayed with her uncle in Warrington. Subsequently, however, Mary joined her mother and sisters in Louvain. The elder two sisters, Helen and Jane, entered the Flemish convent of the Augustinian Canonesses, St Ursula's at Louvain. Jane died at St Ursula's, but Helen later transferred to the English convent of St Monica's in the same town.²² Mary married Thomas Worthington of Blainscough Hall, who had himself experienced the raids of 1584, and also ended her life in widowhood at St

¹⁹ Fishwick, 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange', p.148

²⁰ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1

²¹ See chapter five

²² Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, pp.32-4

Monica's.²³ A lengthy court-case ensued following the raid on Rossall Grange, during which agents acting on behalf of Elizabeth Allen tried and failed to regain possession of her property and her daughters' inheritance.²⁴

Amongst families such as the Allens and the Blundells it can be clearly demonstrated that children learned to be Catholic through imitation of female piety and as a result of the hardships that they experienced during their formative years. Further examples illustrate this with greater clarity. The Whitmores of Leighton in Cheshire, for instance, set a clear example of Catholic piety that their children imitated. William Whitmore was a church-papist – treading the fine line of non-communication and absenteeism, but not practicing outright recusancy.²⁵ William's wife Alice (née Hough), on the other hand, was a determined recusant and was presented to diocesan visitations multiple times for her non-communication and non-attendance at Church of England services.²⁶ The Whitmore children followed their mother's example, rather than their father's. Alice and William's three daughters were also presented to the diocesan visitation – Christina, Eleanor, and Jane for non-attendance in 1598; and Christina and Eleanor for non-communication in 1601.²⁷ An example such as this demonstrates the strong correlation between recusant mothers and recusant daughters.

²³ See chapter five

²⁴ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, pp.123-4

²⁵ K.R. Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), p.168

²⁶ C[hester] R[ecord] O[ffice], EDB [Bishop's Transcripts], Thurstaston (1581); CRO, EDV [Visitation Records] 1, 10/39; CRO, EDV 1, 12a/31; CRO, EDV 1, 12b/56

²⁷ CRO, EDV 1, 12a/31; CRO, EDV 1, 12b/56

Similarly, John Whitmore the Elder (the nephew of Alice and William Whitmore) also imitated the religious zeal of his aunt. Both John Whitmore the Elder of Thurstaston (Cheshire) and his son John Whitmore the Younger were repeatedly presented for recusancy. K.R. Wark goes so far as to suggest that Whitmore the Elder was the most determined male recusant in Cheshire. Whitmore the Elder was subjected to a series of recusancy fines, the sequestration of his land and goods, and was imprisoned at Chester Castle. Despite all of this, Whitmore stood by his religious beliefs.²⁸ In 1582 the Privy Council recorded its disbelief that such a 'verie daungerous practising Papist' was still at large.²⁹

In a similar fashion, the second wife of Whitmore the Elder, Jane, was presented to the diocesan visitation for non-attendance. It was claimed that Jane had her child baptised by a Catholic priest during her imprisonment at Chester Castle. She was also accused of fornication on the basis that her marriage was illegal, having been conducted by a Catholic priest.³⁰ John Whitmore the Younger and his wife Elen experienced a similar pattern of events to John's parents, including the sequestration in November 1599 of goods to the value of £7 13s 4d and land worth £22 13s 4d per annum.³¹ Examples such as these demonstrate that the stance mothers assumed regarding non-attendance or non-communication was regularly imitated, and that childhood memories of religious persecution only served to reinforce the religious beliefs and behaviour of Catholics.

²⁸ Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, p.169

²⁹ APC 1581-2, 447 (Acts of the Privy Council, vol.13)

³⁰ CRO, QSE [Quarter Session Records] 4/14; CRO, QSE 4/25; CRO, EDV 1, 10/24; CRO, EDV 1, 12b/55; Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, pp.168-9

³¹ CRO, EDB, Thurstaston (1581); CRO, EDV 1, 12b/55; Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, pp.168, 170

There were sometimes obstacles that prevented the transmission of Catholic belief from mother to child, most notably the presence of a Protestant male within the household. However, the significance of maternal influence upon the religious education of children was often great – even when a Protestant husband was present. The state authorities identified the threat of Catholic maternal influence to the enforcement of religious conformity. Plans were proposed to remove children from the influence of their Catholic parents and place them within the ‘safety’ of Protestant households. Several examples from the Diocese of Chester confirm that this did happen in some cases. The four nephews of the seminary priest Thomas Worthington, third President of Douai, were placed in Protestant homes in 1584 including (in the case of the youngest brother, John) the house of the Bishop of Chester, William Chadderton. Despite their experiences the boys remained steadfast to their Catholic beliefs and all eventually escaped to rejoin their uncle before travelling to the continent.³²

There are also cases where the daughters of Catholic families were placed with Protestant foster-families. For example, Protestant families fostered Alethea and Dorothy Anderton for five years, along with one of their brothers. One of these families subjected the Anderton children to a number of abuses that marked them – physically and figuratively – for life.³³ More comprehensive accounts of both the Anderton and Worthington cases are included in chapter five. Although such extreme measures as fostering children were never widely implemented by the

³² J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1975), p.163

³³ The account of the Anderton sisters does not feature in the Hamilton volumes. All references to the Andertons quote folio numbers from the original manuscript.

state authorities, examples such as those outlined above demonstrate the extent to which Catholic parents, and especially recusant mothers, were perceived as a threat by the Elizabethan and Jacobean authorities.³⁴

Catholic Schools and Religious Education in England

Children did not always learn to be Catholic and receive their religious education solely from their families. However, the way that boys and girls were able to receive a religious education differed, ostensibly as a result of their gender. One way that boys could receive a religious education was from Catholic schoolmasters. Many Catholic boys in the Diocese of Chester received tuition from schoolmasters in the formal environment of a local school: here pedagogical methods were structured, but teachers were more likely to operate under a guise of conformity. There are more frequent examples, however, of Catholic boys being educated by recusant schoolmasters within the confines of gentry households.

There is not a great deal of information available regarding how exactly Catholic children in the diocese were educated, but Catholic boys appear to have received a more extensive and formal education than Catholic girls. Although there are some instances where Catholic girls appear to have been educated alongside Catholic boys – for example, the Blundells of Little Crosby – these examples are confined to the privacy of the gentry household, rather than more public spheres such as schools. This reflects a secular, domestic female enclosure that was representative of the patriarchal nature of society at that time.

³⁴ J.T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry: From the Reformation to the Civil War*, (London: Athlone Press, 1969), p.184

In his research on Tudor Lancashire, Christopher Haigh demonstrated that many families within that county were able to retain the services of Catholic schoolmasters well into the Elizabethan period. Indeed, many of the earliest schools in Lancashire were founded by members of the Catholic gentry during the Marian period and remained in operation after prohibition. These included the grammar school at Clitheroe, which was founded in 1554 by Alexander Houghton. Similarly, Edward Lowe, the first schoolmaster of the foundation at Huyton, found himself in trouble in 1564 for using holy water and encouraging others to adopt Catholic practices. Furthermore, Peter Carter, a Cambridge graduate and schoolmaster at Preston in 1571 was 'supposed to be a papist and be privy with the roving priests'.³⁵

There are numerous examples of Catholic schoolmasters who worked in the Diocese of Chester. In 1597, the purportedly Catholic schoolmaster John Thomson taught children in the chapelry of Boroughbridge (Aldborough parish), although he had no licence to do so. It was claimed that Francis Goodricke, a recusant, had brought him into the parish.³⁶ A seminary priest named Leigh worked as a schoolmaster in the house of William Clifton of Balam (Lancashire) and in 1590 it was said that 'at this hower' he 'teacheth his children'.³⁷ Similarly, the seminary priest James Gardiner was schoolmaster 'a long tyme' to the Blundells of Ince Blundell. The 'sometymes Scholemaster' Thomas Lathom was described as a 'most perverse Recusant' who had conversed with,

³⁵ C. Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 206-7

³⁶ B[orthwick] I[nstitute for] A[rchives], HC.CP [High Commission Cause Papers], 1597/9, f.4

³⁷ W[estminster] D[iocesan] A[rchives], A Series, IV, f.432

amongst others, the seminary priests Thomas Bell and Thomas Worthington at Rixton.³⁸ In a similar fashion, Richard Houghton of Park Hall employed a schoolmaster who was known to be a recusant³⁹, Richard Blundell was schoolmaster to the Houghton family at the Lea⁴⁰, and the schoolmaster Raphe Walker was imprisoned at the New Fleet in Salford for his recusancy in Jan 1591-2.⁴¹

In an article in *Recusant History*, A.C.F. Beales constructed a list of Catholic schoolmasters who worked in England at this time. It is worth noting the high percentage of those on the list who are known to have worked in the Diocese of Chester.⁴² Similarly, a document held in the State Papers at the National Archives provides a list of Catholic schoolmasters working in Lancashire in 1592.⁴³ Using these two sources, the Catholic schoolmasters and the places where they are known to have worked in the Diocese of Chester can be listed as follows:

Thomas Asmowe was at Ormskirk; Richard Aspinwall at Lathom; Nicholas Banester and Peter Carter were at Preston; John Burgh at Salford; John Butterfield was at Sutton; Richard Call at Cartmel; Humphrey Cartwright was with the Scarisbricks at Scarisbrick; Roger Dickson lived with the Gerards at the High Carre; William Fletcher was with the Skillicornes at Preese and schoolmaster in Wigan; James Gardiner with the Massey

³⁸ WDA, A Series, IV, f.452

³⁹ WDA, A Series, IV, ff.444-45

⁴⁰ WDA, A Series, IV, f.455

⁴¹ L[ancashire] R[ecord] O[ffice], DDKE.acc.7840 / HMC [Kenyon of Peel Manuscripts], ff.124-126

⁴² A.C.F. Beales, 'A Biographical Catalogue of Catholic Schoolmasters in England, 1558 to 1700, with an index of places: Part 1 1558 – 1603', *Recusant History*, 7 (1964), 268-289

⁴³ TNA, S[tate] P[apers] Dom[estic] 12, 243/52

family at Rixton, as were schoolmasters named Pele, Bede Banester, and Thomas Latham; Peter Longworth was with the Cliftons at Balam; Edward/Richard Sager [Sagar] was at Dinckeley and possibly with the Southworths at Samlesbury; Mr Scholes and Mr Fawcett were with the Houghtons at the Park Hall; Gabriel Shawe was with the Heskeths at the Newhall and also in Ormskirk parish; Thomas Somers was at Grange-over-Sands and Grayrigg; William Simpson resided with the Haydocks at Cottam; George Swallowell was at Houghton-le-Spring; Edward Waddington lived at 'Churche' (perhaps Church Lawton in Cheshire); Robert Whitfield was at Clayton-in-the-Moor (also probably working for the Haydock family) and generally worked around Blackburn parish; Lawrence Yates was master of Blackburn School and tutor to James Anderton of Lostock; Robert Dewhurst was tutor to the children of Alexander Rigby of Ormskirk, William Norris of Speke, the Shireburnes of Stonyhurst, Richard Hutton, the Standishes, the Rigbys of Horrock, and the Mollineux of Hockley; Miles Gerard was schoolmaster to the children of Mr Tyldesley at the Morleys; and Mrs Houghton of the Lea had 'kepte synce the deth of her husbande' Richard Blundell, brother to William Blundell of Little Crosby, as her schoolmaster.⁴⁴

The extent to which it is possible for historians to identify individuals and their locations demonstrates how prevalent Catholic schoolmasters were in the Diocese of Chester and the influence that they held. William Blundell was described as 'an obstinate Papiste, well acquainted with a number of seminaries'. This was the man that taught Mrs Houghton's

⁴⁴ TNA, SPDom 12, 243/52; Beales, *Catholic Schoolmasters*

children to 'sing and plaie upon the Virginalls'.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the biography of John Gerard S.J. confirms that it was often schoolmasters who inspired Catholic children to undertake a religious vocation. In the years he spent at his father's house at Bryn in Lancashire during the late 1570s, Gerard had two Catholic schoolmasters: Mr Lewknor, 'a Catholic in sympathy and conviction' and a former tutor at Exeter College, Oxford, taught him Latin, while William Sutton, 'a devout priest', taught him Greek. Sutton left his post as Gerard's tutor to join the Society of Jesus. Gerard later joined his former tutor when he was ordained as a Jesuit.⁴⁶

Some Catholic schoolmasters garnered a reputation for themselves through their determined evasion of the law and by the number of converts that they procured. One notable example is Laurence Yates, who worked as a Catholic schoolmaster and was based in Blackburn for most of the 1570s and in Burnley for much of the following two decades. At least nine of Yates' former pupils entered seminaries and five were at Douai-Rheims by 1580. As Christopher Haigh has demonstrated, it was possible for one individual to exert a surprising level of influence within a relatively small group of Catholic gentry families in Lancashire.⁴⁷ A total of 42 schoolmasters in Elizabethan Lancashire were either presented as recusants or accused of operating Popish schools, and there were at least another nine Catholic schools whose masters remain unknown.⁴⁸

There are two particularly interesting aspects of Haigh's research on Catholic schoolmasters in Lancashire. The first is that the prosecution

⁴⁵ TNA, SPDom 12, 243/52

⁴⁶ J. Gerard (trans. P. Caraman), *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, (London: Longmans, 1951), pp.1, 261-3

⁴⁷ TNA, SPDom 12, 243/52; Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance*, pp.278-9

⁴⁸ Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance*, pp.291-2

and persecution of Catholic schoolmasters appears to have been relatively light and few schoolmasters were forced to retreat to the sanctuary of the gentry house – only eighteen of the 42 were definitely known to have been employed as domestic tutors to the gentry. The parish of Prescott provides an interesting example. In 1592, Prescott's Puritan incumbent Thomas Meade seized control of the local grammar school in an attempt to catechise the local children – or more accurately, the local boys. Both Haigh's research, as well as a case study of Prescott by Alan Dunbabin, has shown that the seizure and Protestantisation of Prescott grammar school had little spiritual effect. The local gentry families merely removed their boys from the grammar school and placed them under the tuition of one of the four Catholic schoolmasters who are known to have taught in Prescott between 1578 and 1604. Interestingly, there does not seem to have been much attempt to hide the existence of these alternative schools by cloaking them under the guise of private tuition etc.⁴⁹

A second important point that Haigh's research highlighted – one that is consistent with the conclusions of this research – is that the geographical location of Catholic schoolmasters was significant. Of the 42 schoolmasters identified, Haigh located 34 of them within the deaneries of Amounderness and Warrington.⁵⁰ This statistic is undoubtedly anomalous: one cannot reasonably expect that three quarters of Catholic schoolmasters were operating in one-third of a given geographical area purely by accident. Haigh suggested that one way of explaining this anomaly might be that Amounderness and Warrington had higher

⁴⁹ A. Dunbabin, 'Post-Reformation Catholicism in the parish of Prescott, Lancashire, from the Elizabethan Settlement to the Civil War', (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Manchester, 1981); Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance*, pp.291-2

⁵⁰ Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance*, p.291

educational standards, in general – those two deaneries having the greatest number of schools overall.⁵¹ Although this a valid point, it does not adequately explain the statistical disparity.

A further explanation, which this thesis finds persuasive, is that the deaneries of Amounderness and Warrington contained greater numbers of gentry families who were known to be Catholic than other areas of Lancashire or the diocese. It was in areas where there was a greater density of Catholic families that Catholic schools were most likely to arise, for obvious reasons – there was suitable demand. For those families that were geographically isolated from Catholic neighbours, a private tutor would be their best (or only) option to provide children with a structured Catholic education. This explains why there is so little evidence of Catholic schoolmasters working in the Diocese of Chester beyond the boundaries of Lancashire.

Of the examples outlined above, only one of almost forty Catholic schoolmasters worked beyond the borders of Lancashire: John Thomson, in Boroughbridge Chapelry (Aldborough parish). It has not proved possible to confirm a single example on the list of a Catholic schoolmaster who worked in Cheshire. Furthermore, although the parish of Aldborough was geographically located within Boroughbridge Deanery in the Diocese of Chester, jurisdictionally it was under the authority of the Dean and Chapter of York, rather than the diocese. Thomson, therefore, cannot technically be said to have worked in the Diocese of Chester at all.⁵²

⁵¹ Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance*, p.312

⁵² BIA, HC.CP, 1597/9

Catholic Schools and Religious Education Abroad

For those Catholic gentry families who had the necessary funds available, there was a further option for providing Catholic boys with a religious education: sending them to seminary schools in continental Europe. This option was not available to Catholic girls. The creation of schools for girls at the exiled English convents therefore provided a new educational opportunity for English girls, whose only other option until that point had been to enter a continental convent as a lay sister, where communication was sometimes problematic due to language constraints. Chapter five illustrates the relationship between the exiled English convents and Lancashire Catholic families in greater detail; however, this chapter will consider the role played by convent schools and the exiled convents in the religious education of Catholic girls, and compare them with seminary schools for boys.

After the Reformation and the dissolution of England's religious houses, many monastic and conventual orders were forced to relocate, either in small numbers or *en masse*, to continental Europe. The foundation of the English seminaries at Douai-Rheims and Rome by the Lancastrian priest Cardinal William Allen, in 1561 and 1579 respectively, marked the beginnings of the expatriate English Catholic community. It was to English Colleges such as Douai-Rheims and Rome, as well as others such as Valladolid in Spain and St Omers in the Spanish Netherlands, that the Catholic community began to send their sons in order to receive a religious education. Boys could attend seminaries from a relatively early age as lay students: usually from their early teenage

years, but sometimes earlier. After their time as lay students, these young men were given the opportunity to enter the seminary proper and pursue ordination. Analysis of the entry-records for the seminaries shows that a consistently high number of entrants were born in the Diocese of Chester, but mainly in Lancashire. Christopher Haigh has estimated that one-sixth of all entrants to Douai before 1584 were born in Lancashire and by 1593 at least 32 Lancashire boys had gone to study abroad illegally.⁵³

Some Lancashire families had a particularly strong tradition of sending their children abroad to complete their education. Almost all the male sons from both branches of the Blundell family of Sefton parish – the Blundells of Ince Blundell and the Blundells of Little Crosby – attended one or other of the English Colleges throughout the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries. Initially, the favoured destination for the Blundell boys was Douai, although the preference of the family gradually shifted towards St Omers. Research by Janet Hollinshead has estimated that there were around 100 lay students present at the English College schools at any one time. With each student paying around £25 per annum to the school for living and education costs, this was not the cheapest way to educate children, particularly if there were several sons in attendance at the same time.⁵⁴ The Blundells, however, clearly felt that there was much to be gained from the arrangement, as they continued to send both sons and daughters to schools abroad, despite the great financial hardship that they faced as a consequence.⁵⁵

⁵³ Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance*, pp.278-9

⁵⁴ Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community*, pp.20-1

⁵⁵ Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community*, pp.89-99

Educational establishments for English Catholic girls on the continent developed in a slightly different fashion to the English Colleges for boys. The first exiled English convent to be founded belonged to the Benedictines in Brussels and was established in 1597.⁵⁶ However, perhaps the most significant early foundation, in terms of the destination of girls from the Diocese of Chester, was the Augustinian convent of St Monica's at Louvain, which was founded in 1609. St Monica's was a daughter-house of the Flemish convent of St Ursula's and was a religious community founded specifically for English nuns. There was no intention for these enclosed communities to supply educational provision to England's Catholic daughters. However, these institutions ultimately provided the first opportunities for Catholic girls to receive a formal, structured religious education, in the same way that Catholic boys had been able to.

Many of the English convent schools developed as an attempt to counter the heavy financial burdens faced by the exiled religious houses. Operating in foreign countries, mostly in northern France and Flanders, the exiled convents had access to little pecuniary support or endowments from the Church funds of their host countries. Similarly, although money from the home front in England was forthcoming, the sums were not substantial enough to cover the expenses that were accrued when establishing new religious houses and providing subsistence for great numbers of sisters. Novices joining the house were expected to bring dowries with them, but these often proved to be insubstantial. It therefore became necessary for

⁵⁶ C. Bowden, "For the Glory of God": a Study of the Education of English Catholic Women in Convents in Flanders and France in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century', *Pedagogica Historica: Supplementary Series*, 5 (1999), p.80

the convents to source additional means of income. Some houses produced crafts for sale, while others ran lucrative guesthouses that sheltered English travellers during their journeys abroad. Others convents chose to establish schools for English Catholic girls.⁵⁷

The very idea that female religious communities should interact with the outside world was, in many ways, a direct contravention of the decrees of the Council of Trent and some convents struggled with this contradiction. If the nuns could not move beyond their enclosure and leave the convent, and conversely the students could not enter it, how could a school practically function? Caroline Bowden has demonstrated that in some convents attempts were made to use teachers who were not nuns, while in others the enclosed sisters tried to teach their students through the convent grille. In practice, neither of these arrangements was sustainable and the strictures of Tridentine policy on enclosure were challenged and transgressed to accommodate the necessary changes.⁵⁸

Between 1597 and 1650, nineteen exiled English convents were founded. These convents varied in size – housing between half-a-dozen and 70 sisters. The first English convent schools dated from around 1609 and were established by the Benedictines at Brussels, the Poor Clares at Gravelines, and the Augustinians at St Monica's, Louvain.⁵⁹ What can be gleaned regarding the costs of a convent school education indicates that

⁵⁷ C. Walker, *Gender and Politics in Seventeenth-Century English Convents: English Convents in France and the Low Countries*, (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); C. Walker, 'Loyal and Dutiful Subjects: English Nuns and Stuart Politics', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, (ed.) J. Daybell, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 228-42; C. Walker, 'Recusants, Daughters and Sisters in Christ: English Nuns and their Communities in the Seventeenth Century', in *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, (eds.) S. Tarbin & S. Broomhall, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 61-78

⁵⁸ Bowden, "For the Glory of God", p.81

⁵⁹ Bowden, "For the Glory of God", pp.78-81

fees were roughly equivalent to those of male scholars attending a seminary school. In 1652, the cost of sending a girl to study with the Sepulchrines in Liege was £15 per annum, without the provision of clothes, and £20 per annum, with the provision of clothes.⁶⁰ Janet Hollinshead has demonstrated that both branches of the Blundell family consistently had trouble keeping up with their payments, both for scholar's fees and dowries. Some convents were more tolerant than others for late payment, but exceptions were often made for children who were members of well-regarded Catholic families.⁶¹

The subject matter of the curriculum at convent schools is of particular interest, as it has the potential to tell us much about the expectations of the Catholic parents who sent their daughters to receive an education there. Caroline Bowden has demonstrated that convent schools designed curricula that were as beneficial to girls who chose to return to the secular world, as they were to those who continued on to profess. Some convents explicitly advertised themselves as establishments that would provide girls with an education and skill-set that would ensure they would make good Catholic wives and mothers. The annals of the Augustinian Canonesses at Paris, for instance, recount how 'those who returned to the world were admirable mothers of families, full of piety and zealous maintainers of the Catholic faith'.⁶²

Girls attending convent schools were kept busy by studying a broad and stimulating array of subjects. Unsurprisingly, learning and practicing the Catholic faith consumed much of the girls' time – devotional exercises,

⁶⁰ Bowden, "For the Glory of God", p.83

⁶¹ Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community*, pp.89-99

⁶² Bowden, "For the Glory of God", p.82; F.M. Th. Cedoz, *Un Couvent de religieuses anglaises à Paris de 1634 à 1884, etc.* (London; Paris: Burns & Oates, 1891), fn.39

spiritual reading, catechistical work, attendance at conventual services, private prayer etc. The girls were also strongly encouraged to adopt a quiet and respectful manner, which would befit any well-behaved young lady. What is surprising is the sheer range of additional subjects that the convent school students had the opportunity to study. As a result of their social background, as much as their religion, the girls were expected to be highly literate.

