

Religious and Social Change in the West Riding of
Yorkshire 1550-1700: A Study of Almondbury and the
Surrounding Parishes

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Abstract

The West Riding locality of Almondbury experienced major religious and social changes during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These changes saw the emergence of new rapidly ascending gentry families such as the Kayes of Woodsome and Ramsdens of Longley. Along with the Beaumonts of Whitley, through conformity to the established Church, these families asserted their dominance over the local area and enjoyed major success along the way. This masters addresses three key themes. Firstly, it explores the nature of religious change in the locality and argues that this change was atypical of religious change in Yorkshire. Much of the research on the county as a whole has evidenced that Catholic survivalism was a defining feature. In the locality of Almondbury however, due to its geographical position and the makeup of local society, religious change took on a tone of Protestant conformity. Secondly, this thesis argues that the local conformist gentry shared a commonality of priorities. These priorities centred around wealth, authority and religion. Interestingly, the religious and social upheaval of the period brought new opportunities and ways in which the local gentry could advance these priorities. Finally, the conformist nature of religious reform in the locality is examined further to demonstrate that this conformity was conservative conformity and retained several pre-Reformation elements of religion. This conformity was also a defining feature of the social circle which encompassed the local gentry and clergy and dominated local affairs. This final theme also explores how the conformist gentry continued to use local religion and the church building to advance their priorities during this period. Ultimately, this masters demonstrates that no uniform theme of religious change can be applied to the whole of Yorkshire and how, when the local gentry of a locality were predominantly conformists, religious change could go in a notably different direction.

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Introduction and Methodology

England from 1550-1700 was a country where 'God Mattered'.¹ In late medieval England, Catholicism was a fundamental part of contemporary life and provided the framework 'by which men and women structured their experience of the world, and their hopes within and beyond it.'² By the end of the seventeenth century, Protestantism and its ideas had become the mainstream religious confession in England. By this point, the process of religious reform had played a major role for almost two centuries creating 'significant religious and social upheaval'.³ This upheaval would have undoubtedly touched the lives of every member of local society to some extent. The substantial changes brought about by the Reformation were also highly influential in changing England's social hierarchy and distribution of power. These social changes, and their causes, have been a major topic in early modern England's scholarship with historians debating topics such as the occurrence of a 'reformation of manners' which accompanied the upheaval of the period and created a more orderly and disciplined society.⁴ The gentry in particular experienced significant economic and social changes during this period resulting from the impact of the Reformation in addition to influential political factors such as 'the centralising Tudor monarchy' and the new opportunities which emerged for the gentry from it.⁵ The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries undoubtedly saw 'profound changes' for the social group.⁶

Following on from the reformatory laws brought to England by Henry VIII and Parliament, the period 1550-1700 saw a number of major events which impacted both the religious and social history of the country.⁷ Amongst these, from 1558-1603 the country was ruled by

¹ Haigh, C. (1993). *English Reformations*. Clarendon Press. (p.285)

² Duffy, E. (2005). *The Stripping of the Altars* (2nd ed.). Yale University Press. (p.1)

³ Morton, A., & Lewycky, N. (2012). *Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England - Essays in Honour of Professor W. J. Sheils*. Routledge. (p.1)

⁴ Hutton, R. (1994). *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700*. Oxford University Press. (p.111)

⁵ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Salvato, D. (2018). *The English Reformation Revisited: The Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. (p.2)

Queen Elizabeth whose 'idiosyncratic Protestant' settlement was a key component in the forming of English religion, the seventeenth century brought the English Civil War (1642-1651) followed by the Interregnum (1649-1660) where puritans ruled the land and finally, the years of 1688 and 1689 saw the 'Glorious Revolution' followed by the Toleration Act of 1689 which afforded toleration to Protestant nonconformists.⁸

This time period has also been selected with a great deal of consideration. Though the symptoms of reform were visible with Lutherans in the early decades of the sixteenth century and Lollards even prior to that, not to mention that England's legislative path towards a reformed religion began with Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1534, much of the evidence demonstrating the religious and social changes of the Reformation began to appear in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁹ This makes 1550 a sensible choice for the lower boundary of the study. Additionally, in contrast to many religious and societal studies which take the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642 as their upper boundary, the year 1700 is a more appropriate upper boundary.¹⁰ The core reason for this is that the process of religious and social change continued beyond, and was in many ways most evident during and following, the major turmoil caused by the English Civil War and the subsequent Interregnum. At Kirkheaton, for example, during the interregnum the parish was exposed to a more evangelical type of Protestantism than it had previously experienced when Parliament appointed a Puritan rector to the church.¹¹ Moreover, similar to Wrightson and Levine's explanation that by extending the analysis of Terling to the end of the seventeenth century it was possible to fruitfully examine 'a complex of demographic, economic, political, social and cultural changes', a period of 150 years allows for this work to

⁸ Ryrie, A. (2020). *The English Reformation: A Very Brief History*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Retrieved from https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_English_Reformation/PZ3SDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=ryrie+the+english+reformation+a+brief+history&printsec=frontcover (Further details can be found in the 'Chronology' and 'Introduction').

⁹ Rex, R. (2002). *The Lollards*. Palgrave. (pp.25-53); Dickens, A. G. (1989). *The English Reformation* (2nd ed.). Batsford. (p.13)

¹⁰ Marshall, P. (2008). *Reformation England 1480-1642*. Oxford University Press; Trevor Roper, H. (1953). *The Gentry 1540-1640*. Cambridge University Press for the Economic History Society.

¹¹ Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.129)

productively evaluate the major religious and social changes within the locality of Almondbury whilst still restraining the period of study to a sensible length.¹²

The geographical focus of this masters, the locality of Almondbury which is defined and explored further in a later chapter, has also been chosen with much deliberation. Although there is a rich and detailed historiography available regarding the religious and social changes of England as a whole during this period, studies focusing on these changes within this locality are sparse. Additionally, pre-existing studies which do acknowledge the major changes of this period often fail to do so in detail. In his work *The History of Huddersfield*, Roy Brook emphasised that ‘a very complex religious situation had developed within Huddersfield’ by 1660 due to the impact of religious change spanning more than a century.¹³ However, beyond this, the work offered little insight into the detailed complexities of claims such as this or even how Brook established such conclusions. The influential conformist gentry families of the locality have also been relatively neglected in the literature of early modern England. Though Robert Tittler’s work on John Kaye (d.1594) provided a fascinating study of one of the most influential gentlemen of the locality during this period, in general, the modern historiographical writings which mention the local conformist gentry have often done so in a fleeting manner and as part of a wider national argument rather than as part of an analysis of the local picture.¹⁴ Consequently, though the work of historians including Aveling, Cliffe and Tittler has fruitfully enhanced our understanding of the religious and social changes in our geographical area between 1550-1700, there is still much work to be done to attain a greater understanding of the impact that these changes had on the locality during this period.¹⁵

¹² Wrightson, K., & Levine, D. (1995). *Poverty and Piety in and English Village: Terling, 1525-1700*. Oxford University Press. (p.2)

¹³ Brook, R. (1968). *The Story of Huddersfield*. Macgibbon & Kee. (p.56)

¹⁴ Tittler, R. (2015). Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567. *Northern History*, 52 (2), 182-199. doi: 10.1179/0078172X15Z.00000000087; Tittler, R. (2015). *Kaye, John*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/107187>

¹⁵ Aveling, D. H. (1963). *The Catholic Recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558 – 1790*. Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society; Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press; Tittler, R. (2015). Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567. *Northern History*, 52 (2), 182-199. doi: 10.1179/0078172X15Z.00000000087.

The changes in both religion and the societal position of the gentry, which as subsequent chapters of this work demonstrate were intrinsically connected, were crucial to parish life and the structure of local society between 1550-1700. Consequently, the purpose of this masters as a vehicle for study into the extent of religious change, in connection with the inspection of the local conformist gentry and their interactions with religion and their other priorities, is a fruitful way to enhance the understanding of the religious and social changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the so far underexamined locality of Almondbury, Yorkshire, and the country as a whole.

In analysing the religious and social changes within the locality of Almondbury, this work focuses on three key themes which are Catholic survivalism in the locality, the conformist gentry and their priorities and finally, local religion and gentry authority through the church. Each of these three themes centres around a fundamental research question. The first of these questions is, was religious change in the locality of Almondbury typical of conservative religious change in Yorkshire? This research question sets the tone for the chapter which endeavours to place the locality of Almondbury, along with its experience of religious change and the role of its gentry families, in the wider context of Yorkshire as a whole. From the early research of historians including Hugh Aveling, to more modern interpretations made by historians such as Sarah Bastow, the study of the Reformation in Yorkshire has been dominated by a narrative of conservatism and active resistance to the advance of the new religion.¹⁶ This contextual theme is significant as it is only through comparing the existing research and arguments regarding the Reformation in Yorkshire that it is indeed possible to understand the significance of the religious change, and the influence that the local conformist gentry had on it, in the locality.

The second of these research questions is, what were the priorities of the local conformist gentry? As other studies have shown, it was a common feature for the families at the top of the local social hierarchy to play a significant role in shaping the changing social and religious scenery of this period.¹⁷ Consequently, because the conformist gentry were the

¹⁶ Aveling, D. H. (1963). *The Catholic Recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558 – 1790*. Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society; Bastow, S. L. (2007). *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 Resistance and Accommodation*. Edwin Mellen Press.

¹⁷ Wrightson, K., & Levine, D. (1995). *Poverty and Piety in and English Village: Terling, 1525-1700*. Oxford University Press.

most powerful and influential figures in the locality and therefore played a fundamental role in the significant changes of the period, it is only through examination of their priorities that the changes in the locality and their context can be fully understood. Understanding the priorities of the local gentry also supports this thesis in placing these local families within, and drawing comparisons with, the broader social group and their common priorities both in Yorkshire and England as a whole.

The final research question of this work is, what was the nature of religious change in the locality and how did the conformist gentry use religion and the church building to advance their priorities? This research question was chosen as it allows this thesis to further develop the findings and arguments of the preceding sections whilst also directly contributing to major historiographical trends and methodological approaches regarding the national picture of religious and social change during this period. Most notably, these trends include the hotly debated topic of a 'Calvinist Consensus' and the modern historiographical research method of material culture.¹⁸

Ian Woodward referred to material culture as 'a range of scholarly inquiry into the uses and meanings of objects.'¹⁹ Specifically for this study, the term 'object' is taken to include not just the objects found within the church, such as the pews or the font, but also the architecture and layout of the church building. Although the study of material culture poses its challenges, the Victorians for example made many alterations to objects from the sixteenth century, cross comparing written sources with elements of material culture is undoubtedly a productive approach to increasing the dynamism of the study. It also offers a unique insight into the way the church building was used to support religious practice and the priorities of the local gentry.

Alongside the study of material culture, this masters draws on many written sources including local churchwarden accounts, letters, diary entries and ecclesiastical records. Of particular use to this study were the parish registers of Almondbury and Kirkburton, contemporary wills and the numerous religious and heraldic visitations of Yorkshire.²⁰

¹⁸ Lake, P. (1982). *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁹ Woodward, I. (2007). *Understanding Material culture*. SAGE. doi:10.4135/9781446278987 (p.10)

²⁰ *The Parish Register of Almondbury 1557-1598*, ed. Taylor, H. (1974). The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Volume 1 (Part 1); *The Parish Registers of Kirkburton 1541-1654*, ed. Collins, F. A. (1887). Retrieved from

Localised source materials such as these were vital to understanding religious practice in the locality, in addition to the makeup and networks of the local gentry families across the period. Not only does this study deploy the standard practice of examining written sources with an analytical eye and consideration of their limitations, but it also gives great attention to cross-comparison with other source types to enhance the findings of the research.

On top of utilising material culture in general, another source type examined is portraiture. Tittler explained that this period saw ‘a dramatic expansion in England of what we might think of as the social and/or political use of the portrait medium’.²¹ Though when analysing portraiture, it is important to acknowledge that there are limitations as the source type is analysed predominantly through individual interpretation, when used in a supporting role to written records, portraiture remains a useful tool in understanding the priorities and values of the contemporary gentry.

Much of the research for this thesis was completed during the Covid-19 pandemic and was subject to the consequent travel restrictions meaning that this work draws significantly from online source material. The work has utilised online archives and databases including ‘British History Online’ (BHO) and ‘State Papers Online’.²² Though archives such as these are concerned primarily with resources referring to the national picture, they do include numerous sources which reference major events and achievements regarding the local gentry. Moreover, online archives, and their focus on source material which tells the national picture, were also useful for evaluating the wider context of the changes of the period on a regional and national level. Another online database which provided a fundamental component in the research of this masters is the ‘Clergy of the Church of England Database (CCed)’.²³ This database has been imperative in identifying the influential

https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Parish_Registers_of_Kirkburton_Co_Yo/RK0TAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Parish+of+kirkburton&printsec=frontcover

²¹ Tittler, R. (2015). Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567. *Northern History*, 52 (2), 182-199. doi: 10.1179/0078172X15Z.00000000087.

²² *British History Online*, Version 5.0 <www.british-history.ac.uk> [accessed 19 August 2021]; *State Papers Online, 1509-1714*. Available from <https://www.gale.com/intl/primary-sources/state-papers-online>

²³ *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540 – 1835*. Available from <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

figures in local religion such as the patrons of the local clergy, alongside providing a timeline of the local clergymen in the parishes, rectories and chapelries of the locality.

This masters also draws on nineteenth and twentieth-century local studies, most prominently Hulbert's *Annals of the Church and Parish of Almondbury*.²⁴ These studies were vital in offering context to the religious and social changes of the period as well as providing access to multiple contemporary primary sources which, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, were otherwise unavailable. Despite their use, this thesis treats their content with caution acknowledging that mistakes, although uncommon, are included within their pages. Cross-comparison with other primary sources is therefore deployed to ensure the information extracted from these studies is accurate.

Historiography

The English Reformation

Although the modern approaches of today's scholars have in recent years led to some of the most innovative research on the topic to date and are undeniably invaluable, any historiographical overview must start with earlier works to explore the context for the development of newer interpretations.

One central theme of the early historiography was to frame the religious changes of the period in terms of either being a 'rapid reformation from above' or 'rapid reformation from below'.²⁵ Growing out of his Tudor revolution in Government thesis and viewing the Reformation primarily through a political lens rather than a social one, Geoffrey Elton depicted the religious changes of the period as swift and principally driven by governmental political figures such as Thomas Cromwell alongside the Monarch.²⁶ Elton's interpretation was supported by historians including Peter Clark. In his study of Kent, Clark found that the 'major change in the composition of the Kentish church' made by Cromwell and Archbishop

²⁴ Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the Church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co.

²⁵ Haigh, C. (1982). The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation. *The Historical Journal*, 25(4), 995-1007. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00021385>

²⁶ Elton, G. R. (1977). *Reform and Reformation 1509-1558*. Edward Arnold.

Thomas Cranmer played a significant role in the success of the new religion in the region.²⁷ Although other historians of the period also agreed that Protestantism's success could be attributed to its imposition by the government, not all agreed that it was a swift process. Penry Williams argued that the implementation of the Protestant, or more specifically Anglican, faith was initiated by the Crown, then adopted by the enforcing political nation and respected by the people.²⁸ For Williams, this process was much slower than Elton envisaged and was only achieved during Elizabeth's reign when people were 'pushed towards conformity rather than driven into resistance.'²⁹

A.G Dickens was one of the key objectors to the idea that the Reformation was 'imposed by the monarchy'.³⁰ In contrast to Elton, Dickens argued that it was the rapid conversion of the people that was the driving force behind the English Reformation. In his study of the Diocese of York, Dickens drew links between elements including the Lollard tradition of 'illicit Bible-reading' and previous religious dissent to argue that the 'new seed' of Protestantism succeeded in the diocese as it 'fell upon ground prepared for its reception' by Lollardy.³¹

As with much of the period's historiography, these arguments are significantly problematic to the modern historian. As this chapter subsequently explores, the English Reformation was far too complex a process to be framed within the boundaries and language of a 'rapid reformation from above' or 'rapid reformation from below'.³² Consequently, this thesis works against these arguments made by historians including Elton and Dickens.

Another consistent theme of many of the early works, and one which featured heavily within the reformation from above or below debate, was their strong pro-Protestant viewpoint in addition to, in almost all cases, a definitive tone to their arguments which dismissed compromise and variables such as locality and individualism. Elton claimed that

²⁷ Clark, P. (1977). *English Provincial Society from The Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500-1640*. The Harvester Press. (p.36)

²⁸ Williams, P. (1979). *The Tudor Regime*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. (p.292)

²⁹ Williams, P. (1979). *The Tudor Regime*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

³⁰ Dickens, A. G. (1982). *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York 1509-1558*. The Hambledon Press. (p.245)

³¹ Dickens, A. G. (1982). *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York 1509-1558*. The Hambledon Press. (p.245)

³² Haigh, C. (1982). The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation. *The Historical Journal*, 25(4), 995-1007. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00021385>

the spread of Protestantism was a popular movement in the Tudor period to the extent that, even as early as Mary's reign, the Reformation 'had taken a much firmer hold than has often been supposed'.³³ Moreover, by the final Tudor years, Elton envisaged that the situation regarding Protestant religious change was even more comprehensive with Catholicism 'rendered innocuous' and that the period had overseen the successful emergence of a moderate Protestant Church with Queen Elizabeth I at its head.³⁴

Though the historiography in time moved away from the challenges that works such as Elton's possessed, this was a gradual process. When Penry Williams added a much greater critique to the utopian styled Tudor England that Elton portrayed, even he fell guilty of making the overly definitive statement that 'the Elizabethan Settlement successfully became the religion of the people' by the time of her death in 1603.³⁵

The overtly pro-Protestant tone is undoubtedly one of the greatest issues that the historiography of the 1950s and 1960s presents to the modern reader. The roots of this approach can be found through analysing several societal features from the decades in which the likes of Elton and Williams were writing. One key influence in the setting of this tone was that the Church of England remained influential within English society during this period. Even though the twentieth century saw the gradual secularisation of society, Anglicanism remained 'the religion of the majority'.³⁶ In his book, Kenneth O Morgan described how religion also interacted with other key considerations of British affairs. One such example was that in the late 1920s, religion was linked with the notion of empire 'through youth movements such as the Boy scouts and Church brigade'.³⁷ Though the 1920s were three decades prior to the writings of Elton and Dickens, it was within the context of those years that such historians studied and formed their arguments.

A second consideration for the frequent appearance of the overtly pro-Protestant tone, especially regarding Elton and his favourable approach towards the Tudor dynasty, was the accession of Elizabeth II to the throne in 1952. The accession of the second Queen Elizabeth

³³ Elton, G. R. (1977). *Reform and Reformation 1509-1558*. Edward Arnold. (p.388-389)

³⁴ Elton, G. R. (1955). *England under the Tudors*. Methuen. (p.460)

³⁵ Williams, P. (1979). *The Tudor Regime*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. (p.258)

³⁶ Clapson, M. (2009). *The Routledge Companion to Britain in the Twentieth Century*. Routledge. (p.371)

³⁷ Morgan, K. O. (2000). *Twentieth-Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. (p.44)

created a feeling of 'renewed national greatness' and talk of a new 'Elizabethan age' within England at the time.³⁸ This certainly revealed itself in the historiography where the achievements of the original Queen Elizabeth, most notably the religious settlement, received much praise during the period. Consequently, the influence that the Anglican Church retained, in connection with the feeling of optimism that the accession of a second Queen Elizabeth encouraged, had a significant effect on the early Protestant tone of the historiography.

Even when the Protestant tone on the Reformation was opposed, the issue of an unrealistically definitive approach to the subject remained. As Rosemary O'Day explained, one of the reasons for this is that historians of the period mistakenly used 'the language of quantification' when answering complex questions on the population's religious makeup and identity; questions which required far more multifaceted and dynamic answers than the early historiography dared to investigate.³⁹ In what can be considered a defence of English Catholicism, J.J. Scarisbrick presented an example of this oversimplified and definitive style of argument when portraying the Reformation as chiefly implemented from above and encouraged by the greed of those 'at the top of the social scale.'⁴⁰ Although conceding that Catholicism faced challenges up until the end of the sixteenth century, Scarisbrick painted a triumphant return for the religion by the 1630s and brushed aside the impact of Protestantism with the phrase that 'another wheel had turned at least part of a circle.'⁴¹ Unlike modern historical approaches that compare English Protestantism and its Catholic predecessor, Scarisbrick was definitively dismissive of the changes to English religion and religious practice brought about by the Protestant Reformation.

The often linear and definitive nature of the early historiography did not go unchallenged. Revisionist writings on the subject included much greater consideration of the different dynamics which impacted religious change. For John Guy, Elizabethan Anglicanism, which was in part fuelled by the Protestant foreign policy of the 1570s and 1580s that 'did much to forge the link between Protestantism and national identity', triumphed within England by

³⁸ Pearce, M., & Stewart, G. (2002). *British Political History 1867-2001: Democracy and Decline* (3rd ed.). Routledge. (p.610)

³⁹ O'Day, R. (2014). *The Debate on the English Reformation* (2nd ed.). Manchester University Press. (p.184)

⁴⁰ Scarisbrick, J. J. (1984). *The Reformation and the English People*. Blackwell Publisher Limited. (p.188)

⁴¹ Ibid (p.188)

the end of Elizabeth's reign in 1603.⁴² Furthermore, instead of placing the English Church at either end of the religious scale, Diarmaid MacCulloch expressed a more complex understanding than had come before and discussed that 'from this story of confusion and changing direction emerged a Church which has never subsequently dared define its identity decisively as Protestant or Catholic, and which has decided in the end that this is a virtue rather than a handicap'.⁴³

Another feature of MacCulloch's work was that he emphasised the regional dynamic in the subject when stressing that the section of the population who were particularly prominent in rural areas, especially those who were 'very poor', were most likely to be found without education and therefore, less susceptible to the religious change.⁴⁴ This is something which Christopher Haigh also drew on in his evaluation of Protestantism's failure. In his view, the triumph of the political reformation, followed by the destruction of 'the instruments of Popish superstition', could not abolish the deep-rooted attitudes which had sustained English Catholicism for centuries.⁴⁵ Instead, Haigh expressed that to many illiterate, 'unthinking Christians', the educated nature of Protestantism relative to Catholicism made it difficult for the ordinary people of England to adopt the new religion.⁴⁶ The most significant difference between MacCulloch and Haigh regarding the impact of literacy is MacCulloch's key point that more of the population could 'read than write' which was crucial in the eventual establishment of, what was in his view, English 'popular Protestantism'.⁴⁷ For Haigh, however, the result of the abundance of illiterate 'unthinking Christians' was that the 'Tudor Reformations' did not replace 'a Catholic England by a Protestant England' but instead created a religiously fractured country where 'popery had not been crushed'.⁴⁸

Perhaps the most intriguing work of the historiography in its early decades was *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. In this book, Keith Thomas argued that the distancing of the English people away from Catholicism, from the fifteenth century onwards, was largely linked to the

⁴² Guy, J. (1988). *Tudor England*. Oxford University Press. (p.302)

⁴³ MacCulloch, D. (2001). *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (2nd ed.). Palgrave. (p.142)

⁴⁴ Ibid (p.136)

⁴⁵ Haigh, C. (1993). *English Reformations*. Clarendon Press. (p.288)

⁴⁶ Ibid (p.289)

⁴⁷ MacCulloch, D. (2001). *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (2nd ed.). Palgrave. (p.136)

⁴⁸ Haigh, C. (1993). *English Reformations*. Clarendon Press. (p.293)

declining popularity of magic and superstition as the 'spirit of self-help' rose in influence.⁴⁹ The most interesting part of the work, however, was the primary material which Thomas deployed in the development of his arguments. On top of the traditional written records, Thomas drew heavily on anthropological primary material and contemporary beliefs such as that of the 'good' and 'bad' witch in his famous chapter on witchcraft.⁵⁰ This allowed Thomas' study to focus more on the social aspects of the Reformation than was common at the time and, crucially, to establish the foundations for future work on the English Reformation to deploy new and increasingly innovative primary source material and methodological approaches.

