

**THE ROLE OF THE CLERGY IN
THE PILGRIMAGE OF GRACE**

David Callaghan

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Summary

The Pilgrimage of Grace has been the subject of numerous studies over the past century, helped by a large source of surviving documents collected by the investigations in its aftermath. Since the Royal Supremacy had been formalised the clergy had suffered increases in taxation, restrictions of their powers and by the summer of 1536, the beginnings of the suppression of the monasteries.

The motivating factors causing so many, from all levels of society to rise against the crown have been debated to no universally accepted conclusion. The clergy have usually been given an important role in the studies to date but have not been satisfactorily represented and this dissertation will look at the different roles that they played, both in promoting the cause and influencing the laity in the rebellion. By looking at both individuals and the different ways in which groups of seculars, monks and friars contributed, more can be understood about how their role in this rebellion reflected their place within the community having undergone a period of reform.

Introduction

The Pilgrimage of Grace is a subject which has produced a wide range of scholarship offering an analysis of the impact of the rebellion upon Henrican England and also an ongoing debate around the motivations of those who rose against the government, and more specifically, Thomas Cromwell and his reformist policies. ‘The largest revolt ever mounted against the rule of the Tudor monarchy in sixteenth-century England’ started in Lincolnshire from where it rapidly spread to the East Riding of Yorkshire, then all six of the northernmost counties.¹ The most recent in-depth studies of the Pilgrimage by Michael Bush and R. W. Hoyle have looked at the make-up of the rebel armies and politics surrounding the insurrection respectively, both providing excellent examples of the vastly different approaches that the historian can, and has taken to its investigation.² The original revisions of the Pilgrimage of Grace following M. H. and Ruth Dodds’ comprehensive narrative published at the beginning of the last century,³ most notably from A. G. Dickens and R. R. Reid started an invigorating dialogue claiming the importance of economic conditions over concern for the fate of traditional religion in the north as the main motivation for those who rose.⁴ On the other side of the fence, seeing religious motivations as central to the rebellion, C. S. L. Davies, Christopher Haigh and G. W. Bernard have all played down anti-clericalism amongst the northern counties and place the suppression of

¹ G. R. Elton, ‘Politics and the Pilgrimage of Grace’, in Barbara C. Malament (ed), *After the Reformation: Essays in honour of J. H. Hexter* (Manchester, 1980), p. 27

² R. W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford, 2001); Michael Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the rebel armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996)

³ M. H. Dodds and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-1537 and the Exeter Conspiracy 1538*, 2 Volumes (New Impression, London, 1971, of orig. edn, Cambridge, 1915)

⁴ A. G. Dickens, ‘Secular and Religious Motivation in the Pilgrimage of Grace’, in G. J. Cuming (ed), *Studies in Church History* (Leiden, 1967), pp. 39-64; R. R. Reid, *The King’s Council in the North* (reprint, Wakefield, 1975, of orig. edn, London, 1921), esp. pp. 122-126

the monasteries in a leading role which united the rebels, unable to find a common ground through their various grievances.⁵

As the above references suggest, the function of different social groups in the Pilgrimage of Grace has been considered at length but within them the clergy do not sustain a central role. The extent of relevant historiography however, does mean that this substantial work can be utilised to add depth to this study of clerical involvement. It should also be added that the question of 'the role of the clergy in the Pilgrimage of Grace' will not necessitate a comprehensive analysis of the motivations of the majority of the rebel force. What is required is an understanding of the extent to which the clergy manipulated all of the concerns of northern society and how this affected the direction and outcome of the rebellion. To assess their role, the motivations of the religious must first be considered as these can by no means, be considered universally applicable due to the diversity of the clerical orders in early modern England. Some clergy acted as leaders, some as followers. Some were eager to join, some had to be coerced. Works completed over the last two decades on the role of rumour in Henrican England and also the state and place of the clergy within the early modern community, have added a new dimension to how the historian can approach this subject with a better understanding of local politics and devotion to the religious.⁶ This is especially helpful when studying a topic which relies so heavily upon depositions and sporadic correspondence for its analysis.

⁵ C. S. L. Davies, 'Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace' in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds), *Order and disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 58-91; Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), chp. 9, G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (London, 2005), chp. 4

⁶ Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003); Ethan H. Shagan, 'Rumours and Popular Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII', in Tim Harris (ed), *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 30-66; Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994); Peter Marshall, *The Face of*

To date, no published study of the Pilgrimage has focussed solely on the role of the clergy and therefore this work can make a necessary contribution to the topic.⁷ The implications for this group were stark when it is considered that 16 per cent of those executed after the post-pardon revolts were members of the clergy. This does not take into account those who were known to have been involved in the Pilgrimage but could not be linked to any rising after the general pardon at the beginning of December 1536 and were therefore incarcerated indefinitely.⁸ Monks who had been restored to their monasteries were to be dealt with mercilessly and Henry, as will be shown, wanted examples to be made. The role of the clergy in the Pilgrimage will therefore help to understand Henry's attitude towards the religious and also, the part they played within northern society. In order to do this effectively it will be necessary to separate key elements of the rebellion and better understand the relationships that the clergy enjoyed, or suffered with the laity. This will begin by an analysis of the place of the northern clergy within their communities immediately preceding the uprisings in the last months of 1536. Central to this chapter will be the role that the clergy played in spreading rumour and how they had come to view the reformation up to this point. An analysis of the historiography around anticlericalism will also be undertaken in order to form a working tool with which to assess the environment within which the clergy lived and how this shaped their actions over the coming months.

the Pastoral Ministry in the East Riding, 1525-1595 (York, 1995); David Lamburn, *The Laity and the Church: Religious Developments in Beverley in the first half of the Sixteenth Century* (York, 2000)

⁷ There is however an unpublished work by Susan Brigden, 'The Northern Clergy in the Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study in Resistance', University of Manchester BA thesis (1973)

⁸ Michael Bush & David Bownes, *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Postpardon Revolts of December 1536 to March 1537 and their Effect* (Hull, 1999), pp. 411-412

The following chapter will consider their role in the Lincolnshire rising which along with rumours of changes to parochial religion has been noted by Hoyle as contributing directly to the uprising in Yorkshire.⁹ Following this, a study of the different clerical groups will be necessary in order to assess the various roles and motivations of the regular and secular clergy who had both common and particular interests and patterns of participation within the Pilgrimage. Finally, an assessment will be made of the actions of those clerics who attended the clerical conference at Pontefract at the beginning of December 1536. This is not only an important topic as the last significant clerical involvement in the rebellion, but also because its articles represent an opportunity to assess how the middle and upper ranking clergy felt about Henry's reformation, and whether they represented the concerns of the lower orders who fill the pages of the previous chapters.

Through such a methodology important themes must come to conclusion specifically around the motivations of the clergy, how much their role in the Pilgrimage can uncover about their relationship with the laity and ultimately whether the fate of so many, was justified by their actions within the Pilgrimage or was the result of a ruthless anticlericalism from the king.¹⁰ In order to make an accurate assessment of the role of the clergy it is necessary therefore to consider the diversity of their vocation and the individuals and politics within it. To do this they must be separated regionally, professionally and theologically in order to avoid, where possible, the generalisations with which contemporary investigations were rife.

⁹ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 17

¹⁰ Margaret Bowker, *The Henrican Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland 1521-1547* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 156

Chapter 1: The Northern Clergy in the 1530s

It has been argued that the Pilgrimage of Grace was a gentry conspiracy involving the likes of Lord Darcy, John Hussey and Thomas Dacre. One such theory implicates them in a plot with the Imperial ambassador Chapuys more than two years prior to the rebellion with Darcy claiming he would 'rally the north around the crucifix and the Imperial standard' if Charles V would provide some assistance.¹ More recently R. W. Hoyle has dismissed such a theory arguing that it lacks evidence but has not closed the door on the possibility altogether.² The conspiracy debate is relevant to the role of the clergy as it would affect the significance of their influence prior to the rebellion. If the rebellion was not a spontaneous revolt of the commons, injected with fear for their church by the 'clergy dupes' then their impact would be limited to reaction to the uprising itself, not the politics that caused it.³ Whereas this work will not demonstrate that the clergy were the main instigators of revolt, it will be shown that their involvement ran much deeper than that of agents for the gentry.⁴ No-one has tried to involve the clergy in a long-standing conspiracy to overhaul the religious changes that were occurring by 1536 in the same way as the Darcy example, but as will be seen with the Lincolnshire rebellion, seeds of doubt were being spread by some clerics weeks before the outbreak of the rebellion there. A sense of pre-meditation has been suggested by Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid

¹ Quote from A. G. Dickens, 'Secular and Religious Motivation in the Pilgrimage of Grace', in G. J. Cuming (ed), *Studies in Church History* (Leiden, 1967), p. 46; for further argument for a gentry conspiracy, G. R. Elton, 'Politics and the Pilgrimage of Grace', in Barbara C. Malament (ed), *After the Reformation: Essays in honor of J. H. Hexter* (Manchester, 1980), pp. 35-53; J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968), pp. 339- 340;

² R. W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford, 2001), p. x

³ *Ibid.*, p. 106

⁴ Elton, 'Politics', pp. 34-35

MacCulloch who have argued that ‘the first outbreaks of open protest look as if they were planned’ which can initially be attributed to ‘yeoman, skilled craftsman and the lower clergy.’⁵ The intention of this chapter is to consider if the clergy’s role in the spreading of rumours, their popularity and their own contribution to the reformation of religion in the years immediately preceding the Pilgrimage allowed them the capacity to embolden the disillusioned as Fletcher and MacCulloch suggest. By re-constructing the world within which the clergy operated, this will then provide a framework with which their role in the northern rebellions of 1536 can be analysed against later. The most effective way of doing this is through a discussion of the relevant historiography on this topic.

Royal policies introduced prior to the Pilgrimage such as new clerical taxation and of course the suppression of the monasteries would have concerned some clerics more than others, but a glance at the reforms of the period do demonstrate that all had reason to complain. Those, usually better educated seculars who held more than one benefice were concerned that Cromwell would prevent pluralism and the lesser learned would have feared being deprived by the scheduled competency assessments due in the autumn of 1536. If pluralism was restricted then the monks and friars who often acted in their stead would also be out of work.⁶ Hoyle has argued that ‘by its alienation of the clergy the government ensured that there was a figure of authority to bad-mouth it in every parish, sometimes every village.’⁷ How far this actually occurred, and the reception it received should be considered in more detail.

In April 1536 Thomas Sowle, a priest from Penrith ‘of no promotion or learning’ was in an ale house in Worcestershire where he was said to have

⁵ Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (4th edn, Harlow, 1997), p. 45

⁶ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p. 96

⁷ Hoyle, *Politics*, pp. 92

declared that ‘we be kept bare and smete under, yet we shall once rise again, and 40,000 of us will rise upon a day.’⁸ This rather prophetic statement may accurately reflect the state of living for many of the lower clergy and why any increased financial burden on them would be especially resented. In the East Riding for instance the average value of a vicarage was just over £9 per year and for unbeneficed clerics, who made up the vast majority of the clergy, this could be less than £4, ‘barely a living wage’.⁹ The Archbishop of York complained that the poverty of too many benefices in his control meant that enough educated clergy could not be tempted to take them.¹⁰ In July 1533 the Earl of Derby reported to the King that a priest from Lancashire had exclaimed that ‘the King will put down the order of priests, and destroy the sacrament’, concluding that it matter not as York would replace London soon.¹¹ Christopher Haigh has suggested that clerical discontent over the subsidy was considerable and Cromwell was aware of the problem in 1534.¹² Examples of open hostility to the crown from the lower clergy are not abundant, but with so many of them in every community, perhaps one in fifty souls in the East Riding for example, it is not hard to believe that more comments like these would have been heard as the crown squeezed more from their pockets and their vocation.¹³

Clerical taxation and examination would of course have affected the morale of the clergy, but what of the theological changes that had been thrust upon them in the years leading up to the Pilgrimage? It is unlikely that the

⁸ LP X, 693 (i), (ii); M. H. Dodds and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-1537 and the Exeter Conspiracy 1538*, Vol. 1 (New Impression, London, 1971, of orig. edn, Cambridge, 1915), p. 70

⁹ Peter Marshall, *The Face of the Pastoral Ministry in the East Riding, 1525-1595* (York, 1995), p. 19

¹⁰ Scott Harrison, *The Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake Counties, 1536-7* (London, 1981), p. 14

¹¹ LP VI, 964

¹² Christopher Haigh, *The Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace* (Manchester, 1969), p. 52

¹³ Marshall, *Pastoral Ministry*, pp. 3-4

parochial clergy were of sufficient capacity to adequately educate their parishioners on the religious changes of the 1530s. Therefore, despite them being expected to preach in favour of the royal supremacy, against the papacy and on the abrogation of superfluous holy days it is doubtful that the message was conveyed effectively to the parish.¹⁴ The Royal Supremacy was a particular problem for the clergy when faced with the topic during the Pilgrimage as they had accepted it at the time of the 1534 northern convocation. Even the few who did initially refuse to accept it such as two monks at Mount Grace in Yorkshire, eventually acquiesced to peer pressure and were eligible to receive a pension on the houses' dissolution at the end of 1539.¹⁵ Archbishop Lee and Bishop Tunstall of Durham also signed the Ten Articles in June 1536 on behalf of the northern clergy.¹⁶ The clergy of the north were therefore in a difficult position when it came to speaking out about the religious reforms which they were expected to promote and the king was within his rights to chastise the rebels who complained of these changes when 'all alterations in religion or observance had been determined by the clergy of the provinces of Canterbury and York to be conformable to God's Holy Word and the Testament.'¹⁷ It is in this case not surprising that the lower clergy especially, were frustrated with changes to their profession that they could not properly articulate which led to the significant contribution they made to the October uprisings.

Whether articulated to an acceptable degree or not, the clergy were naturally in a position to spread rumours within their communities. The monasteries had connections through their orders to outside areas and the friars

¹⁴ Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, pp. 92, 95

¹⁵ Claire Cross and Noreen Vickers (eds), *Monks, Friars and Nuns in Sixteenth Century Yorkshire* (Leeds, 1995), p. 229-230

¹⁶ Dodds, *Pilgrimage*, p. 9

¹⁷ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 312-313

and seculars were expected to provide news of the outside world in their preaching. Much has been made of the rumours that were spread by the clergy leading up to October 1536 and it is largely accepted that they were a key influence on the actions of the commons.¹⁸ C. S. L. Davies has rightly pointed out that the clergy 'however crude and unlearned, were by-and-large the most articulate members' of society.¹⁹ This coupled with the fact that they were in a position which allowed them access to the ears of the laity on a regular basis meant that their concerns were able to filter through in the messages they conveyed. This is especially true of the friars, whose natural movement within communities aided the spread and evolution of rumour, and also the seculars who most often addressed groups of the laity. Ethan Shagan has recently done much useful work on rumour and politics in Tudor England and has argued that even the most extraordinary rumours, such as the confiscation of church goods, 'circulated in quite ordinary ways.' He also notes the importance of the 'purveyors of rumours' to be 'in constant dialogue with their consumers.'²⁰ Both of these arguments are consistent with the place of the clergy in northern society where normal daily activities such as attending church were a means by which the priest could survey his parishioners.