The scholars were fluent in their own native English, and those with sufficient ability moved on to Latin and French (usually the native language of the convent) or other modern languages. The traditional pedagogical structures of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and quadrivium (music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy) were often incorporated, as were geography and history – especially the history of the Church. More artistic subjects were also taught, such as embroidery, tapestry, painting, music, and dance. These subjects provided girls, not only with social skills befitting an English gentrywoman, but also instilled the scholars and potential novitiates with talents that could earn the convent money. The sale of items produced through handicrafts, for instance, brought a great deal of revenue into some convents. Girls were also taught many things that could fall under the general umbrella-term ‘housewifery’. They were taught to cook (often more advanced techniques such as working with sweetmeats and pastry), sew, and how to maintain household accounts.⁶³

⁶³ Bowden, “For the Glory of God”, pp.81-3; K. Boyd McBride, ‘Recusant Sisters: English Catholic Women and the Bonds of Learning’, in *Thicker Than Water: Sisters and Brothers in the Early Modern World*, (eds.) N.J. Miller & N. Yavneh, *Women and Gender in the Early Modern World*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 28-39

Some convents prided themselves on providing girls with a more intellectually rigorous programme. For instance, Mary Ward declared to the Papal Nuncio that her convent school at St Omers was not just a school for English girls, but also a 'future recruiting ground for their own members'. At St Omers, the girls were taught ethics, philosophy, and disputation. They were also encouraged to prioritise their language skills, in order that they might communicate with and proselytise to as many people as possible. These 'English Ladies' were not merely studying as contemplative scholars: they were being prepared for their future apostolate – whether that meant joining the missionary endeavour with the nuns at St Omers, or returning to England to construct their own Catholic household.⁶⁴

For many English gentry families, hiring a Catholic tutor or sending their children to attend Catholic schools in continental Europe could be both a hazardous and expensive choice. However, despite the cost and risks attached, many parents considered this to be simply one further step in the natural progression of the religious education of their children. Whether they aspired towards a religious vocation for their sons and daughters, or wanted them to establish a Catholic household of their own in England, it was equally important for children to receive the best education possible – both religious and secular. The financial, legal, and political risks attached to practicing household religion in England meant that sending Catholic children to convent and seminary schools in Europe was a relatively normal occurrence, much as sending children to boarding schools became for the aristocracy in nineteenth- and twentieth-century

⁶⁴ H. Peters (trans. H. Butterworth), *Mary Ward: A World in Contemplation*, (Leominster: Gracewing, 1994), p.111

England. Receiving a religious education in the environment of post-Reformation Catholicism in England was not merely a matter of learning how to be Catholic, but also of learning how to respond to the dangers that Catholicism brought with it.

Religious Annals and the influence of Catholic parents

The annals maintained by religious houses on the continent are invaluable resources that provide a great deal of information about the individuals who entered those houses and the extent to which their parents had influenced their decisions to pursue vocations. The information contained within the annals can also tell us a lot about the different life expectations that male and female Catholics had.

With regard to Catholic men, this thesis has considered the *Responsa* volumes of the English College at Rome and the Douay Diaries, both published by the Catholic Record Society. In relation to Catholic women, the most valuable source is the Chronicle of the Augustinian Canonesses of St Monica's at Louvain.⁶⁵ The *Responsa* volumes primarily list the men ordained at the College, alongside a brief description of their origins. There is occasionally further personal information, in

⁶⁵ E.H. Burton & T.L. Williams (eds.), *The Douay College Diaries Third, Fourth and Fifth, 1598-1654, with the Rheims Report, 1579-80, volume I*, Catholic Record Society, 10, (London: Printed for the Society by J. Whitehead & Son, Leeds, 1911); E.H. Burton & T.L. Williams (eds.), *The Douay College Diaries Third, Fourth and Fifth, 1598-1654, with the Rheims Report, 1579-80, volume II*, Catholic Record Society, 11, (London: Printed for the Society by J. Whitehead & Son, Leeds, 1911); Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*; A. Kenny (ed.), *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome Part one: 1598-1621*, Catholic Record Society, 54, (Newport: Printed by R.H. Johns Limited, 1962); A. Kenny (ed.), *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome Part two: 1622-1685*, Catholic Record Society, 55, (Newport: Printed by R.H. Johns Limited, 1963); T.F. Knox (ed.), *The First and Second diaries of the English College, Douay and an appendix of unpublished documents, edited by the Fathers of the Congregation of the London Oratory; with an historical introduction by Thomas Francis Knox*, (London, 1878)

addition to the names of parents and place of birth; this sometimes includes references to the entrants' level of education, specific examples of their religiosity, or details about their family background. The Douay Diaries do not list entrants in order of their arrival, but there is some personal information that can be gleaned from the various entries.

Both Douai and Rome welcomed great numbers of entrants from the Diocese of Chester. Analysis of the *Responsa* volumes undertaken in the course of this research suggests that around 15% of the entrants can be affiliated with the Diocese of Chester. The vast majority of students from the diocese were from Lancashire – over 90%. This supports the data outlined in the first chapter, which suggested that Catholics were more active in Lancashire, than in other parts of the diocese. Although the Douay Diaries are not as amenable to statistical work, a similar trend emerges from these volumes, with around 15-20% of entrants seemingly originating from the Diocese of Chester – once again, the vast majority from Lancashire.⁶⁶ The Third Douay Diary makes it clear that Lancastrian men were frequent entrants and demonstrates that there was even an agreement in place to ensure that a steady succession of men from that county would be admitted. On 12 January 1628, John Bisley (also known as John Parker) of Lancaster was admitted. The Diary records that:

He was the first of those who are to be sent to our College from the County of Lancaster, according to the agreement, given below, made between the President [Matthew Kellison] and some priests of that county.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Burton & Williams, *Douay Diaries*, volumes I and II; Kenny, *Responsa*, part 1 and 2; Knox, *The First and Second diaries of the English College, Douay*

⁶⁷ Burton & Williams, *Douay Diaries*, volume I, pp.263-4, 416-17

The agreement dated 22 February 1628, stated that Kellison would:

both in his own name and that of his successors ... for the future provide anything necessary for the board, clothing, and lodging of the two English youths, until they have finished their course of studies and received the order of priesthood, and have been sent into England, according to the trust of the said College ... when the first two have finished their course and have been sent into England, two others may be sent ... to succeed them and so in perpetuity. Those to be sent are to be chosen from the nearest kin to the founders themselves, provided they are found to be fit for the said purpose.⁶⁸

It is interesting to note that this bequest ensured that there would be a steady supply of Lancastrian-born priests arriving back in their home county as part of the English Mission. There appears to be an implicit acknowledgment that it was important for missionaries to have familial ties to those they would be ministering to.

The Third Diary also provides a fascinating insight into how the clergy at Douai viewed their female counterparts at the exiled English convents. A letter dated 26 October 1622, from the President of Douai, Matthew Kellison, to the Secretary to the Nuncio Apostolic at Brussels, Don Chrisogano Flacci, provides a description of the female religious houses on the continent. This document casts some light upon contemporary observations about women and particularly about the role of women religious, as perceived by their male counterparts.

In the letter, President Kellison is complimentary about most of the female houses – he describes the Benedictines at Brussels as ‘women of

⁶⁸ Ibid.

noble birth and great piety', the Augustinians at Louvain 'lived a life of 'piety, holiness, and virtue', whilst the Poor Clares at Gravelines had 'a great reputation for holiness and strictness of life' and were 'a source of admiration for those who see them'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Poor Clares at St Omers were singled-out for criticism by Kellison. The President wrote:

The first idea was to educate young ladies in all piety, so that they might afterwards either be religious or else exemplary models in secular life. In the course of time, either accidentally or intentionally, they began to send into England some of their mothers (for so they call those who practise their life), first on the pretext of business or receiving revenue, later to make access easier to noble ladies, and to instruct them, or even their husbands, in the catechism, and finally to bring them to acts of contrition, meditation, and other spiritual exercises. The Fathers of the Society, whom they greatly praised while despising all others, favoured them and tried to introduce them into noblemen's houses. Thus it happened that the said Fathers, in the course of their favour, brought noblemen's daughters to the congregation, and either themselves or by proxy managed all the nuns' business in England, until protest was made by the clergy and religious, and by many of the Catholic laity. These were scandalised by such boldness in women, and I may add, by their life, which was none too religious, but exactly like that of the lay people, except for certain prayers, which they used to boast were said privately by them, and sometimes also by faults in conduct, which were sufficiently unworthy even of lay people. Then the Fathers began to withdraw, and, as if they were divided, some began to protect, other to accuse the ladies.⁶⁹

This account is telling, in the sense that it highlights that there was a great deal of contemporary distress amongst Catholic men, and especially the Catholic clergy, at the activities of Mary Ward and her fellow Jesuitresses.

⁶⁹ Burton & Williams, *Douay Diaries*, volume I, pp.203-5, 397-8,

Work by Laurence Lux-Sterritt has outlined how the Congregation of Jesus transcended contemporary societal norms, by shunning enclosure and contemplative religion, in favour of an unconstrained apostolic life. The Mary Ward Sisters enjoyed a level of freedom that was unusual for secular women, let alone a woman religious.⁷⁰ The fact that so many of the Catholic laity were ‘scandalised’ by such ‘boldness’ in women demonstrates that there were deep-rooted preconceptions about the type of activities that women should participate in and those that they should distance themselves from. It is clear that some women were seeking to transgress the confines of enclosure, to obtain converts, to instruct other ladies, and even daring to instruct the husbands of those ladies. However, it is also clear that such activities were disapproved of – not least within post-Reformation Catholic communities themselves.

The Douay Diaries do not list individuals in order of entry, so the information that is provided about the family backgrounds of the entrants is sporadic. The *Responsa* of the English College at Rome, however, provides a greater insight into the origins of the entrants, as it lists the details of each individual as they arrived at the College. References to women in the *Responsa* are less frequent than in (for example) the Louvain Chronicle, but they do sometimes occur. For example, the *Responsa* records that John Starkey, born at Hatton in Cheshire, was the son of a schismatic father and a Catholic mother and became ‘a Catholic

⁷⁰ L. Lux-Sterritt, ‘An Analysis of the Controversy Caused by Mary Ward’s Institute in the 1620s’, *Recusant History*, 25:4 (2001), 636-47; L. Lux Sterritt, ‘Mary Ward’s English Institute: the Apostolate as Self-Affirmation’, *Recusant History*, 28:2 (2006), 192-208; L. Lux-Sterritt, ‘Une polémique dans l’Angleterre de la contre-réforme: Mary Ward et sa Compagnie de Jésus au féminin’, *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions*, 225:3 (2008)

through his mother's tears'.⁷¹ Furthermore, John Laythwaite, alias Kensington, was born at Wigan, Lancashire, and began his education at Blackrod, but was removed to foster parents with his two brothers as a consequence of the Catholicism of his parents. After returning home he was taught for six months by a Catholic neighbour; before going to school in Wigan for at least four years. The *Responsa* records how the 'respondent's mother, of the Bolton family, remained a Catholic after her husband's death, [and] suffered for 3 years the loss of her goods and cattle, and then died'.⁷²

Analysis of the *Responsa* shows that it was commonplace for entrants to state that their fathers were schismatic, while their mothers were Catholic. For example, William Haughton was the son of a schismatic father and a Catholic mother. Haughton explicitly stated that his mother had converted him.⁷³ Others also claimed that their mothers had converted them. John Gardner, alias Garnett, was born at Frodsham, Cheshire, and was brought up at Winwick, Lancashire until he went to St Omers. The *Responsa* records that he 'was once a heretic', but 'became a Catholic last Candlemas, through the influence of his mother and some Catholic kinsfolk, and with the help of Fr Leech, S.J.'. ⁷⁴

The significance of mothers is also emphasised in relation to the entry regarding Humphrey Whitaker, alias Francis Starkey, who was born and brought up at Burnley, Lancashire. The *Responsa* states that his mother was a Catholic, whilst his father was a schismatic who died a Catholic. Whitaker studied at Burnley and was a 'heretic' until the age of

⁷¹ Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 1, p.108

⁷² Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 1, pp.134-6

⁷³ Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 1, p.316

⁷⁴ Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 2, pp.394-5

twelve, when he was 'persuaded by his mother to be instructed and reconciled by Fr Robert Benson OSB'.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the mother of Charles Calvert, born at Cockerham, Lancashire was 'brought up a Catholic with his brothers, the mother having converted her husband and whole family from heresy before her death 12 years ago'.⁷⁶

The *Responsa* volumes also tell us much about the way that Catholic boys received their education before their arrival at the English College. The volumes record that entrants had generally received quite a formal, structured education – often away from the private sphere of the family home. For example, the *Responsa* records that Hugh Anderton, second son of James Anderton of Clayton, Lancashire, was 'educated in nearby grammar schools until the age of 13'.⁷⁷ Similarly, Brian Cansfield, born at Robert Hall, Lancashire, studied in schools at 'Lancaster, Tunstall, Blackburn, Urswick, Warton and Thornton' and at the age of fifteen he went to St Omers for three years. The *Responsa* records that Cansfield studied 'rhetoric, grammar and syntax in England, [and] syntax, poetry and rhetoric at St Omers'.⁷⁸ John Butler's education was also varied. Butler was brought up at Natbie for five years, spent six years at Mr Anderton's house, and four or five at Mr Westby's house, as well as some time at Mr Laythwaite's, all in Lancashire. Butler studied the 'humanities, privately and haphazardly at the houses above mentioned' and then 're-learnt, with greater profit, during 3 years at Douai'.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 2, p.420

⁷⁶ Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 2, pp.466-7

⁷⁷ Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 1, p.99

⁷⁸ Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 1, pp.106-7

⁷⁹ Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 1, pp.110-11

The *Responsa* relates how some entrants studied with particular individuals. Robert Huddleston was born at his father's house at Farington, Lancashire, and lived there until the age of nine, studying 'elements' at Leyland. When he was ten he went to study for five or six years at 'Grayrigg, Westmoreland, under Thomas Somers, a Catholic'.⁸⁰ Some entries also record detail about what the entrant had studied. For example, Thomas Cowley, alias Bannister, of Lancashire, was the son of poor Catholic parents. The *Responsa* records that he had 'heretical kinsfolk by his father, who was converted as a youth' and 'Catholic kinsfolk by his mother who was always a Catholic'. The *Responsa* further reveals that Cowley had read 'Cicero, Ovid, some of Virgil, and Horace under the supervision of a Jesuit in England who taught him to write and speak Latin'.⁸¹ Similarly, John Baron, alias Burton, studied the 'humanities, read orators and poets under a Jesuit in the house of a nobleman'.⁸²

Although the detail recorded in the Douay Diaries and the *Responsa* volumes is informative, it is not generally as personalised, or as hagiographical as the entries in the Louvain Chronicle. The Chronicle provides a wealth of material about the family backgrounds of the entrants, including specific episodes that happened in the childhood of the entrants and explanations of how those episodes had influenced them. It is interesting to note that the Chronicle not only provides more information about the families and childhood experiences of the entrants – it provides far more information about the entrants' female relatives and their

⁸⁰ Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 1, p.114

⁸¹ Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 2, p.376

⁸² Kenny, *Responsa*, Part 2, pp.377-8

influence. We have already seen some specific examples of this and will consider some more in the final chapter.

The authors of the Louvain Chronicle appear to have been eager to convey a great deal of information about the youthful experiences of the female entrants – especially in terms of highlighting the significance of female relatives in their religious development. It is, perhaps, to be expected that women are likely to have been greatly influenced by their mothers and men by their fathers – yet, it is telling that the female authors have chosen to attribute such significance to the influence of mothers, whereas the accounts written by their male counterparts are – generally speaking – more factual, concise and impersonal. This suggests that mothers were actively involved in the religious education of their daughters in a way that fathers were not involved in the religious education of their sons. When one considers the differences between the educational experiences of Catholic boys and Catholic girls, this is unsurprising. Catholic boys had access to a communal religious education by non-family members, in the form of Catholic schoolmasters and priests. Girls, on the other hand, were restricted by the social norms of a patriarchal society to receive their religious education from family members in the private sphere of the household. It is likely that mothers and other female relatives most frequently delivered this education, due to the social responsibilities of male family members. Laying the groundwork for a religious vocation for ladies therefore rested squarely with women.

By re-iterating the importance of women so greatly within the Louvain Chronicle, the authors found a way to express themselves, to have an opinion, and to ensure that their voices were heard and recorded

for posterity. This was an opportunity that most women in early modern Europe were denied. Even if contemporaries outside of the convent never saw the Chronicle, the nuns had found a way to record what they were not able to say publicly – that women were as important as men, that they were able to express their devotion as skillfully as men, and that they were as important to society as their fathers, brothers, and priests. They might even go so far as to suggest that women could procure converts as easily as priests or Catholic laymen. Whether such controversial thoughts consciously crossed the minds of the nuns as they wrote their entries in the Chronicle is debatable, but the subtext of the entries is clear.

Although it was unusual, some of the nuns managed to emphasise their importance even more publicly. Caroline Bowden's work on Mary Knatchbull, Abbess of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception at Ghent, shows us that some English nuns were deeply ambitious and keen to see their intellect acknowledged beyond the walls of the convent, by participating in political negotiations.⁸³ Others, such as Mary Ward, were determined to pursue an apostolic life that mirrored that of their male counterparts. Whether they were conscious of it, women at the exiled English convents were transcending boundaries and ensuring that their voices were heard.

⁸³ C. Bowden, 'The Abbess and Mrs Brown: Lady Mary Knatchbull and Royalist Politics in Flanders in the late 1650s', *Recusant History*, 24:3 (1999), 288-308; C. Bowden, 'The Role of Mary Knatchbull in the English Benedictine Foundations of the Seventeenth Century', *Magistra*, 8:1 (2002)

The Influence and Production of Catholic Literature in the Diocese of Chester

The Louvain Chronicle demonstrates that English women religious were literate. However, as the use of Catholic literature was by its very nature covert, it is difficult to assess how literate Catholic gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester were and how pervasive the use of devotional and polemical Catholic literature was there. Despite the clandestine nature of its use, there is some persuasive evidence to suggest that Catholic literature was utilised extensively within the Catholic communities of the Diocese of Chester. The importation of Catholic books into the diocese was a regular occurrence. For example, Thomas Bell recorded that an anonymous Catholic trader (whose name is absent in the surviving manuscript copy due to a missing section) ‘manie tymes brought bookes from beyond the Seas & sold them for gaine in England, namely Breviaries, Missals, &c.’.⁸⁴

Bell’s account claims that a tract by Cardinal William Allen was ‘especiallie’ popular amongst the residents of the diocese.⁸⁵ The work in question is Allen’s *A True, Sincere and Modest Defence of English Catholics that Suffer for their Faith* (1584), which was the priest’s response to William Cecil, Lord Burghley’s pamphlet *The Execution of Justice in England* (1583).⁸⁶ It is not difficult to see why the work was popular amongst the Catholics of the diocese, as Allen used his riposte to

⁸⁴ WDA, A Series, IV, ff.446-7

⁸⁵ WDA, A Series, IV, f.447

⁸⁶ W. Allen, *A true, sincere and modest defence, of English Catholiques that suffer for their faith both at home and abroad* (etc.), (Rouen: Fr. Parson’s Press, 1584); W.C. Burghley, *The Executuon of Justice* (etc.), (London: Christopher Barker, 1583)

Burghley to argue that religious adherence to Catholicism did not necessitate political disloyalty or treason. The fact that Cardinal Allen was either related to, or was personally known to, many Catholics of the diocese would also have been a contributory factor to the text's popularity.

Further evidence of the demand for the importation of Catholic books may be gleaned from a record of the examination of two trunks at the Port of Chester in 1609, which were found upon their search to contain 'superstitious reliques' and 'diverse papisticall bookes'.⁸⁷ Despite the dangers involved in smuggling Catholic literature into England, such practices were clearly commonplace. It is noteworthy that the trunk also contained relics. This implies that there was a continued market for the purchase of relics in the diocese, just as there was for Catholic literature.

There is a misapprehension that all early modern females were either illiterate or had a poor grasp of reading and writing. However, surviving material relating to gentrywomen from the Diocese of Chester provides evidence to disprove this idea. Many of the women who have been identified in the course of this study were referred to by contemporaries as highly educated and were often literate in more than one language. Some women, such as Elizabeth Allen, were widely recognised for the high standard of their education. Furthermore, many of the women were closely related to some of the most important Catholic writers in England at that time.

Elizabeth Allen, for example, was the sister-in-law of Cardinal William Allen – renowned author of works such as *A briefe historie of the glorious martyrdom of XII reverend priests* (1582); *A Defense and*

⁸⁷ CRO, QSE 8/11

Declaration of the Catholike Churchies Doctrine, Touching Purgatory (1565); and the aforementioned *A True, Sincere and Modest Defence of English Catholics that Suffer for their Faith* (1584).⁸⁸ Allen was undoubtedly one of the most famous Catholic writers during this period and was related to many of the key Catholic gentrywomen referred to throughout this thesis – he was uncle to Helen, Jane (Catherine), and Mary Allen, and was second cousin to Mary and Ann Worthington, for example. It is impossible to imagine that any of these women would have been unfamiliar with the works of Cardinal Allen and they almost certainly would have had access to copies of his key works in their own households. The Allen-Worthington family (see figure three) was also directly related to a second key Catholic writer – Thomas Worthington S.J., President of Douai.