One example of such an approach is Matthew Milner's post-revisionist study *The Senses and the English Reformation*. The book, which used a similar approach to *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, mobilised the concept of the sensations around the Church experience in early modern England.⁵¹ Through this approach, Milner emphasised that the 'sensory history of reform indicates the very conservative nature of the Reformation itself as an efflorescence of traditional practical concerns over the sensual.'⁵²

Other historians have also deployed intriguing methodological approaches to studying the Reformation in recent times. Brian Cummings investigated the literary culture of the Reformation in order to explore the 'extraordinary history of the English Language as a medium for a new theology and national church.'⁵³ Perhaps more ambitiously, Brad Gregory emphasised the impact that the religious change and secularisation of the period had on shaping Western society in the current century. In doing so, Gregory's work surpassed the confines of studying the Reformation solely through a historical lens and provided a notable example of the continued development of the methodological approaches deployed in Reformation studies.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Thomas, K. (1991). *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*. Penguin. (p.794)

⁵⁰ Ibid (p.520)

⁵¹ Milner, M. (2016). *The Senses and the English Reformation*. Routledge. (pp.348-349)

⁵² Ibid. (p.348)

⁵³ Cummings, B. (2002). *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*. Oxford University Press.

⁵⁴ Gregory, B. S. (2012). *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*. Harvard University Press.

On top of increasingly dynamic source material and methodological approaches, another characteristic of post-revisionist works has been to scrutinise the narratives which almost reject that the English Reformation occurred. Peter Marshall emphasised that though revisionary historians 'have rightly warned against the assumption that because the Reformation happened it must have been necessary or inevitable', the writings of these historians themselves can also possess serious flaws.⁵⁵ As Marshall identified, some revisionist writings have correctly been accused of failing to accept that the Reformation happened or just 'reducing it to an externally imposed act of state.'⁵⁶ In combating this, Marshall argued that in England as a whole, the Acts of State made by Henry VIII and subsequent monarchs undoubtedly impacted and gave momentum to the English Reformation. However, these were just the metaphorical earthquakes, tremors and aftershocks that exposed the 'fault lines' which broke down much of the Catholicism in Early Modern England.⁵⁷

Marshall made a further fundamental contribution to modern studies, perhaps the biggest development to emerge in recent times, when consolidating the portrayal of the Reformation not as a series of events but instead as a process which began as 'an aspect of later medieval religious life'.⁵⁸ Analysing the Reformation as a process is undoubtedly the most fruitful way to examine the religious change of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Although drawing comparisons between the old and new faith is not in every aspect a ground-breaking concept, critically in 1985 Collinson effectively argued that the use of imagery went almost a complete circle from pre-Reformation Catholicism to the late sixteenth-century Protestantism, a key feature of much of the modern historiography has been to explore these comparisons in order to change the way the Reformation is portrayed.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Marshall, P. (2008). *Reformation England 1480-1642*. Oxford University Press. (pp.2-3)

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* (p.3)

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* (p.11)

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* (pp.2-3)

⁵⁹ Collinson, P. (1986). *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation*. University of Reading.

One example where this is evident is in the introduction of research regarding the makeup and divides within English Catholicism and Protestantism of the period. Though for many historians the lines between Protestantism and Catholicism and the divisions within each are clear, others have correctly analysed these religions of the early modern period as far more fluid and interchangeable. Writing in regards to the experience of Early Modern Catholicism, Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars* deliberately worked against writings which portrayed the pre-Reformation Church as vulnerable to popular rebellion due to its superstition and perceived corrupt nature. Instead, Duffy envisaged the traditional religion as a unified 'broad church' where, although there was a clear difference between the spiritualised practices of the educated individuals and superstitious practices of the lay people, 'these groups did not have a different religion'.⁶⁰ In recent years, though from a Protestant perspective, Alec Ryrie has made a similar argument. Ryrie emphasised that Protestants across the period shared 'striking commonalities', thus emphasising the complex nature of the Reformation process.⁶¹

Although Catholicism and Protestantism fundamentally differ, the similarities between people's interactions and experiences with them are not the only commonality that modern research has highlighted. Ryrie again made a key incision into this field when arguing that the complex process of the Reformation meant that, although usually given 'new theological dress... Medieval (and older) patterns of piety persisted everywhere in Protestantism: from the use of set forms of prayer, through the value attached to weeping, to the meanings given to the deathbed.'⁶² Consequently, it is clear that the often-definitive nature of the early writings, likely in large part due to the prominence of the Anglican Church and the accession of Queen Elizabeth II, was misguided. Instead, the relationship between the people and religion of the period was often fluid and far less polarising than has often been suggested. As W.J. Sheils wrote, those who possessed Protestant ideas and those who did not were not completely different groups of people; they could in places be friends or parts of the same family.⁶³ Building on this work, in recent years historians have come together in the work *Getting Along?* to stress that social historians in the present are 'increasingly

⁶⁰ Duffy, E. (2005). *The Stripping of the Altars* (2nd ed.). Yale University Press. (p.298); *Ibid.* (p.2)

⁶¹ Ryrie, A. (2013). *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*. Oxford University Press. (p.469)

⁶² *Ibid.* (p.470)

⁶³ Sheils, W. J. (1989). *The English Reformation 1530-1570*. Longman. (p.70)

moving away from understanding the church and confessional groups as monolithic and rigid entities towards an appreciation of the diversity, complexity and unpredictability of shifting religious faiths *in situ*.⁶⁴

Alexandra Walsham's work has likewise shown the complexity of religious faith during this period. Walsham has successfully emphasised the significance of the Church Papist 'as a congregational component of that inclusive and eclectic institution – that effective umbrella organisation – the Church of England.'⁶⁵ Walsham has also contributed to other subgenres of the English Reformation, including the argument that persecution and the changing landscape of sixteenth-century England meant that Catholics had to 'create a new geography of the sacred centred on the household and the landscape.'⁶⁶ More recently, Walsham has contributed to the genre of generational change during the Reformation period with the conclusion that 'in the mid-Tudor period, youth were the great white hope of the evangelical Protestant movement; half a century later, they were heralded as the best prospect for achieving England's restoration of the old Roman fold and for securing the survival of the old religion'.⁶⁷

Another key theme of the modern historiography is that regarding a 'Calvinist Consensus'. Though discussed by several historians including Patrick Collinson and Nicholas Tyacke, the subject was popularised by Peter Lake.⁶⁸ At the core of his argument was Lake's claim that amongst the educated Protestant elite, there was a 'hegemony' of Calvinist beliefs.⁶⁹ This 'hegemony' suggests that Calvinist beliefs were, therefore, a key feature of English religion

⁶⁴ Morton, A., & Lewycky, N. (2012). *Getting Along?: Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England - Essays in Honour of Professor W. J. Sheils*. Routledge. (p.2)

⁶⁵ Walsham, A. (1999). *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England*. The Boydell Press. (p.3)

⁶⁶ Walsham, A. (2016). *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain*. Routledge. (p.388)

⁶⁷ Walsham, A. (2011). The Reformation of the Generations: Youth, Age and Religious Change in England, c.1500-1700. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 21, 93-121.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440111000053>

⁶⁸ Collinson, P. "England and International Calvinism, 1558-1640," in Prestwich, M. (1985). *International Calvinism, 1541-1715*. Clarendon Press; Tyacke, N. (1990). *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640*. Clarendon Press.

⁶⁹ Lake, P. G. (1987). Calvinism and the English Church 1570-1635. *Past & Present*, 114(1), 32-

76. <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/114.1.32>

during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The debate regarding a 'Calvinist Consensus' is considered in greater detail in a later chapter of this work.

Today's history of the Reformation has fruitfully moved to view religious change in relation to the wider social context and to accept the Reformation as a process of change rather than an event.

The English Reformation in the North

As this chapter evidences, much has been written about the English Reformation specifically in the north of England. However, prior to the exploration of this, it is essential to recognise that these works also hold significance for the study of the subject on a national level. The study of the life and death of the Yorkshire Catholic Margaret Clitherow, by Peter Lake and Michael Questier, is an example of this. Lake and Questier showed how Clitherow's story demonstrated 'the sort of traumatic and tension-filled gender and family politics in and through which religious change was often effected during the period.'⁷⁰ Though Margaret Clitherow's experience provides a unique example of religious change in York and the north, as one of just three Catholic women to be executed for her religion during Elizabeth's reign it also provides a window into 'what we might term the micro-politics of religious change in post-Reformation England' as a whole.⁷¹ Consequently, the historiography of the Reformation in the north should be considered within the broader confines of the English Reformation.

For decades Catholicism has been the dominant theme of the historiography of the Reformation in the North of England and Yorkshire. During the 1960s, in his work on the subject, Hugh Aveling highlighted the perseverance of the old religion when he explored the recusancy of Yorkshire's remaining Catholic population, including those in the West Riding of Yorkshire.⁷² Notably, for historians such as John Bossy, this recusancy became a defining feature of Catholicism during the period.⁷³ Another theme Aveling devoted much attention

⁷⁰ Lake, P. & Questier, M. (2011). *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow: Persecution, Martyrdom and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England* (1st ed.). Continuum. (p.193)

⁷¹ Ibid. (p.193)

⁷² Aveling, D. H. (1963). *The Catholic Recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558 – 1790*. Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society.

⁷³ Bossy, J. (1998). *Peace in the Post-Reformation*. Cambridge University Press.
doi:10.1017/CBO9780511612022

to was the 'English Mission', which saw continentally trained Catholic priests, in his view, breathe new life into English Catholicism during the final decades of the sixteenth century.⁷⁴ Although in subsequent years the study of Catholicism has moved away from a story strictly of recusancy and missionary priests, more modern studies have continued to portray the North, and Yorkshire in particular, as strongly religiously conservative during this period.

In her study of sixteenth-century Beverley and the dissolution of its Dominican and Franciscan priories, Claire Cross has shown that resistance to religious change in the north was evident as early as Henry VIII's reign with support for the Pilgrimage of Grace from friars, alongside the 'commons', revealing 'the extent of conservatism in some of the northern monasteries'.⁷⁵

Moreover, unlike Aveling who placed prominence decisively on the English mission for the survival of northern Catholicism, Sarah Bastow has pointed out that the Catholicism of the 1570s, 1580s and beyond was a hybrid of Medieval Catholicism enhanced by the reformed Catholic ideas coming from the continent.⁷⁶ Bastow has also pointed to the versatility of the Yorkshire gentry and their ability to simultaneously retain their place in society alongside their Catholic faith as a critical factor in the religion's survival in the county.⁷⁷ This was a Yorkshire where Catholicism survived and where, from the Pilgrimage of Grace to the Civil War, the traditional conservative values of the Yorkshire gentry were evident.⁷⁸

Other historians have also argued that Catholicism persisted throughout lower social groups. In her study of the 1569 Northern Rising, Krista J. Kesselring argued that the actions of the rebellion demonstrated that a strong attachment to the old religion persisted in much of the Northern population. For Kesselring, the fact that those who joined the ranks of the rebellion 'carried flags with the images of the saints' and 'marched under time-hallowed banners that depicted Five Wounds of Christ' showed that attachment to Catholicism was a

⁷⁴ Aveling, J.C.H. (1976). *The Handle and the Axe*. London: Blond & Briggs Ltd.

⁷⁵ Cross, C. (2018). Friars, the Pilgrimage of Grace, and the Dissolution of the Dominican and Franciscan Priors in Sixteenth-century Beverley. *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 90(1), 96-110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00844276.2018.1465681>

⁷⁶ Bastow, S. L. (2007). *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 Resistance and Accommodation*. Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press.(p.222)

⁷⁷ Bastow, S. L. (2007). *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 Resistance and Accommodation*. Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press. (p.222)

⁷⁸ Bastow, S. L. (2007). *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 Resistance and Accommodation*. Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press. (p.222)

clear motivation of the rebels.⁷⁹ With people across the North using the opportunity to christen babies and get married ‘by the old rites’, ‘erect altars and holy water vats’ and take part in mass during the rebellion, this was a connection Kesselring argued was also expressed by many of those who did not directly participate in the uprising.⁸⁰ In Kesselring’s view, all this pointed to a society in the North that retained a strong attachment to the old religion, its imagery and traditions over a decade into Elizabeth’s reign.

Clearly, much of the historiography on the Reformation in the North has shown widespread Catholic conservatism regarding the religious change in the area. However, conservatism does not mean that reformed ideas did not make inroads into the parishes of Northern England. In her study of Craven, Victoria Spence has shown how a ‘reluctant reformation’ in the district, which initially saw Catholicism remain visible in surviving local wills and the church buildings, ultimately gave way to the emergence of the Protestant faith during Elizabeth’s reign.⁸¹

Religious change in the north could also result in a more complex situation. Diana Newton has shown that religious change in Newcastle upon Tyne provided one such example of this. Newton found that Newcastle appears to have had several significant links with Puritanism across the period which energised its prominent radical Protestant population. However, at the same time, Newcastle’s government during the reign of Elizabeth was mainly in the hands of Roman Catholics, suggesting ‘a less polarized dichotomy between Puritans and conformist Protestants’ and emphasising the complexity of the religious landscape of the period.⁸²

Furthermore, as this thesis has already discussed, religious identity during this period was not as simple as being either a Catholic or Protestant. Instead, with religion also being a ‘matter of lived experience’ where ‘a web of symbols and meanings... invoked experiences and emotions’, religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is a complex subject best

⁷⁹ Kesselring, K. J. (2004). “A Cold Pye for the Papistes”: Constructing and Containing the Northern Rising of 1569. *The Journal of British Studies*, 43(4), 417-443.

⁸⁰ Kesselring, K. J. (2004). “A Cold Pye for the Papistes”: Constructing and Containing the Northern Rising of 1569. *The Journal of British Studies*, 43(4), 417-443.

⁸¹ Spence, V. (2017). Reluctant Reformation in the North: Craven 1547-1553. *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 89(1), 114-133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00844276.2017.1341014>

⁸² Newton, D. (2008). The Impact of Reformation on North-East England: A Preliminary Survey. *Northern History*, 45(1), 37-49. <https://doi.org/10.1179/174587008X256601>

analysed on a spectrum of religious beliefs.⁸³ As explored in subsequent chapters and inspired by recent historiographical approaches, with the Reformation rehabilitating some aspects of medieval commemorative culture in a modified guise whilst also creating ‘new modes and memorialisation’, it is also clear that the religious change of the period could influence fundamental dynamics such as ‘what it meant to remember’.⁸⁴ Ultimately, although Catholicism and conservatism have been two defining characteristics of the historiography of the Reformation in the North of England, the subject is complex and, as this thesis establishes, one where exceptions to the rule did emerge.

The Gentry and English Society

R.H Tawney’s ‘The Rise of the Gentry’ thesis emphasised a version of events where the gentry of the realm ascended, while a number of the aristocratic families endured contrasting fortunes.⁸⁵ For Tawney, two of the primary factors in the gentry’s ascent were the appearance of a more profitable ‘business like agriculture’ and ‘the heightening rapidity with which land was changing hands.’⁸⁶ Through statistical analysis, Lawrence Stone attempted to consolidate Tawney’s interpretation. In his book, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, Stone used this approach to argue that relative to the gentry, the aristocracy declined in power and wealth.⁸⁷ The arguments made by historians such as Tawney and Stone were, however, not without controversy. In opposition to their arguments, Trevor Roper differentiated between the ‘greater gentry’ and the ‘mere gentry’.⁸⁸ Instead of a universal ascent of the gentry, Roper argued that the ‘greater gentry’ rose through political networks and patronage focused in the city of London and, more specifically, in the district

⁸³ Mears, N & Ryrie, A (eds.). (2013). *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain*. Ashgate. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315546254> (p.2)

⁸⁴ Walsham, A., Cummings, B., Wallace, B., & Law, C. (2020). *Memory and the English Reformation*. Cambridge University Press. (p.3)

⁸⁵ Tawney, R. H. (1941). The Rise of the Gentry. *The Economic History Review*, 11(1), 1-38.

⁸⁶ Tawney, R. H. (1941). The Rise of the Gentry. *The Economic History Review*, 11(1), 1-38.

⁸⁷ Stone, L. (1967). *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*. (Abridged ed.). Oxford University Press. (p.174)

⁸⁸ Trevor Roper, H. (1953). *The Gentry 1540-1640*. Cambridge University Press for the Economic History Society. (p.52)

of Westminster. In contrast, the 'mere gentry', whose sole source of income was their land, ended up a 'depressed declining class'.⁸⁹

However, though the work of the 1940s and following decades reflected a growing interest in social history, one of the major issues with the approach of social history before the 1960s was that it 'did not occupy a prominent place in the hierarchy of historical concern'.⁹⁰ As a result, the early historiography on groups such as the gentry tended to frame their findings in the context of other larger fields of historical study, most notably politics.⁹¹ For the likes of Tawney, Stone and Roper, this political focus was the English Civil War and the role that societal change played in its occurrence. In looking at societal change through a lens which prioritised the causation of the Civil War, the early historiography was relatively unsuccessful in offering an in-depth insight into aspects such as the change in sixteenth and seventeenth-century parish life. It is unsurprising, therefore, that subsequent social historians put social history at the forefront of their studies.

One of the most notable works in the revisionist history of English society was Keith Wrightson and David Levine's *Poverty and Piety in an English Village*.⁹² In affording much focus to the gentry, this study provided a detailed analysis of the experience of Terling, located in Essex, in relation to the change in local factors such as demographics, economics, administration, religion, education and social ties across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁹³ Along with fellow revisionists, including Alan Macfarlane and Margaret Spufford, the work of Wrightson and Levine was part of the new historiography which evaluated social history in its own right and usually prioritised studying in detail a locality or small region.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Ibid. (p.52)

⁹⁰ Wrightson, K. (2003). *English Society 1580-1680* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (p.9)

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Wrightson, K., & Levine, D. (1995). *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700*. Oxford University Press.

⁹³ Ibid (p.183)

⁹⁴ Macfarlane, A., Harrison, S., & Jardine, C. (1977). *Reconstructing Historical Communities*. Cambridge University Press; Spufford, M. (1974). *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Cambridge University Press.

Another study which fruitfully placed social history at the top of its priorities was *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*.⁹⁵ This work, by Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, took a detailed look at the experience of the English and Welsh gentry during this period and offered chapters on some of the key focuses of the contemporary gentry such as lineage, wealth, administration, politics and significantly for this thesis, the relationship of the gentry with piety, belief and the Church.⁹⁶ Building on the methodology developed by its predecessors, this work by Heal and Holmes offered a valuable insight into the 'experience of being a gentleman or gentlewoman' in this period and their interactions with 'mental worlds and expressive gestures; with authority and claims to rulership; and with ways in which power was employed in this culture.'⁹⁷

In recent years, studies of social history have displayed a number of consistent features. Firstly, since the work of historians such as Heal and Holmes, new research on the early modern gentry has been notable in its relative absence. This topic has become increasingly neglected as a standalone discussion but now features as part of other studies into religion, culture, and memory.⁹⁸ Secondly, in connection to this, studies focusing solely on social history have increased in rarity. Instead, as with Andy Wood's study of the 1549 rebellions, modern studies of social history usually find themselves as part of 'recent attempts to reconcile social and political history.'⁹⁹ Though these studies do not cast social history in a mere supporting role to political history as Tawney did, cross-field studies such as this have become a dominant feature in recent social historiography. Within this, a consistent theme of recent social histories has been that of order. For example, in combining the study of social and political history, in his study of the Pilgrimage of Grace Michael Bush described how 'the changes countenanced by the Pilgrim commons lay within the framework of the society of orders'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan.

⁹⁶ Ibid. (p.vii)

⁹⁷ Ibid. (p.ix)

⁹⁸ Wood, A. (2020). *Faith, Hope and Charity: English Neighbourhoods, 1500-1640*. Cambridge University Press; Wood, A (2013). *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England*. Cambridge University Press.

⁹⁹ Wood, A. (2007). *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England*. Cambridge University Press. (p.xvi)

¹⁰⁰ Bush, M. L. (2009). *The Pilgrims Complaint: A Study of Popular Thought in the Early Tudor North*. Ashgate.

Just as with the historiography of the English Reformation, the social history of the period has evolved much since the early writings on the subject and today includes a vast catalogue ranging from detailed local studies to modern approaches which have reconciled social and political history. The development of the methodological approaches towards the subject has also been fruitful, with modern additions in the field now capable of analysing the gentry, and society as a whole, in their own right whilst also placing the field in the broader historiography and context of early modern England.

The social historiography of the period, and the themes discussed within this section, are vital to Reformation studies such as this because the subjects of religion and society were undoubtedly interconnected. As this thesis explores, social themes including wealth, lineage, politics and authority were directly linked to the religious experience and religious changes of the period. Therefore, it is only by analysing the social changes and social historiography of the period, alongside the religious upheaval of the time, that it is possible to fully understand the changes which took place within the locality during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Chapter 1: Catholic Survivalism in Almondbury and the Surrounding Parishes

This chapter explores how Almondbury and the surrounding parishes compare to the established narrative of Yorkshire's position within the historiography of the English Reformation. To do so, the chapter raises the research question, was religious change in the locality of Almondbury typical of conservative religious change in Yorkshire? To understand the locality and its place within this literature, the chapter begins by defining both the location and profile of the area, in addition to reviewing the overall narrative of the existing scholarship on the subject in Yorkshire. In establishing the position and structure of the area, a number of key factors are discussed. These factors are the location and prestige of the local parishes centring on Almondbury, the position of the locality in relation to Yorkshire as a whole and the priorities and progress of three of the most influential contemporary gentry families in the area.

In reviewing the existing historical literature, it is clear that Yorkshire's overall position in the Reformation has been dominated by narratives that portray the county as a stronghold for Catholicism and that focus on ways in which Catholics and Catholic beliefs survived the advance of Protestantism. This narrative acts as a reference point for investigating the strength of Catholicism and the strategies used in maintaining it within the locality. With these contextual features established, the chapter will investigate the strength of Catholicism's survival in the locality of Almondbury. Three key arguments are made.

Firstly, the locality was atypical of what has become expected from religious change in Yorkshire. The survival of Catholicism in the locality during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries appears relatively weak compared to the overall narrative of religious change in the county. Secondly, this seemingly weaker persistence of Catholicism in Almondbury and the surrounding parishes stemmed from a combination of socio-economic, political and geographical factors. The fact that the most influential and wealthy families in the area were predominantly reformists is considered to be a fundamental factor in this. Finally, though it appears that Catholicism survived relatively less successfully in the area, where evidence of its survival does remain, it bears the hallmarks identified in studies which set the Catholic narrative of Yorkshire. This suggests that the same patterns of religious resistance persisted across the county but were less prominent in the locality of Almondbury.

The Locality of Almondbury

With this in mind, it is sensible to begin by defining and exploring the focus of this study which throughout is referred to as 'the locality'. The locality, which is today dominated by the town of Huddersfield, centred around the parish of Almondbury at the beginning of the sixteenth century. From 1272, the year in which Hulbert noted a market charter was first granted to the parish by King Edward, up until 1671, when Sir John Ramsden acquired Huddersfield its own market charter, Almondbury was the only parish in the area with the ability to hold a market.¹⁰¹ This symbolised its unique position as a commercial hub and confirmed its superior status against its neighbours. Almondbury was also where many of

¹⁰¹ Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (p.10)

the prominent families of the region resided and interacted with the Church.¹⁰² Traces of their presence have survived within the material of the church building until this day, and with their impressive gentry houses located nearby, this made the parish a centre point for both local affairs and local authority. Due to its position as the dominant parish for much of the period, Almondbury is the main focus of this chapter and masters in general.