This is not to suggest that the outlets and procedures that the clergy could access for the spreading of rumours meant that they were able to manipulate the commons to a degree which would determine the events of 1536, and there can

¹⁸ Michael Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the rebel armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996), p. 20; Ethan Shagan, 'Rumours and Popular Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII' in Tim Harris (ed), *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 33-35; C. S. L. Davies, 'Popular religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace' in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds), *Order and disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 66-67; Fletcher, *Tudor*, p. 22; Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, pp. 205-206

¹⁹ C. S. L. Davies, 'The Pilgrimage of Grace Reconsidered' in Paul Slack (ed), *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 35

²⁰ Shagan, 'Rumours', pp. 31-34

be little more striking evidence of this than the continuation of royal policies set out by the Ten Articles after the uprising which had altered the state of their place in society. It is more the case that the word of the priest, in their place as an intermediary, between the laity and God, but also between communities, could then be interpreted by the commons as they saw fit, and it is their reaction which can be most useful to the historian.²¹ When looking at the role of the northern clergy in spreading rumour then, although much contemporary evidence blames them for inciting the rebels, it should also be remembered that not all rumours were swallowed by the laity.²² The clergy would likely have been upset by a rumour that ‘a noble shall be paid for every wedding, burying, and christening’, taxes which could be appropriated by themselves but this did not become part of the rebel programme as the commons were not as concerned over the identity of their taxman, but the policies which affected their daily lives.²³

That the rumours spread by the clergy did not create a policy for the rebellion which wholeheartedly took up their fears leads into a further discussion of the negative relations that are also evident between the laity and the clergy which has been labelled as anticlericalism. There is a bulk of scholarly work which has looked at anticlericalism in Henry VIII’s reign and it should be considered in the context of the atmosphere in the north prior to the Pilgrimage.²⁴

There are instances of threats against the clergy by the commons during the Pilgrimage such as the experience of Dr John Dakyn who had to give a man who

²¹ Ibid., pp. 31-32

²² LP XI, 843; LP XII (i), 481 (ix); M. Bateson (ed), ‘Aske’s examination’, *EHR* 5 (1890), p. 558

²³ LP XI, 483 (2)

²⁴ For relevant work on ‘anticlericalism’ see Davies, ‘Reconsidered’, pp. 29-32; Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, chp. 8; Christopher Haigh, ‘Anticlericalism and the English Reformation’, in Ibid. (ed), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 56-74; Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), chp. 4; Dickens, ‘Secular’, esp. pp. 48-64; Ibid., ‘The Shape of Anticlericalism and the English Reformation’ in E. I. Kouri and T. Scott (eds), *Politics and society in Reformation Europe* (London, 1987), pp. 379-410

threatened him five marks in the first days of the uprising.²⁵ The vicar of Skipton went into hiding as soon as trouble erupted ‘or it had cost him his life’²⁶ and Hoyle has argued that in Westmorland, although the rebels looked to the clergy ‘for instruction in the faith, they appear to have been ready to threaten and brutalise’ them also.²⁷ Clearly there were some issues which led the laity to form ill opinions of their clerics. Pluralists, who left a weak replacement in their stead were particularly subjects of abuse. This was the case with the curates at Kirkby Stephen and Kendal in the Lake Counties which led when the rebellion broke out to hostilities towards them and their absent incumbents, which Scott Harrison has argued ‘may have been typical’.²⁸ This does not mean however, that anticlericalism was rife as threats to the clergy ‘did not clash with the religious intentions of the rebels.’²⁹ This becomes more applicable when instances of violence against the clergy are considered geographically. Haigh has stated that of the fifty-seven benefices in Lancashire, twenty were held by absentees and the vast majority of the richest twenty positions ‘were not served properly.’ This in turn was a contributing factor to the common use of violence against the clergy in the county.³⁰ Compare this to the East Riding which had a relatively low instance of violence against the clergy before and during the Pilgrimage, where pluralism was rare and it must be considered a vital component which would not uphold an argument for a widespread anticlerical feeling in the north.³¹

What anticlerical evidence from the period points to, especially with regards to the secular clergy is, as Shagan has noted, ‘an implicit sense of lay

²⁵ LP XII (i), 788

²⁶ Ibid., 1186 (4)

²⁷ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 248

²⁸ Harrison, *Lake Counties*, p. 16

²⁹ Ibid., 102

³⁰ Haigh, *Lancashire*, pp. 1-2

³¹ Marshall, *Pastoral Ministry*, p. 5

superiority in which priests' elevated spiritual status was eroded by their structurally weak position as salaried employees of the parish' and an increasing belief that the church not the priest was most worthy of preservation.³² The Pilgrimage of Grace created an atmosphere of heightened alarm which served to exacerbate already stressed relations where they existed. A. G. Dickens for instance has described the Lincolnshire rebellion as an 'anti-clerical' movement, especially against the monasteries of which the insistence of the rebels that the brethren at Barlings join them in harness is one example.³³ It is difficult to assume however that such examples can prove inherent anticlericalism but more a slow alteration in the attitude of the clergy by the laity which allowed this breakdown in the society of orders. Margaret Bowker has argued that anticlericalism was much less rife in Lincolnshire than in the Pilgrimage of Grace and the clergy were supported by their congregations with both groups being concerned with establishing the faith but not re-installing the Pope as head. This desire to address some, but not all aspects of the Henrican reformation is more consistent with the small, but important changes in the expectations of the clergy from the laity in the 1530s.³⁴

Peter Marshall has suggested that if anticlericalism 'can be measured at all, it might seem that the most telling evidence would be that of violent attacks upon priests by laymen' and this relationship had changed with the Reformation, 'as doubts and confusion as to the religious role of the priest and his reciprocal obligations to his parishioners' became prevalent.³⁵ In the years and months before the Pilgrimage of Grace began then, there was an increasingly frustrated

³² Shagan, *Popular Politics*, pp. 136- 139; also Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, p. 201

³³ Dickens, 'Secular', p. 48; LP XI, 805

³⁴ Margaret Bowker, *The Henrican Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland 1521-1547* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 155

³⁵ Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, pp. 218, 235

clergy who could not rely upon the devotion of the laity to the degree that they could incite them into rising solely for their protection. They still enjoyed a role of unparalleled access to their audience and news of the outside world however, which would allow them to create and feed concerns over the state of religion and by hitting the appropriate buttons, could reveal a politically aware set of communities in the north of England who would decide for what they would rise. The hostilities between the people of Beverley and the Archbishop is an example of anticlerical feeling which had come about with the suspension of powers allowing them to choose their own governors and represents what Davies has called ‘traditionalist, not radical’ anticlericalism.³⁶

This chapter has shown that the clergy in northern society could provoke strong feeling amongst the laity, be this through the spreading of news or by the quality with which they served them. Having established these arguments, the role that the clergy played in the Pilgrimage of Grace can be placed into context. Those clergy that recognised their position could use it constructively, as was the case with the effective spreading of news of the rebellion in Lincolnshire, or the friar of Knaresborough who used his regional connections to carry word abroad. The analysis in this chapter has shown that the clergy’s relationship with the laity was not straightforward and altered according to region and the degree with which they shared common ideals regarding the maintenance of the religion. With this in mind, this dissertation will take into account the depth of this relationship when considering the evidence of clerical involvement in the Pilgrimage.

³⁶ Davies, ‘Popular religion’, p. 83; For hostilities between Beverley and Archbishop Lee see Bush, *Rebel armies*, pp. 51-53

Chapter 2: The Lincolnshire Uprising

It has been argued that a ‘distinguishing feature of the pilgrimage of grace was its dependence upon the Lincolnshire uprising.’ The hosts in Yorkshire relied on the published grievances of their neighbours to spread their movement and were initially intended as a support force for the rebellion south of the Humber.¹ The Lincolnshire prelude was a short but aggressive act started by the commons of Louth and quickly carried to Horncastle and Caistor. It can also however be set apart from the Pilgrimage in several ways, the most obvious being the violent acts that led to the death of three men. One of these, Dr Raynes, chancellor of the diocese of Lincoln was ‘lynched by his own clergy.’² As well as this however, despite the suppression of the monasteries being objected to ‘whereby the service of God is minished’, none were restored in its short life.³ The speed at which the rebellion capitulated to royal pressure is also a striking difference between it, and the Yorkshire uprising. The role of the clergy in this rebellion was arguably more distinctive than in the Pilgrimage and therefore offers a useful comparison. This is exemplified in the account of Lincolnshire by the nephew of Chapuys, Spanish ambassador in England, sent to Mary, Charles V’s regent in the Netherlands. In an awesome exaggeration he claims that there were 50,000 rebels of whom 10,000 were ‘priests, monks, and religious persons, of whom the most learned continually admonish their men to continue the work begun, pointing out the advantages which will come to them of it.’⁴ Of course this was propaganda designed to demonstrate that the English were firmly against Henry’s

¹ Michael Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the rebel armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 13-14

² R. W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford, 2001), p. 6

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18

⁴ LP XI, 714

reformation and the priests would side with Rome but, as will be seen, it was not entirely false to suggest that some religious were encouraging the commons into joining the rebellion.

The Lincolnshire uprising began on 2 October and was over by the 12th. What is most evident from the records is that a study of the role of the clergy can offer both the actions of key individuals, but also the results of collective action. The atmosphere surrounding the three government commissions that were in Lincolnshire in October has been called one of 'rumour and alarm' with dissolutions, collection of subsidy and fitness of the clergy all under scrutiny.⁵ Simon Maltby, parson of Farforth had been at the court for the valuation of benefices on 30 September in Bollingbrook which was led by Dr Raynes, who was due to be in Louth two days later. On his return home Maltby declared that 'their silver chalices were to be given to the King in exchange for tin ones, and that he and other priests had determined to strike down the said chancellor, and trusted in the support of their neighbours.'⁶ This example of a cleric subscribing the use of violence is consistent with what R. W. Hoyle has described as 'the violent militancy of the local clergy.'⁷ Dr Raynes' impending visitation inevitably caused many to seek means of dragging the laity to their defence. Michael Bush has also argued that it was the secular clergy who 'spread the rumour that the visitors would not simply examine the clergy..., but would also confiscate all church treasures and destroy some parish churches.'⁸

The rebellion, however influenced by rumours spread by the religious was overwhelmingly a revolt of the commons. From their point of view

⁵ Anthony Fletcher & Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (4th edn, Harlow, 1997), p. 22

⁶ LP XI, 975

⁷ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 106

⁸ Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 20

visitations also resulted in a concentration of clergy that was ideal for the nucleus of a rebellion, where they could be recruited by the commons and sent to raise the others in their parishes. On 2 October for instance, sixty priests who were in Louth for their clerical tests were sworn by the commons there and sent to carry news of the uprising ‘all over the country-side.’⁹ Having succumbed to the rumours of the clergy the laity, for weight of numbers assumed control of policy and the focus for the main analysis of this chapter will be how far the clergy managed to maintain a grip on the direction of the Lincolnshire movement and in what capacity.

The secular clergy will be the subject of the first assessment as from within their number was a character who became an infamous member of the host, Thomas Kendall, vicar of Louth. Kendall gave a sermon on the 1 October which initially suggests he was hoping to dispel the commons concerns as he asked them ‘to go together and look well on such things as should be inquired of in the visitation next day.’¹⁰ C. S. L. Davies has described this sermon as ‘inflammatory’ but it seems more likely that the words were designed ‘to reassure, to punctuate fears and anxieties.’¹¹ It is possible Kendall favoured peace because he himself was a learned man and would not have shared the same fears as some of the uneducated clergy about losing his benefice. As a cleric who ‘was appointed to Louth and not by Louth’ as well, he must have felt confident that he was held in at least reasonable esteem by the church hierarchy.¹² It is more likely then that the rumours already mentioned, and not any possible

⁹ M. H. Dodds and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-1537 and The Exeter Conspiracy 1538*, Vol. 1 (New Impression, London, 1971, of orig. edn, Cambridge, 1915), pp. 94, 96

¹⁰ LP XII (i), 380

¹¹ C. S. L. Davies, ‘Popular religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace’ in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds), *Order and disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 90; Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 104

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 100

incitement from him caused the commons in Louth to lock up their church jewels on 2 October. Significantly, one of the rebel captains, Nicholas Melton of Louth does not even mention Kendall's sermon in his deposition but instead states that the decision to lock up the church jewels came after one Thomas Foster declared during the Sunday service that they might never follow their cross again.¹³ This again shows that the rumours spread initially by the clergy had been successful in spreading suspicion, but the commons took the decision themselves over what should be done about it.

Kendall himself asserted that he only wanted 'to establish the Faith and put down schismatic English books, which deceive the unlearned' but he was said by others to have 'comforted' the rebels throughout and his actual level of promotion of their cause is debatable.¹⁴ Hoyle has argued effectively that Kendall was probably not the 'priest of Louth' who was with the rebels during the march on Lincoln which Bush has used as evidence of his involvement in this event.¹⁵ It is possible then that Kendall's role in the Lincolnshire uprising has been previously overstated but his guilt was assumed by the government to the same extent as historians, presumably due to the ambiguity of the investigations. Perhaps the slowness to indict Kendall of the Duke of Suffolk, who was collecting evidence on the ground immediately after the rebellion, suggests he did not consider him to be as guilty as has been subsequently thought. What may be more telling is that Wriothsesley, who would have been privy to much the same information as the historian, declared his surprise that the vicar had not yet been accused of involvement.¹⁶ Whether Kendall was as guilty as thought or not

¹³ LP XI, 854; *Ibid.*, 968

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 828 (1); *Ibid.*, 968

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 854 (ii); Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 21; Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 100

¹⁶ LP XI, 843

aside, this debate does highlight that the secular clergy were indeed with the main rebel force and to what extent should be discussed further.

The first act of the clergy working as a group in favour of offensive once the uprising had begun was after the commons had determined, at the behest of Melton to take the bishop of Lincoln's steward, John Hennage who had come to the town the morning of the 2 October. Having met with him, Melton outlined their concerns regarding the loss of church treasure and Hennage resolved to dispel the rumours by going to court to get the king's guarantee that this was not the case. He then attempted to ask the commons for peace until he returned by declaring his intentions at the market cross, but on hearing this, the clergy who had gathered there for the visitation prevented him from doing so. One John Taylor claimed that 'but for them the people had been stayed by Mr. Hennyche.'¹⁷

Having successfully prevented Hennage from calming the rebels the next act of the secular clergy gathered in Louth has been called the 'moment that the artisan rioters found a common purpose with the congregating priests.'¹⁸ When Dr Frankish, the bishop's commissary entered Louth on 2 October he became the focus of attention for both clergy and laity who took him to the market cross and determined to burn his books. This they did, apart from his accounts book and king's commission which were saved from the commons.¹⁹ It is at this event that the clergy then called for the commons to spread their cause. Harry Chylde said that there were forty priests in the Market Place who 'said with a loud voice Let us go forward and ye shall lack no money.' John Overey claimed that 'the parsons of Helloff offered them 40/. and the parsons of Somarcokes and Welton

¹⁷ Ibid., 968; Ibid., 972

¹⁸ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 108

¹⁹ LP XII (i), 380

and dean of Mukton aided and encouraged them.’²⁰ The role of the secular clergy in inciting the commons of Louth can be seen in many depositions such as these. The next consideration is if their influence changed as the movement spread outside of Louth.

