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The northern clergy and the Pilgrimage of Grace

Keith Altazin

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, daltazin@lsu.edu

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THE NORTHERN CLERGY AND THE
PILGRIMAGE OF GRACE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
the Louisiana State University
and Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in

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by

Keith Altazin

B.S., Louisiana State University, 1978

M.A., Southeastern Louisiana University, 2003

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Lincolnshire rebellion. Both rebellions occurred in England in 1536 during the reign of Henry VIII. The rebellions were primarily risings of the commons and occurred as the result of several causes. Much of the recent historiography has focused primarily on the causes of the rebellions and the motives of those involved. Most contemporary interpretations of the Pilgrimage of Grace have cast it primarily as either an economic rebellion or a result of social conflict between the commons and gentry. Practically no analysis of the role of the clergy exists, although it is clear that the religious reforms instituted by Henry VIII beginning in 1534 caused widespread disaffection. These reforms attacked traditional religious practice and worship, affecting the entire clergy and laity. The argument put forth in this dissertation is that the clergy—priests, friars, and monks—supported, stirred, and spread the rebellion throughout Lincolnshire and the North Country of England. In addition, this dissertation supports the argument that both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace were essentially religious rebellions. Research makes it clear that a significant number of the clergy of northern England had the means, motives, and opportunity to incite the commons to rebel against the Henrician Reformation.

Many of the available sources indicate that a significant number of priests, friars, and monks offered stiff resistance to the Henrician reforms. It is also clear that many members of the clergy opposed the royal supremacy as well as the reforms that attacked traditional practice and

worship. Evidence also exists that members of the clergy initiated and spread a series of rumors throughout England. These rumors are important because they played a significant role in causing both the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Lincolnshire rebellion. Extant sources also indicate that many clergymen supported the rebels with words, money, and food. There is also evidence that several priests, friars, and monks stirred and spread rebellion. By addressing the role of the clergy in stirring, this dissertation adds a new approach to the historiography of the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Chapter One: Introduction

On 18 September 1541, several local officials of the city of York, among them the mayor and recorder, along with a large number of citizens and the gentry of the wapentake of the Ainsty, gathered to welcome King Henry VIII.¹ The visit, originally scheduled for the summer of 1537 to meet the participants in the Pilgrimage of Grace demand for a northern parliament, marked Henry's only trip to York. The original purpose of the visit no longer mattered in 1541, but unfinished business needed addressing. For the mayor and his associates, this proved a most unpleasant moment. The source of this unpleasantness resulted from the events of the fall and winter of 1536-7. In October 1536, the city of York, after dispatching desperate letters to the king begging for aid, surrendered to the rebel leader Robert Aske and his so-called Pilgrims without a siege, witnessed their attendance at mass in the Minster, and then at the end of November hosted the rebels' council of war. With this knowledge in mind, a group of citizens of York, both gentry and yeomen, approached the king and begged his forgiveness for their duplicity in the Pilgrimage of Grace.²

¹ A wapentake is a variant term for hundred or ward. It represented the largest public division of the shire, an administrative unit for the collection of the subsidy and the organization of the militia.

² R.W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), here after cited as *Politics of the 1530s*; 1-2; A.G. Dickens, "The Yorkshire Submissions to Henry VIII, 1541," *English Historical Review* April (1938): 267-268. Here after cited as "The Yorkshire Submissions."

This act of acquiescence amounted to the final episode of the Pilgrimage of Grace. The submission of York represented only one such display as Henry made his progress north during the autumn of 1541. Although ultimately a failure, the Pilgrimage of Grace represented the single greatest threat Henry VIII faced during his long and tumultuous reign. The rebellion raged throughout the north of England during the last months of 1536 and early 1537, engulfing most of the northern counties. The risings were large-scale—seven counties constituting about one-third of England openly rebelled. The Pilgrimage represented the single largest popular rebellion not only of Henry VIII's reign, but also of the entire Tudor Dynasty. It may well have been the largest popular uprising in England prior to the English Civil War. No other Tudor rebellion matched the size and scope of the Pilgrimage of Grace. At its height, nearly 50,000 men rose in defiance of the king's policies and ministers. Had its leaders marched on London and engaged the royal armies on the field of battle, the history of England might very well have turned out differently.

Much of the earlier scholarship on the Pilgrimage focused on the religious nature of the revolt, but recent works tend to concentrate on the social and economic factors involved in bringing on the rebellion. It is my contention that the attack on traditional religious practice constituted the principal factor in stirring the Pilgrimage and, more importantly, the northern clergy played a primary role fomenting the rebellion. The available primary and secondary sources indicate that above all else the Pilgrimage and its short-lived prelude, the Lincolnshire rebellion, amounted to risings of the commons and in large part reactions to the religious policies of Henry VIII. However, the commons of Lincoln and York did not suddenly rise up in October 1536; some outside force pressed them to rebel. The premise of my argument is that the northern

clergy had the means, motives, and opportunity to stir the commons to rise in the autumn of 1536.

The extant sources indicate that the dramatic changes made by the Reformation Parliament affected the clergy more so than any other group. By 1536, the king and Parliament had reshaped the traditional mode of worship and practice that many clergymen accepted as the true faith. Besides doctrine and ceremony, the Henrician reforms threatened the independence and very existence of scores of clergy. Many clergymen were too old, too poorly educated, or simply too devoted to Rome to accept the new ecclesiastical policies. Some feared not only losing benefices but also any chance of advancement since the dissolution of the lesser monasteries and the ban on masses for the dead eliminated a plethora of positions. This assault on traditional religion prompted a segment of the northern clergy to incite rebellion among their parishioners. The clergy had direct and powerful influence over the commons through the confessional and the pulpit. The priests, friars, and monks also had direct contact with the local residents thereby learning of their fears and concerns about the reforms instituted by Henry and Parliament. Thus, many priests and religious throughout the north refused to accept the reforms and chose to undermine the new order. Their hope apparently was that resistance and rebellion would convince Henry to halt the attack on the traditional religious practices and return to full communion with Rome. At the very least, they hoped to preserve their positions and way of life.

A number of the primary sources make it clear that there was widespread clerical resistance to the Henrician reforms. These sources reveal that priests and religious spread rumors about the confiscation of church plate and cup. They apparently spread the rumors about increased taxation and confiscatory policies allegedly proposed by the government. The records point out that several abbots and priests contributed money to the rebels in both the Lincolnshire

rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. It is also clear that at least one friar, a certain Sir Robert Esch of Knaresborough, spread rumors, posted seditious handbills, and actively fomented rebellion throughout several northern shires.

The Pilgrimage of Grace continues to spark interest among Tudor historians. Various books and journal articles seek to discover the causes of the great northern uprising as well as the motives of those involved. While historians generally agree on the events of the Pilgrimage, the interpretation of those same events varies dramatically. Much attention centers on whether the rebellion occurred as a spontaneous rising of the commons in response to the radical religious and economic changes wrought by the Henrician reforms or as a conspiracy of the landed gentry in the north angry at the rise of base-born councilors. Another major interpretation questions the religious nature of the Pilgrimage and the actual role religious dissent played in the insurrection. This argument emphasizes economic and social origins of the rebellion. The fact that no consensus exists explains the continued interest in the Pilgrimage of Grace, as expressed by the publication of five books and numerous articles over the last few decades.

Despite the continued interest in the Pilgrimage of Grace among Tudor historians, none has analyzed the role of the clergy in the rebellion. R.W. Hoyle, in *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s*, states that it is likely that the northern clergy played a role in both the Pilgrimage and the Lincolnshire rebellion but he offers no analysis. G.W. Bernard in *The King's Reformation* offers a lengthy discussion of clerical resistance to the Henrician religious reforms but stops short of the role priests, friars, and monks played in the 1536 rebellions. While Bernard views the Pilgrimage as a religious rebellion, he offers no insight into the role the clergy played in either the Lincolnshire rebellion or the Pilgrimage.

The view taken here is that the Pilgrimage of Grace was a rising of the commons and at its core a religious rebellion. No conspiracy among the disaffected northern gentry existed. They offered little support for the rebellion, with many coerced into participating. However, they took practically no action to quell the rising in its early stages and once sworn many took active roles in the rebellion. In fact, the inaction of the gentry during the outbreak of the Pilgrimage indicates at least tacit support for the rising. The gentry, in many cases, used the coercion plea to hide their support. If the rebellion failed then they could explain their actions by claiming duress and fear for their lives and property.

When one examines the various documents available, several factors become apparent. First, most of those deposed agreed on the causes of the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Lincolnshire rebellion. The great majority of those deposed agreed that the suppression of the monasteries and the rumored looting of the parish churches began the insurrections. Henry Thornbeck, cellarer of Barlings, in his description of the Lincolnshire rising attributes the start of the trouble to the belief that “church jewels should be taken; and after, that all cattle unmarked should be confiscated and christenings and burials taxed.”³ Most of the remaining examinations of those involved in Lincolnshire echo this sentiment.⁴ While many depositions contain some economic factors such as the confiscation of unmarked cattle, the taxing of marked cattle, and taxes on marriages and christenings, practically all contained the pulling down of abbeys and churches, the confiscation of church plate, the forbidding of announcing holy days, and denying prayers to the pope. Sources also indicate that these rumors created real fear in the minds of many commons, particularly in the north where abbeys were numerous and still part of the

³ *LP XI*, 828 (vi).

⁴ See *LP XI*, 828, 841, 967, 968, 970, 971; *XII (1)*, 6, 70, 201, 380, 393. Also, see “The Interrogatories Addressed to Aske and Others and the Depositions Made by Aske,” in *Humanist Scholarship*, 201-249.

communities where they existed. Fearing the loss of valuable church jewels, the pulling down of churches and abbeys, and dramatic changes in traditional religious practice, stirred large number of commoners to rebel. It is my contention that the clergy knowing of these fears spread, and possibly initiated, these rumors to stir the commons.

As stated above, historians generally agree on the events of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace, but their interpretation of those same events varies considerably. With all the debate surrounding the causes and nature of the rebellion, it is surprising that the role of the northern clergy in bringing about both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace has received practically no attention from historians. The lack of focus on the role of the clergy may stem from the recent trend among historians of the risings to downplay the role of religious discontent in bringing on the rebellions. Many historians familiar with the rebellions suggest that the monks and the lower clergy supported the rebellions, but few have analyzed what role, if any, they played in stirring either the Lincolnshire rebellion or the Pilgrimage of Grace. The evidence suggests that many religious and priests not only supported the risings but more importantly, played a pivotal role in rousing the commons and spreading rebellion throughout northern England. Moreover, sources point out that the religious and the priests had much more to lose than did the commons or the gentry. The Henrician reforms threatened their religious authority, their social standing, and their entire way of life. The royal supremacy, the examinations, the Ten Articles, the Royal Injunctions, and the dissolution of the lesser monasteries came in such rapid succession that they had little time to adjust. No other group came under such intense government pressure and scrutiny. Many accepted the changes willingly and enthusiastically, but a large number openly defied the new order.

Much of the legislation enacted by the Reformation Parliament had the effect of putting greater and greater pressure on clerical jobs. The pressure for benefices at the parish or curacy level often became intense. Devaluing masses and intercessions for the dead would not only reduce the number of jobs but also increase the number of priests seeking benefices. Under these conditions, religious change, particularly towards the Protestantism of the Continent, brought serious social costs; Catholicism did not. By 1536, the religious reforms placed the clergy, both beneficed and unbeneficed, from a purely material perspective, in a state of severe agitation.⁵ Certainly, the events of the late summer and early autumn of 1536 must have convinced many priests and monks that the religious reforms would destroy their livelihood and any hope of advancement.

The primary sources indicate that widespread opposition to the Henrician reformation existed throughout England. Opposition ranged from the refusal to remove the pope's name from the mass books and angry, often seditious, statements against the king and the royal supremacy.⁶ The argument that the northern clergy and religious incited the Pilgrimage of Grace and the earlier Lincolnshire rebellion does have some support in the available primary sources. The sources clearly show that priests and monks supported the rebels with money and food, spread rumors about increased taxes, confiscation of church cup and plate, and the destruction of churches deemed unnecessary.⁷ As stated above, the actions of Sir Robert Esch of Knaresborough clearly indicate that he actively fomented and spread rebellion throughout Yorkshire. His actions provide a clear picture of the depth of clerical involvement.

⁵ Margaret Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland, 1521-1547* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 121.

⁶ See *L & P*, Volumes VIII, IX, X, XI.

⁷ *Ibid.*, See *L & P*, Vol. XI, XII.

Given what we know about the northern counties on the eve of the Pilgrimage of Grace and Lincolnshire rebellion, the evidence suggests the clergy as the main stirrers of the commons. However, one must use caution when using the primary sources on the Pilgrimage. Much of what we know of the events of the Pilgrimage comes from depositions of those arrested for their participation. Thus, some who leveled accusations against the priests and monks may have had scores to settle. Those deposed may also have given the answers that they thought the inquisitors wanted to hear. Nonetheless, the various accounts of the behavior and actions of the clergy who participated in the Pilgrimage and Lincolnshire rebellion indicate that some of the northern clergy and monks stridently opposed Henry's attack on the Church. The available sources indicate that some clergy used the pulpit and the confessional to speak out against Henry VIII's religious reforms.

In order to develop the argument stated above Chapter 2 will offer an overview of the historiography of the Pilgrimage of Grace. Chapter 3, Royal Assault, focuses on how the major reforms implemented by Henry VIII affected the laity and the clergy. Chapter 4, Rumors, Resistance and Rebellion, delves into the various rumors that spread throughout Lincolnshire, the midlands and the North County along. Most importantly, this chapter will probe who spread these rumors. This is of vital importance since most of the depositions of the rebels point to these rumors as a major factor in sparking the rebellions. Chapter 4 also centers on the depth of As will be shown, a surprising number of clergymen resisted the government-imposed reforms in subtle and not so subtle ways. resistance among priests, friars, and monks. As will be shown, a surprising number of clergymen resisted the government-imposed reforms in subtle and not so subtle ways. The depth of resistance, particularly in the north indicates that many clergymen were ready and willing to support, stir, and spread rebellion. Chapters 5 and 6 provide an

overview of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace respectively. The focus in these chapters will be on analyzing the events and what role the clergy played in the outbreak of both risings. Chapter 7, The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace, will examine the January 1537 risings and their utter failure. Chapter 8, “Stirrers of this Pestilent Sedition,” will analyze the actions of the clergy and religious deposed and executed as the result of their involvement in the Lincolnshire rising and the Pilgrimage of Grace.

The Pilgrimage of Grace offers the interested student of Tudor England an unusually rich event of the reign of Henry VIII. It gives us a rare opportunity to hear the voices of the commons. The sources reveal to us the fears, beliefs, and attitudes of the common folk who participated in the Pilgrimage. As stated above, my hypothesis is that the religious reforms put forth by the Reformation Parliament marked the primary cause of the Pilgrimage of Grace. More importantly, it is my assertion that segments of the northern clergy played a central role in fomenting rebellion among the commons. Much of the recent scholarship fails to recognize the deep importance that faith and religion held for men and women of the sixteenth century. Because we live in an overwhelmingly secular world, it appears that many assume that those living in early modern England approached their faith in the same way. While evidence of social conflict and economic concerns exists in both rebellions, the religious nature of the Lincolnshire rising and the Pilgrimage of Grace is clear. The evidence also indicates that the clergy—priests, friars, and monks—played a pivotal role in stirring and spreading rebellion in the fall of 1536. More importantly, the argument that the clergy fomented the rebellion adds a new dimension to the scholarship on the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Chapter 2: Historiography

Over the past generation or so, the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Lincolnshire rebellion, its short-lived prequel, have garnered a great amount of attention from Tudor historians. The risings, which lasted from October 1536 until January 1537, posed a significant threat to Henry VIII's rule and the implementation of the English Reformation. While there is little disagreement about the events of the Pilgrimage, a lively debate among historians on its causes and motivations exists. Few historians agree on the meaning of the risings or the motives of those involved. Were those involved reacting to Henry's assault on traditional religion? Were the rebels angry over the declining economic conditions in Northern England during the early 1530s? Was it a reaction against Thomas Cromwell and the king's policies? Alternatively, was the Pilgrimage a result of the growing social tensions and divisions within northern society? Was it an authentic popular uprising or did the gentry and nobility aid and abet it in hopes of benefiting from it without risking direct involvement? On the other hand, was it a conspiracy of an angry court faction disgruntled by the ascendancy of "base advisors" such as Thomas Cromwell? To complicate matters further, the available information on the Pilgrimage comes from depositions of those involved in the risings after the defeat of the rebellion and their arrests.

The modern study of the Pilgrimage of Grace began in 1915 with the publishing of *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Exeter Conspiracy*, by Ruth and Madeline Dodds. Since then such notable Tudor historians as A.G. Dickens, M.E. James, C.S.L. Davies, and G.R. Elton have addressed the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. More recently, R.W. Hoyle, Scott Harrison, Christopher Haigh, Michael Bush, Ethan Shagan, and G.W. Bernard have added their names to the list of those examining the Pilgrimage.

Like the Pilgrimage of Grace, a great deal of debate surrounds the Lincolnshire rebellion. As with the Pilgrimage, the motivations and causes of the rebellion are at the heart of the historical debate. The Lincolnshire rebellion, the short-lived prelude to the Pilgrimage, shares some common traits, however much of the historiography concentrates on the nature of the rebellion rather than the causes or motivations of those involved. M.E. James accepts that the Lincolnshire rebellion was initially a rising of the commons. However, as S.H. Gunn points out, he argues the clergy, the lower orders and the county elite combined in protest, but the gentry of the area cloaked their treasonable behavior with the fiction of coercion by the commons.¹ James argues that these men had as much reason to despise Henry's reforms, as did the clergy and commons. For James the gentry's pattern of behavior when first confronted by the rebel commons, and when in the latter's hands, raises the most suspicion. Many of those deposed claimed that when confronted by the commons they had no choice but to take the rebels oath due to threats to their lives and property. James questions the gentry's lack of resistance to the coercion of the commons as well as their subsequent silence and passivity.² He argues that this claim was a mere fiction designed to protect them from charges of disloyalty and treason.

¹ S.H. Gunn, "Peers, Commons and Gentry in the Lincolnshire Revolt of 1536," *Past and Present* 123 (1989): 52.

² M.E. James, "Obedience and Dissent in Henrician England: The Lincolnshire Rebellion 1536," *Past and Present* (1970): 30.

Furthermore, as James points out, there is no available evidence that the commons put any of the lords or gentry in any real physical danger.

James attributes the rising primarily to a conspiracy of inaction among a disgruntled court faction, the same White Rose Party that the Dodds point to as a factor in the outbreak of the Pilgrimage of Grace. He asserts that the nobility in the area, primarily John, Lord Hussey, were just as disgruntled with the changes wrought by Henry and Cromwell as the commons. James maintains that the rebellion remained a viable threat as long as the gentry believed that Hussey supported their cause. However, when Hussey defected, and the gentlemen captains of the rebellion had to make a choice between civil war and loyalty to the king, they chose submission. James argues that without Hussey the rebellion lost the aura of a loyal rising aiming to change the king's policy, not the king himself.³

S.H. Gunn, in "Peers, Commons and Gentry in the Lincolnshire Rebellion 1536," disagrees with the James interpretation. Gunn, using essentially the same primary sources, contends that the gentry did in fact have due cause to fear for their lives and property. The cause of this disagreement, and indeed for the continued debate over the causes and motivations of the rebels, is the nature of the available primary sources. Most of the sources are in the form of letters and depositions taken after the collapse of the rebellions. Thus, one must question the motives of those deposed since many of them were attempting to save their lives.

Gunn contends that James's argument assumes too much of the gentry. He argues that although some of the gentry no doubt viewed the advent of heresy and the royal plunder of the church with as much disgust as the clergy and common rebels, Gunn concedes evidence exists that some of the gentry, especially the lawyers who drafted the Lincolnshire articles, embellished

³ Ibid., 66- 67.

the demands with their own special interests. Nonetheless, he points out that many other Englishmen of conservative sympathies remained steadfastly loyal to the king in 1536, most notably the Duke of Norfolk and the Earls of Shrewsbury and Derby, and there is no reason to think that the Lincolnshire gentry would not have done the same, had they had the chance.⁴

Gunn is particularly critical of James's interpretation of the actions of Thomas Moigne and Lord Hussey. James uses Moigne's deposition as the core of his argument and the actions of Lord Hussey to point to a larger conspiracy of inaction on the part of the peers and gentry. Moigne, according to Gunn, presented the rebellion as a struggle on the part of the gentry to disperse the rebels and prevent violence against the gentlemen and their property. He contends that Moigne's account portrayed the gentry as victims in order to save his life. Gunn views the actions of Hussey, not as part of a larger conspiracy, but rather as poor decisions made by an old man. Hussey's chief mistake, according to Gunn, was not to have assembled whatever force he could and gone straight to Lincoln on 3 October. When Hussey fled Sleaford, in order to avoid capture by the rebels, who did not come until 7 October, his flight was too late to vindicate his loyalty.

Margaret Bowker, in "Lincolnshire 1536: Heresy, Schism, or Religious Discontent," contends that rather than focus on the actions of the gentry and their involvement in the Lincolnshire rebellion historians should focus on the clergy. She argues that the position of the clergy was a complex one and was under attack. Bowker wishes to discover what part the clergy and religious played. More importantly, she wants to discover if they had reached a position in which rebellion alone provided a remedy to their grievances.⁵ Bowker notes that three sets of

⁴ Gunn, 70.

⁵ Margaret Bowker, "Lincolnshire 1536: Heresy, Schism or Religious Discontent?" in *Studies in Church History* vol. 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 199.

commissioners were active in Lincoln during October 1536: subsidy commissioners, suppression commissioners, and men charged with enforcing the Ten Articles and the royal injunctions. Moreover, she contends that these commissions were most likely operating under the authority of Bishop John Longland. This argument refutes the long held assumption that these men were royal commissioners. Bowker cites several sources that indicate the commissioners were Longland's men rather than the king's men. Thus, she maintains that what sparked the rising was an Episcopal commission ordered by an ecclesiastic, John Longland, a man usually considered a religious conservative. Bowker suggests that it may have been Longland's speed in enforcing the religious changes that prompted the Lincolnshire rising. The bishop's action may also have prompted the belief that stretched as far as Yorkshire that he in fact "was the beginning of the trouble."⁶ Longland figured prominently in the list of heretic bishops named in the articles compiled by both the Lincolnshire rebels and the Pilgrims. Regardless of his conservative religious convictions, Longland apparently acted earlier than other bishops and inadvertently created a very volatile situation in a shire already experiencing a dangerous amount of unpopular and unwelcome governmental activity.⁷

Bowker also recognizes the impact of the various rumors that spread throughout Lincoln and Yorkshire on the outbreak of the Lincolnshire rebellion. In fact, she attributes the spread of several rumors to the archdeacon of Lincoln's registrar, Peter Effard. William Morland, one of the chief leaders of the Lincolnshire rebellion, in his deposition accused Effard of spreading the rumor of the confiscation of parish church chalices and that there should be only one parish church within of six or seven miles of each other. Furthermore, Bowker adds that Effard was a

⁶ Ibid., 196.

⁷ Ibid., 197-98.

well-respected citizen of Lincoln and it is likely his word carried some weight. His actions worked to increase the rumors rather than suppress them. By the time the commissioners arrived, the area was rife with rumors but their arrival was also inopportune for yet another reason: by Monday 2 October when the rebellion commenced those commissioned to collect the subsidy and charged with the suppression of the monasteries were in close geographical proximity. By 2 October, the suppression commissioners had reached Legbourne priory, and on 3 October, both the subsidy commissioners and the bishop's commissioners were due to arrive at Caistor, a journey of about thirteen miles. Thus, the coincidental arrival of these commissioners, only a week after the archdeacon's visit, provoked great fear and brought both the clergy and local leaders together with the effect that fears and rumors could be spread, thus creating even more tension.

Unlike other historians of the Lincolnshire rebellion, Bowker recognizes the importance of the clergy and religious in the outbreak of the rising. Although she asserts that the interaction of three groups—clergy, religious, gentry—gave the Lincolnshire rebellion both its “origin and its color,” Bowker contends that the clergy and religious played a prominent role in the outbreak of the rebellion.⁸ She points out that the severe treatment meted out to the religious and secular clergy who participated in the rebellion may indicate the king, or at least his advisers, knew of the critical role played by parish priests and monks. Bowker cites the various sources that indicated that a large number of priests and monks participated in and supported the rebellion. She contends that the fact that the clergy and religious played a prominent role was not surprising given the conditions extant in the summer and autumn of 1536 and the fact that these men were the natural leaders of the local communities, particularly in villages where there was not a prominent gentlemen in residence.

⁸ Ibid., 198.

The most intriguing and unique part of Bowker's argument is that the ecclesiastical reforms implemented by the government actually played a role in sparking the Lincolnshire rebellion. For instance, she points out that very few of the clergy were non-residents. Bowker puts the number at one seventh. She cites the 1529 act forbidding pluralism for those holding cures with an income over £8 per year, though royal servants, chaplains, and scholars were exempted. Clearly, the legislation had an effect since only those clergy away at university or those serving as chaplains for great men were not present at the time of the visitations. Thus, the restriction on holding only one position with an adequate stipend meant that clerics could not supplement their incomes by holding more than one parish position. This situation put great pressure on many since to lose one position meant the loss of all their income, which helps to explain the heightened sense of vulnerability and fear among the clergy in 1536. This may explain why so many clergy were active in the Lincolnshire rebellion in the early stages: there were more present in 1536 due to the Henrician reforms of 1529. The 1529 reforms by 1536 essentially ended the abuse of nonresident clerics. However, this meant that many more priests and religious were present in their parishes and abbeys. This in fact made them more vulnerable since if they lost one benefice they lost everything, which goes a long way in explaining the intense fear clergymen exhibited in 1536.

There are similarities in the above-mentioned interpretations with those of the Pilgrimage of Grace. The first and most thorough examination of the Pilgrimage of Grace dates back to 1915. Madeline and Ruth Dodds account of the Pilgrimage of Grace until fairly recently remained a widely accepted interpretation of the rising. The Dodds viewed the Pilgrimage primarily as a religious uprising, inspired by a conspiracy of disaffected court faction angry over Henry VIII's attack on the Catholic Church and the influence of "base born" advisors, meaning

primarily Thomas Cromwell. The Dodds sisters contend that the acts of the so-called Reformation Parliament pushed through by Cromwell were highly unpopular. Moreover, the common people had no confidence in the government and were always ready to believe rumors that these acts would turn out to be new forms of taxation.⁹ The authors also argue that the ultimate defeat of the Pilgrimage was the result of Henry's policy of delay in order to destroy the uneasy alliance of commons and gentry.

The rumors that the Dodds emphasize resulted from the government's attempts to slow the problem of enclosures as well as regulate the rising prices of meat. The enclosure acts aimed to halt depopulation caused by sheep farming enclosures. These actions caused strong resentment among landowners and rumors spread that the government planned to tax or confiscate cattle and sheep. The effort to control meat prices, passed in 1534, led to the spread of a rumor that poor men were "to be forbidden to eat 'white meat' unless they paid taxes to the king on chickens, capons, or such like."¹⁰ The Dodds suggest that these rumors reflected the disaffection of nobles and gentry directly affected by the religious and economic acts. Their disgruntlement, according to this argument, led to the development and spread of the above-mentioned rumors.

The Dodds also contend that a group of disaffected nobles, whom they term the White Rose party, conspired to bring down Cromwell and halt Henry's attack on the Church. The authors argue that before the dissolution of the lesser monasteries, passed in March 1536, opposition to the king's policies remained too divided by class distinctions to have any real influence. Nor did the leading conservative nobles encourage a popular movement prior to that.

⁹ Madeline and Ruth Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Exeter Conspiracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 12. Cited here after as *The Pilgrimage of Grace*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

The Dodds argue that a united front may quite possibly have forced Henry from the throne. The real court opposition came not from Norfolk or other conservative nobles but from a party of the old nobility, the remaining Yorkist nobility that had survived the Wars of the Roses. These men made up the White Rose party. The Dodds associate these men with the remnants of the house of Pole. Much of this strand of their argument centers on the actions of Thomas, Lord Darcy. Darcy, a member of the White Rose party, held various positions under Henry VII. During Henry VIII's reign, Darcy led an expedition to Spain at the request of Ferdinand, at the time still Henry's father-in-law, to assist in his war on the Moors. The expedition was a disaster militarily and economically for Darcy. During the failed expedition, Darcy's men wore as their badge the "Five Wounds of Christ." This symbol, later adopted by the participants in the Pilgrimage of Grace, suggests Lord Darcy played a role in bringing on or at least supporting the rebellion.

The Dodds assert that although personally loyal to the king, Darcy was an honest man and a good Christian. Darcy apparently could not envision being one without being the other. Accordingly, he could not stand by and allow the queen and princess Mary to be cast aside, the destruction of the Church, and the land brought under absolute despotism. Darcy felt that he must take some action to save them. Thus, according to the Dodds it was easy for him to accept the belief that the removal of Cromwell would bring Henry to his senses. This and several other acts point to Darcy instigating a conspiracy to right these perceived wrongs. Other disaffected nobles, specifically John, Lord Hussey, and Sir Robert Constable, engaged in what the Dodds term treasonable activity. In 1534, the three men met in London and discussed a sermon preached by Sir Francis Bigod. Like the other three men, Bigod held lands in the north but was a supporter of the New Learning. In Bigod's sermon he stated, "Our Lady was like a pudding when the meat was out." All three men swore none of them would be heretics, but would "die

Christian men.”¹¹ Furthermore, Lord Hussey in September 1534 was in communication with the Imperial ambassador, Eustace Chapuys. The Dodds add that while up to this point Hussey had been a loyal supporter of Henry VIII, now he unquestionably indulged in treasonable behavior. He and other disgruntled nobles, most significantly Lord Darcy, begged Chapuys to convince the emperor to invade England. The basis of the argument rests with Chapuys diplomatic notes sent back to Spain. However, this argument seems rather speculative primarily because Chapuys and Charles V never acted.

The Dodds contend that the dissolution of the lesser monasteries proved the most important factor in bringing on the Pilgrimage of Grace. They maintain that the destruction of the lesser monasteries created the bond between the gentry, priests, and commons. The attack on the traditional religion also played a major role in causing the Pilgrimage. The Ten Articles, which reduced the number of sacraments from seven to three and attacked images, the Proclamation Restricting the Number of Holy Days, the dissolution of the lesser monasteries, and the First Royal injunctions compelling the clergy to preach the Ten Articles and enforce the abrogation of holy days all became law and were imposed on the populace in 1536. The reform movement manifested in these acts quickly developed into a struggle between the old religion and the new, reflecting one of the major elements evident in the Pilgrimage of Grace.

The Dodds also put forth a more widely accepted argument about the final defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace. The Dodds argue that Henry VIII, with the aid of the Duke of Norfolk, adopted a policy of delay and never intended to honor the general pardon promised the rebels in December 1536. Despite overwhelming military strength (the Dodds place their numbers at 20,000), the Pilgrims decided to negotiate with Norfolk at Doncaster between 6 and 8 December

¹¹ Ibid., 22.

1536. At this meeting, the Pilgrims were able to wrest from Norfolk a full pardon for all members and a promise for a parliament to address their grievances. The Dodds contend that this doomed the Pilgrimage of Grace to failure. Throughout this process, Henry delayed and hesitated, claiming that the grievances of the Pilgrims were vague. The Pilgrims responded with two lists of grievances, the Pontefract Articles and the York Articles. In the meantime, Henry ordered Norfolk to delay and under no circumstances offer the promised pardon to the rebels. On 2 December 1536, Henry informed Norfolk to promise anything the rebels demand, but leave Henry free to repudiate it afterwards.¹² However, at Doncaster on 6 December Robert Aske, the chief captain of the Pilgrimage, forced Norfolk into granting the full pardon. The Dodds argue based on Henry's instructions to Norfolk he never planned to honor the pardon or grant a parliament. Henry simply waited until the uneasy coalition of commons and gentry shattered to vent his anger on those responsible. He did not have long to wait. In January 1537, Sir Francis Bigod and Robert Hallom, fearing that the king's pardon was worthless, launched the ill conceived and futile last phase of the Pilgrimage of Grace by attempting to capture Hull and Scarborough in order to force the king to honor his word. The king's loyal troops routed the followers of Bigod and Hallom. Nearly 200 men went to the block or gallows, including Darcy and Aske.

A.G. Dickens in "Secular and Religious Motivation in the Pilgrimage of Grace" refutes several assertions made by the sisters Dodds. Whereas they maintain that religion, particularly anger over the reforms instituted by Henry VIII and Cromwell, was the primary factor in causing the Pilgrimage of Grace, Dickens argues that the main factors were secular. Dickens contends that the majority of the accounts of the Pilgrimage continue to "insist upon a heavily religious motivation, upon the ardent desire of northern society to preserve the Catholic religion and the

¹² *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, v.2, 17.

monasteries.” He examines the religious and near-religious motives along with the secular ones and places them within the proper local, national, and even European contexts.¹³

Sixteenth century rebels, according to Dickens, were more concerned with local needs and grievances. He maintains that the English rebellions of 1536-7 were similar to those of 1549, and like the German Peasants’ Rebellion of 1524-5, spread across large areas. Dickens argues that the rebels embraced a wide number of primarily local motives and were poorly coordinated and uncertain in their aims, which threatened to make the risings local demonstrations rather than national movements. However, of all the Tudor risings, only the Pilgrimage of Grace gathered forces large enough to threaten Henry’s reign. Thus, it was uniquely dangerous in that it enlisted a large part of the northern military society under its accustomed and experienced leadership.¹⁴ However, the Pilgrims failed to achieve any lasting success due to the lack of credible leadership. Robert Aske, the Grand Captain of the Pilgrimage, was a common lawyer, not a prince of the blood able to become the focus of widespread national discontent. In fact, as Dickens points out, few nobles of any consequence joined the rising; they either did nothing to halt the rebellion or fled the region until the danger passed. Dickens contends, like several other historians, that the Pilgrimage of Grace was largely a spontaneous uprising of a disgruntled peasantry and yeomanry. Thus, not only was the Pilgrimage doomed to remain largely a localized rebellion. It also had no real chance of success.

According to Dickens, the Pilgrimage of Grace was not a unitary movement but actually four risings “loosely connected by a broad, inchoate spirit of resentment and opportunism.”¹⁵

¹³ A.G. Dickens, “Secular and Religious Motivation in the Pilgrimage of Grace,” *Studies in Church History* 4 (1965): 42.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 48.

More importantly, he contends that the primary causes for each movement although draped with religious imagery were primarily economic. The Lincolnshire rebellion, the risings in Cumberland and Westmorland of January 1537, and those of Craven and Richmondshire had little or no religious motivation. Dickens attributes the Cumberland-Westmorland rising to Sir Francis Bigod, the only Protestant pilgrim. Bigod raised this revolt primarily because he did not believe in the sincerity or legality of the pardon granted by Henry in December 1536. He evidently believed that by capturing Hull and Scarborough the rebels would be in better position to secure a true pardon from Henry. Bigod's scheme received little support and failed miserably, touching off severe reprisals by the king.

Dickens finds no evidence of religious factors in the causes of the Pilgrimage of Grace or the Lincolnshire rebellion. He points out that most of the grievances of those involved centered on enclosures, high rents and taxes, and tithes. He finds no religious causes whatsoever in the Lincolnshire rebellion, pointing out that the Lincolnshire rebels "showed no interest in Papalism."¹⁶ Dickens concludes "with confidence" that Catholic idealism or adherence to traditional religious practice played as negligible a role in Lincolnshire as it did in Cumberland-Westmorland. However, when one views the main Pilgrimage, a much more complex situation becomes apparent. Again, Dickens finds little religious motivation in the Yorkshire rising. He attributes much of the religious imagery to the main captain of the Pilgrimage, Robert Aske. Dickens refers to Aske as a religious idealist who imposed his views on the grievances of the York rebels. He examines Aske's memoir that Henry demanded of him and finds that most of the factors Aske mentions are economic in origin, not religious. Dickens points to the attack on the monasteries, one of the chief causes of the Pilgrimage. He points out that Aske's account

¹⁶ Ibid., 51.

focused on the economic function of the monasteries rather than the religious services provided by the lesser abbeys. Furthermore, according to Dickens, Aske's stress lies heavily upon the usefulness of the monasteries to the nobility, gentry, substantial tenants, and merchants; he mentions very little about the spiritual value of the monasteries.

Dickens also addresses the rebels' demands to restore the suppressed abbeys and the dispossessed monks. He argues that this demand had no clear connection to any real devotion to the monasteries. Dickens asserts that there are as many accounts of conflict between the rebels and various abbots and monasteries as there are cases of restoration of suppressed monasteries. He maintains that laymen in the north did little to help the monks maintain their discipline, and that in the north disrespect for the clergy both regular and secular occurred frequently before and during the Pilgrimage of Grace. Dickens suggests dropping the perseveration of the monasteries from the list of religious motives in the Pilgrimage of Grace, and put into the list of secular causes.

As for the remaining religious motives, the dislike of a predominantly Catholic society for doctrinal heresy and the problem of Royal versus Papal Supremacy, Dickens again rejects them as legitimate religious factors. Dickens further notes that during the years around the Pilgrimage of Grace protests against heresy do not in any remarkable degree come from the North, and it would be exceptionally hard to prove that feeling there was exceptionally intense.¹⁷ As further proof, Dickens points to the fact the Pilgrims accepted as one of their own Sir Francis Bigod, a man of well-known Protestant beliefs.

The matter of the Supremacy presents a more complex situation. Disagreement among the Pilgrims over the issue of Papal Supremacy existed. Dickens attributes the inclusion of the

¹⁷ Ibid., 59.

restoration of papal supremacy primarily to Robert Aske or at least a small pressure group, including clerics, among the Pilgrimage leadership. Dickens also maintains that most of the voluminous sources contain little to suggest, and a good deal to discourage, the notion that papal supremacy encouraged intense enthusiasm among either lay leaders or the commons. He concludes that none of the central aspects of the religious factors in the Pilgrimage of Grace can be assessed in isolation from personal and political issues.

G.R. Elton, one of the foremost historians of the Tudor Age, argues that the Pilgrimage of Grace was neither spontaneous nor overtly religious in nature.¹⁸ He maintains that money, not faith, caused the people to rise. Elton's argument centers on the rumors that circulated before and during the rebellion. He claims the government knew of these rumors, took efforts to quell them and to point out that the recent taxes affected very few of the protesters. Elton also refutes the belief in the spontaneity of the rebellions. He contends that a faction of discontented nobles, primarily Lord Darcy, planned and organized the rebellions.

Elton asserts that three issues dominated the Pilgrimage of Grace: the royal supremacy, the fate of the abbeys, and the spread of heresy. He argues that because of those issues most students of the Pilgrimage regard it as a primarily religious event. Elton interprets the articles attacking the supremacy as the work of Robert Aske alone. In fact he maintains that the entire religious tenor of the rebellion is overstated and entirely the work of Aske. Elton argues that Aske deliberately gave the movement that air of spiritual protest (a pilgrimage) that correctly reflected his own convictions but which he had trouble keeping alive among the body of his followers. Elton further claims that the issues of the restoration of Princess Mary, the freeing of

¹⁸ G.R.R. Elton. "Politics and the Pilgrimage of Grace," *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government*, Vol. 3. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 183-215. Darcy apparently could not envision being one without being the other.

Parliament from royal influence, the dislike of the Succession Acts because they gave Henry the power to bequeath the crown by his last will and testament, and the defense of the common law against recent innovations, if taken together, clearly reveal who and what stood behind the real leadership of the Pilgrimage. With this in mind, he points out that the main northern risings represent the efforts of a defeated court faction to create a power base in the country for achieving a political victory at court. According to Elton, this fact explains the constant affirmation of loyalty to the King (the assertion that the risings were for him not against him). It also helps explain the concentrated attacks on Thomas Cromwell and his ministerial colleagues. Professor Elton claims that the entire rebellion (inception, spread, its avowed and secret purposes, and its end) becomes clear when viewed as the work of a political faction which utilized the social, economic, and religious grievances found in the disaffected north, grievances linked not to feudal or popular uproar but to the increasing distrust felt by the regional gentry towards a revolutionary court policy.

Professor Elton bases much of his thesis on several incidents involving Thomas Darcy. Darcy, like many nobles, held conservative religious views. Darcy and others chafed under the religious reforms and longed for a return to communion with Rome. As we have seen, Chapuys reported to Charles V that several nobles angered over the break with Rome, among them Lord Darcy, approached him concerning intervention by Charles V. Only Darcy openly discussed his anger and in doing so spoke treason. Darcy told Chapuys that he was the king's loyal subject on matters of duty that did not conflict with his conscience and honor. He attacked the religious reforms as an affront to God and reason and said that if he consented to these changes, he could no longer consider himself a gentleman or a good Christian. He went on to state that he could name sixteen earls and other gentry of the north who shared his opinions. Darcy even outlined

military plans, which included an invasion by Scotland and Charles V. He told Chapuys that he could put a force of 8,000 into the field. This incident forms the core of Elton's argument that the Pilgrimage of Grace was a conspiracy of nobles.

Unlike Elton and Dickens, C.S.L. Davies argues that it is wrong to ignore the religious dimension of the Pilgrimage, to treat it merely as a cloak for more material aims. He states that historians pull apart various factors involved in complex movements in the course of their analysis and place them in rank order. Davies contends that in the process historians are inclined to forget the interaction and fusion of other grievances that make revolt possible.¹⁹ His purpose is to press the question of the religious issue in 1536. In the process, he sheds light on the disparity between widespread conservative religious commitment and the paucity of forceful resistance to far-reaching change. Although the narrative is familiar, Davies claims historians have failed to appreciate the full implications of the Pilgrimage. He points out that not only was the Pilgrimage of Grace the most serious threat of Henry VIII's reign but it may also be the largest popular revolt in English history in terms of its numbers and geographical range. Like Elton and the Dodds, Davies acknowledges that the rebellion probably was the result of a conspiracy. He also agrees that the Pilgrimage was not a spontaneous rebellion of the commons. Davis suggests that the degree of organization points to the active connivance of numerous noblemen and gentry. Davies bases this assertion on the contrast between the events of autumn 1536 and those of the rebellions of 1537, when most nobles and gentry actively disassociated themselves.²⁰ He contends that many of the great northern lords participated, either directly or by proxy. Not only

¹⁹ C.S.L. Davies, "Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace," in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 59.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

great lords participated in the Pilgrimage; a great number of lesser nobility and gentry also joined the rebellion.