Thomas Worthington first found acclaim as a result of his involvement in assisting Gregory Martin and others in their translation of the Vulgate into English – a work that was in progress for almost forty years, from the 1570s until the eventual publication in 1609-10 of *The Holie Bible Faithfully Translated into English* (the Douai-Rheims Bible).⁸⁹ Totalling more than 2,300 pages, the work was one of the greatest Catholic literary achievements of its day and remains an impressive work even now. Three other notably popular works by Worthington were *The Rosarie of our Ladie, otherwise called Our Ladies Psalter, with other*

⁸⁸ W. Allen, *A briefe historie of the glorious martyrdom of XII. reverend priests* (etc.), (Rheims: J. Foigny, 1582); W. Allen, *A defence and declaration of the Catholike Churchies doctrine, touching purgatory, and prayers for the soules departed*, (Antwerp: John Latius, 1565); W. Allen, *A true, sincere and modest defence, of English Catholiques that suffer for their faith both at home and abroad* (etc.), (Rouen: Fr. Parson's Press, 1584)

⁸⁹ G. Martin et al, *The holie Bible faithfully translated into English, out of the authentical Latin*. (etc.), (Doway: Laurence Kellam, at the signe of the holie Lambe, 1609-1610)

Godlie exercises, published in 1600; *Whyte Dyed Black*, first published in 1615 (a response to the Church of England minister John White), and *An Anker of Christian Doctrine*, published in 1618 (which provided an analysis of Catholic doctrine in relation to Scripture).⁹⁰ Once again, it is difficult to imagine that Thomas Worthington's direct relatives in the Diocese of Chester did not have access to copies of some or all of these acclaimed works. Furthermore, *The Rosarie of our Ladie* would certainly have held particular appeal for the female Catholics of the diocese, due to its particular emphasis upon Marian devotion.

There is evidence to suggest that some female Catholics in the Diocese of Chester had access to large collections of Catholic texts. In his work of 1624 entitled *The Foot out of the Snare*, the Protestant John Gee compiled a list of the Catholic works that were available for purchase.⁹¹ In the course of making this list, Gee made reference to a secret printing press that had been detected around three years previously in Lancashire and that had been prodigiously publishing literature. Some of these works were written under the pseudonym John Brereley.⁹² Gee was a Lancashire man and had strong connections with Manchester. It is therefore likely that he had a good level of local knowledge.

In 1926, A.J. Hawkes asserted that the location of the secret printing press was at Birchley Hall, the home of Roger Anderton. Hawkes hypothesised that at least nineteen publications were printed there

⁹⁰ T. Worthington, *An anker of Christian doctrine* (etc.), (Doway: Thomas Kellam, 1618); T. Worthington, *The rosarie of our Ladie. Otherwise called our Ladies psalter: with other godlie exercises mentioned in the preface*, (Antwerp: Ioannem Keerbergium, 1600); T. Worthington, *Whyte dyed black. Or A discovery of many most foule blemishes, impostures, and deceiptes which D. Whyte haith practysed in his book entituled The way to the true Church* (etc.), (1615)

⁹¹ J. Gee, *The foot out of the Snare* (etc.), (London: H.L. for Robert Milbourne, 1624)

⁹² Gee, *The foot out of the Snare*, pp.97-8

between 1615 and 1621.⁹³ This thesis considers that the arguments put forward by Hawkes for identifying Birchley Hall as the location of the hidden press are persuasive. The true identity of the writer John Breereley has also been hotly contested. However, as both Hawkes and A.F. Allison have shown, there is strong evidence to indicate that Breereley was a member of the Anderton family.⁹⁴ 'John Breereley, priest' has been variously identified as James Anderton of Birchley Hall (near Wigan) and Lostock Hall (near Bolton); his younger brother Roger Anderton (latterly of Birchley Hall); or their Jesuit cousin Lawrence Anderton S.J.

After his death in 1613, a number of Catholic books were seized from the home of James Anderton at Lostock Hall. These included copies of Laurence Vaux's *Catechism* – another acclaimed work by a Lancastrian author – primers, and publications by Robert Bellarmine.⁹⁵ Later, in 1647, William Blundell of Crosby acquired a list of works that he identified as having belonged to (and which were possibly produced by) his ancestor Roger Anderton of Birchley Hall.⁹⁶ That list of works includes editions of Worthington's *An Anker of Christian Doctrine* and *Whyte Dyed Black* – both of which Hawkes has claimed were almost certainly printed at Birchley Hall.⁹⁷ Other works that it can be established belonged to the Andertons, and were possibly printed by them, include the anonymous tract *Keepe Your Text* (1619),⁹⁸ which provides advice as to how Catholics should defend their faith against opposition, as well as works by Edmund

⁹³ Hawkes, *Birchley Press*

⁹⁴ A.F. Allison, 'Who was John Breereley? The Identity of a Seventeenth Century Controversialist', *Recusant History*, 16 (1982-3), 137-83; Hawkes, *Birchley Press*

⁹⁵ Hawkes, *Birchley Press*, pp.147-8; L. Vaux, *A catechisme, or a Christian doctrine* (etc.), (Antwerp: Iohannem Foulcrun, 1574)

⁹⁶ Hawkes, *Birchley Press*, pp.151-2

⁹⁷ Hawkes, *Birchley Press*, pp.137-83

⁹⁸ F. Veron, *Keepe your text* (etc), (1619)

Campion, Gregory Martin, Sylvester Norris, Robert Parsons, and Richard Smith, Bishop of Chalcedon.

The presence of Vaux's *Catechism* is not surprising, given that he was born in nearby Blackrod and was Warden of Manchester College. What is surprising, given the kinship connections that existed between the Andertons and the Allens, is that there is no evidence that the Birchley Press ever produced or distributed any works by Cardinal Allen. Nor is there any evidence that the Andertons ever owned copies of any of his vastly popular works. The predilection for works by Jesuit authors amongst the listed volumes might perhaps explain this, as there seems to have been a bias towards the Society's works, rather than books by seminarists such as Allen. However, the reasons remain unclear.

It is difficult to establish conclusively whether a secret printing press existed at Birchley Hall. However, the evidence supports Hawkes' assertion that it did.⁹⁹ Similarly, it is difficult to determine the true identity of the elusive John Brereley. Some evidence is suggestive of James Anderton, while some points towards Lawrence Anderton, or Roger Anderton. It is possible that the pseudonym was used collectively as a front for original works produced by more than one individual on behalf of the Birchley Press. Whichever way one considers the evidence, there is little doubt that the male members of the Anderton family were heavily involved in the production and dissemination of Catholic literature and had acquired a large collection of books by 1613 and an even greater collection by 1647.

⁹⁹ Hawkes, *Birchley Press*, pp.137-83

It is interesting to note that a great number of the female members of the Anderton families chose to pursue religious vocations, as will be related further in chapter five (see also figure two). Roger Anderton of Birchley and his wife Ann Stanford had at least four daughters – Ann, Dorothy, Elizabeth, and Mary Anderton. All four girls chose to join the Poor Clares at Gravelines.¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that the Anderton sisters chose to enter a convent that had notably strong ties with the Society of Jesus; although, when one considers the prominence of their uncle Lawrence Anderton S.J. within that order, the decision is hardly surprising. The four Anderton sisters had a cousin, Christopher Anderton (Christopher's father, also Christopher Anderton, was brother to James and Roger Anderton and cousin to Lawrence Anderton S.J.). Christopher Anderton also had three daughters who chose to pursue a vocation – Alethea joined the Augustinians at St Monica's in Louvain; Dorothy also entered as a novitiate at St Monica's, but died before she could profess; and Elizabeth joined the Augustinians at Paris.¹⁰¹ Once again, it is significant to note that the Augustinian convent of St Monica's at Louvain was under the spiritual direction of the Jesuits.

It is highly probable that both sets of Anderton sisters were exposed to a great number of Catholic books, some of which had been written to appeal to Catholic girls and with the intention of inspiring female piety. It is generally accepted that Lawrence Anderton S.J. produced three books that were marketed to attract a female audience: these works were entitled

¹⁰⁰ Who were the nuns? (WWTN) database reference numbers GP008, GP009, GP010, and GP012, respectively.

¹⁰¹ Who were the nuns? (WWTN) database reference numbers for Alethea and Elizabeth are LA005 and PA002, respectively. As Dorothy never professed, she does not have a reference number.

Virginiaia, or Spiritual Sonnets in prayse of the most glorious Virgin Marie (1632), *Maria Triumphans* (1635), and *The English Nunne* (1642).¹⁰²

Regardless of authorial attribution, editions of each of these books undoubtedly belonged to the Anderton family and would therefore have almost certainly have been available to the girls.¹⁰³ It is difficult to assess the extent to which books such as these would have influenced the girls; however, *The English Nunne* was written by Lawrence Anderton with the explicit aim of persuading girls to enter the exiled English convents. Bearing this in mind, it is worth analysing the content of the text in some detail.

The English Nunne

The English Nunne tells the story of a young girl named Cosmophila ('lover of the world') who visits her sister Caelia, a novitiate at one of the exiled English convents in Belgiopolis (which appears to be a thinly-veiled facsimile of Brussels or Louvain). The girls' brother, Monadelphus, heir to the family estate, has recently died and Cosmophila's parents, Orthodoxus and Gynecia, have sent her to Belgiopolis to persuade her sister Caelia to return to England, so that the sisters might both marry and allow the family

¹⁰² L. Anderton, *The English Nunne* (etc.), (St Omers: English College Press, 1642); L. Anderton, *Maria Triumphans* (etc.), (attributed to Saint-Omer: English College Press, 1635); L. Anderton, *Virginiaia, or Spirituall sonnets in prayse of the most glorious Virgin Marie* (etc.), (Rouen: Printed with licence by the widow of N. Courant, 1632)

¹⁰³ Five of the six Anderton girls professed after the publication of these two works: Alethea Anderton (daughter of Christopher), professed 1658, aged 18; Ann Anderton, (daughter of Roger) professed 1646, aged 20; Dorothy Anderton, (daughter of Roger) professed 1630, aged 24; Elizabeth Anderton (daughter of Christopher), professed 1664, aged c.23; Elizabeth Anderton (daughter of Roger), professed 1647, aged 18; Mary Anderton (daughter of Roger), professed 1648, aged 18. Dorothy Anderton (daughter of Christopher) died before she was able to profess at St Monica's in Louvain, but entered as a novitiate well after the publication of both of these texts.

estate to be divided between them. The narrator is the spiritual director of the convent, Father Confessarius, who recounts his conversations with Cosmophila, during the course of which he has persuaded her of the merits of a religious life. Confessarius opens *The English Nunne* by stating: 'My mayne proiect at this present is ... to perswade you (what in me lyeth) to abandone this Wicked World, and to imbrace a Votary and Religious life.'¹⁰⁴

Confessarius praises the state of virginity and presents reasons why women should avoid getting married and having children. He states that: 'the chiefest barre ... to a Monasticall lyfe, is desire of Mariage, & hope of children; I will (besides what is treated therof hereafter) insist heere a little ... that the accustomed miseries of a married lyfe, and of having issue, ought much rather to sway with women, for their forbearance of Marriage.'¹⁰⁵ The priest then warns young women against wantonness and recounts how husbands often lose interest in their wives and squander their estates. He further asserts that women are frequently left to raise a great number of children on their own, without any assistance from their scandalous husbands.

After greeting her sister, Cosmophila berates Caelia for not exhibiting obedience to their parents. The question of obedience was central to post-Reformation Catholic belief, as the conflict between secular obedience (to parents, the state, and to the crown) and spiritual obedience (to priests, the Pope, and to God) was crucial. Confessarius ultimately resolves this conflict in the form of a letter to the girls' father, Orthodoxus. During this letter, Confessarius berates Orthodoxus and Gynecia for

¹⁰⁴ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.3-4

¹⁰⁵ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, p.7

attempting to dissuade their daughters from pursuing vocations. Confessarius states that, although the girls have an obligation to obey their parents, their duty to obey God is far greater. Confessarius likens those parents who attempt to stand in the way of their children's vocation to parricides. Rather, 'parents ought to be content, quietly to resigne their Wills, to Gods Will herein; I meane in joyfully suffering their Children to be called by God'.¹⁰⁶

A number of other oppositions to becoming a religious are outlined by Cosmophila throughout the course of the text and are each roundly countered by Confessarius. The first argument against a religious life is that if everyone were to remain chaste and enclosed, all family lines would die out and the world would be left unpopulated. Confessarius responds by stating that not everyone who marries is able to have children, but that if a person does not have any heirs to leave their worldly goods to, they should leave what they have to either the poor or to the Church.¹⁰⁷ The second argument is that women who are enclosed are more vulnerable to temptation, as a result of the hardships of a religious life. Confessarius denies this assertion, claiming that women in the secular world are far more vulnerable to temptation:

¹⁰⁶ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, p.148

¹⁰⁷ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.31-4

Certaine it is, that women living in the world, are more thrall to Temptations, then Religious women. For secular persons lye open to every bayte, and temptation, which either the devill, or the outward senses present vnto them; they ever conversing, and traficking (as it were) in temporall and worldly affayres. Now, Religious women are freed from all outward occasions, and allurements of Temptations: Since there is a continuall watch, and ward kept over them. For their outward Senses (as their eares, and eyes, and the rest) are barred and restrayned from all such dangerous objects, as may occasion temptation. Againe, their Institution, Orders of their House, Obedience to their Superiours; yea the very wals themselves within which they are inclosed do guard them from all such dangerous and spirituall incursions.¹⁰⁸

The third objection is that the physical hardships that need to be endured are too much for most women to bear. Confessarius acknowledges that he has known many 'whose tendernes of body and delicacy of breeding' has led him to have concerns regarding their welfare. However, he states that his concerns were always ill-founded and that he believes that this was a result of God protecting his own flock.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Confessarius then claims that many people living secular lives also endure great physical suffering, such as sailors, tradesmen, and lawyers. In relation to women, the spiritual director states that women die in childbirth every day and that chaste women are at least spared this great physical ordeal.¹¹⁰ The last (and greatest objection) that Cosmophila raises is the fact that nuns must live in enclosure and never return to their homeland again. Confessarius acknowledges that this is, by far, the greatest sacrifice that women religious must make. However, the priest responds

¹⁰⁸ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.35-6

¹⁰⁹ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, p.39

¹¹⁰ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.40-3

with scriptural references that support his argument that the world is 'an utter Enemy to mans salvation' and that the best hope of entering the Kingdom of Heaven is to pursue a vocation.¹¹¹

After countering the arguments against a religious life, Father Confessarius continues on to extol the merits of the three religious vows, chastity, poverty, and obedience,¹¹² and the importance of other virtues, namely Faith, Hope, Charity, Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude. The priest also names other attributes that are more notable in women religious than in other women – these include Patience, Humility, Wisdom, Understanding Counsel, Piety, and the Fear of God.¹¹³ Confessarius compares a religious life to a kind of martyrdom. Indeed, the priest states that a religious life is, in some respects, a greater act of martyrdom than dying for one's faith, as the deprivations and pains that must be suffered last for longer and require much greater endurance. As such, he argues, the spiritual rewards for this type of martyrdom are great.¹¹⁴ The priest states that: 'a Religious Course is a more safe way to gayne Heaven, then the expectation thereof by Martyrdome.'¹¹⁵

After a further discussion concerning Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, and the remission of sins, Confessarius makes particular reference to the sins of young gentlewomen: 'Wherein all the Idle words (to apply my speach particularly to your Sex) of yong Gentle-women, all heir amarous Conceites, and discourses with men, all multitude of lighter sinnes, all desire of superfluous bravery in apparell, and new fashions, all idle

¹¹¹ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.43-4

¹¹² Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.61-79

¹¹³ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.79-84

¹¹⁴ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.85-9

¹¹⁵ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, p.87

spending of severall howers in the day for adorning and beautifying of their faces and bodies, to be gazed on by men, shalbe purged? and for how many yeares God himselfe only knoweth.’¹¹⁶ Although he cannot guarantee that it will be fully achieved, Confessarius argues that a religious life is certainly the best way of absolving former sins such as vanity.

After having reviewed all the arguments for and against a religious life, Cosmophila is satisfied that Confessarius has dismissed all of her objections and is persuaded that she too wishes to join the convent alongside her sister Caelia: ‘I freely confese, that I am persuaded, that no other course of life is more propitious and gratefull in the sight of God, then a Religious state ... I speake not this out of a womanish Passion; I speake it out of true Judgment, for I see no other more short Cut, for arriving to Heaven, then by a Religious life.’¹¹⁷ Before allowing her to enter, Confessarius commands Cosmophila to return to England and explain her decision to her parents. However, first he recounts the tales of two English gentlewomen, which he asserts are both true stories. The first relates to a young heiress with a large fortune who wished to pursue a vocation. However, before she had chance to physically enter a convent she met an ‘undeserved’ young man in London and married him. Within the space of a year the woman had died in childbirth and her husband had inherited all of her money. The second tale relates to a wealthy young widow who was also resolved to enter a convent. As in the first story, before she had chance to enter the convent the widow met an unworthy man in London and married him. Confessarius describes London as ‘a fit

¹¹⁶ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, p.100

¹¹⁷ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, p.110

place for Women to get bad Husbands'. That marriage was a failure and the couple lived apart (he having claimed half of her fortune). The purpose of relating the two stories is self-evident and, in due course, Cosmophila promptly refuses to return to England, or to leave the safety of the convent.¹¹⁸

Father Confessarius and the Abbess instruct Cosmophila to undertake spiritual exercises at the convent and to spend several days in a cell meditating on the topics of Death, Judgement, Hell, and Heaven.¹¹⁹ The spiritual exercises referred to are a direct reference to the popular contemporary tract *Introduction to a Devout Life* by the Bishop of Geneva, Francis de Sales.¹²⁰ *Introduction to a Devout Life* was clearly influential upon the author of *The English Nunne* – for example, even the names of the lead characters, 'Cosmophila' and 'Philothea', are similar. Upon completion of the exercises, Father Confessarius and the Abbess allow Cosmophila to enter the convent as a novitiate under the new name of Christophila. The two sisters write a letter to their parents explaining what has happened and request Father Confessarius to do the same. Confessarius summarises his arguments in support of a religious life and encloses a copy of his conversations with Cosmophila.

After a delay, Orthodoxus and Gynecia respond to Father Confessarius and inform him that they have found his arguments persuasive. Orthodoxus admits that he was mistaken in thinking that his daughters owed him more obedience than they owed to God: 'though Parents have a certaine kind of authority over their Children, yet this

¹¹⁸ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.116-7

¹¹⁹ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.121-39

¹²⁰ F. de Sales, *An introduction to a devout life* (etc.), (Paris, 1662)

authority is but delegated, or by deputation from God; as being but part of that authority, which God originally hath in himselfe over the said Children. Now I must needs say, that therefore if God command one thing, and the Parents the contrary; the Child is obliged to obey God, rather then his Parents.'¹²¹ Indeed, Orthodoxus states that he has found the arguments put forward by Confessarius so persuasive that he and his wife have decided to pursue vocations themselves. Gynecia will join her daughters at the convent, while Orthodoxus will join a Capuchin monastery in Belgiopolis.¹²²

It is thought provoking to consider the importance of the Anderton girls in both the production of this text and in its reception. It seems unlikely that the author, if it was Laurence Anderton, did not have individuals in mind when he undertook writing the volume. If one accepts the attribution of Laurence Anderton as author, which appears likely, it is also highly probable that he had his young nieces and their friends in mind as he wrote it. Mary, Elizabeth, and Ann Anderton were aged twelve, thirteen, and sixteen, respectively at the time when *The English Nunne* was first published in 1642. All three had professed by the time they were eighteen. It is likely that the girls read the volume, given that it was almost certainly printed in either their uncle's house or possibly even in their own. One can only speculate about the extent to which the book may have influenced the girls in their decision to pursue vocations.

¹²¹ Anderton, *The English Nunne*, pp.159-60

¹²² Anderton, *The English Nunne*, p.162

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the events experienced by children in the Diocese of Chester during their youth directly influenced their religious allegiances and vocations during adulthood. Experience of hardship as a result of parental religious beliefs was commonplace and it was not unusual for Catholic children to suffer the imprisonment of a parent or the sequestration of the family home. Some children were even removed from their parents' influence and were fostered by Protestant families in an attempt to prevent the dissemination of Catholicism from parent to child. The religious example set by parents and particularly models of female piety were influential in compounding children's Catholic beliefs.

The role of Catholic schoolmasters, as well as of seminary and convent schools, further ensured the religious education of children. The widespread presence of Catholic schoolmasters in the Diocese of Chester meant that access to religious tuition was relatively easy for male members of the gentry. This was especially true in Lancashire, where greater numbers of gentry households meant that families there were able to protect and shelter Catholic schoolmasters with ease. Great numbers of children – both male and female – attended Catholic schools in continental Europe, where they learned skills that might prove useful to them: whether they pursued a secular life, or a religious one. Furthermore, schools at the exiled English convents provided Catholic girls with access to a formal religious education that they had previously been unable to access, as a consequence of the constraints of a patriarchal

society. The next chapter demonstrates that many students at the English convent schools continued on to pursue vocations.

Evidence of the importation of Catholic books shows that demand for Catholic devotional and polemical literature remained high in the Diocese of Chester throughout the post-Reformation period. The likely presence of an illegal printing press at Birchley Hall, which specialised in both the reproduction of popular contemporary Catholic publications and of historic texts, only serves to emphasise the importance of the written word within post-Reformation Catholicism. Furthermore, a number of the works known to have been in circulation or produced within the diocese were designed to appeal to women and may well have been inspired by some of the female subjects of this thesis. The evidence provided by the Louvain Chronicle suggests that Catholic women utilised books to as great an extent as their Protestant counterparts did and that they were equally literate.

Chapter Five

Catholic Gentrywomen from the Diocese of Chester and the Exiled English Convents

Introduction

The research outlined in this chapter demonstrates that significant numbers of Catholic gentrywomen from the Diocese of Chester left their homes to join the exiled English convents in continental Europe. The numbers of gentrywomen who chose to pursue religious vocations was significant, both in terms of numbers of Catholic gentrywomen from the diocese as a whole, but also as a percentage of all English nuns leaving their native country for the exiled convents. It can be shown that there was a clear bias towards the presence of Lancastrian nuns at the exiled convents, with only small numbers of women from the rest of the diocese choosing to take religious vows. The research presented in previous chapters supports the hypothesis that the greater prevalence of Catholic women from Lancashire at the exiled convents was, in part, due to the unique culture of Catholicism that existed in that county (see chapter one). However, the evidence outlined in this chapter illustrates that the extensive kinship networks that existed between the gentry families of Lancashire, which could more accurately be described as Catholic kinship networks, were also highly influential. The close ties between these families, and in particular between female kin, explains why great numbers

of women from the same Lancastrian families not only pursued vocations, but also demonstrated allegiance to the same religious orders and joined the same convents as their relatives. Kinship networks of post-Reformation English Catholics were constructed both within the convents and beyond them and women were naturally drawn to those convents where relatives were already present. In addition to this, evidence suggests that a great degree of contact was maintained between the enclosed women living in exile and their families in England, which created a demonstrable link between Counter-Reformed Tridentine Europe and post-Reformation England that has hitherto remained broadly unacknowledged.