Huddersfield is situated less than three miles to the north-west of Almondbury. During Elizabeth's reign, Huddersfield appears to have been merely a village with little remaining evidence to describe the town before the year of the first surviving court roll in 1627.¹⁰³ However, as the seventeenth century progressed, Huddersfield began to ascend in prominence. From as early as 1632, it appears as though the prominent families of the region envisaged Huddersfield as having significant economic potential. In July of that year, Sir John Ramsden (1594-1646) and John Kaye (d.1641) suggested that they saw the town as a place of commercial importance when writing to the authorities regarding the trade in tobacco in the West Riding.¹⁰⁴ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, families such as these made the most of the town's geographical position in the 'amphitheatre created by the Colne and Holme valleys' and erected fulling mills in the river valleys.¹⁰⁵ Crucially, in 1671 it was one of the Ramsdens, Sir John Ramsden (1648-1690), who procured a licence to hold a market in the town which proved a significant step in the transition of influence to Huddersfield from Almondbury over the following years.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to its economic rise which only came to the forefront as the seventeenth century progressed, in religion, Huddersfield enjoyed a large amount of autonomy throughout the period with evidence

¹⁰² The presence of families such as Kaye of Woodsome and Ramsden of Longley is evident in '*The Parish Register of Almondbury 1557-1598*', ed. Taylor, H. (1974). The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Volume 1 (Part 1).

¹⁰³ Redmonds, G. (2003). *The Making of Huddersfield* (Kindle ed.). Wharnccliffe Books. (p.11)

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. (p.17)

¹⁰⁵ Sykes, D. F. E (1898). *The History of Huddersfield and its Vicinity*. The Advertiser Press. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/2583#mode/2up> (p.1); Hey, D. (1986). *Yorkshire From AD 1000*. Longman. (p.152)

¹⁰⁶ 'Charles II: October 1671', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, 1671*, ed. F H Blackburne Daniell (London, 1895), pp. 511-551. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/chas2/1671/pp511-551> [accessed 2 June 2021].

existing that it possessed its own parish church and vicar continuously from the fourteenth century onwards.¹⁰⁷

Aside from the parishes of Almondbury and Huddersfield, other local parishes include Kirkheaton, located a little over three miles to the north of Almondbury, and Kirkburton, located around three miles to the south-east of Almondbury. Both of these parishes were large and autonomous enough to warrant their own impressive parish churches, with Kirkheaton possessing its own rector and Kirkburton its own vicar during this period. Both of these parishes also enjoyed links to the central parish of Almondbury and neighbouring districts. Many historical records imply links between Kirkburton and Penistone to the south, whilst Kirkheaton was on the eastern edge of the locality towards Wakefield.¹⁰⁸

Mirfield is situated around six miles to the north-east of Almondbury. The parish possessed its own church and vicar across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and, despite its relative distance from Almondbury, is of interest due to the families that held influence there.¹⁰⁹ Key local families, such as the Beaumonts of Whitley and the Armitages of Kirklees, were fundamental to affairs within the parish. According to Sykes, the Armitage family of Kirklees controlled the rectory and advowson at Mirfield during the period.¹¹⁰ From the appointment of Richard Senior to the vicarage of Mirfield in 1628, the records show that John Armitage of Kirklees acted as patron for multiple appointments.¹¹¹ The example set by these families is important as it demonstrates that firstly, the influence of local families often stretched beyond the inner circle of Almondbury and its neighbouring parishes and

¹⁰⁷ 'List of vicars of Huddersfield Parish Church' in Sykes, D. F. E (1898). *The History of Huddersfield and its Vicinity*. The Advertiser Press. Retrieved from: <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/2583#mode/2up> (pp.142-3); 'Huddersfield [St Peter]' (CCEd Location ID 22687), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540 – 1835*. Available from <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

¹⁰⁸ Heath, C. (2009). *Denby & District IV Chronicles of Clerics, Convicts, Corn Millers & Comedians*. Pen & Sword Wharnccliffe Books. (p.27); The Kirkheaton family of Beaumont married into multiple Catholic families of Wakefield. See: *Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire, With Additions*, ed. Clay, J. W (1917). Volume 3. William Pollard & Company. Retrieved from [https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_3_\(1917\)_edited_by_J.W._Clay](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_3_(1917)_edited_by_J.W._Clay) [accessed 21 July 2021]. (p.222)

¹⁰⁹ 'Parish (Church): Mirfield' (CCEd Location ID: 22840), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

¹¹⁰ Sykes, D. F. E (1898). *The History of Huddersfield and its Vicinity*. The Advertiser Press. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/2583#mode/2up> (p.168-9)

¹¹¹ 'Richard Senior' (CCEd Person ID: 127409), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

secondly, though Almondbury was the centre of local affairs, different families often practised their influence and authority in different parishes.

This thesis also refers to the parish of Elland, located eight miles to the north-west of Almondbury, and the parish of Halifax, which can be found a further three miles to the north. Alongside their proximity to Almondbury, these parishes are of interest to this study due to their surviving seventeenth-century churchwarden accounts which provide an intriguing comparison point for parish religion in and around Almondbury.¹¹²

Almondbury is also surrounded by several smaller chapelries, including Honley, positioned three and a half miles to the south-west, and Slaithwaite, situated around seven miles to the west. Though relatively small in size and influence, the records demonstrate that Honley possessed its own chapel and resident curate.¹¹³ Before 1503, it appears as though the chapel at Honley was used only as an oratory, but during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though remaining under the authority of the Parish Church of Almondbury, the chapel attained the legislation to expand its functions to include the celebration of Mass and other religious events and festivities.¹¹⁴

The picture at Slaithwaite is more difficult to decipher. Though the records for the overall history of the chapelry across this period are incomplete, it seems likely that the chapel there operated with a curate for significant portions of the period with the records of the 1560s and 1570s showing a William Marcrofte operating in this role.¹¹⁵ Additionally, it seems likely that the chapelry attained strong links to Almondbury, with the Kaye family of Woodsome taking an active role in Slaithwaite. John Kaye (d.1594) was instrumental in the upkeep of the chapel and funded significant work on the building in 1593.¹¹⁶ It is clear that although they were separate from the central parish in terms of geography and possessing

¹¹² Halifax Account Book (Miscellaneous), *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000053 - Halifax St John the Baptist, Parish Records (WDP53/7/1/1); Elland Account book, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000079 - Elland St Mary the Virgin, Churchwardens Account Book 1648-1736 (WDP79/3/1/1)

¹¹³ 'Parochial Chapel: Almondbury, Honley Chapel' (CCEd Location ID: 21311), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

¹¹⁴ Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the Church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longman and Co. (p.288)

¹¹⁵ 'William Marcrofte' (CCEd Person ID: 135073), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>; 'William Marcrofte' (CCEd Person ID: 119666), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

¹¹⁶ Hulbert, C. A. (1864). *Annals of the Church in Slaithwaite (Near Huddersfield) from 1593 to 1864*. Longman & Co. (pp.17-18)

their own religious buildings, smaller and less significant chapelries such as Honley and Slaithwaite were in many ways subsidiaries of Almondbury and the authorities which dominated there. Consequently, these chapelries will only be mentioned for fleeting reference throughout the work.

The locality is situated in what was historically the West Riding of Yorkshire and, more precisely, the area of the Riding within the Wapentake (administrative division) of Agbrigg and Morley.¹¹⁷ The West Riding was a subsection of the county of Yorkshire. David Hey stated that 'Yorkshire was by far the largest county in England until it was broken into five parts in 1974', with the West Riding alone 'bigger than any other English county'.¹¹⁸ As a result of its size, the county has played a major role in shaping northern history, including

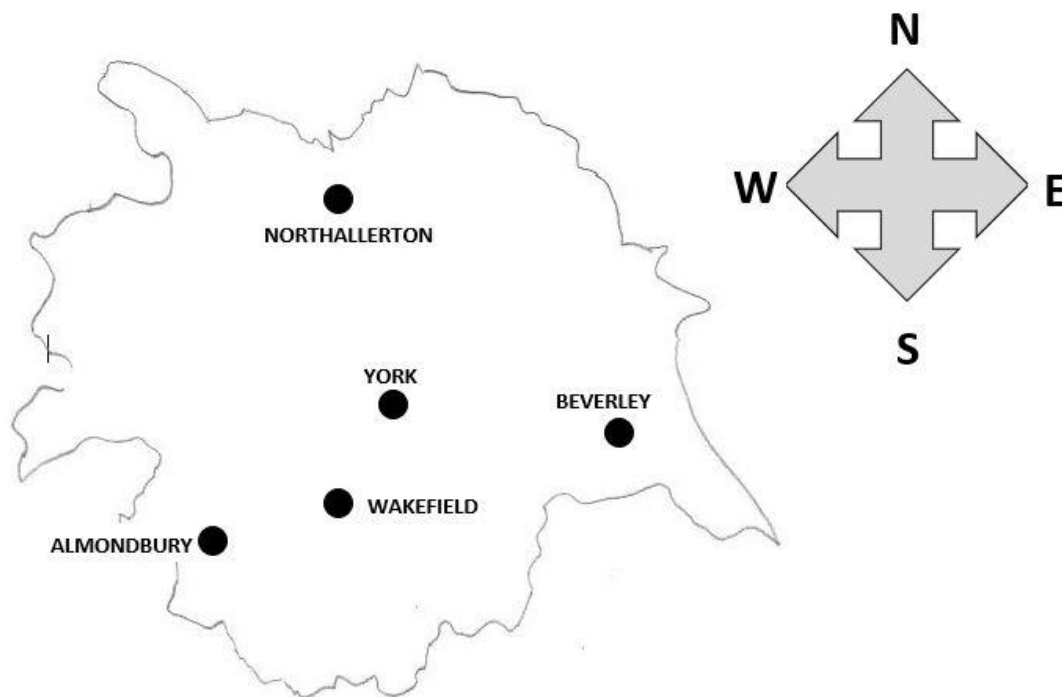


Figure 1. Map of Yorkshire 1550-1700

research done into the English Reformation. Geographically, the area is located in what was the south-west of the Riding and in close proximity to the Pennines to the west.¹¹⁹ As a

¹¹⁷ Aveling, D. H. (1963). *The Catholic Recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558 – 1790*. Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. (pp.299-302)

¹¹⁸ Hey, D. (1986). *Yorkshire From AD 1000*. Longman. (p.1)

¹¹⁹ A map of Yorkshire Castles demonstrates Almondbury's geographical position in Yorkshire and the proximity of the Pennine border to the west. See: Hey, D. (1986). *Yorkshire From AD 1000*. Longman. (p30)

result, Almondbury and the surrounding parishes were closer to parts of Lancashire than much of Yorkshire with the rural parishes of the North and East Ridings located a particularly long distance away.

The relatively isolated nature of the locality away from the Catholic strongholds of other areas of Yorkshire was a potentially major issue for those who wished to continue with Catholic religious practices. Historians such as Aveling placed significant importance on what he described as ‘the many private channels of communication provided by family bonds, the bonds between lord and tenants, and trade arteries’ in attempts of retaining or, in Aveling’s opinion, reviving Catholicism during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹²⁰ Moreover, many of the prominent Catholic families of the north, such as the Constables of Burton (located in the East Riding of Yorkshire), utilised kinship networks with other prominent Catholics to further their attempts to maintain the old religion, demonstrating that access to such networks offered significant advantages.¹²¹

Additionally, in constructing their view of local society during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many historians have emphasised the influence of the ‘family connections of the gentry, especially marriage alliances.’¹²² The historian Alan Everitt contributed significantly to this subject and argued that ‘the England of 1640 resembled a union of partially independent county-states or communities, each with its own distinct ethos and loyalty.’¹²³ As part of his argument, Everitt discussed that a significantly high proportion of marriages occurred between local families during this period with four-fifths of Kent’s minor gentry marrying locally.¹²⁴ This theme was replicated throughout England with, for example, Lawrence Stone finding that ‘sixty per cent of the squirarchy of Lancashire’ married within the county during the early seventeenth century.¹²⁵ Considering Everitt’s model of local society, it is possible to argue that the ‘partially independent’ structure of local society

¹²⁰ Aveling, J.C.H. (1976). *The Handle and the Axe*. Blond & Briggs. (p.65)

¹²¹ Glover, Robert, *The Visitation of Yorkshire, Made in the Years 1584/5*, to which is added, St. George, Richard, *The Subsequent Visitation Made in 1612*, ed. Foster, Joseph (1875). (The Constables of Burton. (p.209))

¹²² Thornton, T., & Carlton, K. (2019). *The Gentleman's Mistress: Illegitimate Relationships and Children, 1450–1640* (1st ed.). Manchester University Press. (p.9)

¹²³ Everitt, A. (1966). *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-60*. Leicester University Press. (p.13)

¹²⁴ Everitt, A. (1966). *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-60*. Leicester University Press. (p.42)

¹²⁵ Stone, L. (1977). *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

during this period would have provided a further barrier for Catholics within the locality of Almondbury to connect with Catholics elsewhere in the north.¹²⁶ Therefore, with such a large geographical distance between the Catholics of the locality and the prominent Catholic strongholds of the county, it is feasible that geographical distance played a major role in why Catholic survivalism appears relatively weak in the locality.

Intriguingly, however, modern research has proven that geographical distance was not necessarily everything regarding the creation and survival of such networks. In his work analysing a series of seventeenth-century letters written between transatlantic kinsfolk, David Cressy determined that the ability of an individual to successfully petition for patronage across such a large space proved that 'distance was not necessarily an obstacle to maintaining kinship ties'.¹²⁷ Furthermore, religiously focused kinship networks were not always limited by distance either. In his recent work on the Jesuit-supporting Petre family of Essex, James E. Kelly found that the family looked to intermarry with other Jesuit-supporting families and, in doing so, formed kinship networks which were 'far beyond county boundaries' and spanned the south of England.¹²⁸ Moreover, as the seventeenth century progressed, the movements of puritan preachers such as Oliver Heywood also evidence that religion could breach the geographical barriers between Lancashire and Yorkshire. Heywood, born in Bolton (Lancashire) in March 1630, spent a great deal of his life working and preaching across Yorkshire, including in the locality of Almondbury.¹²⁹ Moreover, research from historians, including Christopher Haigh, has shown that Lancashire was a stronghold for northern Catholicism.¹³⁰ Perhaps Yorkshire Catholics had the mindset not to look across the Pennines in the search for allies but whatever the reason, despite the proximity of Lancashire, the evidence suggests that Almondbury did not enjoy notable Catholic links with the county. Geographical distance therefore cannot be seen as the sole

¹²⁶ Everitt, A. (1966). *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-60*. Leicester University Press.

¹²⁷ Cressy, D. (1986). Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England. *Past & Present*, 113(1), 38-69. <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/113.1.38>

¹²⁸ Kelly, J. E. (2018). Counties Without Borders? Religious Politics, Kinship Networks and the Formation of Catholic Communities. *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 91(251), 22-38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2281.12209>

¹²⁹ Thomas, S. S. (2013). *Creating Communities in Restoration England: Parish and Congregation in Oliver Heywood's Halifax*. Brill. (p.17)

¹³⁰ Haigh, C. (2008). *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*. Cambridge University Press.

reason why the story of Catholic survivalism was different in Almondbury and the surrounding parishes.

Instead of taking geographical distance as the sole driving force behind the lack of visible Catholic networks in the locality, it is more appropriate to consider a lack of historical family ties as a pivotal reason for the situation. In her research, Sarah Bastow demonstrated that family connections linking the Catholics of Yorkshire 'often transcended imposed geographical boundaries, with kinship or religious ties connecting them (the Ridings of the county) to north-east and other counties.'¹³¹ However, in an area where the majority of the most influential families were Protestant, well-established families that supported the traditional religion and possessed the prestige to connect with other notable northern Catholics were in short supply. Therefore, though the distance did not help matters, the lack of family connections between any aspiring Catholics of the locality and other Catholic families in the north was a significant factor in the absence of any such networks.

The Local Gentry

Intriguingly, all three major families of the locality were members of the gentry. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, much has been made of what R.H Tawney considered 'the rise of the gentry' with much of the scholarship envisaging a period of opportunities for the social group.¹³² It has also been argued that this paralleled a period of increasing challenges for the aristocracy.¹³³ As is explored throughout this masters, the period 1550-1700 was certainly a period of increasing opportunities and success for the ascending gentry in Almondbury and the surrounding parishes. Two of the key gentry families of the locality were the Kayes of Woodsome and the Ramsdens of Longley. Both these families were economically prosperous, with Cliffe appropriately placing them into his category of 'business like squires'.¹³⁴ The Kaye family, based near the village of Almondbury at Woodsome Hall to the south-east, appear to have been relatively well established in the

¹³¹ Bastow, S. L. (2007). *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 Resistance and Accommodation*. Edwin Mellen Press. (p.3)

¹³² Tawney, R. H. (1941). The Rise of the Gentry. *The Economic History Review*, 11(1), 1-38.

¹³³ Stone, L. (1967). *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*. (Abridged ed.). Oxford University Press.

¹³⁴ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.96)

locality by the beginning of the period, with records of the family at Woodsome existing from as early as 1378.¹³⁵ However, the family did not attain the same prestige in wealth or titles as many of the upper gentry until the sixteenth century. It was in these years that the family rose to prominence in the region and attained their reputation as 'industrious and enterprising landowners'.¹³⁶ Across the period, the family continuously acquired land, property and industry throughout the locality. In 1642, Sir John Kaye's (1612-62) estate is thought to have had a rich annual value of around £1000.¹³⁷

Located even closer to the village of Almondbury and in the direction of Huddersfield to the north, Longley Hall was the home of the Ramsden family. Though a wealthy family had existed at Longley for centuries, the Ramsden name only rose to prominence when William Ramsden (1513-1580) married the daughter of John Woode of Longley. By the middle of the sixteenth century, this led to a significant inheritance of land and wealth, transforming the Ramsdens into one of the most influential families in the region.¹³⁸ The marriage was advantageous for William Ramsden and symbolised the ambitiousness of a family primed to continue their upward social mobility. In 1599, William Ramsden (1558-1623) purchased half the manor of Huddersfield.¹³⁹ This purchase further demonstrated the ambition of the Ramsdens and was a significant step in the ascent of the family and the parish of Huddersfield.

Along with a number of other gentry families in the locality, these families appear to have been enthusiastic conformists. For example, Robert Tittler explained that the poetry and company of the head of the Kaye family for much of Elizabeth's reign, John Kaye (d. 1594), suggested that he held strong Protestant beliefs.¹⁴⁰ In addition, the Protestant statement of bequeathing his 'soul into the house of God Almighty' and trusting to be saved by Jesus

¹³⁵ 'Indenture dated 1378, Dame Alice Fynchenden grants to John Cay her Manor of Woodsome, with app. in Farnley Tyas, for 20 years' printed in: Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (p.193)

¹³⁶ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.97)

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (p.219)

¹³⁹ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.97)

¹⁴⁰ Tittler, R. (2015). Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567. *Northern History*, 52 (2), 182-199. Doi: 10.1179/0078172X15Z.00000000087

Christ 'my only saviour and redeemer' appeared in the will of Sir John Ramsden of Longley (d.1646), evidencing the conformity of the Ramsden family.¹⁴¹

With their entrepreneurial abilities and ascent of the social hierarchy, these families, particularly the Ramsdens, fitted perfectly into the concept of the 'rising gentry'.¹⁴²

Contrastingly, the third major gentry family of the region was facing a more challenging situation. Based at Whitley, an estate which sat to the east of Almondbury, the Beaumont of Whitley family were most influential in the parish of Kirkheaton though they were also important in the broader affairs of the locality. The Whitley family were made up of two primary branches throughout the period. The first of these was the branch that began the period as the family referred to as 'Beaumont of Whitley' and ended with the death of Richard Beaumont Baronet in 1631.¹⁴³ Upon Richard's death, his cousin, Sir Thomas Beaumont (1605-1668), succeeded him. Sir Thomas descended from the less influential branch of the family which resided just east of Almondbury at Lascelles Hall and his successors held the title at Whitley until the end of the period.¹⁴⁴

In contrast to the prosperous and social climbing families previously discussed, it was in the early decades of the period that, as Tolson put it, the family were 'at the height of their importance and influence'.¹⁴⁵ The 1574 will of Edward Beaumont demonstrates that the family claimed the old chantry at Kirkheaton as their own private chapel at some point prior to the same year, emphasising their influence at this stage of the sixteenth century.¹⁴⁶ The family had a long history of prestige; in a deed of 1332 Sir John De Beaumont is referred to as a Knight signifying his work for the King.¹⁴⁷ The Beaumont family were a key part of the region's social hierarchy for centuries before the beginning of the Reformation. As such,

¹⁴¹ Will of John Ramsden of Longley, 1648, *The National Archives* available from: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858/>, PROB 11/205/188

¹⁴² Tawney, R. H. (1941). The Rise of the Gentry. *The Economic History Review*, 11(1), 1-38.

¹⁴³ *Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire, With Additions*, ed. Clay, J. W (1917). Volume 3. William Pollard & Company. Retrieved from [https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_3_\(1917\)_edited_by_J.W._Clay](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_3_(1917)_edited_by_J.W._Clay) (p.220)

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* (p.223)

¹⁴⁵ Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.25)

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* (p.25)

¹⁴⁷ *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*. Vol. 08. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/YAJ008> (p.503)

they were in a unique position compared to their neighbours who did not enjoy a history of the same prestige and social connections.

However, as the period progressed, the Beaumonts of Whitley gradually lost their relative dominance in the locality. Cliffe appears to have considered the Whitley family as part of his 'declining gentry'; Richard Beaumont (1574-1631) in particular hurt the family's wealth due to his 'inveterate gambling', including the keeping of fighting-cocks.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, the family was in many ways a contrast to its neighbours of Kaye and Ramsden. Whereas the Beaumont family were part of the long-established gentry which had enjoyed prestige and wealth for centuries, their poor management of finances and smaller success in capitalising on the new opportunities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries resulted in a situation resembling Tawney's 'rising gentry'.¹⁴⁹ Though all of the families in question were of gentry status, in the unique makeup of the locality the Beaumonts of Whitley did, in terms of historical prestige and finances, hold the position most aligned with what would be expected of a long-established noble family during this period.

Consequently, it is possible to draw parallels with the thesis and determine that the superior commercial nous and drive for success possessed by 'the rising gentry' families of Kaye and Ramsden allowed them to surpass the declining power of the Beaumonts and was a key component in them becoming the most influential gentry families of the locality.¹⁵⁰ However, though a powershift between the 'old' and 'new' gentry undoubtedly occurred in the locality, echoing the argument made by Heal and Holmes, the presence of 'continuity' must also be stressed as, despite their struggles and relative decline, the Beaumonts of Whitley retained significant wealth and social standing throughout the period.¹⁵¹ The relationships and commonality in priorities between the families of Kaye, Ramsden and the Beaumonts of Whitley are explored in a later chapter.

¹⁴⁸ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.126)

¹⁴⁹ Tawney, R. H. (1941). The Rise of the Gentry. *The Economic History Review*, 11(1), 1-38.

¹⁵⁰ Tawney, R. H. (1941). The Rise of the Gentry. *The Economic History Review*, 11(1), 1-38.

¹⁵¹ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (p.381)

Catholicism in Yorkshire 1550-1700

To fully understand the state of religious change in the locality, the wider history of Catholicism in both Yorkshire and the nation needs to be examined. Due to its size and influence within England, it is unsurprising that, along with Lancashire, Yorkshire's Catholic community has been a pillar of the Catholic historiography of the English Reformation. The rural parts of the North and East Ridings proved fertile grounds for the early historiography which echoed the sentiments of sixteenth-century Catholic theologians, such as Thomas Stapleton, who placed exclusive membership of the English Catholic community on the rejection of the established Church.¹⁵² Primarily this was achieved through, as Walsham put it, 'deliberate act(s) of separation' such as refusal to communicate with the Church through Communion or refusal to attend in the form of recusancy.¹⁵³ Aveling's work on Catholicism placed the emphasis almost entirely on these separatists and even John Bossy, who did much to revolutionise the study of English Catholicism, was dismissive of arguments which moved the definition of Catholicism away from the exclusive club of recusants.¹⁵⁴ Within Yorkshire, Cliffe estimated that by 1642, 138 of 163 'Catholic families' were recusants.¹⁵⁵ Amongst the families that have received the most attention in this field of history are the East Riding-based Babthorpes of Osgodby who had their own Jesuit priest and were persistent in their nonconformity.¹⁵⁶ Missionary Catholic priests were a common focus of the recusant historiography and the access to Catholic mass they provided to the families that could house them was usually emphasised by the likes of Aveling.¹⁵⁷ This type of nonconformity, however, was not exclusive to the other Ridings of the county. In the West Riding wapentakes of Ripon and Claro, there was a thick distribution of recusants.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, near Leeds, the Gascoignes of Barnbow are a prime example of Yorkshire recusancy and are said to have 'paid recusancy fines continuously from 1605 to 1642'.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵² Aveling, J.C.H. (1976). *The Handle and the Axe*. Blond & Briggs. (p.25)

¹⁵³ Walsham, A. (2016). *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain*. Routledge. (p.8)

¹⁵⁴ Aveling, J.C.H. (1976). *The Handle and the Axe*. Blond & Briggs; Bossy, J. (1998). *Peace in the Post-Reformation*. Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511612022 (pp.86-87)

¹⁵⁵ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.189)

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. (p.177)

¹⁵⁷ Aveling, J.C.H. (1976). *The Handle and the Axe*. Blond & Briggs. (p.61)

¹⁵⁸ Aveling, D. H. (1963). *The Catholic Recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558 – 1790*. Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. (pp.209-210 & p.221).