Davies asserts that a number of factors contributed to the outbreak of the Pilgrimage of Grace. However, he refuses to point to one overarching cause, specifically economic factors. Davies recognizes that economic grievances did exist and in fact played a role in bringing on the rebellion. The general agrarian situation was indeed serious. A general rise in prices forced landlords to increase dues traditionally regarded as fixed or find themselves unable to maintain their traditional way of life. Nevertheless, Davies disagrees with Dickens and Elton that religion played no role in the Pilgrimage. He argues that Dickens insistence that the bad harvest of 1535 as a factor has no relevance to the economic situation extant in October 1536. Davies points out that the harvest of 1536, while not spectacular, was considerably better than that of the previous year. He does not consider the harvest situation sufficient to explain the Pilgrimage of Grace, though by creating bitter class relationships and causing riots it helped pave the way.²¹ Nor does Davies see conflict between the commons and gentry as a major factor. He acknowledges that the Lincolnshire rebellion exhibited a great deal of hostility aimed at the gentry by the commons. Nevertheless, he sees no evidence of class-hatred existing in the Pilgrimage of Grace. The rebels pressed the gentry to lead the rebellion, demanded that the king replace Cromwell and his associates with men of noble blood, and only elected their own captains when the gentry showed themselves unable to defend them against the Scots. Davies stresses that agrarian discontent will explain neither the timing of the Pilgrimage of Grace, nor its form as a revolt of northern society against the central government, rather than as class warfare within that society.²² He concludes

²¹ C.S.L. Davies, "The Pilgrimage of Grace Reconsidered," *Past and Present* 41 (Dec. 1968):58.

²² *Ibid.*, 59.

that economic conditions, while undoubtedly serious, do not seem to have been so unusual as to provoke a major rebellion on their own account.

Christopher Haigh puts forth a similar argument, although his focus is primarily on Lancashire. Haigh contends, like Davies, that the attack on traditional religious practices was a primary factor in causing the Pilgrimage of Grace. Like the Dodds, he views the dissolution of the lesser monasteries as the action that precipitated the rebellion. He points out that the Pilgrimage followed close on the heels of the suppression. Only two weeks after the ejection of the canons of Conishead abbey, the commons of Lancashire were arming themselves. Haigh argues that contrary to much of the historiography of the English Reformation monasticism remained an integral part of life in northern England, and particularly so in Lancashire. In both *The Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace* and *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, he argues that the monasteries in Lancashire played a vital role in the economic, social, and the spiritual life of the county. Furthermore, Haigh points out that a mass of evidence seems to show that the suppression of the lesser houses and the implied threat to the remainder drove the commons of Lancashire to revolt.²³ He cites a number of sources that indicate that unlike in other areas of England (primarily in the south) the monasteries in Lancashire were active and providing much needed charity in the area. All in all Haigh's books point to a strong attachment not only to the traditional religious practices but to Catholicism as well.

Haigh does not accept the idea that the Pilgrimage of Grace was primarily economic or a result of conflict between peasants and property owners. He contends that much of the evidence for economic causes for the rebellion in Lancashire comes from the government following the

²³ Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 119.

suppression of the Pilgrimage. Haigh argues that it was in the Crown's interest to suggest that the rebellion resulted from the greed of the gentry rather than its own ecclesiastical policy.²⁴ In Lancashire the course of the rebellion, and especially the close cooperation between the monks and commons, indicate that religious not economic issues motivated them.²⁵ Haigh clearly views the motives of the common people who rebelled in 1536 as primarily religious, and particularly in opposition to the dissolution of the monasteries. He points out that it would be unwise to assume that all the rebels who defended the monasteries did so for purely religious reasons, or that they all remained committed to the old religion. He concludes that the Pilgrims perhaps were defending not so much religious houses but the ways of thought and behavior, their social universe that they believed were under attack.²⁶

Scott Michael Harrison, in *The Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake Counties*, also takes a regional view of the causes of the Pilgrimage of Grace. His study concentrates on the Lake Counties, which constitute present day Cumbria. Harrison, like Christopher Haigh, rejects the argument that the Pilgrimage resulted from economic or social motives. He does recognize that the assault on traditional religious practices by the king played an important role in the Lake Counties. However, Harrison acknowledges that other factors were significant in causing the men of Cumberland to join the Pilgrimage.

Unlike any of the previous mentioned accounts, Harrison closely examines the political conditions to see what, if any, impact the political situation had on the outbreak of the Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake Counties. The enmity of the two dominant families—the Cliffords and the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Christopher Haigh, *The Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969) 51.

²⁶ Ibid., 59-60.

Dacres—created a violent and highly unstable state of affairs. Harrison contends that the lawlessness caused by the two feuding families was of crucial importance in the months preceding the Pilgrimage of Grace. He argues that both Dacre and Clifford contributed towards an atmosphere that allowed rebellious spirits to thrive. The feud created a power vacuum that is of primary importance in explaining why, in October 1536, rebellion was able to take such a stranglehold on the Lake Counties.²⁷

Unlike Haigh's portrayal of the monasteries in Lancashire, Harrison asserts that the general state of monasteries in the Lake Counties, both large and small, was poor. He cites several instances in which abbots, priors, and monks had the charge of murder leveled against them. Although all escaped punishment, Harrison points out that these cases reveal at the very least an extreme lack of discipline. The monasteries, like the Lake Counties themselves, were poor, clearly reflecting the poverty of the region. The abbey of Furness, the largest and wealthiest monastery in the region, had extremely contentious relations with the local commons. Thus, Harrison sees no apparent loyalty or strong attachment of the people to the Lake Counties monasteries.

Harrison points out that many consider the rebellion in the Lake Counties as a separate episode, disconnected from the Pilgrimage of Grace elsewhere because the complaints there did not attack the changes brought about by the Henrician Reformation.²⁸ He argues religious concerns did exist among the participants in the riding and were of primary importance to them. Harrison maintains their concerns were somewhat different from Pilgrims from other areas involved in the Pilgrimage. For instance, the question of the supremacy was apparently of little

²⁷ Scott Michael Harrison, *The Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake Counties* (London: The Royal Historical Society, 1981), 71. Here after cited as Harrison.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

interest to the Lake Counties Pilgrims. Their focus was on the “heretical ministers,” primarily Cromwell who they believed was the force behind the changes to the traditional religious order. If the rebels were not particularly interested in the supremacy, Harrison contends that their opposition to the changes in church ceremony was practically unanimous. The rebels were particularly angry over the forbidding of the bidding of the beads.²⁹ The Ten Articles and the Injunctions condemned much of the traditional service and liturgical calendar and created widespread discontent. Harrison asserts that where changes did affect them such as in bead bidding and the observance of saints’ days, the Lake Counties rebels saw good reason to protest. Rather than fighting against the introduction of Protestantism, they were simply fighting to protect what they had always known and accepted. Harrison concludes that any notion that the influence of religion in the Lake Counties was negligible is patently false.³⁰

Michael Bush has been one of the most prolific writers on the Pilgrimage of Grace over the last twenty years. He has written several articles and published two books on the subject. Throughout his writings on the Pilgrimage Bush exhibits several consistent themes. First, he rejects monocausal explanations of the rebellion. He is particularly critical of those who insist that the Pilgrimage occurred primarily for religious reasons. Bush also rejects the notion that the Pilgrimage was wholly secular in its origins, however, he tends to emphasize material factors over religious concerns. He further contends that the Pilgrimage was one of a number of revolts in an agrarian tradition dating back to 1381. Unlike many historians of the 1536 rebellions, Bush sees little connection between the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace.

²⁹ Bidding of the beads refers to the enjoining of prayers by the priest, particularly the announcement during the mass of upcoming holy days. Also at this time in the service, the priest would offer prayers for the pope.

³⁰ Harrison, 79.

Michael Bush, in “Captain Poverty and the Pilgrimage of Grace,” examines the northern rebellion in essentially the same area of England, as does Harrison. Bush focuses on the several rebel compositions that he asserts were of vital importance for the Pilgrimage of Grace. One was the list of articles produced by the Lincolnshire rebels. He suggests that the articles, disseminated in southern Yorkshire, helped spread rebellion throughout York. The other critical generator of revolt was the Captain Poverty letter, claiming to come from the commons. Bush maintains that the Captain Poverty letter originated with the Richmondshire uprising. He associates the Captain with the popular literary tradition of Piers the Ploughman. According to Bush, like Piers, Captain Poverty embodied both Christ and the commons and paradoxically challenged and confirmed the society of orders by accepting its hierarchy while temporarily championing commoner leadership.³¹ Bush attributes this and other Captain Poverty letters to members of the commons. The letter called for the restoration of the lesser monasteries, urged the maintenance of border defenses against the Scots, and required an oath of all those who joined the Pilgrimage. This letter, like the Lincolnshire articles, helped spread the rebellion into Durham and the northern reaches of Yorkshire as well as throughout Cumbria. Rebels in Cumberland, Kendal, and Westmorland employed Captain Poverty letters to gain support and declare their grievances.

Bush asserts that the uprisings of the far north were a series of Captain Poverty movements. These movements presented themselves, and most viewed them as popular risings. He further states that the language of Captain Poverty with its emphasis on brotherhood imparted a sense of equality that ran counter to the hierarchical suggestions of the society of orders. However, Bush contends that these risings were not purely commoner revolts. They sought to

³¹ Michael Bush, “Captain Poverty and the Pilgrimage of Grace,” *Historical Research* 65 (1992): 17.

appoint, and succeeded in securing, the support of the gentry and clergy.³² This pattern of seeking out the gentry, forcing them to take an oath, and naming them as captains was common to both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage. Bush views the rebellions (including that of Lincolnshire) as essentially risings of the commons, but with at least the tacit support of the gentry and nobility of the area. This same assertion, according to S.J. Gunn, applies to the earlier Lincolnshire rebellion. There as in the Lake Counties the rebels sought out the gentry and swore them as their captains.

Bush refutes the notion that the rebellions of the northwest were essentially economic in nature. He points out that in the Captain Poverty letters and the rebel articles religious issues were of vital importance. The rebels insisted on restoring the suppressed monasteries, demanded that the king restore the traditional church liturgy, and insisted the king remove heretical counselors. Nor were these rebellions feudal in nature. He points to the cooperation between commons, gentry, clergy, and occasionally noblemen. Although Bush states that this cooperation does not mean that class tension did not exist, it simply shows that each group had common grievances and worked together to convince the king to restore the old ways.

In *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536*, Bush suggests that what he terms “special pleading” and a tendency toward oversimplification of the causes of the Pilgrimage of Grace has dominated the historiography of the rebellion since the publication of the Dodds seminal work in 1915. Bush attributes the “special pleading” to Catholic and Protestant special interests that have “engaged in a face saving attempt to absolve its own religion.”³³ Thus, the Catholic interest portrayed the rebellion as a spirited defense of traditional

³² Ibid., 27.

³³ Michael Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of 1536* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 1. Here after noted as *Rebel Armies of October*.

Catholic belief and practice against the religious radicalism of the king's ministers. On the other hand, the Protestant interest cast the Henrician Reformation as much too moderate to cause a general uprising. As such, they tended to portray the Pilgrimage of Grace as the result of secular and material factors rather than religious matters.

Bush argues that the special pleading of sectarian interests accounts for only part of the oversimplification of the Pilgrimage of Grace. He suggests that the insistence on monocausal explanations has also contributed to the problem. Indeed, this has occurred, according to Bush, in spite of the multiplicity of grievances contained in the rebels' articles; most historians normally present the Pilgrimage as having either secular or spiritual motives.³⁴ Moreover, these monocausal explanations ignore the plurality of social movements contained within the Pilgrimage of Grace. In spite of the various representatives of the commons, gentry, and local nobility holding leadership positions, most accounts regard the rebellion as either aristocratic or popular in nature. Bush also maintains that another source of oversimplification of the event is the tendency to dismiss the Pilgrimage as a dismal failure, the pathetic victim of government manipulation.

Bush suggests that these problems are the result of the over reliance on certain basic themes, notably causation and leadership. His work concentrates on the organization of the revolt that hardly gets a mention: oath taking, the holding of assemblies, the formation of armies, the enlistment of neighboring regions, the drafting of manifestos, the summoning of councils to frame policy, and the drafting of petitions.³⁵ Thus, rather than concentrate on the causes and

³⁴ Ibid., 4.

³⁵ Ibid.

events of the Pilgrimage, Bush analyzes the formation of the rebel armies and in the process examines, with all its regional diversity, the creation of the uprising.³⁶

Unlike most examinations of the Pilgrimage of Grace, Bush does not view it as a monolithic northern rebellion. Instead, he deconstructs the rebellion by analyzing the eight local rebellions and the nine rebel armies that participated. Bush does not include the Lincolnshire rebellion in his study, claiming that it was different and not an integral part of the northern revolts. Furthermore, he does not include the revolts of early 1537 in the analysis. Bush contends that the 1537 risings were in fact a reaction to the Pilgrimage. Those involved in what he later termed the post pardon risings rebelled against the Doncaster agreement that the leaders of the Pilgrimage reached with the government in December 1536. Bush also has a very strict definition of the Pilgrimage of Grace. As he defines it, the Pilgrimage was an insurrection that occurred north of the Trent between 8 October, when the first revolt began in Beverley, and 27 October when the government and rebels agreed to a truce.³⁷

As he indicated in his introduction, Bush finds a diversity of motives among the rebels rather than simply religious or material motivations. For instance, Bush contends that the Aske host, primarily drawn from south Yorkshire, was heavily influenced in its motivations by the neighboring Lincolnshire rebellion. Although Bush recognizes the importance of religious factors, such as the dissolution of the lesser monasteries and the rumored plan to close superfluous churches, he argues that they were not the only concern of the Aske host. In their grievances, these rebels were greatly concerned about the attacks on the Church; however, rebels from other areas had more secular concerns. For example, the Cumberland host of the Four

³⁶ *Rebel Armies of October*, 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, ix.

Captains almost completely ignored the ecclesiastical reforms and the dissolution of the monasteries and focused their grievances on the lack of defense against the Scots. For Bush these examples indicate that there was no single religious or material motivation that led to the outbreak of the Pilgrimage of Grace. As stated above, a diversity of factors in the various areas of the North Country inspired commons, gentry, and nobility alike to revolt against Henry VIII.

Bush contends that the Pilgrimage of Grace was an agrarian revolt similar to those of 1381 and 1549. He claims that the hosts of October 1536 were following in a long tradition of popular protests. Bush suggests that by claiming that they were trying to restore right government, the Pilgrims belonged to a genre that had its beginnings in 1381 and in most of the popular revolts all the way to the rebellions in Norfolk and Cornwall in 1549. Bush points out that each rebellion took the form of an army acting in the name of the commons. The purpose in each case was to force the government to restore the body politic to its proper course.³⁸ Bush uses the statements of Robert Aske to support this argument. He contends that Aske's use of the term "pilgrimage of grace" indicates that the uprising was conceived as a pilgrimage to invoke grace that would proceed by petitioning the king to terminate the government's pact with heresy and to revive the respect for the society of orders and its abiding principles.³⁹ As to the type of grace the rebels were seeking, Bush concludes that based on the nature of the statements they were seeking the king's grace not spiritual grace.

Michael Bush in *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace* examines the aftermath of the Pilgrimage of Grace by analyzing the revolts that followed the government's acceptance of the Doncaster agreement of December 1536. The agreement between the northern rebels and the

³⁸ Ibid., 7-8.

³⁹ Ibid., 9

duke of Norfolk included a general pardon for all those who participated in the Pilgrimage of Grace and the promise of a York parliament in 1537 to allow the Pilgrims to seek redress of their grievances. Bush contends that by forcing Norfolk, Henry VIII's representative, to accept the rebel demands at Doncaster the rebels achieved a stunning success. The government, unable to crush the rebellion, had to negotiate with the rebels. He further argues that the defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace did not occur in December 1536, as most historians assert (the Dodds in particular), but in January and February of 1537 when a series of post pardon revolts erupted affecting Durham, all three Ridings, Westmorland, Cumberland, and Lancashire nullifying the December agreement. Bush asserts that had these revolts not occurred the history of England would have been dramatically different. The post pardon revolts by violating the December agreement and releasing the government from its obligations allowed the dissolution of the monasteries to continue, and, more importantly, allowed for the continued development of an English national church under royal control.

The post-pardon revolts began in January and continued throughout February and into March of 1537. As with the Pilgrimage of Grace, a series of rumors precipitated these risings. A visceral mistrust of government intentions and pilgrim leadership made up the core of these rumors. The rumors had two general themes: one, the government did not intend to honor the December agreement; and two, the Pilgrim leadership had made their own deal with the king and would betray the commons. Several other rumors fueled the fear that Henry would not honor the promised general pardon or allow the York parliament. One rumor, particularly strong in the East Riding, stated that the government had secretly begun garrisoning Hull and Scarborough and intended to use them to subject the commons in the manner of Lincolnshire. Another volatile rumor centered on the duke of Norfolk. According to this account, Norfolk intended not

to enforce the Doncaster agreement but to subjugate the commons. The story included the belief that Norfolk would bring an army of 20,000 in order to control the commons.

A series of events helped to intensify the fears that the government would not honor the December agreement. One such event centered on the collection of the clerical tenth. A letter from Henry VIII to the Archbishop of York demanding he resume the collection of the tenth caused uproar in Yorkshire and the surrounding area. The vast majority of the commons interpreted the Doncaster agreement to state that the government would not collect the tenth until the York parliament met. They viewed this demand as a clear violation of the agreement and proof of the government's intentions. The activities of the leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace also aroused the suspicions of the commons. The steady flow of northern gentlemen to London following the December agreement led many commoners to question the motives of the Pilgrimage leaders. These visits by the northern gentry caused the collapse of the alliance forged between the classes that accounted for the success of the Pilgrimage of Grace. Now the commons feared those who led them had negotiated a separate agreement with the king and now worked to betray them.

The revolts, all failures with the exception of Lumley's capture of Scarborough, violated the December agreement and led to the crushing of the Pilgrimage of Grace. According to Bush, the post pardon rebellions failed in large part because the majority of pilgrims, commons and gentry, accepted the Doncaster agreement. This accounts for the failure of any of the post pardon revolts to attract the large numbers of 1536. The fact that very few gentlemen took part in the 1537 risings severely limited any hope of success. Thus, the post pardon rebellions were overwhelmingly movements of the commons. Most of the leaders of the Pilgrimage worked to stifle the post pardon rebellions and defended the December agreement. With the majority of the

commons and the gentry unwilling to violate the pardon and content to wait for the chance to air their grievances at the promised York parliament, the post pardon revolts failed to create widespread support among former participants in the Pilgrimage of Grace. Lacking leadership and support, the post pardon rebellions succeeded only in destroying the accomplishments of 1536. The 1537 revolts effectively violated the pardon and released the government from honoring its part of the Doncaster agreement. The government, no longer concerned with violating the December agreement, took reprisals against not only the post pardon rebels but also many of the most prominent leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace, including Lord Darcy, Robert Aske, Sir Robert Constable, and Sir Thomas Percy.

Throughout the latter chapters of the book, Bush refutes the argument initiated by Madeleine and Ruth Dodds in *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Exeter Conspiracy* that the government never intended to honor the December agreement and promoted dissention among the Pilgrims in order to destroy the pardon. Bush bases his argument on the relative moderation with which the government acted in punishing the rebels. He further points out that the vast majority of those who went to the gallows in 1537 were involved in the post pardon revolts not the Pilgrimage of Grace. With the exception of the most prominent Pilgrim leaders, the majority of pilgrim captains and activists (well over fifty of them) escaped execution because their offenses occurred prior to the December 1536 pardon, thus pointing to the government's adherence to the Doncaster agreement. Bush asserts that of the 150 or so executed all but seven or eight actively participated in the post pardon revolts and all were found guilty of participating in further rebellion. He further suggests that government did not act out of leniency but rather out of its need to respect the December pardon. Furthermore, 150 of those executed took part in the post pardon rebellions while only seven or eight suffered for the Pilgrimage of Grace and

forty-six for the Lincolnshire rebellion. These numbers, according to Bush, point to a government determined to adhere to the pardon rather than destroy it.

R. W. Hoyle in *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* analyzes the great northern rebellion and much of the historiography of the event. Hoyle argues that the Pilgrimage of Grace was an overwhelmingly popular and spontaneous rising. He refutes the position that the Pilgrimage occurred as the result of a conspiracy of the gentry. Professor Hoyle contends that the gentry, initially coerced into joining the rebellion, took over leadership of the movement and worked to stall and contain the rising. He vigorously maintains that the dynamic heart of the Pilgrimage, whether in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, or the fringes of Lancashire and Cumbria, lay with the commons.⁴⁰ Hoyle further states that the determination to rise came from two sources: first, rumors of the dissolution of provincial religion that circulated in the summer of 1536; and second, word of the rising elsewhere. He finds no evidence of a conspiracy of the northern nobility and attributes the risings of 1536-37 solely to the commons.

Hoyle delineates two general phases to the 1536 movements. He states all of the risings in 1536 began as activist movements in which the local bonds of deference collapsed or at the least inverted. In the second phase, the gentry won a competition for leadership with the activists but found them confronted with the problem of offering leadership to the commons, who accepted their authority as long as it advanced their own interests, while making their own arrangement with the king.⁴¹ The actions of the nobility during the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace are central to Hoyle's thesis.

⁴⁰ R.W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 17. Cited here after as Hoyle.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

Much of the evidence of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace exists in the form of examinations and depositions of the rebels. Thus, a large proportion of the evidence available comes from those who gave statements while under the threat of arrest or imprisonment, or as in the case of the Pilgrimage of Grace, in the Tower of London. Thus, their authors had every reason to conceal their role or put the best possible spin on their actions.⁴² Most of these examinations, particularly those of the Pilgrimage, come from the gentry. Hoyle explains this in that neither the government nor the duke of Norfolk had any interest in tracing the rebellion back to its local roots. As a result, it is very difficult to uncover the voice of the ordinary people of the Pilgrimage of Grace because most of them escaped free of blame. Nonetheless, Hoyle bases his entire argument on these examinations and depositions.

Compared to earlier rebellions, a mass of evidence of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace exists. Much of the material on the risings of 1536-37 comes from contemporary correspondences and records of the investigations to determine the guilt of individual rebels whose names came to the attention of the government. Hoyle concentrates on these sources, particularly the letters and examinations of the Pilgrimage leadership and the royal leadership sent to quell the risings. The depositions of Thomas Moigne, William Stapleton, Robert Aske, the letters of Thomas, Lord Darcy, the correspondences of the duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Shrewsbury, as well as the letters and testimonies of various others involved in the movement provide the bulk of Hoyle's sources. Professor Hoyle uses these ample sources to determine the actions of the gentry in the rebellions. In direct refutation of the arguments of Dickens and the Dodds, he carefully and convincingly makes his case that the gentry did not

⁴² Ibid., 23.

enter the rebellion on their own free will; rather the commons coerced them to join under threat of harm to their property and person. Hoyle cites source after source to support this aspect of his argument. Obviously, this theme of coercion appears throughout practically all of the depositions of the gentry. The statements of the commons that exist also verify that most of the gentry who joined did so under threat. Even Norfolk and Shrewsbury believed that many of the gentry took leadership positions because the commons threatened them with destruction of property or person.

Throughout the work, Hoyle refutes most of the commonly held religious and economic factors attributed to bringing on the outbreak of Lincolnshire Rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. For instance, unlike G.W. Bernard, Hoyle dismisses the dissolution of the lesser monasteries as a primary motivation in bringing on the Pilgrimage of Grace. He concludes that the dissolution of the monasteries as the precipitator of the Pilgrimage of Grace can generally be attributed to Robert Aske. Hoyle contends that a close reading of Aske's account on the importance of the monasteries to the North reveals centrality of this issue to him, but not necessarily the sentiments of most of those involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace. In the account, Aske states that the abbeys in the north gave "great alms to poor men and laudably served God." He further states that the suppression of the monasteries will diminish the "divine service of Almighty God" because the people will not have access to the sacraments, the church treasures will be "unreverent used," and hospitality will not be available because those who acquire the abbeys will farm them out "for lucre and advantages to themselves." Aske also expressed the concern that the profits of the abbeys "yearly goeth out of the country to the king's highness," which will impoverish the north.⁴³ Hoyle interprets Aske's account as "an apologia for

⁴³ Ibid., 47.

monasteries couched in utilitarian social and economic terms.”⁴⁴ He further argues that the reoccupation of the recently suppressed monasteries was a “foolhardy and empty gesture” since most structures had been stripped of their lead roofs and were impossible to inhabit. Hoyle concludes that although there was a degree of support for dissolved houses, “it seems most likely that the dissolution which forms a strand of the Pilgrimage of Grace was largely the result of Aske’s own preoccupations.”⁴⁵ Not only does he reject the argument that the Pilgrimage was essentially a movement in response to Henry’s religious reforms, he also rejects the notion that the Pilgrimage of Grace was at its outset a tax rebellion. Here Hoyle is at odds with Bush on the role taxation played in stirring the revolts. He contends that taxation was not “to any significant degree” a cause of the Pilgrimage of Grace nor was the risings of 1535 as Bush has suggested. Hoyle asserts that it is more accurate to regard the taxation levied in 1536 as something that coincided with rather than inspired the Pilgrimage of Grace.

On the issue of the king’s disdain for the monasteries, Hoyle’s argument closely resembles that of Bernard. Like Bernard, he argues that the royal commissioners greatly exaggerated the charges of sexual misconduct among the monks in order to smear the monastic estate and precipitate the dissolution.⁴⁶ Hoyle contends that a marked anti-monastic tone existed in Henry’s behavior during the crisis. The king’s pronouncements expressed great antipathy toward the monks. He despised them for their uselessness and became preoccupied with their “abominable lives,” and clearly doubted their loyalty and obedience.⁴⁷ Hoyle states that it is not by chance that of the 67 laymen tried at Lincoln on 6 March 1537 only fourteen were executed

⁴⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 71-3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 452-53.

while all twenty of the clergy convicted were executed, among them fourteen monks from Bardney, Barlings, and Kirkstead.⁴⁸

Unlike Hoyle and Bush, Ethan Shagan, in *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, acknowledges that the Pilgrimage was primarily a reaction to the religious changes wrought by the Henrician Reformation. Unlike most of the other historians who have written on the Pilgrimage, Shagan does not delve into the causes or the motives of those involved in the rebellion. He is more concerned with the forces that caused the failure of the Pilgrimage. More specifically Shagan analyzes the popular politics of the period to explain why the rebellion failed. He asserts that at first glance the Pilgrimage of Grace appears to be “the epitome” of resistance to the Henrician Reformation. Furthermore, he contends that although the Pilgrimage was ostensibly opposed to the Reformation there was no substantial agreement among the Pilgrims over what the religious settlement would look like. The rebels also claimed to be defending the commonwealth against the economic abuses of an avaricious government but as with the religious grievances, there was no consensus on how radical the economic solution should be. The inability of the Pilgrims to come to an agreement on the very issues they claimed to be rebelling over is at the core of Shagan’s argument. Indeed, he argues that the movement draped itself with images and performances designed to promote such an appearance. Shagan claims “performative politics acted as a centripetal force, pulling together disparate forces and lending intellectual coherence to the movement.”⁴⁹ Although the imagery used by the Pilgrims promoted the appearance of unity, the lack of agreement on what the goals of the Pilgrimage of Grace were doomed the rebellion from the very start. Thus, according to Shagan, the Pilgrimage

⁴⁸ Ibid., 453.

⁴⁹ Ethan Shagan. *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 90. Here after cited as *Popular Politics*.

failed not because of the disruptive post pardon rebellions of 1537 but because the nation, so divided politically, prevented the majority of those involved from agreeing on what constituted victory.

Shagan does recognize the importance of the confiscatory rumors that spread throughout England in 1536 in bringing on the rebellions. In fact, he points to the rumored destruction of parish churches as the flashpoint for the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. These rumors convinced many people of the government's sacrilege and greed. Yet, Shagan warns that these rumors did not justify armed resistance. They did however confirm, even to the gentry, the government's worst faults. He argues that it was because of this shared imagery of a corrupt and mismanaged government that the Pilgrimage of Grace was "performed."⁵⁰ Shagan maintains that the adoption of the rhetoric of protecting the commonwealth, the imagery of an armed pilgrimage, the adoption of the five wounds of Christ as the Pilgrims' symbol were designed to show the government how a true Christian commonwealth should behave.

Behind these symbols, particularly that of protecting the Catholic Church lay serious disputes over the practical problems facing the kingdom that threatened to tear the Pilgrimage apart. Shagan points out that the protests against the government's assault on traditional religious practices and the commonwealth hid the fact that the rebels never agreed on what actions they were protesting, for what reasons, or what new policies they wanted put into place. He uses the central issue of the monasteries to illustrate this point. Shagan contends that if one canvasses the opinions of the rebels they reveal a clear disparity on what how to address dissolution. For some rebels the only acceptable solution was the restoration of those houses suppressed and the prevention of further dissolution. These sentiments were widespread in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Richmondshire. Shagan points out that while this attitude was

⁵⁰ *Popular Politics*, 91.

common even outside the area of rebellion it was by no means universal among the rebels. He states that only a minority of the Pilgrims held the view that there could be no negotiation on the issue of the monasteries. Shagan points out that even Robert Aske, one of the staunchest defenders of the monasteries, was not opposed to some form of compromise. Aske listed a number of practical reasons for the continued existence of the lesser monasteries such as masses for the dead, alms giving, hospitality, and education. Yet, he was willing to surrender some of the abbeys to the royal farmers pending the final settlement with the king.

Shagan also points to the royal supremacy as a more divisive issue than the monasteries. In fact, he contends the supremacy caused the most dissention among the rebels. He argues that the king's claim of supremacy over the Church created a dilemma for many religious conservatives but many defined it in such nominal terms, which allowed them to accept it. Shagan concludes that many of those involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace had in fact come to terms with the supremacy and were more concerned with Henry's abuse of authority. He notes that several of the rebel captains, such as Lord Darcy and Robert Constable, clearly accepted the supremacy. Shagan also points out that although the rebels spoke out harshly against the royal supremacy, it was not included in their early lists of grievances. More importantly, after outlining a number of differing stances on the issue, Shagan concludes that so many views existed among the Pilgrims that any settlement that attempted to finesse questions of church government would create as many problems as it solved.

Shagan addresses several conclusions made by Richard Hoyle and Michael Bush. He rejects the Bush interpretation that the Doncaster agreement of December 1536 marked a great victory for the Pilgrims and that the king had no other alternative but to accept his defeat. Shagan also rejects Hoyle's assertion that the December agreement was no victory at all. He

suggests that this argument rests on the prospect that the captains, who claimed the commons forced them to join the rebellion, found a way to diminish their collusion in the Pilgrimage and brokered a deal with the Duke of Norfolk designed to end the revolt peacefully with or without government concessions. Shagan proposes a third model based on his argument that the Pilgrimage of Grace was not a unified revolt with basic aims but rather an intrinsically unstable and politically contested movement. Moreover, fractures within the movement itself did not break down along class lines. He contends that some issues pitted gentry against commons, others clergy against laity, and others grew out of real differences in ideology that reflected the political temperament of the popular politics of the period. Shagan argues that this situation suggests that the fragmentation of the Pilgrimage of Grace resulted from a more general splintering of Catholic opinion causing the most devoted opponents of the Henrician Reformation to become politically marginalized and defeated by other more moderate Catholics.⁵¹ These fissures within the Catholic population increasingly allowed new religious ideas to seep into English culture, ultimately paving the way for Protestantism to gain a foothold. Shagan maintains that the Pilgrimage of Grace introduced a new sort of “casuistic calculation, balancing civil and religious obligations,” that increasingly dominated the political situation.⁵² The relationship between outward obedience and personal belief became the dominant issue of the English Reformation. The reaction to the royal supremacy was a prime example of this issue. Englishmen now began to balance political loyalty with policies so long as they did not violate God’s laws or undermine the structure of the commonwealth. Shagan contends that the basic divide that developed among the English people was not over whether royal policy was admirable but whether those policies were in fact legal and legitimate. These questions of

⁵¹ Ibid., 111-12.

⁵² Ibid., 127.

whether or not royal policy violated God's law or disrupted civil harmony dominated the next century. Shagan concludes that in the Pilgrimage of Grace the rebels asked these questions for the first time and discovered, much to their disappointment, that they disagreed.⁵³

G.W. Bernard in *The King's Reformation* is the most recent historian to grapple with the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. Like Shagan, he does not offer a detailed account of either of the rebellions. Instead, Bernard analyzes the causes and motives of the rebels and in the process exhibits an impressive knowledge of the historiography of the 1536 rebellions. Contrary to contemporary accounts, Bernard finds a great deal of commonality in both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. Bernard maintains that the causes of both rebellions and the motivations of those who participated were essentially the same. Both were the result of opposition to the Henrician reformation, thus both were fundamentally religious rebellions. He contends that the dissolution of the lesser monasteries was the central cause of both rebellions. However, Bernard attributes a greater portion of causation to the rumors circulating throughout the kingdom in the summer and fall of 1536 to the outbreak of the Lincolnshire rebellion. Furthermore, he maintains that news of the Lincolnshire rebellion prompted the rising in Beverley, which eventually spread throughout Yorkshire and the North Country becoming the Pilgrimage of Grace. Bernard points out that striking similarities in the oaths used in both rebellions existed, particularly the emphasis on the suppression of the monasteries. The dynamics of the revolts that occurred in the East Riding of Yorkshire were rather different from those in Lincolnshire. Although rumors of the confiscation of church treasures and closure of churches did play a role in igniting the Yorkshire rebellions, it was hard news of the events in Lincolnshire that acted as the catalyst for rebellion there. Men of the East

⁵³ Ibid., 127-28.

Riding learned of an armed uprising in Lincolnshire, quickly imitated in Beverley, directed against government policy. They also heard of the articles of grievances set down in Lincoln. Knowing that the commons of Lincolnshire were up, several men in adjoining areas of the East Riding apparently coaxed their fellows to revolt as well.

The heart of Bernard's argument is two-fold. First, he argues that the Lincolnshire rebellion and Pilgrimage of Grace were popular risings primarily opposed to the king's reformation. Moreover, he contends that it would be reasonable to go on to cite the rebellions as a "larger and deeper illustration of refusal and opposition" to Henry VIII's religious reforms.⁵⁴ Bernard points out that a surprising number of historians of both rebellions have sought to play down, if not eliminate, the importance of religious grievances in the risings. Secondly, he argues that few historians have adequately recognized that the defense of the monasteries was central to the risings and grasped how pivotal the Pilgrimage of Grace was in the subsequent suppression of the remaining monasteries. Throughout the lengthy chapter on the 1536 rebellions, Bernard argues that in fact spiritual motivations were central to the rebels. As such, he is critical of those historians who fail to recognize the depth of religious causes in the 1536 rebellions. Moreover, he contends that to ignore such spiritual dimension risks significant distortion.

As stated above, Bernard recognizes the role rumors played in igniting the Lincolnshire rebellion. He cites a number of sources that clearly indicate the centrality of the rumors of the destruction of superfluous churches and the government taking the chalices, crosses, and censors from parish churches and replacing them with ones made of tin. Bernard claims that there "is little doubt that the clergy and commons who spread such rumors" feared they were true.⁵⁵ In

⁵⁴ G.W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation—Henry VIII and the Reformation of the English Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 293. Here after noted as *The King's Reformation*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 296.

support of this point, he indicates that many of those deposed mentioned the rumors playing a role in bringing on the Lincolnshire rising. More importantly, the rumors were in many cases very specific, occasionally naming actual parishes. Bernard maintains that the intentions of the government to close churches or confiscate church treasures are not the relevant issues. Rather, he contends that the actions taken by parishioners to defend their churches and treasures offer clear and vivid testimony to the depth of their faith and its prominent place in their daily lives.⁵⁶ Here Bernard once again differs with the more recent trends in the historiography of the event. He rejects the notion that these rumors reveal essentially material or secular concerns. Here he is at odds with Michael Bush. The revolt at Caistor corresponded with the appearance of subsidy commissioners, who once sworn by the rebels, claimed that the commons objected that “they should be put of new enhancements and other importune charges which they were not able to bear by reason of extreme poverty.”⁵⁷ This, according to Bush, reveals that the revolt at Caistor had its beginnings as a tax revolt. Bernard admits that on the surface this seems a reasonable assertion. However, he contends that if one gives Henry’s response to these grievances a close reading then Bush’s argument collapses. In his response, the king announced that less than one in ten then engaged in what Henry viewed as a rebellion were affected by the parliamentary taxation of 1534. In doing so, Bernard argues that Henry unwittingly undermined the supposition that this was an essentially fiscal protest. Furthermore, he adds that if so few were liable to pay the tax, is it plausible that so many not affected by it would have gathered to protest so forcefully.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 297.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 297-98.

More in line with the more recent interpretations of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace is Bernard's rejection of the argument that both rebellions were the result of a conspiracy of the northern gentry or a disgruntled court faction angry at losing royal influence to "base born" counselors. Earlier accounts of the Lincolnshire rebellion focused on the activities of Lord Hussey, a first generation peer known for his religious conservatism and his long-standing sympathy toward Catherine of Aragon. The conspiracy theory surrounding Hussey has two central arguments. First, Eustace Chapuys, imperial ambassador to England, in a 1534 letter to Charles V intimated that Hussey and Lord Darcy had approached him about the emperor providing support to help overthrow Henry VIII. Both men claimed they could guarantee men well harnessed and ready if Charles would support their effort. The other basis for this argument is that early in 1536 Hussey had hoped that the overthrow of Anne Boleyn by a conservative court faction would correct matters. However, when Thomas Cromwell outmaneuvered the anti-Boleyn faction, this argument asserts that Hussey had no alternative but to stir up a rebellion. Bernard finds little merit to this claim. Sources indicate that both Chapuys and Hussey appeared genuinely surprised by the outbreak. Chapuys letters in 1536 indicate that the rebellions were unexpected and furthermore his letters in no way reveal he understood what was happening, much less that he was somehow coordinating it or knew anyone who was. Hussey's behavior, according to Bernard, strongly suggests that the Lincolnshire rebellion caught him by surprise as well. Bernard speculates that it was quite probable that Hussey sympathized with the demands of the rebels; quite possibly, he hoped to act as a mediator between them and the king. However, Bernard contends that this does not amount to starting or fostering the rebellion.

Bernard, as he did with the Lincolnshire rebellion, refutes the argument that a disaffected court faction conspired to bring Henry VIII's government down. The argument that such a conspiracy led to rebellion in Yorkshire centers on the actions of Lord Darcy. The case against Darcy depends heavily on his conversations with Chapuys in 1534. Chapuys reported that Darcy had told one of Chapuys servants that the religious changes in England were so outrageous against God that he could not consent. Darcy also claimed that he knew of sixteen earls in the north and other gentlemen that would raise the banner of the crucifix and put eight thousand men into the field.⁵⁸ In May 1535, Chapuys reported that Darcy was going home and would waste no time in advancing the business. In July 1535, the "good old lord" sent word to Chapuys that the emperor should obtain executorials. Bernard points out that such correspondence was certainly treasonable and, if accurate indicates that Darcy, like Hussey, was willing to consider rebellion, but as with Hussey, no connection exists between an old man's grumblings of 1534 with the rebellion of 1536. Darcy seemed surprised by the events of early October 1536. Bernard argues that just because Henry and Cromwell regarded Darcy as responsible for the rebellion and that he eventually went to the gallows does not necessarily prove that he was behind the revolt. Furthermore, it was obviously useful for the government to make the rebellion look like the work of a small group of partisan and treasonous malcontents, rather than the expression of widespread resentment among the northern nobility, gentry, and commons. Bernard suggests that it is legitimate to ask how far modern historians who have cast Hussey and Darcy as instigators of the revolt have fallen for the government's propaganda.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *The King's Reformation*, 321.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 322.

Bernard contends that the Pilgrimage of Grace was essentially a religious rebellion. The aims of the Pilgrims, he argues, reveal the religious character of the rebellion. Bernard refutes the argument that material concerns were at the heart of the rebellion. He points to one of Robert Aske's early proclamations to support this stance. Aske in a proclamation from mid-October refuted the charge that the rebellion had resulted because the king had had made "many impositions" on them—in other words had made too many material demands on his people. The proclamation leaves little doubt of the religious character of the Pilgrimage. It denounces the "many and sundry new inventions, which be contrary to the faith of God...the commonwealth of this realm"; their fears that evilly disposed persons were working to destroy the Church of England; and insists that they were making a pilgrimage "for the preservation of Christ's Church of this realm of England."⁶⁰ Archbishop Lee, in several of his comments, affirmed the religious nature of the revolt. Although Lee claimed he could not remember specific statements made by Aske, he did recall that Aske saying that the rebels were "entered in to that holy pilgrimage," which Bernard suggests presents the cause as a religious crusade.⁶¹

Bernard's chief argument is that the centrality of religious grievances for the Pilgrims reveals a rejection of the entire religious reform program of Henry VIII. The later interrogatories for Aske pressed him on subjects ranging from the Supremacy to the calling the "bishops of new learning" heretics to the legitimacy of Lady Mary. Aske, in his response, proclaimed that many still grudged against the divorce stating that "then it was thought, that the divorce made by the bishop of Canterbury, hanging that appeal, was not lawful, yea, and the men doubted the authority of his consecration, have not his pall as his predecessors had." Bernard maintains that

⁶⁰ Ibid., 332.

⁶¹ Ibid.

by implication this statement rejected the king's grounds for an annulment of his first marriage, and implicitly made the break with Rome unnecessary.⁶²

As with the Lincolnshire rebellion, Bernard contends that while the rumors discussed earlier were a central factor in bringing on the rebellion, the suppression of the monasteries provided the spark that ignited the Pilgrimage. He cites the testimony of Robert Aske to support this assertion. In April 1537, Cromwell questioned Aske as to the role the rumors played in starting the Pilgrimage of Grace. He responded by stating that although the bruits were one of the greatest causes but the "suppression of the abbeys was the greatest cause" of the rebellion. When pressed further about the impact of the rumors Aske stated that the suppression of the abbeys and the division of preachers would have caused an insurrection had "the said bruits not been spoken of at all."⁶³ He claimed that of all the grievances espoused by the rebels those aimed at the dissolution were the most prominent.