The commons in Horncastle heard of the insurrection in Louth from Sir Nicholas Leache, parson of Belchford who most probably had been there awaiting the visitation.²¹ The spreading of news of the uprising outside of Louth can account for the ringing of the commons’ bell in several towns around Horncastle. Arthur Washingly told that the vicar of Alford ‘who had been at Lowth on the 2nd Oct. rang the common bell on the 4th.’²² Sir Ralph Gray, the priest of Croft had also been at Louth ‘and afterwards raised the commons’ of the town.²³ To the north-west where a visitation was to be held in Caistor on the Tuesday, a host was sent from Louth which included four clergymen as its representatives.²⁴ Having entered the town the ‘commons demanded to know whether the clergy would join them’, to which they agreed and burnt their own books.²⁵ From these events it can clearly be seen that the visitations had proved to be fundamental to both the unity of the clergy in their spreading of rumour and decision making at Louth, and their recruitment at Caistor. Indeed, Hoyle has asserted that ‘a more efficient means of gathering recruits could not have been found.’²⁶ This had in turn helped to spread word of rebellion through intermediaries who, by and large, served their cures well and therefore were in a

²⁰ LP XI, 972

²¹ Ibid., 828

²² Ibid., 973

²³ Ibid., 975

²⁴ LP XII (i), 380

²⁵ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 113

²⁶ Ibid., p. 110

position to sufficiently influence their parishioners.²⁷ As has been seen, this is not to suggest that the clergy were architects of the shape the rebellion took on a larger scale, this was left to the lay leadership, but the news network that the secular clergy were a part of was integral to the speed at which the uprising developed. By spreading word before the rebellion could claim to have a consistent goal however, and through clerics who had their own agenda, this haste contributed towards the collapse of the movement when faced with royal pressure which questioned its legitimacy.

Thus far the discussion has revolved around the secular clergy's involvement but to highlight the role of the clergy fully, the actions of the regular clergy should also be considered. As has been mentioned, unlike in the Pilgrimage of Grace, the Lincolnshire rebels did not restore any religious houses during its short life. This does not mean however, that monasteries did not contribute to the uprising. It should also be mentioned here that a discussion of the regular clergy in the Lincolnshire uprising is a focus on monks, and in one case nuns, and therefore at this juncture the term should not be taken as relating to friars.

In their analysis of the two northern rebellions at the end of 1536, Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch highlighted ten regular houses that were involved with the rebels. Of these, four were in Lincolnshire which requires further explanation as to why almost half those deemed particularly culpable were from a revolt which did not make their restoration a priority.²⁸ One of these houses though, the Cistercian nunnery at Legbourne was saved from suppression, but this seems more as a reaction against those sent to suppress it as opposed to a

²⁷ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p. 176

²⁸ Fletcher, *Tudor*, p. 27

desire to save the house as the dissolvers happened to be there when the uprising began and would naturally have become a focus for local hostility.²⁹ Bush has argued that ‘besides the secular clergy, the regulars were very much involved..., moved by fear that they were next in line for suppression.’³⁰ Six monks from the house of Bardney were executed for their part in the revolt despite it being likely they had little choice about riding with the rebels.³¹ The involvement of the monks though cannot be taken as wholly coerced when taking the plethora of evidence on offer. The abbot and monks of Barlings were said to have urged the commons forward and also sent them victuals.³² Despite the abbot claiming that he was commanded to do so, he mentions that the rebels did not come to him until 5 October and for the next seven days he and six of his canons ‘went to the host’ and ‘twice took victuals’ which seems to allude to a level of commitment, not fear and at no point does he mention he was threatened with violence.³³ The abbot must certainly have been quite visible with the rebels as he is named as a traitor to the King as early as 23 October.³⁴

Despite claims of incitement such as that from the abbot of Barlings, the most significant way in which the regular clergy contributed, and were most willing to do so, was in the provision of victuals. The abbot of Kirkstead for example provided the rebels with 20s. and ‘a horse laden with victual.’ Although three of the seventeen men who went from his house to the host were horsed and carried battle axes, the sheriff soon allowed him home in return for provisions.³⁵

Although the carrying of arms should also be considered as a breakdown of

²⁹ Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 23

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21

³¹ LP XII (i), 581 (ii); LP XI, 828 (vii)

³² *Ibid.*, 828 (ii); *Ibid.*, 975

³³ *Ibid.*, 828 (v)

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 842 (2)

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 828 (viii)

traditional boundaries governing the role of the clergy in northern society, the Dodds are correct in stating that the main concern for the rebels was that the regular clergy 'share the risks and expenses'.³⁶ As has been seen, the major concern for the laity was the removal of church plate and this may well be why there is more evidence of monastic involvement in Lincolnshire than will be seen in the Pilgrimage because there was less focus on those in Lincolnshire being there for the maintenance of the faith. As has been argued by Ethan Shagan 'the Pilgrimage of Grace acquired a unified and almost universally "popular" meaning through its rhetorical reconstitution of a rightly ordered society.'³⁷ This will be considered in more detail below, but as a comparison to the aims of the Lincolnshire rebellion, such a position did not have time to materialise and can be seen through the role of the regular clergy.

Before any further conclusions can be drawn over the role of the clergy in the Lincolnshire rebellion, attention should be given to an individual who offers a link into the main uprising in Yorkshire. William Morland or Burraby, as he called himself was a former monk of Louth Park. Like Kendall he was a graduate and therefore had little to fear from clerical testing, even hoping that 'he might be able to succeed to the room of some of the unlettered parsons.'³⁸ Morland's ability to infiltrate the rebellion and apparently make contact and spread information to various outlets most probably stemmed from the work he had been doing prior to it. Since Louth Park had been dissolved he had been carrying 'capacities' to other expelled monks around the country, during which 'he had heard many discontented mutterings.'³⁹ The contacts he would have made and

³⁶ Dodds, *Pilgrimage*, p. 104

³⁷ Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 91

³⁸ LP XII (i), 380

³⁹ Dodds, *Pilgrimage*, p. 92

places he would have visited can explain his comfort with travelling extensively to spread news of the uprising.

Morland had been involved since the first day in Louth. To illustrate his influence the variety of his actions should be mentioned. Kendall had heard that the rebels bill of demands to the king had been written by Morland; the parson of Sotby claimed he heard that Morland had spread rumours on the day of the uprising in Louth regarding the demolishing of churches; another priest said that Morland went to Oovingham and ‘forced the late abbot there to give him gelding, and then went to Yorkshire’; he had also been in Horncastle around the time of the murder of Dr Raynes and came to tell one of the leaders, a lawyer named Thomas Moigne.⁴⁰ What is most relevant at this point is whether Morland can also be accredited with a similar role in Yorkshire. Although he never denied travelling north he always denied that he ‘incited any man to stir or continue the insurrection there.’⁴¹ Even if the scope of his efforts in Lincolnshire was ignored, a cursory glance at his movements in Yorkshire would make this hard to believe. He spent five nights from the 12 October in Clye and Esington in the East Riding before being taken to Hull accused of being a spy. Having cleared his name the next day he returned to Beverley and spent the next two weeks visiting more small towns in the area and was in Pontefract in mid-November.⁴² Although little can be found of his influence in causing the places he visited to rise, that he maintained an interest in proceedings can be of little doubt as his name is mentioned in working alongside the infamous friar of Knaresborough during the post pardon revolts of January 1537.⁴³

⁴⁰ LP XI, 970 (12); *Ibid.*, 973; *Ibid.*, 974; *Ibid.*, 975; *Ibid.*, 971

⁴¹ LP XII (i), 481

⁴² *Ibid.*, 380

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 322

The first and most obvious answer to any question about the level of involvement of the clergy in the Lincolnshire uprising would be that it was significant. The secular clergy who were gathered in Louth and Caistor at the beginning of October 1536 helped to create a hotbed of fear and rumour which was eagerly picked up by the laity. The speed at which the uprising spread can be attributed to the communication channels that clerics opened when they returned to their parish, under orders to ring the commons bell. The regular clergy, who offered no such immediate assistance were largely 'invited' to participate but the confusion of policy which helped facilitate the uprising's demise almost as quickly as it started meant that the role of the monks was not determined, and those who did go with the hosts often bought their way back home when it was clear they were not there to act as standard bearers. What cannot be ignored however is the crown's reaction to both the religious demands that were made by the rebels, and the obvious inclusion of so many of the clergy. On 23 October Wriothesley wrote to the Duke of Suffolk demanding that the role of the clergy in the Lincolnshire uprising be investigated. He obviously suspected that they had contributed to the spreading of the rebellion to Yorkshire.⁴⁴ Little lenience was given to those clerics who claimed they had been coerced into joining, unlike many of the gentry who had been involved. Some, like Thomas Kendall may have had a case whereas others, like Morland probably did not. At the beginning of March 1537 sixty-four 'offenders' who had been sentenced to death for their involvement in Lincolnshire were given a reprieve. None of them were clergymen. Of the thirty-seven who did have their sentences carried out at least

⁴⁴ LP XI, 843

twenty were religious men.⁴⁵ The Lincolnshire rebellion created a cloud of suspicion around a clergy who were already under pressure from recent reforms. Their role would serve to have repercussions for their brethren in the rest of the northern counties of England.

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⁴⁵ LP XII (i), 582 (i), (ii)

Chapter 3: The Secular Clergy

In order to understand the role that the clergy played in the Pilgrimage it is now necessary to discuss who they were by localising the analysis around parishes, houses and individuals. This will begin with a closer look at the lower orders of the secular clergy or the vicars, curates and rectors of early modern northern society. To date, discussion of this group has been in passing, focussing on the actions of key individuals. This chapter will re-assess the old ground of the stand out members of the secular clergy in the rebellion but its main aim is to ascertain how this reflects the role of this clerical group as a whole, or at least identify some general trends. It has been asserted that the secular priests' involvement in the rebellion can be seen through the 'spreading of inflammatory rumours, providing food and money, urging resistance openly, even summoning the commons by ringing church bells.'¹ These actions will form the basis for assessing levels of a priest's, or parish church's involvement in order to provide a practical comparison. The thread of investigation will follow the progression of events as they unfolded and where individuals have not been identified through the contemporary evidence, it will be necessary to make assumptions based upon what can be discovered about the parish church and actions of its parishioners. For this reason the East Riding of Yorkshire, beginning with Beverley which produced the host led by William Stapulton will be the starting point as this is where the Pilgrimage of Grace began.

¹Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p. 205

Estimates of the size of the population in Beverley have ranged from 1,200 to 5,000 but the higher figure would seem to be closer to the mark.² The town was served by three parish churches; the Minster of St John's, St Mary's and St Nicholas'.³ It is worth noting that there were some 165 parishes in the East riding and so for only three of them to have served the significant population of Beverley would have meant a high concentration of parishioners attending the same church. Around seventy of the 587 secular clergy in the region served the collegiate churches of Beverley, Howden, and Hemingborough⁴ with the Beverley Minster having nine vicars responsible for the cure of souls.⁵

On the morning of the 8 October the commons bell was rung and a Roger Kitchyn claims that Sir John Tuvye, a priest told him that they were up in Lincolnshire and exhorted him 'and others there present to rise and take their quarrel.'⁶ There is little direct evidence suggesting that the secular clergy played any significant role in instigating the uprising outside of the actions of John Tuvye but this could be attributed to its reactionary nature to Lincolnshire and lack of clear goals at the outset. Those that gathered in the marketplace on the afternoon of the 8th took the Lincolnshire oath which had been received that morning 'to maintain the holy church'⁷ and John Hallam, visiting the town on the 11th found out from Guy Kyme and Thomas Dunne that they had risen 'as an

² 1,200 figure from R. W. Hoyle is based upon the size of a muster in the town three years later and therefore it would seem that David Lamburn's estimate based on those served by the three churches Beverley is more accurate; R. W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford, 2001), p. 179; David Lamburn, *The Laity and the Church: Religious Development in Beverley in the first half of the Sixteenth Century* (York, 2000), p. 2

³ Ibid., p. 3

⁴ Peter Marshall, *The Face of the Pastoral Ministry in the East Riding, 1525-1595* (York, 1995), p. 3

⁵ Lamburn, *Beverley*, p. 2

⁶ LP XII (i), 201 (vii)

⁷ Michael Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996), p. 29

objection to the dissolution of the monasteries and to the expected onslaught on parish churches, especially the plans to confiscate their relics and ornaments, to leave only one church standing in every four miles.’⁸ It is not hard to believe that the loss of church goods would be a concern for the rebels, who as we have seen did not have many churches in the area and thus funds levied from the laity for church goods would not have been diluted. There is however limited evidence of fear in Beverley for their religious life. There is also scant example of participation from the secular clergy in the town during the uprising which can be attributed to various factors. With a low density of churches per head it is possible that the rumour regarding the pulling down of parish churches may not have been as grave a concern for the clerics who served them compared with areas which had numerous buildings to serve fewer parishioners. Also, the rebel programme in the town did not develop its own religious identity until it had acquired some leadership from Hallam, an outsider, which suggest that the local concerns were a result of long standing complaints ‘over commercial rights, systems of government and electoral arrangements.’⁹ Thus they did not require the local secular clergy to provide a spiritual guise to legitimise their concerns.

Many of the indigenous secular clergy were unlearned and had spent long careers with the church.¹⁰ If they had been fearful for their livelihoods they would have been much more prominent in the instigation of the parish communities and the laity may have felt more of a sense of obligation towards them, but as locals themselves, the political grievances highlighted above would have been as important to them as the laity. They may also have chosen not to involve themselves due to a professional duty to live upright lives. As the

⁸ Ibid., p. 34

⁹ Lamburn, *Beverley*, pp. 19-20

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 14

objectives of the Pilgrimage evolved though, it is important to move with them to see the actions and reactions of the secular clergy elsewhere.