¹⁵⁹ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.228)

Mostly, these types of recusant families tended to thrive in rural communities away from cities. As Cliffe stated in his study of the North Riding, areas such as these had the greatest potential as nonconformist Catholic strongholds as they were made up of 'wild and inaccessible country which offered little encouragement to the disciples of the reformed faith.'¹⁶⁰

Arguably, areas of rural landscape appear to have offered greater opportunities for Catholic resistance though the reasons for such are more multifaceted than Cliffe implied. Instead of being purely based on how rural an area was, the answers to this are to be found in the subject of authority. Firstly, the distance from the authority of The Council of the North (located in York), which was charged with enforcing the Crown's interests in the north of England up until 1641, was a fundamental factor.¹⁶¹ As Bastow explained, Catholics directly in the view of the Council, such as those residing in the city of York, could easily be identified but beyond the Council's centre of authority the responsibility for identifying Catholics 'remained the task of local men, specifically the churchwarden'.¹⁶² Secondly, because of this, the sympathies and religious beliefs of the enforcers of local authority in question then became a key factor. As Walsham has shown, Catholics often still held prominent office in society such as 'mayor, bailiff, constable, justices of the peace and even sometimes as churchwarden' during the period of study. This meant that in areas where Catholicism persisted, it was not uncommon for the figures of local authority to be Catholics themselves suggesting that they would be less enthusiastic about the persecution of local Catholic families.¹⁶³ Consequently, in a locality isolated from the authority of the Council of the North due to factors including distance or rurality and where local officials were sympathetic to the old religion, Catholicism certainly possessed an advantage that it did not have in the urban hubs of authority. In localities such as Almondbury, where the figures of local authority were ambitious conformists, rural landscape and distance from the Council of the North were substantially less likely to offer a boost to Catholic survivalism.

¹⁶⁰ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.169)

¹⁶¹ Wagner, J. A., & Schmid, S. W. (2012). *Encyclopedia of Tudor England*. ABC-CLIO. (pp.304-305)

¹⁶² Bastow, S. L. (2007). *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 Resistance and Accommodation*. Edwin Mellen Press. (p.125)

¹⁶³ Walsham, A. (2016). *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain*. Routledge. (p.95)

In more recent times, increasingly dynamic historiography has wrestled the narrative of Catholicism and the Reformation away from an exclusive story of recusants and missionary priests to one which affords much greater attention to 'Church Papists' who outwardly conformed to the Church of England yet inwardly retained Catholic beliefs. Alexandra Walsham directly opposed the likes of Bossy in arguing that 'conformity was not merely a stepping stone on the road to recusancy, but an enduring and viable strategy for surviving persecution and for reconciling the competing allegiances to the Crown and faith'.¹⁶⁴ Despite its reliability in providing scholars with quantifiable numbers of certain Catholics, for contemporaries, nonconformity on the scale demonstrated by the most persistent nonconformist families could be disastrous with, by 1593, 'crippling fines, confiscated estates, constraints on mobility and sometimes extended imprisonment.'¹⁶⁵ As Michael Questier has shown, with the government handing such penalties out on the political grounds of 'sedition' rather than on the grounds of religion, nonconformity in religion was an intrinsically political issue. These penalties left nonconformists facing tough financial penalties but also created further dilemmas for the remaining English Catholics in pitching social aspirations against religious loyalties.¹⁶⁶

In Yorkshire, this dilemma was no different. Bastow emphasised that 'the Yorkshire gentry were an integral part of the political and social elite in the north and their desire to retain this role is clear.'¹⁶⁷ This led many of the Catholic gentry families in the county to not pursue the 'heroic' and often 'self-destructive' recusancy of their peers, but instead to take a far more 'pragmatic' approach which avoided the separatist actions of nonconformity and would usually avoid direct opposition to the Church and authorities.¹⁶⁸

Another recent development in the historiography of Catholicism relates to the complexity of religious beliefs. Instead of exclusive categories of the reformed and unreformed, Michael Questier has rightly considered that historiography on the subject should look beyond the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. (p.10)

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. (p.12)

¹⁶⁶ Questier, M. (2013). Sermons, Separatists, and Succession Politics in Late Elizabethan England. *The Journal of British Studies*, 52(2), 290-316. (p.291)

¹⁶⁷ Bastow, S. L. (2007). *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 Resistance and Accommodation*. Edwin Mellen Press. (p.8)

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. (p.2)

‘artificially restricted concept of how change of religion took place.’¹⁶⁹ In a similar way to Haigh’s claim that parishioners ‘conformed to what suited them’, religious boundaries were penetrable and the extent to which one was a Protestant or Catholic is most comparable to a sliding scale rather than an approach which put individuals exclusively in one category or the other.¹⁷⁰ Individuals could consider themselves Catholic yet accept elements of the new religion and vice versa. Subsequently, due to a variety of dynamics ranging from concerns over social prosperity to the versatility of religious beliefs, the recusants of the country were only, as Ryrie considered, the ‘tip of an iceberg’ when it came to the actual figure of those holding Catholic beliefs within England during this period.¹⁷¹ It is critical to note that although, from a modern perspective, approaches which concealed a Catholic’s true faith or the concept of a religious hybrid of types may appear pragmatic, to devout contemporaries these actions were heavily frowned upon and considered despicable.¹⁷²

Clearly, a picture of the Reformation in Yorkshire has emerged which depicts the process of change in the county to have been slow and conservative. J.T. Cliffe estimated that in 1570, 368 of 567 gentry families could be described as Catholic demonstrating the significant influence Catholicism retained on many of the local families well into Elizabeth’s reign.¹⁷³ Though Cliffe’s estimate of Catholicism in later decades subsided significantly, in 1642 Cliffe estimated that only 163 of the 679 Yorkshire gentry families were Catholic, the work of historians including Bastow has proven that to some extent the traditional religion and its values survived in much greater numbers below the surface and away from the eyes and records of the authorities.¹⁷⁴

Catholicism in the Locality of Almondbury

Having acknowledged that, in Yorkshire, Catholic survivalism has proven to be the dominant theme of the historiography, it is interesting to evaluate the extent to which the locality

¹⁶⁹ Questier, M. C. (1996). *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625*. Cambridge University Press. (p.201)

¹⁷⁰ Haigh, C. (1993). *English Reformations*. Clarendon Press. (p.290)

¹⁷¹ Ryrie, A. (2009). *The Age of Reformation, The Tudor and Stewart Realms 1485 - 1603*. Routledge. (p.246)

¹⁷² Overell, A. (2018). *Nicodemites: Faith and Concealment Between Italy and Tudor England*. Brill. (p.1)

¹⁷³ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.169)

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* (p.189)

conforms to what has become expected of religious change in the county. Crucially, the locality appears to have been atypical of Yorkshire in that the evidence suggests Catholicism was not maintained to the same degree as it was elsewhere. Grindal's visitation of 1575 provides no evidence of Catholic nonconformity in the locality. However, it must be noted here that the visitation as a whole was limited in scope when it came to regulating the religious practice of those not at the top of the societal tree. In 1623 for example, the visitation brought four times as many people before the courts as were summoned in 1575.¹⁷⁵ In 1575, these limits of the visitation may therefore have led to any existing Catholicism within the locality not being detected. In his work which took a more comprehensive view of the contemporary source material, including sixteenth and seventeenth-century visitation books, Aveling found that even compared to the rest of the Wapentake of Agrabigg and Morley, particularly parishes such as Rothwell, relatively fewer Catholics remained in the locality.¹⁷⁶ Almondbury, unsurprisingly as the centre parish in the locality, accounted for the most Catholics. In the parish, there is noted to have been one unnamed recusant in 1571 and, in the century or so that followed, at least five other individuals said to be non-communicants or not attending church on the sabbath day. At Huddersfield, there are also noted to have been four or five non-communicants in 1603, whilst the records of Kirkburton and Kirkheaton show only one and two Catholic nonconformists respectively.¹⁷⁷

The state of religious change in Almondbury and the surrounding area during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries clearly appears to have been unusual compared to what has become expected of the county, but why was this? The most likely explanation behind the disparity in religious change observed in the locality consists of a combination of intertwined socio-economic, political and geographical reasons. Though it is hard to

¹⁷⁵ *Archbishop Grindal's Visitation, 1575. Comperta et Detecta Book*, ed. Sheils, W. J. (1977). Borthwick Texts and Calendars: Records of the Northern Province 4. (p.x)

¹⁷⁶ Aveling, D. H. (1963). *The Catholic Recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558 – 1790*. Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. (pp.299-302)

¹⁷⁷ Aveling, D. H. (1963). *The Catholic Recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558 – 1790*. Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. (pp.299-300); *A List of Roman Catholics in the County of York 1604*, ed. E. Peacock (1872). J.C Hotten. Retrieved from

<https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/A List of the Roman Catholics in the Cou/6bxCAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=a+list+of+catholic+sin+yorkshire+1600&printsec=frontcover> (pp.11-12)

measure the exact impact that each of these factors possessed, socio-economic and political factors appear to have been the most influential.

Firstly, the dominant families of the locality were primarily socially ascending gentry families who advocated for conformity to the new religion. As has been demonstrated, Almondbury and Huddersfield were parishes which offered entrepreneurial opportunities to the prosperous gentry. Where such economic opportunities presented themselves and where reformist gentry such as the Kayes and Ramsdens could ascend to the summit of local society, religious change in Yorkshire could go in a notably different direction than the traditional approach suggests. As Cliffe found, in the West Riding Protestantism made 'considerable headway' earlier and quicker in 'the neighbourhood of industrial towns' such as Huddersfield.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, if the locality was favourable to the ascending Protestant gentry, it was not so favourable to the gentry that retained their Catholic faith.

As has been shown, large geographical distances did not necessarily consign existing Catholic kinship networks to failure; however, in a locality which was experiencing large-scale social change and which contained a lack of historically established and prestigious Catholic families, the forming of new Catholic networks with distant Catholic families would have been highly challenging and highly unlikely. As such, Catholic kinship networks appear to have rarely formed which posed a problem to aspiring local Catholic nonconformists due to the potential these networks had in supporting nonconformity. As Victoria Spence has proven in her work on the North Yorkshire parish of Craven, kinship networks could be pivotal in protecting the conservative gentry of the sixteenth century from persecution, especially relating to nonconformist behaviour.¹⁷⁹ Consequently, the locality's position as an emerging industrial centre and geographically away from the rural parts of the North and East Ridings not only encouraged Protestantism but actively made the survival of Catholicism, especially for those who may have entered into nonconformity if the conditions were more sympathetic, increasingly difficult.

¹⁷⁸ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.169)

¹⁷⁹ Spence, V. (2016). Adapting to the Elizabethan Settlement: Religious Faith and the Drive Towards Conformity in Craven, 1559 to 1579. *Northern History*, 53(2), 189-219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0078172X.2016.1201888>

Secondly, though the circumstances of the locality actively supported Protestantism and discouraged Catholicism, elements such as the above almost certainly encouraged the type of conformity that the historical records have failed to identify. Even if it is true that those who can broadly be described as Protestants had a stronger presence in the population than in most other Yorkshire localities, that is not to say Catholicism instantly became a minority religion in the locality as the records suggest. Instead, it is far more likely that conservative beliefs around religion persisted more widely throughout the period but individuals chose not to express them. At Kirkburton for example, though little evidence of Catholic nonconformity in the parish survives, the Catholic practice of placing a Chrisom on newly baptised babies, followed by a spoken Latin ritual, continued until November 1568 suggesting that Catholic beliefs persisted for at least the first decade of Queen Elizabeth I's reign.¹⁸⁰ Exactly how long Catholic practices such as this persisted in the parish church is unknown; perhaps the repercussions of the Northern Rebellion which took place in the following year may have signalled the end of the practice. However, what is known is that the vicar of the church from 1562-1579, Otho Hunte, is recorded as not residing in the parish but instead spending most of his time at Methley with a curate serving in his place.¹⁸¹ It was not until 1579 that Hunte resigned from his position and a new vicar was installed, leaving open the possibility that traditional practices may have continued in the church building for much longer.¹⁸²

As Questier has shown, religious change could be a complex process suggesting old religious beliefs could live on alongside the new religious regime.¹⁸³ However, if it seems almost inevitable that attachment to Catholicism persisted far more in the locality than the records suggest, it must be asked, why? On this, it is beneficial to return to the subject of church papists. As Ryrie indicated, these individuals who conformed to the Church, yet to some

¹⁸⁰ *The Parish Registers of Kirkburton 1541-1654*, ed. Collins, F. A. (1887). Retrieved from https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Parish_Registers_of_Kirkburton_Co_Yo/RK0TAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Parish+of+kirkburton&printsec=frontcover

¹⁸¹ 'Otho Hunte' (CCEd Person ID 75235), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from: <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>; Archbishop Grindal's Visitation, 1575. *Comperta et Detecta Book*, ed. Sheils, W. J. (1977). *Borthwick Texts and Calendars: Records of the Northern Province 4*. (p.21)

¹⁸² 'Otho Hunte' (CCEd Person ID 75235), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from: <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

¹⁸³ Questier, M. C. (1996). *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625*. Cambridge University Press. (p.201)

degree remained Catholic, made up a significant number of the parish congregation. However, because they conformed and attended Church, they did not attract the attention of the authorities and therefore little evidence of their existence survives making their numbers 'unquantifiable'.¹⁸⁴ In the locality of Almondbury, there are multiple reasons why an individual with even the strongest Catholic beliefs may have been more likely to act as a church papist compared to, for example, a Catholic in a rural North Riding locality.

In an atypical locality where upcoming reformist families who were keen to impress the government enforced the law, avoiding persecution may have proven difficult for nonconformists and the danger of 'crippling fines' and 'confiscated estates' would have seemed an ever-realistic possibility as the legislature against nonconformity harshened.¹⁸⁵ The 1604 record of recusants was certified by, amongst others, Robert Kaye (d. 1620) and William Ramsden (1558-1623) demonstrating the role such conformist families played in local officiating and suggesting that nonconformity in the locality was more likely to result in fines and punishment than in other parts of Yorkshire where the leading families were religiously conservative.¹⁸⁶ As a result, the presence of such conformist figures may have deterred numerous local families who possessed conservative religious preferences from professing anything other than allegiance to the established Church.

In a similar train of thought, if the leading and wealthiest families of the locality were predominantly reformers or conformists, any remaining Catholic families would have lacked significant wealth. This is important on multiple levels. Initially, in a locality made up of less wealthy Catholics, enforcement of any such fines, especially beyond the later stages of the sixteenth century, would have been particularly debilitating to any who incurred them. Therefore, with wealthy Catholics likely sparse in number, conformity in the locality was most certainly 'a more affordable lifestyle for the majority'.¹⁸⁷ Another reason the number of recorded Catholics in the locality is low may be due to the local government and the higher authorities being reluctant to pursue the less wealthy Catholics simply as they would

¹⁸⁴ Ryrie, A. (2009). *The Age of Reformation, The Tudor and Stewart Realms 1485 - 1603*. Routledge. (p.246)

¹⁸⁵ Walsham, A. (2016). *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain*. Routledge. (p.12)

¹⁸⁶ *A List of Roman Catholics in the County of York 1604*, ed. E. Peacock. (1872). J.C Hotten. Retrieved from https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/A_List_of_the_Roman_Catholics_in_the_Cou/6bxCAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=a+list+of+catholic+sin+yorkshire+1600&printsec=frontcover (p.14)

¹⁸⁷ Walsham, A. (2016). *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain*. Routledge. (p.38)

have lacked wealth and societal influence. Bastow has shown that, particularly in the reign of Elizabeth, the identification and persecution of Catholics was often dictated by an individual's financial status suggesting that persecution and the enforcement of fines was partly about revenue generation.¹⁸⁸ Ultimately, due to a combination of socio-economic, political and geographical reasons, Protestantism enjoyed relatively more success in the locality. For the most part, where traditional beliefs persisted, outward conformity appears to have triumphed over expressions of religious zeal.

Despite the relative struggles of Catholicism in the locality, that is not to say that no evidence of Catholic survivalism exists. Instead, where evidence of Catholic nonconformity in the locality has survived, it bears the hallmarks identified in the studies which set the Catholic narrative of Yorkshire. This suggests that the same patterns of religious resistance persisted across the county. Intriguingly, one of the aforementioned non-communicants at Almondbury was Richard Beaumont of Lydiat who is thought was part of the Beaumont of Whitley family.¹⁸⁹ It is difficult to say with absolute certainty who this individual was, however, the most feasible possibility is that it was Richard Beaumont, Esq of Lascelles Hall whom Dugdale notes was born in 1570 and buried in 1656.¹⁹⁰ This Richard Beaumont was father to Thomas Beaumont of Whitley who inherited the Whitley estate from his cousin.¹⁹¹ Though across the period all strands of the family which resided at Whitley appear to have outwardly conformed to the established religion, the branch of the family which resided at Lascelles Hall retained a significant number of links to Catholicism. Richard's predecessors married into families such as the Gascoigne family of Lasingcroft (later of Barnbow) who have become well known for their conservatism throughout this period.¹⁹² Richard himself also married into a family who had a history of nonconformity when he married his first

¹⁸⁸ Bastow, S. L. (2007). *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 Resistance and Accommodation*. Edwin Mellen Press. (p.78)

¹⁸⁹ *A List of Roman Catholics in the County of York 1604*, ed. E. Peacock. (1872). J.C Hotten. Retrieved from [https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/A List of the Roman Catholics in the Cou/6bxCAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=a+list+of+catholic+sin+yorkshire+1600&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/A_List_of_the_Roman_Catholics_in_the_Cou/6bxCAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=a+list+of+catholic+sin+yorkshire+1600&printsec=frontcover) (p.11)

¹⁹⁰ *Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire, With Additions*, ed. Clay, J. W. (1917). Volume 3. William Pollard & Company. Retrieved from [https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s Visitation of Yorkshire: Volume 3 \(1917\) edited by J.W. Clay](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_3_(1917)_edited_by_J.W._Clay) (p.222)

¹⁹¹ Ibid

¹⁹² Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.228)

wife, Anna, daughter of Robert Kay of Wakefield.¹⁹³ Aveling noted that a 'Rob Kaye jun' was part of a group of recusants within Wakefield in 1572.¹⁹⁴ This individual seems almost certain to have been a member of the family that Richard Beaumont married into and plausibly to have been his wife, Anna's, father (Robert Kay of Wakefield).

Also, in 1637 'Eliz wife of Ric Beaumont esq' is recorded as a nonconformist at Mirfield though she quickly conformed again in 1638.¹⁹⁵ Considering Mirfield's proximity to Almondbury and that this branch of the family is known to have baptised their children at the local church and to have been active in the parish, it is likely that this recusant in question was Richard Beaumont's second wife, Elizabeth Beaumont, who was the daughter of Michael Wentworth of Woolley.¹⁹⁶ Michael Wentworth was a Catholic gentleman who, in 1604, is supposed to have had a schoolmaster that was a recusant.¹⁹⁷ With this in mind, it is easy to deduce that Elizabeth Beaumont was from a resilient Catholic family and would have no doubt had a strict Catholic upbringing; this makes her a strong candidate to have been the individual listed as a nonconformist at Mirfield in 1637.

Intriguingly, the fact that this branch of the Beaumont family managed to maintain kinship ties from within the locality demonstrates that it was possible to maintain such networks in the area. Consequently, even in a locality which was relatively isolated, where connections with other Catholic families preceded the occurrence of the Reformation, family networks influenced by the old religion could survive comfortably into Elizabeth's reign even if they were the exception to the rule. Moreover, the way in which this part of the Beaumont family constructed their kinship networks resembled the wider pattern of Catholic kinship. Through their intermarriage with other Catholic families, it is evident the family resembled

¹⁹³ *Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire, With Additions*, ed. Clay, J. W. (1917). Volume 3. William Pollard & Company. Retrieved from [https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_3_\(1917\)_edited_by_J.W._Clay](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_3_(1917)_edited_by_J.W._Clay) (p.222)

¹⁹⁴ Aveling, D. H. (1963). *The Catholic Recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558 – 1790*. Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. (p.302)

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* (p.300)

¹⁹⁶ *Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire, With Additions*, ed. Clay, J. W (1917). Volume 3. William Pollard & Company. Retrieved from: [https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_3_\(1917\)_edited_by_J.W._Clay](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_3_(1917)_edited_by_J.W._Clay) (p.222)

¹⁹⁷ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.194)

Spence's claims that kinship networks could be pivotal in maintaining Catholicism, especially nonconformist Catholicism.¹⁹⁸ It is likely that these historical ties to the Catholic hubs of other parts of Yorkshire encouraged the nonconformist behaviour exhibited by this branch of the Beaumont family and is, in large part, what set them aside from the bulk of the local religiously conservative population who did not all enjoy access to such networks and therefore failed to enter into nonconformity.

If they did participate in such nonconformist activities as Aveling's work infers, then it is clear that the branch of the family residing at Lascelles Hall retained a strong attachment to Catholicism and, especially in the time of the Richard Beaumont in question, were willing to defy the established Church to express their religious zeal. Additionally, it is hard to believe that future generations, especially Richard's son Thomas who it seems was raised in a Catholic household, did not continue to hold traditional beliefs on religion to some extent when previous generations went to great effort in maintaining them through elements such as their kinship networks and nonconformity.