Bernard addresses the assertion by Michael Bush and R.W. Hoyle that Aske's defense of the monasteries is essentially a social and economic document. Bush, according to Bernard, constantly stresses the rebels' material objections to the dissolution—notably its impact on employment, charity, and hospitality. Hoyle also emphasizes the material. Bernard states that Hoyle views Aske's statement as "an apologia for monasteries couched in utilitarian social and economic terms."⁶⁴ Bernard argues that the problem with this approach is that it redefines religious matters so as to exclude the charitable, hospitable, and educational role intrinsic to late medieval monasteries. In essence, Bernard contends that Hoyle's argument reduces the religious

⁶² Ibid., 342.

⁶³ Ibid., 369.

⁶⁴ *The King's Reformation*, 371.

role of the monasteries to simply providing basic social needs without any religious or spiritual function. He states that such assertions distort Aske's defense of the monasteries as in any sense unmindful of the monasteries first responsibility—the divine service of God. According to Bernard Aske was emphasizing how much the monasteries did in the north and the damaging effects dissolution would have on the local economy. Bernard further speculates that by emphasizing the broader activities of the abbeys, Aske may have been attempting to convince the king and his ministers, who, as he probably had recognized by this time, had completely rejected the traditional religious function of the monasteries.⁶⁵

One of the last issues Bernard deals with is Bush's argument that Henry intended to honor the December agreement. Bush argues that Henry was by December 1536 quite prepared to go along with the concessions made at Doncaster. Again, Bernard finds fault with another of Bush's arguments. He contends that Henry disguised his true intentions to Aske and that he was always determined to prevail. Bernard points to several of Henry's actions that indicate he never intended to honor the Doncaster agreement. Throughout the crisis, Henry insisted on the evil of rebellion. He demanded that the gentry should make submission and receive the king's mercy. He wanted to impose an oath that would oblige the northern gentry openly to renounce the rebellion. The king demanded that those responsible for instigating the rebellion and the authors of its articles be found—even though he had pardoned them for any offenses they had committed.⁶⁶ Above all, Henry vehemently denounced the monasteries. Furthermore, Henry in his instructions to his royal lieutenants was adamant about dealing with the monasteries and

⁶⁵ Ibid., 371-72.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 390.

those who tried to restore them. Those who did not accept the suppression of the lesser monasteries were to be considered traitors.

Bernard concludes that what is most striking about the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace is not that they failed but that they took place at all and that from October 1536 through January 1537 it appeared the Pilgrims “held the whip hand” and would succeed in forcing substantial concessions from Henry VIII. The concessions, as he vigorously argues, were above all on matters concerning religion, especially the fate of the monasteries. Finally, Bernard concludes that the Pilgrimage of Grace, more than is currently fashionable to recognize, even more than was once believed, was a critique of the Henrician reformation revealing the depth and breadth of concern over Henry VIII’s religious policies.

As is evident, the historical debate over the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace remains a lively one. Several areas of agreement among most interpretations exist, specifically the importance of the rumors and the impact of the changes to traditional religion wrought by the Henrician Reformation. The nature of the rebellions and the motives of those involved remain the most significant areas of contention among Tudor historians. As the details above have made clear, the nature and quantity of the primary sources contribute greatly to the various interpretations. As mentioned above, Margaret Bowker has analyzed the role of the clergy in Lincolnshire and Bernard has emphasized the religious nature of both the Pilgrimage and the Lincolnshire rebellion. However, no historian has offered a detailed analysis of the role of the clergy in fomenting and spreading rebellion. Bernard in an early chapter of *The King’s Reformation* analyzes the opposition of the religious and clergy but only to the extent of their individual acts of defiance. Bowker, due to the sources she used, only addresses the Lincolnshire rising. It is striking that so little attention has been given to the one group of Englishmen that

had the most to lose due to of the Henrician reformation. Many of the historians noted above have indicated that it is quite likely that many of the clergy helped to stir and spread rebellion although none but Bowker has analyzed the actions of priests and monks. This lack of attention is most likely due to two factors. One, most of the historiography of the last fifteen years or so has tended to emphasize social and material factors while downplaying the religious. Two, the nature of the sources does not clearly reveal what role priests and monks played in stirring the rebellions. However, a close reading of the sources does reveal a depth of priestly and religious involvement. The following chapters will analyze the situation that confronted the English clergy beginning in 1529 and how those who refused to conform to the “new learning” reacted. In the following chapters, I will argue that both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace were at the very least supported and promoted by both priests and monks and most likely a number of them helped to stir both rebellions.

Chapter 3: Royal Assault

Henry VIII's determined effort to obtain a divorce from Catherine of Aragon brought him into open conflict with the Pope, ultimately resulting in the establishment of an independent state church in England. England's path to reformation took a much different path from that of northern Germany or Geneva. Henry VIII, with the assistance of Thomas Cromwell, engineered the break with Rome through a series of parliamentary actions that not only severed ties with Rome but also made it possible for the English clergy to provide Henry with the divorce. In the process, the Reformation Parliament dismantled much of the traditional religious practice, ultimately affecting both the clergy and laity. The Reformation Parliament of Henry VIII demolished the mechanisms of Roman Catholicism within England, established the Royal Supremacy, and put in place the devices for the king to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn. It is here, in the parliamentary assault on the traditional religious practice of England that we find the origins of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. Furthermore, the resulting establishment of an independent English Church, although very conservative compared to Lutheran or Calvinist churches, disrupted the traditional religious calendar and rhythm of life throughout England. For many members of the clergy and laity the changes were unreasonable, unwarranted, and unacceptable. The social, economic, and most

importantly, the religious reforms that resulted provide the general background causes of both rebellions.

The changes wrought by the so-called Reformation Parliament placed immense stress on the English clergy. The reforms enacted altered significantly the relation between church and state. More importantly, the changes in the traditional practices, the subordination of the English Church to the state, and the examinations and visitations occurred in rapid succession between 1533 and 1536. These changes along with the divorce caused great anxiety among the clergy, particularly among the lower ranks. No group came under such intense government pressure and scrutiny. The argument here is that these changes caused great disquiet and unease among clergy and laity alike. The disaffection that many of the clergy felt toward the Henrician reforms provides us with the source of both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. The royal assault on the clergy created widespread discontent throughout the realm especially in the northern counties creating conditions that provided a disgruntled and beleaguered clergy with the motive and means to stir the popular anger into revolt.

The Reformation Parliament, which sat in seven sessions from 1529 to 1536, was one of the most important of the Tudor period and, indeed, all of English history. On 3 November 1529, the long Parliament of Henry VIII assembled amid great pomp and medieval ceremony. Henry had issued writs summoning peers to a Parliament and ordered elections of members to the Commons on 9 August 1529. Henry had not called Parliament since 1523. Thomas Wolsey, the great cardinal who managed Henry's affairs for over a decade, preferred to rule without Parliament. The 1523 Parliament met ostensibly to finance the war with France and throughout its entire session, Wolsey met with great opposition. The political climate had changed since the early 1520s. The cardinal played no role in calling the 1529 Parliament. By August 1529 the

failure of Wolsey's French alliance and, more importantly, his inability to secure a divorce for his king, had caused the cardinal's power to collapse abruptly.¹ Although Henry's reasons for calling the Parliament are unknown, it seems unlikely that his intention was an attack on papal authority or the establishment of a national church. Henry had not received news of the actual advocacy of his case to Rome by 9 August. It seems more likely that the king probably intended for Parliament to take action against Wolsey. However, Wolsey's condemnation did not fall to Parliament. Henry offered Wolsey an indictment on praemunire rather than an attainder from Parliament. Wolsey accepted the praemunire charge, meaning he would lose only his property. Henry had the indictment against Wolsey drawn up on 9 October with a guilty verdict rendered against the cardinal on October 30. Four days later Parliament gathered.

The assault on the clergy began almost immediately. The newly gathered Parliament, particularly the House of Commons, quickly exhibited strong anticlerical leanings. Thomas More instructed the Commons to focus attention on "laws made by long continuance of time and mutation of things very insufficient, and also by the frail condition of man, divers new enormities" lately appearing among the people "for which no law was yet made to reform the same."² Apparently, the Commons interpreted this charge as a command to consider the abuses of the clergy. The Commons immediately assaulted the clerical estate. They sent a petition to Henry asking him to command the spiritual lords of Parliament to declare to the king "whether by the laws of God and Holy Church spiritual men might buy and sell for gain, take in farm any temporal possession, hold secular office, possess more than one benefice with cure of souls, and

¹ Stanford Lehmburg. *The Reformation Parliament, 1529-1536* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 1- 2. Here after noted as *The Reformation Parliament*.

² Edward Hall. *Hall's Chronicle* (London: J. Johnson et.al, 1809), 764; *The Reformation Parliament*, 81.

indulge in non residence.”³ The Commons sent the petition to the king presumably because the authors knew he would be responsive. However, the upsurge of anticlericalism displayed by the House of Commons was immediate and spontaneous. Henry VIII was not the source. The king had no need to instigate such an attack. He merely allowed it.

The king took no direct action on the petition. Instead, the complaints listed in the petition found their way into the bills of the Commons. Members charged the clergy with levying excessive fees for burials, probates of wills, and administration of the sacraments. The Commons charged that some clergymen held secular positions as surveyors and stewards to bishops, allowing them to occupy farms, granaries, and grazing lands. They further charged that some clerics kept tanning houses and dealt in wool, cloth, and other merchandise. In doing so, they took business from lay merchants and sometimes raised prices by engrossing and regrating.⁴ The Commons voiced alarm over the problems associated with pluralism and non-residency, particularly the pastoral care of the poor in rural areas. They called attention to the injustice of ignorant priests holding multiple benefices while many educated clerics wasted away in poverty at Oxford and Cambridge, unable to share their talents.⁵ Critics in the House of Commons also maintained that an excessive number of holy days existed causing workingmen to lapse into idle vice and lechery.

The Commons also addressed the abuses within Church courts, especially in heresy trials and the practice of excommunication. They alleged that bishops and archbishops brought charges

³ J.J. Scarisbrick. *Henry VIII* (Los Angeles: University of California Press), 250. Here after noted as *Henry VIII*; *Hall's Chronicle*, 765.

⁴ Engrossing refers to the practice of acquiring a monopoly of goods in order to sell them at inflated prices. Regrating is the practice of gaining control of a commodity once it reaches the market.

⁵ *The Reformation Parliament*, 82-83; *Hall's Chronicle*, 765.

of heresy against anyone who spoke out or questioned them. According to this line of attack, the Church courts charged exorbitant fees and accomplished nothing without bribery. Members of the clergy, according to critics, frequently excommunicated subjects for light and frivolous causes. Critics in the House of Commons charged that clerics used excommunication to silence their detractors and then benefited monetarily by charging the excommunicate outrageous fees for absolution. The Convocation of Clergy, Northern and Southern, also felt the sting of the Commons' anticlerical attacks. Detractors in the House of Commons claimed that Convocation made laws and ordinances without royal consent, yet these laws were binding on the king and his subjects. Furthermore, this practice diminished the king's power and jurisdiction.⁶ Despite the strong anticlerical rhetoric in the Commons and the seriousness of these charges, Parliament took no significant action against the clergy during this session. In fact, Parliament only acted on three of the charges – probates, mortuaries, and non-residence. However, these attacks are important because they reveal the presence of anticlerical opinions in the House of Commons and presage the coming attacks on ecclesiastical independence.

Parliament did not meet in 1530 due to Henry's preoccupation with the divorce. It seems clear that had Parliament met that the king intended to use it to settle the matter. On Easter Monday, 11 April 1530, Henry summoned Eustace Chapuys, the Spanish ambassador, to Windsor Palace. While at the palace, the duke of Norfolk cornered the ambassador and asked him point-blank if Spain would declare war on England if Henry divorced Catherine of Aragon and married Anne Boleyn. A short time earlier the French ambassador reported that Henry VIII planned to settle the matter of the divorce within England by the advice of Parliament completely

⁶ *The Reformation Parliament*, 86.

bypassing the pope.⁷ Originally scheduled to begin on 26 April 1530, the king prorogued the opening session of Parliament until June. The government claimed the reason for delaying Parliament was due to an outbreak of the plague in and around London. However, in June Henry once again postponed Parliament, this time until 1 October. The outbreak of the pestilence proved most convenient for Henry since it provided a cover for the real reason for prorogation—governmental indecision. When Parliament finally did gather in 1531, the focus was on Convocation, which had assembled on 12 January.

During the months of indecision, Henry took several steps to gain a favorable decision from the pope; specifically he sent representatives throughout the continent to seek the opinions of learned scholars from Paris to Bologna to support his case for the divorce. He met with limited success in this endeavor. Henry also began to take measures to bring the English clerical estate more directly under royal jurisdiction. Thus on Michaelmas, 1530, the government leveled praemunire charges against fifteen leading clerics. The fifteen included a number of Catherine of Aragon's strongest advocates: Bishops Fisher, Clerk, West, and Standish, along with Adam Travers, the archdeacon of Exeter. The indictments accused the clerics of entering into some sort of agreement with Wolsey that allowed them to keep their jurisdiction in return for a cash settlement. By doing so, the fifteen had incriminated themselves in the cardinal's guilt. The motive for the attack seems to have been an attempt to punish the supporters of Catherine and to intimidate Pope Clement VII.⁸ Whatever Henry's purpose, the charges came to naught. No trials occurred and the charges were later dropped. Instead, the king's advisers, presumably Cromwell, devised another strategy. In a letter to Wolsey, dated 21 October,

⁷ *The Reformation Parliament*, 105.

⁸ *Henry VIII*, 273-74.

Cromwell informed the cardinal that praemunire charges against the prelates would not appear, “There is another way devised.”⁹ Cromwell’s new device was to level praemunire charges against all of the English clergy rather than just fifteen.¹⁰ The charges stemmed from the fact that the entire clergy had honored Wolsey’s appointment as papal legate. J.J. Scarisbrick contends that the attack on the clergy “was a thrust at the heart of the clerical estate and the freedom of the Church in England.”¹¹

Thus, when Convocation gathered on 12 January 1531, the clerics of the realm had to address the praemunire charge against the entire clergy. Henry demanded £100,000 of the clergy allegedly to cover the expenses of bringing suit for the divorce in Rome and also for seeking the opinions of the various scholars in support of his cause. The clergy countered with an offer of £40,000 in hope that the king would compromise. However, Henry had no intention of compromising. He refused the offer, threatening that he would “punish every one with extreme rigor.”¹² Henry’s threats worked, the clergy agreed to pay the entire sum on 24 January. Convocation quickly drew up the terms for payment of the grant. The clergy wanted the payments spread out over a five-year period. Henry demanded the entire sum immediately in case of war. The Convocation could not or would not agree to the king’s terms and withdrew the grant completely. Chapuys reported that the clergy demanded that Henry restore certain privileges before agreeing to pay the grant.¹³ The clergy insisted on the restoration of ancient

⁹ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII* (Vaduz: Kaduz Reprints, 1965), IV, no. 6699. Hereafter noted as *LP*.

¹⁰ *The Reformation Parliament*, 108.

¹¹ *Henry VIII*, 274.

¹² *LP V*, 62.

¹³ Pascual de Giangos, Ed, *Calendar of State Papers, Spain, Vol. 4, Part 2: 1531-1533* (1882), 31-47.

rights and privileges of the clergy and a declaration of the precise meaning of the statute of praemunire. Henry refused both requests, agreeing only to allow the payment of the grant over five years. The king then issued his own set of demands in five articles. First, he called upon the clergy to recognize the king as “sole protector and supreme head of the Anglican Church and clergy.” The next article credited the king with spiritual jurisdiction, even the cure of souls. The third article confirmed those privileges of the Church that did not detract from the royal prerogative and the laws of the realm. The fourth article granted the clergy pardon from the praemunire charges but offered no explanation. The final article pardoned the laity as well.¹⁴

The supremacy clause met with stiff opposition in both houses of Convocation. Bishop Fisher led the opposition to the king, apparently convincing the upper house to reject flatly the idea of the supremacy. The king’s councilors attempted to calm the prelates by telling them that the king had no intention to assume any more power than his predecessors did, or to interfere in matters spiritual. However, Fisher and Convocation refused to budge. Once again, Henry’s advisers intervened to break the impasse. They argued that even if Henry received the supremacy as completely as he desired, it was understood “that he can have no further power or authority as far as the word of God allows.”¹⁵ This appeal apparently worked; the clergy compromised by adding the qualifying clause to the supremacy “as far as the law of Christ allowed.” The compromise met final agreement on Saturday 11 February. However, the lower clergy never gave unanimous consent. Only those bishops and archbishops present accepted the agreement. Convocation worked out the final terms of payment of the grant by 23 February. The payment of the grant was to occur in five installments with the first payment of £20,000 set for the Feast of the Annunciation in 1532. For his part, Henry accepted the payment schedule

¹⁴ *The Reformation Parliament*, 112-113; *Henry VIII*, 274-75.

¹⁵ *The Reformation Parliament*, 114.

offered by the clergy. He also abandoned the claim of cure of souls. Curiously, the king deleted the article extending a pardon to the laity.

The clergy emerged from this initial contest with the king relatively unscathed. The king had obtained the claim of supremacy over the English Church and clergy. Yet, it was a watered down version limiting his powers to temporal matters. Although Henry had forced the clergy to concede to him an unprecedented monetary grant, the clerical estate escaped with most of its traditional privileges still intact. Nevertheless, this was only the opening salvo of the assault on the clergy. Henry had retreated but by no means had given in to the prelates; his was a tactical retreat. A much more determined, and ultimately successful, attack lay in store for the English clergy.

The king's divorce overshadowed all religious matters during the third session of the Reformation Parliament. Yet, Parliament found time to assail the independent clergy, ultimately setting the stage for the final break with Rome. The desire for autonomy from Rome and for royal control of the English Church manifested itself with the passage in 1532 of the Act in Conditional Restraint of Annates. Annates, or first fruits, were payments claimed by the pope and the papal curia for the first year's revenues of a new benefice. The act proclaimed the siphoning of money by Rome intolerable and unbearable. It declared annates "and all manner contributions for...any archbishopric or bishopric...should henceforth utterly cease" and forbade any future payments to Rome by any prelate elected to any archbishopric or bishopric.¹⁶ The second article of the act stated that if Rome denied or delayed the required bulls for the consecration of any prelate by the king, the installation would take place without them.

¹⁶ A.G. Dickens and Dorothy Carr, Eds. *The Reformation in England to the Accession of Elizabeth I* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), 53. Here after noted as Dickens and Carr.

The anticlerical rhetoric that appeared in the opening session of the Parliament reemerged during the 1532 session. The Supplication of the Commons against the Ordinaries, originally drafted by Cromwell in 1529 and presented to the king in 1532, reflected the lay animosity toward the clergy. More importantly, it also represented a further attack on ecclesiastical independence. The Supplication contained a long list of specific grievances against the clergy reminiscent of those introduced but shelved in 1529. The measure attacked the clerical authority to enact legislation in Convocation without the agreement of secular government. It also criticized the corrupt and unfair Church courts, worldly priests, excessive fees for the administration of the sacraments, capricious persecution of heresy, and a church calendar with too many holy days that allowed laborers too much idle time, thus injuring the needs of England's budding economy. The grievances espoused in the Supplication illustrated the fundamental jurisdictional battle between church and state.¹⁷

The bill to abolish annates proved a very controversial and hotly debated issue in both houses of Parliament. Despite the obvious financial benefits to themselves, the spiritual lords unanimously opposed the legislation. Apparently, the anticlericalism of the Commons was not as universal as advertised since it proved just as uncooperative as the Lords did on the issue of annates. Henry tried several approaches to bring the Commons on board, but his agents failed to gain wide support. The king's agents argued that Spain made no such payments and promised that the king would take no further action against the pope for a year. In the end, the king resorted to a rather novel procedure to get the bill accepted. Chapuys reported that in order to ensure the passage of the annates bill, Henry ordered those members that "would stand for his success and the welfare of the realm on one side of the house" and those opposed to stand on the

¹⁷ Gerald Bray, ed., *Documents of the English Reformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 51-56. Hereafter noted as Bray. *The Reformation Parliament*, 138-42.

other. Chapuys reports that some who had opposed the measure passed to the king's side "for fear of his indignation."¹⁸ The act in conditional restraint of annates passed both Houses at the end of March. However, the final form of the bill was much more moderate due to the stiff opposition the matter faced. According to Chapuys, rather than deny all annates revenue to the pope, the act allowed the pope to collect 5 percent of the former payments. If the pope refused, "the two archbishops will have the power of conferring dignities and of consecrating, or, in their stead, two bishops appointed by the King."¹⁹ Evidently, the implied threat was not lost on Clement VII for he quickly dispatched the bull necessary for the consecration of Thomas Cranmer as archbishop of Canterbury following the death of Warham in August 1532.

Even though the Conditional Restraint of the Annates had met with considerable opposition, criticism of the clergy in the House of Commons continued. The Commons discussed a number of grievances similar to those included in the 1529 petition to Henry. According to Edward Hall, the Commons "sore complained of the cruelty of the ordinaries" in *ex officio* proceedings for heresy.²⁰ The lower house debated other grievances of the church courts. Norfolk, on February 28 in a letter to Benet, wrote of "the infinite clamors of the temporality here in Parliament against the misuse of the spiritual jurisdiction." He went on to inform Benet that "nothing hurtful shall be done, unless the fault be in the Pope in proceeding wrongfully against the King," and that "the King will stop all evil effects if the Pope does not handle him unkindly."²¹ Clearly, Norfolk and the king still held out hope that the pope would come around to their cause with enough intimidation. Sent to Henry in 1532, the Supplication Against the

¹⁸ LP V, 898; *The Reformation Parliament*, 138.

¹⁹ LP V, 898.

²⁰ Hall quoted in *The Reformation Parliament*, 138.

²¹ LP V, 831.

Ordinaries was originally a series of grievances of the Commons against the clergy. The Supplication listed nine specific charges against the clergy. The first charge attacked the independent legislative power of Convocation as giving the clergy too much power and the unjust character of *ex officio* proceedings. Other charges focused on the independent legislative power of Convocation, the nature and inconvenience of heresy trials, the use of excommunication as a means of punishing those who spoke against the clergy, the large number of holy days kept with small devotion, and the number of secular offices held by clerics. Henry received the Supplication on 18 March.

While the Commons sent their grievances against the clergy to the king, Convocation took up several reforms of a less serious nature as those contained in the Supplication. The reform articles urged bishops to set a good example. Other articles addressed the issues of simony, holy orders, non-residency, education of monks, and abuses in immune chapels, such as that in the Tower.²² Convocation left the more controversial issues to future deliberations. However, Convocation dropped several of these such as *ex officio* proceedings apparently because Parliament had taken action. Nonetheless, in spite of the good intentions of the clergy to reform the Church from within, their actions pointed out the independent legislative power of Convocation at the exact moment of its debate in Parliament. As Convocation passed their reform canons, the government opened its attack on the clergy. On 8 February, the government brought *quo warranto* charges against several prominent clerics, including the archbishop of Canterbury. The apparent purpose of the charges was to intimidate the clergy and it may have helped pave the way for their submission.

Archbishop Warham went on the offensive. He issued a formal protest distancing him from any parliamentary acts attacking the power of the pope or the liberties of the Church. He

²² *The Reformation Parliament*, 142.

further antagonized the Commons by summoning Hugh Latimer, one of their favorite preachers, on heresy charges. The summons declared Latimer contumacious because he would not subscribe to the required articles. Warham excommunicated him and ordered him taken prisoner. Latimer submitted and was exonerated after he recanted his “over bold” preaching and begged forgiveness on his knees. On 15 March, Warham spoke against the king in the House of Lords, prompting an alleged use of foul language by Henry. The archbishop’s actions brought the threat of praemunire charges. Legal proceedings did not materialize, however. Warham’s death most likely spared him from Henry’s wrath.

After breaking for Easter on 28 March, Parliament reconvened on 10 April with Convocation gathering two days later. The first order of business for Convocation was to consider the Supplication, which Warham received from the king during the recess. Stephen Gardiner drafted Convocation’s response. Although couched in servile language, he yielded nothing to the Commons. Gardiner claimed that the legislative authority of Convocation had its origin in Scripture and Church tradition. He also added that the charges of abuse in heresy trials and other administrative matters stemmed from the faults of particular men and not the entire clergy. Henry received the response on 27 March.

Meanwhile the king continued to press for a tax for war with Scotland. The tax created a great deal of bitterness among the Commons as evidenced by their response to the request. The argument advanced by many in the House of Commons was that Scotland could only invade with foreign assistance and thus the best method of preserving peace was the maintenance of justice and friendship abroad. This response probably referred to the matter of the divorce, which some members believed was destroying relations with the Holy Roman Emperor. Again, this seems to counter the argument of great anticlericalism within the House of Commons.

On 30 April, Henry delivered the response of Convocation to the Supplication by saying, “We think their answer will smally please you, for it seemeth to us very slender.”²³ On 8 May, Stokesley, presiding over Convocation in Warham’s absence, informed the clergy of Parliament’s granting of a fifteenth to the king. He wanted the clergy to follow suit. The lower clergy retired to discuss the issue of taxation as ordered. They returned shortly with a new proposal. The lower clergy requested that the bishops of London and Lincoln, the abbots of Westminster and Burton, the dean of the chapel royal, and Edward Fox, the king’s almoner, go to Henry as representatives of the entire clergy and implore the king to preserve and protect the liberties of the Church. Those named, all favorites of the king, agreed to go, however the meeting accomplished nothing.

This meeting may have prompted the king’s preemptory demand that the clergy abandon their legislative power. On 10 May, Convocation received three articles from the king. The articles demanded that the English Church renounce its authority to make canons without royal permission or license. The clergy were to submit existing canons to a council of thirty-two, appointed by the king consisting of half clergy and half members of Parliament. Last, the English Church was to abandon all canons that the committee found offensive and retain the remaining canons with the consent of the king. The clergy reacted with an unyielding response. They argued that spiritual jurisdiction proceeded directly from God and offered to present for royal approval only those canons that did not deal with the correction of sin or maintenance of the faith. Henry responded by calling a delegation from Parliament and showed them a copy of the oaths the clergy gave to pope and king. On 11 May 1532, Henry delivered his famous response, which was a thinly veiled charge of clerical treason. “Well beloved, we thought that

²³ *The Reformation Parliament*, 148.

the clergy of our realm had been our subjects wholly, but now we have well perceived that they be but half our subjects, yea, and scarce our subjects; for all the prelates at their consecration make an oath to the pope, clean contrary to the oath they make to us, so that they seem to be his subjects and not ours.”²⁴ Two days later the king sent a new draft of demands to Convocation. The clergy attempted to work out a compromise but matters took an unexpected turn when the king suddenly prorogued Parliament and Convocation until 4 November. The appearance of Norfolk, Exeter, Oxford, Sandys, and the Boleyns made it clear that the king expected immediate action on the matter. The king’s councilors demanded the submission of the clergy without any qualifications. Threatened with the charge of treason Convocation submitted on 15 May. Royal pressure proved too great and the churchmen surrendered, abandoning their independent power to legislate. On 16 May, the Submission of the Clergy was presented and enacted by a rump convocation. The abbots of St. Albans, Bury, and Waltham represented the regular clergy and Warham, Standish, Longland, and Clerk signed for the bishops. The record makes no mention of the response of the lower clergy.

The submission of the clergy allowed Cromwell free reign to pursue his radical solution to Henry’s impasse with the papacy. During the fourth and fifth sessions of the Reformation Parliament, the breach with Rome grew ever wider, making it clear that no reconciliation would happen. The Act in Absolute Restraint of Annates (1533), the Act of Restraint of Appeals (1534), and Dispensations Act (1534), all composed by Cromwell, effectively made the break with Rome permanent. The Act in Restraint of Appeals made it illegal to make any appeal, spiritual or temporal, to Rome on pain of confiscation of property and person as a rebel. The bill, written by Cromwell, maintained total independence for England claiming it was an empire. Furthermore, Cromwell declared that jurisdiction rested with the king in all cases. Despite stiff

²⁴ Ibid., 150; *Henry VIII*, 299.

opposition, the Act in Restraint of Appeals passed both houses of Parliament before the Easter recess in April. This measure was one of the most important passed by the Reformation Parliament. Not only did it remove the remaining obstacles to the divorce, it made the break with Rome virtually complete. The Dispensations Act cut off all financial payments to Rome and granted the archbishop of Canterbury the authority to issue dispensations formerly issued by the pope. The act also set fees charged for dispensations and required royal assent, confirmed by the Great Seal, in matters that exceeded £4. This series of acts destroyed the remaining vestiges of papal authority in England and further limited the independence of the English clergy.

The final blow came in 1534 with the passage of the Act of Supremacy. It not only proclaimed the king as Supreme Head of the Church in England, it also granted Henry VIII and his successors the power to subject the clergy to all laws of the realm, to lay down doctrine, to ensure the proper teaching of doctrine, and to reform the Church in any way they thought necessary.²⁵ The Supremacy made Henry, and future English monarchs, the only Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England. The act also stated that the king had “all dignities and jurisdictions properly belonging to the same, and from time to time correct errors and enormities in the Church, by visitation or otherwise.”²⁶ The claim to royal supremacy included the right to teach right doctrine and reform the church but not to preach or the cure of souls. That right, known as *potestas ordinis*, belonged solely to the clergy. Henry insisted that he was only claiming the ancient rights of secular rulers usurped by the papacy over the centuries. The Supremacy obviously removed what remained of ecclesiastical independence and placed the English Church directly under state control. The changes wrought by the Supremacy were

²⁵ Dickens and Carr, 64-5.

²⁶ *The Reformation Parliament*, 202.

extremely unpopular, as were the causes of the changes, throughout the realm. The Royal Supremacy caused more overt and repeated displays of disaffection for the king and his proceedings than any other act of his entire reign. Discontent with the Supremacy was widespread among both laity and clergy. As the following chapters will attest, numerous sources testify to the disgruntlement that the Supremacy caused throughout the kingdom.

Although these acts are of great importance to the Henrician Reformation because they initiated the final break with Rome, they had little impact on the daily lives of most of Henry's lay subjects. The fact that these acts had little or no direct impact on the religious practices of the realm helps us to understand why, with the exception of the Supremacy, they went unnoticed among most commoners. However, a series of acts passed by Parliament between 1534 and 1536 created widespread discontent, especially in northern England. These acts attacked traditional medieval religious practices, thus affecting the daily lives of the citizenry, which explains why so many of those who rebelled knew of and despised them in some form. Most of these reform acts found their way into the various lists of grievances drafted by the Lincolnshire rebels and the Pilgrims of Grace. A large number of Englishmen of all classes disagreed with the attack on traditional medieval religious rituals; their anger also lashed out at those whom they believed had instigated the changes, particularly Thomas Cromwell and certain "heretical bishops." Of particular importance was the Act for First Fruits and Tenths. First fruits and tenths or annates, as explained above, refers to the payments claimed by the pope and papal curia from the first year's revenue of a new office or benefice. The first fruits and tenths chiefly affected clergy appointed to archbishoprics and bishoprics who paid large sums to Rome.²⁷ The Act of 1534 simply transferred the payments of the first fruits and tenths from the papacy to the crown. The

²⁷ Dickens and Carr, 51.

source of discontent was not so much the transference of the payment to the king, but that the payment now became yearly

for more augmentations and maintenance of the royal estate of his imperial Crown and dignity of Supreme Head of the Church of England, shall yearly have, take (and) enjoy...one yearly rent or pension amounting to the value of the tenth part of all the revenue, farms (fixed annual rents), tithes, offerings, emoluments and all other profits, as well called spiritual as temporal...the said pension or annual rent to be yearly paid forever to our said Sovereign Lord.²⁸

The commons objected to this act in large part because they believed that the demand for the yearly payment of first fruits and tenths would rob the monasteries of their ability to provide alms and hospitality. Many held land as tenants to the various abbeys and monasteries, and they feared that rents would increase causing a shortage of money in the north and economic hardships. The Act for First Fruits also established commissions “to examine, search and enquire...of and for the true and just whole and entire yearly values of all manors, lands and properties...belonging to any archbishopric, bishopric, (etc.).”²⁹ This particular passage foreshadows, and possibly reveals, the dissolution of the monasteries.

Another source of agitation was the passage of a subsidy act, with the subsidy to be collected in 1535 and 1536 and a fifteenth and tenth in 1537. These represented the two most common types of taxation during the early Tudor period. However, these taxes were radically different. The fifteenth and tenth was a simple fixed tax and until the early Tudor period had been the most common tax levied on Englishmen. The directly assessed subsidy was a much

²⁸ Ibid., 67.

²⁹ Ibid., 64-65.

more complex tax that under the early Tudors became highly developed and actually superseded the fifteenth and tenth as the chief means of taxation. Before the Tudor dynasty gained the throne of England the fifteenth and tenth had become universally accepted as the standard form of taxation. Parliament preferred this tax because it was simple, fixed, and familiar. The fifteenth and the tenth, originally a directly assessed tax, had created problems over time for the royal government. Widespread evasion and concealment in the assessment of the tax forced changes. These problems caused Edward III in 1334 to abandon the direct assessment of the tax on individuals and commissioned the heads of religious houses and royal commissioners to negotiate with the locals on how each village or town should pay. If those involved were unable to reach an agreement then the locality would pay the sum that it had paid in 1332.³⁰ Some adjustments were made before the Tudors arrived on the scene, but by the reign of Henry VII, the fifteenth and tenth had become a fixed assessment for a small geographical area. From the crown's perspective, the tax was remarkably simple, and since the amount to be paid was known, all that remained was to collect the tax.³¹ The Tudor dynasty's great economic innovation was establishing the directly assessed subsidy as the principal form of taxation. Subsidies, based on periodic assessments, taxed directly the moveable property, income, and wages of Englishmen. The subsidy and the fifteenth and tenth were both extraordinary taxes, reserved only for times of emergency; usually war. Parliament granted such taxes periodically, only twenty-seven times between 1485 and 1547. Unlike the fifteenth and tenth, Parliament set the rates for the subsidy and organized its collection.³² The commons disliked the subsidy primarily because the rates

³⁰ Roger Schofield. *Taxation Under the Early Tudors, 1485-1547* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 28. Hereafter cited as *Taxation Under the Early Tudors*.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

³² *Rebel Armies of October*, xiv-xv.

were unknown and then assessed directly. For the gentry and commons alike, this was an onerous tax. As mentioned above, the king had declared subsidies for 1535 and 1536 followed by the assessment of a fifteenth and tenth in 1537. The close proximity of these taxes put great pressure on limited incomes, causing the Pilgrims to address each in their list of grievances. The Yorkshire Articles, drafted by Robert Aske in October 1536, drew attention to the subsidies. Aske stated, “your subjects within the said shire (York) are now at this instant in time in manner utterly decayed and perished whereby Your Grace to take the said tax...would be an importunate charge to them considering the poverty they be in already.”³³ The Pontefract Articles issued in December 1536 demanded “to be discharged of the quindene (tax of a fifteenth) now granted by act of Parliament.”³⁴ The rejection of the fifteenth and the tenth most likely reflected the anger over having to pay both it and the subsidy in such close proximity to one another. Obviously, these taxes weighed heavily on many of the Pilgrims.

In addition to these measures, Parliament passed a group of political acts that proved very unpopular. Among these, a series of Succession Acts caused a great amount of popular dissatisfaction. The First Act of Succession declared Princess Mary illegitimate and passed the succession on to the male offspring of Anne Boleyn, or to Princess Elizabeth if the marriage produced no male heir. It obliged all subjects of the realm to swear to uphold it, under penalty of high treason. This and subsequent acts gave Henry the right to name a successor in his last will and testament. The Treason Act made words treason, thus giving a new definition of high treason. It declared treasonable “any person [who]...do maliciously wish, will or desire by

³³ David S. Berkowitz, ed., *Humanist Scholarship and Public Order* (Washington: Folger Books, 1984), 167. Here after noted as *Humanist Scholarship*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

words or writing that the King...be heretic, schismatic, tyrant, infidel or usurper of the crown.”³⁵ As stated earlier, the Act of Supremacy granted Henry and future monarchs complete control over all matters concerning the Church of England. Each of these articles was offensive to those who joined in the Pilgrimage of Grace. However, the Lincoln men appeared willing to accept the king’s supremacy. Robert Aske, leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace, on the other hand demanded England’s return to obedience to Rome.

In February 1536, Parliament passed the Act for the Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries. The act justified the dissolution because the small monasteries served only as dens of “manifest sin, vicious, carnal and abominable living.”³⁶ The act provided for the dissolution of all monasteries with less than twelve members and an income of under £200 per year. Those inhabiting the small houses would either transfer to one of the great monasteries or renounce their vows and enter secular life. The Pilgrims particularly objected to article five of the Act. It stated, “The King’s Highness shall have and enjoy his own proper use, all the ornaments, jewels, goods, chattels, and debts” of the various suppressed houses.³⁷ This policy caused widespread upheavals in the north. The abbeys that existed in the northern counties, according to many sources, remained a viable, important part of the social and religious life of the north. Estimates place the number of houses victimized by the act of dissolution at that more than three hundred. Between 70 and 80 houses, or about one-fourth, received exemptions allowing them to remain open.³⁸ It is unclear how many of the two hundred odd houses suppressed were in Yorkshire and the northern counties. Yet we do know that at least twelve houses endured suppression because

³⁵ *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 10-11.

³⁶ Dickens and Carr, 98.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

³⁸ Joyce Youings. *The Dissolution of the Monasteries* (London: George Allen and Unwin LTD, 1971), 50. Here after cited as *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*.

the Pilgrims restored that many houses during the rebellion. Apparently, many of the residents of the smaller houses did not accept dispensations allowing them to forsake their vows and enter secular life. A large number petitioned to either enter other houses or become secular priests. Of the 289 men affected by the act, 117, or 40.5 percent, asked to take holy orders. In Yorkshire, of the 108 nuns affected only one asked for release from her vows.³⁹ Clearly, many of the smaller houses in Yorkshire remained strong and active. The fact that the rebels restored twelve of the dissolved houses points out that the abbeys remained a viable and important part of the social and religious life of the north.

Monastic houses served many purposes besides religious ones. They provided schools, almshouses, hospitals, and orphanages. The houses also offered employment on their estates to landless freemen. Many northerners wondered how almsgiving and hospitality provided by the small abbeys could continue. The indication that the king would confiscate the ornaments, jewels, and good of the abbeys spawned a series of rumors throughout the north and even in southern and eastern England, claiming the government planned to seize the treasures of parish churches. The parishioners, many of whom had contributed to the purchase of cup and plate, feared the loss of their community's treasures. When the rebellion broke out, many people guarded their local churches to prevent the confiscation of their parish plate.

The Statute of Uses, passed by Parliament between February and April 1536, preserved intact to the king feudal dues from estates held directly from the crown. It was illegal to bequeath such estates, but usually the holders provided for their families by leaving a rent charge on the estate for the use of their younger children or other dependents. The Statute of Uses

³⁹ David Knowles. *The Religious Orders in England*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 310-11. The numbers listed above for those monks and friars who petitioned to become secular priests include Yorkshire.

abolished such practices entirely and thus deprived the whole family except the eldest son of any income from an estate held in chief from the king.⁴⁰ Landowners especially despised this act, while the commons seemed to have no knowledge of it. Apparently, the Lincoln rebels included a demand for its repeal only after the gentry told them about it and explained it to them. Robert Aske, in the York Articles, also called for the repeal of the Statute of Uses. The second of the five York Articles humbly beseeched Henry to repeal the Act because it “restrained of our liberties in declaration of our will concerning our lands, as well for the payment of our debts...and relieving our children, the which we had by the suffering of your laws...the long continuance the which we think is a great discomfort to the commonwealth.”⁴¹ However, Aske admitted that he only included it in his articles because it appeared in the Lincoln articles.

In May 1536, the suppression of the monasteries began with the dissolution of Sawley Abbey and Marton Priory, both in Yorkshire. Along with the suppression of the monasteries, several acts passed between June and July created great hostility among those living in the north. The adoption of the Ten Articles, the Proclamation Restricting the Number of Holy Days, and the First Henrician Injunctions caused widespread discontent. Each of these signified a direct assault on the traditional medieval religion that existed in sixteenth century England. The Ten Articles represented the first official doctrinal statement of the Church of England. The Articles reflected the struggle between the radicals and the traditionalists in the 1536 Convocation. The intended purpose of the articles was to establish basic doctrines of the faith and to prevent inflammatory or radical preaching.⁴² These articles reduced the number of sacraments from

⁴⁰ *The Reformation Parliament*, 235-38.

⁴¹ *Humanist Scholarship*, 166-7.

⁴² Hoyle, 83.

seven to three, recognizing only Baptism, Penance, and the Eucharist. The Ten Articles also affirmed a form of justification by faith. Article VI allowed for images of Christ and the Virgin in churches. However, the faithful must learn not to pray to images but only to God. Article VII permitted the ‘honoring of saints’ with the qualification that “they should be revered for their excellent virtues which Christ planted in them” but not with the confidence and honor due only to God.⁴³ The Ten Articles also denied the doctrine of Purgatory. Article X maintained that while it was acceptable to offer prayers for the souls of the dead as tradition and custom allowed, the “place where they be, the name thereof, and kind of pains there, also be uncertain in scripture; therefore this with all things we remit to Almighty God...to whom it is known their estate and condition.”⁴⁴ The Articles also forbade the invocation of the saints and offering prayers for the pope. That the commons knew of and disliked the Ten Articles resulted from the fact that Article I commanded the clergy to teach and the people to believe all the doctrines contained in the Ten Articles. When the clergy attempted to follow this command, their parishioners often responded angrily to the new teachings. Not only were the commons angered over the Ten Articles, but a significant number of clergymen objected to the articles as well. The assertion here is that the Ten Articles created a great deal of anger and discontent among the lower clergy. Along the same lines, R.W. Hoyle maintains that the reaction of the lower house of convocation, although not recorded was probably one of absolute horror. He makes this claim based on the list of “mala dogmata” of June 1536 that the lower clergy drafted.⁴⁵ As we will see

⁴³ Dickens and Carr, 76.