Just to the north of Beverley in Watton there is evidence of parishioners reacting against their clergy when they did not perform their duties as expected of them. John Hallam recounted that a parish priest left out St Wilfred's day during the bidding of the beads justifying his actions as being 'by the King's authority'. The whole parish afterwards demanded that 'they would have their holydays bid and kept as before'.¹¹ This attitude of ambivalence to the desires of his parishioners reflects what Peter Marshall has described as 'acquiescence rather than activism' as 'the characteristic response of the East Riding clergy to politico-religious change.'¹²

There were clerics however who shared the Pilgrims' displeasure with these instructional changes such as John Dobson, the vicar of Mustone in the North East of the region whom his parishioners claimed in December 1537 had not 'prayed for the King or set forth the Supremacy' for a year and a quarter. Dobson himself showed complete contempt for the government saying 'that the King would be driven out of his realm' and Cromwell 'brought low.'¹³ He was subsequently executed in April 1538.¹⁴ The vicar of Watton, not mentioned before Hallam's rebellion was nevertheless said to be one of the 'great setters forth of sedition' in the post-pardon revolt and thus it is hard to believe that he was uninterested in the revolt just three months previously.¹⁵ The East Riding then looks like a set of communities where the secular clergy did not offer the qualities to provide leadership, for instance only '4.6 per cent of the serving

¹¹ LP XII (i), 201 (iv)

¹² Marshall, *Pastoral Ministry*, p. 7

¹³ LP XII (ii), 1212 (i) 1

¹⁴ LP XIII (i), 705

¹⁵ LP XII (i), 201 (i)

parish clergy' had a degree and it is likely that this qualification would lead to some of this few being absentees.¹⁶ Although a learned priest was not necessarily in a better position to provide leadership, it may have affected the standards of preaching when required to promote, for instance, the Ten Articles of 1536, and thus effectively articulate the religious changes which their parishioners noticed, but did not fully understand. This may explain why Dobson for instance, could not gather support from his parishioners. D. M. Palliser however, has argued that 'the mass of parish clergy and unbeneficed chaplains' were best placed to mould opinion and so the lack of concern for their religion by the commons until gentry leadership had been formalised may indicate that the secular clergy of the East Riding were not as concerned about religious change as elsewhere.¹⁷

Looking to the West Riding of Yorkshire, a few more pro-active secular clerics can be identified within the host which had been instigated by Robert Aske. Sir Thomas Franke, parson of Loft-house, had been made a captain of Holdenshire by Aske by the 11 October and was said to have 'caused Sir Thomas Percy to rise.'¹⁸ Although Franke was almost certainly a rebel leader in the region, his activities are uncertain but it is known he did travel north after being made captain to Pickering Lythe.¹⁹ Much of the evidence naming him comes from Sir John Bulmer who also declared that the cleric owed him money so may have been looking to discredit him. Friar Pickering also stated that the chaplain of Bulmer did not pass on a letter from his master seeking council from Franke after finding that he 'did not favour' him.²⁰ Franke seems to have been keen to

¹⁶ Marshall, *Pastoral Ministry*, p. 12

¹⁷ D. M. Palliser, 'Popular reactions to the Reformation during the years of uncertainty 1530-70', in Christopher Haigh (ed), *The English Reformation revised* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 111

¹⁸ Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 82; LP XII (i), 1085

¹⁹ Bush, *Rebel Armies*, p. 82; LP XII (i), 1085, 1087, 1277 (iii)

²⁰ Bush, *Rebel Armies*, p. 123; LP XII (i), 1277 (iii), LP XII (ii), 12 (1)

distance himself from the gentry leaders and he and the parson of Esington also gave evidence in the spring depositions of 1537 against Mr. Rudston, a member of the gentry who had led the revolt around Watton.²¹ Harry Lytherland, only described as a cleric is said to have maintained ‘men in Yorkshire at his own cost’ at the time of the rebellion.²² Bush has also named Richard Fisher, chaplain of the college of Howden who ‘played an active and important part in enlisting’ Thomas Maunsell, the vicar of Brayton ‘and in approaching various religious houses for funds and supplies.’²³

More should be said here of Maunsell who was an important coup and became by far the busiest secular cleric in this region, leading the Dodds to describe him as ‘one of the most zealous leaders of the Pilgrimage.’²⁴ Trying to piece together the actions of Maunsell and his motivations requires several depositions which mention his movements. His own omits key details and insinuates that in his collusion with the rebels he was merely a pawn of Lord Thomas Darcy’s. For instance he claims that he attended a muster at Skipwith Moor on 12 October as a spy for Darcy and on learning that they intended to cross the River Ouse and raise Pontefract, spent three days inciting the tenants of Darcy’s lands to join the uprising. For him to do this though was, according to Maunsell, all Darcy’s plan for then the commons ‘seeing them ready to go with them, should not come over.’²⁵ It does seem likely that Darcy was getting information from Maunsell and his correspondence with the King on the 13 October where he expressed his concern that ‘the rebels will visit me here in two

²¹ *Ibid.*, 12 (1)

²² LP XII (i), 537

²³ Bush, *Rebel Armies*, p. 134

²⁴ M. H. and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-1537 and The Exeter Conspiracy 1538*, Vol. 1 (New Impression, London, 1971, of orig. edn, Cambridge, 1915), p. 190

²⁵ LP XI, 1402

or three days' corresponds with the argument that the information had come via the vicar.²⁶ Darcy though had hereto been running a policy of appeasement rather than incitement and Maunsell's efforts outside of this certainly demonstrate he was capable of the initiative to raise men of his own accord.²⁷

Maunsell appears to be somewhat of a maverick and unafraid to covet controversy. For instance, by involving himself with the rebels he was acting against the interests of his brother, William Maunsell who had been a beneficiary of the dissolution and been leased the two Benedictine monasteries in York in July.²⁸ He also lied to the rebels that his brother had taken the rebel oath at York in order to save him from their wrath, demonstrating confused loyalties again. Maunsell was then sent to raise the town of Pontefract and did so on Tuesday 17 October. It is here that his loyalty to Darcy becomes undoubtedly questionable as Archbishop Lee, who by this time had fled to the castle stated that they could not even procure victual to sustain themselves after 'the vicar of Brayton came amongst them.'²⁹ To risk depriving himself and his eminent guests would be a high risk strategy of Darcy who spent the whole event in a self imposed, and subsequently ill judged grey area. On Wednesday, a steward of Darcy's called Strangways 'came and showed him (Maunsell) how to assault the castle if it was not given up',³⁰ which he subsequently passed onto Aske at York and helped convince Aske to march on Pontefract immediately.³¹

Clearly, Maunsell was somewhat of an anomaly and his behaviour alludes to questionable morals and offer a stark contrast to the elusive members

²⁶ Ibid., 692

²⁷ Hoyle, *Politics*, pp. 268-269; for argument that Darcy was not in collaboration with the rebels see Ibid., chp. 9

²⁸ Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 90

²⁹ LP XII (i), 1022

³⁰ LP XI, 1402

³¹ Dodds, *Pilgrimage*, p. 185

of the East Riding clergy. His reputation reached the King and his involvement resulted in him being the only cleric to be omitted from the original pardon for the rebels produced on 2 November which was never officially released.³² He seems to have steered clear of any trouble after the December pardon was accepted though and managed to avoid sentencing for his actions, continuing in his living until his death in 1555.³³

Further to the North, the large area which constituted the Richmondshire uprising produced another amalgamation which provides the historian with a new perspective for the role of the clergy. This is mainly down to the supply of evidence for the first days of the rising coming from Dr John Dakyn, rector of Kirkby Ravensworth. Michael Bush has used Dakyn's account in his argument that the first days of this uprising were a 'rising of the commons' and their rhetoric was 'imposed upon gentlemen and clerics.'³⁴ Dakyn played a major part in the Pilgrimage, culminating in his attendance at the clerical conference to discuss the rebels' articles in December 1536. It is not surprising he was under great suspicion by the government, but his role seems to have been under genuine coercion from the commons. The Duke of Norfolk was happy enough with his allegiance when he sent him to Cromwell in March 1537 suggesting that he could be used to assess the Archbishop of York's loyalty as 'at the first insurrection no priest stood more firmly against the King.'³⁵ Dakyn had also written to another priest, William Tristram about the 12 December rebuking him for inciting the commons and he advised him 'to show himself in his conversation like a priest, and not like a man of war; and to execute his duty,

³² LP XI, 955

³³ C. S. L. Davies, 'Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace' in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds), *Order and disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 70, n. 50

³⁴ Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 141

³⁵ LP XII (i), 698

which is prayer, study, and virtuous living.³⁶ Caution must still be taken with taking his deposition at face value, especially as Cromwell was not entirely convinced of him, but it would seem that from his evidence can be gleaned a useful account of the rising in Richmondshire.³⁷

Despite going into hiding when he heard that the rebellion had reached Richmond, Dakyn surrendered to the rebels and was sworn by the commons on 13 October. Dakyn suggests in his statement that the commons of Richmondshire did not hold priestly values as demonstrated by the East Riding rebels in the same high regard. He asserts that until the host found gentry leadership from Robert Bowes the commons 'were fully resolved to have all priests who were young and able in the company, and many had told me priests should not choose but go forward and fight.'³⁸ It would seem that when the traditional hierarchy of early modern England was not in place, as was the case during the first days of the Richmondshire uprising, the commons did not concern themselves when it came to blurring more established social lines. Once Bowes took the lead he was persuaded to allow the priests to go home in consideration of their vows. This admittedly limited evidence also points to a significant number of priests who were with the company around the 15 October 1536.³⁹ Outside of the individual depositions of those such as Dakyn who were required to give evidence, there is little reference to a broader clerical involvement in the Pilgrimage.

From this point, Dakyn's involvement became more administrative as he was sent with other aged priests to the abbey of Jervaulx to act as corresponders

³⁶ LP XI, 1284

³⁷ LP XII (i), 788

³⁸ Ibid., 789

³⁹ Ibid., 789

for the rebellion.⁴⁰ This role was necessary as the revolt in the region had moved further to the North West into Westmorland and Cumberland, under separate leadership and so communication channels between the hosts were essential to its developing cohesion with those in the East and West ridings of Yorkshire.

Dakyn's assumption of this new position could however be demonstrative of a more effective way of using the clergy and though not widely documented could offer an adequate assumption for the role of a more significant number of the lower secular clergy. C. S. L. Davies has pointed out the natural role of the priest 'as a principal intermediary, a major dispenser of news between the world at large and his parishioners' and it would be unlikely that more seculars did not find themselves in this capacity.⁴¹

As the Richmondshire rising split into two separate hosts, another two secular clerics again present contrasting examples to that which has so far been seen. Robert Thompson, the vicar of Brough and Dr Bernard Towneley, the bishop of Carlisle's chancellor were leading figures in the host of the four captains in Cumberland. Towneley blamed Thompson for starting the rebellion by 'reading a letter from Richmondshire calling them to rise' and describes him as a 'prophet'.⁴² It is of this host that there is the most evidence of secular involvement at the highest level. As well as the two mentioned there was Sir Edward Penrith who acted as cross bearer, and four chaplains of Poverty who were 'all eminent clerics'. They were Towneley, Christopher Blenkow, vicar of Edenhall; Christopher Slee, vicar of Castle Sowerby; and the pluralist, Roland Threkeld.' The appointment of these figureheads was according to Bush, on

⁴⁰ Ibid., 788

⁴¹ C. S. L. Davies, 'The Pilgrimage of Grace Reconsidered' in Paul Slack (ed), *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 31

⁴² LP XII (i), 687

reputation rather than commitment.⁴³ As Christopher Haigh has asserted, the presence of the parish priest ‘in any form of collective action..., gave legitimacy to protest and their people naturally turned to them for guidance.’⁴⁴ If the commons desired a presence to provide the traditional role of chaplain of the faith they would have chosen more familiar members of the local clergy. The commons instead required the secular clergy to act as legitimisers of the rebellion. Indeed, Scott Harrison has described Threkeld as ‘the worst example in the region of a wealthy pluralist absentee cleric of the type the rebels had determined to overthrow.’⁴⁵

Despite similar hostilities towards clerics as have been seen in Richmondshire, in Westmorland and Cumberland it is likely that some were more sympathetic to the commons. Christopher Howden, the vicar of Clapham highlighted the defence of the faith involved in the Pilgrimage and Towneley, after initial scepticism became a committed patron.⁴⁶ Bush has found evidence of at least twelve members of the clergy involved with six seculars holding benefices and four regulars. Apart from Robert Thompson though, they again represent ceremonial or administrative inclusions.⁴⁷ This is however another indication of the symbolism of clerical participation as opposed to passionate involvement. This is the most consistent feature of the role of the secular clergy during the unfolding events of October 1536. That the beneficed clergy played a larger role as figureheads of the hosts is not surprising given that this was their role within the parish community. What is most interesting is the inconsistent

⁴³ Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 333

⁴⁴ Christopher Haigh, ‘Anticlericalism and the English Reformation’ in Haigh, *Reformation revised*, p. 70

⁴⁵ Scott Harrison, *The Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake Counties, 1536-7* (London, 1981), P. 102

⁴⁶ Harrison, *Lake Counties*, pp. 103-104

⁴⁷ Bush, *Rebel armies*, pp. 355-356

treatment they received at the hands of the rebels which must reflect the local grievances and varying relationships between clergy and laity. As opposed to the East Riding rebels where the secular clergy seem to have been allowed to adhere to the boundaries of their vocation, the laity in Richmondshire were prepared to force their participation. The vicar of Brough, a unique individual for his influence with the commons and leadership noted that the other seculars involved were appointed 'on pain of death' and one Percy Simpson, at hearing of dissent over their appointed tasks demanded that 'they would never be well till they had stricken off all the priests' heads, saying that they would but deceive them.'⁴⁸ As has been seen, pluralists were particularly disliked in northern England yet Threkeld's services were demanded. Anticlerical feeling in this case seems to have resolved itself into constructive use for their priests, who recognised their importance as a symbol of the faith. It is possible that such instances are evidence that the Pilgrimage of Grace reminded some of the laity that their beneficed priest in particular, was someone who could provide communal inspiration.

As another example of an embedded relationship with their communities the role of the regular clergy, many of whom had already suffered a loss of livelihoods, not just facing the possibility, will offer further body to this analysis.

⁴⁸ LP XII (i), 687 (2)

Chapter 4: The Monks

The role of the monks in the Pilgrimage of Grace may be considered an obvious inclusion. When the Act of Suppression was passed in March 1536, those houses that had an income of less than £200 per year were to be dissolved and their lands handed over to the crown. As a result of this, fifty-five monasteries in the northern counties which would raise hosts in support of the Pilgrimage were deemed unnecessary and their inhabitants either pensioned off, or sent to larger houses in the area. As many as sixteen of these houses were restored during the rebellion and it has been suggested that ‘the most constructive act of the rebels was a religious one: to affirm the place of monastic life in their own communities.’¹ Such arguments though do not make room for the extent of active participation from the inhabitants of the dissolved houses, and also those in the larger monasteries who were aware that events had been set in motion. One of the most important areas that will be considered by this analysis will be whether the laity’s desire to save the monasteries was for religious or economic and social reasons? Similarly, how far were the monks involved in the rebellion trying to preserve their religious vocation, or a lifestyle which in comparison to much of the laity would be considered affluent? As is often the case, few fell completely on one side of the fence and both these motivating factors can be seen from a significant number of these men.

As with the secular clergy, the role of the monasteries will be studied by following the events of the Pilgrimage as they were set in motion. Christopher Haigh has argued that the popularity of the monasteries to the local community

¹ Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (4th edn, Harlow, 1997), p. 37

was of direct relevance to the seriousness of the rebellion in the area and the rising around Beverley which spread west does support this argument.² In the East Riding there was a low proportion of monastic houses and numbers for regular clergy as a whole were less than a quarter of the population of secular clergy.³ David Lamburn has suggested that ‘in general the evidence suggests that monasteries were low on the scale of priorities for the inhabitants’ of Beverley but this does not necessarily tell the whole story of the reaction to the Pilgrimage of those who lived in the small priories around the town.⁴ Michael Bush has taken quite the opposite view and argues that ‘the rebels about Beverley were agitated by the dissolution of the monasteries.’⁵ Again though, the concern here is not to enter into the debate over the importance of the houses without understanding how, or if the monks played a part in the actions of the local laity.