However, beyond the time of Richard Beaumont and into Thomas Beaumont's accession to Whitley, the evidence suggests the family did not participate in Catholic nonconformity. Even Elizabeth Beaumont conformed in 1638, only a year after her initial entry into nonconformity.¹⁹⁹ For some historians, such as John Bossy, this was seen as a lack of commitment to Catholicism.²⁰⁰ However, newer interpretations have rightly altered this approach. As Walsham argued, conformity was 'an enduring and viable strategy for surviving persecution' and for 'reconciling the competing allegiances to the Crown and faith that confronted those who clung to the faith of their forefathers'.²⁰¹ In part, this suggests the Beaumonts may have shielded away any Catholic beliefs that remained in order to prevent large legal and financial losses. Following the ascent of the Lascelles Hall branch of the family to Whitley, the family continued to possess great wealth, with Cliffe estimating

¹⁹⁸ Spence, V. (2016). Adapting to the Elizabethan Settlement: Religious Faith and the Drive Towards Conformity in Craven, 1559 to 1579. *Northern History*, 53(2), 189-219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0078172X.2016.1201888>

¹⁹⁹ Aveling, D. H. (1963). *The Catholic Recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558 – 1790*. Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. (p.300)

²⁰⁰ Bossy, J. (1998). *Peace in the Post-Reformation*. Cambridge University Press.
doi:10.1017/CBO9780511612022

²⁰¹ Walsham, A. (2016). *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain*. Routledge. (p.10)

that Thomas Beaumont's property at Whitley was worth about £212 a year in 1638, proving they had plenty to lose.²⁰² The family's desire to continue enjoying such wealth and standing in society is one possible reason why they do not feature in the recusant and nonconformist records consistently throughout the seventeenth century. Alternatively, as Thomas Beaumont's participation in the Protestation returns of 1641 implies, another possible reason may be that the family simply conformed.²⁰³ Notably, an evaluation of the 1651 will of Adam Beaumont, the eldest son of Thomas, suggests only Protestant conformity, further adding to the possibility that as the seventeenth century progressed the family conformed to the national religion.²⁰⁴

To precisely what extent the Beaumont of Whitley family, and the individuals within it, retained their Catholic beliefs throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is impossible to know. However, what is evident is that the types of behaviour exhibited by individuals such as Richard Beaumont (1570-1656) were in many ways typical of what historians have come to expect when investigating the dynamic Catholic Yorkshire gentry. Acting to some degree as Church Papists in order to protect their interests, the actions of the Beaumont family are relatable to Bastow's argument that the Catholic Yorkshire gentry wished to retain their role in society'.²⁰⁵ Additionally, Elizabeth's appearance as a nonconformist at Mirfield in 1637, independent of mention of her husband's nonconformity, is further evidence to support the ever-growing work on the role women played in Catholic survivalism in the north. Bastow, a great contributor to this subject, summarised that 'it is evident from looking at Yorkshire that women did have a significant place in the history of Yorkshire Catholicism and therefore by implication in maintaining English Catholicism.'²⁰⁶ Whether it be due to the threat of persecution that Richard Beaumont likely faced if he failed to conform or simply that Elizabeth was more zealous in

²⁰² Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.140)

²⁰³ Kirkheaton Inhabitants by Surname 1600-1649. *Kirkheaton.info Archive Database*. Available from <https://www.kirkheaton.info/kirkheaton-items-various/2012-02-13-10-16-31/inhabitants-by-surname-1600-1649>

²⁰⁴ Will of Adam Beaumont, 1656, *The National Archives* available from: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858/>, PROB 11/253/482.

²⁰⁵ Bastow, S. L. (2007). *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 Resistance and Accommodation*. Edwin Mellen Press. (p.8)

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* (p.69)

her drive for nonconformity than her husband was, it was her spearheading the family's Catholic nonconformity in 1637. Thus, Elizabeth Beaumont appears to have been a forefront figure in her family's maintenance of the old faith.

Another fascinating element of the Beaumonts' potential Catholicism is that they do not appear to have accommodated Catholic missionary priests. Though it is well understood that missionary priests tended to locate 'away from the north and the west' and instead 'towards the south and the east', numerous priests are known to have resided in Yorkshire.²⁰⁷

As has been shown, some of the most famous Catholic families from across Yorkshire maintained Catholic priests during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁰⁸ The reason that the Beaumonts of Lascelles Hall did not maintain Catholic priests is likely due to a combination of factors. Firstly, with local officials eager to enforce religious conformity such a move risked placing the family in direct and open conflict with the authorities, something which Elizabeth Beaumont's swift return to conformity in 1638 implies the family were keen to avoid.

Secondly, the Catholic clergy tended to settle in 'the homes of recusant nobility and gentry' which were impressive in size and where, as the Gascoigne's demonstrated, they could disguise themselves in roles such as a chaplain.²⁰⁹ Little evidence survives of the first Lascelles Hall where this branch of the Beaumont family resided with Tolson providing the best-known description of the no-longer-standing house. Tolson stated that in the building 'characteristic of medieval times... there is little doubt that it was a timbered building, H shape in design' with a dining hall, a 'huge log hearth', kitchens and drawing rooms.²¹⁰ Lascelles Hall is likely to have been an impressive gentry house during the sixteenth century,

²⁰⁷ Walsham, A. (2005). Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation. *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 78 (201), 288-310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2281.2005.00230.x>

²⁰⁸ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.177)

²⁰⁹ Walsham, A. (2005). Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation. *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 78 (201), 288-310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2281.2005.00230.x>; Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (pp.176-7)

²¹⁰ Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (pp.125-6)

but whether it possessed the capacity to house a missionary priest is unknown. With the most prominent Catholic family of the locality either unwilling or incapable of attracting a Catholic missionary priest, in addition to the remaining impressive houses of the locality belonging to conformist families, it is likely that local families did not receive access to Catholic priests that other Yorkshire Catholics did.

The religious change in the locality of Almondbury and the surrounding parishes was atypical of religious change within Yorkshire during the Reformation. In contrast to what has become expected of religious change in the county, there is little evidence of strong and persistent Catholic survivalism in the locality during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Instead, the advance of Protestantism appears to have been particularly successful. The reasons for this development were a combination of socio-economic, political and geographical factors but primarily centred on the emergence of conformist families who became highly influential in local affairs. The social structure and commercial opportunities of the area were pivotal in allowing the rise of the entrepreneurial-minded and reformist gentry, most notably the Kayes and Ramsdens, who were supported by the increasing opportunities of the time.

Additionally, there were no great families of nobility status within the region to slow their rapid ascent resulting in a situation where the advocates for reform dominated local society. Due to factors including the locality's distance from the Catholic focal points of Yorkshire and the likely lack of wealth and prestige any surviving Catholics of the area would have possessed, the evidence suggests few Catholic kinship networks developed in the area which further challenged the survival of the traditional religion in the locality. This chapter has also demonstrated that where indications of Catholic survivalism are visible, it appears they mirrored the ways in which the old faith survived in other parts of the county, suggesting that Catholic survivalism operated similarly throughout the boundaries of Yorkshire.

Chapter 2: The Conformist Gentry and Their Priorities

The locality of Almondbury was dominated by conformist gentry. This chapter investigates these families and asks, what were the priorities of the local conformist gentry? The reasons for this focus are that it is only through understanding the priorities of these drivers of local society that the major changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the locality can be fully understood. As one example, much of the surviving material culture from the period offers significantly greater insight into affairs once the priorities of its creators, usually a member of the local gentry, are known. Furthermore, through understanding the priorities of the local gentry it is possible to attain a greater understating of how the religious and social changes in the area, along with the gentry of the locality, compared to the country as a whole. This chapter focuses primarily on the Kayes of Woodsome due to their prominence as a local gentry family but also discusses the Ramsdens of Longley and Beaumonts of Whitley.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that despite their differences, the conformist gentry in the locality of Almondbury shared a commonality of priorities. These priorities were the attainment of wealth, the assertion of authority and the collection of greater prestige. As part of their aim to expand authority and prestige, the conformist gentry also prioritised several other elements, including the iconographic development of the family home, the expression of gentry values, the attainment of patronage and the desire to display loyalty and usefulness to the Crown.

Following this, the chapter argues that religion remained a priority for the local gentry. Though the parish church remained a powerful tool in asserting the priorities of authority and piety, the new religion and its 'ideals of religious devotion' and 'stricter standards of personal conduct' brought new opportunities to express these priorities for the conformist gentry.²¹¹ Notably, such concerns became expressed through the assertion of order and religious discipline in domestic spaces, most prominently in their increasingly impressive family homes. Along with the positions of increasing societal power afforded to them across

²¹¹ Wrightson, K. (2003). *English Society 1580-1680* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (p.233)

the period, this continues the theme recognised in the previous chapter that religious conformity to the established Church was an advantageous position to take for the local gentry, especially compared to the experience of nonconformists from 1558 onwards. This chapter expresses that the priorities of these local families were typical of the conformist English gentry during this period and reflected the emerging trends in areas such as gentry spending.

The 'rising gentry'?

As we have seen, the key families of the locality differed in social standing. The Kayes of Woodsome and Ramsdens of Longley can undoubtedly be considered examples of the 'rising gentry'.²¹² Both these families, especially the Ramsdens who went on to be particularly successful, were part of the new breed of ambitious and entrepreneurial gentry that rose to prominence during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In contrast, the Beaumont family at Whitley had a greater established role in the local social hierarchy but found themselves in relative decline during the same period. However, what connected all three families was, at the very least on the surface, religious conformity and their commonality in priorities.

As with the heads of the family that both preceded and succeeded him, John Kaye (d.1594) was heavily invested in solidifying and improving the family's societal position on both the local and national stages. For the gentry, at the core of achieving such ambitions was expanding their wealth. Wealth underpinned the status and prestige of gentry families across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so consolidation and expansion of family finances was a key element to attaining success.²¹³ The primary method through which this was achieved was the acquisition and retention of landed wealth, something which the successful local conformist families aggressively pursued. In the case of John Kaye, he acquired this through the acquisition of land and mills.²¹⁴

The most prosperous of the local conformist gentry, the Ramsden family, followed a similar path. The family possessed interests in numerous types of industrial activity such as

²¹² Tawney, R. H. (1941). The Rise of the Gentry. *The Economic History Review*, 11(1), 1-38.

²¹³ Wrightson, K. (2003). *English Society 1580-1680* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (p.33)

²¹⁴ Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (p.194)

collieries, iron forges and fulling mills, in addition to purchasing significant amounts of land around Huddersfield during this period.²¹⁵ What made wealth so imperative was that with it in hand, gentlemen such as John Kaye could use it to advance their other priorities. Though all of these focuses were priorities of the gentry in their own right, they also, to a greater or lesser extent, contributed to the gentry's key desire to maintain and expand the family's authority. As this chapter will now explore, for the conformist gentry in the locality of Almondbury, authority was a fundamental component in the maintenance and increase of the family's prospects during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the ways in which it was attained were multifaceted.

In what Wrightson referred to as a 'great age of building', one way gentry families achieved a boost to their authority was through the prioritisation of expanding and, in some cases, building impressive country houses.²¹⁶ For example, as a sign of their rapid rise through the ranks of society, in the final years of Elizabeth's reign the Ramsdens constructed a new family mansion known as the second Lascelles Hall.²¹⁷ However, the most intriguing of the local conformist gentry homes is the Kaye's home at Woodsome Hall. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, subsequent generations of the family resided at the home and continuously added intriguing elements to its interior. Amongst other features, the impressive building houses an inscription above the fireplace stating the names of Arthur Kaye and Beatrix Kaye, a stone porch in the centre which bears the date 1600 and a series of portraits depicting different family members from across the seventeenth century.²¹⁸ Clearly, the development of Woodsome Hall was a priority for consecutive generations of the Kaye family across the period. Though such elements were undoubtedly aesthetically impressive, the reasons for their creation were far more dynamic than just for the purpose of visual pleasure.

For gentlemen like John Kaye, the family home was designed to be an impressive status symbol which served the family's interests. The inscribed names of Arthur Kaye and Beatrix

²¹⁵ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (p.97)

²¹⁶ Wrightson, K. (2000). *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain*. Yale University Press. (p.185)

²¹⁷ Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.127)

²¹⁸ Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (pp.177-180)

Kaye above the fireplace, for example, are a particularly potent piece of evidence both because of their placement and content. In her study of religious imagery in Protestant households during this period, Tara Hamling described the significance of the area above the fireplace as a 'physical and symbolic focal point' in a room which served as a 'natural gathering point for individuals and groups seeking warmth' suggesting the inscription was purposely placed with the intention of being viewed by visitors to the house.²¹⁹ The seventeenth-century diary of the Rev. Robert Meeke suggests that the family used Woodsome Hall for entertaining guests implying that the number of visitors, and consequently the number of individuals who viewed the fireplace, across the decades would have been considerable.²²⁰ Regarding the content of the inscription, Arthur and Beatrix Kaye, the parents of John Kaye, provided the foundations for John's rapid ascent of the family's fortunes and did much for the house at Woodsome.²²¹ Therefore, in an era where blood and lineage played a substantial role in legitimising a gentleman's status, for John Kaye the maintenance of this display would have expressed his legitimacy and, through it, his authority to the many individuals that laid eyes on it.²²²

The investment in the interior of the family home by individuals such as John Kaye was typical of the gentry's changing spending patterns during the decades following the dissolution and up until the Civil War. As research on the topic has found, wealthy landowners in this period moved away from lavish spending on traditional displays of status, such as the maintenance of excessive amounts of servants and lavish funerals, and instead looked to interior elements of their homes to demonstrate their wealth and prestige.²²³ In the creation of the symbolic elements of Woodsome Hall, leaders of the Kaye family

²¹⁹ Hamling, T. (2007). To See or Not to See? The Presence of Religious Imagery in the Protestant Household. *Art History*, 30(2), 170-197. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8365.2007.00537.x>

²²⁰ Meeke, R. *Extracts from the Diary of the Rev. Robert Meeke*, ed. H.J Morehouse (1874). Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/6929> (p.67)

²²¹ *Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire, With Additions*, ed. Clay, J. W (1899). Volume 1. William Pollard & Company. Retrieved from [https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_1_\(1899\)_edited_by_J.W._Clay](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire:_Volume_1_(1899)_edited_by_J.W._Clay) (p.75)

²²² Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (p.27)

²²³ Clay, C. G. A. (2005). *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700*. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Economic_Expansion_and_Social_Change_Eng/oyRH81DocnC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=gentry+houses+status+symbol+1500-1700&pg=PA25&printsec=frontcover (p.25)

therefore provide an example of the emerging trend of gentry families using the interior of their family homes as part of their arsenal to assert their priorities.

Further inspection of the interior of Woodsome Hall also reveals a number of the Kaye's other priorities which were common amongst the social group at the time. The first of these is the prioritisation of demonstrating what were considered gentry qualities. For some historians, gentility in this period became primarily dependent 'upon the moral qualities of the individual, as well as his house and descent.'²²⁴ Though claims such as these underappreciate the importance of other elements, most notably landed wealth, such concerns were undoubtedly imperative in the minds of the gentry. As we have seen, emphasising their descent was something which the Kaye family valued significantly and, through further investigation of Woodsome Hall's interior, it is evident that the family prioritised the expression of the moral values and criteria which they perceived to be a fundamental part of possessing gentry status.

Originally placed in the house at Woodsome but now held at the Tolson Museum in Huddersfield, the Kaye family panels possess clear evidence of this.²²⁵ In the words of Robert Tittler, the panels (dated 1567 during the time of John Kaye) 'consist of four tableaux, painted on both sides of each panel.' The makeup of the four panels includes a portrait of John Kaye, surrounded by three poems, twelve miniature figures holding scrolls, and the Kaye arms raised above them all; a panel consisting of sixty-six coats of arms; a panel portraying Dorothy Kaye surrounded by five inscriptions; and a panel depicting three generations of the Kaye family in a style of a family tree, stemming from John's father, Arthur.²²⁶

²²⁴ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (p.277)

²²⁵ Anonymous., *Kaye Family Tree*, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/398A (verso). Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries; Anonymous., *John Kaye of Woodsome*, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/399 (recto). Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries; Anonymous., *Coats of Arms of Kaye's Friends and Kin*, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/399A (verso). Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries; Anonymous., *Dorothy Kaye*, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/398 (recto). Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries.

²²⁶ Tittler, R. (2015) Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567. *Northern History*, 52(2), 182-199. Doi: 10.1179/0078172X15Z.00000000087



Figure 2: Anonymous., Kaye Family Tree, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/398A (verso). Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries.



Figure 3: Anonymous., John Kaye of Woodsome, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/399 (recto). Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries.



Figure 4: Anonymous., Coats of Arms of Kaye's Friends and Kin, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/399A (verso). Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries.



Figure 5: Anonymous., Dorothy Kaye, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/398 (recto). Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries.

Alongside lineage, analysis of the panels reveals several values that John Kaye associated with gentry status and therefore attempted to express including hospitality, the importance of learning and loyalty to the Crown.²²⁷ The most interesting expression of the panels is, however, the importance of order. Fundamentally, the concept of order focused on status and placed the Crown at the summit and the peasantry at the bottom, though it could also encompass other parts of society including gender roles. In the commission of the Woodsome panels, John Kaye expressed his undoubted desire to retain order in relation to gender. The misogynist poem found on the Dorothy Kaye panel, seemingly the creation of Kaye himself, states 'Obeying our husbands in what lawful is'.²²⁸ In the later decades of the sixteenth century, anxiety over women's role in society was an increasingly prominent feature of the contemporary patriarchal social structure. As Keith Thomas explained, 'women at this time were denied access to any of the normal means of expression afforded by Church, State or University' and members of the gentry, evidently including John Kaye, were keen on maintaining and enforcing this 'male preserve'.²²⁹ In the seventeenth century, gender anxieties played a major role in the emerging concept of witchcraft when women accused were believed to have 'made a deliberate pact with the Devil'; such was the unease over contemporary gender roles.²³⁰ Through expression of values including order, Tittler correctly considered that John Kaye was attempting 'nothing less than the very forging of social identities'.²³¹ With the consolidation of the family's gentry status proving pivotal in allowing gentlemen to be successful during this period, it is no surprise that gentlemen such as John Kaye prioritised the demonstration of what they considered gentry qualities and values.

²²⁷ Tittler, R. (2015). Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567. *Northern History*, 52(2), 182-199. Doi: 10.1179/0078172X15Z.00000000087

²²⁸ Anonymous., *Dorothy Kaye*, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/398 (recto). *Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries*.

²²⁹ Thomas, K. (1991). *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*. Penguin. (p.163)

²³⁰ *Ibid.* (p.521)

²³¹ Tittler, R. (2015) Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567. *Northern History*, 52(2), 182-199. Doi: 10.1179/0078172X15Z.00000000087

In connection with this, another priority of the gentry was the attainment of patronage. As has been rightly summarised, historians have emphasised ‘the role of kinship in political networks and patronage, from the Tudor nobility to eighteenth-century gentry and court circles’.²³² During the time of John Kaye, the family home was becoming a tool to achieve patronage from the more powerful families of the region and country. As has been shown, the visual and symbolic elements of Woodsome Hall were intentionally created to assert the family’s gentry status and impress visitors, some of whom would have had the ability to support the Kaye family in achieving their aspirations. Notably, the Woodsome panel which depicts sixty-six coats of arms was a direct attempt by John Kaye to associate with other potentially beneficial Protestant families of the region, demonstrating the gentry’s awareness of the benefits such links could hold.²³³

Across the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, influential patrons were undoubtedly worth attracting for the Yorkshire gentry. In regards to the local gentry of Almondbury, one of the most interesting examples of this patronage involved Sir John Ramsden (1594-1646) and the significantly powerful Yorkshire gentleman Sir Thomas Wentworth. Sir Thomas, of the Wentworth Woodhouse branch of the family, was one of the most powerful and influential figures in Yorkshire before and during the reign of Charles I.²³⁴ In matters of politics, Sir Thomas was backed by ‘virtually every Protestant squire of real substance’ in the West Riding, including it seems John Ramsden who appears to have supported him in the Yorkshire election of 1620.²³⁵ By 1628, Sir Thomas had successfully taken control over the Parliamentary seat of Pontefract and, almost certainly down to his association with and support of Sir Thomas, John Ramsden attained the seat for himself in the same year.²³⁶

²³² Tadmor, N. (2010). Early Modern English Kinship in the Long Run: Reflections on Continuity and Change. *Continuity and Change*, 25(1), 15-48. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416010000093>

²³³ Tittler, R. (2015). Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567. *Northern History*, 52(2), 182-199. doi: 10.1179/0078172X15Z.00000000087; Anonymous., *Coats of Arms of Kaye’s Friends and Kin*, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/399A (verso). *Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries*.

²³⁴ Cliffe, J. T (1969). *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*. The Athlone Press. (pp.236-7)

²³⁵ Ibid. (p.283); ‘Sir Henry Savile [of Methley] to Sir Richard Beaumont’, in *Beaumont Papers*, ed. Macray, W. D. (1884). Retrieved from

[https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Beaumont Papers: Letters Relating to the Family of Beaumont of Whitley, Yorkshire \(1884\) by Rev. W.D. Macray](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Beaumont_Papers:_Letters_Relating_to_the_Family_of_Beaumont_of_Whitely,_Yorkshire_(1884)_by_Rev._W.D._Macray) (pp.43-44)

²³⁶ Ruigh, R. E. (1971). *The Parliament of 1624 Politics and Foreign Policy*. Harvard University Press. (pp.104-5); Sykes, D. F. E (1898). *The History of Huddersfield and its Vicinity*. The Advertiser Press. Retrieved from:

Clearly, conformist families were aware that the shape of contemporary society meant that association with, and impressing, more powerful members of the conformist gentry had the potential to yield significant benefits through patronage. Attaining approval and patronage from those higher in the social food chain was a sensible priority for conformist gentry families such as the Kayes and Ramsdens.

Similarly, the conformist gentry also prioritised demonstrating loyalty and usefulness to the government and Crown. Since their rise to power, the Tudor monarchs 'sought, through often lavish grants of land and office, to build the local power of those of the aristocracy, some of their own creation, upon whose loyalty they could rely.'²³⁷ From Elizabeth's reign onwards, there were many opportunities to be capitalised on by the conformist gentlemen of the country. One of the clearest and most beneficial ways to demonstrate loyalty to the Crown was to acquire political titles and local power. This engraved individuals within the established system, therefore demonstrating their promotion of it whilst also allowing them to rise up the social ladder and directly fulfil their key priority of attaining more local and national authority.

Regarding titles, most notably for the Kaye family, Sir John Kaye (1616-1662) was created Baronet by Charles I in 1641.²³⁸ Though the prestige associated with the title had undoubtedly degraded since its introduction earlier in the seventeenth century, largely due to the sheer number of them which had been distributed in addition to the Crown freely selling the title when it needed to raise funds or in this case as an attempt to buy loyalty as the Civil War approached, the prestige associated with the title was still of benefit to the Kaye family and would have provided them with a boost to their prestige and authority.²³⁹

The Ramsden and Beaumont of Whitley families also acquired titles in the seventeenth century. During the reign of James I, Sir John Ramsden (1594-1646) was knighted in 1619. The Ramsdens were one of many gentry families who utilised the new King's willingness to

[https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/The History of Huddersfield and its Vicinity \(1898\) by D.F.E. Sykes](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/The_History_of_Huddersfield_and_its_Vicinity_(1898)_by_D.F.E._Sykes) (p.215)

²³⁷ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (p.196)

²³⁸ *Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire, with Additions*, Parts 1-4, ed. William Clay, J (1894). W. Pollard & Company. Retrieved from [https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Dugdale s Visitation of Yorkshire with A/6KFCAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Dugdale_s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire_with_A/6KFCAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv) (p.77)

²³⁹ Stone, L. (1967). *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*. (Abridged ed.). Oxford University Press. (pp.44-47)

distribute a larger quantity of honours compared with his predecessors. Lawrence Stone calculated that, on average, the years from 1615-19 included 120 knighthoods per year which was a notable increase from Elizabeth's reign.²⁴⁰ Many years later, a warrant to make Sir John Ramsden a baronet in 1689 survives, showing that across the seventeenth century the local families continued to attain these titles.²⁴¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the oldest family with the longest history of chivalry acquired titles even prior to both the Kaye and Ramsden families. In contrast to Sir John Ramsden, who attained his knighthood in 1619 when they were in far greater supply and therefore less prestigious, Sir Richard Beaumont of Whitley Hall, the final head of the family before the branch of the family residing at Lascelles Hall ascended to the title, was part of the first wave of knighthoods during the reign of James I when he was knighted on July 23rd 1603.²⁴² The Beaumonts were also the first of the three families to attain a Baronetage when, during the reign of Charles I in July of 1628, Sir Richard was granted the title.²⁴³ The tomb of Sir Richard, which remains located within the church at Kirkheaton and which was created by his successor, specifically mentions his titles of Knight and Baronet giving a strong indication of the regard that the local gentry held such titles in and the boost to authority that they offered.²⁴⁴

However, it was in holding prestigious governmental offices where families could really demonstrate their usefulness to the Crown and, in turn, attain a substantial degree of additional authority and prestige. Dugdale's visitation demonstrates how from Sir Arthur

²⁴⁰ Stone, L. (1967). *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*. (Abridged ed.). Oxford University Press. (p.42); Shaw, W. A & Burtchaell, G. D (1908). *The Knights of England. A Complete Record from the Earliest Times to the Present Day of Knights of all the Orders of Chivalry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Knights Bachelors, Incorporating A Complete List of Knights Bachelors Dubbed in Ireland*. Sherratt and Hughes. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/knightsofengland02shawuoft/mode/2up> (p.173)

²⁴¹ 'William and Mary: November 1689', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: William and Mary, 1689-90*, ed. William John Hardy (London, 1895), pp. 311-341. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/will-mary/1689-90/pp311-341> [accessed 2 June 2021].