The Development of the Exiled English Convents

After the Henrician Reformation and the dissolution of the country's religious houses, English nuns were displaced and, in many cases, were left quite literally without homes. English women continued to join continental foundations such as St Ursula's in Louvain in substantial numbers, in the absence of alternative options. In response to the decrees of the Council of Trent on enclosure and the development of the Counter-Reformation in continental Europe, exiled convents began to be founded at the end of the sixteenth-century that catered specifically to demand from English Catholic women who wanted to pursue a vocation.¹

The English convents were mainly located in northern France and

¹ For general histories see: C. Bowden, 'The English Convents in Exile and Questions of National Identity, 1600-1688', in *British and Irish Emigrants and Exiles in Europe, 1603-1688*, (ed.) D. Worthington, (Amsterdam: Brill, 2010), 297-314; P. Guilday, *The English Catholic Refugees on the Continent, 1558-1795*, (London: Longmans and Green, 1914)

Flanders, but later spread as far south as the Iberian Peninsula. The drift of the English convents towards Spain was a significant development, given the prominence of the Society of Jesus and the Jesuit Mission in the move towards an active apostolate in post-Tridentine Europe.

The conclusions of this chapter owe much to work that has been undertaken using specialist resources by the AHRC-funded 'Who Were the Nuns?' (WWTN) research project, based at Queen Mary, University of London.² Using the project database, it has been possible to trace all of the professed women from the Diocese of Chester who joined the exiled convents between the time of their respective foundations and the end of the eighteenth-century (when many of the convents returned to England in the wake of the French Revolution and Catholic emancipation). Although this thesis is primarily concerned with evidence from before 1625, professions until 1650 have been included in the analytical work for this chapter. This decision was taken predominantly because, as chapter four has demonstrated, the childhood experiences of women were instrumental in shaping their religious vocation. Furthermore, the first convents were not founded until the turn of the seventeenth-century; thereby meaning that restricting calculations to include only professions that took place between c.1599 and 1625 would have severely limited the quantity of data that was available for analysis.

Nuns from the Diocese of Chester joined a wide variety of convents. Around 22 houses were founded early enough to be of relevance to this thesis – see tables three and four for a list of the exiled English convents

² 'Who Were the Nuns? A Prosopographical Study of the English Nuns in Exile, 1600-1800', an AHRC-funded research project. More information about the project is available along with the prosopographical database: <http://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/index.html>

and their foundation dates.³ For the purpose of this research, women who are known to have professed before 1650 have been included in the data. This means, however, that a number of nuns are included who were professed before 1650, but who later joined convents that were founded after 1650. This explains the presence of some relatively late foundations within the quantitative data that, on first impression, may appear erroneous to the reader. The 22 convents that have been considered spanned a wide range of religious orders, including the Augustinians, the Benedictines, the Bridgettines, the Carmelites, the Franciscans, the Poor Clares, the Sepulchrines, and the Order of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady (Conceptionists). No English Dominican houses for women existed at this early date.⁴ The Congregation of Jesus or the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, founded by Mary Ward, has also been included. However, as work by Laurence Lux-Sterritt (amongst others) has emphasised, this order consisted of unenclosed sisters who modelled themselves on the Society of Jesus and considered themselves to be a female branch of that missionary order; these nuns embraced an apostolic vocation and therefore remained clearly distinguishable from their contemporaries who lived an enclosed life in contemplative orders.⁵

³ These are the 22 convents at which the WWTN? database identifies that English nuns who were professed before 1650 were housed. This search was conducted by selecting a convent search, then requesting the database to search all convents / no specific convent for professions before 1650. This procedure was followed for each respective English county: e.g. for Lancashire, then for Yorkshire, then for Durham etc.

⁴ The first Dominican foundation was at Vilvorde, near Brussels, and was founded by Cardinal Philip Howard in 1661. In 1668 the convent moved to Brussels. The convent was popularly referred to as the Spellikans or Spellicans.

⁵ L. Lux-Sterritt, 'An Analysis of the Controversy Caused by Mary Ward's Institute in the 1620s', *Recusant History*, 25:4 (2001), 636-47; L. Lux Sterritt, 'Mary Ward's English Institute: the Apostolate as Self-Affirmation', *Recusant History*, 28:2 (2006), 192-208; L. Lux-Sterritt, 'Une polémique dans l'Angleterre de la contre-réforme: Mary Ward et sa Compagnie de Jésus au féminin', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 225:3 (2008)

There is margin for error in the use of any quantifiable data and it is likely that some women from the Diocese of Chester have evaded identification because they were not easily categorised. For example, the database produced by the Who Were the Nuns (WWTN) project is currently searchable only by date of profession, rather than by date of entry at a convent or date of death – this can result in the provision of incomplete or misleading data. For example, the results of a search would not include those women who entered convents as novitiates, but were never professed (this would be the case if a woman died before her profession). Caroline Bowden has conducted extensive research on these ‘nearly-nuns’, which she presented in a paper at the joint WWTN and H-WRBI (History of Women Religious in Britain and Ireland) conference in June 2011.⁶ Her work highlighted the fact that there were many women who entered the convents, but who never professed: some disliked their convent and left to join another; others decided that a religious vocation was not for them and returned to secular life; occasionally novitiates were rejected by convents as being unsuitable for religious life, frequently because of an attachment to the secular world; sometimes the reasons are simply unrecorded. The quantifiable data, therefore, tells us nothing about those women. Nor does it necessarily tell us anything about those nuns who were professed, but for whom the date at which they did so has been lost, as these nuns might not always be detectable in a date-restricted search.

The WWTN material does, however, provide excellent, quantifiable information about those professed nuns from the diocese who were at the

⁶ Who Were the Nuns Project? and H-WRBI joint conference, Queen Mary, University of London, 23-25 June 2011

exiled English convents. To reach the point of profession, women were forced to navigate a series of challenging obstacles. Firstly women, or (as was more often the case) young girls, needed to decide to pursue a religious vocation. What motivated women to undertake a religious and an enclosed life can be difficult to assess due to limited source material. It is unclear how much choice these (usually young) women had in their own life choices. Entering a convent required financial support – not only to fund conventual dowries, but also to travel to the convent in the first instance. As women usually did not have any financial independence under English law, it is clear that most women required financial support from male relatives – generally fathers or brothers – in order to pursue a vocation. Whether the decision to use family money to fund a conventual dowry, rather than a marital dowry was left to the women themselves, or was the choice of male relatives, is unclear. However, evidence later in this chapter will show that there was no real pecuniary advantage to a woman entering a convent, rather than marrying. The obvious question therefore becomes – why would male relatives have compelled women to enter convents, if it was not what they wanted?

It is worth thinking for a moment about the alternative life choices available to Catholic women in the Diocese of Chester at the time. There were few opportunities for women to remain single in early modern England, if they did not have the means to financially support themselves. The ability to remain single was usually only a realistic option for widows. The two main options, then, were to marry or to profess. Chapter Four demonstrated that great numbers of men from the Lancashire gentry travelled to seminaries on the continent and subsequently joined the

English Mission, in the period before the foundation of the exiled English convents. Upon reflection, this must have led to a severe shortage of marriageable men within the Catholic gentry communities of the diocese. Although the Catholic communities of the diocese were extensive, they were not unlimited. A similar problem would also have been experienced across England (although perhaps not on the same scale as in Lancashire), so looking further afield for suitable husbands would have been of limited use. When one factors this into the equation, a life of enclosure offered certain advantages to Catholic gentrywomen, in lieu of a suitable marriage. Although it was not always an easy life, the convents fostered an educated environment and normally offered a degree of stability and security that would have been unfamiliar to gentrywomen who had lived their whole lives under prohibition in England.

It is possible to glean some valuable insights into the more personal factors that may have influenced the decision for a woman to profess by analysing the contents of conventual chronicles. In terms of qualitative data, the Chronicle of the Augustinian Canonesses of St Monica's at Louvain (henceforth referred to as the 'Louvain Chronicle' or simply as the 'Chronicle') offers historians an insight into the recorded reasons why a number of nuns from the Diocese of Chester pursued a vocation.⁷ Although one must approach the Chronicle with a critical eye – it is, after all, inherently hagiographical in nature – its content provides an insight into the personal lives of these English nuns.

⁷ A. Hamilton, (ed.), *The Chronicle of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, at St. Monica's in Louvain now at St Augustine's Priory, Newton Abbot, Devon*, (Edinburgh: Sands, 1904), 2 vols.; The Hamilton volumes are the most thorough printed source currently available. This thesis routinely cites page numbers from those volumes. However, some references are not included in the Hamilton volumes. As such, references in relation to those sections quote folio numbers from the original manuscript.

Nuns from the Diocese of Chester and their Reasons for Following a Religious Vocation

Anne Worthington professed in 1615 aged sixteen, having spent much of her childhood receiving her education in Louvain – firstly, at the Flemish convent of St Ursula's and, later, at the English convent of St Monica's, where she ultimately professed.⁸ Anne was the daughter of Thomas Worthington of Blainscough Hall, near Chorley, and Mary Allen of Rossall Grange, both in Lancashire. Both the Allens and the Worthingtons were prominent Catholic Lancashire families that have been referred to many times already in the course of this thesis (see figure three in appendix for prosopographical detail).⁹ The Chronicle records that, after the death of her grandmother, Elizabeth Allen, who had been living in exile in Louvain with most of her family, Thomas Worthington decided that his daughter Anne ought to see something of the world before deciding whether to commit herself to a lifetime of enclosure.

Anne's entry in the Louvain Chronicle, which was written by an unknown sister upon the event of Anne's death in 1654, recounts how around the year 1610, 'her father took her out of the cloister being about

⁸ Who Were the Nuns? (WWTN) Database reference number, LA313

⁹ For the Allen family see, for amongst others: Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange and Todderstaffe Hall, the Residence and Estates of Mrs. Allen, the Widow of the Brother of Cardinal Allen', (trans. J. Gillow) from Dr Bridgewater's *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia*, and printed in *The History of the Parish of Poulton-le-Fylde in the County of Lancashire, Remains Historical and Literary connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester*, 8, New Series, (Manchester: C.E. Simms for the Chetham Society, 1885), 136-57; For more about the Worthingtons see, for example: H. Foley (ed.), *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus: Historic facts illustrative of the labours and sufferings of its members in the sixteenth and seventeenth century*, vols. 1 & 2, (London: Burns and Oates, 1875), esp. vol.1, pp.633-41 and vol. 2, p.117

11 years of age, that she might see the world before she made her choice'.¹⁰ Thomas, having reason to return to England, took his wife and children with him, apart from his eldest son who remained at the English College at Douai. Upon their return to Louvain three years later, in 1613, the Chronicle describes how Anne, 'now about the age of 14 was content to enter again into religion altho' the vanities of the world had much allured her in that youthful age'. It is clear that the teenage Anne had doubts about relinquishing her freedom after 'finding liberty in place of her holy religious education' that 'she wou'd easily have yealded to follow'. The Louvain Chronicle indicates that a significant factor in Anne's ultimate decision to enter the convent was a decline in her health. She was 'afflicted ... with sicknes in the world, in such wise that what ever difficulty she felt in nature heroically by the help of divine grace she overcam & entred again to her former habitation of our cloister soon after her coming out of England'.¹¹

The case of Anne Worthington is enlightening, as it suggests that even in devout Catholic families such as the Allens or the Worthingtons, the decision to pursue a religious vocation and enclosure was not foisted upon children, nor that it always encouraged. The Chronicle suggests that Anne's parents considered that it was important that she was aware of all her options and of the things that she would be leaving behind if she undertook a religious life. Despite the fact that Anne's parents, as well as her maternal grandmother, had been forced into exile and had lost much of their ancestral property as a result of their religion, the Chronicle suggests that her parents still felt that it was important for her to make a

¹⁰ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, pp.154-5

¹¹ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.155

free and informed decision. The decision of the Worthington family to return to England, and to take their children with them, is also intriguing. Until the age of eleven, Anne had grown up entirely in the securely Catholic environs of Louvain. The sudden relocation back to England and the risks and hardships faced by Catholics in their native country clearly had a great impact upon the young Anne – or so the Chronicle would suggest. How far these experiences really informed her decision to enter convent life, or whether it was actually Anne's decision, remains unclear.

The Louvain Chronicle also gives an account of the manner in which Anne's younger sister Mary Worthington¹² discovered her religious vocation. In Mary's case, her inclination towards a religious life appears to have been influenced by an aversion to secular domesticity and marriage. The Chronicle records how Mary first experienced a desire for a religious vocation at the age of ten after 'seeing a gentlewoman a friend of theirs who had a very untoward husband'. Although she was still so young, Mary apparently took note of 'what misery her friend and neighbor whom she loved' suffered 'with that man'. The Chronicle records that the incident comprised a watershed in the young Mary's life, as she swore to herself 'never to marry but become religious with her sister'. Mary chose to keep her decision private 'until at length she told her mother thereof who was content' to let her undertake convent life. The differences between the accounts of Anne and Mary are of interest, as there was a significant age gap between the sisters. Anne was born around 1599, whereas Mary was twelve years younger, born around 1611 (presumably during the time when her parents were in England). Mary seems never to have visited

¹² Database reference number, LA318

England again after the family's return to Louvain in 1613, when she would have been only two. The Chronicle records that in around 1625, when Mary Worthington had 'occasion to go again into England', rather than take her teenage daughter Mary with her, as she had done with Anne, instead she 'placed this her daughter' at St Monica's 'to be a scollar for religion'. Mary professed at St Monica's three years later in 1628.¹³ Once again, it is appears from the content of the account that no undue pressure was exerted upon Mary to pursue a religious life. The Chronicle strongly suggests that Mary had a free choice, but it would appear that there was a level of expectation within the Worthington family that many of the children would take vows. To what extent this expectation subconsciously influenced Mary's free choice is difficult to gauge.

Although the Worthington-Allens were living in exile, some members of the family were returning periodically to England. This may have been as a result of familial obligations or visits, or perhaps partly as a result of the legal battles that the Allen family was engaged in, to reclaim their property at Rossall Grange back from the crown. For Mary, a strong motivating factor towards religious life is recorded as an avoidance of, what the young girl interpreted to be, the secular miseries of marital life. For some women, the relative freedoms of life at a convent, particularly for those who were inclined towards intellectual study, must have been appealing in comparison to domestic life and marriage. The evidence considered in chapter four suggested that the Catholic gentrywomen of the diocese were highly literate and one wonders to what extent this was a factor in their life choices.

¹³ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.2, p.66

The Louvain Chronicle recounts that Margaret Blundell was strongly influenced by both her childhood experiences and parental example.¹⁴ The Chronicle states that Margaret's parents were 'good & vertuous persons' who brought up their children 'in the fear of God'. Furthermore, the account describes how 'the mother would oftentimes assay her daughters if they would be Religious'.¹⁵ Although this does not suggest that she was forced, there are indications of robust encouragement from Margaret's mother, Emilia Blundell (née Norris), that she should pursue a religious life. The Chronicle also highlights the impression that Margaret's childhood experiences of parental arrest, sequestration and attacks on the family home by pursuivants (which were discussed more explicitly in chapter four) made upon her and the extent to which her childhood experiences had encouraged her to embrace a vocation.¹⁶

A further account that emphasises the connection between childhood experiences and the decision to pursue a religious vocation is included in the Louvain Chronicle. The Chronicle describes the experiences of Alethea Anderton of Lostock, Lancashire (second cousin of Margaret Blundell), who professed at St Monica's in 1658.¹⁷ The Chronicle recounts how Alethea's parents, Christopher Anderton of

¹⁴ Database reference number, LA036

¹⁵ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.154

¹⁶ For more on the Blundells see: T.E. Gibson (ed.), *Crosby records: a chapter of Lancashire recusancy, containing a relation of troubles and persecutions sustained by William Blundell of Crosby Hall, Lancashire, Esq. (1560-1638) and an account of an ancient burial ground for recusants, called the Harkirke, and of coins discovered there*, Remains historical and literary connected with the Palatine counties of Lancaster and Chester, 12, New Series, (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1887); J.E. Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community: The Blundells of south Lancashire during the seventeenth & eighteenth centuries*, (Wigan: T. Snape and Co Ltd for the North West Catholic History Society, 2010); F. Tyrer, 'A Star Chamber case: Assheton v. Blundell, 1624-31', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 118, (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1967), 19-37

¹⁷ *Louvain Chronicle MS*, ff.526, 606-11; Database reference number LA005

Lostock and Alethea Smith (henceforth Mrs Anderton to avoid confusion) of Warwickshire, 'suffred very much for their conscience ... having their goods plundered and their land'. The account continues on to describe how Mrs Anderton 'had very scarcely left enough to maintaine herself & her children'. The hardships that Alethea faced during her childhood as a consequence of her parent's religion were severe. When one of the children was ill, the Chronicle recounts how Mrs Anderton was 'fain to rost a bit of meat with 2 sticks for her'.¹⁸ Life became far worse for Alethea after she was removed from her parents care and placed, along with her brother and sister, with a Protestant family in order that the children might be converted.

The Anderton children were allegedly 'most cruelly used' by their foster parents, although the money that was taken 'for them 3, out of their Parents living [was] more then was left them to maintain all the rest'. The Chronicle recounts that the children were scarcely fed or clothed. They were 'kept bare leg'd in sackcloth & their food was flower & water sod together'. In addition to these indignities, the children's foster parents 'beat them with whips that had crooked pins in them'. Upon one occasion, the Chronicle recounts how a whip hit Alethea 'in her Eyes & made her almost blind'. Furthermore, Alethea's younger sister Dorothy was ordered by their foster parents to 'fetch water in a pail' every day and as a result of this hard labour '& being compeld to eat such trash as she cou'd get ... it is thought that she contracted so many worms' that it eventually led to her death before she had chance to profess at St Monica's. Mrs Anderton 'made all the means she could for to get them out of their hands, after they

¹⁸ *Louvain Chronicle MS*, ff.606-611

had suffered this hard life above 2 years' and eventually succeeded in having the children placed with an alternative family 'where they were better used in body'.¹⁹

By the time Mrs Anderton managed to regain custody of her children – seemingly after a period of around five years – they had (perhaps unsurprisingly, due to their indoctrination) turned away from Catholicism. Indeed, the Chronicle records that Alethea had become 'so perverse that she would not say the Ave Maria unless her Mother whipt her, & even then when she had said it thro' Smart of the Rod, she would afterwards spit out again the words'. After first suffering beatings from her Protestant foster parents because of her traditional religious beliefs, Alethea then faced beatings from her Catholic mother for the inverse philosophy. In the case of Alethea Anderton, the battle to influence the young girl's religious beliefs was hard fought, 'yet for all that, her Mother at last overcame her & she became a good Catholick'. Alethea was taken to join the Augustinians at Louvain by her uncle, along with her sister Dorothy (who as we have seen died before she had the chance to profess). After some initial doubts regarding the pursuit of a vocation (which was apparently due in part to a youthful romance with an English gentleman that she met at the convent grille), Alethea eventually professed in 1658.²⁰ Six years later, another of Alethea's younger sisters, Elizabeth, professed with the Augustinians at Paris.²¹

Examples such as Anne and Mary Worthington, Margaret Blundell, and Alethea, Dorothy, and Elizabeth Anderton demonstrate the way in

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Database reference number PA002

which the childhood experiences of young women from Lancashire may have influenced the decision to profess. The Chronicle suggests that some girls were encouraged by parents and other kin to undertake a religious life, while others made an informed personal decision in the knowledge of what secular domestic life might entail. It would be naive to suggest that the writers of the Chronicle did not have an agenda when they wrote their entries. It would not have been politic to suggest that any of the nuns had professed partly because they had limited other life choices. However, there does seem to be a clear sense within the Chronicle that conventual life was an appealing option to gentrywomen from the diocese, regardless of any additional factors that may have been pertinent.