As has been seen the Beverley rebels were more concerned about the loss of the region’s wealth as opposed to the state of religion and Bush agrees here with Lamburn that the loss of charity was a bigger concern than religion in lay concern over the monastic houses.⁶ Such as with the case of the secular clergy this can account for the lack of evidence regarding monastic participants from the East Riding in the Pilgrimage of Grace. The priory of Watton gives some insight into the lack of propensity for the monks in the area to ally themselves with the rebels. Watton was not dissolved under the Suppression Act, having been valued at £360 16s in 1535. At the outbreak of the rebellion the prior, Robert Holgate,

² Christopher Haigh, *The Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace* (Manchester, 1969), p. 53

³ Peter Marshall, *The Face of the Pastoral Ministry in the East Riding, 1525-1595* (York, 1995), p. 3

⁴ David Lamburn, *The Laity and the Church: Religious Development in Beverley in the first half of the Sixteenth Century* (York, 2000), p. 4

⁵ Michael Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996), p. 43

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44

fled to Cromwell who had promoted him to the position. With at least sixty members of the household left behind Sir Francis Bigod declared that they could lawfully elect a new prior, suggesting the Prior of Ellerton, possibly using the local commons to intimidate the brethren to carry out his wishes. Bigod was therefore able to conference with his fellow conspirators in his post-pardon revolt at Watton, having the new prior indebted to him. The vast majority of the inhabitants however, were not willing participants in the Pilgrimage proper and had been manipulated by Bigod into involvement in his post-pardon insurrection.⁷ Indeed Robert Aske complained to Watton on 10 November that he had received no money from them for 'this high business' suggesting that he felt they had not pulled their weight.⁸ Hallam claimed that he received ten marks from the canons of Watton after the Doncaster pardon but it is most likely that this was under threat.⁹

As the rebellion moved west towards York, again there is little evidence of the local monastic houses having a significant impact upon the events around them. The commons of the Ainsty restored Healaugh Priory and reinstated its prior but the lack of evidence may relate to the fact that the restoration of suppressed religious houses did not become official policy until the 16 or 17 October when Aske had arrived at York.¹⁰ In his confession, Stapulton does not mention any contact with the monastic orders or details of their involvement (apart from the prior of Malton providing the Friar of Knaresborough with a

⁷ William Page (ed), *A History of the County of York: Volume 3* (York, 1974), pp. 254-255; LP XII (i), 201 (4); *Ibid.*, 370

⁸ LP XI, 1039

⁹ C. S. L. Davies, 'The Pilgrimage of Grace Reconsidered' in Paul Slack (ed), *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 27; LP XII (i), 370

¹⁰ Bush, *Rebel armies*, pp. 88-90

horse) until 21 October when he had reached York.¹¹ It is possible that Aske hoped when support for them was legitimised, the monks would become bolder in their support for the Pilgrims' cause. That the two dissolved houses in York were restored would seem to confirm Aske's intentions, that the fate of others in the region is unclear suggest that monastic influence on this issue was still limited.¹² As restoration as an official rebel policy spread northwards to Richmondshire however, there is evidence of a shift in attitude towards the monasteries, and as their fate became intertwined with the rebels, their support no longer became a matter of choice. The variable reactions of these houses can tell much about the monastic contribution to the Pilgrimage.

In his examination George Lumley, from the Palatinate north of Richmondshire told that about the 21 or 22 October he was in York with Sir Thomas Percy, Sir Nicholas Fairfax and Sir Oswald Wolsethorpe. He heard the abbot of Bridlington had sent two brethren who were 'the tallest men that he saw.' Here Fairfax declared that 'it was a spiritual matter all churchmen should go forth in person.' Fairfax and the others subsequently visited the abbot of St Mary's in York, St Saviour's of Newburgh, Byland, Reviulx, Whitby, Malton, Kirkham, Mountgrace, Bridlington and Guisborough. This is a clear statement of intent that the monasteries should be involved. Lumley asserts that 'this was to move the abbots or priors and two brethren from each to come forward with their best crosses.' Byland, Newburgh and Whitby provided 40s. each whilst the abbots of Rieviulx and Guisborough offered to join the rebels. Aske though showed a desire to maintain the proper behaviour for the monks, similar to the efforts of Bowes with the seculars of the region. From the monks Aske desired

¹¹ LP XII (i), 392

¹² Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 106

support in the form of ‘carriage and benevolence’ but wanted the brethren to stay at home.¹³ Aske, at least then was keen for the monasteries to perform their traditional roles, but he may have also been concerned for their future if they were implicated in an uprising against a crown which had already shown itself to be hostile towards their orders. This stipulation though was not universally complied with and the abbot of Jervaulx was said to have been at the muster at Bishop Auckland with his chaplain who ‘carried bow and arrows’¹⁴ and Fairfax had already travelled with Percy and the abbot of St. Mary’s to Pontefract on 21 October with the monks of his house having promised in mid-October to aid the rebels in return for their protection.¹⁵

How then did some of the other houses offer their support? The prior of Bridlington, William Wood, said that he received threats from local rebel leaders. He followed their requests to the letter sending eleven commons and two brethren to them.¹⁶ It is likely that Wood was more sympathetic to the Pilgrims than he claims as he housed the Dominican friar, Dr John Pickering in October who was a staunch advocate for their cause and various others deposed after the Hallam insurrection that Wood was ‘a principal procurer of the first.’¹⁷ Bush has argued that ‘to convince the government that its religious policy was wrong, it was vital that the clerics should be visible as committed rebels.’ There are limited examples of this however, both as a result of conflicting orders from Aske and others, and a desire from the monks not to involve themselves on the front line. It was ‘exceptional’ when monks did attend musters, which suggests that unlike the

¹³ Ibid., p. 150; LP XII (i), 369

¹⁴ Ibid., 369

¹⁵ Ibid., 392; Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 8-9

¹⁶ LP XII (i), 1019

¹⁷ Ibid., 1020; Claire Cross, ‘Wood, William (c.1490–1537), prior of Bridlington’ *ODNB*, online

secular clergy who could act as symbols, the monastic houses were more useful for their provision of vittles.¹⁸ This of course should not be considered as relevant to all houses without conducting a more detailed survey.

As has been seen, the abbot of Jervaulx, Adam Sedbergh whose house was a few miles south of Richmond was said to have attended rebel musters but initially, when they came for him he fled with his father and a boy. He returned after his monks informed him that they would be compelled to choose a new leader. He was afterwards said to have spoken in favour of the rising at the great muster at Darlington and his house was associated with the post-pardon revolts so it is possible but that they became at least sympathetic to the Pilgrims.¹⁹ Although he would clearly have been trying to distance himself with the leadership of the rebellion, there is a good deal of truth in Sedburgh's statement to Cromwell when in the Tower of London that 'ye be greatly deceived thinking that the monks and canons were chief doers in this insurrection, for their were other of more reputation.'²⁰ As a reference to the uprising around Richmondshire, there is scant evidence to point to the contrary. Like Jervaulx, little can be seen of any involvement from Fountains Abbey in the Pilgrimage, another in the area large enough to have escaped the suppression. It is more likely that involvement of these abbeys was emboldened by shaky evidence as

¹⁸ Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 214

¹⁹ Claire Cross, 'Sedbergh, Adam (c.1502–1537), abbot of Jervaulx', *ODNB*, online; LP XII (i), 1012

²⁰ M. H. and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-1537 and The Exeter Conspiracy 1538*, Vol. 1 (New Impression, London, 1971, of orig. edn, Cambridge, 1915), p. 208

Henry looked for an excuse to suppress their houses having been suspicious that they had worked alongside the rebels.²¹

Further to the north east, the Augustinian priory of Hexham offers a more vivid case study. Although the abbey was worth more than two hundred pounds it was included among those to be suppressed. It would seem that a letter from Archbishop Lee to Cromwell on 23 April 1536 gave the priory a stay of execution but by the end of September it was again in trouble. Whilst the prior was in London trying to save his house, the sub-prior had decided that drastic action was needed and laid weapons for its defence, calling for aid from the local laity. On the arrival of the commissioners, the sub-prior produced a document from the King omitting it from the suppression and the commissioners left.²² The earl of Northumberland, in a letter to Cromwell described this behaviour of the canons as ‘obstinate and traitorous’, a sure sign that they had been earmarked for the proverbial royal treatment.²³ Indeed, Henry wrote to the first Earl of Cumberland, Henry Clifford on 5 October that their crime was ‘so heinous, traitorouse and detestable that mindage to have the advicers thereof punished to the example of all other subjectes’. And he continued to declare that any others who defy his authority should be used ‘like arrant and detestible traitors to the terror of all other hereafter.’²⁴ It is clear that put into context of having just heard of a rising against him in Lincolnshire, Henry was in no mood to forgive. The behaviour of Hexham at such a critical moment must have endangered all those

²¹ LP XII (i), 1012, evidence of Nynian Stavely who is condemning of the monks of Jervaulx and Fountains in the second uprising but he himself raised men and so it is likely that he was looking for scapegoats. The King wanted clerics and so Stavely provided these monks.

²² Dodds, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 193-194; LP XI, 504

²³ *Ibid.*, 535

²⁴ R. W. Hoyle (ed), ‘letters of the Cliffords, Lords Clifford and Earls of Cumberland’, in *Camden Miscellany XXI* (London, 1992), p. 51

abbeys who received a mention when it came to the events of the rest of the month.

Moving onto the role of those at Sawley abbey gives a more detailed example of a suppressed houses' role in the Pilgrimage, and place within its community. Sawley was just inside Yorkshire's border with Lancashire. Having been dissolved on 13 May 1536 its tenants restored its abbot and monks on 12 October and is the first evidence of any disturbance in the area.²⁵ Contrary to the majority of the suppressed houses in the East Riding and Richmondshire, Sawley was re-occupied before Aske's order for this to become policy and is an example that the commons around Sawley recognised the restoration as part of their own agenda. Although the abbot and monks claimed that they were forcibly put back into their house, the fact that they had all stayed in such close proximity for five months despite not all being re-housed locally suggests that they were keen to re-enter the monastery at the earliest opportunity. One monk of Sawley was heard to say that 'it was never a merry world since secular men and knaves rule upon us' and that 'there should be no lay head of the church.' It is hard to believe then that support from their tenants would have been discouraged.²⁶ Henry certainly believed that the abbot of the house should pay with his life for the restoration and subtly demanded that the Duke of Norfolk implicate him in some wrongdoing after the Doncaster pardon since the Earl of Derby had failed to hang the 'errant traitors' before.²⁷

Looking further to the west and Lancashire, the role of the monasteries changes further, and this was largely down to the relative popularity of the

²⁵ R. W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford, 2001), p. 232

²⁶ C. S. L. Davies, 'Popular religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace' in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds), *Order and disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 68-69

²⁷ LP XII (i), 666; quote from Haigh, *Lancashire*, p. 63

religious houses of the area. Christopher Haigh, who has conducted the most comprehensive study of the effect of the suppression and role of the monasteries in Lancashire during the uprising, argues that they ‘were important social institutions which fulfilled useful functions in a backward and unsophisticated society. Twelve of the fifty-seven parish churches were actually served by monks.’²⁸ As one of the larger abbeys of the region, Whalley was also one which fared better in the visitations at the beginning of 1536.²⁹ Its charity was amongst the highest in the region and housed twenty-five poor in 1535 and Haigh has made the important point that the vast majority of its inhabitants, as with the other houses in Lancashire, were made up of local men, with relatives amongst the tenants of the house. Whalley also had natural ties with Sawley as a fellow Cistercian abbey and two or three of the monks from Sawley came to Whalley after its suppression and may have incited unrest amongst the monks there.³⁰ It is Haigh’s assessment that, as with many other houses involved in the Pilgrimage, the inhabitants were most concerned with self-preservation. Although they would have had sympathy for the rebels’ cause, after the Earl of Derby had confirmed his support for the King they must have been concerned given the recent visitations that they were offering an excuse for their suppression.³¹ Indeed that the abbot of Whalley feared for the future of his house if he affiliated himself with the rebels seems to be confirmed with his refusal to attend the clerical convocation at Pontefract in December 1536.³²

²⁸ Ibid., p. 3

²⁹ Ibid., p. 26

³⁰ Claire Cross, ‘Haydock, William (c.1483–1537), Cistercian monk’, *ODNB*, online

³¹ Haigh, *Lancashire*, pp. 64-67

³² Christopher Haigh, ‘Paslew, John (d. 1537), abbot of Whalley’, *ODNB*, online

Another monastery in the region which was much more an instigator of action from its tenants was Furness, the largest house in England after Fountains in Richmondshire. The abbot of Furness 'allegedly ordered their tenants to join the rebels' but had to 'provide cash and general extortion, as well as threaten life and property' to get a response.³³ Again though, a desire to preserve the abbey against both sides was at the forefront of the abbot, Roger's mind. At the outbreak of the insurrection he fled to the Earl of Derby saying to his brethren that if he did not go 'it would undo both himself and them.' A friar staying at the house called Roger Legate accused the prior of covering up seditious comments made by his monks and the abbot of sending three monks from Sawley who had been with them since its suppression, back to their house on its restoration to help in the rebellion.³⁴ Despite the cautious approach of its abbot, the actions of the brethren of Furness are an indication of their anger towards Henry's religious policy and in contrast to Whalley, their open commitment to the rebels' cause showed they 'were sincere in their support.'³⁵

It has not been possible to discuss the role of every monastic house in northern England here but those that have been considered are an adequate cross section of their behaviour during the Pilgrimage. Much has been made in the study of this subject of the high proportion of suppressed houses that were restored by the laity and Davies has asked why if there was not a conspiracy by the monks to incite rebellion, did the laymen follow them?³⁶ To suggest that the monks 'led' the laity is not accurate as too many tried to distance themselves from the rebellion, a natural response considering the traditional expectations of

³³ Davies, 'Reconsidered', p. 27; Davies, 'Popular', p. 65; LP XII (i), 841

³⁴ Ibid., 841; for monks being sent to Sawley to rebel see Ibid., 841 (4)

³⁵ Haigh, *Lancashire*, pp. 52, 95

³⁶ Davies, 'Reconsidered', p. 27

the monastic life. Of houses where incitement is evident such as Furness, the commons were not overly keen to fight for their cause. It must also be considered a minor point that not all of the restorations were voluntarily. Sawley abbey for instance claimed that to be the case but it is always hard to trust the depositions of suspected men and many of its brethren, it is likely, were happy to return. Small evidences though such as the Sawley monk who had been housed at Furness and had to be forced to return show that not all houses can be seen to be acting in unison.³⁷ Some local pride must also have been at stake when the commons of Richmond abused a servant of Sawley after its suppression declaring that they would never let the monks of their local house St Agatha be removed and would die to stop it.³⁸

Of course though, as has been seen, many houses after Aske had declared that their protection would be a fundamental objective of the Pilgrimage were prepared to support the rebellion. Their support can thus be seen as spreading outwards from York as his declaration was distributed amongst the hosts. As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the popularity of the monasteries in each area had a direct impact on how vociferously rebellion was called for which led to the regional differences that have been highlighted, especially between the east and west. During the uprisings however the monks did not live up to the billing they received. Unlike their houses, and the secular clergy, they neither offered, nor were consistently required, to become symbols of the faith. Their restoration though became an objective designed to show that the rebel leadership were unhappy with religious change and so became a facilitator of policy, a unifying force for the various rebel hosts. If the seculars provided the

³⁷ LP XII (i) 841

³⁸ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 219

rebels with a religious identity, this allowed the monks to become the victims of the Reformation. For this reason, the monks were not as significant in creating a rebel agenda, as they were not a part of it until Aske declared they should be. Their role as a provider of public services to local communities, to varying degrees of significance however, meant that those that were popular served as a beacon of intent for the rebels when they were restored. The larger houses that were still standing, funded and fed the various hosts and as owners of significant proportions of land in the north of England, they were an integral source of victuals and therefore fulfilled an essential function to the stability of the hosts. Individually then, the monks did not play as significant a part in the rebellion as the secular clergy, but as a collective group, they sustained the rebellion, and after Aske's promotion for their restoration, provided a tangible objective for the rebels, in the absence of any armed conflict.