²⁴² Shaw, W. A & Burtchaell, G. D (1908). *The Knights of England. A Complete Record from the Earliest Times to the Present Day of Knights of all the Orders of Chivalry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Knights Bachelors, Incorporating A Complete List of Knights Bachelors Dubbed in Ireland*. Sherratt and Hughes. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/knightsofengland02shawuoft/mode/2up> (p.120)

²⁴³ 'Charles I - volume 111: July 25-31, 1628', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1628-29*, ed. John Bruce (London, 1859), pp. 230-242. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/chas1/1628-9/pp230-242> [accessed 4 June 2021].

²⁴⁴ Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.57)

Kaye (d. 1571) onwards, the Kaye family played a crucial role in the governance of local society through their appointments as Justices of the Peace.²⁴⁵ Though Dugdale's visitation does not state that John Kaye (d. 1594) was himself a JP, research by Tittler suggests that he served as a JP from 1572 until the late 1580s.²⁴⁶ Even as the role of JP evolved across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, across the period, the position was a crucial part of local government and put gentlemen such as John Kaye in a position vital to both law enforcement and administration.²⁴⁷ Besides providing a significant physical boost to authority, the role was also prestigious in that only those with substantial wealth and local respect could attain it.²⁴⁸ Acting as a Justice of the Peace was a crucial way in which the gentry could demonstrate their loyalty to the Crown and advance their authority.

Though serving in local office was indeed important to the gentry, service at county level was a more lucrative position and a greater test of status.²⁴⁹ Moreover, service at national level was even more prestigious and, for the local conformist families of the locality, would have represented a peak in their social status and authority. Across the seventeenth century, the Kaye family continued to acquire more prestigious roles. In the 1680s, the family reached new heights of local authority when Sir John Kaye (d. 1706) sat in Parliament for the county (The role was undoubtedly inconvenient, Meeke's diary from the 19th – 21st of February 1690 described the protracted process of voting in the seventeenth century, but the chance to serve his locality and the Crown, along with the potential increase to both prestige and authority were clearly appealing to Sir John for he persisted with the position for years²⁵⁰). Across the country, attaining the position of a Member of Parliament was certainly of great importance to aspirational gentlemen. Wrightson found that in Somerset,

²⁴⁵ *Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire, with Additions*, Parts 1-4, ed. William Clay, J (1894). W. Pollard & Company. Digitized in 2009 and retrieved from: [https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Dugdale s Visitation of Yorkshire with A/6KFCAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Dugdale_s_Visitation_of_Yorkshire_with_A/6KFCAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv) (pp.74-78)

²⁴⁶ Tittler, R. (2015). *Kaye, John*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/107187>

²⁴⁷ Sharpe, J.A (2013). *Crime in Early Modern England 1550 – 1750*. (2nd edition). Routledge. (p.40)

²⁴⁸ *Ibid* (p.42)

²⁴⁹ Wrightson, K. (2003). *English Society 1580-1680* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (p.34)

²⁵⁰ Meeke, R. *Extracts from the Diary of the Rev. Robert Meeke*, ed. H.J Morehouse (1874). Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/6929> (p.23)

the county's Members of Parliament were men from ranks of 'the greatest baronets, knights and esquires', emphasising the prestige associated with the role.²⁵¹

Intriguingly, it appears that the selection of Sir John was, at least in part, due to the family's reputation as loyal to the Crown. In a letter from the royalist supporter the Marquess of Winchester to the Earl of Sunderland, Sir John Kaye is noted as a candidate in Winchester's search for 'loyal and fit persons to serve in Parliament'.²⁵² In a time of political instability and continued tensions between the Crown and Parliament, loyal subjects were what the Crown needed. Therefore, not only does this demonstrate that the Kaye family were considered by their contemporaries as one loyal to the Crown and one who strived to preserve the social order associated with it, but it also emphasises how the priority of demonstrating loyalty and usefulness to the Crown continued to work in their favour and led to the attainment of further prestige and therefore an increase in authority and social status across the period.

With their rapid social climbing through the period, the Ramsden's of Longley also prioritised demonstrating their loyalty and usefulness to the Crown and gained significant authority from appointments to positions of political power. Sir John Ramsden (1594 – 1646) offers the best example of this. Besides his already discussed role as an MP from 1628 to 1640, Hulbert demonstrated that 'Sir John was Justice of the Peace and Treasurer for lame soldiers in the West Riding, in the 7th year of the reign of King Charles I; and High Sheriff of Yorkshire in the 13th year of the said reign'.²⁵³ Because the authority and prestige associated with the roles of Justice of the Peace and Member of Parliament have already been deliberated, perhaps the most interesting part here is that Sir John Ramsden was, in October of 1636, appointed Sheriff of the county.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Wrightson, K. (2003). *English Society 1580-1680* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (p.34)

²⁵² 'James II volume 1: February 1685', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James II, 1685*, ed. E K Timings (London, 1960), pp. 1-60. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/jas2/1685/pp1-60> [accessed 4 June 2021].

²⁵³ Sykes, D. F. E (1898). *The History of Huddersfield and its Vicinity*. The Advertiser Press. Retrieved from [https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/The_History_of_Huddersfield_and_its_Vicinity_\(1898\)_by_D.F.E._Sykes](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/The_History_of_Huddersfield_and_its_Vicinity_(1898)_by_D.F.E._Sykes) (p.215); Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (p.231)

²⁵⁴ Great Britain. Public Record Office. (1963). *List of sheriffs for England and Wales, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1831, Compiled from Documents in the Public Record Office*. Kraus Reprint Corporation. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/listofsheriffsfo00newy/page/n3/mode/2up> (p.163)

In her study of Sir Robert Stapleton, who was Sheriff of Yorkshire from 1580-1581, Bastow described how by this period the office was largely a status symbol but one where 'the cost of the office... was significant enough for many local gentlemen to try and avoid it'.²⁵⁵ With Sir John attaining a respectable amount of judicial authority from his position as a JP and the authority which came from his position as Member of Parliament for Pontefract, it seems his attainment of the role as high Sheriff can instead be seen as a demonstration of the Ramsden's wealth which provided a quick route to enhancing the prestige and authority of the family who were rapidly climbing the social ranks. Additionally, Ramsden likely saw his time as Sheriff as one which held the potential to boost his reputation as a loyal and capable agent of the Crown. In February of 1637, during his time as Sheriff, Sir John is recorded to have done a particularly efficient job in collecting the Yorkshire Ship Money.²⁵⁶ Future generations of the family continued in the footsteps of Sir John Ramsden in their work for the Crown; Sir John Ramsden of Longley Hall and Byrom (1648-1690) also took on the role of Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1672.²⁵⁷ From the analysis of the titles and positions attained by the conformist families of the locality, it is evident that demonstrating loyalty and usefulness to the Crown was a clear priority of theirs and, through this, they attained a significant amount of additional local, county and national level authority and prestige.

The Gentry and Protestant Piety, 1550-1700

Another key priority of the conformist gentry remained religion. As this chapter has so far suggested, the religious and social changes of the period changed the ways in which the gentry asserted their priorities. This was particularly potent regarding religion. In late Medieval England, the parish church was undoubtedly the most prominent vessel for the gentry to 'establish their place in local society' and express their authority and religious

²⁵⁵ Bastow, S. L. (2012). A Manner of Apology: Sir Robert Stapleton and Archbishop Edwin Sandys in an Elizabethan Cause Célèbre. *Textile History*, 43(2), 147-160. <https://doi.org/10.1179/0040496912Z.0000000008>

²⁵⁶ 'Charles I - volume 346: February 1-13, 1637', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1636-7*, ed. John Bruce (London, 1867), pp. 414-442. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/chas1/1636-7/pp414-442> [accessed 2 June 2021].

²⁵⁷ Great Britain. Public Record Office. (1963). *List of sheriffs for England and Wales, From the Earliest Times to A.D. 1831, Compiled from Documents in the Public Record Office*. Kraus Reprint Corporation. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/listofsheriffsfo00newy/page/n3/mode/2up> (p.164)

piety.²⁵⁸ However, for the conformist gentry of the locality, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the opportunities to express these values expanded to incorporate the domestic setting and societal roles outside of the church.

Though, as the following chapter explains, the church remained a useful tool for the gentry in the assertion of their priorities, it appears that following the Reformation the churches of the locality experienced a decrease in the level of investment and support they attained. One way this manifested itself was through a lack of funds afforded to support the parish clergy. Wrightson asserted that in almost sixty-three per cent of the livings in Yorkshire, the tithes were controlled by local laymen in 1585.²⁵⁹ The tithes made up a tax of ten per cent on all fruits and profits paid to the Church for the maintenance of the local ministry and, in the well-established parishes of the locality, should have provided a sustainable living to allow the incumbent clergyman to survive and take residence.²⁶⁰ However, Wrightson found that many of these laymen (often of gentry status) 'enjoyed considerable revenues... but left only a pittance for the vicar', leading to many late sixteenth-century livings proving insufficient as a clergyman's sole income and emphasising a pattern of neglect in church financing.²⁶¹

This pattern was also present in the locality of Almondbury. At Kirkburton, Otho Hunte's persistent non-residency at the vicarage was due to the fact he resided solely at, what local historian Henry James Morehouse considered, the 'valuable rectory of Methley' suggesting the finance made available at the living at Kirkburton was not considered adequate enough to support the living of the vicar on its own.²⁶² Moreover, historians have also rightly identified that 'the later sixteenth century was not a happy period for the fabric of the English Church, and gentry impropiators bore a heavy responsibility for the neglect.'²⁶³ Across the archdeaconry of York, a common problem reported was the number of chancels

²⁵⁸ Duffy, E. (2005). *The Stripping of the Altars* (2nd ed.). Yale University Press. (p.132)

²⁵⁹ Wrightson, K. (2003). *English Society 1580-1680* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (p.215)

²⁶⁰ 'Tithes', Livingstone, E. A. (ed.). (2013). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (2013). Oxford University Press.

²⁶¹ Wrightson, K. (2003). *English Society 1580-1680* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (p.215)

²⁶² *Archbishop Grindal's Visitation, 1575. Comperta et Detecta Book*, ed. Sheils, W. J. (1977). *Borthwick Texts and Calendars: Records of the Northern Province 4*. (p.21); Morehouse, H.J. (1861). *The History and Topography of the Parish of Kirkburton and of the Graveship of Holme*. (p.65)

²⁶³ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (pp.335-6)

in decay. Grindal's visitation reported thirty-five instances of this, including multiple within the locality of Almondbury.²⁶⁴ At Huddersfield, a lack of investment had resulted in the chancel being 'oute of reperations' with 'the rayne raineth into the churche' in 1575.²⁶⁵ This was also the case at Almondbury where the chancel is recorded as having fallen into poor condition, but instead of quickly repairing the building, Grindal's visitation of 1575 suggests that John Ramsden (d.1591), whom the rectory was leased from and who it is implied was responsible for financing the repair, was reluctant to cover the cost.²⁶⁶ The condition of the chancel at Almondbury appears to have been a continuous and persistent issue across the period, with Canon J. S. Purvis finding that the visitations of 1674 and 1684-5 both note the chancel in the church as being unrepaired.²⁶⁷

The frugality with which some gentlemen approached the church building was certainly not a sign that religion was no longer a priority for the gentry. Instead, it signified two key points. Firstly, it is further evidence of the gentry's prioritisation of wealth during this period. This prioritisation appears to have resulted in a situation where members of the gentry would attempt to disengage from their financial responsibilities to the church building whilst, as the subsequent chapter evidences, they remained engaged with the church itself and continued to use it as a vessel to assert their priorities. Secondly, it signified that there were new opportunities in which the gentry could assert their religious priorities.

As established, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought an increasing number of opportunities for the local gentry to enhance their authority by taking on positions of control such as that of Justice of the Peace. However, with the religious changes of the period bringing a greater focus on morality and a desire to create a more 'orderly and sober' society, this also gave the holding of societal positions of authority a pious element.²⁶⁸

Promoting order and control through governmental office was undoubtedly an expression

²⁶⁴ *Archbishop Grindal's Visitation, 1575. Comperta et Detecta Book, ed. Sheils, W. J. (1977). Borthwick Texts and Calendars: Records of the Northern Province 4.*

²⁶⁵ *Archbishop Grindal's Visitation, 1575. Comperta et Detecta Book, ed. Sheils, W. J. (1977). Borthwick Texts and Calendars: Records of the Northern Province 4. (p.26)*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid. (p.27)*

²⁶⁷ Purvis, J. S. (1958). *The Condition of Yorkshire Church Fabrics 1300-1800*. ST. Anthony's Hall Publications. (pp.20-21)

²⁶⁸ Hutton, R. (1994). *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700*. Oxford University Press. (p.111)

of reformed piety. This is a theme further evident in the Kaye family panels. Not only did the panels assert the family's societal priorities of authority and prestige, but, with these 'new ideals of religious devotion', the panels also had a significant pious element.²⁶⁹ One responsibility of a good Protestant householder during this period was maintaining an orderly and disciplined family and household.²⁷⁰ In a 1621 sermon, the Calvinist George Hakewill emphasised the influence that the head of the household had in these matters through his role as 'the father of children, the master of servants' and 'the head and governour of a family'.²⁷¹ The key themes of morality, order and discipline are unmissable within the Kaye panels. For example, the family tree with Arthur Kaye at its base was undoubtedly designed to assert order through the family's lineage, and the panel featuring Dorothy Kaye is blatant in the assertion of her orderly role in the household.²⁷²

The religious interests of the panels are even more evident through the multiple references to God which can be found across them. Dorothy Kaye's panel includes the statement, 'To bragge or to boost of noble parentage, to thee ys none honour if ye live amys, rather than sarve we God duely in euey age'.²⁷³ The most interesting reference to God, however, is the statement, 'The gayne is yours in godly life ye payne is their yt live in str'fe' which can be found on the panel of John Kaye.²⁷⁴ On top of the obvious intention to demonstrate devotion to God, this direct reference to 'godly life' is insightful in multiple ways.

Firstly, through evaluation of the wider source material, Tittler found that John Kaye was unquestionably concerned with encouraging moral Protestant behaviour from both his and future generations of the family.²⁷⁵ Therefore, the fact that this reference to 'godly life' is

²⁶⁹ Wrightson, K. (2003). *English Society 1580-1680* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (p.233)

²⁷⁰ Hamling, T. (2010). *Decorating the Godly Household*. Yale University Press. (p.109)

²⁷¹ George Hakewil. (1621). *King Davids Vow For Reformation... Delivered in Twelve Sermons before the Prince*. (p.205)

²⁷² Anonymous., *Kaye family Tree*, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/398A (verso). Co. *Kirklees Museums and Galleries*; Anon., *Dorothy Kaye*, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/398 (recto). Co. *Kirklees Museums and Galleries*.

²⁷³ Anonymous., *Dorothy Kaye*, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/398 (recto). Co. *Kirklees Museums and Galleries*.

²⁷⁴ Anonymous., *John Kaye of Woodsome*, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/399 (recto). Co. *Kirklees Museums and Galleries*.

²⁷⁵ Tittler, R. (2015). Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567. *Northern History*, 52 (2), 182-199. doi: 10.1179/0078172X15Z.00000000087

included on the panel depicting himself provides an example of John Kaye using portraiture to set a constant reminder, as the head of the household, of the importance of living a moral and pious godly life to both his and succeeding generations.

Secondly, the reference to God was another useful way to enforce moral and pious behaviour. Hamling found that the gentry of the period consciously attempted to 'invoke a higher authority' in their quest to enforce moral and pious behaviour and, in line with this, the best way to ensure the 'fear of God was planted in the heart of each member of the household was to invoke his presence before them'.²⁷⁶ The repeated references to God and 'godly life' were, therefore, to some extent intended to emphasise his constant presence in the lives of those who came into contact with the panels and, through that, encourage the moral and godly behaviours which were integral to the Protestant lifestyle. These expressions of Protestant piety through portraiture are prime examples of the new ways enabled by the Reformation, which the conformist gentry utilised to advance their priorities. Moreover, in contrast to Collinson's famous argument that the English people became a people who experienced 'iconophobia' around the 1580s, the panels appear to have remained in the house across the period suggesting that this form of Protestant piety was likely to have been promoted by successive generations of the family.²⁷⁷

The conformist gentry of the locality of Almondbury shared significant commonalities in their priorities. This chapter has shown that these priorities were the attainment of wealth alongside the assertion and expansion of authority and prestige. To advance their authority, the gentry of the locality also prioritised the iconographical development of their homes, the expression of gentry values, the attainment of patronage and the desire to display loyalty and usefulness to the Crown. Religion also remained a key priority of the local gentry. Though the parish church remained a useful tool for the gentry, the way this priority was expressed differed from the late Medieval period due to the new opportunities for pious expression brought by the Reformation. Notably, these new opportunities were focused outside the parish church and often in a domestic setting. This chapter has also

²⁷⁶ Hamling, T. (2010). *Decorating the Godly Household*. Yale University Press. (pp.109-110)

²⁷⁷ Collinson, P. (1986). *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation*. University of Reading.

shown that these priorities of the Kayes, Ramsdens and Beaumonts were typical of the English conformist gentry during this period and reflected the new trends, such as investment in the family home, which were becoming commonplace amongst the social group at the time.

Chapter 3: Local Religion and Gentry Authority Through the Church

To expand the investigation into the religious and social changes of the period, this chapter asks, what was the nature of religious change in the locality and how did the conformist gentry use religion and the church building to advance their priorities? As has been shown, religious change in the locality of Almondbury was atypical of what has become expected of religion in Yorkshire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Instead of being defined by Catholic survivalism, the evidence suggests that local religion conformed to the requirements of the Protestant state. This chapter takes this understanding further to explore two key issues. Firstly, to understand the extent to which reformed ideas took hold, this chapter explores the nature of religious change in the locality. In doing so, the chapter focuses on the parishes of Almondbury and Kirkheaton where the Kaye, Ramsden and Beaumont families were active. Secondly, continuing the discussion on how the local gentry operated in society, this chapter explores how they used religion and local church buildings to promote their priorities. Due to their undeniable presence in the church, this section focuses on the Kaye family and the parish church of Almondbury. In addressing these key points, this chapter enables the placing of the locality in the wider literature concerning the advance of Protestantism whilst also allowing for further evaluation into the mechanisms which saw the emergence of gentry dominance during this period.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that the outcome of religious change in the locality was conformity. Conformists were a large and diverse group but crucially, regardless of their exact beliefs, 'they practised their religion in accordance with the dictates of the law, civil

and ecclesiastical.²⁷⁸ The religious conformity of the locality was predominantly conservative conformity. Though Protestantism enjoyed success in Almondbury and the surrounding parishes, elements associated with pre-Reformation religion stubbornly remained until, and in some cases beyond, the Commonwealth and many of the more radical elements of the new religion were strongly rejected. As such, this chapter also argues against the concept of a 'Calvinist consensus' existing in the locality.²⁷⁹ Along with cooperation, the theme of conformity appears to have formed the foundations for the emergence of a social circle which dominated the locality and local affairs. This social circle included both the gentry and clergy and, in doing so, brought together the intertwined political, judicial and religious interests of the locality into one group. Additionally, this chapter argues that the interior of churches such as that of Almondbury All Hallows remained important tools in the enforcement of the conformist gentry's priorities of authority, prestige and the expression of religious piety. Intriguingly, remnants of the old religion were useful in expressing the piety promoted by the new religion. This chapter continues the argument that their conformity to the new religion was a clear benefit to the local gentry, allowing them to succeed and prosper in contemporary society.

Conformity and the Locality

The followers of the reformed religion embraced its doctrines with varying extents of evangelicalism and discipline. Consequently, creating an overall picture of English Protestantism during this period has been particularly challenging and the subject of much debate amongst historians of the early modern period. One idea, which has in recent years been popularised by Peter Lake, is the debate regarding a 'Calvinist consensus'. For Lake, this was a culture amongst the 'educated, literate Protestants'.²⁸⁰ This culture involved a shared world view of 'an all-encompassing concern with the potentially transforming effects

²⁷⁸ Marshall, P. (2017). *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation*. Yale University Press. (p.543)

²⁷⁹ Lake, P. (1982). *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*. Cambridge University Press.

²⁸⁰ Lake, P. G. (1987). Calvinism and the English Church 1570-1635. *Past & Present*, 114(1), 32-76. <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/114.1.32>

of the gospel on both individuals and on the social order as a whole'.²⁸¹ Lake also argued that predestination often acted as a 'resolution' for those on different parts of the Calvinist spectrum.²⁸² The concept of a 'Calvinist consensus' is not, however, a new one. Collinson applied the concept to encompass a 'broad harbour' of reformed traditions rather than simply the ideas of its namesake, the theologian John Calvin.²⁸³ Moreover, Nicholas Tyacke envisaged a situation where until Charles I embraced Arminianism, which he was drawn to due to its emphasis on a hierarchical church and state 'in which the office not the holder was what counted', the English Church was doctrinally Calvinist.²⁸⁴

Criticisms of the concept are not new either. In his study of the Netherlands, Alistair Duke found that the Calvinist insistence on their position as a 'chosen people' meant that the 'Reformed church never became the church of all, or even a majority of Dutchmen'.²⁸⁵ In more recent years, Peter Marshall has rightly acknowledged that the idea that the Church of England was a Calvinist one seems 'odd to those who find it hard to associate Calvinism with bishops, cathedrals'.²⁸⁶

Many localised studies have indeed supported the idea that Calvinist beliefs, and within that often the more Puritan forms of Protestantism, found success in localities across England during this period. Though Puritanism is notoriously difficult to define, this study considers the term to relate to a version of Protestantism significantly more evangelical and disciplined than the Church of England offered.²⁸⁷ Keith Wrightson and David Levine found that the Essex village of Terling was an example of this.²⁸⁸ For Wrightson and Levine, one of the key factors in the success of the more reformed version of Protestantism was 'the mounting tide of Protestant lay piety in Essex as a whole' and the possible influence of local

²⁸¹ Lake, P. (1982). *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*. Cambridge University Press. (p.279)

²⁸² Lake, P. (1982). *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*. Cambridge University Press. (p.150)

²⁸³ Collinson, P. 'England and International Calvinism, 1558-1640,' in Prestwich, M. (1985). *International Calvinism, 1541-1715*. Clarendon Press. (pp.197-223)

²⁸⁴ Tyacke, N. (1990). *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640*. Clarendon Press. (p.246)

²⁸⁵ Duke, A. 'The Ambivalent Face of Calvinism in the Netherlands, 1561-1618,' in Prestwich, M. (1985). *International Calvinism, 1541-1715*. Clarendon Press. (pp.109-134)

²⁸⁶ Marshall, P. (2008). *Reformation England 1480-1642*. Oxford University Press. (pp.127-8)

²⁸⁷ Harris, J. I., & Scott-Baumann, E. (2010). *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680*. Palgrave Macmillan. (p.xii-xiii)

²⁸⁸ Wrightson, K., & Levine, D. (1995). *Poverty and Piety in and English Village: Terling, 1525-1700*. Oxford University Press. (pp.153-172)

Puritan ministers such as Thomas Rust and Thomas Weld who both acted as vicar of Terling in the early decades of the seventeenth century.²⁸⁹

These developments in Terling were, at least to some degree, supported by the overall abundance of zealous Protestantism in Essex at the time. However, even in the typically religiously conservative county of Yorkshire, strict obedience to Calvinist ideas could also take hold. In the nearby West Riding parish of Penistone (located slightly over ten miles south of Almondbury), the more evangelical Bosville family were part of a group of leading local families that encouraged and embraced Puritanism in the second half of the seventeenth century.²⁹⁰ Clearly, in parishes across England, Calvinist ideas were fundamental to local religion. Consequently, this chapter does not oppose the idea that certain Calvinist beliefs such as predestination were common throughout English Protestantism. In the locality of Almondbury, the panels created by John Kaye for example demonstrate he was invested in 'the growing role of Protestant thinking and with literacy', thus suggesting he is likely to have interacted with such ideas himself. However, this chapter argues against the concept of a 'Calvinist consensus'.²⁹¹ As is explored in the following paragraphs, the above examples of Terling and Penistone both contrast with the picture of religion in the locality of Almondbury.