The Difficulties of Reaching the Continent

For gentrywomen of the Diocese of Chester, social conventions were different to those of their male counterparts. As a result of the decree on enclosure outlined by the Council of Trent, after a woman's entry into a convent there would not normally be any expectation of her ever returning to England. Women would not, therefore, be facing the same situation as their religious brothers, who were expected to return to minister in a country where their very presence was illegal. However, women still faced the same difficulties in reaching the continent in the first instance. The principal difficulty was physically getting from England to continental Europe, during a time when it was not only difficult to travel long distances, but it was also illegal to travel outside of the realm without licence, or to

profess (under the 1585 *Act Against Jesuits and Seminarists*, 27 Eliz. c.2, and also partly under the statutes 13 Eliz. c.3 & 23 Eliz. c.1).²² Although little evidence survives regarding the journeys that women undertook to reach continental convents, a letter written by Robert Parsons S.J. and an account contained within the compendium of Catholic tracts entitled the *Concertatio* recounts the capture of four brothers from the Worthington family of Lancashire in 1584, while they were travelling to London on the instruction of their father.²³

Father Parson's letter recounts how, after their capture, the Worthington boys were 'conducted to prison, and there tried in many ways, and flogged in bed to make them inform of their parents'. Amongst other things, the boys' interrogators wanted to know 'when and where they had assisted at Mass, [and] what priests they had sheltered at home'. When all four brothers refused to answer any questions or to attend Church of England services, the interrogators 'parted from the others the youngest, who was scarcely twelve years old' and tried to force him to talk by withholding food and plying the youth with alcohol. Henry Foley has identified these four brothers as Thomas, Richard, Robert, and John Worthington. Foley suggests that the youngest of the brothers later joined the clergy as Father John Worthington and that one of the other brothers (either Richard or Robert) did the same under the name of Father Laurence Worthington. The eldest of the boys, at just sixteen, was the aforementioned Thomas Worthington, father to Anne and Mary

²² R.B. Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', *The Historical Journal*, 15:1 (1972), 23-36

²³ J. Gibbons, *Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia adversus Calvinopapistas et Puritanas sue Elizabetha Regina, quorundum hominum doctrina & sanctitate illustriam renovate & recognito*, (ed.) Dr Bridgewater, (Treves: H. Bock, 1594), unnumbered folios; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, vol.1, p.117

Worthington (see also figure 3). Having weakened the willpower of the youngest brother John, with alcohol, the interrogators led him to be examined by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Present in the court were the fourth Earl of Derby, 'the leading peer of that county' and 'many other nobles and men of rank'.²⁴

A severely inebriated John continued to refuse to speak against his faith and instead proclaimed that he was 'quite *compos mentis*', expressing his distaste at the methods used by his interrogators to try to make him talk. As testament to the extent of his intoxication, the young boy is then recorded to have 'said that he wanted to be sick, and shortly after vomited all the mass of undigested liquor, so that the very heretics were put to the blush as they looked on'.²⁵ The brothers were all held under house arrest. The youngest, John, for a time lived with the Bishop of Chester, William Chadderton, while Richard was sent to the home of a Dutch Puritan. The two elder boys, Thomas and Robert, were confined, regularly beaten by their keeper, and forced to attend classes given by a Protestant schoolmaster. Thomas and John (who was by this point no longer living with Bishop Chadderton) ultimately conspired to escape their house arrest. Family friends later rescued Robert Worthington in the course of his transportation to Chester Gaol. This would suggest that some assistance was provided by at least one of Robert's captors. Richard was eventually released on condition that he did not flee abroad. In blatant contravention of this order, Richard promptly travelled to Rheims

²⁴ Foley, *Records of the English Province*, vol.1, p.117

²⁵ 'An account, in the form of a letter of Father Robert Parsons to Father Alphonsus Agazzari, in which he gives a relation of the state of affairs in connection with religion in England. (Dated Paris, September 28, 1584.)', printed in Foley, *Records of the English Province*, vol. 1, pp.638-9

along with Robert and John, whilst Thomas was recaptured in London along with his father, Richard Worthington, and his uncle, Father Thomas Worthington. The younger Thomas Worthington is known to have spent a period of time in the Gatehouse prison.²⁶

Although the potential consequences of capture were often less severe than for their male counterparts, the Catholic gentrywomen of the Diocese of Chester faced risks too. At the time of the capture of the Worthington boys at Sankey House at Great Sankey near Warrington, the daughters of Mrs Elizabeth Allen of Rossall Grange were also at great risk from the same pursuivants. Helen, Jane²⁷, and Mary Allen managed to escape capture, but may well have been staying at Great Sankey at the time of raid there. The *Concertatio* claims that their evasion was fortunate, as 'on account of the hatred entertained' for their uncle Cardinal Allen they 'would otherwise have fared badly'. The timing of these events is significant, as the Warrington raids took place on 12 February 1584 – only around a month after the raid on Rossall Grange that occurred at Epiphany.²⁸ Given that the sisters spent a period of time under house arrest at Rossall before their subsequent escape and journey with their mother to Rheims (and thus onwards to Louvain), one must deduce that the girls had managed to elude detection throughout this period of time. The account in the *Concertatio* describes how 'after passing through many hardships and perils innumerable by land and sea, during two months and more, wherein they were compelled at night-time to accomplish long

²⁶ Gibbons, *Concertatio*, unnumbered folio; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, vol.1, p.117

²⁷ Jane is also known as Catherine (her professed name), but is referred to as Jane throughout this thesis for ease of reference.

²⁸ Gibbons, *Concertatio*, unnumbered folio; Foley, *Records of the English Province*, vol.1, p.117

journey, and at day-time to lurk in woods and thickets, or other secret places, Mrs Allen at last reached Rheims in safety, with her two elder daughters'.²⁹ Why Elizabeth Allen's youngest daughter Mary did not travel with the rest of the family and where she was at this point in time is unclear; however, Mary ultimately joined her mother and sisters at Louvain. It seems likely that Mary might have remained with her uncle in Warrington as a result of her young age.

The risks of travelling to convents remained high for women and it is no coincidence that females, generally speaking, travelled with male relatives who were able to offer a greater degree of physical protection. For example, almost thirty years later in 1613, Thomas Worthington escorted his own daughter Anne along with his niece Margaret Blundell to St Monica's at Louvain. The convent Chronicle describes how 'Mr Worthington being then in England at his return hither took with him this daughter of theirs [Margaret Blundell] to be religious'.³⁰ Similarly, Sir Charles Smith, Viscount Carington accompanied his nieces Alethea and Dorothy Anderton when they travelled to Louvain in the 1650s.³¹

The Cost of Convent Dowries

The women of the Diocese of Chester were required to pay for their entrance to the exiled convents and money was undoubtedly an issue of fundamental importance. Aside from the cost of travel to reach the continent, entrants also had to negotiate the payment arrangements for

²⁹ Anon., 'The Seizure and Plunder of Rossall Grange', p.156

³⁰ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.154

³¹ *Louvain Chronicle MS*, ff.606-11

their convent dowries. Conventual dowries generally either consisted of a single lump-sum payment, or a smaller downpayment with fixed installments charged at regular intervals throughout the novitiate's time at the convent. The size of convent dowries varied. The Lancastrian nun Elizabeth Cansfield of Robert's Hall took with her a dowry of 2,500 florins when she joined the Benedictines at Brussels in 1600.³² When she joined the Augustinians at Louvain in 1628, Mary Worthington took 3,000 florins with her.³³ By the time Dorothy and Margaret Blundell of Ince Blundell joined the Benedictines at Brussels in 1655, their dowries totalled 3,000 florins apiece.³⁴

We can see from sums such as these that the size of conventual dowries appears to have remained relatively consistent over the course of sixty years. However, sometimes families had trouble meeting the installment payments for their dowries. For example, Ursula Babthorpe of Yorkshire professed with the Augustinians at Bruges in 1642 after finally paying £100. She had been forced to spend two years as a novice for want of a portion.³⁵ Similarly, England's penal laws thwarted the payment of dowries for the Lancashire nuns Elizabeth Gillibrand and her sister Margaret.³⁶

The Louvain Chronicle records that:

³² Database reference number is unavailable.

³³ Database reference number, LA318

³⁴ Database reference numbers, BB021 & BB022, respectively.

³⁵ Database reference number, BA009

³⁶ Database reference numbers, LA109 & LA110, respectively.

This year [1642] also Mr Gillibrand sent us aforehand half of his 2 daughters portion, 4 hundred pound. They were then novices, & the rest was, according to our agreement, to have sum upon rent there untill he should pay in the full portion, which was as much more 4 hundred pound, but this rent failed afterwards like the rest for som 12 years til tims were more quiet, he paid in the rest in the year 1655.³⁷

The record of dowry payments for the majority of nuns from the Diocese of Chester, unfortunately, do not survive; however, by analysing the size of dowry payments for nuns who joined the exiled convents from other parts of England we can gain a broad impression of average sums. The Yorkshire nun Mary Vavasour joined the Benedictines in Brussels in 1616, paying 5,000 florins.³⁸ Meanwhile, Mary Roper from Kent joined the same convent in the same year, but paid 6,500 florins – although she was initially meant to have paid 10,000.³⁹ Conversely, Margaret Smith from Yorkshire joined the Benedictines in Brussels as a choir nun in 1600, having paid only 700 florins.⁴⁰ Similarly, the Hampshire nun Elizabeth Tichborne joined the same convent as a lay sister a year later in 1601, paying only the relatively miniscule sum of 30 florins.⁴¹ It is probable that Tichborne was allowed to enter having made such a small contribution as a result of her family name: two of Elizabeth's brothers and her father had been executed as a result of their religion. The aura of martyrdom seems sometimes to have been used as spiritual credit.

For many gentrywomen from the Diocese of Chester, the size of a conventual dowry was roughly proximate to that of a marital dowry. For

³⁷ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.2, pp.191-2

³⁸ Database reference number, BB186

³⁹ Database reference number, BB152

⁴⁰ No database reference number is available.

⁴¹ Database reference number, BB179

other women, the sum seems to have been calculated as a fixed percentage of what would have been a marital portion – for instance two-thirds, or half. The calculation of a dowry's size rested on finding a balance between what the novitiate's family could afford and what the convent was willing to accept. As dowries were the principal source of income for the convents, it was important that the abbess and the cellarer ensured that financial agreements were closely negotiated. Non-payment or part-payment could result in a convent sinking into financial ruin, as happened to the Benedictines at Ghent.⁴² It was for this reason that some convents employed agents, such as Mannock Strickland, to check their accounts and to ensure that payments were met promptly and in full.⁴³

Separate pieces of research by Susan Cogan and Janet Hollinshead have demonstrated that pecuniary advantage does not seem to have been a motivating factor in a family's decision to support or oppose the decision to enter a convent. Unenclosed Catholic women were sometimes able to live in relative financial comfort, without pursuing either marriage or a vocation – although the ability to support oneself financially invariably remained a constant concern for any single woman.⁴⁴ Examples such as Mary Throckmorton, demonstrate that unmarried Catholic women were sometimes useful to families, as they were able to

⁴² For a thorough discussion of dowries and convent finances, see: Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community*, pp.89-99

⁴³ R.G. Williams, 'Strickland, Mannock John (1683–1744)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64936>, accessed 16 March 2014]

⁴⁴ S. Cogan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage: Throckmorton Men and Women, c.1560-1620', in *Catholic Gentry in English Society, The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation*, (eds.) P. Marshall & G. Scott, *Catholic Christendom, 1300-1700 Series*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 69-91; Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community*, pp.63-74

undertake responsibility for the household.⁴⁵ Janet Hollinshead has shown that single women were able to offer assistance with childcare and household management.⁴⁶

Hollinshead has calculated that the average conventual dowry payment in the seventeenth-century was somewhere between £400-600. Given that some families were sending multiple daughters to enclosed communities – five, in the case of William Blundell (d.1698) – these sort of figures added up to as great a financial expenditure as marital dowries or the costs of supporting numerous unmarried daughters. However, it is possible that William Blundell settled his daughters' dowry payments in alternative ways, as Blundell acted as a financial and recruiting agent for several of the English exiled convents.⁴⁷ Provision was normally made for those women who pursued a vocation, regardless of their familial or socio-economic backgrounds and there is little indication that women were enclosed in order to rid their families of an unwanted financial burden.

‘Who Were the Nuns’ and Where Did They Come From?

The quantifiable data gathered from the ‘Who Were the Nuns?’ (WWTN) database shows that 672 English women were professed at the exiled English convents before 1650. Tables one (see below) and two (see appendix) list all the nuns whose date of profession is known and sorts them by their native English county.⁴⁸ Using this table, we can trace the

⁴⁵ Cogan, ‘Reputation, Credit and Patronage’, pp.75-6

⁴⁶ Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community*, pp.63-74

⁴⁷ Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community*, pp.90-4

⁴⁸ This search was conducted by selecting a convent search, then requesting the database to search all convents / no specific convent for professions before 1650. This

numbers of Catholic women from the Diocese of Chester who joined the exiled English convents.

procedure was followed for each respective English county: e.g. for Lancashire, then for Yorkshire, then for Durham etc.

Place association	Number of nuns professed before 1650	% of 672 nuns professed pre-1650 (to 2 decimal points)
Yorks	60	8.92
Essex	50	7.44
Oxon	43	6.39
Suffolk	42	6.25
Lancs	38	5.65
Staffs	36	5.35
Kent	34	5.05
Sussex	27	4.01
Hants	24	3.57
Norfolk	24	3.57
Bucks	23	3.42
London	21	3.12
Warws	20	2.97
Durham	17	2.52
Berks	16	2.38
Lincs	16	2.38
Herefs	15	2.23
Leics	15	2.23
Worcs	15	2.23
Northants	14	2.08
Somerset	14	2.08
Wilts	13	1.93
Cornw	12	1.78
Shrops	11	1.63
Gloucs	10	1.48
Monmths	10	1.48
Devon	9	1.33
Northd	9	1.33
Notts	9	1.33
Surrey	9	1.33
Herts	6	0.89
Cambs	5	0.74
Middx	5	0.74
Derbys	4	0.59
Rutland	3	0.44
Beds	2	0.29
Westmld	2	0.29
Chesh	1	0.14
Cumbd	1	0.14
Dorset	1	0.14
Hunts	1	0.14
Total	672	

Table One - Number of English nuns professed before 1650 by county of origin (by number). [Tables one and two contain the same data, but one is sorted alphabetically by name of English county, while the other is sorted in ascending order of number. For table two, see appendix.]

Analysing the results, we can see that the five counties with the greatest numbers of professions are, respectively: Yorkshire (60 professions, 8.92%), Essex (50 professions, 7.44%), Oxfordshire (43 professions, 6.39%), Suffolk (42 professions, 6.25%), and Lancashire (38 professions, 5.65%). These results demonstrate some clear trends. The fact that Yorkshire tops the list is relatively unsurprising, as that county comprises a large geographical area.⁴⁹ Historians such as J.C.H. Aveling, Sarah Bastow, J.T. Cliffe, Claire Cross, W.J. Sheils, and Emma Watson have regularly demonstrated the proportionately high levels of Catholic activity in the Yorkshire ridings during the post-Reformation period.⁵⁰ Essex is a more surprising result, and the figures exhibited here support the arguments of recent work by James Kelly, which suggests that there is greater evidence of Catholicism in Essex than has previously been acknowledged.⁵¹ What is most interesting, in terms of this research, are

⁴⁹ See, for example, discussion in: K.J. Allison (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England, Yorkshire, East Riding, Vol.1, The City of Kingston upon Hull*, (London: Published for the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press, 1969)

⁵⁰ See, amongst many others: J.C.H. Aveling, *Northern Catholics: the Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire, 1558-1790*, (London: Chapman, 1966); S. Bastow, *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642: Resistance and Accommodation*, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007); J.T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*, (London: Athlone Press, 1969); M.C. Cross, 'The Religious Life of Women in Sixteenth-Century Yorkshire', in *Women in the Church*, (eds.) W.J. Sheils & D. Woods, *Studies in Church History*, 27, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1990), 307-24; W.J. Sheils, 'Catholics and their Neighbours in a Rural Community: Egton Chapelry 1590-1780', *Northern History*, 25 (1998), 190-230; E. Watson, 'Disciplined Disobedience? Women and the Survival of Catholicism in the North York Moors in the Reign of Elizabeth I', *Studies in Church History*, 43 (2007), 295-306

⁵¹ J.E. Kelly, 'Kinship and Religious Politics among Catholic Families in England, 1570-1640', *History*, 94:315, 328-43

the comparative results for both the north of England in general and specifically within the Diocese of Chester.

Both Lancashire and Yorkshire are within the top five counties, with 5.65% and 8.92% of all professions, respectively. In contrast, if we examine the results for other northern counties, the trend does not continue. Cumberland and Cheshire recorded just one profession each (0.14%), while Westmorland only had two (0.29%) and Northumberland nine (1.33%). These results are anomalous, when considered alongside those for Lancashire and Yorkshire. It is surprising that a county such as Cheshire, which shared a border with a county that recorded such a great numbers of nuns as Lancashire, returned only a single profession. It is also unclear why such geographically vast counties as Cumberland, Northumberland, and Westmorland emerged with only around 1% of the total numbers of nuns apiece. Even County Durham, which research by J.A. Hilton and Rosamund Oates has demonstrated had an active Catholic community during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, recorded only a moderate total of seventeen professions (2.52%).⁵²

One possible explanation for these disparities could be the differing levels of missionary activity that existed in these counties. There appears to be a clear correlation between the presence of greater numbers of missionary priests and the counties that recorded the greatest number of professions. Christopher Haigh demonstrated that at least 75 recusant priests are known to have worked in Lancashire during this time period, while research by K.R. Wark showed that far fewer priests were active in

⁵² J.A. Hilton, 'Catholicism in Elizabethan Durham', *Recusant History*, 14:1 (1977), 1-8; J.A. Hilton, 'Catholicism in Jacobean Durham', *Recusant History*, 14:2 (1977), 78-85; R. Oates, 'Catholicism, Conformity and the Community in the Elizabethan Diocese of Durham', *Northern History*, 43, (2006), 53-76

Cheshire at the same time.⁵³ A further possible explanation is proximity to trade routes and ports that made continental travel easier. Yorkshire has a number of coastal ports, which placed it within easy reach of France and the Low Countries. The greater degree of contact with continental Europe and the comparative ease of travel to the exiled convents might go some way towards explaining the great number of professions from Yorkshire. However, one could argue that the same could be said about Lancashire, which had a series of major ports. Although Lancashire's location on the west coast of England meant that links with continental Europe were more distant, there were close relations with Catholic Ireland. Furthermore, work by R.C. Richardson, amongst others, has shown that Chester established pre- and proto-industrial trade routes, long before the subsequent expansion of Liverpool and Manchester during the Industrial Revolution.⁵⁴

It is possible to argue that socio-political factors were significant in explaining the disparity in numbers of professions within the diocese. The greatest numbers of professions were of women who originated from the counties that housed the diocesan administrative centres. Manchester and Lancaster (Lancashire), as well as Richmond (Yorkshire), were the secular and ecclesiastical capitals within the Diocese of Chester. This argument fails, however, when we consider Cheshire. Chester was not only the diocesan capital, but also one of the key administrative centres for the Duchy of Lancaster and northern England in general. Given Chester's temporal and ecclesiastical importance during the medieval and early

⁵³ C. Haigh, *Reformation & Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.255

⁵⁴ R.C. Richardson, *Puritanism in North-West England: A Regional Study of the Diocese of Chester to 1642*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972)

modern periods, one would expect to see lots of nuns emerging from Cheshire, yet this is not the case. Socio-political factors, therefore, seem to have little bearing.

The independence granted by the Duchy of Lancaster might be considered to be influential; but once again, this argument fails. All of Lancashire and Cheshire fell within the duchy's jurisdiction, as did parts of Cumberland and Westmorland. This would point against any correlation according to duchy boundaries. A similar argument could be made regarding the palatine county status of Cheshire and Lancashire. However, if one adhered to any of these hypotheses, one would expect to see great numbers of professions not only from Lancashire, but also from Cheshire. Although there is no simple explanation for the disparity within these figures, it seems apparent that a combination of factors was at play. The evidence indicates that Lancashire's high level of missionary activity, the presence of familial recruiting agents, and the county's location within the Diocese of Chester, the Duchy of Lancashire, and as a palatine county, all conspired to ensure that Lancashire sent greater numbers of women to the exiled convents than its immediate neighbour, Cheshire.

The Convents that Nuns Entered

When analysing trends, it is significant to consider the exiled English convents women from the Diocese of Chester were associated with. Tables three (see below) and four (see appendix) demonstrate that there were a total of 852 associations to be found between English nuns and the exiled convents. The figures have once again been calculated from those

women known to have professed who joined the convents before 1650. Some women were members of more than one convent during this time and so have (out of necessity) been counted more than once. For example, a sister who joined the Poor Clares at Gravelines, before moving to Aire later in life (as was the case with the Lancashire nun Helen Parker), would be counted once for Gravelines and once for Aire.⁵⁵ This explains the disparity between the total in these tables (852) and the much smaller total (672) in tables one and two. This method of calculating is not ideal, but the searchability of the database resists any alternative approaches.

⁵⁵ Database reference number, GP210

Convent [foundation date]	Number of nuns	% of nuns
Augustinians, Bruges [1629]	24	2.83
Augustinians, Louvain [1609]	109	12.88
Augustinians, Paris [1612/34]	43	5.08
Benedictines, Brussels [1599]	86	10.16
Benedictines, Cambrai [1623]	53	6.26
Benedictines, Dunkirk [1662]	11	1.30
Benedictines, Ghent [1624]	83	9.81
Benedictines, Paris [1653]	8	0.94
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise [1652/8]	9	1.06
Benedictines, Ypres [1665]	9	1.06
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon [1580/94]	48	5.67
Carmelites, Antwerp [1619]	61	7.21
Carmelites, Hoogstraten [1678]	3	0.35
Carmelites, Lierre [1648]	12	1.41
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges [1619]	81	9.57
Mary Ward Institute [1609/16]	5	0.59
Poor Clares, Aire [1629]	35	4.13
Poor Clares, Dunkirk [1662]	14	1.65
Poor Clares, Gravelines [1606]	117	13.82
Poor Clares, Rouen [1644]	16	1.89
Sepulchrines, Liège [1642]	13	1.53
Conceptionists, Paris [1658/9]	6	0.70
Total	852	

Table Three - Number of English nuns associated with each convent, calculated using those who professed before 1650. Some nuns were members of more than one convent, often leaving to found or join daughter-houses at a later date (by order).

The greatest numbers of English women who professed before 1650 were to be found with the Poor Clares at Gravelines (117 nuns, 13.82%) and the Augustinians at Louvain (109 nuns, 12.88%). The popularity of these two convents was swiftly followed by the Benedictines at both Brussels (86 nuns, 10.16%) and Ghent (83 nuns, 9.81%) and then by the Franciscans at Brussels (81 nuns, 9.57%). There is no indication that English women favoured any particular order. Rather, the figures seem to correlate with the foundation dates of the convents: thus, as a general rule, the earlier the foundation date, the greater the numbers of English women who joined. The Benedictines at Brussels were the earliest new English foundation in 1599, followed by the Poor Clares at Gravelines (from St Omers) in 1606 and the Augustinians at Louvain in 1609 (from the Flemish convent of St Ursula's in the same town).⁵⁶

What is most illuminating, in terms of considering the Catholic women of the Diocese of Chester, is to consider the destinations of nuns from specific counties. Looking at table five (see below), we can trace the destinations of the professed nuns from Lancashire, amongst whom it was possible to identify 38 matches. It is worth reiterating that some nuns were members of more than one convent during their lifetime – women normally moved to assist with the foundation of a daughter-house, as was the case with the aforementioned Helen Parker – and so have been counted twice, in accordance with their conventual membership. Analysing table five, it is apparent that nineteen individuals (professed before 1650) were members

⁵⁶ J. Gillow (ed.), *Registers of the English Poor Clares Gravelines etc, contr. by W M Hunnybun*, Catholic Record Society, 14, *Miscellanea IX*, (London: Catholic Record Society, 1914); Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*; J.S. Hansom (ed.), *Registers of the English Benedictine Nuns, Brussels ... 1598-1856, contr. by the Lady Abbess of East Bergholt*, Catholic Record Society, 14, *Miscellanea IX*, (London: Catholic Record Society, 1914)

of the convent of the Poor Clares at Gravelines – this comprises 50% of Lancastrian women who are known to have professed during this time period. A further six joined the Augustinians at Louvain. In no other county is such a dramatic clustering effect to be found. To provide a comparison, if one considers the results for Yorkshire (table six, see below), just three women from a total of 60 joined the Poor Clares at Gravelines – a mere 5% of that county's total number of nuns.