Having suggested the differences between the monks and seculars, the friars can offer an important inclusion providing, as they did, something of a middle ground.

Chapter 5: The Friars

The Dodds asserted that in the months leading up to the Pilgrimage of Grace ‘the friaries were storm-centres of revolt.’ The Observant friars had already in 1534 suffered the same fate that would befall the smaller monasteries for their vigorous denunciation of the royal divorce.¹ By their very nature, the friars were wandering preachers and this would go some way to explaining why the evidence for their role in the Pilgrimage of Grace is focussed around individuals as opposed to their houses. For this reason the Dodds’ statement is slightly misleading but the friaries did serve as meeting points for the rebel and loyalist leaders and so could be considered, on a very limited scale, as nerve-centres of revolt. In preparation for the final meeting with the Duke of Norfolk in December 1536 for instance, Aske, the lords and selected knights and commons had left from the Grey Friars at Doncaster to meet the Duke at the White Friars.² This does not necessarily suggest a split in loyalties between Franciscans and Carmelites as the prior of the White Friars was later imprisoned in the Tower for supporting the rebellion and the Grey friars at Beverley had been threatened with the burning of their house in October.³ Compared to the monastic clergy that have been seen thus far, the friars did not have an immediate concern over their livelihoods, with the exception of the Observants. This gives them more in common with the seculars whilst they still maintained a unique influence which will be elaborated further during the course of the analysis. It is necessary, due to the focus of the majority of the evidence available, to concentrate the bulk of

¹ M. H. and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-1537 and The Exeter Conspiracy 1538*, Vol. 1 (New Impression, London, 1971, of orig. edn, Cambridge, 1915), p. 63

² LP XII (i), 6

³ William Page (ed), *A History of the County of York: Volume 3* (York, 1974), pp. 267-270; For grey friars at Beverley, LP XII (i), 392

discussion around the case studies of individuals. This should not be considered significantly restrictive, however, as through their actions and recorded reasoning, individuals are able to offer much insight into deeper concerns over the state of politics and religion.

It makes sense then to begin an analysis of the role of the friars with those Observants who had already suffered eviction and re-housing at the hands of royal policy. The Observants had only been introduced into the country by Henry VII and there had been six houses, with the only one in the counties involved in the Pilgrimage in Newcastle-on-Tyne. After their suppression the friars were transferred to conventual houses, 'but the result of this was that they infected the whole body with their own discontent.'⁴ The first and certainly most vocal supporter of the rebels was an Observant called Sir Thomas Johnson, otherwise known as Brother Bonaventure. Bonaventure had been sent to the Grey Friars at Beverley by the warden of the Grey Friars of York, William Vavasour. Vavasour's actions however do not seem to have been taken as suspect as he was given a pension on the Friaries' dissolution in 1538.⁵ In his confession, William Stapulton claimed that on Monday 9 October he was at the Grey Friars when the commons came to swear him to their cause. As mentioned above he tells that 'many of them bade burn the Friars and them within it.' This suggests that the Franciscans in Beverley were not particularly popular and may not have offered their support to the uprising. Brother Bonaventure however, who presumably had met with Stapulton in the Friars, had already thrown his full support in with the commons and was 'laying scriptures to maintain their purpose.' Stapulton

⁴ Dodds, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 63-65

⁵ LP XII (i), 392; Vavasour named as Dr. Vausar in LP but his full name is from Page, *York*, pp. 283-296; Claire Cross and Noreen Vickers, *Monks, Friars and Nuns in Sixteenth century Yorkshire* (Leeds, 1995), p. 4

assumes that it was Bonaventure who encouraged the commons to take him as their captain as 'they did not know him well.' After they had sworn him the friar 'offered to go himself in harness to the field.'⁶ It is understandable that Bonaventure was an individual who associated himself with the commons more than his brethren having felt the full force of the reforming policies of Cromwell but unfortunately his motivations must be speculated on with no definitive evidence from the records. The case of Bonaventure and his nomadic lifestyle does offer some insight into his ability to infiltrate communities that was an essential trait for a friar. Indeed, Lord Latimer complained of a friar who was 'wily witted, Dunsly learned..., bold not a little, zealous more than enough,' and it is these traits which could be used to gain favour with the rebels, as equals.⁷

Bonaventure aside, there are only small pieces of information that link the Observant friars with the Pilgrimage of Grace, and no further individual stories despite at least eight others living in Franciscan houses in Yorkshire.⁸ Even though their attachment to friaries as opposed to monasteries suggests they were of the thirty-six 'exempt' from prosecution not 'confinement in monasteries' after their dissolution, none of them seem either convinced enough or influential enough to apparently incite their brethren.⁹ It is possible that the unnamed friar who attended the clerical convocation in December was an Observant,¹⁰ and article six of those presented to Norfolk at the second meeting at Doncaster demanded the restoration of the 'Friars Observant to their houses.'¹¹ Some had

⁶ LP XII (i), 392

⁷ Dodds, *Pilgrimage*, p. 65

⁸ Cross, *Monks*, pp. 447-459

⁹ David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England: Volume III, The Tudor Age* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 210

¹⁰ LP XII (i), 1021

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1246; 'The Pontefract Articles', printed in full in R. W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 460-463

returned to their Newcastle home during the Pilgrimage having been in exile in Scotland but were promptly sent back by Norfolk after the rebellion.¹² It would seem that having already shown a small degree of mercy to the few who remained in the orders after their dissolution in 1534, Henry decided that they could no longer be tolerated. In March 1537, just weeks after Norfolk had returned those who had repopulated the Newcastle house back to Scotland, he declared that:

The Friars Observants are disciples of the bp. Of Rome, and sowers of sedition. You shall therefore do your best to apprehend the friars of that faction and place them in other houses of friars as prisoners, without the liberty to speak to any man, till we shall determine our further pleasure about them.¹³

It must be imagined that these words were based on prior events and not any evidence of a co-ordinated Observant involvement with the Pilgrimage. Brother Bonaventure would not have helped their cause but as will be seen, his individual efforts are more reflective of actual involvement by the friars of various orders as opposed to a co-ordinated conspiracy by the Observants.

A discussion of the role of the friars within the Pilgrimage certainly requires mention of the infamous friar of the Trinitarian Friars of St Robert at Knaresborough, Robert Esch. Although it is likely that the majority of the house, of which there were eleven, sympathised with the rebels and helped to spread seditious rumours, only Esch was sought for punishment and his actions were far

¹² Peter Marshall, *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 237

¹³ LP XII (i), 666

in excess of any of the others.¹⁴ Esch was a principal rumour monger, inciting the commons in a particularly aggressive manner. The clerk to the treasurer of York heard of Esch's doings stating that the insurrection in Yorkshire 'was spread by letter of a friar of Knaresborough, who said churches should be pulled down, men taxed for christening, marriage...'¹⁵ C. S. L. Davies has argued that these rumours 'were, perhaps, the major single cause of the revolt.'¹⁶ Dr. Pickering who will be discussed further below told his examiners that he knew 'of no religious men who were provokers or aiders of the insurrection, except a friar of St Robert's of Knaresborough.'¹⁷ It is not clear why Esch was singled out by Pickering who had been residing with William Wood, the prior of Bridlington during the rebellion and so he would have been privy to his dealings with the rebels. This may be a personal dislike of the friar, but more likely, his activities during October, and indeed his participation in the planning of the post-pardon revolts in January were so well known that giving evidence against him would not be aiding the crown in its ongoing prosecutions. As an example of this, in the abridgement of the examinations made in February 1537 of those involved in the Hallam rebellion, the King himself has written that the friar of Knaresborough 'is to be taken, well examined, to suffer.'¹⁸

Although attached to St Robert's in the West Riding of Yorkshire, Esch had been living in Beverley for some time and was well known there, having a license to beg and preach within the town,¹⁹ possibly taking the occasional

¹⁴ Cross, *Monks*, pp. 5, 502

¹⁵ LP XII (i), 1018

¹⁶ C. S. L. Davies, 'The Pilgrimage of Grace Reconsidered' in Paul Slack (ed), *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 27

¹⁷ LP XII (i), 1021, (11)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 370, n.

¹⁹ Page, *York*, pp. 296-300; Michael Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the rebel armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996), p. 61; LP XII (i), 1021, (11), Pickering notes him as 'residing at Beverley'; Cross, *Monks*, p. 503

sermon in one of the parish churches as was not uncommon in the period.²⁰

Initially the friar acted as something of a secretary for the rebels in Beverley and was asked to write to all the other local townships to muster at Hunsley.²¹ On the 10 October the friar requested a passport from William Stapulton 'offering to raise all Rydale and Pickering.' It is quite possible that his claims on his return on 15 October of having 'raised all Malton and that quarter' were true as his departure from Beverley coincided with the rising of the commons in these areas. He was then given some money and a horse of the prior of Malton to continue his pilgrimage into the forest of Knaresborough.²² The friar subsequently disappears from the records until becoming a principal planner in the post-pardon revolts.

The fate of the friar proves to be almost as interesting as his activities during October as he seems to be one of the few key instigators who escaped from the authorities. On 17 February 1537 Norfolk wrote to the King triumphantly declaring his capture of Esch,²³ but he had either been misinformed or he escaped as in July he was named by Norfolk as being exempted out of the King's pardon, along with the late prior of the White Friars at Doncaster and a friar of Appleby.²⁴ There is later evidence that he had fled to Scotland and was trying to make contact with his former brethren at St Robert's.²⁵ The motivations of Esch are unclear from the evidence but it is of interest that the Trinitarians were the only friary who showed some sort of unity in supporting the rebels, maybe because they were the sole representative of their order in the north of England and therefore enjoyed a sense of autonomy. It might also be suggested

²⁰ Peter Marshall, *The Face of the Pastoral Ministry in the East Riding, 1525-1595* (York, 1995), p. 15

²¹ LP XII (i), 370

²² Ibid., 392; Bush, *Rebel armies*, pp. 36, 61

²³ LP XII (i), 448

²⁴ LP XII (ii), 291

²⁵ Ibid., 918

that their relative high profile in the ‘indulgence trade’ and experience of producing publicity documents for this cause gave them a particular reason to dislike the Henrican reforms, but also put them in a unique position of experience in sending out evocative proclamations to the laity.²⁶ In any case, Esch’s actions were much more in line with those of the secular clergy than monastic, in that he did not rely on support from his house, and indeed went beyond the efforts of some of his fellow Trinitarians as administrators for the rebels and set out to spread the word. His ability to forge links with outside communities draws parallels with Bonaventure and sets them apart from those monks who were more content to stay within their walls, and secular’s who mostly stayed with their own communities.

The next friar whose role in the Pilgrimage is well documented is the Dominican Friar, Dr John Pickering who has been described as having ‘the distinction of being the only friar to give all his energies to the cause.’²⁷ Although this is a debatable assertion given the evidence seen so far, it is accurate to say that unlike Bonaventure and Esch, Pickering’s involvement can be seen at all episodes of the revolt, from the initial uprising, to the November truce, and the December pardon. Pickering was a Cambridge graduate and prior of the Black Friars in York. At the time of the rising in Lincolnshire he was visiting the prior of Bridlington who has been mentioned above.²⁸ He seems to have lain here for most of October and November but spent his time composing a rhyme which was designed ‘to encourage the commons.’²⁹ This rhyme was

²⁶ R. N. Swanson, ‘Mendicants and Confraternity in Late Medieval England’, in James G. Clark (ed), *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 132-133

²⁷ Knowles, *Religious*, p. 334

²⁸ Susan E. James, ‘Pickering, John, (c. 1495-1537), Dominican friar and rebel’, *ODNB*, online; Cross, *monks*, p. 431

²⁹ LP XII (i), 1019

particularly scathing of Cromwell and his heretical bishops, declaring that until Cromwell was hanged for his crimes ‘offences and intolerable exactions would continue.’³⁰ Pickering was consistent in his separation of Cromwell and the King and he openly admitted that he ‘hoped for the mutation and reformation of divers recent laws’ but not at the cost of the King’s estate.³¹ Bush has argued that his song was a complaint against the exactions of taxes on the wealth of the church which insinuates that the threat to the church in the East-Riding ‘was seen as coming from the taxation as well as Dissolution.’³² This view is certainly in keeping with the analysis of the secular and monastic clergy in the region.

Friar Pickering’s song did much to vocalise the commons’ concerns in an accessible vehicle and by the end of October it was ‘on everyone’s lips.’³³ In his examination Pickering tried to appease his interrogators and dismissed a previous assertion that Henry did not have the right to rule the church.³⁴ This is not surprising given the fate of those who had been involved in Lincolnshire. Despite Norfolk believing that he would be a prime informant to discover the true allegiances of other suspects such as Sir Robert Constable and Lord Darcy he gave very little away during his deposition that would incriminate others.³⁵ Apart from Esch, he mentions showing his rhyme to a friar at Scarborough who ‘praised him for it.’³⁶ It is possible that this was John Boroby, prior of the White Friars who had heard seditious prophecies from clergy in Beverley in May 1536 and passed them on to the vicar of Muston and the warden of the Grey Friars

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1021 (5)

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1021

³² Bush, *Rebel armies*, p. 48

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 213

³⁴ LP XII (i), 1021 (13)

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 698

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1021 (3)

which would suggest he would be interested in Pickering's work.³⁷ Pickering though seems to have kept his cards close to his chest. As a connected and well travelled friar, it should be assumed he could have provided Cromwell with a significantly more damning deposition but had accepted that his fate was already sealed.