The religion of the locality is best understood under the lens of conformity. To explain what this masters considers as conformity, it is best to look at the arguments made by historians such as Alec Ryrie. As Elizabeth's reign progressed, Ryrie described a situation where precise religious beliefs in the country were 'remarkably diverse' but ultimately, conformity to the established Church and its practices triumphed for the majority.²⁹² Additionally, due to the fact that the 'story of the later English Reformation which produced the Church of England is a tale of retreat from the Protestant advance of 1550', this masters also considers that the type of conformist religion under consideration often involved rejection of the more zealous

²⁸⁹ Wrightson, K., & Levine, D. (1995). *Poverty and Piety in and English Village: Terling, 1525-1700*. Oxford University Press. (p.159)

²⁹⁰ Hey, D. (2002). *A History of Penistone* (Kindle ed.). Wharnccliffe Books. (p.133)

²⁹¹ Tittler, R. (2015). Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567. *Northern History*, 52 (2), 182-199. Doi: 10.1179/0078172X15Z.00000000087

²⁹² Ryrie, A. (2009). *The Age of Reformation The Tudor and Stewart Realms 1485 – 1603*. Routledge. (pp.283-285)

and presbyterian elements of the new religion.²⁹³ As the gentry of the locality valued highly loyalty to the Crown and, through that, loyalty to the Church of England, these conformist values aligned with the interests of the most powerful figures in local society. This chapter will now analyse the surviving evidence relating to religious change in the locality to express that conformity, rather than a 'Calvinist consensus', was the defining feature of local religion.

All three gentry families investigated in this study were heavily involved and interested in local religion, particularly in the parishes of Almondbury and Kirkheaton. As the surviving Kaye artefacts in the church of Almondbury suggest, the Kaye family possessed significant influence in the parish religion of Almondbury throughout the period and interacted directly with the church there.²⁹⁴ However, the family's influence on local religion was not limited to the central parish as, across the period, there is significant evidence to suggest that the family were actively involved in other areas of local religion. At Kirkheaton for example, Sir John Kaye of Woodsome is listed as the largest financial contributor to an addition to the church in the 1660s.²⁹⁵

The Ramsdens of Longley were also strongly involved in local religion. At Almondbury, in addition to being baptised there across the sixteenth century, the family played a fundamental role in the affairs of the parish church. For example, John Ramsden (1594-1646) acted as patron for the vicar of the parish John Crosland at his institution in 1636.²⁹⁶ After acquiring the advowson for the vicarage of Huddersfield, the family also played a key

²⁹³ MacCulloch, D. (2001). *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (2nd ed.). Palgrave. (p.141)

²⁹⁴ *The Parish Register of Almondbury 1557-1598*, ed. Taylor, H. (1974). The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Volume 1 (Part 1).

²⁹⁵ A list of subscribers to the addition to the North Side of the Church from the second Volume of the Kirkheaton Parish Registers. Source retrieved from Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from: <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.26)

²⁹⁶ For evidence of the Ramsden family baptisms at Almondbury from 1557-1598 see *The Parish Register of Almondbury 1557-1598*, ed. Taylor, H. (1974). The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Volume 1 (Part 1); 'John Crosland' (CCed Person ID 116279), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540 – 1835*. Available from: <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

role in the religion of that parish, acting as patron for the likes of namesake Robert Ramsden on his institution as rector of Huddersfield St Peter in 1581.²⁹⁷

The central focus of religion for the Beaumont family of Whitely was at Kirkheaton where it appears family members had been buried even prior to the Reformation. Just like the Kaye chapel at Almondbury, the Beaumont family also had their own converted chantry at Kirkheaton following the Reformation which includes the extravagant tomb of Sir Richard Beaumont.²⁹⁸ Moreover, the church at Almondbury includes traces of the family's influence there in the form of the 'Beaumont Chapel' which Tolson concluded was likely in connection with their presence in the manor of Crosland which was situated in the parish.²⁹⁹

Though the religious influence of these three families impacted religion across the locality, all of them were strongly involved in religious practice in one of, if not both, the parishes of Almondbury and Kirkheaton. As the above evidence suggests, there also appears to have been a level of interaction between the gentry that attended both these churches. For these reasons and to keep this section satisfyingly concise, Almondbury and Kirkheaton form the basis of this chapter's investigation into the conformist religion of the locality.

In 1559 the vicar of the parish, Robert Staynton, noted the first celebration of holy communion signalling a key moment for religion in Almondbury.³⁰⁰ Staynton appears to have remained vicar of Almondbury, and therefore oversaw religious practice in the church, from his appointment in 1557 until his death in 1598.³⁰¹ Consequently, during the key decades of religious change which followed the coronation of Queen Elizabeth I, Staynton's services were crucial in setting the tone for religious practice in the parish. At first glance, as a member of the Marian clergy, Staynton's position as vicar of the parish suggests that the religious services for much of the reign were potentially conservative and out of line with

²⁹⁷ Sykes states William Ramsden attained the advowson of the vicarage in 1546. See Sykes, D. F. E (1898). *The History of Huddersfield and its Vicinity*. The Advertiser Press. Retrieved from:

<https://huddersfield.exposed/book/2583#mode/2up> (p.142); 'Robert Ramsden' (CCEd Person ID 121709), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540 – 1835*. Available from: <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

²⁹⁸ Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.25)

²⁹⁹ Ibid (p.117)

³⁰⁰ *The Parish Register of Almondbury 1557-1598*, ed. Taylor, H. (1974). The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Volume 1 (Part 1). (p.8)

³⁰¹ Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the Church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (p.95)

what would be expected in a locality dominated by conformist gentry. Staynton certainly would not have been the first Catholic vicar of the parish during this period as his predecessor, Robert Norham, who was vicar from 1554 until 1557, was undoubtedly a Catholic. Surviving records demonstrate that Norham worked as a chantry priest at York until his resignation in 1543 and that, in 1541, he performed the Catholic service of dirige for fellow chantry priest John Rayner.³⁰² Norham's will also included a Catholic preamble where he bequeathed his soul to 'oure blessed virgin, our Ladie Saincte Marie'.³⁰³ Intriguingly, the Almondbury parish register suggests that Staynton himself remained unmarried as was customary with Catholic clergy implying that, to some extent, Staynton remained attached to the clergy values and practices of the past.³⁰⁴

Despite this, however, it appears as though Staynton did conform. Staynton's will, made in March of 1598, demonstrated conformity to the new religion. Most intriguingly, Staynton bequeathed two books of homilies and John Jewel's *'The apologies of the Church of England'* to the Church of Almondbury.³⁰⁵ Jewel's work has been considered influential in giving the Elizabethan English Church 'credibility and a coherent Protestant identity' making the inclusion of the book not just evidence of Staynton's conformity to the new religion, but once again emphasising the loyalty to the Crown and Church of England evident throughout the locality.³⁰⁶ Consequently, despite his likely attachment to Catholicism at the beginning of his tenure, in a locality dominated by conformist gentry, Robert Staynton's church services would have likely gradually conformed to the new religion just as his will did.

Intriguingly, a wider look at the Marian clergy during Elizabeth's reign suggests that Staynton was not unusual in his conformity. In his study of Morebath, Eamon Duffy found that the undoubtedly conservative and Catholic priest of the parish, Sir Christopher Trychay, clearly conformed to the Elizabethan settlement. Moreover, in the words of Duffy, his

³⁰² 'Robert Norham' (CCEd Person ID 120549), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from: <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>; *York Clergy Wills 1520-1600: I Minister Clergy*, ed. Cross, C (1984). Borthwick Texts and Calendars: Records of the Northern Province 10. (pp.47-48)

³⁰³ *York Clergy Wills 1520-1600: II City Clergy*, ed. Cross, C (1989). Borthwick Texts and Calendars 15. (p.93)

³⁰⁴ *The Parish Register of Almondbury 1557-1598*, ed. Taylor, H. (1974). The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Volume 1 (Part 1).

³⁰⁵ Last Will and Testament of Robert Staynton retrieved from: Entry 1, *Register 31 f.136 (recto) entry 1* <<https://dlibrailsprod1.york.ac.uk/entry/00000214r>> [Accessed: 13 Aug 2022]

³⁰⁶ Ranson, A., Gazal, A. A., & Bastow, S. L. (2019). *Defending the Faith: John Jewel and the Elizabethan Church*. The Pennsylvania State University Press. (p.2)

conformity was more than just a 'grudging minimalism'.³⁰⁷ Instead, Duffy expressed that it is most feasible that Sir Christopher Trychay actively conformed because the 'unthinkable alternative to conformity was to leave his vicarage and the people he had baptised, married and buried for forty years... a course few took'.³⁰⁸ This suggests that Robert Staynton was part of a wider group of Marian clergy who were successful in bridging the gap into Elizabeth's reign when conformity was demanded.

Following the death of Staynton, his successors to the vicarage of the parish continued to align with the new religion. According to Hulbert, following the school's attainment of the advowson of the church in the reign of Mary, the Governors of Clitheroe School in Lancashire made appointments often from those who possessed a masters, meaning that the vicarage was from thereafter occupied by learned men who had undertaken a Protestant education.³⁰⁹ Hulbert's claims on the matter are supported by the surviving primary material. The church records of Staynton's closest successors, George Crosland and John Crosland, both noted that the advowson of the church was 'granted by the governors of the Free Grammar School in Clitheroe', and the incumbents of the position throughout the seventeenth century are noted as each possessing an M.A.³¹⁰

Though as the sixteenth century progressed more radical Protestant views emerged, it was in the seventeenth century that zealous beliefs resembling Puritanism became more common across the country. In Terling for example, by 1630 there was the appearance of a group in society 'exhibiting a distinctly Puritan piety'.³¹¹ However, in Almondbury further reform appears to have been rejected, and instead, the parish continued to embrace conservative conformity. The surviving churchwarden accounts for the parish, which begin

³⁰⁷ Duffy, E. (2001). *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*. Yale University Press. (p.175)

³⁰⁸ Duffy, E. (2001). *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*. Yale University Press. (p.176)

³⁰⁹ Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the Church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (pp.69-72)

³¹⁰ 'George Crosland' (CCEd Person ID 116278), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from: <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>; John Crosland' (CCEd Person ID 116279), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from: <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>; List of incumbents of Almondbury, *West Yorkshire Archive Service (Wakefield), D000012 - Almondbury All Hallows and Longley St Mary, and others, Parish Records (WDP12/69)*.

³¹¹ Wrightson, K., & Levine, D. (1995). *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700*. Oxford University Press. (p.158)

in 1692, imply conformity continued until the end of the period with regular outgoings for communion and the purchase of a new common prayer book in 1694.³¹²

Another example of this conformity can be seen in the rejection of Presbyterianism.

Presbyterianism was a form of church government led by elected elders and one which can be considered a ‘middle position between episcopacy and congregationalism’.³¹³ For those

fiercely loyal to the Crown and Church of England, this made Presbyterianism repulsive due to its desire to alter ‘the structure and governance of the English Church’.³¹⁴ It is

unsurprising therefore that Almondbury appears to have rejected such ideas. Instead, the material culture of the parish church suggests that it retained its segregation and structure.

The Kaye family chapel, for example, remained.

This was a segregated and private chapel which expressed the family’s superior societal position, in comparison to the bulk of the congregation, and reinforced the physical and spiritual

hierarchy in the church.³¹⁵ Pews were also

present in the church during this period and were used to listen to sermons. Heal and

Holmes found that John Kaye described his new pew in Almondbury church as constructed

in order to hear sermons.³¹⁶ With private, and almost certainly segregated, family pews

appearing commonplace in the church, it is possible to suggest that structure in the church

remained important during the seventeenth century. Along with the knowledge that the

local gentry prioritised order across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these

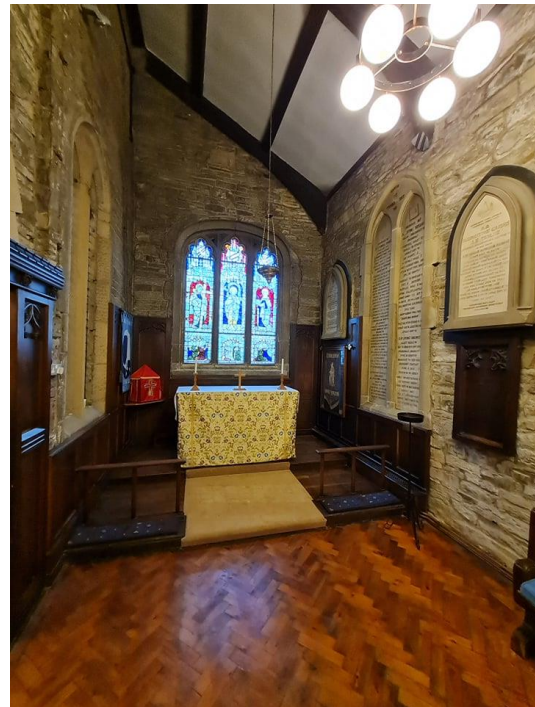


Figure 6: Kaye Family Chapel. Almondbury All Hallows Church, Yorkshire.

³¹² Almondbury Account Book 1692-1775, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000012 - Almondbury All Hallows and Longley St Mary, and others, Parish Records (WDP12/181)

³¹³ Presbyterianism. In Hart, J., Martin, W., & Hinrichs, D. (Eds.), *The Concise Oxford Companion to American Literature*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved 30 Oct. 2021, from <https://www-oxfordreference-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780191872112.001.0001/acref-9780191872112-e-1117>.

³¹⁴ Marshall, P. (2017). *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation*. Yale University Press. (p.497)

³¹⁵ *Kaye Family Chapel*. Almondbury All Hallows Church, Yorkshire.

³¹⁶ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (p.370)

elements of the church heavily imply that across the period the church rejected presbyterian values and instead retained the structure and hierarchy associated with the episcopal church.

As recent historiography has emphasised the importance of the 'lived experience' in both the church service and interior, the retention of Staynton as vicar along with physical aspects of the church such as the Kaye chapel, suggest a theme of continuity within the experience of going to church between the end of Marian Catholicism and the conformist Protestantism which followed.³¹⁷ Though religious practice and the church building undoubtedly altered to conform to the nation's new religion during this period, the elements of continuity at Almondbury are further evidence that the religious conformity in the parish religion was in multiple aspects conservative conformity.

However, it was not just in Almondbury where conservative conformity was the defining feature of parish religion. A comparable pattern arose in Kirkheaton. In a similar way to how the Kaye chapel signified segregation and hierarchy in the church at Almondbury, following the dissolution of the monasteries, the former chantry at Kirkheaton was recycled into something of a shrine to the Beaumont family of Whitley. The well decorated chapel survived throughout the period and still stands within the church.³¹⁸ Additionally, around the time of the Interregnum there is evidence that beyond the Elizabethan settlement the parish church at Kirkheaton had been resistant to further change. It is thought that the church font remained in the church until well into the seventeenth century and was only removed during the time of the Interregnum. The font's octagonal form was likely interpreted by the new regime to be superstitious, due to its connotations of regeneration, leading to its removal.³¹⁹ As Duffy has demonstrated, iconographic or superstitious fonts were often attacked by reformers for these reasons.³²⁰

In conservatively conformist parishes, retention of elements from pre-Reformation religion was not uncommon. Duffy found that the parish church of Morebath continued to use a

³¹⁷ Mears, N & Ryrie, A (eds.). (2013). *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain*. Ashgate. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315546254> (p.2)

³¹⁸ Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.25)

³¹⁹ Ibid (pp.30-31)

³²⁰ Duffy, E. (2005). *The Stripping of the Altars* (2nd ed.). Yale University Press (pp.65-66)

pre-Reformation chalice to administer the communion until Sir Christopher Trychay's death in 1574.³²¹ Reference was also made in the 1651 Elland churchwarden accounts to the removal of a font stone.³²² This suggests that the enforced removal of traditional Catholic items from churches may have been a common theme in the local area during this time. In Yorkshire, as Bastow and Kesselring have shown, it was common for people across different social groups to retain a strong attachment to aspects of pre-Reformation religion so the fact that these fonts were only removed in the middle of the seventeenth century suggests that religious change was not rapid.³²³

Another example of this can be seen in the persistence of bell ringing throughout the parishes of Almondbury, Halifax and Elland.³²⁴ Prior to the Reformation, church tower bells were fundamental parts of the church experience, often linked to superstitious practices and could be baptised.³²⁵ In seventeenth-century England, this tradition of bell ringing was recycled with parishes such as Elland using bell ringing to demonstrate loyalty to the Crown on events such as the anniversary of the King's accession to the throne and, in 1692, to celebrate a victory at sea.³²⁶ At Almondbury, it appears that bell ringing on May 29th in celebration of Charles II's ascent to the throne, and therefore the restoration of the Crown, continued into the 1690s.³²⁷

With the retention and recycling of elements such as Kirkheaton's Church font until the middle of the seventeenth century, it appears that even in the conservatively conformist

³²¹ Duffy, E. (2001). *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*. Yale University Press. (p.178)

³²² Elland Account book, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000079 - Elland St Mary the Virgin, Churchwardens Account Book 1648-1736 (WDP79/3/1/1)

³²³ Bastow, S. L. (2007). *The Catholic Gentry of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 Resistance and Accommodation*. Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press; Kesselring, K. J. (2004). "A Cold Pye for the Papistes": Constructing and Containing the Northern Rising of 1569. *The Journal of British Studies*, 43(4), 417-443.

³²⁴ Elland Account book, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000079 - Elland St Mary the Virgin, Churchwardens Account Book 1648-1736 (WDP79/3/1/1); Halifax Account Book (Miscellaneous), *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000053 - Halifax St John the Baptist, Parish Records (WDP53/7/1/1); Halifax Churchwardens' Accounts, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Calderdale), CC00715 - Halifax Churchwardens and Overseers accounts (MIC:8); Almondbury Account Book 1692-1775, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000012 - Almondbury All Hallows and Longley St Mary, and others, Parish Records (WDP12/181)

³²⁵ Milner, M. (2016). *The Senses and the English Reformation*. Routledge. (p.106)

³²⁶ Elland Account book, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000079 - Elland St Mary the Virgin, Churchwardens Account Book 1648-1736 (WDP79/3/1/1)

³²⁷ Almondbury Account Book 1692-1775, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000012 - Almondbury All Hallows and Longley St Mary, and others, Parish Records (WDP12/181)

parishes of the locality, attachment to pre-Reformation church objects persisted for over a century. This persistence of Catholic objects in the church building again links with the continuity arguments made by historians such as Ryrie who have expressed that in terms of religious practice, 'Medieval (and older) patterns of piety persisted everywhere in Protestantism'.³²⁸ Ultimately, the retention of the superstitious font until almost a century after the Elizabethan religious settlement is clear evidence of the parish's resistance to zealous Protestant reform and, instead, that the religion of the parish resembled conservative conformity.

The situation over the living at Kirkheaton during the Interregnum also provides an insight into the parish's conformist nature. As Parliament and its Puritanism took hold of the country in the 1640s, the rector of the parish, the Rev Richard Sykes, appears to have been removed from the living following the Civil War, with Parliament appointing a replacement in 1646.³²⁹ Sykes, who was ingrained into the episcopacy through his ordination as a priest and deacon, seems to have been dispossessed of the living due to his staunch loyalty to the established church during the conflict.³³⁰ Sykes was replaced by the Parliamentary appointed Rev. Christopher Richardson. The life and actions of Richardson show his Presbyterian beliefs. The diary of the famous nonconformist Puritan preacher Oliver Heywood reveals he and Richardson were close friends and, in terms of religious beliefs and practices, certainly had common ground.³³¹ This suggests Richardson was inclined towards Puritan ideals.

Considering the religious beliefs of Richardson in addition to the changing of approved religious practice by Parliament, it is almost certain that Syke's replacement brought a more reformed version of Protestantism to Kirkheaton than it had previously experienced. It is,

³²⁸ Ryrie, A. (2013). *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*. Oxford University Press (p.470).

³²⁹ Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.129)

³³⁰ 'Richard Sykes' (CCEd Person ID 135238), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540 – 1835*. Available from <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>; Tolson, L. (1929) *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.70)

³³¹ *The Rev. Oliver Heywood, B.A. 1630 – 1702; His Autobiography, Diaries, Anecdote and Event Books* (1881), ed. Horsfall Turner, J. A.B. Bayes, Volume 2. Retrieved from https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Rev_Oliver_Heywood_B_A_1630_1702/qrVCAAAAYAAJ?kptab=editions&gbpv=1

therefore, intriguing that Richardson was replaced after he refused to conform at the Restoration in 1661.³³² The Act brought in by Charles II denounced the Solemn League and Covenant and instructed the clergy to use only the Revised Book of Common Prayer in service.³³³ In parishes such as Penistone, where Puritanism had taken a much stronger grip over prominent local families, despite their religious values, nonconformist clergy such as the Rev. Henry Swift held on to their livings during the restoration through the favour of families such as the Bosvile family.³³⁴ The speed in which Richardson was removed following the restoration therefore suggests a clear lack of enthusiasm for the more reformed version of Protestantism in the parish and, in turn, that conformity remained favoured.

This lack of enthusiasm for further reform can also be seen through the fact that segregation persisted in the church during the Interregnum. A surviving plan of 'New Seats' in 1664 demonstrates that the gentry's desire for a named seat continued in the church during this period.³³⁵ Alongside the continuation of the individuals and families prominent in the church records from the 1640s to 1660s, it is possible to suggest that the influential figures in the parish and their religious preferences changed very little during Richardson's stint as Rector.³³⁶ Unlike Sykes who, in his favouring of conformist religion and defence of the established church, was aligned with the interests of the local gentry and likely part of the locality's wider social circle, Richardson's Puritan beliefs and the circumstances around his appointment would have left him outside of this social group. This can also be considered a reason for his rapid removal.

³³² Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.81)

³³³ 'Charles II, 1662: An Act for the Uniformity of Publique Prayers and Administrac[i]on of Sacraments & other Rites & Ceremonies and for establishing the Form of making ordaining and consecrating Bishops Priests and Deacons in the Church of England.', in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628-80*, ed. John Raithby (s.l, 1819), pp. 364-370. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol5/pp364-370> [accessed 15 June 2021].

³³⁴ Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the Church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (p.27)

³³⁵ Kirkheaton Owners of North Gallery Pews 1664 (ref WBK7). *West Yorkshire Archive Service Kirklees*. Available from <https://www.kirkheaton.info/kirkheaton-items-various/2012-02-13-10-16-31/owners-of-north-gallery-pews-1664>

³³⁶ Kirkheaton Inhabitants by Surname 1600-1649. *Kirkheaton.info Archive Database*. Available from <https://www.kirkheaton.info/kirkheaton-items-various/2012-02-13-10-16-31/inhabitants-by-surname-1600-1649>; Kirkheaton Owners of North Gallery Pews 1664 (ref WBK7). *West Yorkshire Archive Service Kirklees*. Available from <https://www.kirkheaton.info/kirkheaton-items-various/2012-02-13-10-16-31/owners-of-north-gallery-pews-1664>

A similar situation emerged at Almondbury. Though the vicar at Almondbury between 1647-1663 must have complied with the religious demands of the Commonwealth during the Interregnum, in 1660 following the restoration, it is telling how the parish register at Almondbury includes an entry from May stating that ‘Charles the Second, our most pious, as well as august King, after almost 13 years exile, from the beheading of his father, a savageness to be execrated and abominated by all men; which by those Cromwellian monsters of human race...’ and is signed by George Farrand.³³⁷ The entry suggests that even though the vicar of the time (Thomas Naylor) must have to some extent embraced the state religion, the loyalties of those invested in the parish church quickly realigned with the re-established episcopal Church of England at the Restoration; the side that many of the prominent local gentry sided with during the Civil War and which best reflected their ideals and priorities. A quick realignment with the episcopal Church appears to have been common in the area. At Elland, a common prayer book was purchased in 1660 when Charles II ascended to the throne and another common prayer book, likely the revised book of common prayer that the King instructed churches across the land to use, was purchased in 1662.³³⁸ At Halifax, the picture appears to have been similar. The churchwarden’s accounts for the parish show that a common prayer book was also purchased there in 1662.³³⁹ Across the period, the evidence from the churches of Almondbury and Kirkheaton shows that religion in the locality was dominated by conservative conformity.