⁴⁴ Bray, 174.

⁴⁵ Hoyle, 85.

in the next chapter, numerous examples exist to corroborate both clerical and lay anger over the Ten Articles.

The First Royal Injunctions of Henry VIII of 1536, the work of Thomas Cromwell in his capacity as vicegerent for ecclesiastical affairs, endeavored to enforce uniformity throughout the Church of England. The Injunctions sought to ensure the translation of the provisions of the Ten Articles into Church practice at the parish level. It seems that Cromwell anticipated that the Ten Articles and the abrogation of holy days would cause problems. The Injunctions insisted on clerical obedience to legislation abolishing the pope's jurisdiction, and it ordered that the clergy provide Bibles in both Latin and English, and encourage their parishioners to read them. These injunctions ordered the clergy to preach on the Ten Articles and to enforce the abolition of the holy days. It disallowed pilgrimages and the veneration of the saints and relics as superstitions. The First Royal Injunctions called for parents and masters to catechize every member of their family in the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in English.⁴⁶ The reform movement manifested in these acts quickly developed into a struggle between the old religion and the new, reflecting one of the major elements evident in the Pilgrimage of Grace.

These acts conflicted directly with traditional religious practice throughout England. Not only did these acts dismantle daily religious practice, several also threatened economic hardships on both laity and clergy. First Fruits and Tenths transferred the payments from Rome to the king but actually placed more financial burdens on the clergy by making the payments yearly as opposed only the first year of a new appointment. The Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries caused fear among the common folk, primarily in Northern England. Many lay people feared the loss of the monasteries because throughout the north these smaller institutions provided hospitality, alms giving, jobs, and education. Much of the reform legislation had the effect of

⁴⁶ Dickens and Carr, 77-81.

putting greater and greater pressure on clerical jobs. The pressure for benefices at the parish or curacy level often became intense. Devaluing masses and intercessions for the dead would not only reduce the number of jobs but also increase the number of priests seeking benefices. Under these conditions, religious change, particularly towards the Protestantism of the Continent, brought serious social costs; Catholicism did not. By 1536, the religious reforms placed the clergy, both beneficed and unbeneficed, from a purely material perspective, in a state of severe agitation.⁴⁷ Certainly, the events of the late summer and early autumn of 1536 must have convinced many priests and monks that the religious reforms would destroy their livelihood and any hope of advancement. As we will see in the next chapter, ample primary source materials exist to connect much of the clerical and lay discontent with the above-mentioned acts. These acts are most likely the source of the rumors that preceded the outbreak of both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Before discussing the impact the Henrician reforms had on the English people and clergy, we first need to analyze the relationship between priest and laity. A great deal of emphasis in this relationship has focused on the anticlericalism present in England at the outset of the Reformation. Until recently, the standard interpretation of the early stages of the Henrician Reformation centered on the supposedly widespread, endemic anticlericalism among Englishmen. Recent analysis of the English Reformation suggests that anticlericalism was a result of the Reformation rather than anticlericalism fueling the Reformation. According to this interpretation it appears that the Reformation in England caused a strong anticlerical sentiment to develop throughout the kingdom. The anticlerical sentiment and legislation offered by the House of Commons during the Reformation Parliament was politically motivated to attack the

⁴⁷ Margaret Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln Under John Longland, 1520-1547*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 121.

independent legislative authority of the clergy.⁴⁸ Much of the controversy centers on the function of the priesthood by clerics and theologians of Protestant sympathies and those of Catholic traditionalists. Those with Protestant leanings tended to view the priesthood in terms of function rather than essence. They viewed the priest as faithful pastors and, most importantly, as preachers of the word of God. Those with Protestant sensibilities rejected the priest as an anointed purveyor of Divine grace through the administration of the sacraments. For Catholic traditionalists, the pastoral element was important, but the essential quality of the priest was his ability to administer the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and penance that mattered most. Thus for the Protestant, the education of the priest was of primary importance in order that he might properly minister the word of God to his congregation. For most Catholics what mattered most was that the parish priest provided them with regular opportunities to receive the sacraments; his preaching ability was of secondary importance.

The nature of the anticlericalism that appeared in the House of Commons in the early stages of the English Reformation appears to have resulted from these opposing views of the nature of the priesthood. Throughout the realm, no significant evidence exists to suggest that widespread animosity toward the clergy existed among the laity. Indeed, it appears that as long as priests performed their duties in providing their parishioners access to the Eucharist and penance their relations with their congregations were usually good. However, when a priest failed in this regard relations with parishioners could get unpleasant. Complaints often arose when priests neglected their responsibility to say mass and hear confessions.⁴⁹ The churchwardens of Havervill in Suffolk complained that their vicar was neglecting his duty to

⁴⁸ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 220. Hereafter noted as Marshall.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

here confessions. In Lancashire, the parishioners of Pendle complained that their curate was absent and did not provide them with opportunities to go to confession during Lent. One obvious way a priest might lose the trust of his congregation was to violate the secrecy of the confessional. One purpose of the sacrament of confession was to create unity and social harmony within the parish. A priest who violated the sanctity of the confessional threatened the unity and harmony of his parish and most likely lost the trust of his congregation. Although evidence is scarce, it appears that such behavior on the part of priests was rare. In confessing their sins, men and women of a parish placed a great deal of trust in the integrity of their priest. Where that trust failed, a pastor's hold on his flock could become increasingly untenable.

Although the Six Articles of 1539 retained auricular confession, many reformers began to view it as "privy chamber treason." In the late 1530s a number of reports reached government officials that conservative priests were using the confessional to encourage disaffection with religious changes. Government authorities exhibited a great deal of nervousness about the potential of the confessor to influence political attitudes. In the aftermath of the Pilgrimage of Grace, clergymen in York received instructions to urge their parishioners "both in confessions and otherwise to conform themselves in all points to such order as it shall please the king's highness to take for the governance and quietness of his realm."⁵⁰ Evidence indicates that this behavior on part of clergymen continued well into the 1540s.

A priest's spiritual standing among his parishioners centered on his ability to perform the miracle of the mass. The one thing Catholics understood about the mass was that during it Christ became present among them and that this miracle could only occur through the agency of a duly ordained priest. This appearance of Christ, the moment at which the congregation knew him to

⁵⁰Ibid., 28.

be actually present, had developed into the apotheosis of popular devotion.⁵¹ With the declining frequency of lay communion during the course of the Middle Ages, many of the laity attended mass expressly to see the elevation of the host. For many Englishmen and women the elevated host was the main, perhaps the lone reason for attending mass on Sundays and holy days.⁵² It is here that we see the importance of the priest for most Englishmen in the sixteenth century. At the moment of elevation the laity was completely reliant upon the priest for the realization of their deepest religious needs. Because of the priest's daily contact with the body of Christ, it was a common understanding in the pre-Reformation Church that the priest was "higher than the angels."⁵³ Based on these examples, two things are clear about the role of the parish priest in the lives of his parishioners. First, because of his sacerdotal powers, parishioners held him in greater esteem than lay people; they expected more of him. Second, and most importantly, the priest's most important duty was to see to it that his congregation had access to the body of Christ and the confessional. For most Englishmen, the priest as preacher was of little importance. They looked to the priest, not as the exponent of the Word of God, but as mediator and intercessor.⁵⁴ However, it is incorrect to dismiss completely the significance of preaching in the sixteenth century. Examples exist of instances where controversial preaching, conservative or radical, had the potential to divide communities. On occasion preachers stirred crowds with their sermons, specifically the Evil May Day riots of 1517 and the sermon of Thomas Kendal, the vicar of Louth, whose incendiary sermon triggered the Lincolnshire rebellion in 1536. The radical

⁵¹ Marshall, 40.

⁵² Ibid., 42.

⁵³ Ibid., 46.

⁵⁴ Marshall, 95.

preaching of Hugh Latimer at Bristol during Lent in 1533 and the orthodox response of Thomas Hubberdine created great turmoil in the town.

Arising from the fact that most priests did not preach is the charge that most clergymen were ignorant and poorly trained. The fact that most parish clergymen did not preach is most likely due to their lack of training to do so. Peter Marshall contends that on the eve of the Reformation, about 20 to 25 percent of the English clergy were university graduates and the numbers were higher in the areas near universities. Furthermore, Marshall maintains that the widespread image of the ignorant and ill-trained parish priest was the result of charges leveled by humanists and Protestant reformers. He suggests that since many influential laymen nominated predominately non-graduates to clerical positions it is unlikely that common parishioners, who were largely illiterate, were any more interested in the educational background of their priests. Furthermore, most attacks on the ignorant clergy came from literary sources rather than parochial protest.⁵⁵ In general, the parishioners did not consider the matter important so long as the parish priest performed his pastoral duties regularly and conscientiously. The common folk considered the honesty and conscientiousness of the clergy much more important than his educational background or his ability to preach. Lasciviousness, drunkenness, and failure to perform pastoral duties aroused parishioners' anger, not educational mediocrity.⁵⁶

As the Henrician Reformation progressed, emphasis on the clergy's ability to preach and teach replaced the priest's administering the sacraments. This change in emphasis resulted from the need for the clergy to promote the Royal Supremacy and to distance the English Church from the Bishop of Rome. The doctrinal formularies beginning with the Ten Articles of 1536 and

⁵⁵ Ibid., 98-9.

⁵⁶ Marshall, 100.

continuing with the Six Articles in 1539 and the King's Book of 1543 deemphasized the sacerdotal responsibilities of priests. These doctrinal formularies failed to mention the human intent of the minister of sacraments and appeared to make the priest a nonentity.⁵⁷

All indications are that before the Reformation the priesthood was, in varying degrees, held in reverence by many members of the laity in early sixteenth century England. As seen above, the sacerdotal powers of priests caused most lay people to hold them in an exalted position. Overall, the moral standards of the English clergy were better than other kingdoms. Records indicate that relatively few clergymen were disciplined for fornication. However, the laity showed a great deal of anxiety when it came to the issue of lecherous priests. Clearly, parishioners held their clerics to a much higher moral standard and were quick to expose priests who violated their vow of celibacy. This anxiety toward the sexual lapses of priests was most likely due to the fear on part of the laity that sinful priests somehow weakened and corrupted the Eucharist. The fear was that sinful priests adversely affected a layperson's ability to receive unadulterated sacraments and ultimately entry into heaven. "Lay people were concerned about clerical celibacy because at root it was an issue which touched their very salvation. In spite of the orthodox teaching that the sacraments were unaffected by the wickedness of the minister," failure to remain chaste "was viewed in quasi-Judaic terms as a ritual pollutant, an objective threat to the efficacy of priestly functions."⁵⁸

Beyond the sacerdotal responsibilities of English priests, people expected the clergy to provide them with charity and hospitality. They also expected their pastors to be present and had little patience with nonresident priests. In most cases, congregations had good relations with

⁵⁷ Ibid., 117.

⁵⁸ Marshall, 163.

those priests who performed their duties regularly and provided for their spiritual needs. When priests failed in these areas, animosity among parishioners could be quite serious. Although there were no sixteenth century saints among the English clergy, for the most part they did a commendable job of providing for their congregations. The relationship between the pastor and his flock on the eve of the Reformation seems to have been relatively good.

The argument above refutes the existence of widespread and deep seeded anticlericalism in England. Furthermore, the evidence above supports the contention that anticlericalism resulted from the Reformation rather than contributed to its cause. Much of the anticlerical legislation offered by the House of Commons in the opening sessions of the Reformation Parliament was politically motivated rather than inspired by religious feeling. The anticlerical sentiment that existed in the early stages of the English Reformation focused not on the entire clergy but on individual priests who failed to live up to the near unattainable standards that the Church demanded. The special status of the priest as the source of sacramental grace made it practically impossible for many priests to live up to such lofty expectations. The laity expected the clergy to exhibit their sacral status not only in their priestly duties but in their daily lives as well. By “allowing or encouraging its spokesmen to disseminate an arch-clericalist world view, which had no place for fallible ministers, the Church created a currency of inflated expectation, and was repaid by the laity in that same coin.”⁵⁹ Accordingly, the laity expected that the priest in all aspects of daily life would reflect these signs of sanctity that served to guarantee the spiritual gifts the clergy claimed to be able to grant. Simply put, most priests could not live up to these expectations and the failure of priests to attain such spiritual perfection was the source of what has been regarded traditionally as anticlericalism. Furthermore, the nature of anticlerical

⁵⁹ Marshall, 235.

sentiment was aimed largely at individual priests. Universal anticlerical sentiments did not exist early on and developed much later in the English Reformation.

The result of the assault on the clergy by king and Parliament resulted in an inordinate amount of pressure on the ecclesiastical community. The English Reformation was of a much more conservative nature than that inspired by Martin Luther and John Calvin, it altered completely the relationship between priest and the royal government. Clerical independence fell away and now the clerical establishment answered ultimately to secular authorities rather than the bishop of Rome. As a result, the fitness of a priest came under intense scrutiny by Cromwell in his responsibilities as vicegerent. Not only did the Henrician reforms destroy the independence of the English Church and the clergy, the various changes challenged the security of many priests. The Act of First Fruits and Tenths allowing the king to collect each in the first year of a priest's incumbency created a potentially lucrative situation for Henry VIII. If clergymen moved from one benefice to another then the king would be able to collect first fruits and tenths for each newly assigned position. For priests it meant that positions once thought permanent were no longer secure. Moving priests from one benefice to another allowed the king to profit. The only difficulty for Henry was to see to it that priests did in fact move. A sure fire means to insure just that was the examination. The threat of examinations explicit in the First Royal Injunctions caused great fear among many beneficed priests. Any religious injunction that required explanation to parishioners meant the possibility of an examination to determine if that priest was fit to instruct his parish. A priest in a situation in which he knew the king stood to gain from depriving a man of his cure, and the priest concerned could not rely on his learning, such as it was, that took him through ordination and institution, to get through the examination,

any royal injunction that required a visitation for enforcement was a threat.⁶⁰ Adding to the feelings of clerical insecurity was the suppression of the lesser monasteries. Among other things, the local monasteries in Lincolnshire and throughout the northern counties provided priests with titles at ordination and later perhaps a benefice. With the passage of the Suppression Act in 1536, many of these positions would soon disappear. Not only did the suppression of the lesser monasteries mean fewer positions. It meant more competition for the remaining benefices throughout the midlands and northern counties. Among the religious, much the same sentiment existed although they had less to lose from rebellion. Much of the fear, anger, and discontent among the parochial clergy and religious developed because of the parliamentary acts that had facilitated the break with Rome and the visitations. This fear and anger on part of the clergy and religious towards the religious reforms helps us to understand why so many defied the government by refusing to comply with the Henrician reforms. As we shall see in the next chapter, this fear played a role in clergymen spreading rumors, posting seditious handbills, and spreading rebellion in Lincolnshire and the northern counties.

⁶⁰ Margaret Bowker, "Lincolnshire 1536: heresy, schism or religious discontent?" *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, Derek Baker, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 204.

Chapter 4: Resistance, Rumors, and Rebellion

Early modern monarchs wielded great authority over every aspect of the government of their kingdoms. Tudor monarchs were no exception. Henry VIII was responsible for maintaining good government, administering the law, and preserving peace throughout his realm. A detached or lazy king was a burden and a handicap to his kingdom. Worse still, an incapacitated monarch unable or unwilling to shoulder the responsibilities of governing was “a misfortune inflicted on his kingdom.”¹ Potentially more harmful were kings who gained the throne as minors. Minorities could lead to political instability since political factions aiming to control the child king often developed and vied for control of the government. Certainly, the Tudors were keenly aware of the political instability that plagued England due to the dynastic woes the kingdom endured during the fifteenth century. The Wars of the Roses, which beleaguered England with sporadic violence from 1455 to 1485, are indicative of the problems that weak, incapacitated kings as well as minors inheriting the throne created. Henry VII ended the Wars of the Roses in 1485 by defeating the usurper Richard III, and marrying the Yorkist

¹ Hoyle, 55.

heir, Elizabeth of York.² There is little doubt that Henry VIII understood the potential problems the realm faced because of his lack of a male heir. That fear of the collapse of political and civil stability played a role in Henry's determination to put away Queen Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn.

The Tudors liked to portray themselves as the restorers of peace and stability as well as reestablishing the authority of the English crown. Henry VII had done just that in 1485 and succeeded in passing the crown peacefully to his son Henry VIII. However, Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon had produced only one female child, his marriage to Anne Boleyn had produced yet another daughter. By act of Parliament Henry had both of his daughters Mary and Elizabeth declared illegitimate and settled the succession to the throne on the issue of his marriage to Jane Seymour. However, the act provided that if no heir resulted from Henry's latest marriage then the king could name his heir either by will or letters patent. Many believed that this was a thinly veiled attempt by the king to pass the crown on to his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond. If that was Henry VIII's intention, those hopes ended on 23 July 1536 with Richmond's death. Thus, by July 1536 the succession situation was exactly where it had been before the divorce of Catherine of Aragon. Still, in the summer of 1536 Henry's domestic situation appeared to be as stable as it had been since early in his reign. Yet, there was serious discontent throughout the realm created by the religious reforms imposed on the kingdom between 1533 and 1536. Henry's marital problems may have quieted down for the time being but the religious reforms enacted by the Reformation Parliament had agitated large segments of the commons and clergy. By the fall of 1536, much of the midlands and Northern England had

² Ibid., 55-56.

risen in opposition to the religious changes and presented Henry VIII with the greatest internal threat he would face as king of England.

Discontent and resistance to the religious reforms appeared throughout the realm almost immediately. The changes created a great deal of uncertainty for clergy and laymen alike. The religious reforms threatened not only traditional religious practices. The entire pace of life for clerics and laymen was in the process of being, if not destroyed, drastically altered. These fears on the part of the clergy, religious, and laity led to widespread discontent and resistance throughout the kingdom. Prior to the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace, however no organized resistance to the religious reforms existed. Indeed, most of the extant sources indicate that although opposition was widespread most acts of defiance to the Henrician reforms took the form of individualized acts.

The Act of Supremacy (1534), the Act annexing First Fruits and Tithes to the Crown (1534), the Proclamation Restricting the Number of Holydays (1536), the Ten Articles (1536), the First Royal Injunctions of Henry VIII (1536), and the Act for the Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries (1536) had the greatest effect on the traditional religion of England. These acts caused widespread discontent, particularly in northern England, because they affected the time-honored religious customs of the citizenry. The Act of Supremacy proclaimed the king as Supreme Head of the Church in England. It also granted Henry VIII and his successors the power to subject the clergy to all laws of the realm, to lay down doctrine, to ensure proper teaching of doctrine, and to reform the Church in any way they believed necessary.³ The Act of Supremacy effectively ended any chance for reconciliation with Rome by transferring papal authority to the king. More importantly, it brought the English Church and clergy under governmental and lay control for the first time in history. To enforce the Act of Supremacy

³ Dickens and Dorothy Carr, 4-5.

Parliament passed a new Treason Act that among other things made the denial of the king's title high treason, punishable by death.

The Royal Supremacy paved the way for Cromwell acting as vicegerent to issue the First Royal Injunctions in 1536. The injunctions endeavored to enforce uniformity throughout the Church of England. It seems Cromwell anticipated that the abrogation of holy days and the Ten Articles would cause problems. Thus, the Injunctions insisted on clerical obedience to legislation abolishing the pope's jurisdiction, ordering that the clergy provide Bibles in both Latin and English, and to encourage their parishioners to read them. These injunctions ordered the clergy to preach on the Ten Articles and to enforce the abolition of the holy days. They disallowed pilgrimages and the veneration of the saints and relics as superstitions. The First Royal Injunctions called for parents and masters to catechize every member of their family in the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in English. Much more menacing to the clergy was Article IX of the injunctions. It caused intense anxiety among the clergy by requiring an examination to determine their fitness to preach and hold benefices.

The Ten Articles represented the first doctrinal statement of the English Church and proved very controversial among clergy and laymen alike. The Articles reduced the number of sacraments from seven to three, recognizing only Baptism, Penance, and the Eucharist. They also affirmed a form of justification by faith. Article VI allowed for images of Christ and the Virgin in churches. The faithful, however, must learn not to pray to images but only to God. Article VII permitted the 'honoring of saints' with the qualification that "they should be revered for their excellent virtues which Christ planted in them" but not with the confidence and honor due only to God.⁴ The Ten Articles also denied the doctrine of Purgatory. Article X, maintaining that

⁴ Dickens and Carr, 76.

while acceptable to offer prayers for the souls of the dead as tradition and custom allowed, stated that the “place where they be, the name thereof, and kind of pains there, also be uncertain in scripture; therefore this with all things we remit to Almighty God...to whom it is known their estate and condition.”⁵ The Articles also forbade the invocation of the saints and offering prayers for the pope. That the commons knew of and disliked the Ten Articles resulted from the fact that Article I commanded the clergy to teach and the people to believe all the doctrines contained in the Ten Articles. When the clergy attempted to follow this command, their parishioners often responded angrily to the new teachings. An example of the anger of the commons’ directed at the new teachings occurred in July 1535 at Gisburn in Yorkshire. On Sunday 11 July, as the priest declared the injunctions issued by Cromwell, one John Atkinson approached the altar, “violently” took the book from the stunned priest’s hands “pulled it to pieces, and privily conveyed himself forth from the church.”⁶ Another example of the anger at the religious reforms can be seen in the commons dislike of the use of English mass books and Bibles. At the outset of the Lincolnshire rebellion at Louth, the rebels burned the books written in English.

Eight days after the signing of the Ten Articles, Parliament approved the Proclamation Restricting the Number of Holydays. By this act the king, in his capacity as supreme head, declared that abolished all feast days falling in harvest, from 1 July to 29 September, as well as those occurring during the Westminster law term, except for the feasts of the Apostles, the Blessed Virgin, and St. George. Observance of Ascension Day, the Nativity of John the Baptist, All Saints’ Day, and Candlemas was also allowed. The Proclamation “decimated the ritual year,” outlawing numerous local festivals and removing a large number of important religious feasts from the traditional church calendar. In July, the holydays struck down included the feasts

⁵ Gerald Bray, ed., *Documents of the English Reformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984) 173.

⁶ LP VII, no. 1024.

of St. Martin, St. Swithin, St. Margaret, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Anne, and the main feast of the translation of the relics of Thomas Becket. The August feasts abolished were the enormously popular feasts of the Transfiguration and the Holy Name of Jesus along with the feasts of St. Laurence and St. Augustine. Traditional September feasts eliminated were the feasts of St. Giles, St. Cuthbert, and Holy Cross Day. The abrogated days that fell within the law terms included those of St. John of Beverley, St. Dunstan, St. Augustine of Canterbury, St. Edmund, St. Edward the Confessor, St. Alban, St. Ethelreda, Sts. Crispin and Crispinian, St. Winfred, St. Cecilia, St. Clement, St. Katherine, and St. Agatha.⁷ The list of abrogated feast days included an inordinate amount of local English saints, most likely creating more intense anger over the legislation. This act constituted the first overt attack on the traditional pattern of religious observance in the parishes, and it was bound to have a tremendous effect.⁸ The impact becomes evident at Beverley, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, on the Sunday before St. Wilfred's Day (12 October), when in the "bidding of the beads" the parish priest obeyed the royal order and failed to announce St. Wilfred's Day.⁹ The parishioners challenged the priest in the pulpit about the omission "for it was wont to be a holiday here."¹⁰ When the priest explained that they no longer could keep that feast and many others by order of the king, there was uproar among the parishioners. In another instance, Sir Robert Thompson, the vicar of Burgh, testified that on the Sunday before St. Luke's Day (18 October) the curate of Kirkby Stephen in Westmorland, left out at the bidding of the beads St. Luke's Day sending the parishioners into a murderous rage.

⁷ Eamon Duffy. *The Stripping of the Altars, Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 394-95. Here after cited as *The Stripping of the Altars*.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Bidding of the beads" refers to the traditional prayers for the pope, invocation of saints, and the general intercessions of the mass. At this time, the priest also announced upcoming feast days.

¹⁰ LP XII (1), no. 201 (iv).

Thompson claimed that the curate saved himself when he “took a sacring bell and rang it, and bade the said St. Luke’s day as holyday.”¹¹ Nicholas Leach, parson of Byrchforde, stated that he attempted to persuade “the people that they might work upon the days abrogated by the King; for which cause he feared he should have been slain by the commons.”¹² The proclamation also prohibited the compulsory cessation of labor for any feasts other than those listed above. This meant that not only was the rhythm of the traditional church calendar disrupted. The number of days the commons worked also increased dramatically—most likely without increased wages. The feast days, aside from special masses, allowed the commons opportunities for food and drink and socialization. Obviously all this was lost with the abrogation of the holydays. This attack on traditional religion played a significant role in both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Much of the earliest defiance centered on the divorce and the Royal Supremacy. Much of the anger towards the divorce manifested itself mainly in disdain for Anne Boleyn and support for Catherine of Aragon. The defiance of the Royal Supremacy took the form of denying the king’s supremacy and speaking in favor of the pope. The most common form of resistance to the divorce came in the form of harsh criticism of Anne and occasionally Henry. Examples abound of harsh words aimed at Anne Boleyn. Margaret Chancellor, identified as “a spinster from Suffolk,” confessed to calling Anne Boleyn a “goggle-eyed whore” and proclaiming, “God save Queen Katherine for she was righteous Queen and she trusted to see her queen again.” She blamed drunkenness for her words and apparently suffered no severe punishment.¹³ Robert

¹¹ TNA SP1/117 fos. 43-56; *LP* XII (1) no. 687 (2).

¹² *Ibid.*, no. 70 xi.

¹³ *LP* VIII, no. 196.

Barrett, of London, found himself in trouble with the government for statements similar to those of Chancellor. William Gardner, in a note to Lord Brough, accused Barrett of referring to the queen as a “churl's daughter, and also that she was a whore.”¹⁴ George Taylor went a bit farther than either Chancellor or Barrett, attacking the king, saying, “The king is but a knave and liveth in avowtry, and is an heretic and liveth not after the laws of God,” and further, “I set not by the King's crown, and, if I had it here, I would play at football with it.” Taylor’s outburst amounted to treason according to the new Act of Treason. Sir Frances Bryan apparently wanted to make an example out of Taylor. He recommended that Taylor “be tried by the King's commission, hanged, drawn and quartered, and his quarters set up in Buckingham, Aylesbury, Wycombe and Stony Stretford.”¹⁵ Guilliaum Cowschier, identified as a skinner of St. Omer’s, found himself in jail for saying that “our sovereign lord king Henry was a wretch, a caitiff and no Christian man, having two wives and a concubine.” In the same conversation, Nicholas Delanoy said to Cowschier, “Pity it was of the King's life to forsake the noble blood of the Emperor and to take a poor knight's daughter.”¹⁶ David Leonard, identified as a hooper and an Irishman wound up jailed for saying “God save King Henry and Queen Katharine his wedded wife, and Anne at his pleasure, for whom all England shall rue.”¹⁷ George Browne, prior of the Augustines, learned first-hand of lay animosity toward Anne Boleyn when in a sermon he recommended the people expressly pray for the new queen. According to Chapuys, the people “were astonished and scandalized, and almost every one took his departure with great murmuring and ill looks, without waiting for the rest of the sermon.” Henry, greatly angered by this display of resistance, sent

¹⁴ Ibid., VI, no 1254.

¹⁵ Ibid., no 278.

¹⁶ Ibid., no. 324.

¹⁷ LP IX, no. 136.

word to the mayor of the town “on dread of his displeasure he should take order that nothing of the kind happened again, and that no one should be so bold as to murmur at his marriage. The Mayor hereupon assembled the trades and their officers of the several halls, and commanded them, on pain of the King's indignation, not to murmur at his marriage, and to prevent their apprentices from so doing, and, what is worse and more difficult, their wives.”¹⁸

The indictment against Anthony Heron is a good example of the resistance to and defiance of the supremacy. Heron said at York castle “the King is not Head of the Church, but the Pope is.”¹⁹ Heron’s statements led to an imprisonment but his fate is unknown. Andrew Menesse, mayor of Sandwich, reported to Cromwell the treasonous words of Gervase Shelby. According to Menesse, Shelby refused to take the oath recognizing the Royal Supremacy because “his conscience grieved him sore to take the oath commanded to be taken of all the King's subjects in Kent.” Shelby went on, “as the King had broken the sacrament of matrimony, and that when he went over the sea he went to Rome to the Pope to have his favor to marry with Queen Anne, but the Pope would give him no license.”²⁰ In a letter to the king, Thomas Starkey, warned Henry that he should take action against “the scandal arising from the wrong opinions of the vulgar.” According to Starkey the commons “are much impressed with the belief, first, that the King's father, being a prince of great prudence, would never have procured this marriage if it had been against laws either divine or human; and, secondly, that the Pope, to whom they attribute a power almost equal to God's, can do nothing wrong.”²¹ Although Starkey’s letter

¹⁸ Ibid., VI, no. 391.

¹⁹ Ibid., IX, no. 491.

²⁰ Ibid., VI, no. 634.

²¹ Ibid., no. 414.

precedes the Royal Supremacy by about a year, his observations indicate that a strong loyalty to the pope among the commons existed and threatened the success of Henry's religious reforms.

Sources indicate a trend of popular sympathy in the north for traditional religious practices. Edward Lee, Archbishop of York, usually subservient to the King, protested on several occasions against heretic preachers who attacked pilgrimages and purgatory causing much anger among the people who "otherwise all the King's commandment here obey diligently, as well for setting forth of his title of supreme head as also of the abolition of the primate of Rome."²² The protests of the archbishop illuminate the uneasiness the higher clergy such as Lee felt about the reforms. Dr. Richard Layton, one of Cromwell's most despised visitors, held much stronger opinions in favor of the new order. He offered his master this advice in 1535, "I should advise you to set forth the King's authority as Supreme Head by all possible means. There can be no better way to beat the King's authority into the heads of the rude people of the north than to show them that the King intends reformation and correction of religion." Layton further describes the northerners as "more superstitious than virtuous, long accustomed to frantic fantasies and ceremonies, which they regard more than either God or their prince, right far alienate from true religion."²³ These remarks and those of the archbishop expose the disgruntlement of the commons with respect to the religious policy and how little it took to stir their resentment toward the government. The comments of both men, particularly Layton's, reveal that many northerners remained loyal to traditional religious practice and bring to light a strain of resistance to the ecclesiastical policy of King Henry VIII. Remarks such as these leave

²² Ibid., IX nos. 704, 742; X no. 172.

²³ *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 71; LP IX no. 955.

little doubt that the king's religious reforms elicited scant affection among scores of clergymen and commons of England, particularly those in Lincolnshire and the northern counties.

One of the earliest, and perhaps the most threatening sources of religious resistance, from the perspective of the Tudor regime, was that of Elizabeth Barton, the holy maid of Kent. Barton began having visions in 1525 and rapidly gained the reputation of prophetess. Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham, sent a commission of priests to examine Barton's visions. The commission reported to the archbishop who pronounced her holiness authentic.²⁴ Warham not only gave Barton strong support he officially sanctioned her activities. Barton's visions and prophecies from the beginning of her career defended orthodox Catholic practices. Her pronouncements supported the doctrine of purgatory, auricular confession, prayers to the saints, and papal supremacy. It is important to note that in the years before the issue of the divorce no one questioned Barton's holiness.²⁵ In the early stages of Barton's career, many regarded her widely and sincerely as a living saint specially privileged by God. Hostile and sympathetic sources both agree that large crowds gathered to hear the holy maid of Kent speak. One source indicated that 2,000 people once gathered to hear her. Barton met with Cardinal Wolsey and on two occasions with the king himself. However, when Barton's prophecies began to attack Henry, his marriage to Anne Boleyn, and the impending break with Rome, the government became increasingly concerned about the possibility that she might initiate a rebellion.

The problem for the king was that if the people of his kingdom genuinely considered Barton as a true holy maid then her criticisms of Henry VIII not only carried weight, but also need not be read as political maneuvering. Her criticisms challenged the king's spiritual

²⁴ *Popular Politics*, 67-8.

²⁵ *The King's Reformation*, 88.

power.²⁶ Barton began to have visions relating to Henry's divorce and proposed marriage to Anne Boleyn. The holy maid of Kent claimed an angel bade her go to the king "and command him to amend his life, to take none of the Pope's right, to destroy these new folks of opinion and the works of their new learning; and that if he married Anne, the vengeance of God should plague him."²⁷ According to one account, Barton committed high treason when she prophesied, "he shall not be king a month after he married [Anne Boleyn]."²⁸ Furthermore, she "said the King would not continue King a month after his marriage, but would be destroyed in six months in a plague of unheard of severity."²⁹ In another version, Barton supposedly said that if Henry married Anne Boleyn, his reign would only survive for a month and even if God allowed him to continue ruling, Henry would lose recognition "in the reputation of God."³⁰ Barton obviously did not prevent the marriage to Anne Boleyn and when Henry survived the first month, Barton reinterpreted her earlier revelation. She claimed, "the king, though not destroyed, was no longer king in God's eyes."³¹

Elizabeth Barton did not keep her visions to herself or her close associates. She took her message to high government and church officials, meeting with Wolsey and Warham. The angel that spoke to her also commanded that she inform the king personally, which she did on two occasions. Barton spoke with various priests and monks as well, including Henry Gold, priest of

²⁶ Ibid., 89.

²⁷ Thomas Wright, ed. *Three Chapters of Letters Relating to the Suppression of the Monasteries* (London: J.B. Nichols and Son, 1843), 14-15.

²⁸ *LP VI*, no. 1468.

²⁹ Ibid., no. 1546.

³⁰ *Popular Politics*, 71.

³¹ *The King's Reformation*, 89.

Aldermary, London, young novice monks at Christ Church, Canterbury, several Observant Franciscans at Canterbury (most notably Hugh Rich), Greenwich, and Richmond. Henry Man at Charlerton of Sheen was an associate as were the Brigettine nuns and priests of Syon. Several of these monks and friars spread word of Barton's visions, according to the official sermon denouncing the nun, who they knew "to grudge and not to favor" the marriage to Anne Boleyn.³² She also met with Bishop John Fisher who allegedly wept for joy upon hearing Barton's prophecies. Thomas More refused to hear her political pronouncements and warned her of the risks of making such provocative statements. Catherine of Aragon also refused to meet with Barton most likely for the same reasons as More; it was too dangerous to have an audience with such a controversial figure.

Henry and his advisors feared that Barton, because of her reputation as a living saint and the nature of her revelations attacking the marriage and impending break with Rome, might possibly incite an insurrection. More importantly, an informal network developed around her with priests spreading her prophecies throughout England. Some disagreement exists as to how widespread Barton's audience actually was. According to the sermon denouncing her, "many of the spirituality" trusted her prophecies and "infected a great number of the king's grace's people with like grudge of mind." The act of attainder condemning Barton stated she gained popularity "by such false and feigned hypocrisy with dissembled sanctity was brought in a great bruit and fame of the people in sundry parts of this Realm, a great number and multitude...of the king's subjects...by their great negligence and follies inclined to new fangledness have had relation and knowledge to them given" through Barton's revelations.³³ Barton's network was particularly threatening once her revelations became increasingly political in tone. Ethan Shagan contends

³² Ibid., 90

³³ Ibid.

that beyond her communications with those who visited St. Sepulcher's, Barton's supporters began to travel throughout the kingdom to spread her political messages. Shagan argues that the widespread network that developed presented a clear and potentially dangerous political threat to Henry VIII's reign.³⁴ G.W. Bernard rejects this argument. He contends that although the nun's actions and contacts were impressive, they proved too haphazard, intermittent, and too limited to be a significant political threat to Henry VIII's reign. Regardless, Henry and his advisors viewed Barton as a threat and as her statements became increasingly political in nature, she became a symbol of resistance.

Henry and his advisors certainly understood the potential threat Barton posed and the gravity of this informal network but the king acted with caution in dealing with the holy maid of Kent. Her first political revelations came while Wolsey still held office. Barton claimed Henry, after hearing her prophecies, tried to bribe her with an offer to make her an abbess, which she refused to the king's great displeasure. Thomas Cranmer believed that Barton's visions and prophecies not only delayed the marriage but also slowed the progress of the Reformation. He believed that Barton's reputation as a living saint along with her revelations "had stayed them very much in the matter."³⁵

Henry did not take action against the holy maid until the 1533. By that time, Henry had married Anne Boleyn, a child was on the way, and Barton's prophecies had failed to occur. Thus, the king was in a stronger position to take action against her. Barton's revised revelation about Henry no longer being king in God's eyes amounted to treason. More importantly, such a pronouncement could be interpreted as justifying any attempt to depose Henry since if he was no

³⁴ *Popular Politics*, 78-9. For detailed account of Bernard's argument see chapter 2 of *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church*.

³⁵ *LP VI*, no. 1546.

longer king in God's eyes, then his subjects were no longer obligated to obey him and could move to overthrow him. On 12 November 1533, the king had Barton and five of her supporters arrested. The king and his advisors took drastic measures to destroy Barton's saintly image. According to the authorities, she and her associates promoted "blasphemy of almighty God, whereby a great multitude of people of this realm...were induced to idolatry," but they had also "brought in a mummer and grudge amongst themselves, to the great peril of the destruction of our sovereign lord and his succession, and to the jeopardy of a great commotion, rebellion, and insurrection in this realm."³⁶ Apparently, Barton recanted everything she had said claiming she had feigned everything. Under extreme pressure from the government no doubt, she admitted she was the source "of all this mischief," and that she deceived all those around her. Barton also admitted that all the charges against her were true: she had committed high treason against the king, and eventually admitted that her revelations were fraudulent.³⁷ The bill of attainder against Barton condemned seven people to death: Barton, Dr. Edward Bocking and John Dering, both of Christ Church, Canterbury, two Observant Franciscans, Hugh Rich and Richard Risby, and two secular priests, Henry Gold and Richard Master. Barton and five of her associates went to the gallows at Tyburn on 20 April 1534.³⁸ It is impossible to determine if a rebellion centered on the holy maid of Kent would have occurred. Certainly, Henry and his advisors believed an insurrection was possible and did everything they could to destroy Barton's reputation as a living saint. Although the government did a remarkable job of discrediting Barton and her associates, Henry and his ministers failed to eliminate resistance to the religious changes.

³⁶ *Popular Politics*, 61.

³⁷ *The King's Reformation*, 94.

³⁸ Richard Rex, "The Execution of the Holy Maid of Kent." *Historical Research*, Vol. 64, issue 154, p. 216.

Clerical resistance to the Henrician reforms took many forms. Like the laity, the resistance of the religious and clergy was widespread and primarily manifested as individual acts of defiance. Many clerics held the same opinion of the Royal Supremacy and Anne Boleyn as did the laity. A certain Dr. Hubberdine of Bristol preached from the pulpit that “that the Pope is king and prince of all the world.” John Floke, the dean of Bristol, allegedly commanded the curates of Henbury not to pray for the king and queen.³⁹ Chapuys reported that Bishop Tunstall of Durham spoke against the king’s divorce. The Spanish ambassador believed that if Henry had a more competent man to govern the lands bordering Scotland he would have jailed Tunstall.⁴⁰ Sir William Fitzwilliam issued a warrant for the arrest of a “lewd and naughty priest” for slandering the king and queen. The priest, James Harrison stated, “I will take none for queen but Queen Katharine. Who the devil made Nan Bullen, that whore, queen?” Harrison compounded his crime further by stating, ““This is a marvelous world. The King will put down the order of priests, and destroy the sacrament.”⁴¹ One priest, identified only as Sir William, compared Henry’s reign to that of King John. When asked whether, if the Pope made war on the realm, Henry’s subjects were not bound to resist, he answered, "No, marry! for the Pope is above all kings and princes of the world, and hath power both of body and soul; whereas the King hath power but of the body only."⁴² Apparently, any slip of the tongue or reading anything that could be construed as critical of Henry or his title could lead to charges against an individual. Nicholas Austen, abbot of Rewley, reported to Cromwell that a monk, Norton, had read a sentence of Agrippa in his book *De Vanitate Scientiarum* that was against the king’s marriage and then

³⁹ LP VI, no. 572.

⁴⁰ Ibid., no. 653.

⁴¹ Ibid., no. 964.

⁴² Ibid., no. 1077.

repeated it. This incident reveals that accusations of this type may have arisen due to some conflict within the monastery. Richard Davys, the young monk who accused Norton, wrote a letter to the mayor rather than informing the abbot. Davys' accusation and communicating with a civil official rather than the abbot indicates that he had some sort of personal conflict with Norton and did not trust Abbot Austen to handle his complaint properly. The abbot responded by imprisoning all parties and requested that Cromwell allow him to mete out the punishment.⁴³ Some religious who embraced the new learning complained of rough treatment by their brethren. Richard Lyst, a lay brother living among the friars at Greenwich, complained to Anne Boleyn of his treatment by the friars. Lyst informed the queen that the source of his troubles was that he had "often spoken and answered in the King's cause and yours, for which I have suffered rebuke and trouble." He went on to say that the friars derisively referred to him "as your chaplain" even though he had not yet taken priest's orders.⁴⁴ Peter Watts in a letter to Cromwell reported similar treatment. In his letter, Watts implored Cromwell to release him from the Charterhouse. He explains, "If the men of my order might get me, they would make me agree to their sprites, or else imprison me that I should never see the sun. They judged it extreme heresy to swear to maintain the King's acts against the Pope's power; so much that some of them said they would rather be exiled or suffer death as martyrs in the Pope's just cause."⁴⁵ John Laurens's message to Cromwell is similar to that of Watts. Laurens reported to the vicegerent that because he "did somewhat detect their pertinacity and proved their hypocrisy, proving by Scripture that the punishment for our transgressions was not only just but merciful, and that the King might justly

⁴³ Ibid., no. 1677.

⁴⁴ Ibid., no. 115.