Convent	Number of Lancs nuns
Augustinians, Bruges	0
Augustinians, Louvain	6
Augustinians, Paris	2
Benedictines, Brussels	1
Benedictines, Cambrai	4
Benedictines, Dunkirk	0
Benedictines, Ghent	1
Benedictines, Paris	1
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise	1
Benedictines, Ypres	0
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon	0
Carmelites, Antwerp	1
Carmelites, Hoogstraten	0
Carmelites, Lierre	0
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges	3
Mary Ward Institute	0
Poor Clares, Aire	3
Poor Clares, Dunkirk	3
Poor Clares, Gravelines	19
Poor Clares, Rouen	2
Sepulchrines, Liège	0
Conceptionists, Paris	0
Total	47 (38 nuns)

Table Five - Number of Lancashire nuns in residence at each convent, calculated using those professed before 1650 (some women were members of more than one convent)

Convent	Number of Yorks nuns
Augustinians, Bruges	3
Augustinians, Louvain	13
Augustinians, Paris	3
Benedictines, Brussels	7
Benedictines, Cambrai	13
Benedictines, Dunkirk	1
Benedictines, Ghent	5
Benedictines, Paris	2
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise	1
Benedictines, Ypres	1
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon	3
Carmelites, Antwerp	2
Carmelites, Hoogstraten	0
Carmelites, Lierre	0
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges	8
Mary Ward Institute	1
Poor Clares, Aire	0
Poor Clares, Dunkirk	0
Poor Clares, Gravelines	3
Poor Clares, Rouen	2
Sepulchrines, Liège	1
Conceptionists, Paris	0
Total	69 (60 nuns)

Table Six - Number of Yorkshire nuns in residence at each convent, calculated using those professed before 1650 (some women were members of more than one convent)

To analyse the data further still, Yorkshire nuns (see table six, above) seem to have favoured the Augustinians at Louvain and the Benedictines at Cambrai, where thirteen women attended each convent (21.6%). Nuns from Suffolk (table seven, see appendix) gravitated towards the Carmelites at Antwerp, with twelve entering there (28.5%), while Kent nuns (table eight, see appendix) preferred the Benedictines at Ghent with ten women joining that house (29.4%). Essex women (table nine, see appendix) were drawn to the Augustinians at Louvain, with twelve pursuing their vocation there (24%). A further ten joined the Benedictines at Brussels (20%). Meanwhile, Oxfordshire nuns (table ten, see appendix) held allegiance with the Benedictines at Brussels and Ghent, with ten (23.2%) and eight (18.6%) women respectively. Finally, Staffordshire women religious (table eleven, see appendix), like the Lancastrian nuns, favoured the Poor Clares at Gravelines and the Augustinians at Louvain, with eleven (30.5%) and ten (27.7%) members joining each convent, respectively.

There was some consistency in the choice of convent amongst nuns from the Diocese of Chester, to a greater degree than was found elsewhere. Looking at the results for the seven counties with the greatest numbers of nuns at the exiled convents (Essex, Kent, Lancashire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire, Suffolk, and Yorkshire), it is apparent that women preferred different convents, depending on their place of origin. Interestingly, the women's choices do not bear much relation to a preference for a particular order, such as the Augustinians or Benedictines. However, nowhere was there so great a clustering effect as there was with the nineteen Lancashire nuns with the Poor Clares at

Gravelines. The fact that 50% of the county's nuns entered one convent provides an unusually anomalous figure.

Lancashire Nuns and their Kinship Networks

Figure one (see appendix) provides a list of all 38 Lancastrian nuns known to have professed before 1650. Although the Lancastrian nuns were not the only women religious from the Diocese of Chester, they comprised the vast majority – with only a handful hailing from the rest of diocesan territories in Cheshire, parts of Yorkshire, Cumberland, and Westmorland. The nuns who joined the English Poor Clares at Gravelines are highlighted in bold text on the list and those who joined the English Augustinians at Louvain are highlighted in bold italic. It is immediately evident upon sight of this list that a great number of the women share the same surnames. There are five Andertons, four Bradshaighs, four Cliftons, three Blundells, two Gillibrands, two Parkers, and two Worthingtons. When considering the family tree in figure two (see below) it is apparent that fourteen of the nineteen nuns at Gravelines were directly related to one another, by either blood or marriage. Eight of the women were first cousins – the four Anderton sisters, three Bradshaigh sisters, and Elizabeth Tyldesley. Ellenor Bradshaigh was niece to the three Bradshaigh sisters and second cousin to the others. Ann and Margaret Blundell were cousins, not only to Ellenor Bradshaigh, but also to the Gillibrand sisters who joined the Augustinians at Louvain. In addition to these fourteen, another five of the nineteen Lancashire women at Gravelines – Dorothy and Elizabeth Clifton, Ann Standish, Ann Walton, and Ann Westby – can also be linked into this

extended kinship network (but too distantly in order to accurately convey these relationships on a prosopographical diagram).⁵⁷

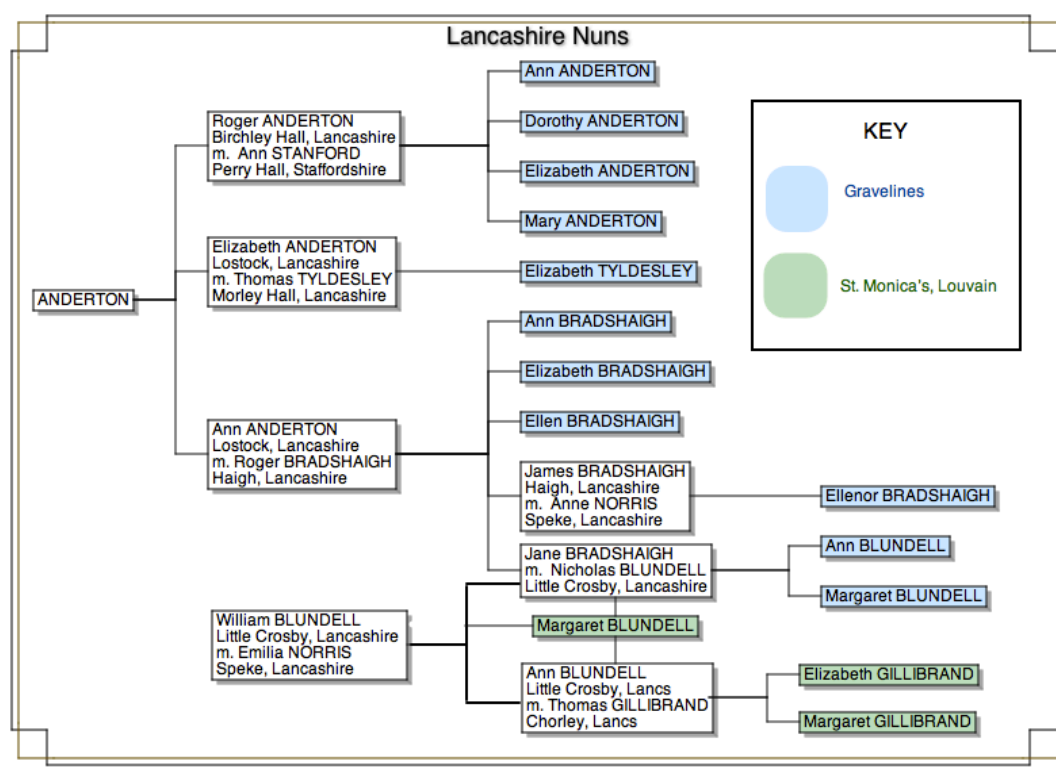


Figure Two - Diagram showing the familial relationships between Lancashire nuns - Andertons, Bradshaighs, Blundells, Gillibrands, and Tyldesleys.

A second family tree that is outlined in figure three (see below) demonstrates that three of the six nuns who joined the Augustinians at Louvain were also related. Anne and Mary Worthington were the nieces of Jane Allen. Jane's sister, Helen, was also at the Flemish convent of St Ursula's in Louvain alongside her sister, but died before the move to the English convent of St Monica's. The Allen-Worthington family includes some influential relatives – Elizabeth Allen, who has been discussed

⁵⁷ Prosopographical information has been established from the WWTN? database.

extensively throughout this thesis, and Cardinal William Allen, founder of the English Colleges at Douai-Rheims and Rome.⁵⁸ The Worthingtons also boasted a string of widely known missionary priests amongst their relatives, including Thomas Worthington (d.1626), President of Douai and acclaimed author, editor and translator.⁵⁹

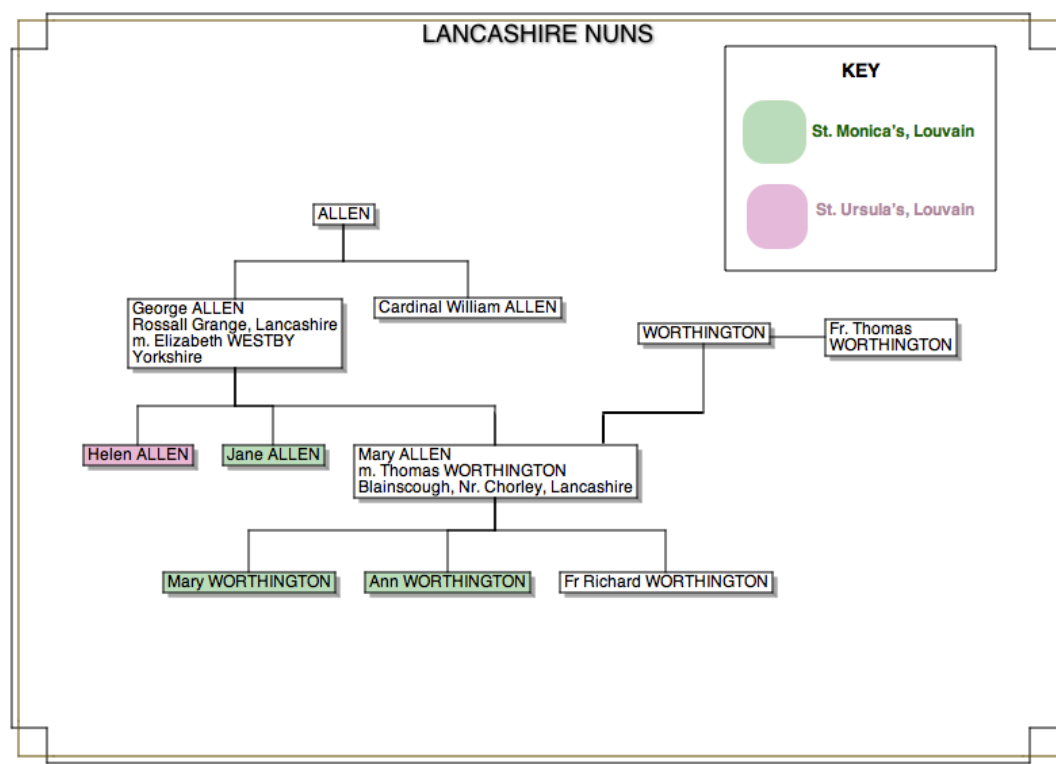


Figure Three - Diagram showing the familial relationships between Lancashire nuns - Allens and Worthingtons.

It seems evident, when considering diagrams such as these, that kinship networks played an important role in determining which convents women religious from the Diocese of Chester would join. Pushing aside for a

⁵⁸ E. Duffy, 'Allen, William (1532–1594)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/391>, accessed 16 March 2014]

⁵⁹ A.J. Loomie, 'Worthington, Thomas (1549–1626)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2012 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29993>, accessed 16 March 2014]

moment issues of confessional allegiance and personal preference, the presence of immediate relatives or more distant kin at a convent was surely a major contributory factor in the decision making process. This is not to say that kinship was the only consideration in choosing a convent; religious beliefs almost certainly swayed the final decision. It would be naive, however, to suggest that kinship networks did not play their part. Considering once again the network outlined in figure two (see above), it is telling to note that all the nuns who joined Gravelines did so during a time when Elizabeth Tyldesley was the abbess there (1615-54). If the abbess of your convent was related to you, this could naturally have had certain advantages. Some nuns also had male relatives who spent time at their convents. For example, Richard Worthington S.J. – who was brother to Anne and Mary Worthington and a kinsman of many of the other nuns – was the Chaplain at St Monica's in Louvain.⁶⁰ Some enclosed women therefore remained under the supervision of male relatives within the convent, just as they had in their secular lives.

Local networks also inevitably played their part. Two of the Lancastrian nuns at Gravelines, who have thus far been unaccounted for in the kinship networks outlined, were Frances Gerard and Grace Pennington. These two women grew up in close proximity to other members of the Gravelines community. Frances Gerard was the daughter of Sir Thomas Gerard of Bryn and Frances Molyneux of Sefton.⁶¹ Both Bryn and Sefton were located only a few miles from the Blundells at Little Crosby and Frances was only a year or two older than Anne and Margaret Blundell. Grace Pennington was the daughter of Sir John Pennington of

⁶⁰ Database reference numbers, LA313 & LA318, respectively.

⁶¹ Database reference number, GP133

Pennington, near Wigan in Lancashire, and an unknown female member of the Radcliffe family of Northumberland.⁶² Pennington was within ten miles of both the Andertons at Birchley Hall and the Bradshaighs at Haigh Hall. Considering that both of those families were notably Catholic, it is highly probable that they knew one another well. It therefore seems likely that the presence of friends was a contributory factor in Grace Pennington's decision to join the community at Gravelines. What alternative life choices Grace had aside from enclosure remain unknown.

How Enclosed Sisters Maintained Contact with Unenclosed Kin

The Louvain Chronicle provides evidence that nuns remained in close contact with their kin after enclosure, through personal correspondence, patronage and finance-collection. The families of some nuns lived very close to the convents – in exile from England's penal laws. Jane Allen and Anne and Mary Worthington, for example, had a number of close relatives who were living in exile at Louvain (see figure three). The Louvain Chronicle tells us much of the friendships, patronage, and kinship networks that remained in place within this family, even after the women were enclosed. Both Elizabeth Allen and Thomas Worthington are regularly referred to in the Louvain Chronicle as good friends of the nuns. For example, the Chronicle describes Thomas Worthington as 'our often mentioned frind'.⁶³ Both of these unenclosed family members, Elizabeth Allen and Thomas Worthington, were ultimately buried within the walls of the convent, as was Richard Worthington S.J., brother to Anne and Mary.

⁶² Database reference number is unavailable.

⁶³ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.154

The Louvain Chronicle recounts how, after his death in 1619, Thomas Worthington had:

desired to be buried within our monastery among our sisters, the which was granted him, having been so dear a frind and faithful a helper in the setting up of this house, & therefore lies buried in our cloister neer unto his wifes mother Mrs Allen who was layd here.⁶⁴

The Chronicle goes into further detail, describing the various ways in which Elizabeth and Thomas validated their friendship towards St Monica's. At the very beginning of the foundation and in the wake of numerous teething problems, Thomas Worthington had located, negotiated a price for, and helped to purchase the house that would become the home of the new convent.⁶⁵ As compensation for his endeavours, Worthington negotiated the entry into the convent (and presumably the dowry size) of another of his female relatives, Susan Leyburne, whose father had been executed for his faith.⁶⁶ Worthington also negotiated the transfer of the convent organ from St Ursula's to St Monica's⁶⁷ and even went so far as to physically escort the English nuns to their new home – naturally, making sure that the party paused for dinner at his own house along the way. This meal was partly arranged by Thomas's mother-in-law Elizabeth Allen and Father John Fen and comprised of:

⁶⁴ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.197

⁶⁵ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, pp.64-8

⁶⁶ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.64

⁶⁷ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, pp.65-6

two great tartes the one of mins'd meat made costly,
the other of fruit very good. These two Tartes Mrs
Allen would not have to be touched there, for they
had enough, she sent them before hand to their own
house and indeed they served our poor Sisters her a
whol week.⁶⁸

One of the nuns enjoyed the aforementioned feast so much that she wrote a poem about it. The somewhat teasing tone of the poem infers that the author was well known to both Worthington and Fen, which leads one to speculate that the authoress may have been one of the Lancastrian nuns.

I leave you to guess our dear Mother's surprise
At finding a table well-covered with pies.
Old Mr Worthington played them a trick
And old Father Fen entered into it quick...
They talked of the Convent they're going to found
Tho' alas! in their pockets they had not a pound.
To be Proc. in those days was I'm sure very bad
And many a time has she felt very sad...
Though many from friends they'd already bespoken,
Yet promise like pie-crust is made to be broken.⁶⁹

Worthington also gave up one of his own men, known only as Roger, to act as manservant at the new religious house. Furthermore, he also donated 'his library of books which were many'.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, his mother-in-law gave beer, bread, eggs, and meat.⁷¹ Elizabeth also gave a 'white damask hearse cloth'; perhaps to match the 'sure of red Damask tunicks'

⁶⁸ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, pp.69-70

⁶⁹ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, p.70

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol.1, pp.70-1

given by the two Allen daughters, Helen and Jane, at the time of their entry into the convent.⁷²

These examples demonstrate that relations within this kinship network did not disintegrate after the enclosure of nuns. On the contrary, in this case, at least, the bonds on kinship seem to have flourished, rather than dissipated. Relationships with family and other kin who had stayed in England also remained strong. Although they would rarely, if ever, have physically seen these friends and relatives, the bonds of patronage and mutual assistance existed and remained helpful to the nuns. Caroline Bowden and Claire Walker have established that relatives and patrons were particularly useful to the nuns in procuring political advice and assistance – whether within internecine conventual-clerical disputes, or national and international politics.⁷³ Examples of this have been seen in the form of Elizabeth Allen, William Blundell, and Thomas Worthington.⁷⁴

⁷² Hamilton, *Louvain Chronicle*, vol. 1, p.67

⁷³ C. Bowden, 'The Abbess and Mrs Brown: Lady Mary Knatchbull and Royalist Politics in Flanders in the late 1650s', *Recusant History*, 24:3 (1999), 288-308; C. Bowden, 'The Role of Mary Knatchbull in the English Benedictine Foundations of the Seventeenth Century', *Magistra*, 8:1 (2002); Bowden, 'The English Convents in Exile'; C. Walker, "'Doe not suppose me a well mortified Nun dead to the world": Letter Writing in Early Modern English Convents', in *Early Modern Women Letter Writers 1450-1700*, (ed.) J. Daybell, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 159-76; C. Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); C. Walker, "'Going against some forcible wind": Writing and Reform in Medieval and Early Modern Convents', *Journal of Women's History*, 21:1 (2009), 135-44; C. Walker, 'Loyal and Dutiful Subjects: English Nuns and Stuart Politics', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, (ed.) J. Daybell, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 228-42; C. Walker, 'Prayer, Patronage and Political Conspiracy: English Nuns and the Restoration', *The Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), 1-23

⁷⁴ Hollinshead, *Women of the Catholic Community*, pp.90-4

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that recruitment to the English exiled convents varied in accordance with the region where women were born. Two of the counties within the Diocese of Chester, Lancashire and (in part) Yorkshire recruited more nuns to the convents than other large northern counties with great numbers of Catholics, such as County Durham. However, it is also evident that extremely low numbers of nuns originated from elsewhere in the Diocese of Chester – namely Cumberland, Northumberland, and Westmorland. Most anomalously, the numbers of Catholic women leaving Cheshire to join the exiled convents is inexplicably low. It appears evident that a unique combination of socio-political, economic, and religious factors ensured that Lancashire sent greater numbers of women to the exiled convents than the other counties that surrounded it within the diocese. The research outlined here has demonstrated that women clustered at particular convents, with an especially large group of Lancastrian women joining the Poor Clares at Gravelines. Investigation has confirmed that all nineteen of these Lancashire women can be linked via a single kinship network – through blood relation, marriage, and geographical proximity. It has also been ascertained that, even after enclosure, female kinship networks remained intact and active.

Relatives and friends regularly provided assistance to the convents in a wide range of respects. This especially included kin who lived in the immediate vicinity of the convent, but also family and friends who had remained in Protestant England. The close links that persisted between

the exiled convents and female kinship networks ensured that Catholics in England had regular contact with post-Tridentine devotion and Counter-Reformed thought. The contact that the women of the diocese had with continental conventual piety and women religious greatly influenced the direction in which post-Reformation Catholicism developed in the Diocese of Chester. The example of female piety within religious houses also served to inspire the maintenance and dissemination of the Catholic faith within their families and local communities in England.

The extent to which gentrywomen entering the exiled convents made a free choice to pursue a vocation is difficult to measure. Some women may have felt pressured by their parents to pursue a life as a religious. In some families it was commonplace for children to become nuns and priests. It would not be realistic to suggest that gentrywomen joined convents in the absence of parental approval, as they required financial assistance to reach the continent and to pay for conventual dowries. However, there is no evidence from the surviving sources of women from the Diocese of Chester being forced or manipulated into enclosure against their will. If there was any pressure, it is more probable that it was a conscious or subconscious awareness that there were few alternative life choices available. As significant numbers of the male Catholic gentry joined the English Mission, the pool of marriageable Catholic men in the diocese diminished. With little financial independence and reduced prospects of a good Catholic marriage, a life of enclosure must have appeared to be an increasingly desirable option. This may go some way towards explaining why such great numbers of Catholic gentrywomen from the diocese joined the exiled English convents.

Thesis Conclusion

This thesis demonstrates that Catholic gentrywomen played an instrumental part in the evolution of post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester. The first chapter showed that jurisdictional and administrative confusion within the diocese led to the poor enforcement of religious conformity by the church and state authorities. Temporally, jurisdiction in the diocese was split as a result of the historic presence of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Palatine Counties of Chester and Lancaster. Territory within the Duchy of Lancaster was beyond the authority of the crown, without the issue of additional writs. Furthermore, the diocese was entirely outside of the remit of the main seat of temporal authority in northern England, the Council in the North. Ecclesiastically, jurisdiction within the large and recently created diocese was also complex. Parishes were often divided and a number of ecclesiastical peculiars further confused the situation. Similarly, the Ecclesiastical Commission established specifically to serve the Diocese of Chester was short-lived and failed to enforce religious conformity.

The overlaps and exemptions within the administration of the diocese meant that authority was not cohesive and was therefore ineffective. Furthermore, conformist Catholic men held a number of positions of authority within the diocese, as Justices of the Peace or Ecclesiastical Commissioners, ensuring that the problem of enforcing religious conformity was compounded to a greater degree. The evidence indicates that post-Reformation Catholicism was especially prevalent in Lancashire and that county undoubtedly experienced Catholicism in a

manner that was distinct from the rest of the diocese. Why the development of post-Reformation Catholicism was so unique in Lancashire, when compared with Cheshire and other parts of the diocese, is difficult to establish and there is no simple answer. However, the evidence suggests that the extensive Catholic kinship networks that existed within Lancashire were a key factor. The first chapter also confirmed that attempts by historians to quantify numbers of recusants and non-communicants are of limited use, as the data often tells us more about the counting methodologies utilised by the state authorities, than it does about the nature and extent of Catholic belief.