The study of religion in the locality not only demonstrates that conservative conformity was the dominant theme of local religion, but also offers an insight into the social structure and kinship networks within the locality. For example, Robert Staynton’s kin feature heavily within his will with bequests of personal belongings and money made to individuals such as ‘Margaret Stainton’ and ‘John Stainton’.³⁴⁰ The prominence of Staynton’s family in this document demonstrated an element of continuity with late medieval religion where studies, such as Joel Rosenthal’s ‘The Northern Clergy: Clerical Wills and Family Ties’, have found

³³⁷ Extract from the Parish Register of Almondbury from 1660 retrieved from: Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the Church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (p.492)

³³⁸ Elland Account book, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000079 - Elland St Mary the Virgin, Churchwardens Account Book 1648-1736 (WDP79/3/1/1)

³³⁹ Halifax Churchwardens’ Accounts, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Calderdale), CC00715 - Halifax Churchwardens and Overseers accounts (MIC:8)

³⁴⁰ Last Will and Testament of Robert Staynton retrieved from: Entry 1, *Register 31 f.136 (recto) entry 1* <<http://https://dlibrailsprod1.york.ac.uk/entry/00000214r>> [Accessed: 13 Aug 2022]

that the Northern Clergy of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries easily crossed ‘the gulf between the world of one’s birth family and that of one’s subsequent spiritual circles’.³⁴¹ More intriguingly, Staynton’s conformity coupled with the fact that the local gentry appear to have been content with his retention as vicar, provides an indication of the theme of cooperation present within the locality during this period. It is interesting to note here that in the zealously reformatory Terling, where the ‘triumph of at least conventional Protestantism was the work of the first decade of the reign of Elizabeth’, the Catholic vicar was removed from his position in 1560. This suggests that in more zealously Protestant parishes, cooperation with the leading parish figures proved challenging for the Marian clergy.³⁴²

In contrast, within the locality of Almondbury there is strong evidence that a theme of cooperation led to the emergence of a social circle which united the political, judicial and religious figures of the area. Firstly, there is evidence to suggest that through their commonality in priorities, a theme established in the previous chapter, alongside the spirit of cooperation, the gentry themselves were connected in a type of kinship network. The debate over the importance of kinship networks has been thoroughly examined by the historiography on the subject. Lawrence Stone suggested that between 1500 and 1700, ‘there was a decline in the role played in society’ by kin, and instead, what Stone considered the ‘nuclear core’ of the family (essentially immediate family) increased in prominence over the same period.³⁴³ Keith Wrightson criticised this and argued for a great deal more continuity. For Wrightson, the prominence of the ‘nuclear family’ in society was a feature which had defined family connections even prior to the early modern period.³⁴⁴ However, the arguments made by Heal and Holmes best represent the locality of Almondbury. As their work demonstrates, the Kaye panels display the importance of the nuclear family whilst the panel of Dorothy Kaye also lists a significant number of the family’s extended kin.³⁴⁵ Clearly

³⁴¹ Rosenthal, J. T. (1999). The Northern Clergy: Clerical wills and Family Ties. *Medieval Prosopography*, 20, 147-159.

³⁴² Wrightson, K., & Levine, D. (1995). *Poverty and Piety in and English Village: Terling, 1525-1700*. Oxford University Press. (p.155)

³⁴³ Stone, L. (1975). The Rise of the Nuclear Family in Early Modern England: The Patriarchal Stage. In Rosenberg, C. E. (ed.), *The Family in History* (pp. 13–58). University of Pennsylvania Press.

³⁴⁴ Wrightson, K. (2003). *English Society 1580-1680* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (p.79)

³⁴⁵ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (pp.91-93)

the families of the locality were closely connected, Dugdale's visitation for example reveals that Edward Beaumont of Whitley married Elizabeth Ramsden, daughter of John of Longley, in 1571 thus directly connecting the families and evidencing the point.³⁴⁶

However, it is through expanding the definition of kin to 'those who shared social worlds or had mutual interests' that the relationship between the local gentry families is best understood.³⁴⁷ As this thesis has explored, the gentry of the locality shared commonalities in their priorities. Moreover, a selection of surviving evidence demonstrates the connections between the families in matters of local politics and bureaucracy. For example, in 1632 Sir John Ramsden and John Kaye, as the local Justices of the Peace, were addressed together regarding a local governmental situation certifying 'that two mercers and one oildrawer may be permitted to sell tobacco.'³⁴⁸ Furthermore, when the Civil War occurred a few years later, the families of Kaye, Beaumont and Whitley found themselves once again campaigning for the same political cause in their support of the Royalists and the King. It seems Thomas Beaumont and Sir John Kaye both submitted to Parliament when Sir William Saville's Royalist Regiment surrendered in 1644.³⁴⁹ Alongside the importance of the 'nuclear' family, the shared priorities of the local families led to a system which symbolised a type of local kinship network.

As the diary of the Rev. Robert Meeke demonstrates, this theme of 'shared social worlds' and 'mutual interests' extended to include cooperation with clerical figures.³⁵⁰ Meeke, who was appointed curate at the chapel of Slaithwaite in 1684, was clearly a supporter of the established Church and had a close association with Sir John Kaye (1641-1706).³⁵¹ Most interestingly, his diary includes entries referring to how he dined and lodged at the home of

³⁴⁶ *Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire, with Additions*, ed. William Clay (1899). William Pollard & Co. Volume 3. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/dugdalsvisitati03dugd/page/n7/mode/2up> (p.220)

³⁴⁷ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (p.94)

³⁴⁸ 'Charles I - volume 221: July 19-31, 1632', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1631-3*, ed. John Bruce (London, 1862), pp. 384-396. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/chas1/1631-3/pp384-396> [accessed 1 June 2021].

³⁴⁹ Tolson, L. (1929). *History of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Kirkheaton, Yorkshire and Annals of the Parish*. Printed by Titus Wilson & Son. Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/17195> (p.121)

³⁵⁰ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (p.94)

³⁵¹ 'Robert Meeke' (CCEd Person ID 117697), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540 – 1835*. Available from: <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>; Meeke, R. *Extracts from the Diary of the Rev. Robert Meeke*, ed. H.J Morehouse (1874). Retrieved from <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/6929>

Sir John and how he sometimes preached at the Kaye's local parish church of Almondbury.³⁵² The association between Sir John and Meeke, which was close enough for Meeke to lodge at Sir John's home, is one example of how the local clergy were part of the same social circle which included the local conformist gentry. The influence of kinship networks in the local religion becomes further evident when considering the period when George Crosland and John Crosland were vicars of Almondbury. George Crosland's will not only demonstrated that he was the father of his successor, John, but also appeared to refer to his cousin Thomas Crosland of Crosland Hill evidencing both that the vicar had remained geographically close to his kin and that, just like Staynton, some connection with his wider family was retained.³⁵³ However, the most intriguing aspect of George Crosland's will was that he bequeathed to John Ramsden the advowson of 'the vicarage of Almondbury' given by the 'Governors of the Free Grammar School of Clitherow'.³⁵⁴ Considering that John Ramsden acted as patron for the appointment of George's son, John, to the vicarage following his father's death, John Ramsden's involvement with and support of the local clergy family provides yet another example of the influence that local kinship networks possessed within the locality.³⁵⁵ With this in mind, along with the fact that local gentry families such as the Kayes were influential in religion across the locality during this period, it appears that the key local figures in politics, judicial power and religion were brought together in one social circle. This was a social circle where conformity and cooperation were two of the fundamental features. Consequently, considering the importance of local kinship networks in the locality, it seems likely that Robert Staynton's retention as vicar was a sign of his positive relationship with other members of the local social circle. This relationship was likely not just built on religious ideology but also on factors such as his willingness to

³⁵² Meeke, R. *Extracts from the Diary of the Rev. Robert Meeke*, ed. H.J Morehouse (1874). Retrieved from: <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/6929>

³⁵³ Last Will and Testament of George Crosland retrieved from: Entry 1, *Register 32 f.83 (recto) entry 1* <<https://dlibrailsprod1.york.ac.uk/entry/rb68xf243>> [Accessed: 12 Aug 2022]; *Dugdale's* Crosland's of Crosland Hill in: *Visitation of Yorkshire, With Additions*, ed. Clay, J. W (1899). Volume 1. William Pollard & Company. Retrieved from [https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s Visitation of Yorkshire: Volume 1 \(1899\) edited by J.W. Clay](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Dugdale%27s%20Visitation%20of%20Yorkshire%3A%20Volume%201%20(1899)%20edited%20by%20J.W.%20Clay) (pp.181-184)

³⁵⁴ Last Will and Testament of George Crosland retrieved from: Entry 1, *Register 32 f.83 (recto) entry 1* <<https://dlibrailsprod1.york.ac.uk/entry/rb68xf243>> [Accessed: 12 Aug 2022]

³⁵⁵ John Crosland' (CCEd Person ID 116279), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*. Available from: <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>

cooperate with the local gentry and the quality of the job he was delivering. Clearly, in the locality, personal relationships could be just as, if not more, influential as religious ideology.

The Gentry, Local Religion and the Parish Church

As the previous chapter emphasised, the parish church and local religion remained an important priority for the conformist gentry. Prior to the Reformation, the parish church almost exclusively provided the gentry with 'the environment in which to display their manorial and familial authority.'³⁵⁶ Despite the new ways of advancing their priorities brought by the religious and social changes of the period, the local church continued to offer a major opportunity for the gentry to advance their priorities.³⁵⁷

As established in chapter two, these priorities were the attainment of wealth, the desire to expand their authority and prestige and, most importantly for the subsequent discussion, religion and the expression of Protestant piety. Critically, the local gentry viewed the creation of 'a more orderly and sober, as well as more pious, society' as a fundamental method to express their own personal piety; the use of local religion was a central tool in achieving this.³⁵⁸ With this in mind, this chapter now explores how the local gentry used religion and the parish church to advance these priorities.

One way the prioritisation of the parish church manifested itself was through ensuring adherence to the conformist religion that was preached there. This meant ensuring conformity to the established Church of England, something which the Kaye family, in particular, embraced across the period. At Almondbury for example, with families such as the Kayes prominent in the parish, it is unsurprising that the vicars appointed to the living appear to have been made up of predominantly conformist clergy and that, as this chapter has established, moderate and conformist religious practice appears to have triumphed across the period. It also appears that the sermons preached in the church aligned with the gentry's priority of encouraging adherence to the official religion and societal order.

³⁵⁶ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (p.369)

³⁵⁷ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (p.369)

³⁵⁸ Hutton, R. (1994). *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700*. Oxford University Press. (p.111)

Almondbury's 1652 Book of Sermons has specific dates noted next to sermons including a sermon 'Against Gluttony and Drunkenness' and 'An Homily against Disobedience and wilful Rebellion', suggesting these were preached within the church on the corresponding dates.³⁵⁹

In the case of Sir John Kaye (1641-1706) however, not only did he actively support conformist clergy but he also directly opposed nonconformists. In his diary, whilst preaching a sermon to a crowd at Lascelles Hall, the nonconformist preacher Oliver Heywood noted that on January 2nd 1673 a servant of Sir John Kaye commanded him to go for an audience with the gentleman regarding the legality of his nonconformist preaching. Upon arrival, Heywood stated that they were asked for their licence and that Sir John explained how 'His majesty hath graciously encouraged conformists, and indulged his other subjects that pretend conscience in not conforming; but his princely clemency had been abused in many places'.³⁶⁰ Sir John was evidently unimpressed with the prevalence of nonconformist preaching and also concerned that some may be preaching without a licence. Moreover, in referencing the King's interests during the confrontation, Sir John was clearly keen to express his position as an agent of the Crown and ensure that neither his nor his sovereign's authority was undermined. Ultimately, the actions of Sir John Kaye demonstrate that the family continued to actively support, and on occasion enforce, conformity to the established Church until the final years of the period.

This enforcement of conformity allowed the Kaye family to advance a number of their priorities. Firstly, it was a direct way in which the local gentry could demonstrate their loyalty to the Crown. After all, following Elizabeth's ascension, the monarch was the head of the Church and particularly in Elizabeth's reign, conformity to the religious settlement was required.³⁶¹ This demonstration of loyalty, in turn, supported their enhancement of additional authority and prestige, a strategy which, as explored in chapter two, had proven significantly effective in the attainment of titles and the enhancing of the family's societal

³⁵⁹ Almondbury 1652 Book of Sermons, *West Yorkshire Archive Service* (Wakefield), D000012 - Almondbury All Hallows and Longley St Mary, and others, Parish Records (WDP12/285)

³⁶⁰ *The Rev. Oliver Heywood, B.A. 1630 – 1702; His Autobiography, Diaries, Anecdote and Event Books* (1881), ed. Horsfall Turner, J. A.B. Bayes, Volume 2. Retrieved from: [https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Rev_Oliver_Heywood_B_A_1630_1702/grVCAAAAYAAJ?kptab=editions&gbpv=1\(pp.186-188\)](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Rev_Oliver_Heywood_B_A_1630_1702/grVCAAAAYAAJ?kptab=editions&gbpv=1(pp.186-188))

³⁶¹ Guy, J. (1988). *Tudor England*. Oxford University Press. (p.296)

position by the time of Sir John (1641-1706). Secondly, especially considering the turbulence of seventeenth-century politics, the opportunity to enforce religious conformity was another way in which Protestant gentlemen such as Sir John Kaye could express their piety. The creation of an orderly society was a clear concern of morality for reformers and the establishment of religious conformity was a key part of achieving this.³⁶²

These priorities also manifested themselves in the church building. As the investigation into the Kaye's home of Woodsome Hall showed, most commonly these priorities were visually expressed in the gentry's country homes. However, the church of Almondbury evidences that the gentry continued to deploy similar techniques in the parish church. As the local parish registers show, the church was the stage for every major event in a person's life.³⁶³ The church was also a place of regular large-scale attendances throughout the period. In Elizabeth's reign for example, 'the Elizabethan state may not have wished to make windows into its subjects' souls, but it did want their bodies in church' such was the emphasis placed on church attendance.³⁶⁴ Therefore, by continuing to use the parish church as a place to express their priorities, the local gentry could impact a different and larger audience than they could reach through their gentry homes.

³⁶² Hutton, R. (1994). *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700*. Oxford University Press. (p.111)

³⁶³ *The Parish Register of Almondbury 1557-1598*, ed. Taylor, H. (1974). The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Volume 1 (Part 1).

³⁶⁴ Ryrie, A. (2013). *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*. Oxford University Press. (p.321)



Figure 7: King Charles I Royal Arms. Almondbury All Hallows Church, Yorkshire.

Though the gentry's interaction with the material culture of the church is a relatively underexplored topic, recent studies on the subject have highlighted the methods by which the gentry could exploit the church building to forward their priorities. In her work on Jacobean Leeds, Maggie Bullett established how places of worship could be used as a vessel for those in power to express their political beliefs and loyalty to the Crown. Bullett explained how the interior of St John's Chapel, built by John Harrison in the seventeenth century, 'can be understood through the articulation of Harrison's views on religion and authority'.³⁶⁵ A similar situation occurred in the church at Almondbury. In the church, the most blatant method of linking the prestigious families of the parish with the Crown was by displaying the arms of the incumbent monarch. Above the chancel arch at Almondbury All Hallows remains a board bearing the Royal Arms and the letters C.R, dated 1626 despite the fact that Charles I came to the throne in 1625.³⁶⁶ At St John's Chapel, Bullett described how Harrison likely installed the arms of King James due to his local disputes and within that, 'to signify the Crown's legitimisation of his position.'³⁶⁷ Consequently, the installation of the Arms of King Charles at Almondbury can be taken to signify two primary aspects of what the local gentry were trying to achieve. Firstly, at a base level, it represented the loyalty of the families to the Crown but more importantly, placed high above the chancel arch watching over the parishioners, the arms were also likely intended to assert the dominance of the

³⁶⁵ Bullett, M. (2018). 'Son of Thunder or Good Shepherd', Contesting the Parish Pulpit in Early Seventeenth-Century Leeds. *Northern History*, 55(2), 161-177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0078172X.2019.1573623>

³⁶⁶ King Charles I Royal Arms. Almondbury All Hallows Church, Yorkshire.

³⁶⁷ Bullett, M. (2018). 'Son of Thunder or Good Shepherd', Contesting the Parish Pulpit in Early Seventeenth-Century Leeds. *Northern History*, 55(2), 161-177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0078172X.2019.1573623>

Crown over the congregation and, as agents of the government, assert the local authority of the leading gentry families through their association with the Crown.

The presence of the Kaye chapel and its interior is another example of how the local gentry used the church to advance their priorities. Not only did the chapel emphasise the social hierarchy in the church, it also gave the family a constant presence and authority in the building whether they were there in person or not. The interior of the chapel also allowed the family to advance their priorities. In their house at Woodsome, due to the important role blood and lineage played in maintaining gentry status, the family showed a clear appreciation for their heritage and ancestors.³⁶⁸ This appreciation is also evident in the Kaye chapel where saintly stained-glass windows represent successive generations of the family.³⁶⁹ The windows, which were restored towards the end of the nineteenth century to how they were described in the visitation of 1584, in the words of Hulbert show 'John Kaye, Esq., and Elizabeth, his wife, at prayer' beneath figures including St. John the Baptist and St Helena and topped by what appear to be the Kaye Finchenden arms.³⁷⁰ Though their restoration in the nineteenth century suggests that at some stage prior the windows fell into disrepair, as late as 1584 they were in reasonable condition. Initially, the retention of these saintly windows after a significant period of Elizabeth's reign appears to contradict the family's position as conformist Protestants. However, for a family that highly valued the advancement of their priorities, the retention of the windows is unsurprising.

The assertion of the family's lineage, in addition to the depiction of the family's heraldry, asserted to local parishioners the family's gentry status and, through that, their authority. Moreover, such elements were also intriguingly useful in the demonstration of Protestant piety. Tara Hamling explained that 'domestic decoration had a key role in promoting and regulating godly behaviour within the Protestant household'; it is arguable that in Almondbury, decoration in the church had a key role in promoting godly behaviour in the religious setting too.³⁷¹ The elevated arms of the King overseeing the congregation, the constant presence of the Kaye family through their chapel and the interior of the chapel, which expressed the family's lineage and gentry status, would all have promoted religious

³⁶⁸ Heal, F., & Holmes, C. (1994). *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700*. Macmillan. (p.27)

³⁶⁹ *Kaye Family Chapel*. Almondbury All Hallows Church, Yorkshire.

³⁷⁰ Hulbert, C. A. (1882). *Annals of the Church and Parish of Almondbury*. Longmans and Co. (pp.32-33)

³⁷¹ Hamling, T. (2010). *Decorating the Godly Household*. Yale University Press. (p.272)

discipline within the church. As explored in the previous chapter, the promotion of religious discipline was a fundamental way in which the conformist gentry of the locality expressed their Protestant piety. It is therefore unsurprising that elements of the Kaye chapel windows survived as, if the Kaye family had destroyed the interior of the Kaye chapel, they would have been removing an expression of both their local authority and Protestant piety.

The religion of the locality of Almondbury during this period was conservative conformity. Not only did elements of pre-Reformation religion persist but further reform, especially in the time of the Interregnum, appears to have been received with distaste and ultimately rejected. This chapter has also shown that a 'Calvinist consensus' was not a feature of local religion.³⁷²

This theme of conformity, along with cooperation, formed the foundations for a social circle which dominated local affairs. This circle included both the leading local gentry and clergy which therefore unified the intertwined political, judicial and religious interests of the locality in one group. As Staynton's continuation as the vicar of Almondbury suggests, membership in this social circle could often be more influential than religious ideology. This implies that personal relationships were fundamental to how local society operated.

Additionally, despite the increasing opportunities brought by the Reformation, this chapter has shown that the local gentry continued to utilise local religion and the local parish church to advance their priorities. This chapter has therefore contributed to the recent scholarship regarding the gentry's use of the material elements of the parish church during this period.³⁷³ Furthermore, in examining these features within the church, this chapter has also added extra analysis to the ways conformist families utilised such material and visual features to express Protestant piety.³⁷⁴ With this in mind, this chapter has continued the argument that conformity to the new religion was a clear benefit to the local gentry.

³⁷² Lake, P. (1982). *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*. Cambridge University Press.

³⁷³ Bullett, M. (2018). 'Son of Thunder or Good Shepherd', Contesting the Parish Pulpit in Early Seventeenth-Century Leeds. *Northern History*, 55(2), 161-177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0078172X.2019.1573623>

³⁷⁴ Hamling, T. (2010). *Decorating the Godly Household*. Yale University Press.

Conclusion

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England experienced significant religious and social upheaval.³⁷⁵ These changes offered new opportunities to the ambitious 'rising gentry' in the West Riding of Yorkshire and within the locality of Almondbury.³⁷⁶ This masters has evidenced that the locality was atypical of the Catholic survivalism within Yorkshire at the time; it has also strongly argued that the overriding theme of local religion was conservative conformity rather than something which represented further reform in the shape of a 'Calvinist Consensus'.³⁷⁷ This focus on conservative conformity saw elements of pre-Reformation religion survive into the seventeenth century and the rejection of the more evangelical version of Protestantism which arrived during the Interregnum.

This masters has also argued that this period saw the local conformist gentry express a commonality in priorities. These priorities focused on the accumulation of wealth alongside the assertion and expansion of their authority and prestige. The methods by which the local gentry advanced these priorities often reflected the wider trends of the social group during this period. For example, the Kayes used the development of their country house at Woodsome to promote their interests.³⁷⁸ Additionally, though the local gentry continued to possess a strong interest in religious affairs and the church building, they also explored new ways of expressing their religious piety, made available by the English Reformation.³⁷⁹ As the fascinating Kaye panels demonstrate, many of these new expressions of living a 'godly life' took place in the domestic rather than religious setting.³⁸⁰ From the new expressions of piety to the societal positions made more easily accessible by alignment to the state, conformity to the new religion was undoubtedly beneficial to the local gentry.

The societal structure which arose in the locality is similarly fascinating. As the connections between the local gentry and the relationship between the curate of Slaithwaite Robert

³⁷⁵ Morton, A., & Lewycky, N. (2012). *Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England - Essays in Honour of Professor W. J. Sheils*. Routledge. (p.1)

³⁷⁶ Tawney, R. H. (1941). The Rise of the Gentry. *The Economic History Review*, 11(1), 1-38.

³⁷⁷ Lake, P. (1982). *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*. Cambridge University Press. (p.279)

³⁷⁸ Wrightson, K. (2000). *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain*. Yale University Press. (p.185)

³⁷⁹ Hamling, T. (2010). *Decorating the Godly Household*. Yale University Press. (pp.93-120)

³⁸⁰ Anonymous., John Kaye of Woodsome, c. 1567. Tolson Museum, Huddersfield, ref. KLMUS 1990/399 (recto). Co. Kirklees Museums and Galleries.

Meeke and the Kaye family demonstrates, a social circle emerged which included both the gentry and clergy.³⁸¹ This social group therefore combined the political, judicial and religious forces of the locality in one social group where authority and conformity were certainly two of the defining characteristics.

Ultimately, this masters has shown that no uniform experience of religious change can be applied to Yorkshire. Nor was the traditional story of recusancy and resistance the full story of the Reformation in the county. Instead, in a locality which was dominated by ascending conformist families, the story of religious change was significantly different.

³⁸¹ Meeke, R. *Extracts from the Diary of the Rev. Robert Meeke*, ed. H.J Morehouse (1874). Available from: <https://huddersfield.exposed/book/6929>

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