⁴⁵ Ibid., VII, no. 577.

have put us to temporal death by the authority given to him by God. I shall be out of their favor forever.” He further complained the Observant friars “are in such displeasure with me, as were the Pharisees against Christ.” Laurens requested that Cromwell to “put me in the habit of a secular priest and give me some poor living” in order to be free from the rule of the Observants.⁴⁶ One particularly bold friar, Friar Pecoock, spoke his mind freely, exhorting his congregation to “live and die in their faith.” He made his views on the authority of the pope quite clear. Pecoock rejected the notion that “the Pope should have no more authority, power or jurisdiction out of Rome than a bishop out of his diocese, nor a bishop no more than a simple priest, and so consequently the Pope no more than a simple curate.” He claimed such sayings were “grievous errors.”⁴⁷

According to Cromwell’s agents, the most common means of opposition among the clergy was the refusal to remove the pope’s name from the mass books and angry, often seditious, statements against the king and the royal supremacy. Instances of these behaviors abound. Sir Christopher Mitchell, parish priest of Wynested in Yorkshire, denied the royal supremacy before his parishioners stating, “And it is said there is no Pope, but I say there was one Pope.” Examination of his mass book revealed that he had not erased the pope’s name; instead, he covered it with bits of paper fixed with wax.⁴⁸ The earl of Rutland examined friar John Shellington of Grantham due to accusations that he spoke in favor of the pope and against the King’s Acts, and for preventing the erasure of the pope’s name from the service books.⁴⁹ A host of witnesses testified that Sir John Brome, vicar of Staunton, omitted to remove the pope’s

⁴⁶ Ibid., no. 580

⁴⁷ Ibid., no. 449.

⁴⁸ *LP VIII*, no. 1020.

⁴⁹ Ibid., IX, no. 179.

name from his service books. “The manual and the processional were unraised and uncorrected in every place, ...and another was covered with small pieces of paper set on with balm where the name of the bishop of Rome called Pope was, and when the paper was taken away the said name appeared as fair as ever was, and legible.”⁵⁰ Another incident involved two Yorkshire priests Hugh Hall and John Smithson. Hall, described as a fellow of good conversation, accused Smithson (described as a naughty fellow) of saying, “I will not pray for the King, for he is about to beggar us.”⁵¹ One priest, Sir William Hoo, vicar of Eastbourne and suffragan of the diocese of Chichester, was a bit more blunt, saying, “they that rule about the King make him great banquets and give him sweet wines and make him drunk, and then they bring him bills, and he putteth his sign to them.”⁵² Thomas Skidmore called the King a “robber and piller [*sic*] of the commonwealth.”⁵³ Others were less hostile towards Henry but just as determined in their opposition. John Houghton said he could not recognize the King as supreme head of the Church of England. Richard Lawrence stated that there “is one Catholic Church, of which the bishop of Rome is the head.” Richard Reynolds claimed to hold no malice toward the King but “he will spend his blood that he is head of the Church who has been so these 300 years.”⁵⁴ Skidmore, Houghton, Lawrence, and Reynolds, all Carthusian monks, were hanged, drawn, and quartered because of their refusal to acknowledge the royal supremacy.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 408.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, VIII, no. 620.

⁵² TNA SP1/105 fo. 295; *LP XI*, no. 300.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, no. 565 v.

⁵⁴ TNA SP1/106 fo. 291; *LP XI*, no. 566.

Although the vast majority of priests and religious took the oath to the king recognizing the royal supremacy, many could not bring themselves to believe the quarrel with Rome was anything but a “passing cloud.”⁵⁵ Some among the religious and the clergy believed that when Henry died so too would his reforms. As noted in the examples above, various priests covering the name of the pope with bits of paper reveal that they believed the changes only temporary. Examples of more overt instances of such sentiment exist. Sir John Matthew, a priest of St. Andrew’s in St. Alban’s, when Thomas Mallard, in the confessional, asked his advice about the new learning Matthew responded, “I [will n]ever look upon it; for when the King is dead, all these fashions will be laid down.”⁵⁶ The parson of Wittillesham, Richard Jackson, told one of his parishioners in a discussion of the new learning to “hold your peace and say not the contrary; for if ye live two years to an end ye shall see the bishop of Rome in as great authority as ever he was in.” Parson Jackson also denied the royal supremacy, preached papal authority, and did not remove the name *papa* from his service book.⁵⁷ One cleric feared the new religious policies would lead to rebellion. Dr. Benger of Wingham stated to Archbishop Cranmer, “These new laws may be suffered for a season; but in time they will cause broken heads and set men together by the ears.”⁵⁸ Benger’s fears proved quite prophetic and accurate.

Resistance among various orders of friars and monks existed throughout the kingdom. The Observant friars were generally opposed to the reformation and many spoke out and preached against the religious reforms. Sources indicate widespread opposition among the order. Some Observants openly preached against Henry. Others traveled through the West Country

⁵⁵ *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 67.

⁵⁶ *LP VIII*, no. 406.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, XI no. 1393.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, VIII, no. 386.

preaching loyalty to the pope and denouncing Hugh Latimer as a heretic. John Hylsey reported to Cromwell the capture of two Observants in Devonshire. According to Hylsey, “wherever they come they persuade the people to hold of the bishop of Rome, calling him Pope, and saying they will die in his cause.” Furthermore, “they rail at the books set forth *cum privilegio*, and call those heretics that write or read them. If communication be of the Queen's grace, the Princess or the King's marriage, they report the worst.”⁵⁹ One friar in Newark spoke out against the religious reforms and was reported to John Markham, a local landowner. According to Markham, the unnamed friar preached certain sermons in the parish church of Newark, “of a seditious and slanderous tendency.” When Markham confronted the friar, he admitted “to all except four or five.” Unfortunately, the details of the friar’s sermon have not survived. In his letter to Cromwell, Markham warned of “what inconvenience will ensue if these men be suffered to preach and stir men in their confessions, considering their credit among the people.”⁶⁰ However, the Observant house at Newark was not a hotbed of conservative opposition to Henry since most of the friars once confronted submitted to the king.⁶¹

Other Observant friars were more determined in their opposition to the king and the religious reforms. William Peto, the head of the Observant Order in England, compared Henry to King Ahab, who gave ear to false prophets but refused to listen to the true prophet, Micah, whom God had sent. Instead, Ahab had Micah thrown in prison and starved. Peto and another friar, Henry Elston, eventually fled England and continued their attacks on Henry from the Netherlands. One of Cromwell’s agents, Stephen Vaughan, reported on the activities of Peto and

⁵⁹ Ibid., VII, no. 939.

⁶⁰ Ibid., VI, no. 1664.

⁶¹ *The King’s Reformation*, 154-5.

the other expatriated friars. Vaughan seems to have believed that the Observant friars in Antwerp were part of a greater conspiracy to destroy Henry VIII. He informed Cromwell, “The King never had in his realm traitors like his clergy. Let him look well about him, for they seek to devour him. They have blinded his Grace, and made him devour and put to death and trouble many an honest man while they themselves have secretly conspired the destruction of his royal person.” Vaughan also reported that a “friar comes from England every week to Peto.” Apparently, their purpose was to pass books to Peto and obtain other books attacking the king and the reformation and smuggle them into England. Vaughan also implies that Fisher, the Bishop of Rochester, had close connections to the friars. He also indicated that “Peto is much helped out of England with money.”⁶² All of this, at least in Vaughan’s opinion, pointed to a greater conspiracy among not only the clergy of England but other subjects as well.

The Carthusians, like the Observant Franciscans, refused to take the oath in 1535 and afterwards. As we have seen above, several went to the gallows because of their refusals. As late as 1537, Carthusians were refusing to take the oath. The Duke of Norfolk, in a letter to Henry VIII dated 10 May 1537, reported to the king that he had arrested two Carthusian monks of the monastery of St. Mary in York for denying the royal supremacy. Norfolk’s letter indicated that John Rochester and James Walworth had previously rejected the king’s supremacy and had once again refused the oath. Both men went to the gallows for their refusals. At Mount Grace monastery in the North Riding of Yorkshire although most of the monks there took the oath, two monks, Thomas Leighton and Jeffrey Hodeson, refused the oath. The king’s commissioners charged the prior to “to keep them in safeguard till we hear further.”⁶³ Another Richard Marshall and a lay brother, James Newey, fled to Scotland “because they would not be sworn to such

⁶² *LP* VI, no. 934.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, VII, no. 932.

articles as they were bound to by the King's laws," however both were eventually captured and imprisoned. Sir Francis Bigod reported to Cromwell that the prior of Mount Grace believed "that most of his brethren are traitors." In the same letter Bigod reported he examined George Laysingby, a monk of Jervaulx, "who, I assure you, handled himself in defending yonder same idol and blood supper of Rome so boldly and stiffly as I never in all my days saw the like. But learning he has none. He would blind simple folks, and establish his treason with revelations, as he calls them."⁶⁴ In an earlier letter to Cromwell Bigod first mentions Laysingby and suggests that "he is boldened by another man in this his treason, on whose learning he more relies than on his own. I suspect he is of Mount Grace."⁶⁵

Clearly, a great deal of resistance and defiance of the Henrician reforms existed throughout the realm. Large numbers of clerics and laity refused to accept the religious changes Parliament and king imposed upon the kingdom. However, the reality is that most people, lay and clergy, took the oath. When one examines the various documents on the acknowledgements of the Royal Supremacy, it becomes clear that the majority of priests and monks took the oath. The documents do not state how many refused the oath—only the number that took it. Several of the documents after listing the monastery, cathedral, or nunnery simply state no signatures. In only one of the documents included in *Letters and Papers* is there any statement of refusal. In an acknowledgement document dated 27 June 1534, there is a notation that "Nine Carthusians contumaciously refused to take the oath."⁶⁶ The only other report is that of Edward Lord Stourton. He reported visiting the Charterhouse in the diocese of Winchester to take the oaths of

⁶⁴ Ibid., VIII, no. 1069.

⁶⁵ Ibid., no. 1033.

⁶⁶ *LP* VII, no. 891.

the prior and monks. Lord Stourton informed Cromwell that “the prior has gone a pilgrimage these 14 days, and seven of his monks will not take any oath till he returns and swears first.”⁶⁷ Although there was widespread resistance and defiance, few clergymen and fewer lay people refused the oath and became martyrs for the old faith. While most Carthusians and other religious conformed, many, as noted above, resorted to individual acts of resistance such as inaction on removing the pope’s name from mass books. There was some opposition by several bishops, but for the most part most of them publicly supported the king. Only Bishop John Fisher refused to support the Henrician reforms and he was the one member of the upper clergy to suffer execution. Perhaps the best explanation for this situation is the fact that most of the bishops were Henry VIII’s nominees and thus were willing to conform to the king’s wishes. Since they owed their lofty status to the king, they supported Henry’s break with Rome. Many of these men had also worked on the king’s case for the divorce between 1529 and 1534 and were rewarded with bishoprics for their efforts.

Obviously, those clerics and monks who took the oath yet continued to defy the government played a dangerous game. Many of those who consented to the oath may have done so in order to save themselves and their houses. Still others, like the monks of Syon, did so only after intimidation and persuasion neutralized opposition. Regardless of why they took the oath, violation of that vow amounted to high treason. Thus, those priests and monks who took the oath under duress, or simply to save their lives, most likely did not acknowledge its validity. The argument here is that those who remained loyal to the pope and Rome yet took the oath recognizing the king’s supremacy did so with the belief that it had no legitimacy. They had no other choice than to take it. Father John Hylsey reported, “I have not found any religious

⁶⁷ Ibid., no. 834.

persons who have utterly refused the oath of obedience. Some have sworn to it with an evil will, and slenderly taken the oath.”⁶⁸ Bishop Roland Lee’s letter to Cromwell supports this attitude among Observant Franciscans at Greenwich. According to Lee, the friars there refused the oath because “this was against the rules of St. Francis, and showed us the rule enjoining ministers to seek, *a domino papa*, a cardinal of the Roman church to be their patron. Lee countered by stating, “they were the King's subjects, and by the law of God owed him entire obedience.” However, according to Bishop Lee, “this reason could not sink into their obstinate heads. Albeit we declared that the two archbishops, the bishops of London, Winchester, Durham and Bath, and all other prelates and famous clerks, had subscribed to the conclusion against the Roman pontiff’s jurisdiction. They concluded, notwithstanding, to live and die in the observance of St. Francis’ religion.”⁶⁹ Clearly, the oath clerics and monks took to the pope and Catholic Church remained in their minds valid and binding. This attitude would account for the continued resistance and defiance of the royal will, why many priests and monks continued to speak out against the English reformation, spread rumors, and eventually supported the Lincolnshire rebellion and Pilgrimage of Grace.

Throughout the early stages of the English Reformation Henry VIII’s ministers feared the possibility of insurrection and conspiracies against the king. The informal network that spread the visions and prophecies of Elizabeth Barton is a good example of what Henry’s government feared. As we have seen, the king and his ministers took special notice of whom and how Barton’s revelations spread throughout England. The fear of course was that Barton’s clerical supporters could stir a rebellion against Henry VIII. Letters written by the Maid of Kent’s

⁶⁸ Ibid., no. 869.

⁶⁹ Ibid., no. 841.

supporters could certainly leave themselves open to such interpretations. Henry Man, in a letter to Edward Bocking stated, “She [Barton] has raised a fire in some hearts that you would think like the operation of the Holy Spirit in the Primitive Church. If you saw with what frequent tears some bewailed their transgressions! God has left himself at least 7,000 who have not bent the knee to Baal. I rejoice that I have lived to see this day.”⁷⁰ As mentioned above, Stephen Vaughan believed that a conspiracy among the Observant friars existed. Cromwell reported to Henry VIII that Peto and the Observant friars in exile “are supplied with money by a rich London merchant,” clearly indicating that some sort of conspiracy against Henry existed. Others, like Francis Bigod, consistently referred to monks and priests as traitors and loyalists to the bishop of Rome. The fear was that the friars and monks would stir the people to rebellion. Christopher Hales, who was apparently gathering information against the Holy Maid of Kent, wrote to Cromwell about “two religious men.” According to Hales, these men “are of as good reputation as any of their degree, and therefore may the sooner deceive others if they be of evil disposition.”⁷¹ One student at Oxford, Michael Drome, accused many of the clergy there of working to undermine the new learning. He claimed, “There are many under miners of the truth in Oxford. Though they dare say nothing against the King's ordinances, they will work all the mischief they can against those who have furthered them. They alienate men's minds by sermons.”⁷² Henry Fasted sent a letter with similar complaints to Cromwell. Fasted reported on “8 March [1534] last had certain books of the King's print now of late put forth among the King's subjects, which the holy fathers of the Spirituality cannot abide to read, hear, nor see, nor yet suffer the King's subjects to read them.” Furthermore, “John Wayne, parson of St. James's

⁷⁰ Ibid., VI, no. 835.

⁷¹ Ibid., no. 1148.

⁷² Ibid., VII, no. 308.

parish, Colchester, and official to the bishop of London, openly preaches against these new books, and says he will prove them to be naught, charging his parishioners not to meddle with them.”⁷³ More serious was a report by Sir Thomas Gage. According to his report, the parson of Westmeston had evidently espoused his “perverse opinions” and when confronted by the bishop of Chichester’s chancellor, one John Seras warned, “Masters, take heed how you handle the parson of Westmeston, for there be 10,000 will take the part he taketh.”⁷⁴ James Billingford of Derby claimed the “Black Monks had gathered £160,000 to make an insurrection against the King and that the money was shipped in wool packs at Southampton to the bishop of Rome.”⁷⁵ One of the strongest examples of sedition on the part of friars was that of Robert Fern and John Hale. Fern and Hale were indicted for high treason and exciting sedition for their words spoken against Henry VIII, the Supremacy, and the marriage to Anne Boleyn. According to the indictment, Fern asked Hale if “there was no one who had written or would write against the King’s evil deeds. Hale responded,

Syth the realm of England was first a realm, was there never in it so great a robber and pyller of the commonwealth read of nor heard of as is our King. And not only we, that be of the spirituality, by his wrongs be oppressed and robbed of our livings as if we were his utter enemies, enemies to Christ, and guilty of his death, but also thus ungoodly he doth handle innocents, and also highly learned and virtuous men, not only robbing them of their livings and spoiling them of their goods, but also thrusting them into perpetual prison, so that it is too great pity to hear, and more to be lamented than any good Christian man's ears

⁷³ Ibid., no. 406.

⁷⁴ Ibid., no. 1281.

⁷⁵ Ibid., VIII, no. 81.

may abide.

Hale continued to rail against the king calling Henry “the most cruelest, capital heretic, defacer, and traitor under foot of Christ and His Church, continually applying and minding to extinct the same.”⁷⁶ These types of reports must have caused Henry’s ministers, especially Cromwell, a great deal of concern. The fear was that because priests and monks had such a lofty status among many lay people such behavior as chronicled above was not only a threat to the religious changes. Such behavior threatened the political stability of the realm by possibly spurring insurrection throughout the kingdom.

A more serious source of concern for Henry’s ministers was the appearance of a number of rumors during the summer and fall of 1536. These rumors spread throughout the kingdom but were particularly prevalent in the midlands and northern parts of England. The government went to great lengths to assure the commons that the rumors had no merit. However, the rumors persisted. The rumors that circulated during the late summer and autumn of 1536 reflected a basic fear and disaffection among the commons caused by the attack on traditional religious practices. The widespread nature of these rumors and their ready acceptance by so many of the commons reflected a general distrust of the government and particular antipathy towards Henry VIII’s vicegerent, Thomas Cromwell. The fact that a large number of people believed that the government would follow such a heavy-handed course of action reveals the general opinion of Henry’s government and his ministers. As we have seen, evidence abounds of widespread discontent among the clergy and commons. These conditions indicate that the clergy, who had the means, motive, and opportunity to foment rebellion, may have used their in depth knowledge of the religious and economic reforms and the fears of their congregations to not only originate and spread the rumors. The clergy and religious may have also encouraged insurrection. The

⁷⁶ Ibid., no. 609.

origin of the rumors remains a subject of debate. However, the nature and scope of the rumors suggests that whoever conceived and spread them certainly knew and understood the religious reforms enacted by Parliament. In addition, the clergy had much more to lose, particularly the monastic orders, because of the Henrician reforms. Furthermore, the clergy, specifically the lower clergy, had the means and the motives to spread these rumors. While evidence of clerical involvement in formulating and especially in spreading rumors exists, it is not as prevalent as that of priestly resistance to the Henrician reforms. Most of the support for clerical involvement in the origin and spread of the rumors comes from the depositions given by men arrested for their participation in the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. One must be cautious in using such sources since those deposed may have said what they thought the government officials wanted to hear or were simply trying to save themselves by casting the blame on members of the clergy. On the other hand, many of those deposed most likely knew their fate and gave accurate information. Regardless of these shortcomings, these depositions represent the major source so we must use them.

The rumors that circulated during the late summer and autumn of 1536 reflected a basic fear and disaffection caused by the attack on traditional religious practices. One of the most stubborn, prevalent, and widespread rumors claimed the government planned to confiscate the jewels and vessels of the parish churches. As indicated in Chapter 2, this rumor appears to have been a sequel to the dissolution of the lesser monasteries. John Tregonwell, one of the chief agents of Cromwell visiting the monasteries, reported in September 1536 that “upon his coming into this country” that rumors circulated that he was coming to confiscate “the crosses, chalices, and other idols of the churches.” Tregonwell informed Cromwell that he believed the “bruit

began by a somner around Bridgewater.”⁷⁷ Robert Tyrwhitt, one of Cromwell’s agents collecting the subsidy in Lincolnshire, reported to Henry VIII, “There were, at our coming, within a mile of the town 20,000 of your true and faithful subjects assembled because the report went that all jewels and goods of the churches were to be taken away to your Grace's Council, and the people put to new charges.”⁷⁸ These sources indicate the widespread nature of this particular rumor, having spread throughout the midlands and as far as Somerset.

Along these lines, another rumor circulating had it that parish churches must be no closer to one another than five miles. In areas where churches were closer, the parishes would unite and the unneeded church would be razed. This particular rumor, like the one mentioned above, seems to have resulted from the dissolution of the lesser monasteries as well. This rumor precipitated fears that people would not be able to receive the sacraments due to distance and unavailability of priests. Other rumors centered on increased and confiscatory royal taxation. Rumors abounded of the levying of taxes on marked cattle and the confiscation of unmarked beasts. One claimed that the government would levy taxes on marriages, christenings, and burials. Poor men feared they would no longer be able to eat white bread, goose, or capon without paying a tribute to the king. Many believed a rumor that required every man to give a sworn account of his property and income. Falsification would result in the forfeiture of all personal goods. These rumors circulated primarily in the midland and eastern counties; however, evidence suggests that they spread as far south and west as Devon.

In the various depositions taken in the aftermath of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace those deposed indicated that much of the trouble occurred because of the rumors. Eustace Chapuys reported to Charles V that those who rebelled in Lincoln did so

⁷⁷ TNA SP1/106 fo. 134; *LP XI*, no. 405. Tregonwell visited monasteries in the south and west of England.

⁷⁸ *LP XI*, no. 534.

because of the rumors of the demolitions of churches and the collection of taxes demanded by the king. Many of those involved in the Lincolnshire rebellion claimed that the rumors of the destruction of churches and the confiscation of church treasures sparked the rebellion. George Huddswell in his deposition stated that the rising in Lincoln began “for the jewels of their church.”⁷⁹ John Brown reported a similar cause for the Lincolnshire rebellion. He claimed it “was published that the Bishop's Chancellor would take away the jewels of the church, that every man should take his gold to the Tower of London for a new touch, and the like.”⁸⁰ According to Thomas Dixon of Horncastle, on 2 October William Leach told him that the visitors were in Louth and “had taken away the church goods, and next day would come to Horncastle to do the like.”⁸¹ Nicholas Melton of Louth claimed that about a fortnight before Michaelmas he heard from two men “the King's council had ordered all gold coin to be diminished, and every man to “pay the King's touch for it, and say also that all jewels and ornaments of parish churches should be taken away.”⁸² Thomas Kendall, the vicar of Louth, testified that the immediate cause of the Lincolnshire risings was the news that “men of Hull hath sold their crosses and jewels of their church at York to prevent the King's commissioners” from confiscating them.⁸³ Most of the other depositions make similar statements about the role these rumors played in causing the rising. Richard Hoyle asserts that many of these rumors circulated with great detail as to when

⁷⁹ Ibid., no. 853 ii.

⁸⁰ Ibid., no. 854 ii.

⁸¹ Ibid., no. 967v.

⁸² Ibid., no. 968.

⁸³ Ibid., 970.

and where the confiscation of church goods would occur, thus making them all the more believable.⁸⁴

Henry VIII, in a letter to Lord Darcy, recognized the impact of the rumors on the Lincolnshire rebellion. He told Darcy, “it appears that this insurrection grew by crafty persons reporting that we would take the goods of all the churches, and levy unheard of impositions.” He ordered Darcy to “to read these letters to those about you, and to show that we never intended to take one pennyworth of parish church goods, or to levy more than has been given by an Act of Parliament which charges no man that is not worth 20l. in goods, and those worth more with only 6d. in the pound.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, on 9 October, the king ordered Darcy “to apprehend as seditious all persons who shall speak of the suppression of abbeys, taking away of their church goods or of levying new impositions.”⁸⁶ A proclamation in the name of the king dated 19 October stated that Henry and his ministers understood the impact the rumors had on the Lincolnshire rebellion. The proclamation stated

rebellions have been stirred up, especially in Lincolnshire by slanderous rumors to the effect that the King intended to have all the gold in his subjects' hands sent in to the Tower to be touched, and all unmarked cattalls and the chalices, &c. of parish churches, and to exact fines for wedding, christening and burying, and licenses for eating wheaten bread, pig, goose or capon, which were never intended by him or the Council.⁸⁷

Clearly, Henry, and presumably others in the government, attempted to quell the rumors but had little success.

⁸⁴ Hoyle, 90.

⁸⁵ TNA SP1/107 fo. 77; *LP XI*, no. 598.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 611.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 782.

Evidence of the impact on these rumors on bringing about the Pilgrimage of Grace is not as prevalent but does exist. Lancaster Herald reported that in his conversations with “common people of husbandry” near Pontefract Castle that they claimed they had risen “to prevent the commonalty and Church being destroyed.” Furthermore, the commons said “no man should bury, christen, wed, or have beasts unmarked without paying a tax and forfeiting the beast unmarked to the King's use.”⁸⁸ Lancaster Herald carried with him a proclamation from the king similar to the one noted above however Robert Aske, chief captain of the Pilgrimage of Grace, refused to allow him to announce it “at Market Cross or amongst my people.”⁸⁹ Henry and his ministers, as with the Lincolnshire rebellion, believed that the rumors played a similar role in bringing on the Pilgrimage. The proclamation stated “that you should not christen, bury, wed, eat bread of wheat, pigs, geese, or capons without paying a tribute; that you should have no parish church within five miles of another, that your beasts should be marked, &c.” were false. The king went on to say, “ye may now, by our Sovereign's proclamation, perceive to be most false and spiteful inventions, and devised by their authors, for their own purpose, to bring the country to ruin and give place to our ancient enemies the Scots.”⁹⁰ William Breyar confessed that while in Dent he heard a smith tell those there to visit the monastery that the king was a thief “for he pullet down our churches in the country.”⁹¹ One of the Captain Poverty letters that circulated through the north country claimed that the rebels intended to defend the faith from certain heretics who “blaspheme the honor of God by spoiling and suppressing holy places, as abbeys,

⁸⁸ *LP XI*, no. 826.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 826 (2).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, no. 841.

churches, and ministers of the same, and despising the laws of Holy Mother Church.”⁹² William Stapleton stated in his deposition that “there was a common bruit in Yorkshire that divers parish churches should be put down and the g[oods] thereof taken to the King's use, so that several parishes should be thrown into one.” Stapleton also claimed after the rumor appeared Dr. Palmes, one of the king’s commissioners, commanded the churchwardens to bring an inventory of the churches' goods. “This confirmed the rumor, and it was said that after taking the inventory the goods should be seized at the next sitting, and that chalices of copper had come to serve the churches; and that this with the suppression of religious houses, the putting down of certain holidays, new opinions, raising of farms, sore taking of gressomes or incomes, pulling down of towns and husbandries, enclosures.”⁹³ Robert Aske in his examination recognized the impact of the rumors stating “those bruits were one of the great causes.” However, Aske believed that the “the suppression of the abbeys was the greatest cause..., which the hearts of the commons most grudged at.”⁹⁴

While the impact of the rumors is clear, the source of these rumors is much more difficult to determine. However, there is evidence that a number of clergymen, primarily monks and friars, played a significant role in generating and spreading these rumors. Several men testified that the parson of Farforthe, Simon Maltby, on the Saturday before the Lincolnshire rebellion reported 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, John Raynes, and trusted

⁹² Ibid., no. 892 (1).

⁹³ TNA EB36/118 fos. 63-69; LP XII (1), no. 392.

⁹⁴ *Humanist Scholarship*, 219.

in the support of their neighbors.”⁹⁵ Thomas Yoell stated that an ex-monk William Moreland spread the rumor that the king would have parish churches six miles apart. Moreland was also labeled an outrider.

The Lincolnshire rebellion, which began in Louth on 1 October 1536, resulted from rumors and appears to have been instigated by the vicar of Louth, Thomas Kendall. He preached a sermon about the pending visitation by the king’s commissioners. Although the text of Kendall’s sermon no longer exists, several witnesses reported that during the sermon, Kendall advised his parishioners “to go together and look well on things as should be inquired of the visitation” scheduled the next day.⁹⁶ Following the mass, as the congregation prepared to walk in procession after three silver crosses owned by the town, Thomas Foster, a singing man of Louth, exacerbated the situation. The impact of the confiscatory rumors is evident in Kendall’s comments and that of Foster. Foster stated as the procession commenced, “Go we to follow the crosses for and if they be taken from us we be like to follow them no more.”⁹⁷ Brian Stanes stated in his deposition that about two or three weeks before the Lincolnshire rebellion began he heard the parson of Millingesby, Simon Maltby, state that the “people would rise because it was said the churches would be pulled down and that two or three parish churches would be put to one. The King’s officers would take away all their corn and cattle.” The vicar and other priests, according to Stanes, stated “that the chalices and jewels of the churches would be taken away.”⁹⁸ Philip Trotter claimed that Nicholas Leach, parson of Belcheforte reported the deeds of the men

⁹⁵ *LP* XI, no. 975.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, XII (1), no. 380.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, XI, no. 828 ii.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, XII (1), no 70 ix.

of Louth in an apparent attempt to stir the people of Horncastle.⁹⁹ R.W. Hoyle asserts that it seems probable that the clergy manufactured the rumor that the commissioners' purpose was to inventory and confiscate church goods. It is possible that the clergymen might well have believed these rumors. What is clear is that those gathered in Louth church on Monday 2 October were convinced the rumors were true.¹⁰⁰

William Moreland, former monk of Louth Park, attributed the rumors of the confiscation of church plate to statements by one of the Bishop of Lincoln's scribes. According to Moreland, the priests were told "to look on their books, for they should have strait examination taken of them shortly after, and if they did not look well on their books it should be worse for them." He believed that "certain lewd priests of those parts, fearing they should lose their benefices, spread such rumors to persuade the common people they should be ill handled." Moreland also claimed that he heard the parson of Conisholm say on the Saturday before the first commotion at Louth, "They will deprive us of our benefices because they should have first fruits, but rather I will pay the first fruits again I had liever lose benefice and all."¹⁰¹ Richard Cromwell reported to Thomas Cromwell that the duke of Suffolk's wife reported a "great bruit" that Suffolk had "lost a field and 20,000 men and the King will have throughout England all as be not marked." Richard Cromwell claimed this idea was put into the heads of the commons "by the traitors of the clergy to make them murmur."¹⁰² Evidence exists that priests copied and distributed Robert Aske's letters. The deposition of Sir Richard Snow, vicar of St. Giles in Reading, indicates that Aske's letters would be given to priests to copy and then passed on to others. Usually a copy of the

⁹⁹ Ibid., XI, 828 (2).

¹⁰⁰ Hoyle, 106.

¹⁰¹ TNA SP1/111 fos. 66-67; LP XI, no. 1047.

¹⁰² Ibid., XI, no. 650.

letter would be passed to another priest who would then copy it and distribute it anew.¹⁰³ Richard Perkys reported to the Bishop of Worcester that the parish priest of Bromsgrove, Sir William Harwood, had a letter from Robert Aske persuading the commons to rise and join in the Pilgrimage of Grace.¹⁰⁴ The abbot of Jervaulx testified that after he took the Pilgrim's oath he conveyed letters for the rebels until the first appointment at Doncaster. These examples are indication of the involvement of a number of priests and friars involved in creating and spreading rumors.

One of the clearest examples of clerical involvement in producing and spreading rumors centers on the Friars of St. Roberts in Knaresborough in the West Riding of York. Based on the existing sources it appears that the friars of St. Roberts were particularly involved in formulating and spreading rumors. Furthermore, several of those deposed testified that the friars of St. Roberts of Knaresborough helped to stir and spread rebellion throughout Yorkshire. The key individual at the friary was Sir Robert Esch. The friar of Knaresborough was deeply involved in devising and spreading rumors throughout Yorkshire. William Maunsell, the vicar of Brayton in York, and active participant in the Pilgrimage of Grace, blamed the friars of St. Roberts for inventing the rumors. According to Maunsell, the friars of St. Robert's of Knaresborough "made bills and proclamations that the king should have 6s. 8d of every plough, 6s. 8d. of every baptism and 4d. of every beast." He went on to claim that the superiors of St. Roberts made other "devices..., wherein the people are determined against the King's council."¹⁰⁵ The actions of Sir Robert Esch support Maunsell's claims. Esch traveled throughout York and the surrounding

¹⁰³ TNA SP1/112 fos. 91-93; *LP XI*, no 1231.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, PRO SP1/113 fo. 173; *LP XI*, no. 1286.

¹⁰⁵ TNA SP1/111 fos. 66-67; *LP XI*, no. 1047.

areas spreading rumors and posting seditious handbills. The friar of Knaresborough was deeply involved in devising and spreading rumors throughout Yorkshire. John Pickering, another cleric deeply involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace, claimed that he knew of no religious men who were provokers or aiders of the insurrection except for a friar of Knaresborough residing in Beverley. William Stapleton, in his examination stated that on 10 October “Sir Robert, a friar of St. Robert's of Knaresborough, and limitor for the same houses in those parts, sued to the said William for a passport, offering to raise all Rydale and Pickering both,” which Stapleton gave him. Stapleton further declared that on 15 October during the siege of Hull, Sir Robert, the friar of St. Robert's appeared, “saying that he had raised all Malton and that quarter.”¹⁰⁶ John Hallom in his examination reported the writing of many letters at Beverley by “a friar of St. Robert's of Knaresborough, and sent to the townships around, commanding them on pain of death to assemble at Hunsley on St. Wilfred's Day to take the same part that Lincolnshire took.”¹⁰⁷

Examples of the clergy providing support and assistance to the rebels are as numerous as those indicating that priests and religious formulated and spread rumors. The Lincolnshire rebellion appears to have been widely supported by many priests and monks. Nicholas Melton, also known as Captain Cobbler, stated that the vicar of Louth, whose sermon had sparked the Lincolnshire rebellion, went among the rebels and comforted them. John Brown's testimony supported Melton's statements about the vicar of Louth. Brown claimed that the priest of Louth was amid the seven or eight hundred priests and monks involved in the Louth rising and at the beginning the vicar “strake them upon their backs and bade them go in their journey.”¹⁰⁸ Several

¹⁰⁶ *LP XII* (1), no 392.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 201 iv.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, XI, 854.

depositions give evidence that priests and monks gave money to the rebels. Harry Sanderson, Thomas Manby, and John Overey, all of Louth, testified that priests and monks supplied the rebels with money. Overey claimed that the parsons of Hellsof offered the rebels £40. Harry Childe said on the day the Lincoln rebellion began, eleven priests were in the market place and they said in a loud voice, “Let us go forward and ye shall lack no money.”¹⁰⁹ Philip Trotter of Horncastle reported that the monks of Barlings, Bardney, Kirkstead, and Ryesbye were with the rebels at Horncastle. Thomas Mawre, identified as a monk and priest of Bardney, corroborated Trotter’s testimony claiming he saw monks of Kirkstead, Ryesbye, and Barlings in the field. Henry Jenkinson, monk and priest of Kirkstead Abbey, reported that “the abbot, cellarer, bursar, himself, and all of the monks able to go, seventeen in all” presented themselves at Horncastle, with the cellarer and the bursar “horsed with battle axes, 20s. for the rebels and a horse laden with victual.”¹¹⁰ Bryan Stanes in his deposition stated that every parson and vicar among the rebels “counseled their parishioners to proceed in their journey, saying they should lack neither gold nor silver.”¹¹¹ William Talbot accused the vicar of Brayton of being “the most busy fellow that was amongst the commons and the greatest robber and pe[ler].” Talbot also charged that the vicar of Blackburn said, “if the commons came again into Lancashire he would bear the cross afore them” saying “God speed them well in their journey.”¹¹² The vicar of Hauton allegedly went among the rebels at Louth with a great club. Thomas Bradley, subprior of Barlings,

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 972.

¹¹⁰ *LP XI*, no 828 (1), (2), iii, v, viii.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, XII (1), no. 70 ix.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, no. 853.

testified that the abbot and six of the canons of Barlings “in harness joined the rebellious within a mile of Lincoln on 7 October.”¹¹³

The rebels involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace received similar support from a number of priests and religious in much the same way as those participating in the Lincolnshire rebellion did. Bernard Towneley testified that Sir Robert Thompson, the vicar of Burgh, was among the Penrith host at Cartlogan and the said vicar “in the name of the whole commons made us take the oath.” The vicar of Burgh, according to Towneley, had the crier declare “if the parson of Thurkyld and others would not attend them they should strike off our heads and set my head on the highest place in the diocese.”¹¹⁴ Robert Legate, friar “put into the monastery of Furness to read and preach to the brethren,” testified that he heard the bailiff of Dalton say “the monks encouraged the commons, saying: "Now must they stick to it or else never, for if they sit down both you and Holy Church is undone; and if they lack, company we will go with them and live and die with them to defend their most godly pilgrimage." The prior and brethren gave them £20.”¹¹⁵ William Talbot testified before the earl of Sussex that Robert Aske “was aided by the abbots and priors of Yorkshire” and that Talbot “supposeth Aske was much counseled by them.”¹¹⁶ William Collins, the bailiff of Kendal, identified the vicar of Clappam as one of the ringleaders of the Dent men. After taking counsel with George Atkinson, the chief captain of Dentdale, the vicar, “in the name of Captain Poverty, made proclamation for all to meet next day at Kendal by 8 a.m. to know the lord Poverty's pleasure.” According to Collins, “The vicar was

¹¹³ Ibid., nos. 972, 1204.

¹¹⁴ TNA SP1/117 fos. 43-56.

¹¹⁵ *LP XII* (1), no. 841

¹¹⁶ Ibid., no. 853.

the common swearer and counselor in all that business, and persuaded the people that they should go to heaven if they died in that quarrel."¹¹⁷ Ninian Staveley in his examination stated that if two monks of Jervaulx, Roger Hartlepoole and John Stanton, "had not called so busily" on the men of Richmondshire "they had made no insurrection." Staveley also indicated that the abbot of Jervaulx, Adam Sedbar, and the quondam of Fountain Abbey, William Thirsk, "bade him, Edward Middleton, Thomas Loble, and Laurence Servant, after Twelfth Day, to send and move Sir Thomas Percy to come forward with a company."¹¹⁸ William Wood, the prior of Bridlington, admitted to giving the rebels eleven men horsed and two brethren shortly after the rising in Beverley. Wood alleged that he provided men and horse only after the rebel leader threatened to cut off his head. He also reported that a resident at the priory, Dr. John Pickering, used to say "the insurrection was well done for the wealth of the church, and made a rhyme, to encourage the commons, beginning 'O faithful people,' which Wood commended. When Pickering was called to Pontefract castle the prior of Bridlington provided him with money and a horse. Apparently, Pickering promoted his song because Wood mentioned "the rhyme was in every man's mouth about Bridlington and Pomfret."¹¹⁹ Depositions against Wood cast him in a traitorous role. According to one deposition, Wood was "a principal procurer of the first insurrection and a great mover in the second. He put all his household servants and tenants in harness when George Lumley sent to him; and Friar Pickering was a principal inciter thereunto."¹²⁰ The abbots of Jervaulx Abbey and Sawley Abbey also found themselves accused of aiding and abetting the rebels. Sir Stephen Hamerton reported that the abbot of Sawley's chaplain and a servant came to

¹¹⁷ Ibid., no. 914.

¹¹⁸ *LP XII* (1), no. 1012.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., no. 1019.

¹²⁰ Ibid., no 1020.

him and tried to bribe him to allow the monks of Sawley to remain in their house. The messengers also told Hamerton that they planned to seek Sir Thomas Percy's help to keep them in their house. Hamerton refused to aid the monks in any way for which he claimed that the abbot held him in suspicion because he had arrested men for posting seditious letters on church doors.

The examples cited above certainly indicate that a number of priests and monks supported and assisted in both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. Like many of the gentry that participated a number of priests and religious claimed the commons coerced them into joining the rebellions. However, most of those involved in the risings gave it their full support once they took the oath. A large number of those involved clearly did so without any threat or coercion. In fact, as we have seen a significant number of priests and religious were in the vanguard of the rebellions. Those who remained loyal to Henry VIII certainly suspected the deep involvement of clergymen. Many of the questions asked of those arrested indicated the government wanted to know who supplied the rebels, who incited the rebels, and who provided money to the rebels. Many believed the government had to look no further than the spiritual men.

As these examples clearly indicate, resistance to the religious reforms took many forms. A significant number of clergymen and the laity resented and rejected the Royal Supremacy and those Henrician reforms that altered the traditional religious practices of English Christians. While the unwillingness of lay people to accept the reforms concerned Henry VIII and his ministers, the behavior of the clergy presented the government with a much more serious problem. Cromwell understood the influence of a parish priest would determine the success or failure of the religious reforms in England. The government did not have the capacity to ensure

total conformity, which explains Cromwell's insistence on a well-trained and educated clergy. The first Royal Injunctions indicate the importance the government placed on the clergy teaching and training the people to accept the religious changes. For successful implementation of the reforms to the English Church, the member of the clergy had to be loyal to the new order. It seems apparent that priests or friars who rejected the new order and remained loyal to the Roman rite had the potential to disrupt not only the realization of religious reform; more importantly, clerics who refused to recognize the break with Rome could foment insurrection. This possibility helps us to understand why Henry's loyal supporters took reports of seditious words spoken by clergymen much more seriously than those spoken by common men and women. The impact of a spinster from Suffolk or a skinner of St. Omer's railing against Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn and the Supremacy caused concern but when a priest in the pulpit or confessional advised his parishioners to reject them the threat was of much greater consequence. This helps to explain the number of priests, friars, and monks investigated and executed for violating the treason act of 1534. The concern on the part of Henry's ministers most likely stemmed from an understanding of the influence and respect most priests had among their congregations. A priest who accepted the new religious order could most likely convince his flock to accept the changes. On the other hand, a contumacious priest could very likely stir his parishioners to insurrection. The fear of insurrection by the king's ministers is almost visceral in the existing sources. That fear explains why many who helped suppress the Lincolnshire rebellion and Pilgrimage of Grace looked at the priests and religious as the instigators of the risings. This fear of clergy inspired rebellion is clearly present in how Henry VIII handled the Holy Maid of Kent and why the government went to such lengths to besmirch Elizabeth Barton's reputation. The execution of those priests and religious associated with Barton also gives testimony to the fear of Henry's

ministers that those who spread the Maid's revelations were actually attempting to spread insurrection.