The second chapter established that Catholic gentrywomen took primary responsibility for the care of recusant and missionary priests who worked in the Diocese of Chester in great numbers. The relocation of sacramental devotion to the private sphere of the gentry household ensured that, as an extension of their role as domestic managers, Catholic gentrywomen also acted as gatekeepers to the clergy. This created a symbiotic relationship between Catholic gentrywomen and their priests. In the pre-Reformation medieval Church, there was little opportunity for women, or indeed lay people in general, to exercise any autonomy in the way that they worshipped. With the absence of any clerical hierarchy within post-Reformation Catholicism, lay people were able to exert a greater degree of control over their own religious experience. Sacramental devotion was still a central tenet of the faith, however, so access to priests remained essential for post-Reformation Catholic communities.

The relocation of religious worship to private households allowed Catholic gentrywomen an opportunity to assume positions of social authority that had hitherto been inaccessible to them. It was women who had the greatest level of contact with priests, in their role as gatekeepers, and it was women who took the lead in the organisation of communal worship, through the use of gentry households as Mass centres. Women also influenced the confessional direction of post-Reformation Catholicism within their local communities through their choice of confessor. By enabling access to either seminary priests or Jesuits, gentrywomen determined the position of Catholic communities in the Diocese of Chester within the intra-Catholic debates of the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-centuries.

Although there was a greater degree of autonomy available to all gentrywomen within post-Reformation Catholicism than there had been in the medieval Church, it was widows (and Catholic women with absent husbands) who were most able to assume positions of social authority within their communities. This was in main part due to their independence. Overall, Catholic gentrywomen were more likely to be recusants than their male counterparts and this seems to have been true of both married women and widows. As they could not hold political office, women did not have positions of public authority to jeopardise and this appears to have been a key factor in female recusancy. Furthermore, the financial impact of non-attendance does not appear to have made Catholic widows any more averse to maintaining a recusant stance than their married counterparts.

The third chapter confirmed that the example of personal piety and routines of devotion that were constructed by Catholic gentrywomen were instrumental in maintaining traditional religion throughout the diocese and disseminating it to subsequent generations. Traditional religious practices were diverse and remained of fundamental importance to both men and women. Many gentrywomen continued to observe the cyclical patterns of devotion that had existed within the liturgical calendar of the medieval Church. Routines of fasting and feasting, the observance of saints' and holy days, and the celebration of religious festivals all ensured that there was continuity between pre- and post-Reformation Catholicism. Similarly, there is widespread evidence that Catholic gentrywomen made use of traditional devotional materials, such as primers and the rosary, and continued to venerate icons, images, and relics.

A range of alternative acts of piety were undertaken by Catholic gentrywomen: such as alms-giving, which demonstrated charity, and needlework, which was used to produce liturgical vestments for priests. There were also attempts by Catholic gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester to imitate the cycles of devotion undertaken by women religious in enclosed convents. By observing the canonical hours of prayer to the extent that their domestic obligations would allow, secular Catholic women emulated the practices of their enclosed sisters. Similarly, Catholic gentrywomen also aspired towards monastic vows and virtues. The absence of a clerical hierarchy in England and the relocation of Catholic worship to the domestic sphere of the private household provided Catholic gentrywomen with new opportunities to transgress social boundaries within their religion, by structuring their own devotional practices. The

methods that women such as Elizabeth Allen used to express their personal religious devotion conveys a great deal of information about the nature of female Catholic piety, as it does not just tell us about the example that gentrywomen set within their own Catholic communities, it also enlightens us about their private religious experiences – what gentrywomen chose to do with their own time, in their own domestic environment.¹ It appears that, as post-Reformation Catholicism developed, it permitted women a greater degree of flexibility to adapt their religious practices to their domestic lives. The analysis of personal piety undertaken in this chapter has provided this thesis with a supplementary insight into the private lives and thought processes of Catholic gentrywomen in the diocese.

The fourth chapter revealed that the events that Catholics experienced during their adolescence sometimes directly affected their religious beliefs in adulthood. Many children from the Diocese of Chester experienced severe hardships as a result of their family's religion. The imprisonment of parents and the sequestration of family homes were both regular occurrences. In some cases, children were even removed from their parents' care and placed with Protestant foster families. These youthful experiences were consolidated by the religious education that children received from Catholic schoolmasters, or at continental seminaries and convent schools. Educational opportunities for girls were limited, prior to the foundation of schools at the exiled English convents. Most young Catholic girls were educated in the private sphere of the gentry household (as were boys, in their infancy). Mothers appear to have

¹ See chapter three

taken responsibility for providing an early religious education to their children in a domestic environment – a fact that supports John Bossy's theory of matriarchy.²

Sources such as the Louvain Chronicle and the annals of the English Colleges at Douai and Rome have shown that Catholic gentrywomen were significant role models to their children and played a key role in the dissemination of post-Reformation Catholicism.³ Schools at the exiled English convents for the first time offered Catholic girls the opportunity of a religious education on a par with that of their male counterparts. The annals of the English Colleges revealed that great numbers of young Catholic men from the diocese travelled to seminaries in continental Europe and subsequently joined the English Mission. The majority of these men were from Lancashire; a trend that was almost certainly a result of the extensive kinship networks that existed between Catholic gentry families in that county. This mirrors the pattern that can be seen for Catholic gentrywomen from the diocese joining the convents.

The fourth chapter also established that devotional and polemical literature was prevalent within the Diocese of Chester. There is evidence that Catholic books were imported into the diocese from abroad and were

² J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1975), pp.153-60

³ E.H. Burton & T.L. Williams (eds.), *The Douay College Diaries Third, Fourth and Fifth, 1598-1654, with the Rheims Report, 1579-80, volume I*, Catholic Record Society, 10, (London: Printed for the Society by J. Whitehead & Son, Leeds, 1911); E.H. Burton & T.L. Williams (eds.), *The Douay College Diaries Third, Fourth and Fifth, 1598-1654, with the Rheims Report, 1579-80, volume II*, Catholic Record Society, 11, (London: Printed for the Society by J. Whitehead & Son, Leeds, 1911); A. Hamilton (ed.), *The Chronicle of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, at St. Monica's in Louvain now at St Augustine's Priory, Newton Abbot, Devon*, 2 vols., (Edinburgh: Sands, 1904); A. Kenny (ed.), *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome Part one: 1598-1621*, Catholic Record Society, 54, (Newport: Printed by R.H. Johns Limited, 1962); A. Kenny (ed.), *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome Part two: 1622-1685*, Catholic Record Society, 55, (Newport: Printed by R.H. Johns Limited, 1963); T.F. Knox (ed.), *The First and Second diaries of the English College, Douay and an appendix of unpublished documents, edited by the Fathers of the Congregation of the London Oratory; with an historical introduction by Thomas Francis Knox*, (London, 1878)

also produced within the diocese itself at a secret printing press. Authors from the diocese wrote many of the most highly influential Catholic texts that were produced during this time period and some of those books, such as *The English Nunne*, were deliberately devised to appeal to women.⁴ The evidence indicates that gentrywomen in the diocese had extensive access to Catholic books and suggests that they were as literate as their Protestant counterparts.

The final chapter established that significant numbers of gentrywomen from the Diocese of Chester left their homes to join the exiled English convents in continental Europe – these women were predominantly from Lancashire and can be linked together by Catholic kinship networks. These kinship networks are evident, both within the enclosure of the convents themselves and between the nuns and their unenclosed kin. It is clear that a great number of Lancastrian gentrywomen clustered at the convent of the Poor Clares at Gravelines – nineteen women in total. All nineteen can be affiliated by either kinship, or the geographical proximity of their familial homes within the diocese. The fact that such a significant number of gentrywomen gathered at one convent suggests that there was sustained contact between enclosed nuns and their kin within the diocese. This contact influenced Catholic gentrywomen and their families, not only in their choice of convent but also in the decision to pursue a vocation in the first place. Kinship networks also ensured that post-Reformation Catholicism in the diocese had sustained contact with Counter-Reformed thought from continental Europe, as well as with post-Tridentine conventual piety. This interaction

⁴ L. Anderton, *The English Nunne* (etc.), (St Omers: English College Press, 1642)

altered the nature of the religious practices that were experienced by Catholic gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester. In this respect, the evidence demonstrates that a symbiotic relationship existed between post-Reformation Catholics in England and the exiled English convents in continental Europe.

The extent to which Catholic gentrywomen made a free choice to pursue a religious vocation was also considered in the last chapter and has been addressed throughout the thesis as a whole. The evidence demonstrates that alternative life choices were limited for Catholic gentrywomen within the diocese. Without financial independence, which was unusual even amongst gentrywomen during this period, there were only two real life choices available for Catholic women – marriage or profession. As chapter four revealed, increasing numbers of men from the Catholic gentry of the diocese travelled abroad to join seminaries and subsequently joined the English Mission. This meant that the remaining pool of marriageable Catholic men within the diocese was greatly reduced. Once the prospect of a good Catholic marriage had diminished, the opportunity to join one of the exiled English convents must have seemed an increasingly good option for Catholic gentrywomen and their families. There is no evidence that has come to light in the course of this research that would suggest any gentrywomen were forced into enclosure against their wishes; however, there is certainly an implicit sense that there was a realisation – either conscious or subconscious – that profession offered a realistic and secure alternative life choice for Catholic gentrywomen.

This thesis has demonstrated that Catholic gentrywomen in the Diocese of Chester played a significant and central role in determining the

direction that post-Reformation Catholicism evolved in. Gentrywomen ensured the continuity of pre-Reformation religious practices – most significantly, sacramental devotion. Furthermore, kinship networks ensured that routines of female personal piety in the diocese increasingly began to imitate conventual observance of the canonical hours and adopted post-Tridentine characteristics. A consideration of personal piety in this context has allowed us to obtain a deeper understanding of female, Catholic devotional practice within the diocese at this time and has revealed that it reflected contact with Counter-Reformed Europe. Post-Reformation Catholicism also offered gentrywomen the opportunity to exercise a greater degree of autonomy with regard to their religious practices and thereby within their lives generally. In all manner of ways, Catholic gentrywomen were instrumental to the development of post-Reformation Catholicism and this fact has previously been unacknowledged by historians. The evidence outlined in this thesis demonstrates that without Catholic gentrywomen, post-Reformation Catholicism would – quite simply – not have survived and adapted as successfully as it did.

APPENDICES

Map One



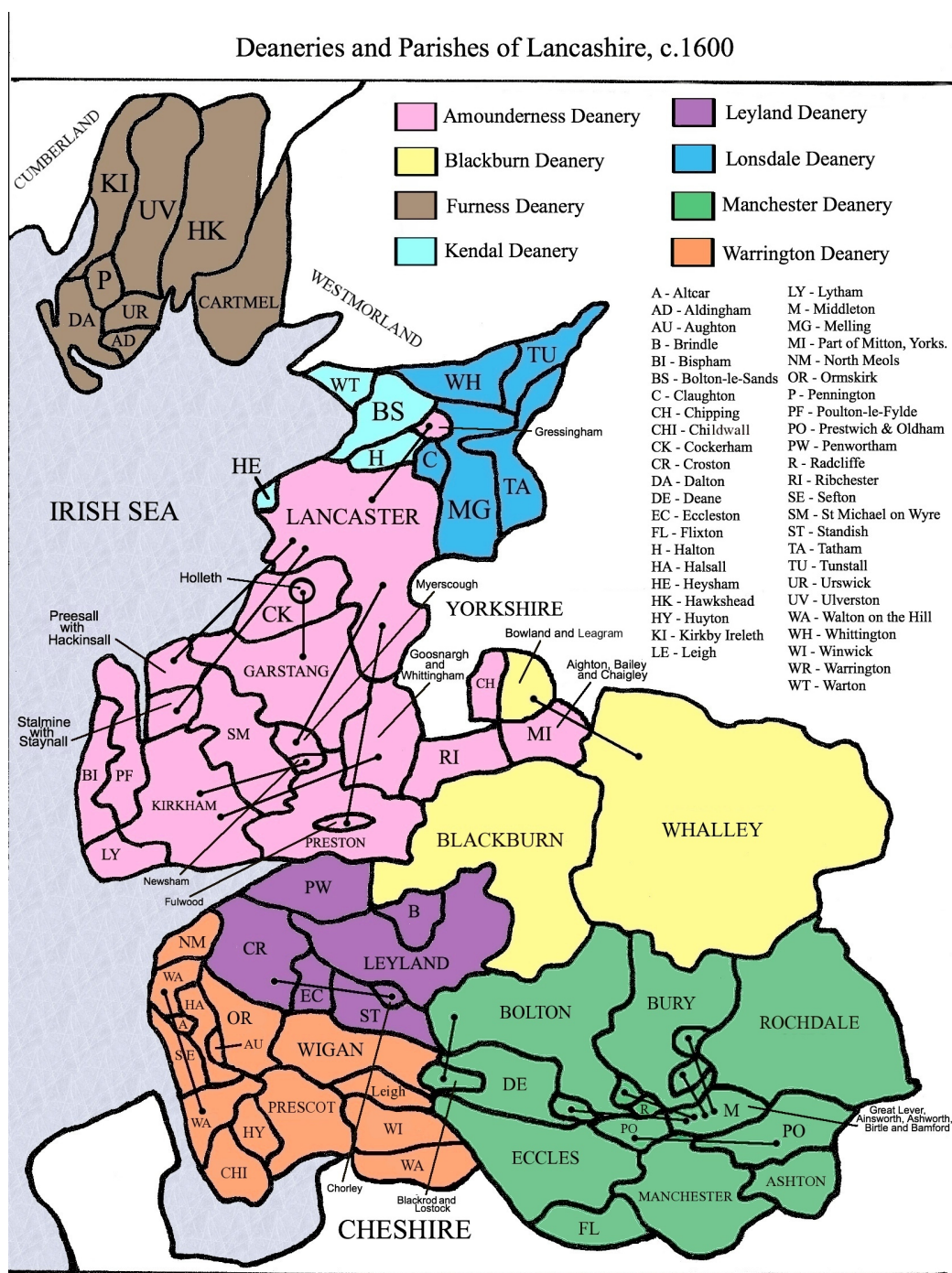
Map of the Diocese of Chester, showing deaneries and archdeaconries

Map Two



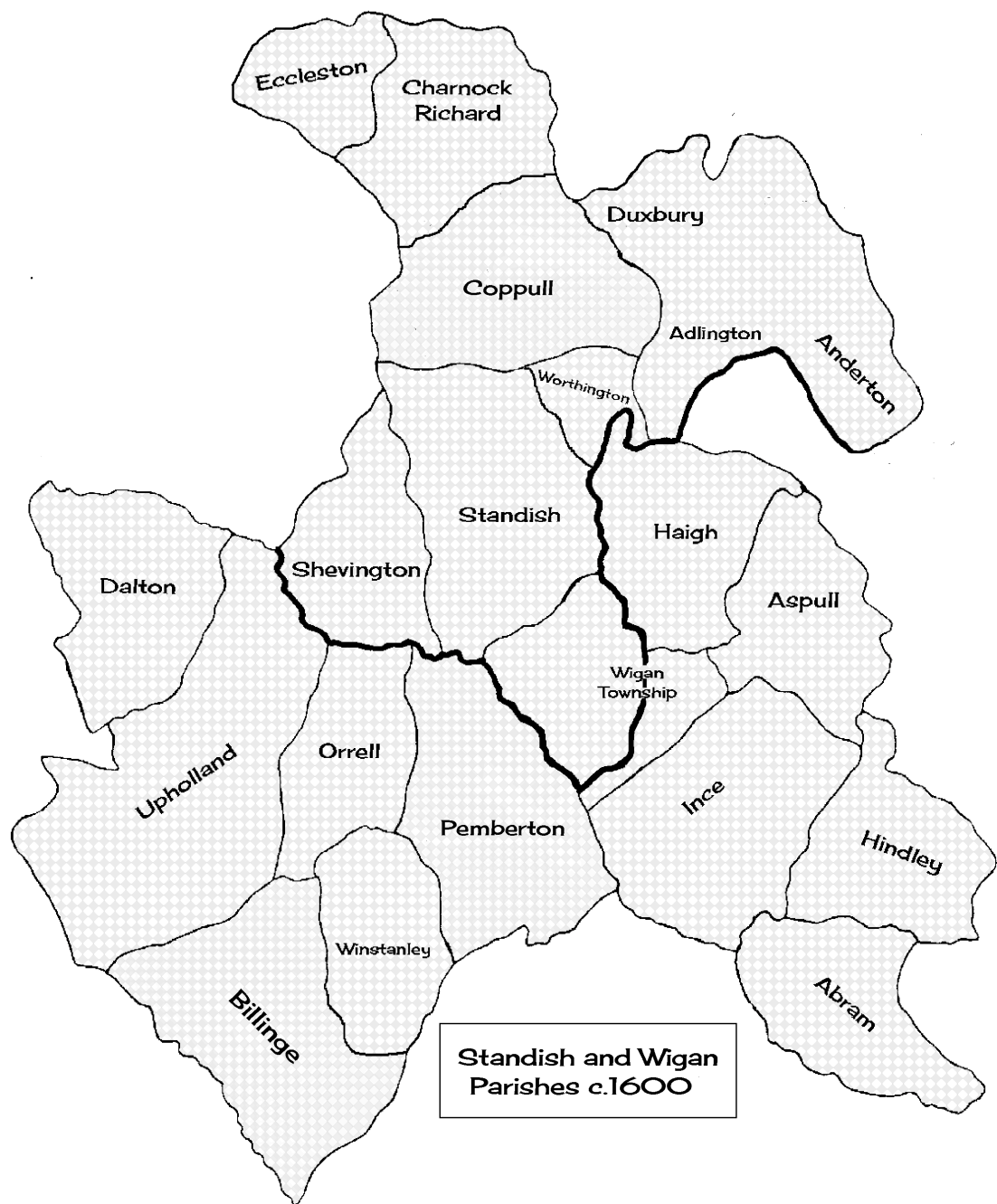
Map showing the hundreds of the Diocese of Chester

Map Three



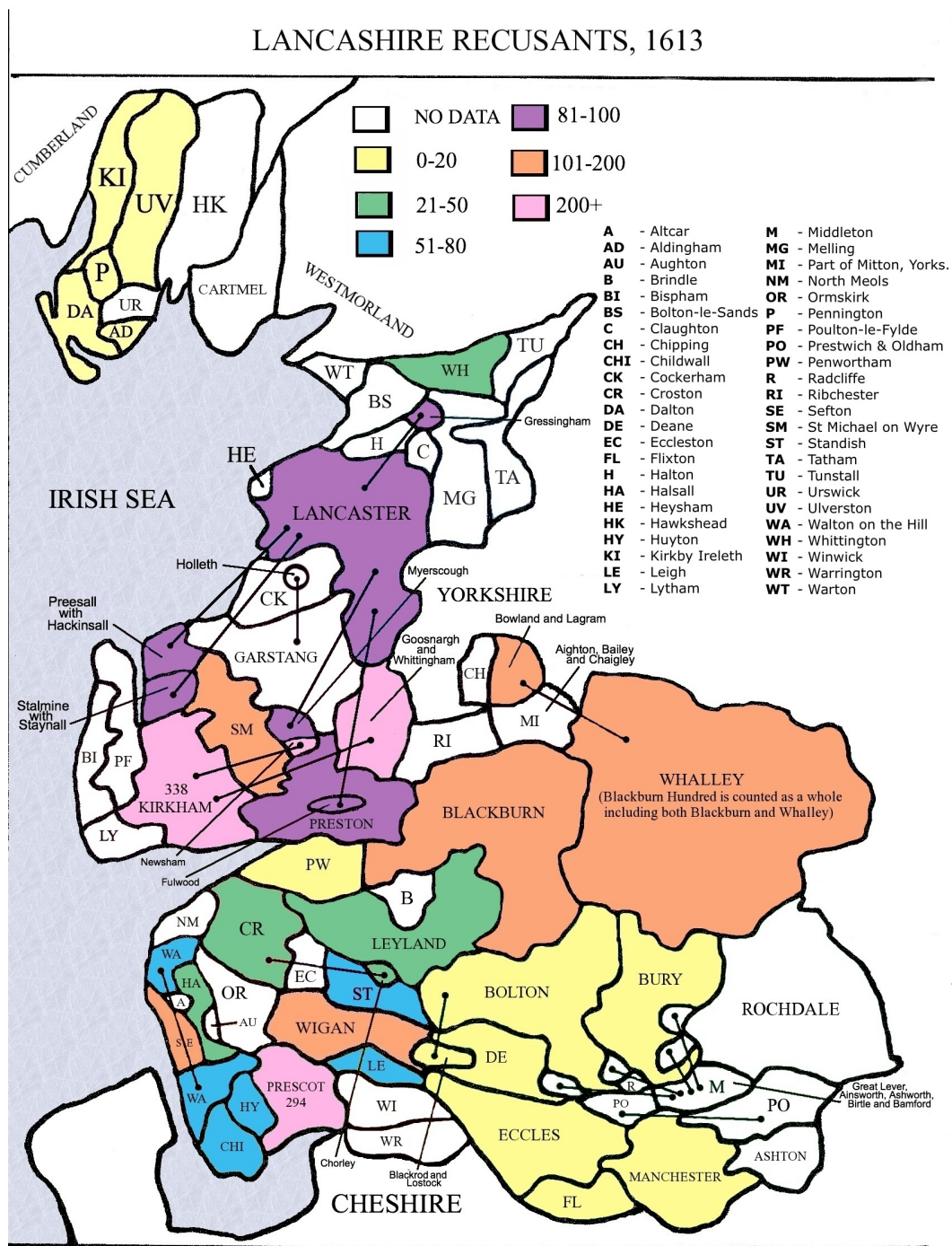
Map showing deaneries and parishes of Lancashire