Despite the dominant role in the records played by individuals who supported the rebels, there are also instances of friars who did not want to side with them and offered evidence to the crown of certain collusions they had witnessed. One such example is Robert Legate who was put into Furness after the visitations of Layton and Legh at the beginning of 1536 in order to preach to the brethren. 'The monks apparently would not listen, and objected to the reformist content of his sermons.'³⁸ The activities of the monks of Furness have been told in the previous chapter but Legate's opinion of them should be considered further. In his deposition he accuses many of the brethren, mostly of seditious comments. Apparently the Abbot was aware of the treasonous words being said in his house and reprimanded one of the monks, Henry Salley, but only so that Legate would not report him.³⁹ Clearly then the abbot knew that Legate was a dangerous house guest, and a mole left over from the visitations. It is surprising that so much was said that he could hear with this in mind and suggests either an abandonment of concern from the brethren, or that Legate preferred to collect evidence rather than confront the perpetrators. He certainly confronted Abbot Pyle who threatened him with vengeance 'if any complaint should be laid against him.' That the monks in the house were prepared to

³⁷ Cross, *monks*, p. 478

³⁸ Christopher Haigh, *The Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace* (Manchester, 1969), p. 28

³⁹ LP XII (i), 841 (3)

support Legate in his evidence against Pyle and various other brethren in the depositions of early 1537, indicates that his very presence caused distrust in the house which he was able to take advantage of, leading in some part to the conviction of so many from one monastery.⁴⁰

Another less documented example of collusion from a friar with the crown's investigations is that of Richard Robinson, the prior of the Austin Friars of Tickhill, a few miles south of Doncaster. On 7 October 1536, Robinson testified that the prior of the Austin Friars of Grimsby went under threat to a rebel muster on 4 October. Despite being excused as 'not able' Robinson indicates a degree of surprise that he returned with the warden of the Grey Friars to provide the rebels with money, although this could have been to ensure the safety of his house.⁴¹ The speed at which Robinson testified to the activities of the prior suggests that he was aware that a serious uprising against the king was developing and he wanted to avoid any suspicion that could be laid at the steps of his house by being open with this information. That he makes it clear that the prior was, certainly in the first instance, forced into collaboration with the rebels may also have been seen as an opportunity to make the authorities aware that the rebels were prepared to threaten violence against the clergy and therefore excuse any possible involvement that may be demanded of him. He seems though to have been successful in avoiding any contact with the rebels.⁴²

Geoffrey Baskerville has pointed out that friars 'had none of the local ties' of monks and canons, but this can also be applicable to the beneficed secular clergy.⁴³ This implies that most friars did not suffer from the local

⁴⁰ Haigh, *Lancashire*, pp. 97-98

⁴¹ LP XI, 593; Cross, *Monks*, p. 494

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 494

⁴³ Cited in Cross, *Monks*, p. 1

politics that may affect the reputation of a curate.⁴⁴ This may in some part then explain why the East Riding, an area which has such limited evidence of participation from its secular and monastic clergy, produced three outsiders who had significant influence over the events of October 1536. The activities of Pickering, Esch and Bonaventure are unfortunately isolated and extreme, but their motivations can be inferred from an analysis of their actions, and also a better understanding of what had led them to join the rebels. This can then go some way in helping to elucidate the friars' place in northern society as it stood in 1536. Of course, that no other Observant can be named for certain as being involved with the rebels does not necessarily mean that they did not share Bonaventure's concerns. Like Esch, he may have been an extreme example of a widespread hostility shared with the other members of his house, but dispersed, the other Observants may have not had the confidence of Bonaventure to join the uprising. It also must be asked why the rebels wished to restore the Observants to their houses if they had shown no interest in the rising? Perhaps they wished to show allegiance to others who had stood against royal policies, but also, if there was indeed an Observant friar at Pontefract whilst that rebel articles were being composed, he would likely have come from the restored house at Newcastle and would have been keen to gather support from the rebel leadership. If, as is likely, this restoration received local support, it is less surprising that it is mentioned in articles devised by a group which included representatives from the area. From what has been seen of the other regular clergy, the rebel leadership expected the support of those that they had raised the banner of the five wounds of Christ for.

⁴⁴ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p. 196

This support resulted in a purge of the Observants and in the absence of further evidence against them, seemed sufficient for Henry to demand their heads.

As has been seen, it is important to look at the role of the friars through a microscope because they offer distinct and subtle differences to that of the secular and monastic that have so far been seen. There was no-one who could be described as a leader like the vicar of Brough, no friary that could be called a focal point for the defence of the local church such as Sawley but skilled politicians who seemed to know how to pull the rebel strings, be it by producing songs for them to sing, or propaganda to provide purpose. It is for this reason that their actions must be considered separately and can be seen as a 'middle ground.' In a different way to the monasteries, the rumours of Esch and song of Pickering provided accessible focal points which the commons could rally to, and the incitement from within rebel musters such as from Bonaventure echoes that which has been seen from the seculars.

Dr Pickering, and one other friar were invited to the clerical conference in December 1536 where the opportunities for a select group of the clergy to voice their frustrations found a new arena. It is this then, which should be considered next before any satisfactory conclusions can be made regarding the role of the clergy.

Chapter 6: Archbishop Lee and the clerical conference of December 1536

The decision to hold a parallel clerical conference to sit on Sunday 3rd and Monday 4 December 1536 to complement the articles to be put to the Duke of Norfolk by the laity, had been made at York in the meeting of the nobility and gentry of the north on 21 November. Originally the plan was for Archbishop Lee to invite the participants but he refused to co-operate and secured permission to leave Pontefract.¹ The role of the Archbishop is included here as it should be considered if any of the participants at the conference were there at his suggestion and how his attitude towards the rebels changed during the course of the Pilgrimage. This chapter will therefore begin with a synopsis of each of those who attended the clerical convocation including, where possible, how they came to be there, their input on proceedings and their subsequent fate. The articles were brought to the gathered clergy by Aske and they returned fourteen points which they felt needed addressing for the maintenance of the church.² How these were a reflection of the grievances of the clergy that have been highlighted in the previous chapters will be assessed in further detail below. Finally, the actions of Lee, centring around his sermon at Pontefract on 3 December, in the middle of the conference will be considered and his possible intentions. R. W. Hoyle has asserted that the clerical articles were 'intended to have an independent public existence as a critique of the Cromwellian ascendancy' and it is likely that this is the reason that the majority of the participants were leading northern clerics who held doctorates but the diverse nature of the group necessitates a further analysis

¹ R. W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford, 2001), p. 344

² *Ibid.*, p. 345; 'The opinion of the clergy of the north parts' printed in full in *Ibid.*, pp. 463-464

of those chosen.³ The Dodds named fifteen present during the conference but there could have been sixteen as a Mr. Bashlare of Mewys was also said to be in attendance by Dr. Pickering and cannot be ruled out from the evidence elsewhere.⁴

It seems most useful to begin with Dr John Dakyn from whom there is the most comprehensive account of the meeting, largely due to his position as minute taker.⁵ As has already been seen, Dakyn was involved with the rebels around Richmondshire during October and he claims it was for this reason that his parishioners determined he should go the York conference to which he agreed out of fear. It was at York that it was decided he should attend at Pontefract as he was 'somewhat learned, and an officer.'⁶ In his deposition Dakyn tries at length to distance himself from any actual involvement in the controversial topics that were discussed and emphasises his role as ledger, not participant by stating what 'they agreed' when the decision was made that the king might exercise no jurisdiction over the church.⁷ Given Dakyn's precarious situation after his prior involvement in the rebellion it is not surprising that he did not want to implicate himself further but none of the other participants offer any further input from him. Indeed, Dakyn himself pleaded with Cromwell to speak with Lee, Dr. Brandsby and Dr. Rokeby who were also present, to confirm his innocence regarding the articles.

Dakyn was one of only two participants who can be said to have had any major part in the rebellion itself. The other was the Dominican friar, Dr. John

³ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 344-345

⁴ M. H. and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-1537 and The Exeter Conspiracy 1538*, Vol. 1 (New Impression, London, 1971, of orig. edn, Cambridge, 1915), p. 382; LP XII (i), 1021

⁵ *Ibid.*, 786 (ii,1)

⁶ *Ibid.*, 789

⁷ *Ibid.*, 786 (ii,2)

Pickering who had been residing at Bridlington and producing treasonous rhymes in support of the rebel cause which he took to the conference. Despite his activity during October, he would have to be considered one of the lower ranked members of the group and it is most likely that he was chosen because he had been at the northern convocations in both 1531 and 1532 which had debated the royal supremacy. He was also an associate of another attendee, Dr. Marmaduke Waldby and had a history of flirting with controversy having written a formal protest to the acquiescence to Henry after 1532 which he also brought with him to Pontefract.⁸ Pickering's deposition gives very little away on the discussion within the meeting and apart from his admitting that he unsurprisingly said 'the King might not be Supreme head' nothing is divulged.⁹ This lack of recorded questioning around the actual discussions at the conference from the investigations of the uprising is a common theme in the available evidence suggesting that the authorities were not immediately concerned with assessing the motivations of those present.

The next cleric who was involved in at least one event outside of the conference was the aforementioned Dr Waldby. Waldby was the rector of Kirk Deighton and prebendary of Carlisle.¹⁰ He had been at the northern convocation in York in May 1534 which had passed a resolution denouncing any power the Pope could claim over religious affairs on English shores, effectively solidifying the royal supremacy.¹¹ Although he seems to have had limited impact during the meeting itself he had been implicated in a plot with Lord Darcy and Sir Robert Constable in which he would go, possibly not of his own choice, to Flanders and

⁸ Susan E. James, 'Pickering, John (c.1495–1537), Dominican friar and rebel', *ODNB*, online

⁹ LP XII (i), 1021 (14)

¹⁰ Dodds, *Pilgrimage*, p. 382

¹¹ LP XII (i), 786 (2); Dodds, *Pilgrimage*, p. 7

gather aid from the sister of Charles V for the rebels.¹² This event has been described as ‘the one moment when the Pilgrimage looked as though it might take on an international dimension.’¹³ In February 1537 he met Dakyn having been examined by Cromwell regarding the articles, a statement that appears to have been lost, and declared he ‘thought that the business was passed.’¹⁴ It may be that this statement does not exist as it was part of a more informal investigation into the clerical conference conducted by Cromwell, and may be a reason why more cannot be deduced on the content of the meeting from the examinations available. Waldby’s claim though seems either hopeful or naïve since by the end of April he can be found in the Tower and was subsequently exempted from the King’s pardon by Norfolk.¹⁵ His fate from this point is unknown but it is likely he was executed for his crimes. It is this link with Darcy and Constable that seems the most obvious reason for his inclusion at the conference.

The three attendees who were the highest ranked at the convocation can be discussed together, having shared comparable fates for their participation. The first, William Cliff was Archbishop Lee’s chancellor and according to Dakyn was his representative.¹⁶ He was said to have been ‘most affectionate’ on the matters of law and it was also reported that prior to the conference he had complained ‘at the abrogation of holy days.’¹⁷ Dr Geoffrey Downes, Chancellor of York again is not recorded as having a particular role in the proceedings.¹⁸ Dr

¹² LP XII (i), 1079-1081; LP XII (ii), 181; *Ibid.*, 292 (iii); Hoyle, *Politics*, pp. 322-323

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 416

¹⁴ LP XII (i), 789 (2)

¹⁵ LP XII (ii), 291 (ii)

¹⁶ LP XII (i), 786 (1)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 786 (2)

¹⁸ The Dodds have Downes as chancellor but it is possible that he did not hold this position until 1537; Dodds, *Pilgrimage*, p. 382; B. Jones, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1300-1541: volume 6: Northern province (York, Carlisle and Durham)* (London, 1963), pp. 9-10.

Cuthbert Marshall, Archdeacon of Nottingham seems to have had the biggest influence, especially on the topic of the supremacy where he ‘spoke most for the Bp. Of Rome.’¹⁹ He also clashed with Lee on this subject when he returned to Pontefract, Lee expressing his desire, unsuccessfully, that this clause be removed.²⁰ Of the three, Marshall was suspected most of being in favour of the articles, especially by Norfolk.²¹ By August 1537 however, he seems to have realised his precarious position and was said to be preaching ‘frequently against the bp. Of Rome.’²² What is most interesting about these three clerics is that their careers seemed to have continued to flourish despite their participation in the conference. One reason for this could be that it had been decided that the actions of the participants should be discarded by the investigation, preferring to go after those who had not opposed the government only by theological reasoning. Lee clearly also held them in high esteem and provided they did not openly oppose royal policy he supported them following the rebellion. Lee showed his faith in Downes to Cromwell for example in 1538 when he told him that he had sent Downes to investigate a rumour of seditious preaching in Beverley²³ and all three were invited to contribute to the ‘Bishops book’ in July 1537.²⁴ It is important not to speculate too far why these three influential clerics did not receive punishment for their role at the conference but that they were offering advice on the doctrine of the church just seven months later does suggest that Lee may have encouraged their attendance at the clerical convocation. As he did not leave before the decision was made to hold the convocation, it is not impossible that he

¹⁹ LP XII, (i), 786 (2)

²⁰ Ibid., 786 (3)

²¹ Ibid., 698

²² LP XII (ii), 422

²³ LP XIII (i), 1317

²⁴ LP XII (ii), 402, 403; ‘The Institution of a Christian Man, 1537’ in C. H. Williams (ed), *English Historical Documents: Vol. 5, 1485-1558* (London, 1967), pp. 809-810

made some suggestions before he absented himself. It is unlikely that Lee was willing or able to protect them from the authorities, but would have been able to encourage the 'career-orientated mentality' that had seen his middle-order clergy rise through the ranks and which is evident in their behaviour after the rebellion.²⁵

The final four members of the group who were seculars should be mentioned here, though relatively little is known of them. Dr. Sherwood was the chancellor of Beverley minister. Conflicting evidence can be found of him and thus it is hard to adjudge where his loyalties lay. During the conference Dakyn described him as being 'most on the King's side'²⁶ but by 1538 when he was apparently suffering from an infirmity, Cromwell heard that he had given a seditious sermon and was 'named of naughty judgement.' Again he was protected by Lee who claimed not to have sent him up for his preaching because he was impotent. He did seem aware though that he needed to be removed from office because he requested a replacement from Cromwell. Sherwood was however, still in office at the suppression of the remaining religious houses in the area.²⁷

Dr. George Palmes, rector of Sutton-upon Derwent seems not to have favoured the rebels and indeed appears to have played a part in provoking them prior to the Pilgrimage. He had been collecting inventories of the parish churches around Beverley, which as has been seen sparked a conspiracy theory amongst the commons of the East Riding that this was in preparation for the confiscation

²⁵ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p. 110

²⁶ LP XII (i), 786 (2)

²⁷ LP XIII (i), 1317; LP XIII (ii), 108; K. J. Allison (ed), *A History of the County of York East Riding: Volume 6: The borough and liberties of Beverley* (York, 1989), pp. 76-80.

of church goods.²⁸ At the conference, he is described along with Cliff as being knowledgeable on the legality of their considerations.²⁹ Dr. Langridge, Archdeacon of Cleveland and Dr. John Brandsby, Lee's chaplain and master of the collegiate church of Sutton are not noted as making a particular contribution either prior to, or during the conference but again it is worth mentioning that their careers in the aftermath did not suffer with Langridge continuing in his position until 1547 and Brandsby achieving the prebendary of Osbaldwick in 1539.³⁰

All but one of the remaining participants were members of the regular clergy. Only of John Ripley who had been abbot of Kirkstall since at least 1531 can much evidence be found.³¹ He was described by Dakyn as 'a sober man and spoke little' but he was not completely able to avoid any confrontation after the rebellion.³² In January 1537 Sir Henry Saville petitioned for his removal 'in the King's best interests' but he was still in place on Kirkstall's suppression in November 1539.³³ The abbot's chaplain was also at the conference and was described as 'learned in divinity'.³⁴

The other two regulars were James Thwaites, Prior of Pontefract who appears to have been there only by proxy as he was 'not learned in any faculty' and an observant friar, who is described as such only by Dr Pickering. Pickering also mentions Mr Bashlare (possibly Bachelor) of Mewys, but as he is not found anywhere else in the records little can be speculated as to his role.³⁵

²⁸ LP XII (i), 398 (ii)

²⁹ Ibid., 786 (2)

³⁰ Jones, *Fasti Ecclesiae*, pp. 19-21; Ibid., pp. 73-75

³¹ Claire Cross and Noreen Vickers, *Monks, Friars and Nuns in Sixteenth century Yorkshire* (Leeds, 1995), p. 143

³² LP XII (i), 786 (1)

³³ Ibid., 281; Cross, *Monks*, p. 143

³⁴ LP XII (i), 786 (1)

³⁵ Ibid., 786 (1); Ibid., 1021

Not much also need be mentioned of the final member of the group, Dr John Rokeby as he was an ecclesiastical lawyer not a clergyman. He was nominated along with Dakyn to go to York in November but was apparently distrusted by the commons who in October accused him of being ‘a lollard and puller down of the abbeys, and that they should go with him in spite of his teeth.’³⁶ It does seem surprising that a figure who was distrusted by the commons was desired to go to the conference but this is consistent with their policy to have people who could offer legitimacy to their cause in the public forum, even at the cost of genuine commitment.