Just as Henry attempted to avert rebellion by attacking the character of Elizabeth Barton, he and his ministers attempted to quell the various rumors that spread around the realm during the summer and fall of 1536. Henry's own pronouncements that the rumors had no validity and that those who spread them were vile traitors had little impact. The interrogatories of those deposed in the aftermath of the Lincolnshire rising and the Pilgrimage of Grace indicated that the government understood the importance of the rumors in helping incite the rebellions. The examiners wanted to know who started the rumors and who spread them as well as who was responsible for providing money and assistance to the rebels. The men deposed for their involvement in the Lincolnshire rebellion for the most part indicated that the clergy played a central role in not only spreading rumors but also in supporting the rebels with food, money, and encouragement. Those examined for their role in the Pilgrimage gave similar testimony, although not as many indicted the clergy. However, as we have seen a number of priests and friars did in fact play a significant role in the rising. Obviously, the actions of Robert Esch are clear evidence of the direct and open involvement of the clergy. Indeed, the sources give us a number of examples of why Henry VIII and his ministers were, with ample justification, so openly suspicious of the role the northern clergy played in both the Lincolnshire affair and the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Chapter 5: The Lincolnshire Prelude

"How presumptuous then are ye, the rude commons of one shire, and that one of the most brute and beastly of the whole realm and of least experience, to find fault with your prince for the electing of his counselors and prelates?"¹ Thus, Henry VIII addressed the Lincolnshire rebels in response to their petition asking him for a full pardon. Traditionally most Englishmen viewed Lincolnshire as lawless and the men there as uneducated and unruly. Lincolnites displayed a tendency towards riots and a remarkable lack of discipline. Generally, the commons of Lincolnshire were very poor and ignorant and regarded the gentry, their landlords and magistrates, with a great deal of mistrust. The gentry were slightly better educated than the commons and almost as lawless. Many petty feuds existed among families, creating widespread suspicion among the Lincolnshire gentry. The feuds of the noble families spawned discord among their enemies and supporters alike. Many minor and disruptive feuds occurred among their dependents as well. Many of these petty feuds centered on disputed land claims, which in

¹ *LP XI*, no. 780 (2).

turn spread such disputes throughout Lincolnshire. Thomas Moigne, a Lincolnshire lawyer, was involved in one such dispute. Moigne obtained Wyfflingham manor but one George Bowgham disputed his right to it. On 20 September 1534, Bowgham gathered about forty men at his house ostensibly to travel to Wyfflingham and drive Moigne off the manor. Moigne, however, was away and Bowgham and his band of men threatened Moigne's wife and his servants. Apparently, Bowgham seems to have left without doing any harm to Moigne's family or property. The frequency of this type of pointless behavior "does not speak well for the men of Lincolnshire."² These conditions help to explain the lack of organization and cooperation among the Lincoln rebels. Divided by class hatred, private feuds, and mutual suspicion, the Lincoln rebels never posed a serious threat to the feebly organized royal troops.³ It is perhaps more accurate to consider the events in Lincolnshire as a massive riot rather than a rebellion.

The rumors discussed in the previous chapter circulated more freely in Lincoln than in most places, and some believe they may have originated there. In fact, the rising at Louth, which sparked the Lincolnshire rebellion, occurred primarily because of the fear that the government intended to confiscate church treasures such as plate and chalices. The religious statutes and the new forms of taxation the king and Parliament imposed had the people of Lincolnshire, especially the commons, in a highly agitated state. The presence of "radical preachers" created more discord among the people of Lincolnshire. Archbishop Lee warned London about the discord created by radical preachers. In January 1536, the Archbishop complained to Cromwell of preachers who professed to have the king's license but preached slanderously or on matters forbidden by "King's order." Lee informed Cromwell that the people accept the king's matters

² *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 90.

³ *Ibid.*, 89-91.

reverently, “but at such novelties they grudge much.”⁴ John Longland, bishop of Lincoln, twice in May 1536 complained about radical preachers, who for the most part preached against the old faith. Longland complained to Cromwell of one preacher who claimed to “know the King’s mind.” Furthermore, the preacher, Sir Swynnerton, preached on “those doubtful matters which were forbidden to be touched till the determinations were published.” Longland warned Cromwell that these preachers of “little learning and less discretion” offended the people and “against whom the people of Lincolnshire grudgeth.”⁵

To excite the people further, three sets of royal commissioners were diligently at work in Lincolnshire by Michaelmas 1536 (29 September). The commissioners for the dissolution of the lesser monasteries arrived first. Then came those sent to collect the subsidy of 1534, and finally the commissioners of the inquiry to the condition of the clergy arrived. The presence of these commissioners proved a source of agitation for all classes in the shire. The suppression of the monasteries outraged the commons, fearing the loss of parish treasures and the destruction of the source of alms giving and hospitality. The new taxation angered the gentry, and the examination that the commissioners forced the clergymen to undergo infuriated them. Simon Maltby, vicar of Farforthe, expressed the aversion of the clergy toward the examinations and their desire to stir the people. Maltby on the Saturday before the rising was at Bolingbroke and met with Dr. Raynes, the bishop of Lincoln’s chancellor. It is unclear if Maltby was there for the examinations; all the sources indicate is that he was “at the court for the valuation of benefices.” Upon his return to Farforthe, Maltby proclaimed, “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

⁴ *LP XI*, no. 172.

⁵ *Ibid.*, X, nos. 804, 891.

said chancellor, and trusted in the support of their neighbors.” Sources also reported that on the Sunday after the rising Maltby prayed for the Pope and the College of Cardinals.⁶ The next scheduled examination was to take place at Louth on 2 October. Several priests from the district traveled to Bolingbroke to discover the nature of the dreaded examination. They came away asserting "they would not be so ordered nor examined in their learning."⁷ According to William Moreland, a former monk of Louth Park, another rumor angered a number of the clergy and commons. According to Moreland about three weeks before Michaelmas a great rumor spread especially after a Mr. Peter, described as a scribe of Dr. Prynne, the commissary of Lincoln, visited St. Peter’s Church in Louth. Word spread that not only would the chalices of the churches be taken and replaced with tin ones but that “there should be but one parish church within six or seven miles' compass, and that every parson and vicar should be examined by their learning whether they were sufficient for the cure of souls.”⁸

Thomas Kendall, the vicar of Louth, was a local man who thus understood the desires and fears of his parishioners. Unlike many clergy of the area Kendall was an Oxford-educated priest who had, while serving in Essex, investigated some heretical opinions in Colchester at the request of the Bishop of London. A man of deep-rooted conservative views, he was alarmed and angry over the governmental assault on the Church and traditional religious practice.⁹ Although Kendall was not present at Bolingbroke, he was as opposed to the commissioners as the other priests. Most historians agree that the sermon he preached on Sunday 1 October triggered the

⁶ LP XI, no. 975 (4).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., XII (1), no. 380.

⁹ Geoffrey Moorhouse. *The Pilgrimage of Grace, The Rebellion that Shook Henry VIII's Throne* (London: Phoenix publishers, 2002) 45.

rising in Louth. According to witnesses, Kendall's sermon addressed the pending visit by the king's commissioners. Morland reported that during his sermon, Kendall advised his parishioners "to go together and look well on things as should be inquired of in the visitation" scheduled the next day."¹⁰ The congregation clearly understood the meaning of Kendall's sermon. Following mass, as the congregation prepared to walk in procession after three silver crosses owned by the town, Thomas Foster, a singing man of Louth, exacerbated the situation. He stated as the procession commenced, "Go we to follow the crosses for and if they be taken from us we be like to follow them no more."¹¹ Kendall in his deposition claimed that the rebellion began not with his sermon but because of news from Hull. He reported that the immediate cause of the insurrection in Lincolnshire was the news that that "men of Hull hath sold their crosses and jewels of their church at York to prevent the King's commissioners" from confiscating them. Obviously, this news gave credence to the confiscatory rumors that had been present since late summer. Kendall further stated that they had "indeed long grudged that the King should be Head of the Church, and the putting down of holydays and of monasteries, &c., and it was said if any o[ne would ry]se all would ryse, and that [it] lacketh but a be[ginni]ng."¹² Kendall also stated that the rising in Louth began on 1 October because the "the poor men heard that the King's commissioners, with the chancellor, would be there on the morrow; so, to make the keys sure, they took them from the churchwardens."¹³ The vicar conveniently failed to mention the role his sermon played in bringing on the rising.

¹⁰ *LP XII* (1), no. 380.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, XI, no 828 iii.

¹² *Ibid.*, no 970.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Rumor of the vicar's sermon and Foster's words spread throughout the village. Robert Norman, a roper by trade, paid John Wilson a penny to spread the news of the vicar's sermon and Foster's comments throughout the town. By that evening, a number of people gathered at the choir door of the church after evensong and took the keys from the churchwardens "for saving of the church jewels for safe keeping."¹⁴ Apparently, they believed that the chief constable meant to surrender the church jewels to the bishop's chancellor the next day. The keys fell into the possession of Nicholas Melton, also known as Captain Cobbler, and he established a watch on the church that night that remained in effect until the rebellion ended. On Monday 2 October, following morning prayers, about one hundred people gathered at the church door and rang the bell. The ringing of the church bell in Louth marked the beginning of the Lincolnshire rebellion. News of these events traveled fast. William Morland reported that by Sunday afternoon news of what had happened in Louth was circulating in the town of Kedington, near Louth Park. He was currently residing in Kedington since he had left the suppressed monastery at Louth Park and had taken the job of delivering capacities to other expelled monks. Capacities referred to the licenses granted to monks of suppressed houses to become secular priests or to take residence in other houses of their order not yet dissolved.¹⁵ Morland had been away from Kedington that day to deliver several of these "to divers of the brethren of the monasteries lately suppressed." He reported that he arrived back in Kedington around 3 p.m. and heard from the townspeople "that the vicar of Louth, Kendall, had made a certain collation to his parishioners there, in which he advised them to go together and look well on such things as should be inquired of in the visitation next day." The next day, Monday 2 October, after matins Morland rode to Louth after

¹⁴ Ibid., no. 828 I (1).

¹⁵ *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 44.

‘hearing of the ruffling that was among them at Louth the night before.’¹⁶ Upon arriving in Louth, he visited the shop of Robert Bailby to inquire as to what the situation was in the town. The men in the shop confirmed what he had heard in Kedington except for the vicar’s sermon. Morland claimed he would have gone to mass but those guarding the church would not let him or any others enter, except such as they liked. Upon leaving the church, he went to the house of William Hert, whose brother had also been a monk at Louth Park. One Nicholas, a servant of Lord Burgh, was also present. Over breakfast, the men discussed the events of the previous night. While enjoying their puddings suddenly the common bell sounded, rung by those within the church. Nicholas remarked that some of them that ordered themselves after this fashion would find themselves hanged. William Hert answered, "Hold thy peace Nicholas, for I think as much as thou dost, but if they heard us say so then would they hang us."¹⁷

Not long before the common bell sounded John Hennage, an official of the bishop of Lincoln, arrived in Louth to conduct the selection of new town officers. The ringing of the church bells interrupted his task. According to Morland, the commoners of the town upon hearing the bell rushed to the house of Robert Proctor “with such weapons as they had” and took Hennage and apparently threatened to kill him. The noise and “skrye” became so loud that Morland went to Proctor’s house to see what had happened. Upon his arrival, he discovered that the commons were taking Hennage to the church. Morland and several “honest men of the parish” were able by force and also by fair words” to rescue Hennage. They helped him take refuge in the church choir, and locked the door. The commons demanded that he and all those who had opposed them the night before must take an oath to be true to the commons and take

¹⁶ *LP XII (I)*, no. 380.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*.

their part.¹⁸ Nicholas Melton administered the oath to Hennage, Morland, and the honest men. This quieted the crowd and they began to disperse. However the bell sounded again, and the commons reassembled to seize John Frankish, the bishop of London's registrar who had just arrived. The commons all ran with weapons to William Goldsmith's house where Frankish had stopped. The exact nature of Frankish's visit to Louth remains unclear. He may have been there to conduct the visitation of the clergy or collect the clerical tenth. More importantly, the laity fervently believed that he was in Louth to confiscate church treasures, while many of the clergy supposed that he would examine them and deprive the less qualified of their livings.¹⁹ The mob took Frankish from the Saracen's Head, seized his books and carried them to the market place. John Taylor, a weaver, produced a torch and lit a fire. The mob brought out heretical books, especially the English versions of the New Testament, along with the registrar's papers to burn. Morland attempted to stop the mob and met them at Guy Kyme's house but failed to save the registrar's papers from the fire. Taken aback by the violence of the crowd Morland pleaded with them saying, "Masters, for the Passion of Christ, take heed what ye do, for by this mischievous act which ye be about to do we shall be all casten away."²⁰ In the meantime, the mob brought Frankish and Hennage to the market place with the intent of hanging them. However, Morland was able to get Frankish out of town, and in the ensuing confusion, Hennage also escaped.

In addition, on Monday, the practice of swearing men to the rebellion began when the people of Louth forced John Hennage to "be true to God, the King, and the commonality."²¹ This practice became a vital part of both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. The

¹⁸ Ibid.; *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 93.

¹⁹ Hoyle, 103.

²⁰ *LP XII* (1), no. 380.

²¹ Hoyle, 46.

commons actively recruited gentlemen to participate in the rebellion, and all landowners involved in the rebellion had to take the oath. By recruiting the gentry, often forcibly, requiring them to swear the oath to God, King, and commonalty, and employing them as captains, the rebels established a respectable organization and robbed the government of its usual means of local control.²² The rebellion quickly spread to the surrounding areas, and as in Louth, the commons sought out the gentry as their leaders. In addition, the mob forced sixty parish priests who had assembled at Louth for the visitations to take the oath and swear to ring the common bells of their parishes and raise the people. The priests evidently followed their instructions, for the next day their parishioners had risen.²³ The commons also demanded that the town leaders, who were in the town hall to elect an officer, “calling them churls” should come out and take the oath “to God, the King, and commons for the [wealth] of Holy Church.”²⁴ Then a group of about forty rebels set out for Legbourne Priory about two miles outside of Louth. Along the way they encountered John Bellowe, the Lord Privy Seal’s servant, “whom they took with great violence.” A group of the rebels took Bellowe back to Louth. Along the way, they met Sir William Skipwith and compelled him to take the oath. Once back in Louth the rebels put Bellowe in the stocks.²⁵

The remaining group proceeded to Legbourne where they captured several royal commissioners and their servants, William Eleyne, John Browne, Thomas Manby, and John Millesaunt. They returned to Louth and took one George Parker prisoner on their way back into

²² Michael Bush. *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Armies of October 1536* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 147. Cited hereafter as *The Rebel Armies of October*.

²³ *LP* XII (1), no. 70 (1).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, XI, no. 854.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, XI, no. 854, 828, no. i (1).

town. They put Millesaunt in the stocks next to Bellowe. Later the rebels jailed both men and placed them in the custody of Robert Browne. The priests still present in the town promised the commons to warn their parishioners to meet the rebels the next day between Louth and Caistor.²⁶

Word of the rising in Louth reached Lord Clinton and Sir Edward Madeson that same day. Clinton and Madeson sent word of the insurrection on to Lord Hussey. Madeson, his brother John and his two sons went up into Casterfield to get some idea how many had risen. The king's commissioners of the subsidy, of whom Madeson was one, were supposed to meet in Caistor the next day. According to Thomas Moigne, the commissioners decided to meet outside the town to assess the situation in Caistor before they began their mission.²⁷ The priests sworn at Louth spread the news of the rebellion throughout the countryside.

Tuesday 3 October the common bell of Louth sounded around dawn. Morland and a number of others gathered. Melton and John Tailor announced that all should be ready to march to Caistor when the common bell sounded again. The commons appointed a delegation of eight men to meet with the subsidy commissioners at Caistor. Four from the delegation were clergymen: Thomas Lincoln, Morland, William Dicheham, and Thomas More; the last two were priests of Louth. After attending mass, the men of Louth set out for Caistor traveling in two groups, the poor men first followed by the rich men who had horses. Thomas Kendall put the number who traveled to Caster at 100.²⁸ Morland went on foot until the host reached Orford where the prioress there loaned him a horse. The number of men reported waiting for them at Caistor varies from Melton's over exaggerated 20,000 to Huddswell's more probable 3,000.

²⁶ Ibid., 854.

²⁷ Ibid., nos. 568, 852; TNA SP1/110 fos. 149-159.

²⁸ *LP XI*, nos. 380 and 970. R.W. Hoyle claims that the number cited in *LP 970* is misleading. He claims that the actual number is not clear but the primary document states that there were 100 horsemen.

Morland reported that near Rothwell the Louth men decided that a delegation of 100 men of their company should meet with the commissioners. However, “the commonalty would not be stayed by them,” and so the company appointed a dozen men with horses, including Morland, to ride ahead of those on foot.²⁹

The commissioners held their preliminary hearing on that day. A large number of priests were also present; there to “wait on the bishop’s commissary” because rumor had it he would keep court that day. Anthony Wilson, Harry Penell, and “divers others” proclaimed “aloud that the justices had a commission from the King to take all men’s harness from them and bring it to the castle of Bolingbroke, and said they would not obey.” Next the commons went to the church where the priests were, “to the number of eight score,” and demanded to know if they would take the commons part. The priests quickly joined with the commons and they all marched into the market place where the priests burned their own books. George Huddswell, chosen as their leader, along with the entire body of commons and priests, went to Caistor Hill to meet with the justices.³⁰ That same day the “country mustered at Louth, 20,000, and went to Caistor for the King’s commissioners...whom they found and brought to Louth, *i.e.* Sir William Askew, Sir Robert Tyrwhitt, and others.”³¹

Initially the commissioners believed Caistor to be peaceful. However, news of trouble in Louth caused them to reassess the situation. Since dawn, the people of Louth had been stirred up. Guy Kyme attempted to stay the people, but Thomas Noble “bade him speak of no stay or they would kill him.”³² The commons prepared to march to Caistor as they had agreed the night

²⁹ *LP XI*, no. 380.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 853.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 828 i (1)

³² *Ibid.*, 828 xii.

before. According to Thomas Moigne, the commissioners on Caistor Hill heard that 10,000 were marching towards them. Their initial reaction was to flee, however Mr. Dalison suggested that leaving would only “encourage the commons...and make the matter more dangerous.” Thus, the commissioners sent word to the commons then at Caistor to meet with them “without the town where we would declare unto them the king’s pleasure.”³³

The justices on Caistor Hill met with a small group of the commons and attempted to convince them that the rumors had no merit. They informed the commons that the people would assess the subsidy themselves and the rumored pilfering and tearing down of churches had no substance. The attempt failed, for by this time, the bells were ringing and the Louth rebels had appeared. The justices, realizing they were in grave danger, mounted their horses and raced out of town. The commons captured and forced Sir William Askew, Edward Madeson, Thomas Portington, and Sir Robert Tyrwhitt, all commissioners, to take the oath. The captured commissioners inquired why the commons had risen. John Porman, a gentleman and captain, replied “with a loud voice that the commons were willing to take the King to be supreme head of the Church and he shall have the first fruits and the tenths of every benefice, and shall have the subsidy granted him but he shall have no more money of the commons during his life and suppress no more abbeys.” He also said the commons would have Cromwell and the heretic bishops of Canterbury, Lincoln, Rochester, Ely, Worcester, and Dublin (Cranmer, Longland, Hilsey, Goodrich, Latimer, and Browne) must be handed over to the commons.³⁴

The commons were particularly determined to have Lord Burgh join them. However, Burgh, with the aid of a swift horse, was able to avoid capture. Thomas Moigne also escaped.

³³ TNA SP1/110 fos. 149-159.

³⁴ LP XII, no. 853.

In their anger over the loss of Burgh, the commons captured one of his unfortunate servants Nicholas, whom they accused of warning his master. According to Morland, there were “so many striking at him as he never saw man escape such danger.” The men of Louth pursued the hapless servant relentlessly for over a quarter of a mile beating him so savagely that Morland administered Last Rites to him and left him under the care of several honest men of the town.³⁵

That night the captured gentlemen wrote a letter to the king beseeching him to grant the rebels a general pardon. Sir Edward Madeson and John Hennage, after reading the letter to the commons, set off toward London to deliver it to the king. Other messengers were about that night. Lord Burgh sent news of the insurrection to Henry, to the Earl of Shrewsbury at Sheffield, and to Lord Darcy in Yorkshire. Thomas Moigne sent word to Lord Hussey. Hussey wrote back asking for more information and sent a messenger to alert the mayor of Lincoln.³⁶

On Wednesday 4 October, the gentry persuaded the commons take no further action until hearing from the king. That same day a group of men arrived from Market Rasen with several captives, Sir William Askew’s two sons and George Eton, a servant of Lord Hussey. Eton had two letters in his possession, one from Lord Hussey to Tyrwhitt and Askew, and the other from the mayor of Lincoln to Hussey. The letter from Hussey offered to help stay the country while that from the mayor of Lincoln acknowledged Hussey’s offer to help suppress the rebellion. The letters infuriated the commons so much that they came close to killing their three captives. Moigne, who had also been captured, stated that had it not been for “the honest men of the town

³⁵ LP XII (1) no. 380. It is unclear what became of Nicholas, although the Dodds mentioned that he most likely died of his injuries.

³⁶ *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 99.

they would have been slain.”³⁷ On the way to Louth, the men of Rasen insisted that Moigne take the oath and he complied.

Along the journey to Louth, Moigne attempted to convince the men of Rasen to keep the captured letters secret “and speak not of them.” His pleas were of no avail, for the men of Market Rasen insisted on reading the letters to the commons of Louth. The contingent arrived in Louth just after mass and found the commons “were there and reasonable good stay.” However, when “the letters were read to them they were in such fury that they that they would...ring the bell and slay them who would not let them do it.”³⁸ The efforts of the gentlemen could not calm them down. At one point William Morland, who had attempted to prevent the bell from being rung, was told “they would hang him up by the rope thereof if he resisted any more.”³⁹ Shortly thereafter, a rumor quickly spread through the crowd claiming that Lord Burgh “was moving toward them with ten thousand” men to destroy them. With some difficulty, the gentry were able to persuade the commons that every man should go to his dinner. After dinner, the gentlemen divided the commons into wapentakes, each of which had as its captain the commissioner who dwelt in it. They were then to muster on Julien Bower.⁴⁰ Morland was then sent out to discover if Lord Burgh was indeed on the march. Morland returned to Louth that evening and reported that there was no sign of lord Burgh. He also brought news that Horncastle had risen with grave results.⁴¹

³⁷ TNA SP1/110 fos. 149-159.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *LP XII* (1), no. 380.

⁴⁰ TNA SP1/110 fos. 149-159v; *LP XI*, no. 971; Ibid., *XII* (1), no. 380.

⁴¹ *LP XII* (1), no. 380.

Trouble in Horncastle began as early as 30 September. Rebellion erupted there on Tuesday 3 October in response to the sermons of Nicholas Leach, the parson of Belchford, and his brother William. William Leach seems to have been the driving force in Horncastle. On Monday 2 October, William Leach told Thomas Dixon and “other poor men” that he had been in Louth and those conducting the visitation “had taken away the church goods, and next day would come to Horncastle to do the like.” Furthermore, Nicholas Leach may have been responsible for the ringing of the common bell. Leach had been in Louth on 2 October and had promised the commons there he would ring the bell.⁴² The Horncastle commons, led by William Leach, marched to Scrivelsby Hall and captured Sir Robert Dymoke, his sons, and several other gentlemen. Another band from Horncastle journeyed to Bolingbroke, where they found Bishop Longland’s vicar general, Dr. Raynes in a “chantry priest’s house and swore him lying sick in bed.”⁴³ Dymoke also sent another band to Louth to gather news on Lord Burgh. Raynes carried with him the order for the abrogation of certain saints’ days, the Ten Articles, and the related injunctions. He was also responsible for checking the valuation of the livings made by the commissioners for first fruits and tenths. More importantly many clerics believed that Raynes carried the dreaded inquiries into the fitness of the clergy. Most of the sources available point to the visitation of Raynes as one of the key factors in the outbreak of the rebellion in Horncastle.⁴⁴

Raynes certainly had visited parts of the diocese during the previous week, which raises the question as to why the rebellion broke out in the first week of October rather than the last

⁴² *LP XI*, no. 967 v, x.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, no. 828 (2).

⁴⁴ Hoyle contends that the rebellion in Louth was a spontaneous rising of the commons. He argues that the Horncastle rising was an opportunist, copycat adventure deliberately raised by William Leach. Hoyle, 6.

week of September. The answer is that the harvest was in by then and the risk of destroying crops no longer existed. Friday 29 September, the feast of St. Michael and all angels (Michaelmas), was a permitted holiday. Sunday 1 October, the feast of the dedication of churches, brought together people more likely made prone to reckless behavior by the feasting and drinking that marked the end of the harvest. The clergy also gathered in large numbers on October 2 to meet with Bishop Longland's commissary. Gathering under such conditions allowed them the opportunity to air their grievances, cooperate in the ringing of bells, and raise their parishioners to rebellion should the circulating rumors prove true.⁴⁵

The commons of Horncastle mustered early on the morning of 4 October under the command of Edward Dymmoke, the sheriff. Dymmoke sent for the chancellor and another priest called the surveyor. Apparently, Raynes arrival sent the commons into a murderous rage. The rebels in the field, many of whom were "priests and vicars" cried out, "Kill him! Kill him!" Thereupon, William Hutchinson and William Balderstane pulled Raynes off his horse, "kneeling upon his knees and slew him with their staves, and, being dead, the priests crying continually "Kill him!" The chancellor's clothing was distributed among the commons. The sheriff obtained Raynes' purse and he distributed the contents among the "poor men among the rebels." Following the murder, "every parson and vicar in the field counselled their parishioners to proceed in their journey, saying they should lack neither gold nor silver."⁴⁶ The sheriff and Sir John Coplelike witnessed the murder but did nothing to stop the mob. Sir William Morland, returning from Louth, arrived in time to observe William Leach approach Dymmoke and Coplelike and asked them to turn over Thomas Wolsey, a former servant of Cardinal Wolsey.

⁴⁵ Margaret Bowker. *The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland, 1520-1547* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 152.

⁴⁶ LP XI, no. 70 ix.

Leach proposed a swap of prisoners, Wolsey in return for one Stephen Haggar. The sheriff agreed and turned over Wolsey to the commons. The mob, convinced that the unfortunate Wolsey was a spy, promptly hanged him.⁴⁷

After Wolsey's hanging the commons dispersed agreeing to meet the following morning between Horncastle and Scrivelsby.⁴⁸ Thomas Ratford, the vicar of Snelland reported that he heard that all of the wapentake of Wraggoe was going to join them there. The rebels sent word by one John Parker to Kirkstead Abbey. He carried a message stating that if "they did not come forth to the host" the rebels would burn down their house. As the abbot and all of the monks able to go, seventeen in all, prepared to set out for Horncastle, a messenger "said the host had pardoned them for that night," but they had to be in Horncastle the next day, Thursday, by 11:00 o'clock. However according to the vicar of Snelland, a party of sixty rebels came on that Tuesday night and carried off all of the abbey's servants.⁴⁹

Most of the gentlemen were not present during these events. They had withdrawn about a mile away principally to draft a series of articles expressing the grievances of the commons. Bryan Stanes, parson of Millingsby, believed to be the chief author of the articles, read them to the host. These Horncastle Articles stated that the king should put an end to the subsidy, let the abbeys stand, and repeal the Statute of Uses. The Statute, which affected only the upper classes, was unknown to the commons. After an explanation of the Statute, the commons willingly included it in their list of grievances.

⁴⁷ Ibid., XII (1) 380.

⁴⁸ Hoyle, 133; *LP* XI, no. 828 ii (2).

⁴⁹ Ibid., no 828 viii.

The next day all the monks of Kirkstead arrived, the bursar and cellarer “horsed and with battle axes, the rest unhorsed.”⁵⁰ At Grimsby, “at night when the commons came home” Leonard Curtis, armed and harnessed, came to the Austin Friar’s gate and told two friars, “It were alms to set your house of fire; therefore command your prior that you come tomorrow.” The friars desired that Curtis go in himself, which he did. Once inside he commanded the prior to have the friars ready when called.⁵¹ The different hosts were to meet at Hambleton Hill that day. That afternoon the Yarborough host under the command of Sir Robert Tyrwhitt arrived as did Thomas Moigne bringing 200 men with him. The men of Louth and the men of Horncastle who had met between Horncastle and Scrivelsby were there as well. Estimates of the muster placed the number at 10,000.⁵²

By this point the Lincolnshire rising was no longer a local event. News of the murder of Dr. Raynes spread throughout the countryside, signaling a general arming. Towns and villages all along the south bank of the Humber River lit beacons that were seen and understood in Yorkshire. At 3 a.m. on Thursday 5 October, news reached the East Riding town of Beverley that Lincolnshire from Barton to Lincoln was in open rebellion. Any member of the gentry who remained home was in jeopardy of capture by the commons and being sworn as a captain. The people were particularly determined that the monks, for whom they had risen, share in their risk and expenses. By Wednesday, the monks at Barlings were aware of what was happening. At Bardney and Kirkstead, the rebels insisted that the monks join them.⁵³ On 8 October, the rebels,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., no. 593.

⁵² Ibid., no. 828 i, 828 (2), 853.

⁵³ *LP XI*, nos. 828 v, 828 vii; Dodds, 104.

by this time in Lincoln, received two letters informing them that Halifax “was likewise risen and were ready to aid the commons [of Lincolnshire].”⁵⁴

On 5 October, the commons, led by the gentlemen, began their march on Lincoln. That night near Market Rasen, the Louth muster met another host of about 10,000 according to Thomas Foster.⁵⁵ About two miles from Rasen, the gentry held a council declaring that the commons “were unruly.” The captains demanded “they should be ordered or no, and every gentleman said it was well done that they be ruled.” The commons submitted to the knights and gentlemen but according to George Huddswell the latter did not intend “the reformation of the insurrection, but furthered it to the utmost of their power.”⁵⁶ A rumor attributed to Thomas Moigne that Lord Burgh would join them that Friday caused great rejoicing among the commons. However, Lord Burgh did not appear and the host moved on to Dunholm Lings. A short time after their arrival a message from Lord Hussey arrived carried by one of his servants. Sir William Askew asked the messenger if Hussey would “take their part.” The servant answered that Hussey “and all his house were at the commons’ command.”⁵⁷

The next day the rebels arrived in Lincoln, which surrendered to them without difficulty. According to Huddswell, “they were well entertained,” and the town officials issued orders that “victuals be sold to them at reasonable price.” The captains lodged that night with the dean and canons in the Close of Lincoln. The next day, George Huddswell and Sir Christopher Askew and 500 others set out to bring Lord Hussey to Lincoln. The group found that Hussey had left his house, so they “went and lodged that night at the bishop’s castle, which they spoiled.” On

⁵⁴ TNA SP1/110 fos. 148-159; *LP* XI, no. 971.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 828 iii.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 853.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Sunday, Huddswell went with Lady Hussey to Colwike, where Lord Hussey was, to ask him if he would go to Lincoln. Hussey answered he would not.⁵⁸

By Saturday 7 October, the ranks of the Lincolnshire rebels swelled to over 30,000. They mustered at New Porte and agreed to send a letter stating their grievances to the king. While the company sent to capture Hussey was away the “men of worship” of Louth and Horncastle met at Mile Cross to revise the articles made at Horncastle because “they were wondrous unreasonable and foolish.”⁵⁹ The next day, Sunday 8 October, the host mustered at Lincoln ostensibly to hear and give approval of the articles drafted the previous day. George Stanes read the articles aloud to the host and volunteered to deliver the list of grievances to King Henry. The grievances of the Lincolnshire rebels, seven in all, were as follows:

- (1) that the King should demand no more taxes, except in time of war.
- (2) the repeal of the Statute of Uses.
- (3) that the Church should enjoy its ancient liberties and that the government cease collection of first fruits and tenths from the clergy.
- (4) that the King put an end to the suppression of the monasteries and churches.
- (5) the purging of heresy and the removal and punishment of the heretical bishops Cranmer, Latimer, and Longland.
- (6) that the King remove his base-born councilors Cromwell, Rich, Legh, and Layton and replace them with noblemen.
- (7) a general pardon for all those participating in the insurrection⁶⁰

The host duly adopted the articles, but did not send them immediately to Henry.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ TNA SP1/110 fos. 149-159; *LP XI*, no. 971.

⁶⁰ *Pilgrimage of Grace*, 114.

These articles give us insight into the fears and concerns of those involved in the Lincolnshire rebellion. It is important to note that the clergy took the initiative to rewrite and clarify the rebel demands. This fact provides another clear indication that the clergy not only supported the rebellion but also were actively involved. As far as the religious grievances, we see clearly the desire to halt the dissolution of the monasteries and the concern for the “ancient liberties of the Church.” The suppression of the monasteries weighed heavy on the Lincolnshire rebels as did the belief that superfluous churches also faced destruction. The clerics who drafted the articles demanded that the government cease collecting first fruits and tenths. As seen earlier, many clergy feared that the annual collection of first fruits by the government would rob them of benefices. The government control of first fruits also meant that in order for a cleric to retain a benefice he would have to undergo an examination in order to determine his fitness to hold the said benefice. As seen, fear of the examinations on part of many clergymen helped spark the Lincolnshire rising. Clearly, the men of worship, along with most of the rebels, placed the blame for the hated reforms on the “heretical bishops” and Cromwell. It is interesting that economic concerns are the first grievances listed. These grievances reveal that the weight of taxation played heavily on the minds of at least the leadership of the Lincolnshire rebels. It seems likely that the clergymen who drafted the articles placed them at the top of the list in order to appease the gentry and keep them committed to the rebellion. We have already seen that the commons had no knowledge of the Statute of Uses, attributing this grievance solely to the gentry. The rebels were also concerned about the extraordinary taxes especially the subsidy that king and Parliament had levied. They wanted these taxes levied only in times of war suggesting that there was no clear need on part of the government for additional funds. For many of those involved in the Lincolnshire rebellion these taxes indicated that Henry’s government had become overly

rapacious and had lost its way due to the influence of base-born ministers. Nevertheless, the primary concern of the rebels was the attack on traditional religious practice. Articles 4, 5, and 6 clearly indicate that the rebels demanded a return to the old ways. These articles, especially 5 and 6, point out that the Lincolnshire rebels wanted those responsible for the reforms and heretical policies punished and removed from office. The overall purpose of the rebels issuing their grievances went beyond simply informing the king as to why the men of Lincolnshire had risen. The true purpose was to force the king to rid himself of those responsible for the heretical policies, return to Henry to his senses, and restore the Church, as it existed at the beginning of his reign. As we will see below, Henry was completely unreceptive and unmoved by the rebel demands. He rejected out-of-hand all of the rebel grievances as traitorous and unreasonable.

That evening, following the acceptance of the articles, while the gentry and a number of the commons of Lincolnshire relaxed in the chapter house of Lincoln cathedral, two messages arrived from Beverley addressed to the commons of Lincolnshire. The letter, brought by William Woodmancey, stated that the people of Beverley had risen, asked the cause of the Lincoln rising, and offered help. The gentlemen obligingly sent copies of the Lincoln Articles and a letter to Beverley by Guy Kyme and Thomas Donne. Shortly after the arrival of the Beverley letter, two messengers from Halifax arrived, informing the Lincolnshire rebels that their town was also up, armed, and ready to assist the Lincolnites.⁶¹ The commons received both letters with such great enthusiasm that the gentry could hardly restrain them. Thomas Moigne reported “this news upon whose message the commons did answer with great fury would needs go forward.”⁶² The commons, with the news of other areas joining them in rebellion, wanted to march on the King’s

⁶¹ TNA SP1/110 fos. 149-159; *LP XI*, no. 971.

⁶² *Ibid.*

troops. The gentry assured them that to do so before the king's response to their grievances would amount to high treason. The gentry preached caution to the inflamed masses in order to prevent an attack on the approaching royal troops. The gentry prevailed, convincing the commons that the wisest course was to wait for the King's response. The next day, Monday, the gentlemen signed the articles and sent them to the king. The commons dispatched George Stanes to deliver the articles to London. The rebels, tired of inaction and Lincoln, agreed to remain there another day with the understanding that they would not spoil any man's possessions that did not join the host when summoned.⁶³

Word of the Lincolnshire rebellion reached Henry on Wednesday 4 October. Madeson and Hennage, who had left Louth at midnight on Tuesday 3 October, arrived the next morning at court with the first news of the rebellion. Henry immediately recognized the gravity of the situation. So great was his concern that he swallowed his royal pride and sent for the Duke of Norfolk, then at Kenninghall in Norfolk in a state of semi-disgrace for his opposition to Cromwell.⁶⁴ Norfolk was the king's most experienced and perhaps his best soldier, so naturally Henry turned to him when the rebellion flared up. The king then ordered all gentlemen at court to prepare to march against the insurgents under the command of Richard Cromwell, Thomas Cromwell's nephew. Henry ordered the mayor London to supply them with horses. The mayor did his duty quite well, going from stable to stable and taking horses from merchant strangers and from those of the country. These actions "caused great murmuring" forcing Henry to keep the Lincolnshire rebellion as quiet as possible. The government reported that the requisitioning of horses was for the visit of the Count of Nassau "who they pretended was coming to England

⁶³ Ibid., *Pilgrimage of Grace*, 115.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 107.

with a great company of men, but unprovided with horses.”⁶⁵ The king must have become increasingly concerned with the situation as letters from Shrewsbury and Hussey arrived at court. Both men advised the king that the insurrection was spreading and the number of rebels was growing. Hussey reported to Cromwell the commons summoning him to join and lead them. Shrewsbury reported to the king the commons desire to take Lord Burgh as well as the capture of the royal subsidy commissioners by the rebels. Henry continued his preparations in London, although he was clearly concerned about who could be trusted. From the outset the king “took from the city many people and furnished as many men with harness as possible, so as to weaken the town and strengthen his army and the Tower, which is his last refuge.” Henry also sent word for Cromwell to raise a loan to test the Londoners whom he suspected of being rebels.⁶⁶

Three days later Henry sent letters under the Privy Seal announcing that he planned to lead an advance on the rebels personally. Henry then sent William Fitzwilliam, the Lord Admiral, to Ampthill. He dispatched Lord Clinton to the Midlands with written orders summoning the gentlemen to keep order in their lands, to raise men for the king, and send them to meet the Earl of Shrewsbury at Nottingham on Monday 9 October. Henry ordered the Earls of Rutland and Huntington to join Shrewsbury.⁶⁷ George Talbot, the Earl of Shrewsbury, arrived at Hardwick in Sherwood on Saturday 7 October. Shrewsbury reported that a spy placed the number of rebels at about 40,000 strong, but with only 16,000 properly equipped for battle. He and the Earl of Rutland both wrote to the king for money and ordnance. Richard Cromwell,

⁶⁵ *LP XI*, no 714.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 860.

⁶⁷ *Pilgrimage of Grace*, 119.

nephew of the vicegerent, on his way to Amptill reported that he met several Lincolnshire fugitives near Ware who estimated the rebels were 40,000 in number.

Cromwell immediately dispatched two agents to reconnoiter the situation and gather information. Cromwell sent Marmaduke Constable and Robert Tyrwhitt to survey the conditions that existed in Lincolnshire. John Hennage, who had delivered the first petition of the commons to the king, accompanied them. Thursday morning at 9 o'clock, they had reached Stilton where they received their first report. Constable and Tyrwhitt reported that they had met an "honest priest" who informed them that all of Louth and Horncastle had risen and all had been forced to take an oath. The priest reported the words of the oath to be "Ye shall swear to be true to Almighty God, to Christ's Catholic Church, to our Sovereign Lord the King, and unto the Commons of this realm; so help you God and Holydam and by this book." The priest also informed them that on Tuesday, he had supped with the dean of Lincoln and the dean had a letter from John Hennage's wife that put the number of rebels at 10,000.⁶⁸ Constable and Tyrwhitt left Stilton bound for Lincoln. When they arrived at Ancaster, a gentleman informed them that Lindsey had risen and the rebel numbers had swelled to 20,000. Their petition was "for pardon and that they may keep holydays, &c. as before, that suppressed religious houses may stand, and that they be no more taxed." The rebels also wanted Cromwell handed over them.⁶⁹ Constable and Tyrwhitt departed for Sleaford in order to speak with Lord Hussey. When they arrived, they found Hussey in no position to carry out the king's orders because he was beset by the commons and unable to raise any men. From Sleaford Constable and Tyrwhitt wrote to Cromwell that they

⁶⁸ *LP XI*, no. 552.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 553.

intended to remain there until they received further orders. Both men would eventually be taken and sworn by the rebels

Henry changed his plans as increasingly disturbing news of the rebellion reached London. Initially the king felt that Shrewsbury could easily defeat the rebels, and after which the king would make a military march through the area. For this purpose, the king sent the Duke of Norfolk to Ampthill to prepare the way. When it became clear that dispersing the rebels would be no simple military promenade Henry altered his plans. He did not want to expose himself to possible danger, and it would be counterproductive to delay his forces. The king also had second thoughts about Norfolk leading the royal forces against the Lincolnshire rebels. Suspecting that Norfolk had leanings towards the old religion, the king did not trust him to lead his army against rebels espousing loyalty to the old faith. The king doubted Norfolk's willingness to wage full war on those with whom he sympathized. Because of these doubts, Henry recalled Norfolk and called on the Duke of Suffolk to command the royal forces.

The king did engage in what amounted to damage control with regard the reporting of the rebellion on the continent, especially at the French court. Henry reported to Gardiner and Wallop a heavily edited version of what had actually occurred. In a letter dated 11 October, before he knew of the Yorkshire rebellion, he clearly played down the danger the Lincolnshire rebellion posed. In the letter he informed his ambassadors "injurious rumors have been spread" by traitors "of whom two are already executed, and more are ready to suffer." The letter stated that a group of his subjects had assembled in Lincoln County consisting of "a number of boys and beggars." Henry further wrote "of pure tried men" sufficient to give the greatest prince christened three great and main battles, "and yet the great part of our realm is not touched." The king put the number of royal troops at no less than 40,000. Clearly, Henry wanted a highly

sanitized version of these events reported to impress upon the French and other continental rulers that he was in control and the situation was no real threat.⁷⁰

The status of the royal forces was as follows: Shrewsbury, Rutland, and Huntingdon were at Nottingham with what forces and weapons they could muster. Sir John Russell and Sir William Parr were at Stamford with a small force.⁷¹ Russell and Parr reported to Henry that Stamford's defenses were practically nonexistent but with ordnance, "the town...should be defended, whatever assault was made."⁷² The duke of Suffolk arrived at Huntington on 9 October and found "neither ordnance nor artillery nor men enough to do anything," the men there had "neither harness nor weapons."⁷³ Suffolk, terribly outnumbered, appealed to the king for men, harness, ordnance, and horses. He sent letters to the rebels, one from Henry that threatened them with great vengeance if they did not put down their arms at once. In the letter, the king expressed anger that his commissioners "should have put yourselves in their hands, instead of assembling for the surety of your own persons and for their suppression." Henry also addressed the rumors claiming there was never any intention to loot the parish churches. He marveled "at the unkindness of our subjects, that they would move any insurrection against us for such a cause," considering that the vast majority were not going to be affected by the subsidy.⁷⁴ The duke sent letters of his own to the rebels in hopes that he could delay a confrontation until the royal army reached greater strength. Suffolk also sent messages back to London demanding desperately needed money and instructions on what to do if the rebels

⁷⁰ *LP XI*, no. 656.