Map Four



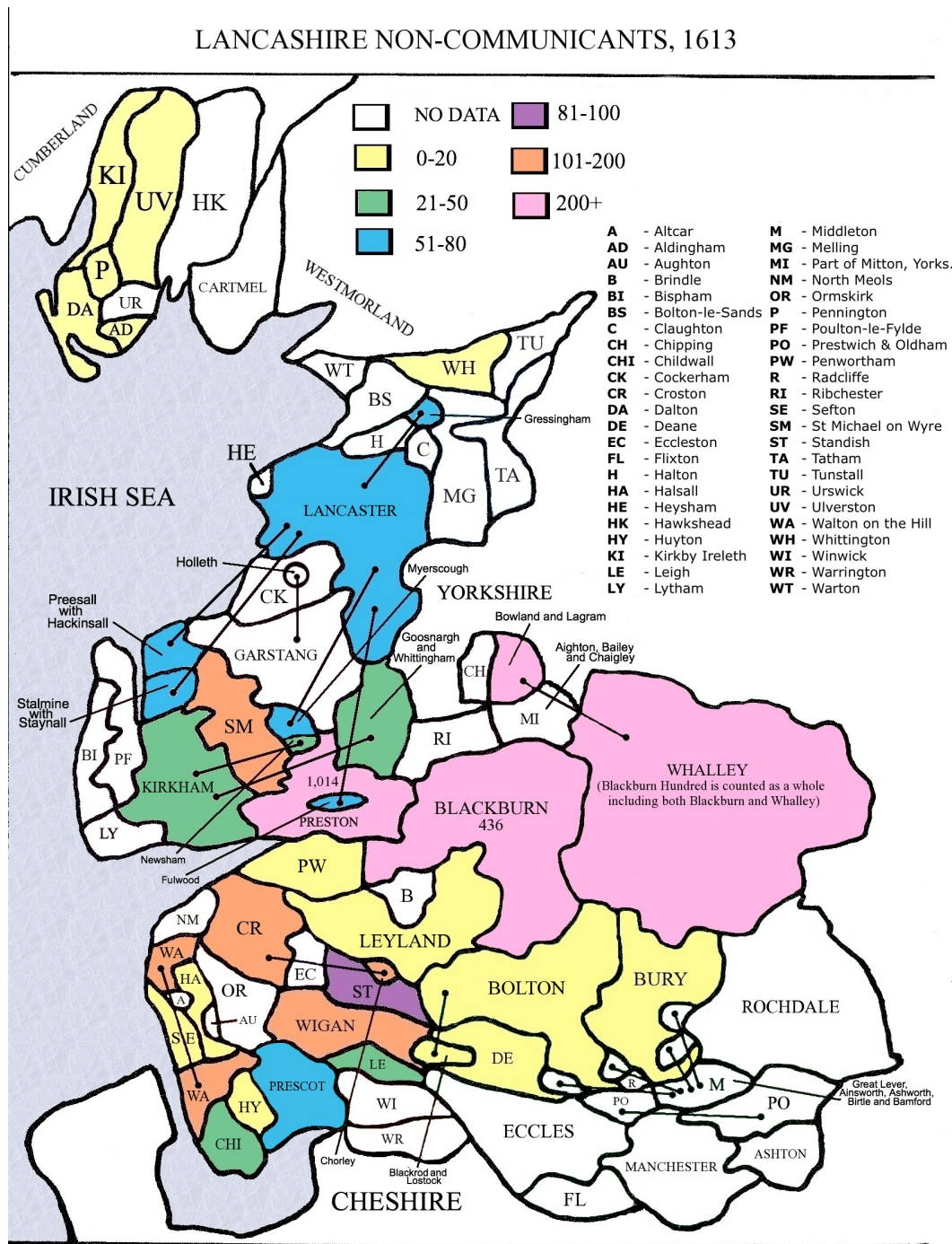
Map of Standish and Wigan Parishes

Map Five



Map plotting numbers of recusants presented from Lancashire parishes in 1613, as listed in British Library, Lansdowne 153/10 (1613)

Map Six



Map plotting numbers of non-communicants presented from Lancashire parishes in 1613, as listed in British Library, Lansdowne 153/10 (1613)

Table One

Place association	Number of nuns professed before 1650	% of 672 nuns professed pre- 1650 (to 2 decimal points)
Yorks	60	8.92
Essex	50	7.44
Oxon	43	6.39
Suffolk	42	6.25
Lancs	38	5.65
Staffs	36	5.35
Kent	34	5.05
Sussex	27	4.01
Hants	24	3.57
Norfolk	24	3.57
Bucks	23	3.42
London	21	3.12
Warws	20	2.97
Durham	17	2.52
Berks	16	2.38
Lincs	16	2.38
Herefs	15	2.23
Leics	15	2.23
Worcs	15	2.23
Northants	14	2.08
Somerset	14	2.08
Wilts	13	1.93
Cornw	12	1.78
Shrops	11	1.63
Gloucs	10	1.48
Monmths	10	1.48
Devon	9	1.33
Northd	9	1.33
Notts	9	1.33
Surrey	9	1.33
Herts	6	0.89
Cambs	5	0.74
Middx	5	0.74
Derbys	4	0.59
Rutland	3	0.44
Beds	2	0.29
Westmld	2	0.29
Chesh	1	0.14

Cumbd	1	0.14
Dorset	1	0.14
Hunts	1	0.14
Total	672	

Number of English nuns professed before 1650 by county of origin (by number)

Table Two

Place association	Number of nuns professed before 1650	% of all nuns before 1650 to two decimal points
Beds	2	0.29
Berks	16	2.38
Bucks	23	3.42
Cambs	5	0.74
Chesh	1	0.14
Cornw	12	1.78
Cumbrd	1	0.14
Derbys	4	0.59
Devon	9	1.33
Dorset	1	0.14
Durham	17	2.52
Essex	50	7.44
Gloucs	10	1.48
Hants	24	3.57
Herefs	15	2.23
Herts	6	0.89
Hunts	1	0.14
Kent	34	5.05
Lancs	38	5.65
Leics	15	2.23
Lincs	16	2.38
London	21	3.12
Middx	5	0.74
Monmths	10	1.48
Norfolk	24	3.57
Northants	14	2.08
Northd	9	1.33
Notts	9	1.33
Oxon	43	6.39
Rutland	3	0.44
Shrops	11	1.63
Somerset	14	2.08
Staffs	36	5.35

Suffolk	42	6.25
Surrey	9	1.33
Sussex	27	4.01
Warws	20	2.97
Westmld	2	0.29
Wilts	13	1.93
Worcs	15	2.23
Yorks	60	8.92
Total	672	

Number of English nuns professed before 1650 by county of origin (in alphabetical order)

Table Three

Convent [foundation date]	Number of nuns	% of nuns
Augustinians, Bruges [1629]	24	2.83
Augustinians, Louvain [1609]	109	12.88
Augustinians, Paris [1612/34]	43	5.08
Benedictines, Brussels [1599]	86	10.16
Benedictines, Cambrai [1623]	53	6.26
Benedictines, Dunkirk [1662]	11	1.30
Benedictines, Ghent [1624]	83	9.81
Benedictines, Paris [1653]	8	0.94
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise [1652/8]	9	1.06
Benedictines, Ypres [1665]	9	1.06
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon [1580/94]	48	5.67
Carmelites, Antwerp [1619]	61	7.21
Carmelites, Hoogstraten [1678]	3	0.35
Carmelites, Lierre [1648]	12	1.41
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges [1619]	81	9.57
Mary Ward Institute [1609/16]	5	0.59
Poor Clares, Aire [1629]	35	4.13
Poor Clares, Dunkirk [1662]	14	1.65
Poor Clares, Gravelines [1606]	117	13.82
Poor Clares, Rouen [1644]	16	1.89
Sepulchrines, Liège [1642]	13	1.53
Conceptionists, Paris [1658/9]	6	0.70
Total	852	

Number of English nuns associated with each convent, calculated using those who professed before 1650. Some nuns were members of more than one convent, often leaving to found or join daughter-houses at a later date (by order).

Table Four

Convent [foundation date]	Number of nuns	% of nuns
Poor Clares, Gravelines [1606]	117	13.82
Augustinians, Louvain [1609]	109	12.88
Benedictines, Brussels [1599]	86	10.16
Benedictines, Ghent [1624]	83	9.81
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges [1619]	81	9.57
Carmelites, Antwerp [1619]	61	7.21
Benedictines, Cambrai [1623]	53	6.26
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon [1580/94]	48	5.67
Augustinians, Paris [1612/34]	43	5.08
Poor Clares, Aire [1629]	35	4.13
Augustinians, Bruges [1629]	24	2.83
Poor Clares, Rouen [1644]	16	1.89
Poor Clares, Dunkirk [1662]	14	1.65
Sepulchrines, Liège [1642]	13	1.53
Carmelites, Lierre [1648]	12	1.41
Benedictines, Dunkirk [1662]	11	1.30
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise [1652/8]	9	1.06
Benedictines, Ypres [1665]	9	1.06
Benedictines, Paris [1653]	8	0.94
Conceptionists, Paris [1658/9]	6	0.70
Mary Ward Institute [1609/16]	5	0.59
Carmelites, Hoogstraten [1678]	3	0.35
Total	852	

Number of English nuns associated with each convent, calculated using those who professed before 1650. Some nuns were members of more than one convent, often leaving to found or join daughter-houses at a later date (by number).

Table Five

Convent	Number of Lancs nuns
Augustinians, Bruges	0
Augustinians, Louvain	6
Augustinians, Paris	2
Benedictines, Brussels	1
Benedictines, Cambrai	4
Benedictines, Dunkirk	0
Benedictines, Ghent	1
Benedictines, Paris	1
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise	1
Benedictines, Ypres	0
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon	0
Carmelites, Antwerp	1
Carmelites, Hoogstraten	0
Carmelites, Lierre	0
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges	3
Mary Ward Institute	0
Poor Clares, Aire	3
Poor Clares, Dunkirk	3
Poor Clares, Gravelines	19
Poor Clares, Rouen	2
Sepulchrines, Liège	0
Conceptionists, Paris	0
Total	47 (38 nuns)

**Number of Lancashire nuns in residence at each convent,
calculated using those professed before 1650 (some women
were members of more than one convent)**

Table Six

Convent	Number of Yorks nuns
Augustinians, Bruges	3
Augustinians, Louvain	13
Augustinians, Paris	3
Benedictines, Brussels	7
Benedictines, Cambrai	13
Benedictines, Dunkirk	1
Benedictines, Ghent	5
Benedictines, Paris	2
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise	1
Benedictines, Ypres	1
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon	3
Carmelites, Antwerp	2
Carmelites, Hoogstraten	0
Carmelites, Lierre	0
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges	8
Mary Ward Institute	1
Poor Clares, Aire	0
Poor Clares, Dunkirk	0
Poor Clares, Gravelines	3
Poor Clares, Rouen	2
Sepulchrines, Liège	1
Conceptionists, Paris	0
Total	69 (60 nuns)

**Number of Yorkshire nuns in residence at each convent,
calculated using those professed before 1650 (some women
were members of more than one convent)**

Table Seven

Convent	Number of Suffolk nuns
Augustinians, Bruges	1
Augustinians, Louvain	5
Augustinians, Paris	0
Benedictines, Brussels	5
Benedictines, Cambrai	4
Benedictines, Dunkirk	0
Benedictines, Ghent	3
Benedictines, Paris	0
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise	0
Benedictines, Ypres	0
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon	1
Carmelites, Antwerp	12
Carmelites, Hoogstraten	1
Carmelites, Lierre	1
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges	2
Mary Ward Institute	1
Poor Clares, Aire	0
Poor Clares, Dunkirk	2
Poor Clares, Gravelines	8
Poor Clares, Rouen	2
Sepulchrines, Liège	2
Conceptionists, Paris	1
Total	51 (42 nuns)

Number of Suffolk nuns in residence at each convent, calculated using those professed before 1650 (some women were members of more than one convent)

Table Eight

Convent	Number of Kent nuns
Augustinians, Bruges	1
Augustinians, Louvain	6
Augustinians, Paris	0
Benedictines, Brussels	6
Benedictines, Cambrai	2
Benedictines, Dunkirk	0
Benedictines, Ghent	10
Benedictines, Paris	0
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise	2
Benedictines, Ypres	1
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon	1
Carmelites, Antwerp	2
Carmelites, Hoogstraten	0
Carmelites, Lierre	0
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges	4
Mary Ward Institute	0
Poor Clares, Aire	1
Poor Clares, Dunkirk	0
Poor Clares, Gravelines	5
Poor Clares, Rouen	0
Sepulchrines, Liège	0
Conceptionists, Paris	1
Total	42 (34 nuns)

Number of Kent nuns in residence at each convent, calculated using those professed before 1650 (some women were members of more than one convent)

Table Nine

Convent	Number of Essex nuns
Augustinians, Bruges	1
Augustinians, Louvain	12
Augustinians, Paris	0
Benedictines, Brussels	10
Benedictines, Cambrai	7
Benedictines, Dunkirk	1
Benedictines, Ghent	6
Benedictines, Paris	1
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise	0
Benedictines, Ypres	0
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon	2
Carmelites, Antwerp	9
Carmelites, Hoogstraten	1
Carmelites, Lierre	1
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges	2
Mary Ward Institute	0
Poor Clares, Aire	0
Poor Clares, Dunkirk	0
Poor Clares, Gravelines	1
Poor Clares, Rouen	0
Sepulchrines, Liège	2
Conceptionists, Paris	1
Total	57 (50 nuns)

**Number of Essex nuns in residence at each convent,
calculated using those professed before 1650 (some women
were members of more than one convent)**

Table Ten

Convent	Number of Oxon nuns
Augustinians, Bruges	1
Augustinians, Louvain	4
Augustinians, Paris	5
Benedictines, Brussels	6
Benedictines, Cambrai	10
Benedictines, Dunkirk	1
Benedictines, Ghent	8
Benedictines, Paris	3
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise	1
Benedictines, Ypres	1
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon	0
Carmelites, Antwerp	3
Carmelites, Hoogstraten	0
Carmelites, Lierre	0
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges	3
Mary Ward Institute	1
Poor Clares, Aire	1
Poor Clares, Dunkirk	1
Poor Clares, Gravelines	3
Poor Clares, Rouen	2
Sepulchrines, Liège	0
Conceptionists, Paris	0
Total	54 (43 nuns)

**Number of Oxfordshire nuns in residence at each convent,
calculated using those professed before 1650 (some women
were members of more than one convent)**

Table Eleven

Convent	Number of Staffs nuns
Augustinians, Bruges	3
Augustinians, Louvain	10
Augustinians, Paris	0
Benedictines, Brussels	4
Benedictines, Cambrai	0
Benedictines, Dunkirk	0
Benedictines, Ghent	1
Benedictines, Paris	0
Benedictines, Boulougne, Pontoise	0
Benedictines, Ypres	0
Bridgettines, Rouen, Lisbon	0
Carmelites, Antwerp	7
Carmelites, Hoogstraten	1
Carmelites, Lierre	1
Franciscans, Brussels, Nieuport, Bruges	2
Mary Ward Institute	1
Poor Clares, Aire	0
Poor Clares, Dunkirk	1
Poor Clares, Gravelines	11
Poor Clares, Rouen	1
Sepulchrines, Liège	0
Conceptionists, Paris	0
Total	43 (36 nuns)

Number of Staffordshire nuns in residence at each convent, calculated using those professed before 1650 (some women were members of more than one convent)

Figure One

Lancashire nuns professed before 1650, highlighting those who professed with the Poor Clares at Gravelines and the Augustinians at Louvain.

Jane Allen
Ann Anderton
Dorothy Anderton
Elinor Anderton
Elizabeth Anderton
Mary Anderton
Anne Beswick
Ann Blundell
Margaret Blundell
Margaret Blundell
Ann Bradshaigh
Elizabeth Bradshaigh
Ellen Bradshaigh
Ellenor Bradshaigh
Elizabeth Cansfield
Catherine Clifton
Dorothy Clifton
Dorothy Clifton
Elizabeth Clifton
Anne Forster
Frances Gerard
Elizabeth Gillibrand
Margaret Gillibrand
Anne Hodson
Mary Hoghton
Dorothy Huddleston
Hellen Kenion
Margaret Kenion
Anne Massey
Helen Parker
Margaret Parker
Grace Pennington
Ann Standish
Elizabeth Tyldesley
Ann Walton
Ann Wesby
Anne Worthington
Mary Worthington

Bold = Poor Clares, Gravelines
Bold Italic = Augustinians, Louvain

Figure Two

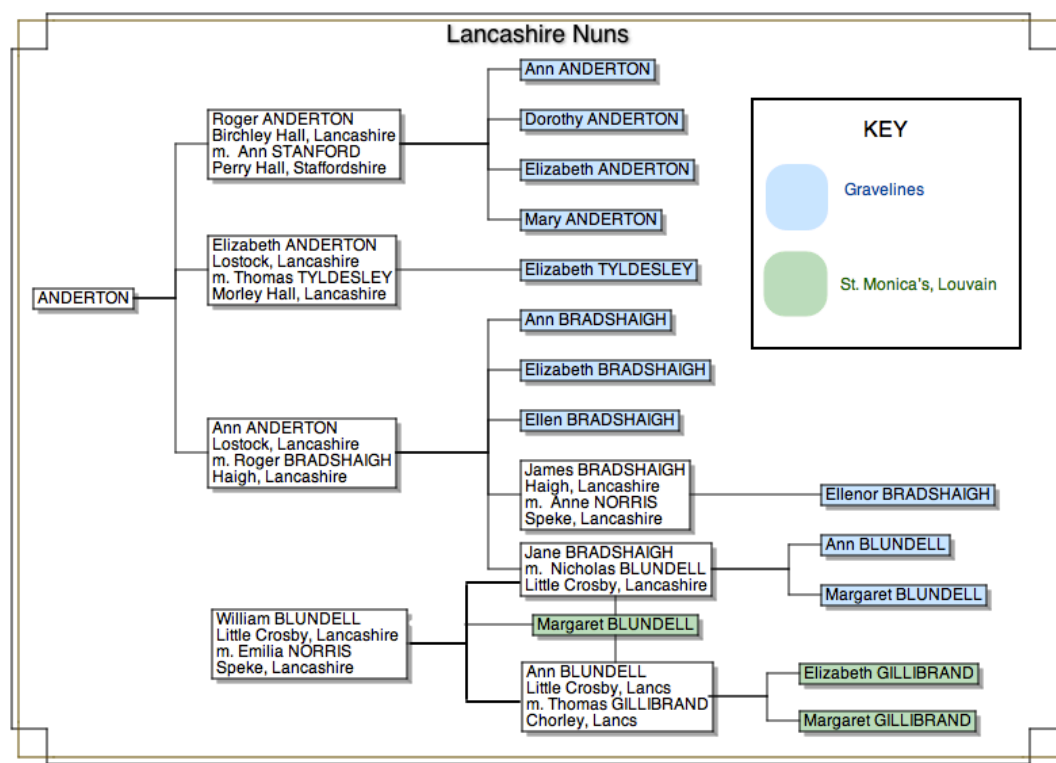


Diagram showing the familial relationships between Lancashire nuns - Andertons, Bradshaighs, Blundells, Gillibrands and Tyldesleys.

Figure Three

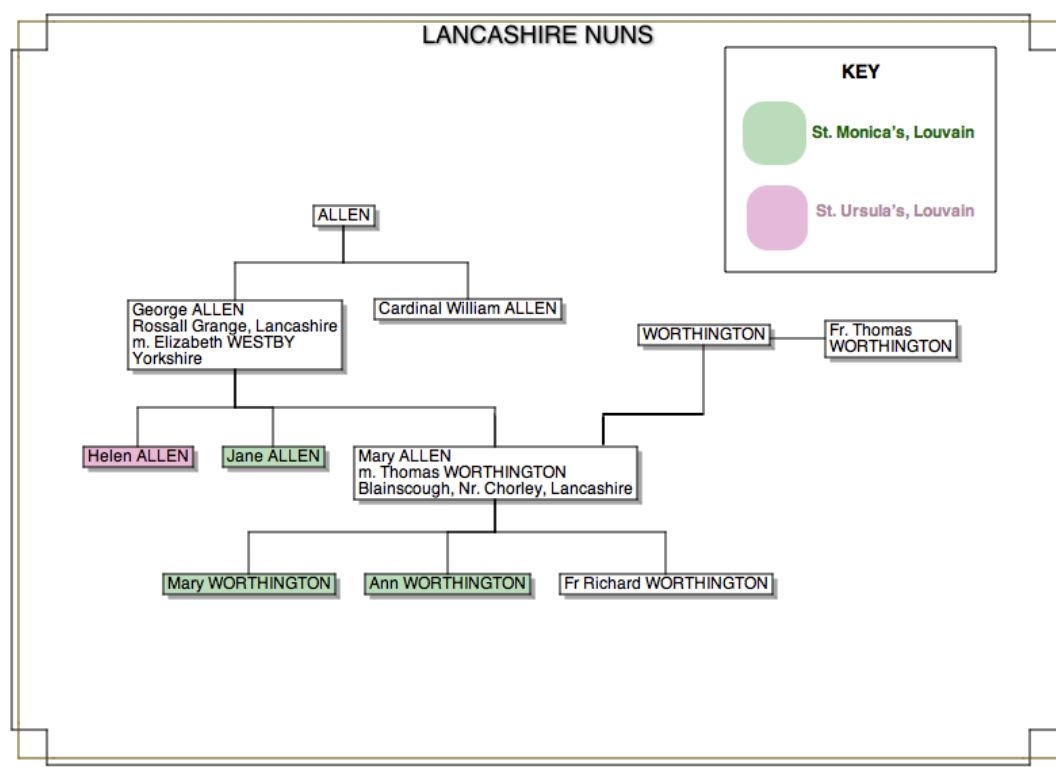


Diagram showing the familial relationships between Lancashire nuns - Allens and Worthingtons.

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HC.CP - High Commission Cause Papers

V.1578-9 - V.1607 - Visitation Records

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Cheshire Record Office, Chester

EDA 1 - Bishops' Act Books

EDA 2 - Bishops' Registers

EDA 3/1 - Bishop Bridgeman's Register

EDA 12 - Commissioners in Ecclesiastical Causes

EDB - Bishop's Transcripts

EDC 1 - Consistory Court Books

EDC 2 - Consistory Deposition Book

EDC 5 - Consistory Court Papers

EDC 6 - Penances and Excommunications

EDC 7 - Marriage Act Books

EDP - Parish Bundles

EDV 1 - Visitation Correction Books

EDV 2 - Visitation Call Books

QSE - Quarter Session Examinations and Depositions

Douai Abbey Archives, Reading

Augustinian Canonesses formerly of St Monica's, Louvain, MS Louvain

Chronicle, MS C 2

[This thesis made use of a printed transcript of this manuscript that was produced by Caroline Bowden on behalf of the Who Were the Nuns? project. All references in this thesis are to the printed transcription produced by Dom. Adam Hamilton. However, thanks go to Caroline Bowden and Douai Abbey Archives for allowing me use of this transcript during the production of this thesis.]

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DDBL - Blundell of Crosby Papers

DDKE - Kenyon of Peel Manuscripts

The National Archives

DL - Records of the Duchy of Lancaster

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More information about the project is available at this website, along the prosopographical database:

<http://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/index.html>

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