So what did this diverse mix of clerics and an ecclesiastical lawyer produce on the 3rd and 4 December 1536? Hoyle has accurately argued that the clerics’ articles, despite many of their claims that they had acted out of fear, often go beyond the required answer of the lay articles and betray ‘no compromise with the religious innovations of the early and mid-1530s.’³⁷ What should be of most consideration here is how the clerics’ articles reflect the concerns of the clergy that have been seen so far in this work. The suppression of the monasteries for instance is remarked upon only in article seven which states that religious lands ‘may not be taken away and put to profane uses by the laws of God.’³⁸ That there was only one monk present, who was not a charismatic character may be the reason why this subject, which was of the most immediate relevance to many of the religious in the north parts, was not given more attention. Cromwell, named as the perpetrator of many of the injustices suffered by the church in Pickering’s rhyme is also not mentioned, nor is specific reference made to the rumours spread regarding a taxation on marriages and

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1011

³⁷ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 355

³⁸ ‘Opinion of the clergy’, p. 463

baptisms by Esch.³⁹ It was perhaps inevitable that at a conference dominated by clergy that had taken no active part in the rebellion, matters which were the motivations behind those who did join the rebels, were not always given significant attention. Article eleven demonstrates this with most accuracy, demanding ‘that the laws of the church may be openly read in universities.’⁴⁰ There is no reference to such a concern from any of the clerical participants that have been seen in the previous chapters. There is some evidence which suggests that those at the conference were not privy to the more localised concerns of the lower clergy. Scott Harrison has pointed out that when asked for their opinions on certain issues to be raised at the conference the clergy of the Lake Counties did not answer, instead referring ‘their minds to the archbishop of York with such learned counsel as they heard say would be at Pontefract’⁴¹ and the Abbot of Whalley refused to attend.⁴² Unsurprisingly then the clerical articles read as a damning condemnation of royal policy towards the church over the past few years and reveal a frustration at the dilution of power of the middle and higher ranking clergy.⁴³ They do however, pick up on more general concerns, mostly affecting the secular clergy such as the repeal of first fruits and tenths and the content of their sermons and the dominance of seculars at the conference can explain this. It would therefore be misleading to claim that the lower clergy would have produced a list of completely different articles. It may then be most appropriate to suggest that the articles demonstrate an overview of the concerns of a large portion of the clergy but looked to include some provisions that had

³⁹ For Friar Pickering’s rhyme LP XII (i), 1021 (5)

⁴⁰ ‘Opinion of the clergy’, p. 464

⁴¹ Scott Harrison, *The Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake Counties, 1536-7* (London, 1981), pp. 116-117

⁴² Christopher Haigh, ‘Paslew, John (d. 1537), abbot of Whalley’, *ODNB*, online

⁴³ Hoyle, *Politics*, pp. 356-357

not been highlighted by clerics that have so far been reviewed. Because the conference was at least able to pick up on some of the widespread concerns, it must be conceded that had it been dominated instead by the lower orders, the additions that they made might not have been considered. Thus the concerns of the middle ranking clergy would have been ignored. G. W. Bernard's assertion then that the articles 'represent the authentic voice of counter-revolution' and it is hard to see 'on what grounds their representativeness is to be doubted' seems to offer the most acceptable conclusion.⁴⁴

As has been mentioned, the participants at the conference seem to have been chosen as legitimisers which is consistent, especially in the appropriation of secular clergy, with their role in the Pilgrimage. One might wonder why Robert Thompson or Bernard Towneley, both of whom held doctorates, were not invited to attend? Such middle-ranking clergyman, of unknown whereabouts at this time seem not to have been considered important enough to seek out but this may also reflect the fact that the uprising they were involved in around Cumberland had no powerful gentry leader who would have had significant influence at the York conference of 21 November.⁴⁵ It is feasible that Lee had a hand in suggesting the likes of Marshall, Cliff and Downes to the gentry but much of the evidence suggests that the majority of the participants were chosen by the leadership at York firstly by importance, and then by convenience to make up the numbers.

The risks that were inherent for the clergy at the conference were great and it is therefore unsurprising that for those whom the authorities could subsequently demonstrate no further involvement, they insisted that they were

⁴⁴ G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (London, 2005), p. 338

⁴⁵ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 248

not there by choice. Indeed, Dakyn having spoken with Waldby, Marshall and Cliff in February 1537 maintained that ‘every one of us at Pomfret came thither for fear, and when we came together, every man was weary of his part, and doubtful what to do.’⁴⁶ This contradicts some of his earlier evidence concerning the level of participation from certain members. It may be more accurate to say that despite initial concerns which plagued them when asked to attend, many of them took advantage of a rare opportunity to voice some long standing grievances.

The final part of this chapter concerns the more definite actions of the Archbishop of York during the time of the clerical conference. Explanation for Lee’s actions comes from various sources during, and after the pilgrimage and must be considered as a whole to conclude adequately what his role had been. To read his deposition he was a prisoner of the rebels, forced into what small contributions he made.⁴⁷ This is not surprising given the suspicion he was held in from those investigating the uprising. Norfolk had written to Cromwell a few days before the Archbishop was examined telling him that Aske had heard Lee declare ‘that the supreme headship touching the cure of souls did not belong to the King as King.’⁴⁸ There are a few events which indicate that Lee was not entirely convinced by the current policy towards the maintenance of the Church, such as his attempt to save Hexham abbey from suppression and accusations by Sir Francis Bigod in June 1535 that ‘he had failed to preach the royal supremacy with sufficient fervour.’⁴⁹ It is for this reason that Claire Cross has argued that

⁴⁶ LP XII (i), 789 (2)

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1022

⁴⁸ Ibid., 698 (3)

⁴⁹ LP XI, 504; Claire Cross, ‘Lee, Edward (1481/2–1544), archbishop of York’, *ODNB*, online

‘not without some justification Aske and his followers assumed that the archbishop sympathised with their aims’ and when he came to give his sermon in Pontefract priory on 3 December the commons were expecting him to ‘comfort them to go forward.’⁵⁰ Lee’s intention to distance himself from the rebels and do all he could to stay suspicion of him seems to have superseded any sympathies by this time however, and his sermon declared that ‘none might make battle but by the authority of the king.’⁵¹ Although more than one source insisted that he only took this firm line when Lancaster Herald appeared, it is unlikely by this point that Lee would have done anything other than show that he was not in support of the rebellion.⁵² His mere appearance at Pontefract when he had been given permission to return home, something he had been trying to secure since the first meeting with Norfolk at Doncaster, is evidence of this. There may well then be some truth in his claim that he returned because he found out that Aske was suggesting that the rebels should fight if their articles were refused, though not to defend the King’s efforts, but more because he saw an opportunity to publically declare his loyalty on theological grounds.⁵³ It is the evidence surrounding his actions of late November and early December that support the Archbishop’s claims that he was not in collusion with the rebels and despite suspicion that was heaped upon him, it is for this reason that like Norfolk and his investigators who were not able to conclude that he was guilty of any crime, this is still the case.

The clerical conference at Pontefract has not been the subject of in-depth historical analysis and this can perhaps be attributed to the fact that the crown did

⁵⁰ Ibid.; LP XII (i), 1021

⁵¹ Ibid., 786 (2), (3)

⁵² M. Bateson (ed), ‘Aske’s examination’, *EHR* 5 (1890), p. 572; LP XII (i), 1021

⁵³ Ibid., 1022

not consider those present to be culpable for their actions. Only Dr Pickering, who was involved in the post-pardon revolt and Dr Waldby were convicted of crimes following the investigations into the Pilgrimage of 1537. When considering the severe retribution that those clergy who's names cropped up as being involved with the rebels on a variable scale received, the clerics at the conference must have succeeded in convincing Cromwell that they were there against their will. This could be because the articles they produced were never reviewed against the lay articles as Hoyle suggests many historians have subsequently been guilty of.⁵⁴ Another reason could be that given the seniority of most of the participants, the government decided to apply its strategy of attributing the Pilgrimage to 'a handful of partisans and treasonous malcontents', rather than an expression of widely held resentments.⁵⁵ Despite Henry's wrath directed at the lower clergy, he perhaps realised that to suggest that opposition to his reformation was endemic throughout the middle and upper orders of the clergy would be too damaging for the church of which he was head.

Archbishop Lee, despite his efforts was still suspected of aiding the rebels but felt secure enough to question the collecting of the clerical tenth in the north in January 1537. Although with reduced powers, Lee remained in office until his death in 1544.⁵⁶ Even though the majority of those who were involved in the conference were not punished, this should not remove any of its importance as a reflection of frustration by the middle and upper clergy in the north who were also able, if not wholly, then adequately consider the concerns of their lower orders. As has been shown, the articles they produced went significantly further

⁵⁴ Hoyle, *Politics*, p. 348

⁵⁵ Bernard, *King's Reformation*, p. 322

⁵⁶ Cross, 'Lee'

than may have been expected and those who had a hand in them must have been slightly surprised, and certainly relieved that they did not receive a sterner reaction.

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Conclusion

The role of the clergy in the Pilgrimage of Grace says much about the relationship between them and the laity. As has been shown, the balance of power in the 1530s was very much with the latter and they were in many cases willing and able to determine the type of religion that was provided them by their clergy, unafraid to show their distaste if their wishes were not upheld. This relationship can be seen as contributing to the uprising where for instance, as has been shown, a cleric could be chastised for both accepting and denouncing religious reform, depending on his parishioners.

The secular clergy in the Pilgrimage never produced the mass promotion campaign that they had in Lincolnshire but nor would it have been possible to. The visitations of October in Louth and Caistor had provided the ideal breeding ground for the development of seditious rumour from the clergy, and once the commons had decided that it was their concern, hastily sent them to raise their parishes. It has been argued that by using the clergy, and not a circular from any legitimate leadership to raise the region, the rebellion in Lincolnshire occurred too quickly and for this reason could not survive under royal pressure. The clergy in Lincolnshire therefore were inadvertently instrumental in the failure of the rebellion.

Michael Bush has argued that 'the role of the clergy was not to lead or to influence or to incite. Rather it was to comply with the rebels' demands for money, horses and carts; for properly furnished troops; and for clerical cross-

bearers.’¹ Although as a broad statement designating the role of the clergy this can be argued, a closer analysis has shown that clerics could fulfil a more influential role. The friar of Knaresborough for example was instrumental in promoting the uprising and the vicar of Brough can be considered as part of the rebel leadership in Cumberland. The most stark differences have been seen not in the expectations of the different clerical groups, although these did exist, but in the different regional expectations. The East Riding of Yorkshire for instance saw very little spiritual or practical participation from its clerics. This is because the laity were more fearful of the spoliation of their church and were therefore rising for the protection of property and goods of which they had provided a significant amount. Without a religious programme the seculars were not required for its justification, and as the restoration of the monasteries did not become policy until declared as such by Aske, the support of the monks was not demanded. Also, as the host moved to Pontefract on 22 October, they were not called upon to provide victuals to the same degree as was asked of those in the West Riding and around the much larger hosts in Richmondshire, Westmorland and Cumberland. Indeed, as has been seen, the major contribution from the clergy in the East Riding came from outsiders. The friars Esch, Bonaventure and Pickering were instrumental in spreading word through the local relationships which they had formed.

The Richmondshire rebels demanded much from their clerics and it is of this region that Bush’s statement is most appropriate. Again however, that their official role may not have been to incite, does not mean that it did not happen as with the vicar of Clapham who declared the Pilgrimage in defence of the faith. In

¹ Michael Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996), p. 213

Lancashire, where the monasteries were most popular, they formed the focal point for a defiant laity, poor and relatively ignorant, who had relied on these houses in the past and looked to do so now. Again though, not all could rely upon an appreciative laity, with Furness providing an adequate example. It must also be ventured however that the Observant friars, some of whom had returned from exile in Scotland, were able to influence the rebellion, and if there was indeed at least one member of the order at Pontefract, it is possible he had been sent by the commons around his house to do just that.

For these reasons the role of the clergy cannot be summed up in a neat sentence. It was too complex and inconsistent for it to be safe to do so. But it is in this way that it reflected their role in northern society before the rebellion. Here their power was waning, and their influence depended very much upon their individual quality and ability to provide the laity with what they desired. The clerical conference can demonstrate just how much they felt their livelihoods had changed during Henry's reign and as has been shown, their articles can be adequately said to be representative of the majority of the clergy. The importance of this conference was paramount to the rebel leadership and this can explain their disappointment that Archbishop Lee did not get behind them. As has been shown, the conference reflected the role of the secular clergy who went with the hosts, to act as legitimisers for their cause. Although they were not all willing participants, their inclusion was justified by the stamp of approval that they gave to the rebel demands.

C. S. L. Davies has asserted that 'the end result of the Pilgrimage may have been to sow such distrust between the clergy and commons, and between

gentry and commons, as to prevent any repetition for a generation.'² Although accurate, again this does not take into account that the clergy looked very different in the generation that followed and thus it cannot be considered a fair comparison. With no monasteries to fight for and provide for any rebel host, and by the 1540's, no friars to act as links between communities, the secular clergy had not provided enough widespread support, and had been at pains to distance themselves from the cause, having seen the fate of the monks. Maybe it is more appropriate to argue that Henry's reformation had succeeded in altering the ability of the clergy to influence northern society, and it is this change which prevented any repetition of the events of 1536.

² C. S. L. Davies, 'Popular religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace' in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds), *Order and disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 85

Abbreviations

- LP* Brewer, J. S., James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (eds),
*Letters and Papers, Foreign and domestic , of the reign of
Henry VIII, 1509-47* (London, 1862-1910), twenty-one
volumes, plus *Addenda*, (London, 1929-32).
- ODNB* *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
- EHR* *English Historical Review*

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