⁷¹ *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 122.

⁷² *LP XI*, no. 621.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, no. 615.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 569.

submitted. On Tuesday 10 October, Suffolk moved his troops to Stamford where Richard Cromwell, Sir John Russell, Sir William Parr, Sir Francis Brian, and the troops from Ampthill under Sir William Fitzwilliam joined him. Brian had only 900 men, no ordnance, and no money. By noon on Friday, Suffolk had only 5000 men, two-fifths of whom had neither horse nor weapons.⁷⁵ Again, Suffolk sent letters from the king and himself to the rebels.

In the meantime, a second body of men began arriving at Nottingham under the leadership of the Earls of Shrewsbury, Huntingdon, and Rutland. Shrewsbury had told Lord Hussey that he expected to have 40,000 men. In actuality, he had far less than that number. He was also in the wrong place. If the Lincolnshire rebels chose to move south, Shrewsbury's forces would have to chase them southward and attack them from the rear. The small company at Newark was not prepared to hold out long if the rebels chose to pass that way as was anticipated on 6 October. The military situation at this stage was dire as Norfolk recognized on 9 October.⁷⁶ Fortunately, for Henry, the skimpy royal forces never faced the rebel masses. By Wednesday 11 October, the vanguard of the royal forces at Stamford recognized that the rebels had started to disperse from Lincoln.

The Duke of Suffolk's letters from Henry and himself reached the leaders of the rebellion at Lincoln Cathedral. These letters created a crisis among the rebel captains. Now the gentlemen had to make a choice. The king's army lacked organization and was without ordnance and money. At this time, the rebels, in terms of discipline, equipment, and military readiness, were exactly equal to the royal forces. The commons were eager for a fight; one small victory, which seemed imminently possible, might raise the whole kingdom and leave the king at their mercy.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 808.

⁷⁶ *Hoyle*, 171; TNA SP1/106 fo. 283; *LP XI*, nos. 562, 644.

Obviously, the gentlemen had reason to fear an armed confrontation. To win they must commit to the commons, drop their defense of being forced to join the rebellion, and abandon any hope of making peace with the king. Victory over the king would mean a return to civil war and with it the possibility of foreign invasion and complete destruction.⁷⁷ If they fought and failed, the gentlemen would forfeit their lives, land, and good family names. The choice, simply, was to fight or submit. It was an extremely difficult decision for a handful of country gentlemen to have to make.

The letters from Suffolk and the king arrived in Lincoln on the afternoon of 10 October. The commons demanded that one of the gentlemen read aloud the contents of the letters. Thomas Moigne, now one of the captains, read the letters but omitted parts that he believed would anger the commons. The meeting broke up in confusion when the pastor of Snelland announced to the crowd that the letter “was falsely read.” The undercurrent of mistrust between the gentry and the commons burst forth with many of the commoners demanding the hanging of all the gentlemen. According to Moigne, about 200 of the commons withdrew into the cloister, where they declared that the gentlemen intended to deceive them, and after much debate, agreed to kill Moigne and the other gentlemen “as they came out at the west door of the minster.”⁷⁸ However, their servants transported them out of the south door of the cathedral to the chancellor’s house, and the commons delayed killing them until the next morning. The next morning the gentlemen, dressed in harness, marched down from Lincoln Cathedral and met the commons, announcing that they would take no further action until receipt of the king’s response

⁷⁷ The Wars of the Roses still haunted many Englishmen. A successful rebellion against Henry might invite invasion by the Scots, the French, and possibly the Spanish.

⁷⁸ TNA SP1/110 fos. 149-159; *LP XI*, no. 971.

on the pardon. Essentially the Lincolnshire rebellion was over; many of the commoners began returning quietly to their homes.

Rumors of the collapse of the rebellion quickly reached Suffolk's camp. Richard Cromwell reported to his uncle on 11 October that he had arrived at Stamford and met with Suffolk. Sir John Russell, Sir Francis Brian, Sir William Parr, and others were also there with "well furnished men." That night the Lord Admiral arrived to complete the gathering of royal forces at Stamford. Richard Cromwell also reported that the traitors about Lincoln "are so dismayed at the assembly of these noblemen that they know not what to do." Furthermore, the Boston host and others had departed from Lincoln "to the number of ten or twelve thousand men" and the rest would flee shortly. Later that day one of John Thimbleby's sons arrived at Stamford and reduced that number by half but young Thimbleby added that less than 10,000 rebels remained at Lincoln.⁷⁹ As the Lincolnshire Rebellion imploded, the Duke of Suffolk had plans to march on Lincoln on Saturday, 14 October, and afterwards to destroy Louth and Horncastle. He clearly wished to meet the rebels in a pitched battle. The earl of Shrewsbury, at Nottingham, was more prudent. He dispatched Thomas Miller, Lancaster Herald, with a proclamation demanding the rebels disperse and return home. When Lancaster Herald arrived in Lincoln on Wednesday evening, he found widespread confusion. The gentlemen were eager to make peace with the king, while the commons, without their leaders, were without hope.⁸⁰ That night Lancaster Herald announced that all should gather the next day to hear his proclamation.

On Thursday October 12, the remaining host gathered to hear his proclamation. The declaration was in the name of George, Earl of Shrewsbury, Thomas, Earl of Rutland, and

⁷⁹ *LP XI*, no. 658.

⁸⁰ *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 128-29.

George, Earl of Huntingdon. It demanded that the people of Lincolnshire halt their rebellion and return to their homes. The herald informed the rebels that the Earl of Shrewsbury would attack if they did not disperse. It is unknown what other arguments Lancaster Herald used at this meeting but he must have been convincing. The commons agreed to go home while the gentlemen met with Suffolk to attempt to obtain a general pardon. Following Lancaster Herald's proclamation, many of the commons began to depart that night while the remainder departed the next day. However, not all the commons were content to depart. Robert Leach seized the submission of the gentry and read it saying "he would see what their answer was ere it should depart"⁸¹ According to William Morland all went home except "the men of worship and their servants."⁸²

Upon hearing the news of the success of Lancaster Herald's mission, the duke of Suffolk wrote to Henry asking him to provide instructions on how to handle the situation. Suffolk asked for the king's response on two points. Suffolk wanted to know whether Henry would grant a pardon to the rebels so he and "the writers may march straight towards the rebels in the North" or whether he should subdue the "traitors in Lincolnshire." Suffolk informed Henry that the greatest danger was from "the multitude of men that is in the North, if they have time to gather, is to be considered." He also suggested that a general pardon would "sparple," or quiet, the people, allowing him to advance and put his army between the Lincolnshire rebels and the North men, thus permitting him to address which ever posed the greatest threat. While Suffolk drafted his letter, the Dymmokes arrived and requested if the duke would act as their petitioner to the king. Suffolk replied that they must use their own discretion, he would only "keep them in surety" until the king made his pleasure known.⁸³ On Friday 13 October Richard Cromwell

⁸¹ *LP XI*, no 843.

⁸² *TNA SP1/110 fos. 149-159; LP XI*, nos. 971, 380.

reported to his uncle “the traitors about Lincoln have dispersed” and the gentlemen and their servants have offered unconditionally to come in tomorrow if Suffolk would receive them. Shrewsbury sent a letter to Lord Darcy in Yorkshire that included a copy of the proclamation read by Lancaster Herald because it had been so effective in Lincoln. He reported that the Lincoln rebels upon hearing the declaration were content to depart home, but tarried for answer from my lord of Suffolk. Shrewsbury thought that when they heard from him they would go home.⁸⁴

By Saturday 14 October, Lancaster Herald was with the king in London and news of the collapse of the Lincolnshire rebellion was probably generally known. On Sunday, Henry was confident enough that the danger had passed to send out letters countermanding the musters at Ampthill. In the letters, Henry announced that “the traitors of Lincolnshire having submitted and retired home, the King, minding in no wise that our good subjects appointed to wait on us with you at Ampthill... should travel any further in the cold and foul season.”⁸⁵ Henry sent letters to Suffolk and Shrewsbury “and proclaim that, if all who have been in company with these traitors will deliver you their harness and weapons in the open market place [or other such place] those in the town at once and the rest on a fixed day, and the commonalty perform the articles sent herewith, then they may depart home and you will be suitors for our favor to them.”⁸⁶ Henry also sent a proclamation announcing that he accepted the rebels submission made to Lancaster Herald. The king promised to show them mercy if they complied with Suffolk’s demands.

⁸³ *LP XI*, no. 672.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 694.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 720.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 717.

Suffolk arrived in Lincoln on Tuesday 17 October. His unexpected arrival caught the remnant of the rebels off guard and ended any chance of resistance. Richard Cromwell, who arrived in Lincoln on Monday night, described the people of Lincoln as “the most obstinate persons as ever I saw.” He also confided to his uncle that had “we not stolen upon them” the rebels would have “withstood us.”⁸⁷ Suffolk informed Henry that although the rebels had dispersed the danger had not yet ended. According to his letters to the king, “some attempt to renew rebellion by lighting beacons, putting themselves in harness, and appointing new assemblies.” Henry informed Suffolk that if this behavior continued Suffolk was to “run upon them and with all extremity destroy, burn, and kill man, woman, and child the terrible example of all others, and specially the town of Louth because to this rebellion took his [sic] beginning in the same.”⁸⁸ However, the situation never required such brutal tactics. The last event of the Lincolnshire rebellion was Henry’s response to the petition sent to him on October 9. The king conceded nothing to the rebels.

Henry addressed each of the grievances listed in the Horncastle petition. First the king responded to fourth and sixth articles “because upon them dependeth much of the rest.” Henry, in a mocking tone, informed the Lincolnshire rebels that he had never heard of any king allowing “rude and ignorant common people” to appoint a prince’s councilors and prelates. Nor did they have the ability to discern “meet and sufficient councilors for a prince.” Henry continued to chastise the people of Lincolnshire for having the temerity to “find fault with your prince for the

⁸⁷ Ibid., no. 756.

⁸⁸ Ibid., no. 780.

electing of his counselors and prelates.” They were false subjects who, contrary to God’s laws, have presumed to rule their prince whom “ye are bound by all laws to obey and serve.”⁸⁹

Next Henry addressed the issue of the suppression of the monasteries. He responded by asserting that the suppression was “granted to us by Parliament and not set forth by the mere will of any counselor.” Furthermore, the service of God has not been diminished “for none were suppressed but where most abominable living was used, as appears by their own confessions signed by their own hands in the time of our visitations.” Henry dismissed the claim that the giving of alms and hospitality by the monasteries would harm the communities. The king asserted that these houses, most of which housed only four or five religious persons, “spent the goods of their house in nourishing vice.”

As far as the Statute of Uses, Henry “marveled at what madness” was in the brains of the Lincolnshire commons. He saw their demand for the repeal of the act as madness since it had nothing to do with the commons. Furthermore, the statute had been duly passed by Parliament making it just.⁹⁰ The king next turned his attention to the fifteenth and the tenth. Again, Henry vented his anger on the “ingratitude, unnaturalness, and unkindness” of the people of Lincolnshire. He marveled that they believed they could “compel us with your insurrections and with such rebellious demeanor to remit the same?” He further reminded the rebels that the money collected was for their protection and “will not meet a tenth of the charges we must sustain for your protection.” As far as First Fruits, it was a thing granted by Parliament also. Henry again chastised the rebels pointing out that “ye our commons have much complained in time past that most of the goods and lands of the realm were in the spiritual men's hands; yet,

⁸⁹ *LP XI*, no. 780. The Dodds have a more complete version of Henry’s response 136-38.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

now pretending to be loyal subjects, you cannot endure that your prince should have part thereof.”⁹¹ The king concluded by reiterating his demand that the rebels return to their homes, deliver to his lieutenants 100 “to be ordered according to their demerits at our will and pleasure.” Finally, Henry ended by warning the commons that further obstinacy would lead to the destruction of “their lives, wives, children, lands, goods, and chattels.”⁹²

Thus, the Lincolnshire rebellion came to an abrupt end. The most striking aspect of the Lincolnshire rebellion is the rapidity with which it collapsed. Like a flash fire, the rebellion spread rapidly and burned out just as speedily. In the end, the rebellion lasted only a fortnight. Fearing attack by Shrewsbury and Suffolk, the rebel leadership recoiled from any confrontation with royal troops. The commons without viable leadership fractured and sullenly returned to their homes. The Dodds attributed the collapse to a lack of commitment on the part of the men of Lincolnshire. They viewed the great mistrust and contempt between the gentry and commons as a key factor in the ultimate failure of the Lincolnshire rebellion. G. W. Bernard rejects this assertion. He contends that the numerical superiority of the rebels was not a real advantage. Bernard points to Lord Russell’s forces crushing the southwestern rebels in 1549 as an example of what the Lincolnshire rebels might have risked.⁹³ Clearly, the superior numbers of the rebels before 12 October did not guarantee victory over royal forces. However, there is no viable reason to assume that Shrewsbury and company would have been successful had an armed confrontation taken place. Perhaps, as Bernard suggests, the rebels dispersed aware of the insurrections beyond the Humber in the East Riding of Yorkshire and were simply biding their

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ *The King’s Reformation*, 319.

time. Nonetheless, as the Lincolnshire rebellion imploded a larger, better organized, and much greater threat had presented itself in Yorkshire.

In light of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the events that took place in Lincolnshire exposed a lack of leadership and a dire absence of organization. Yet, the risings in York, particularly that of Beverley and Halifax, as we shall see, were clearly inspired by Lincolnshire. Both towns corresponded with the Lincoln rebels and offered to support them in their stance against the religious reforms, suppression of the monasteries, and the new taxes. Furthermore, the Pilgrims imitated the Lincolnshire men in administering an oath to those who joined. The oath administered initially by the Yorkshire men was almost identical to that of the Lincolnshire rebels. The Pilgrims also followed the pattern set by the Lincolnshire men by seeking out members of the gentry to take the oath and then appointing them as captains of the rebel hosts. The first set of articles issued by Robert Aske, chief captain of the Pilgrimage, incorporated the Lincolnshire grievances.

The government's response to the Lincolnshire rebellion, as mentioned above, was slow, disorganized, and feeble. Shrewsbury and Suffolk never had more than 9000 men and many of them lacked the proper tools of combat. Shrewsbury and Suffolk recognized the weakness of the royal force assembled to confront the rebels. Orders from London often exhibited a clear misunderstanding of the situation in Lincoln. The king on several occasions railed against Shrewsbury and Suffolk for their over cautious handling of the rebels. Henry's bluster and threats, while issued with great and frightful seriousness, were nothing more than hollow words. Fortunately, for Henry, the leadership of the rebels ultimately was unwilling to test the king's veracity and resolve. It is quite probable that the slow and feeble response by the royal forces motivated the men who became involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace. It is also quite possible that

those who led the Pilgrimage of Grace recognized the failings of the Lincolnshire rebellion, which explains the vastly superior leadership, organization, and communication that existed among the Pilgrims. The rapid collapse of the Lincolnshire rebellion, which Henry attributed to his decisive action taken against the rebels, caused him to discount the Yorkshire risings. He evidently viewed them as mere copycat revolts that posed no serious threat. Clearly, the slow response to the risings north of the Humber allowed the Yorkshire rebels the opportunity to organize and prepare for the government's response. Whatever the case, the Pilgrimage of Grace, which encompassed most of the northern counties, posed a much more serious threat to the Henrician reformation and indeed to the Tudor dynasty.

Chapter 6: The Pilgrimage of Grace

The rumors that ignited the Lincolnshire rebellion were not, as we have seen, unique to that part of the kingdom. The people of Cornwall heard rumors that Dr. John Tregonwell was going to confiscate their “crosses, chalices, and other idols of the churches.”¹ Similar rumors of the pulling down of churches and confiscation of cup and plate spread throughout the ridings of Yorkshire and much of northern England. As the Lincolnshire rebellion imploded across the Humber, a larger and more threatening insurrection began. At first glance it would appear that the Lincolnshire rising and the Pilgrimage of Grace were very similar. Both were risings of the commons, both had deep-seated religious causes, both swore those involved to oaths, and looked to the gentry for leadership of the various hosts. However, most of the apparent similarities are only superficial. First, as we shall see, the participants in the Pilgrimage not only demanded that Henry halt the suppression of the monasteries, they actually restored a number of abbeys. Additionally, the Pilgrimage of Grace encompassed a much larger area than did the Lincolnshire rebellion engulfing much of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cumberland, and Northumberland. Most importantly, the dynamic of the Pilgrimage was more overtly religious than that of Lincolnshire. The rhetoric espoused by Robert Aske and the other captains was clearly aimed at convincing Henry VIII to recognize the grievous errors his ministers, especially Cromwell, had made by the

¹ LP XI, no. 405.

break with Rome and the assault on traditional religious practice. As in Lincolnshire, the clergy played a significant role in spreading and supporting the risings. Clearly, at its height the Pilgrimage posed a significantly more serious threat to Henry VIII than did the Lincolnshire rising. Had the hosts, which numbered at least 40,000 well-harnessed men, marched on London it is doubtful that royal forces would have been able to turn them back.

Robert Aske

The Lincolnshire rebellion played a role in the rise of one of the most important leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace – Robert Aske. He was a lawyer by trade and the youngest son of a Yorkshire knight. Outside of a few physical features, such as Aske having only one eye, we know very little about the man who became the Great Captain of the Pilgrimage of Grace. The date of his birth is uncertain, although he was probably born around 1500. Robert was the youngest son of Sir Robert Aske of Aughton, the patriarch of an old and well-connected Yorkshire family. Aske was related to the Cliffords of Skipton Castle on his mother's side. Robert's mother was a Clifford, daughter of John Clifford, ninth Baron de Clifford. In 1527, another of his aristocratic relatives, Henry Percy, the sixth Earl of Northumberland, briefly employed Aske. Percy was Robert's second cousin. Later that year, Aske gained admittance to Grey's Inn in London and left Percy's employ. It was here that he became acquainted with Thomas Moigne and William Stapleton, both of whom actively participated in the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace, fellow lawyers at Grey's Inn. Grey's Inn was well represented in both rebellions; three important rebel leaders came from its ranks. Like many in Yorkshire, Aske was opposed to the religious reforms of Henry VIII and it was in this capacity that he gained notoriety in 1536-1537.

Aske appeared on the scene on 4 October 1536. Robert and his two brothers, Christopher and John, were in Yorkswold at Sir William Ellerker's house ostensibly to meet Sir Ralph Ellerker for a foxhunt. The very same day Robert and his brother arrived, Sir Ralph received the king's commission for the subsidy and departed to Beverley or Hull on that business. Aske decided to take his leave so that he could return to London. He claimed that he crossed the Humber River into Lincolnshire with no other purpose than to return to London for the upcoming law term. He forded the Humber five miles from the Ellerker's home by the Barton Ferry. On his crossing, Aske learned from the ferryman that Caistor had risen and the commons there had taken the commissioners and the Bishop's commissary. The ferryman also told him of the rumored pulling down of churches and the confiscation of church ornaments. Aske claimed that this was the first time he had heard this rumor and it was known "in no place, nor yet in Yorkshire" until Guy Kyme brought the Lincolnshire articles into Yorkshire.

At Feriby George Huddswell and sixteen men on horses stopped Aske. Huddswell demanded Aske's name and then informed him the "commons of that quarter, as far as Louth, were up."² Huddswell informed Aske that "no man should pass through that country but that they should be sworn" to the commons. Aske responded saying that he was sworn to the king's highness and he would take no other oath unless forced to do so. He then demanded the manner of the oath. Huddswell then declared the oath, "Ye shall be true to God and the king and the commonwealth." Aske replied that he saw no treason in the oath but he would stand "with his first oath." The men then forced Aske to take the oath and he made his way to Sawcliff to the house of Thomas Portington, his brother-in-law. Upon his arrival at Sawcliff, Aske found that the commons had taken Portington. He attempted to make his way to Wintringham, about three

² LP XII (1), no. 6; David Berkowitz, *Humanist Scholarship and Public Order, Two Tracts against the Pilgrimage of Grace* (Washington: Folger Books, 1984) 218. Here after cited as *Humanist Scholarship*.

miles from Sawcliff, but was met by “divers [members] of the commons” who “so entreated him, that he was glad to repair again to Sawcliff,” where he spent the night.³ About an hour before daybreak, the commons took Aske and his three nephews there with him, two of whom were law students. However, they had license to go into Yorkshire because two of them were “heirs apparent.” The commons took Aske to a small town three miles south of Sawcliff where there was an assembly without captains or gentlemen. The commons there informed him that Lord Burgh had warned the soke of Kirton in Lindsey against them, and they intended to raise the same soke. They divided themselves with Aske going to Humber side with those on horses. They raised the soke and met the rest of the group that afternoon around three o’clock in Kirton.

The company next decided to join the host at Caistor, which would be at a place called Hamilton How. Aske inquired if they in fact knew “if any such host were there or no.” The commons responded that they had heard as much but did not know for sure if the host would be at Hamilton How. Aske offered to go “if ye will keep your ground” until he returned. The company agreed and he rode to Caistor some twelve miles away. Upon his arrival, he spoke with Thomas Moigne whom the commons had appointed as one of their captains. The commons would not allow a private meeting so Aske and Moigne had to meet openly and aloud so the commons could hear what transpired. Aske learned that the Caistor host would lodge that night at Raisingwoode, a mile off, and the next night at Downholme Mede, five miles beyond Lincoln, where they wished Aske’s company to meet them.⁴

Aske took his leave and that night returned to Sawcliff. Early the next morning he crossed the River Trent at Burton Stature and entered into Marshland, where the commons were

³ LP XII (1), no. 6; Mary Bateson, “The Manner and Taking of Robert Grace,” *English Historical Review*, April (1890), 332. Here after cited as “The Manner and Taking of Robert Aske.”

⁴ Ibid., 333; LP XII (1), no. 6;

in a high state of excitement and ready to rise. Upon seeing Aske, whom they had heard was a captain in Lincolnshire, they wished to ring their bells. Aske advised them to wait until they heard the Howden bells ring. He then crossed the Ouse into Howden and told them not to ring their bells until they heard the Marshland bells. Aske then traveled five miles to his brother's house only to find him away, so he returned to Howden and stayed there that night.

The next day, 7 October, word reached Aske that Mr. Hennage knew the king's response to the Lincolnshire articles, so he returned to Lincoln. After his arrival, he found confusion due to the widespread mutual distrust among the commons and the gentry. That night he heard that "if he tarried there he would be slain, either by the gentlemen or by the commons, because he had departed from them." As a result, Aske left his lodgings at the Sign of the Angel, and stayed with a priest who was the brother of his host. He departed for home early the next morning, 9 October, but could not cross the Trent for two days. According to Aske, during that time a letter forged in his name appeared in the town of Beverley, which he utterly denied writing or consenting to. Around midnight he crossed the Trent upon seeing the beacons of Yorkswold lit. The next day a letter from Sir Brian Hastings arrived demanding that the gentlemen of Marshland muster their men and report to him. The gentry followed Hastings instructions, calling the commons before them at the parish church. During this meeting, the church bells suddenly were rung in every church there and in Howdenshire.

Aske had taken refuge in a poor man's house but the Howdenshire commons soon discovered him and forced him to return. On his arrival, he found the commons about to set fire to Sir Thomas Metham's house. Aske pacified the commons and saved the house. By October 11, the commons recognized Aske as the chief captain of Marshland, Howdenshire, and the Isle of Ancholme. Moreover, in this capacity he issued his first proclamation. The proclamation

called “for all men to assemble on the morrow (12 October) at Skipwith Moor and appoint captains...to warn all beyond the water to take the oath to be true to the King’s issue and the noble blood, to preserve the church from spoil and be true to the commonwealth.”⁵ The next day after reading his first proclamation at Skipwith, Aske marched to Market Wighton to meet with the Beverley rebels. Another event of significance took place on 12 October. That day the rebels in Lancashire restored Sawley Abbey, one of the first abbeys suppressed by the government. The restoring of dissolved monasteries became a common occurrence throughout the Pilgrimage of Grace. In all, the rebels restored twelve suppressed monasteries.⁶

Aske’s account of his capture and swearing appears very convenient. He claimed that he was sworn to the king and would not break his oath. In addition, Aske claimed his only purpose was to get to London for the Westminster law term. The account, taken after his arrest, may well have been a last ditch attempt to save himself. Much of the account, at least until 12 October, makes it seem as though he had no choice but to do as the commons demanded. Clearly, his actions during the Pilgrimage do not support his claims. This inconsistency in action and words is indicative of the available sources on the Lincolnshire rebellion and Pilgrimage of Grace. What we know of both rebellions comes primarily from the numerous depositions taken in the aftermath of the rebellions, thus making it difficult to identify motives and causes.

The East Riding

The Pilgrimage of Grace began in Beverley on Sunday 8 October, six days after the Lincolnshire rising and exactly one week after the townspeople of Louth locked up their church to protect its treasures from confiscation by the royal commissioners. It was the first revolt of

⁵ SP1/107 fo. 116; *LP XI*, no. 622.

⁶ *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 147-48.

the north to form an army, commanded initially by William Stapleton, a common lawyer, and eventually led by the knights Sir Thomas Percy, Sir Ralph Ellerker the younger, and Sir William Constable. Fundamentally it was, as it claimed to be, a rising of the commons. The Pilgrimage of Grace became a considerable rebellion because the gentry of the East Riding remained either passive or fled when the rising began; and partly because the areas around it, Holderness and Yorkswold, found with it a common cause. Originally, the East Riding uprising intended to assist the Lincolnshire rebellion; however, the host occupied itself with the siege of Hull from 15 to 19 October. By the time Hull surrendered to the Stapleton host, the rising in Lincolnshire was over. With the collapse of the Lincolnshire rebellion, the Beverley host linked up with the other Yorkshire rebellions, sending its army to join the Pilgrims gathered at Doncaster on 26 and 27 October.⁷

According to William Stapleton, a common bruit circulated throughout Yorkshire that “divers parish churches in that country should be put down and the goods thereof to be taken to the king’s use so that of several parishes should be but one.” Furthermore, Stapleton named several parishes where this feared destruction and consolidation would take place, revealing just how detailed the rumors were and thus making them all the more believable. He also reported that a certain Dr. Palmes, one of the king’s commissioners, commanded the churchwardens at Tadcaster to take an inventory of the churches’ goods “and that this with the suppression of religious houses the putting down of certain holy days and the new opinions of certain persons concerning the faith, raising of farms, sore taking of gressoms or incomes, pulling down of towns and husbandries, enclosures of the common, worshipful men, taking of farms and yeomen’s offices.” Stapleton testified that for many this report confirmed the rumor and would lead to the

⁷ *Rebel Armies of October 1536*, 25-26.

great decay of “the commonwealth. All which...more grudge and stir the people much to such rebellion.”⁸

Trouble began in Beverley when John Hallom and other parishioners forced the priest of Walton church to acknowledge and announce the upcoming feast of St. Wilfrid’s Day, one of the abrogated holy days. Hallom stated that on the Sunday before St. Wilfrid’s Day, the priest “in bidding the beads” did not mention the feast day. Hallom openly asked the priest why he left it out “for it was wont to be a holyday here.” The priest responded by informing the parishioners, that it and other feasts “were put down by the king’s authority.” After mass, the whole parish “was in a rumor and said they would have their holydays bid and kept as before.”⁹ On the following Monday or Tuesday Hallom traveled to Beverley. At John Crow’s house he “found a great number drinking and talking of that new business of insurrection” in Lincoln. He reported that among those talking “of that business” were Guy Kyme and Thomas Donne from Lincolnshire, and one Woodmancy, “who had been sent from Beverley into Lincolnshire to learn the truth of the insurrection there.”¹⁰ In his deposition, William Stapleton reported that in the early morning hours of 5 October, John Wadingham, a servant of his brother, Brian Stapleton, brought him word that “all Lincolnshire was up from Barton to Lincoln.”¹¹ The report of the Lincolnshire rebellion prevented Stapleton from departing Beverley for London since he could not freely pass through Lincoln. The situation in Lincolnshire caused tensions in Beverley to begin to boil over. Christopher Aske, brother of Robert Aske, stated that on October 3 he and his other brother, John, traveled to Hemingborough to visit Sir Ralph Ellerker the younger. While at

⁸ TNA EB36/118, fos. 63-69; *LP XII* (1), no. 392

⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 201 iv.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ TNA EB36/118, fos. 63-69; *LP XII* (1), no. 392.

Hemingborough, Christopher Aske reported, “we learnt the first moving of the people.” He further stated that on the journey home “we found the people drawn out in the fields, awaiting the ringing of Howden’s great bell to advance.”¹² On Sunday 8 October the common bell was rung in Beverley by one Roger Kitchen, a glover. According to Stapleton’s account Kitchen claimed that Robert Aske sent the town a letter calling on it to rise and he was determined that he would ring the common bell to insure that it did.¹³ Kitchen offered an alternative account in his deposition taken after the failed Hallom-Bigod rising in 1537. Kitchen stated that he heard that there was a letter from Aske to Robert Raffles (alderman of the bakers), which Raffles concealed. However, Kitchen indicated that he learned of this later and he does not say that Aske ordered the town raised. Kitchen claimed he learned of the Lincolnshire rising from Richard Wilson and William Woodmancy, the latter a serving-man who traveled out of Lincolnshire “with tidings.” Furthermore, he, Wilson, Woodmancy, and Sir John Truvye, a priest, met before matins, where Kitchen’s associates informed him “that they were up in Lincolnshire for the common weal.” Wilson, Woodmancy, and Truvye then proceeded to exhort Kitchen and “others there present to rise and take their quarrel.” That evening around dinner, Woodmancy and another rang the common bell. Kitchen, Wilson, Richard Newdyke, and Truvye were all there and consented.¹⁴

Kyme and Donne informed Hallom and others present that there were two hosts mustered in Lincoln with six knights in each. The two messengers from Lincoln also had a copy of the Lincolnshire articles, “which all strove to see and get copies of.” Hallom, like Stapleton, viewed

¹² *LP XII* (1), no. 1186.

¹³ TNA EB36/118, fos. 63-69; *LP XII* (1), no. 392.

¹⁴ *LP XII* (1), no. 201 vii.

the pulling down of churches and confiscation of church cup and plate as the prime causes for the rebellion. He also claimed, “[b]ecause people saw many abbeys pulled down they believed the rest; and every man cried against the lord Cromwell, Cranmer, Latimer, the two chancellors, and the king’s visitors in these parts.”¹⁵ Kyme and Donne informed the group that both hosts in Lincolnshire had sent them to seek the aid of the people of Beverley and implored them to come to the rescue of Lincolnshire.

A number of letters written at Beverley by a friar of St. Roberts of Knaresborough were sent to the surrounding townships commanding them upon pain of death to assemble at Hunsley on St. Wilfrid’s Day (12 October) to “take the same part that Lincolnshire took.” Hallom, while at Crow’s house, received one of these letters to show to his neighbors in Watton. He took a copy of the letter home with him but upon his arrival, he discovered that “they had already heard of that business.”¹⁶ Before he left Beverley, Hallom took the oath, administered by either Wilson or Woodmancy, to take the commons’ part. From that point on, according to Hallom, no man could keep his servants “at the plow.” Every able man began to march towards Hunsley and Hallom went along with them. Once at Hunsley, the commons selected four men as their captains, for “they were without a leader” for two or three days after their arrival. Hallom was one of the four selected along with Robert Howtham, Harry Newark, and William Cowrsor “as captains of all the commons from Beverley to Driffield.”¹⁷ From Hunsley the Beverley host marched to Arows and then to Wighton Hill. Along the way, the commons swore the gentry at each place they passed through.

¹⁵ Ibid., no. 201 iv.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

On Sunday 8 October, William Stapleton, unable to leave Beverley, had his brother, Christopher, send John Wadingham to Christopher Saunderson to inform him of the commotion and to try to stay the ringing of the common bell if possible. Saunderson arrived too late to prevent the ringing of the bell. Stapleton decided to remain in Beverley with his brother who was “so feeble and weak” that he could not flee or resist the rebels. William then had his brother command all his servants to “keep within the house.” Stapleton then sent one George Bell to the market place to see what was happening. Bell returned saying that Richard Endyke made a proclamation that every man should come and take the oath to the commons “on pain of death.” Richard Wilson, with the oath in one hand and a book in the other, began swearing them. Although Stapleton was not sure, he believed that at that time the commons sent a letter to Lincolnshire by William Woodmancy “promising them their aid under common seal.”¹⁸ Shortly afterwards, the commons issued a proclamation that every man appear at Westwood green near the friar’s house with horse and harness.

Christopher Stapleton’s wife disregarded the order to remain in the house. She stood “in a close where great numbers came” saying, “God’s blessing have ye, and speed you well in your good purpose.” When the commons asked her why her husband had not yet come forward to take the oath she replied, “They be in the Friars. Go pull them out by the heads.” Christopher, who was weak and feeble from sickness, chastised her asking if she would have her husband, son, and brother-in-law “cast away.” She replied, “It was God’s quarrel.”¹⁹

The next day, 9 October, the commons mustered at Westwood green and the entire town was sworn. The commons then sent several representatives, among them Christopher Saunderson, to Sir Ralph Ellerker, the younger, to see if he would take their part. Young Sir

¹⁸ TNA EB36/118 fos. 63-69; *LP XII* (1), no. 392.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Ralph refused the offer stating he was sworn to the king, but he agreed to come and give them advice if the commons gave him free passage. The commons refused his offer. The commons next turned their attention on Christopher and William Stapleton. The commons remaining on the green, angry that the Stapleton's had not taken the oath "bade burn the Friars," where William and Christopher were staying, with them inside. Sir Thomas Johnson, also known as Bonaventure, an Observant friar, came to Christopher and informed him of what had transpired. According to William Stapleton, Bonaventure "rejoiced much their rising and was very busy going betwixt the wife of the said Christopher and the said wild people." Bonaventure persuaded the commons with scripture and reminding them of how well the Stapletons, especially William, had treated them. The friar along with certain honest men convinced the commons to refrain from such an uncharitable action. The commons acquiesced but demanded that Christopher, his son Brian, and William take the oath. They decided to send certain honest men to swear them. William convinced them that due to Christopher's frailty he would be of little use. That day William and Brian Stapleton took the oath. Shortly thereafter, the commons declared William as their captain. Stapleton believed that Bonaventure, the Observant friar, caused the commons to select him as captain. In his deposition, he stated Bonaventure "in setting him forth with said praises to the said people as they would never have been so earnest of him when they did not know [him]."²⁰ After the administration of the oath, Christopher Stapleton's wife and Bonaventure celebrated. The Observant friar offered to join the commons and take the field in harness and did so at the first stay taken at Doncaster. After holding a council, Stapleton issued a proclamation commanding all under his rule to put aside their petty grudges and to refrain from spoiling any man's goods upon pain of death. Shortly thereafter Roger Kitchen came riding into town "like a man distraught," crying "As many as be true unto the commons, follow me, and

²⁰ Ibid.

raise with his house to the said green moving them that might to raise Cottingham and Hessell, and other towns about.” Stapleton attempted to prevent this action but was only partially successful for most of the commons went into town. That night some of the commons fired Hunsley beacon, thus stirring the adjoining town.²¹

The next day, Tuesday, the commons once again gathered on Westwood green. Because of the firing of the beacon the previous night, several riders from Cottingham arrived desiring to know when the commons would move forward, saying they were ready to do as Beverley did. Upon hearing this news, the commons of Beverley demanded to move forward. Stapleton and other “honest men” persuaded the commons not to move forward until they had a response to the letter sent to Lincolnshire. That same day Stapleton dispatched Christopher Saunderson to get old Sir Ralph Ellerker to come the next day to help stay the town, to which he agreed. Also on that Tuesday, the friar of Knaresborough, Sir Robert Esch, arrived in Beverley. Esch asked William Stapleton for a passport so that he could raise the commons in Rydale and Pickering, which Stapleton provided.

The next morning, 11 October, the commons of Beverley once again assembled on Westwood green. Sir Ralph Ellerker arrived that same morning and met with Saunderson, William Stapleton, and Sir John Milner to consult with them about staying the commons. As the men breakfasted, a letter arrived from the inhabitants of North Cave. The letter was a response to the lighting of the beacon on Monday night. The people of North Cave inquired as to when the commons of Beverley planned to move forward. Stapleton and the other men informed the letter bearer that they would not move forward until they heard from Lincolnshire. One Richard Fairecliff wrote a letter to North Cave desiring them to refrain from taking any action “until such

²¹TNA EB36/118 fos. 63-69; LP XII (1), no. 392.

time as they had knowledge from Beverley by writing under the common seal.”²² Shortly after breakfast, Stapleton along with Sir Ralph Ellerker and John Milner went to the green to speak with the commons. Sir Ralph spoke at length to the people gathered there explaining the reasons for their inaction. John Milner also spoke to the commons suggesting that several honest men travel to Hessell to wait for the message from Lincolnshire.

While Ellerker and Milner spoke to the commons William Woodmancy arrived, riding as fast as he could with word that the Lincolnshire host had sent messengers “with whom they had sent their whole mind.” Shortly thereafter Guy Kyme and Thomas Donne arrived bearing the anticipated messages. Sir Ralph suggested that the letters should be shown to four or five apart to determine their validity, but the commons demanded that the letters be read openly. Guy Kyme gave one of the letters to Ellerker, which he opened and affirmed that it was from Sir William Askew’s hand saying he recognized the handwriting. Kyme acknowledged that Askew had indeed written the letter and it was signed by Sir Robert Tyrwhitt, Sir William Skipwith, Askew, and diverse men of worship. Thomas Donne then read the letter and thanked the commons of Beverley for their offer of assistance. Kyme then declared the manner of the rising in Lincolnshire from its beginning in Louth “and in one day growing to the number of 10,000, the next day 20,000, which was like to come of the Holy Ghost.” According to Kyme the Lincolnshire host was well trained with horse and harness, and “their high courage accompanying their ability to give battle to any king christened.” According to Stapleton, upon hearing this “our wild people was set a flutter, and then no word but full forward.” Kyme also delivered the Lincolnshire articles stating the causes of the rebellion.²³ After the muster, Stapleton allowed Sir Ralph to return home, much against the will of the commons. Stapleton

²² Ibid.

²³ TNA EB36/118 fos. 63-69; *LP XII* (1), no. 392.

had dinner with Anthony Curtis, a lawyer he knew from Gray's Inn. Curtis clearly sympathized with the commons praising the Beverley host. After dinner, he told Stapleton that he must go into Holderness but did not reveal why. Stapleton claimed he never saw Curtis after that night. Later that night beacons were lit in Hunsley and Transby in Humberside and proclamation made for every man to come to Hunsley beacon the next morning at nine o'clock with horse and harness. Word of the muster was sent to Cottingham and Hessell to send men as well.

The next morning the men of the surrounding country arrived at Hunsley beacon. Apparently, they were in an anxious mood due to the news from Lincolnshire. The commons informed Stapleton that "a great treasure of the king's" was at Beckwith's house in South Cave. They claimed the treasure had been taken from the abbeys at Fereby and Hawtenprice. To please the commons Stapleton agreed to allow the commons to "save the goods" if indeed any valuables were in South Cave. Stapleton took with him "certain honest men and left the light persons from such things." When the group arrived at Beckwith's house they found a priest hiding there, for "light persons" had been there before Stapleton, threatening to take the goods and "free the priest." Evidently, the priest believed that the Beverley men planned to do just that for, according to Stapleton, he was quivering and shaking with fear when they arrived in the house. Stapleton asked the priest what treasure was in the two iron chests they had discovered. The priest responded that the chests contained "nothing but evidence." To satisfy the commons, Stapleton told the priest that it was just as likely that the chests contained treasure. He then told the priest that he had nothing to fear from them and to set out meat if he had any. After eating, Stapleton and the honest men departed. At the priest's request, Stapleton announced at the church stile that no man should meddle with the goods upon pain of death. Furthermore, he

ordered the town to either stop those who attempted to spoil the goods or if they were unable to do that, inform him of any that did so.

That same day, Stapleton, while in South Cave, received word that Robert Aske had raised Howdenshire and all of Marshland. Aske would be at Wighton that night and wanted the Beverley host to join him there the next morning at Wighton Hill. Guy Kyme and Thomas Donne rejoiced at this news exclaiming, “they would not into Lincolnshire with their finger in their mouths, but they would tarry and see our muster and the raising of the country so that they might be able to declare the same to their host by their own sight and not by hearsay.”²⁴ Stapleton also received word that Holderness was up “to the seaside” and had taken Sir Christopher Hillyard, Ralph Constable, and “divers others.” Many of the gentry had fled to Hull, among them young Sir Ralph Ellerker, Sir John Constable, and William Constable. That night Stapleton sent three messengers to Hull to speak with the aldermen to know “whether they would do as we did or be against us.” He informed the messengers to bring their response to Wighton Hill the next morning. The mayor and aldermen responded that they “would never appoint as we did and would send certain persons to the said hill the morrow after” with a full response.²⁵

The next morning, October 13, four men from Hull arrived with their full answer. One of the men, Brown, offered the answer of Hull, which he set forth “with as gentle words” as he could. The others confirmed his message and the commons received it thankfully. That same day Robert Hotham, a servant of the earl of Westmorland, James Constable of the Clyff, Philip Wawdebye, and one Lygerd of Hullshire, George Bawne, John Hallom, and others arrived at Beverley. Bawne informed Stapleton that a number of gentry, including Sir John Conyers had fled to Scarborough Castle and “he would go win them or else he would hazard his life in the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ TNA EB36/118 fos. 63-69; *LP* XII (1), no. 392.

quarrel.”²⁶ Stapleton decided to take a group of gentlemen and the messengers from both Lincolnshire and Hull to go to meet with Aske and his host to inform him of what they had done. The rest he left behind to keep the host under control while he and the others were away.

Robert Aske met with William Stapleton at Wighton on 13 October. At this meeting, Aske declared the circumstances of his taking at Lincolnshire. Stapleton claimed this was the first time he had seen or met with Aske other than in London during the law term. The messengers of Lincoln and Hull stated their messages to Aske and his men. Kyme and Donne, the messengers for Lincolnshire, were busy traveling throughout the countryside spreading word of the Lincolnshire rebellion and seeking assistance from the surrounding area. Aske inquired if they had any news for him from Lincoln, but their only message was to Beverley; their lack of knowledge of events in Lincolnshire disappointed him. After hearing the messages, Aske and several of his captains withdrew and consulted among themselves. Following the conference, Aske requested that the Beverley men appoint four gentlemen to confer with him. They agreed that the Beverley host should take the town of Hull while Aske’s company would march to York. The Beverley host chose Brian and William Stapleton along with Philip Wawdebye and Robert Hotsom for the task.

The Beverley captains decided to send Nicolas Rudston, Sir Thomas Metham’s son, William Stapleton, and Robert Hotsom to Hull that night to speak with the mayor and aldermen of the town and to take the town according to their promise and to keep “with us three of their men for pledges.” Hotsom remained in Wighton and the other three journeyed to Hull, arriving there late that night. Guy Kyme asked permission to leave, planning to cross the Humber that night. Aske “bade God be with them, saying they were pilgrims and had a pilgrimage gate to

²⁶ Ibid.

go.”²⁷ This marked the earliest use of the term “pilgrimage” by Aske to describe the purpose of the rebellion. Aske moved to Shipton where he spent the night. He left word for Stapleton and the others to meet with him at Wighton the next day to bring news of what transpired in Hull. Two days later Aske began his march on York.

Upon arriving in Hull Stapleton’s company attempted to meet with the mayor. The mayor refused to speak with them that night, which did not sit well with Stapleton and his men. The next morning, 14 October, Stapleton and company were summoned to the church to meet with the gentry who had fled. After much discussion, Sir John Constable the elder made it clear that he would rather forfeit his life than join the rebellion saying, “he would rather die with honesty than live in shame.”²⁸ The meeting proved fruitless for the Beverley contingent and they departed and went to breakfast. A short time later, they received word to return to the church and meet with the mayor and aldermen as well as the above-mentioned gentry. The mayor then answered the men of Beverley by stating that they would remain “the king’s town” and “keep their liberty.” Furthermore, they would offer neither “horse, harness, meat, nor money” to the rebels contrary to their earlier promise.²⁹ Before their departure, Sir Ralph Ellerker offered to take whatever articles the rebels had and take their message to the king. However, like the rest of the gentry, Ellerker refused to join with the Beverley host. After arranging to return the messengers from Hull, Stapleton and his contingent set out for Wighton Hill.

Upon arrival at Wighton Hill Stapleton immediately released the messengers from Hull for fear that once the commons heard of the town’s refusal to join them the men’s lives would be

²⁷ *LP XI*, no. 828 xiii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *TNA EB36/118 fos. 63-69; LP XII (1)*, no. 392.

in danger. Stapleton then informed the commons with “good countenance” that Hull did not intend to join them. Next Stapleton sent young Thomas Metham to Aske to inform him of what had transpired in Hull. News arrived that Holderness men were on their way to Beverley and wanted to meet with Stapleton and company at Bishop Burton. Rudston, Brian and William Stapleton, and others left to meet with the Holderness men. At the meeting, the gentlemen decided they would muster the next morning around Hull at Windoak, in the lordship of Cottingham at nine o’clock. According to Stapleton, the men of Beverley were highly agitated and angry with him and his brother because they did not deliver the news themselves. Several “light persons” called for their removal as captains “for the gentlemen counseled too much and would betray them.”³⁰ When Stapleton arrived in Beverley that evening, the Holderness captains were mustering their men on Westwood green. He placed their numbers at 300.

The next morning all men gathered at Windoak as scheduled. Before departing, Stapleton called the Beverley men together and confronted them about their displeasure with him and his nephew. William said that if they were unhappy with his leadership he would gladly step down and he and Brian would “meddle no more.” Upon hearing this, the men of Beverley “gave a great shout saying we will have none other captain.” After agreeing to remain their captain, William issued a proclamation prohibiting looting and every man would “pay honestly for that they did take.”³¹ William Stapleton requested the Beverley host to allow him and his nephew Brian to travel to Wighill to gather their harness from Christopher Stapleton’s home. The commons would not agree unless they went also. Therefore, the host kept William and Brian with them continually during the siege of Hull and other places for 15 days without harness. Following the proclamation, the Beverley men made their way to Windoak where they decided

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

to send some of the host to York to assist Aske and the remainder to Hull. They decided that Rudston and the men of Yorkswold, Holderness, Hullshire, Beverley, and Cottingham would take Hull. Next, they determined that the Holderness captains, Barker and Tenant, would take their 200 men and lie on the Holderness side of Hull while William and Brian Stapleton would take the Beverley men and camp on the other side at Skowcottes. Thomas Ellerker and the men of Cottingham would move to Humber, and Ombler, another of the Holderness captains, with Sir Christopher Hilliard and the Hullshire men, would take his 100 men to Hull Armitage. The hosts would lay siege to Hull from Sunday, 15 October until Thursday, 19 October.

That same Sunday, a letter from Robert Aske arrived asking for the Lincolnshire articles to show the people of Kexby Bridge why he had raised the country between the Ouse and Derwent Rivers; apparently, he had misplaced his copy. While laying siege to Hull, “certain men of the...water towns” approached Stapleton offering to “burn all the ships in Hull haven and thereby burn all that past of the town.” One of the men bragged that with one barrel of burning pitch sent down by the tide, he could set fire to all the ships in the haven. Stapleton refused to allow such action saying it was against policy, but he admitted had the men insisted in burning the ships he could not have stopped them. Stapleton “suffered great displeasures in saving the windmills at Hull gate, called Beverley gate,” but with “fair words” managed to save the windmills. He told them that he trusted he would have their reasonable requests and “the king’s highness take them into his mercy” adding that when peace returned they would “repent the loss and injury inflicted on the town.”³²

Later that day, a man of Grimsby named Horncliff brought a letter from Lincolnshire signed “with the hand of one Hempringham and others.” The letter brought news that the Lincolnshire rebellion had collapsed. The men of Holderness “called out and bade keep the

³² TNA EB36/118 fos. 63-69; *LP XII* (1), no. 392.

messenger fast for the letter was forged.” Many among those at Hull agreed since they had heard nothing from Guy Kyme who had promised to keep them informed of the situation in Lincoln. They therefore composed a letter informing the people of Lincolnshire of the siege of Hull, that York had fallen to them, and that the commons had taken Sir Thomas Percy. Stapleton then dispatched William Woodmancy with the letter since he “was a messenger known with them who was taken there.” Shortly after Woodmancy departed with the letter to Lincolnshire, James Aslaby, who claimed to have captured Sir Thomas Percy, appeared and wished to speak with Stapleton. Percy had sent Aslaby “without word or passport” to Hull to convince Stapleton to allow him to speak with Sir Ralph Ellerker to persuade him to surrender. After Aslaby met with Ellerker, Sir Ralph wrote a letter to Percy. In the letter, Ellerker marveled “that he would send men to him without letter or token, especially to pass among their enemies in such extreme business.” Also during the siege Sir Robert Esch, the friar of Knaresborough, arrived at Hull. He met with Stapleton and informed him that he had raised all of Malton “and that quarter.” Esch also brought word that Richmondshire was up and that the commons had taken Lord Latimer. Furthermore, Esch desired “that he might go into the forest of Knaresborough,” but he had no money. The men of Beverley gave him 20 shillings and the parson of Malton provided him with a horse, “for he had tired his own.”³³ Esch apparently had been a very busy man spreading seditious rumors, fomenting rebellion, and gathering information throughout the East, West, and North Ridings of Yorkshire.

In spite of Stapleton’s proclamations against looting, spoiling and “privy pickings” occurred. When several honest men approached Stapleton for redress, he took immediate action to alleviate the problem. He ordered that a watch be kept and they took one Barton, a fletcher, who Stapleton had appointed in “trust to keep their victuals.” Another man described as “a

³³ Ibid.

naughty fellow, a sanctuary man of Beverley and a common picker,” was also arrested. The host responded with great exclamations and after several honest men advised him, Stapleton led the two accused to believe they would be put to death for their crimes. He assigned the men a friar “being in his company” so they could “make clean to God.” Stapleton next called for one Spalding, a water man, and in the presence of the entire host had the sanctuary man brought before them. Spalding tied a rope around the man’s waist, with the other end tied to a boat. The man was then hauled over the water, several times with the oar held over his head. After witnessing this, the other man expected the same treatment but several honest men requested that the man, who was a simple housekeeper, be allowed to go unpunished. Stapleton agreed and banished the man from the company.³⁴

Another important development occurred during the siege of Hull. John Wright, one of the petty captains of Holderness under Ombler, arrived with news that Sir Ralph Ellerker and Sir William Constable were willing to meet with the host captains to make terms for their surrender. A meeting was set for nine o’clock the next morning, Wednesday, 18 October. The meeting took place in the Charterhouse outside Hull’s wall. Only a select few of the Pilgrimage captains knew of the meeting, Sir Christopher Hilliard and those close to the captains. The small group appointed William Stapleton and one of the captains of Holderness to meet with Ellerker and Constable, but Stapleton refused unless a gentleman accompanied him to the meeting. The group appointed Marmaduke Constable, the younger brother of Sir William Constable, to accompany Stapleton. At the meeting, Sir Ralph let it be known that if the rebels agreed not to make them swear the oath or make them captains, they were content to join with the rebels. Stapleton agreed to their terms, “for he was of the opinion that the oath did no good for it would make a

³⁴ Ibid.

man neither better nor yet worse.” Ellerker also requested that every captain go to his company and persuade their men “neither to hurt those that came in nor any that belonged to them.” They agreed and the “commons was well pleased,” greatly pleasing Ellerker for he “was sore afraid of the commons, especially of Holderness.” The next day, Ellerker again met with Stapleton and suggested that if Sir John Constable left Hull, the town would yield. He suggested that the Pilgrims allow Constable to “steal away.” Stapleton rejected this suggestion immediately saying that he would “never be privy to stealing away in that he lay there to win him” and the town for the Pilgrimage.³⁵

The surrender of Hull occurred in large part due to an unexpected turn of events. When news of Aske’s capture of York had reached Hull, Stapleton had written to him for more aid to help with the capture of Hull. Rudston arrived with 400 or 500 men in response to Stapleton’s request. Upon the sight of these men, the town yielded and sent an offer by several aldermen. Rudston, “seeing all at a stay, lodged his men about” and went to the Charterhouse to hear the offer of the men of Hull. By the time Stapleton and Rudston arrived at the hall, they found Sir John Constable and the other gentlemen except Phillip Myssen who had fled. Because it was late, and the captains felt it would be too difficult to prevent spoiling the town, they decided to wait until the next morning.

The next day, Friday, 20 October, the appointment was kept and the aldermen Eland, Knolles, and John Thornton surrendered the town and opened the gates to the rebel host. According to the agreement reached the previous day, Stapleton did not swear any man to the oath. They then agreed that every man should be at Hunsley beacon. Eland and Knolles were appointed to represent Hull at Hunsley beacon. It was decided that the commons should choose

³⁵ Ibid.

a council to decide what their next move should be. They now knew without a doubt that Lincolnshire was down and the duke of Suffolk was in Lincoln. The council decided that their best option was to draft a set of articles stating their grievances and send them to Suffolk. They also decided to ask Suffolk to be their petitioner to Henry VIII. They appointed William Grymston of Cottingham, John Write of Holderness, and William Worme, sometime servant of the Earl of Northumberland, to deliver the message to Suffolk. William Stapleton was given the task of writing the articles. While Stapleton was writing the articles, a messenger from Aske appeared saying that the Lord Steward, with a great army, was ready to give battle at Pontefract Castle. According to Stapleton this news along with the defeat of the Lincolnshire rebellion caused them to leave their “former purpose and sent 200 men of Holderness to keep Hull.” That night Sir Ralph Ellerker kept the beacon with his men, but he was not to light it “unless he saw apparent cause.”

Hull finally surrendered on 20 October but it was only one of many events in the Pilgrimage of Grace. Events in and around the city of York were similar to those in Beverley and Howdenshire. Immediately following the defeat of the Lincolnshire rebellion, royal forces were concerned primarily with reestablishing order in Lincoln and did not pay heed to the situation in Beverley. Shrewsbury, camped at Nottingham, did not receive word of the Pilgrimage until Thursday, October 12.³⁶ Lord Thomas Darcy and Sir Brian Hastings, the sheriff of York, had to deal with the increasing seriousness of the Pilgrimage for a week without any instructions from London. Indeed, Henry took little notice of the Beverley rising, believing it to be part of the Lincolnshire rebellion.

³⁶ TNA SP1/107 fo. 141; *LP XI*, no. 658, 672; *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 168.

On Monday 9 October, Lord Darcy heard that the “commons of the Marshland, Howdenshire, Beverley, and the East Riding intend to invade the city of York and seize the King's money.” He wrote to the mayor of York informing him of the situation and instructed the mayor to “put himself and the citizens in readiness to resist; for the said commons are men of high experience in war,” but lack “artillery and other things.” Darcy also charged the mayor to “summon the gentlemen of Ainstey” to assist him in the defense of York.³⁷ Next Darcy attempted to capture Aske. According to the Dodds sisters, he sent George Darcy, his son, into Marshland to take Aske. Sir Thomas said that Aske would have been taken “if he had kept the appointments he made with the gentlemen to lie at their houses.” Unfortunately, for Darcy, Aske failed to keep the appointment and Sir George failed to capture him. When the people of Marshland rose, Darcy took up residence at Pontefract castle and “kept thirteen score men fourteen days at his own cost.”³⁸ He then wrote to the king and Lord Lieutenant to ask for instructions and aid.

On 10 October, Brian Hastings wrote to Darcy informing him that the Howdenshire and Marshland hosts intended to go to York. Hastings recommended that Darcy “make haste” to stop them before they reached York. He also suggested that Darcy “send a force to York to overawe their faction in that city.” Hastings offered to send 300 men to Darcy to help defend York.³⁹ Hastings wrote to Fitzwilliam the next day “that all of Yorkshire was up, over 20,000” and they intended to take York. Furthermore, “the common people of all the North are so

³⁷ *LP XI*, no. 627.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, no 1086; The Dodds sisters claim Darcy sent his son George to capture Aske but *Letters and Papers* does not identify who Darcy sent.

³⁹ *LP XI*, no. 646.

confederated that they will not be stayed without great policy.”⁴⁰ Darcy responded that he had received Hastings letter and planned to retreat to Pontefract with all the gentlemen to “wait in readiness at an hour’s warning, when I shall know the King’s pleasure.” He, however, had not received any response from either the king or Shrewsbury. He requested that Hastings, “If you have any “certainty from above, let me share it.”⁴¹

While the Stapleton host was laying siege to Hull, Robert Aske began moving towards York. Aske held a muster at Kexby Moor in the East Riding and shortly after his men seized the bridges across the Derwent at Kexby and Sutton. He then gathered his host, estimated at 20,000 strong, outside the gates of York. Aske sent three of his captains and messengers with a summons for the mayor and aldermen to allow the Pilgrims free passage through the city. He promised “that they should be truly paid for all things taken.” Since the city lacked artillery and gunpowder it “received them.” Aske “suffered no footman to enter within the walls” to prevent any from spoiling the town. In fact, he issued “proclamations that no man should spoil” and any “offenders against his orders” were sent “to the siege of Hull.” Aske remained in York for two days before marching towards Pontefract. While still in York, he took “order for religious houses suppressed because the commons would needs put them in.” Aske’s order was placed on the Minster door “that all houses suppressed might know how to use themselves.”⁴² The order read as follows:

First, that the prior and convent should re-enter their suppressed monasteries and view by indenture how much of their goods were left, keeping the one part and delivering the other to

⁴⁰ Ibid., no. 663.

⁴¹ Ibid., no. 664.

⁴² *The Manner and Taking of Robert Aske*, 334-35; *LP XII* (1), no. 6.

the King's farmer, from whom they should have necessary food and clothing pending our petition to the King, and so do divine service as the King's beadmen or women. If the farmer refused they might then take of the same goods by the delivery of two indifferent neighbors by bill indented what they required to live upon during the said time.⁴³

Aske's order to restore the monasteries is an important moment in the Pilgrimage of Grace. Aske, like the majority of those involved in the Pilgrimage, viewed the pulling down of the monasteries as an attack on Christ's Church. In his deposition, Aske stated that he believed the suppression of the monasteries had been the primary cause of the rebellions of 1536. His order for the residents of the suppressed houses to reenter their houses clearly reflects the importance of this issue to himself and the commons. The act of restoring the monasteries was an open and public act of defiance of the new order imposed on the people of England by Henry and Cromwell. It seems that Aske wanted Henry to recognize the importance of the monasteries in the spiritual as well as the daily lives of the people of the north. Yet the order also points out that Aske acted with caution in ordering the restoration of the dissolved houses. He was careful to include in the order that the priors view how much of their goods remained and "keep one part," meaning what the residents needed to survive. Aske then ordered the priors to deliver the other part to the king's farmer "from whom they should have necessary food and clothing pending our petition to the King." He clearly wanted to appease the common anger over the dissolution and at the same time insure that the farmers got partial payment from the monastic lands. Aske also wanted to protect the monks and nuns that reentered their houses. The order is careful to instruct those who reentered the suppressed houses to make sure the king's farmer received his share of the monasteries "goods." By doing so, those who reentered would "do divine service as the

⁴³ Ibid.

King's beadmen or women." Evidently, he hoped this would protect those who reentered the houses from charges of treason. Aske realized that ordering the religious back into the houses would create conflict and attempted to allay it from the start. He obviously hoped that Henry would accept the Pilgrims' petition and allow the restored monasteries to continue to exist.

Aske probably sent his second proclamation with the above-mentioned summons. The so-called York Articles sent to the mayor stated the rebels' reasons for rising. The articles, a restatement of the Lincoln Articles, called for an end to the suppression of "so many religious houses" by which "the service of God is not well performed and the people unrelieved." They desired the repeal of the Act of Uses, "which retrains the liberty of the people in declaration of their wills concerning their lands." The York Articles pointed out that the "tax or quindene payable next year" would place the already impoverished people in a more dire situation.⁴⁴ Another grievance took the king to task for gathering "about him, persons of low birth and small reputation, who have procured these things for their own advantage, who we suspect to be Lord Cromwell and Sir Richard Rich, Chancellor of Augmentations." Finally, the articles state that the rebels were "grieved that there are bishops...who have subverted the faith of Christ, viz., the bishops of Canterbury, Rochester, Worcester, Salisbury, St. David's and Dublin. We think that the beginning of all this trouble was the bishop of Lincoln."⁴⁵

The first article, in Aske's opinion, was really the heart of the whole rebellion. He characteristically placed the religious troubles first. He believed and stated in his examination that "the suppression of the abbeys was the greatest cause of the insurrection" and religious troubles alone were enough to cause the rebellion.⁴⁶ Closely related to the first article are the

⁴⁴ LP XI, 705 (i). A quindene is a tax of a fifteenth, *quindecim*.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

fourth and fifth. The commons blamed Cromwell and the heretic bishops for the dissolution of the monasteries and all the other unpopular acts. The objection against “persons of low birth and small reputation” refers to the fact that several of Henry’s councilors, in particular Thomas Cromwell, were in fact men of common birth. This charge is open to interpretation, first as a sign of aristocratic sway over Aske to include their discontent at losing a measure of their royal influence. On the other hand, it may have been simply a sign of resentment on the part of the commons that men of their class had risen beyond their station. Most likely, this charge reflects the general belief in the infallibility of the king; therefore, the problems rested with the king’s advisors not with the crown. The third article, although difficult to understand, attacks the basis of how the government assessed the subsidy. The second article was the least important to Aske. According to his examination, Aske stated that the only reason he included the Statute of Uses was that it appeared in the Lincolnshire petitions; otherwise, it would have gone unmentioned.⁴⁷

The mayor received the York Articles on 15 October and the next day submitted without any resistance. On 17 October the town took the “Oath of the Honorable Men,” drafted by Aske. It became the official oath of the Pilgrimage of Grace and all Pilgrims; commons and gentry alike took this oath.

The Oath of the Honorable Men

Ye shall not enter into our Pilgrimage of Grace for the Commonwealth, but only for the love that ye do bear unto Almighty God his faith, and the Holy Church militant and the maintenance thereof, to the preservation of the King’s person and his issue, to the purifying of the nobility, and to the expulse of the villain blood and evil councilors against the commonwealth from his Grace and his Privy Council of the same. And that

⁴⁶ *Humanist Scholarship*, 219.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 228-29.

ye shall not enter into our said Pilgrimage for no particular profit to yourself, not to do any displeasure to any private person, but by counsel of the commonwealth, not slay nor murder for no envy, but in your hearts put away fear and dread, and take afore you the Cross of Christ, and in your hearts His faith, the Restitution of the Church, the suppression of these Heretics and their opinions, by all the holy contents of his book.⁴⁸

The Pilgrims sent this oath and the York Articles to all parts of the northern counties. The next day, 18 October, found them posted up in Wensleydale and Swaledale. That same day Aske marched south to Pontefract Castle, ordering the gentlemen and clerics in the castle to submit and take the oath.

Darcy was well informed of the events transpiring around him. As we have seen in his letter to Brian Hastings, he knew of the risings in Beverley, Howden, and Marshland. Darcy also had others in the area keeping him informed. On the day he received Hastings letter, 10 October, two other letters arrived, one from Lancashire the other from Wakefield. The letters were markedly different in tone from that of Hastings. The first letter, from a priest by the name of Thomas Stanley, informed Darcy that those up in Lancashire were “up for the maintenance of Church and Faith and they will not strike against them.” However, there were few stirrings because the Earl of Derby “attends the King's command.” Stanley concluded the letter by letting Darcy know that he could “trust the bearer he is a tall man if need be.” The priest signed the letter, “your faithful son and beadsman.”⁴⁹ The second letter was from Thomas Gryce, Darcy's steward at Wakefield. Gryce informed Darcy that Wakefield had joined the rebellion. According to Gryce, it “is openly spoken here that certain horse-loads of bowstaves and bows have been sent for to York to be carried into Lancashire, and part gone thither already to the earl

⁴⁸ Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (London: Longman, 1997), 132.

⁴⁹ LP XI, no. 635; *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 169.

of Derby.” The commons refused to pay any more money and refused to turn over their church jewels. He also told Darcy that the royal commissioners “have not yet sat, for fear of the commonalty.”⁵⁰

Another source of information for Darcy was Thomas Maunsell, vicar of Brayton. Maunsell was in Howdenshire on Tuesday, 10 October, perhaps with George Darcy in his attempt to capture Aske. The vicar of Brayton was taken prisoner at Howden on suspicion of being a spy for George Darcy. The Howdenshire men kept him until Wednesday where he swore to meet them at Skipwith Moor. Upon his release he went first to George Darcy and then to Pontefract to tell Lord Darcy of the events of the previous few days. Lord Darcy commanded Maunsell to “keep his oath” to attend the muster and inform him the next day as to what occurred at Skipwith. The vicar returned the next day, 12 October, with news that the commons intended to “come over the water” to Templehurst, Darcy’s home, and the Archbishop of York’s and raise all the people there. Lord Darcy told Maunsell to go home to Brayton and if the commons of Howdenshire did decide to cross the Ouse, the said vicar was to “raise all the people in Darcy’s room (land), so that the commons, seeing them ready to go with them, should not come over.” Darcy said he would do the king’s service. The next day, Friday 13 October, twenty-four of the commons of Howdenshire crossed the Ouse and raised Brayton and much of the west bank of the river. Maunsell told them he would raise all the towns in Darcy’s land, which he did on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.⁵¹

Meanwhile, the Archbishop of York and Archdeacon Magnus along with a number of men, who found their tenants unruly and ready to join the rebellion, made their way to Pontefract

⁵⁰ Ibid., no. 678; *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 169-70

⁵¹ TNA SP1/113 fos. 54-57; *LP XI*, no. 1402.

Castle to take refuge. Robert Constable captured a man by the name of Phillips, one of the captains of the Lincolnshire rebellion, and brought him to Shrewsbury at Nottingham. Shrewsbury and the other lords at Nottingham commanded Constable to stay the commons in East Yorkshire. They instructed him “that if the commons were in great number, I was to go to Lord Darcy at Pomfret and do as he did.” When Constable arrived at Pontefract, he found Lord Darcy in a desperate position. In his deposition Constable claimed “that which we did was for lack of furniture and for fear of our lives,” referring to the fact that Darcy had few men and no artillery at Pontefract.⁵²

In the meantime, after Robert Aske issued his orders at York, he proceeded to the commons assembled at Pontefract Castle. Upon his arrival at Pontefract, Aske sent a letter to Darcy demanding the surrender of the castle or he would attack that night. In the letter, Aske stated how the commons were “gnawn in their conscience with spreading of heresies, suppression of houses of religion, and other matters touching the commonwealth, to their impoverishment” and desired “their mediation with the King to set forth their grievances.” Darcy received the letter and demanded to speak with Aske to know his mind on the grievances of the commons. The meeting between Aske and Darcy, Archbishop Lee and the other lords housed at Pontefract took place on Thursday 19 October. At the meeting, Aske declared the grievances of the commons:

First how the lords spiritual had not done their duty and been plain with the King for the quenching of heresies; also about the ornaments of the churches and abbeys suppressed; the violation of relics by the suppressors, and the unreverent demeanor of the doers thereof; and the impositions of the visitors. The lords temporal he blamed in that they had not declared to the King the poverty of his realm, by which danger might have been avoided, as in the North

⁵² Ibid., XII (1), no. 1225.

parts much of the relief of the commons was by succor of abbeys; also that before this last statute the King had no money out of that shire, the revenues of which went to the finding of Berwick, but now the profits of abbeys suppressed, tenths and first fruits went out of those parts, so that in a few years there would be no money left, either for the tenant to pay his rents or for the lord to do the King service; for in those parts was neither the presence of his Grace, execution of his laws, nor much recourse of merchandise, "so that of necessity the said country should either patyssh [sic] with the Scots or of very poverty enforced to make commotions," which the lords knew to be true.⁵³

In addition, "after divers reasons made of both parties," Darcy wanted to keep the castle until "the Saturday after, this being Thursday." Aske knowing that the Earl of Shrewsbury planned to rescue the castle and "perceiving of the favor of the serving men within," refused Darcy's request, saying he had until eight o'clock the next morning to surrender; otherwise Aske was prepared to take the castle by force. When the hour arrived, Darcy said he required more time, which Aske once again refused to allow. Thus, on Saturday 21 October, Lord Darcy surrendered Pontefract Castle to Aske, whereupon "the lords spiritual and temporal, knights and esquires" took the oath.⁵⁴

After Aske took possession of Pontefract Castle, "the country daily assembled of all parts, and Aske tried out his men." Shortly after Lords Neville, Lumley, and Latimer arrived bringing with them, by Aske's estimation, about 10,000 men "with the banner and arms of St. Cuthbert." Next came 5,000 men from Blackamore and Pickering Lythe, "with the knights and gentlemen thereabouts." Yorkswold and Holderness supplied 2,000 or 3,000 men. Men from the West and North Ridings of Yorkshire also arrived. The hosts gathered at Stuping Styse, near

⁵³ "The Manner and Taking of Robert Aske," 335-36; *LP XII* (1), no. 6

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Doncaster. Aske estimated that the number of men gathered at Pontefract totaled 34,000 or 35,000 “men well tried on horseback.”⁵⁵

The Rebellion Spreads

Richmondshire

While Robert Aske was about his work in York, the rebellion was spreading throughout the northern counties. Trouble began in the North Riding in late September. Lord Darcy suggested that rebellion in Richmondshire preceded that of Beverley. In a letter to the Earl of Cumberland, Darcy stated that the “countries of Dent, Sedbar, and Wensleydale have confederated with their neighbors and sworn to certain unlawful articles, of which great bruits and murmur are sown all over Yorkshire.”⁵⁶ The letter dated 6 October also claimed to have credible information that “above 500 were sworn” in Wensleydale. Michael Bush asserts that Darcy was actually referring to a separate rebellion that began on 25 September in Dent. The Dent rebellion affected the far western area of Wensleydale and eventually materialized as the rebellion that, William Breyar, in his deposition, stated that after arriving in Dent he had to flee for his life because he wore the king’s livery. Breyar fled to Kirkby Lonsdale and complained to the officials there of his treatment in Dent. Whereupon, they responded, “Alas man! what didst thou there, for they of Dent [and] of three other parishes thereabouts were sworn

⁵⁵ “The Manner and Taking of Robert Aske,” 336; LP XII (1), no. 6.

⁵⁶ LP XI, no. 564.

on Monday last,” 25 September, “to [wh]om and wherefore they could not tell.”⁵⁷ The Dent rebellion began a week before the Lincolnshire rebellion and two weeks before Aske issued his first proclamation.

The only abbey to resist actively suppression was the Augustinian priory at Hexham in Northumberland. Although it did not fall under the Act for the Suppression of the Lesser Monasteries since its yearly income exceeded £200, for some reason it found its way on to the list of houses scheduled for dissolution. The house suffered from attacks by the Scots and was not in very good condition but it was highly valued by the people of the area because it was an important source of hospitality in a region bereft of such places. In April 1536, Archbishop Lee warned Cromwell to spare the house because “wise men that know the Borders think that the lands thereof, although they were then times as much, cannot countervail the damage that is like to ensue if it be suppressed; and some way there is never a house between Scotland and the lordship of Hexham; and men fear if the monastery go down, that in process all will be waste within the land.”⁵⁸ The abbey most likely received a royal pardon and avoided dissolution initially. Later that year the prior, Edward Jay, learned that the house was one again in danger. Jay traveled to London to meet with Cromwell in an attempt to save Hexham Abbey. He failed to convince Cromwell and returned to York ostensibly to meet with Archbishop Lee. Lee met him on his barge and charged him not to resist the king’s commissioners. Lee wrote to Henry on 13 October but did not include the date of the meeting with Jay, although it seems likely that the meeting took place near the end of September.⁵⁹ On 28 September, the king’s commissioners

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 841; *Rebel Armies of October 1536*, 249. Bush maintains that if one works out the time line contained in Breyar’s deposition the Monday referred to in the account is 25 September.

⁵⁸ *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 193.

⁵⁹ *LP XI*, no. 689.

then at Dilston received word that the canons of Hexham “had prepared guns and artillery to defend themselves.” Two of the commissioners, Lionel Gray and Robert Collingwood, along with several others went ahead to scout the situation in Hexham. When the commissioners arrived the church bell was ringing and great numbers of people were in the street. Shortly after their arrival the great bell of the monastery rang and the gates were closed. A canon called the master of Ovingham appeared in harness and said there were 20 brethren in the monastery “who would all die before the commissioners should have it.” In a brief exchange, the commissioners informed the master of Ovingham that it was unwise to resist those who acted under the king’s seal. After some consultation, the master of Ovingham and the subprior reappeared and produced a written statement under “the King’s broad seal.” The note stated “ye shall see here the King’s confirmation of our house under the great seal of King Henry VIII... We think it not the King’s honor to give forth one seal contrary to another. And afore any other of our lands, goods, or house be taken from us, we shall all die, and that is our full answer.” Gray and Collingwood departed to inform the rest of the commissioners of the canons’ response, leaving behind three of their servants. The servants, released a short time after the commissioners departed, reported that as soon as Gray and Collingwood departed the canons marched in harness to the Green.⁶⁰ The situation from this point on became increasingly unruly and uncontrolled due to the conditions that existed in Northumberland.

Edward Jay found this situation upon his return to Hexham. Sir Reynold Carnaby, the gentleman scheduled to receive the abbey, sent one his servants to the Earl of Northumberland with a letter complaining of the “obstinate and traitorous demeanor of the canons of Hexham. Northumberland in turn sent word of the situation to Cromwell on 4 October asking how he

⁶⁰ Ibid., no. 504.

should respond.⁶¹ Henry received word of the situation from his commissioners and sent orders to Northumberland “to assemble all the force you can make, with such others as we have appointed to do the like, either to apprehend them by way of their submission, or if they will not yield, to treat them as arrant traitors and put the commissioners in possession.”⁶² However, the outbreak of the rebellion in Yorkshire prevented Northumberland from executing the king’s order. Henry also wrote to Archbishop Lee, whom he suspected of encouraging the canons of Hexham. Lee responded with a rambling letter full of excuses but did exonerate the prior of Hexham. Lee informed the king that Jay was in fact with him in York when the commotion in Hexham began.⁶³

On 11 October, while Aske issued his first proclamation, the Richmondshire uprising began near Wensleydale. That evening a crowd of 200 or 300 recruited from the lordships of Masham in the North Riding and Kirkby Malzeard in the West Riding occupied Jervaulx Abbey and restored Coverham Abbey. The Richmondshire rising had a major impact on the Pilgrimage of Grace. It created two large hosts that eventually formed the rearward and vanguard of the Pilgrim’s army when it confronted the government forces at Doncaster at the end of October 1536. According to Aske, the Richmondshire hosts furnished 22,000 troops out of the total force of 47,000. The host also provided an outstanding leader in the person of Robert Bowes and it recruited five of the six peers who took part in the Pilgrimage of Grace. The Richmondshire men provided the banner of St. Cuthbert behind which the Pilgrim army was first arrayed. The Richmond host was second in importance only to that led by Aske, and as an inspiration for revolt was equal to the Lincolnshire rising.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, no. 535.

⁶² TNA SP1/106 fos. 257-58; *LP XI*, no 544.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, no. 679; *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 195.

The motivation and ideology of the risings in the North Riding, County Durham, the northern third of the West Riding, and Westmorland were different in character from those of the East Riding and Howdenshire. Unlike Beverley and Howdenshire, the Pilgrimage of Grace in the northern counties had no connection to that of Lincolnshire. The most important factor was that much of the northern parts of England, Westmorland, Northumberland, Cumberland, Durham, and the towns of Berwick and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, were exempted from the subsidy. The exemption resulted primarily from the fact that these areas suffered greatly at the hands of the Scots. Thus, the northern most parts of the realm lacked the key factor that tied the rebellion in Yorkshire to the Lincolnshire rebellion.⁶⁴

The motivations for rebellion in the northern regions were much more diverse than those of the East Riding. The rebels in these areas most certainly knew about Lincolnshire and that their rising coincided with it. However, Hoyle contends that they did not see themselves as allies or imitators of Lincolnshire as did Beverley and Howdenshire. The ambitions and motivations of the hosts drawn from the northern regions of Yorkshire and Durham differed from those of Beverley. Aske's movement adopted the image of a pilgrimage while Richmondshire claimed to act in the name of Captain Poverty. They had strong sympathies for the plight of the suppressed monasteries and had overt agrarian concerns.⁶⁵ There was no contact between Aske and the hosts of the northern movement until after the capture of Pontefract. In his deposition, Aske admitted that he was ignorant of the Richmondshire rising when he captured Pontefract.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Hoyle, 209; *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 192.

⁶⁵ Hoyle, 210.

⁶⁶ "The Manner and Taking of Robert Aske," 335.

Grievances were declared in word and deed. Dissolution was one of the earliest concerns of the Richmond rebels. One of the earliest acts, as mentioned above, was the restoration of Coverham and Easby abbeys. The Richmondshire rebels recruited much support from the areas where the estates of these abbeys were located. The rebels attached so much importance to Easby that a monk from Sawley Abbey was told in December “rather than our house of Saint Agathe should go down, we shall all die; and if any insurrection should happen here again, where there was but one in the same before, now there would be three.”⁶⁷ For the Richmondshire rebels the suppression of the monasteries imperiled “the estate of the church” and was lamented for this reason not only by “religious persons” but also “such as had living by their houses.”⁶⁸ The rebels also feared that the government’s policy of dissolution would be extended to parish churches as well through the rumored plan to reduce their number and confiscate their treasures. According to James Rokesby “there was a common noise in Richmondshire that Drs. Layton and Legh would come down avisiting and would pull down all chapels dependent and many parish churches leaving one in their place and take away all silver chalices leaving tin ones in their place.”⁶⁹

Another issue that angered the commons of Richmondshire was the “alteration of the power of the Bishop of Rome.” Their grievances included not only the attacks on religious houses and parish churches but also the government measures that in the two previous years had dramatically attacked the old religion and which had been publicly declared in July and August 1536, in four explicitly heretical policy statements the Ten Articles, Royal Injunctions directing the clergy to enforce the Ten Articles, the reduction of the number of holy days and a new order

⁶⁷ TNA SP1/ fo. 103; *LP XII* (1), no. 491.

⁶⁸ *Rebel Armies of October 1536*, 163; *LP XII* (1), no. 786.

⁶⁹ *LP XII* (1), no. 1011; *Rebel Armies of October 1536*, 165.

of prayer. Grievances created certain hated figures: William Blitheman, for assisting in dissolving Coverham Abbey, Legh and Layton for allegedly overseeing the dissolution of monasteries and parish churches. They reserved their strongest antipathy for Thomas Cromwell who they accused of misusing his power to promote heresy. The Bowes' host complaints were centered on Cromwell who was charged with being a Lollard and a traitor. The Richmondshire men proposed that he and his lackeys be driven from the country. In their eyes, Cromwell's crimes lay in his maltreatment of the commonwealth, which resulted in the promoting of the royal interest before that of his subjects and of creating a tyrannical and plundering government.⁷⁰ These grievances are similar to those of the East Riding and Lincolnshire. The commons were careful to aim their anger not at Henry VIII but at his ministers who they believed had misled the king and promoted bad policies.

The men of the town of Richmond and several surrounding towns rose on 13 October, within two days of the reoccupation of Jervaulx Abbey. The Richmondshire revolts merged after holding a joint meeting in Richmond. There the rebels decided to send out bands to recruit the gentlemen or their sons and heirs to the rebellion, or otherwise destroy their property. The next day the rebels assembled in Richmond to accept the submission of the gentlemen. A third assembly took place on 15 October, attended by 10,000 commons and gentlemen of the region. At that assembly, the rebels accepted as their chief captain Robert Bowes of East Crowton in Richmondshire, who was similar in social standing to both Robert Aske and William Stapleton. The assembly also dispatched a letter into Cleveland commanding its citizens to attend a muster at Oxen-le-Fields the next day. The Richmond rebels sent additional letters seeking the support of the border counties of Northumberland, Westmorland, Cumberland, and the wapentake of Pickering Lythe. These letters, which contained a list of grievances and an oath, sent out in the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 168-69.

name of Captain Poverty and commons, supposedly were inspired by the appearance at Richmond of a “very simple poor man” whom the rebels christened Lord Poverty and who in a Christ-like manner declared he would die in the matter.⁷¹ Another muster held on the following day, 16 October, took place at Bishop Aukland. According to George Lumley, it was a large gathering numbering between 8,000 and 10,000 men. He found himself in Aukland because “soldiers from Richmondshire asked him to go to Lord Latimer or they would spoil his father’s goods.” Lumley also recognized an impressive number of gentlemen present including Lord Latimer, Robert Bowes, Sir Christopher Danby, Ralph Bulmer, and Sir James Strangways.⁷²

Between 15 and 20 October, the Richmondshire rebels actively promoted rebellion in Northumberland, Durham, Cleveland, Pickering Lythe, Westmorland, Cumberland, and the West Riding lordships of Dent and Craven. On 16 October, rebels reached Seamer and required Lord Thomas Percy to take the oath and become a captain. Thomas Percy led a host of 5,000 men recruited from the Yorkshire Moors to Pontefract and became part of the vanguard of the Pilgrim’s army at Doncaster. The Captain Poverty letter inspired revolts in Westmorland and in Cumberland. The Richmondshire insurgents also inspired risings in Craven by marching into Durham to enlist the Earl of Westmorland and Lord Lumley. A third assembly took place at Spennymoor on October 18 or 19. The purpose of this muster was to get the Earl of Westmorland to join the Richmondshire host. Robert Bowes, William Conyers of Maske, and Roland Place traveled to Brancepeth to convince Westmorland to come to them, but he refused.⁷³

It was expected that the Richmondshire host would move south to link up with Aske as he moved on York and to accomplish the principal aim of confronting the government. This

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁷² TNA SP1/115 fos. 209-215; *LP XII* (1), no 369; *Rebel Armies of October 1536*, 149.

⁷³ *LP XII* (1), no. 29.

expectation did not immediately occur. On 14 October, the mayor of York wrote to Henry VIII informing him that the city was threatened not only from the commons of the East Riding but from that of the city of Richmond as well.⁷⁴ As mentioned above, the first week of the rebellion the Richmondshire men marched north. The movement north was in part a preparation for the journey south. Besides recruitment, it had two other purposes. The first was to ensure the defense of the borders. To achieve this end the Richmond men wrote to the inhabitants of Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmorland. The letters order the people of these areas to take the oath and defend the borders against the Scots who might see the rebellion as an opportunity to attack northern England. The second purpose was to secure the support of the great families of the border, especially the Percys and the Nevilles. On 21 October the Captain Poverty letter appeared in Alnwick. The letters ordered Sir Ingram Percy to swear an oath of allegiance to the articles and require the others to do the same. The letter also commanded them to stay in Northumberland in order to defend the border against the Scots. Sir Ingram Percy, who was at Alnwick Castle, received the letter and promptly complied by taking the oath and having all the gentlemen present swear the oath as well.⁷⁵ As seen above, the Nevilles proved more difficult as Westmorland refused Bowes request to join the rebellion.

The Bowes host split into two separate forces on 18 October. One force responded to Aske's summons and marched to Pontefract. The other army, under Bowes' leadership, disregarded the summons and marched to Skipton Castle. The Bowes host marched on Skipton ostensibly to get the Earl of Cumberland to take the oath. The Richmond men also wanted to

⁷⁴ Ibid., XI, no. 704; *Rebel Armies of October 1536*, 149.

⁷⁵ LP XII (1), no. 467; *Rebel Armies of October 1536*, 150; Michael Bush, "Captain Poverty and the Pilgrimage of Grace," *Historical Review* 65 (1992), 18-19.

take Lord Scrope of Bolton who was known to have fled to Skipton Castle. John Dakyn in his statement confirmed that the goal of the Bowes host was to take Cumberland and Scrope at Skipton. Once the two peers had been taken the Richmond men intended, according to William Stapleton, to join with the Pilgrim army, which was at Pontefract between October 20 and 23 and between 23 and 25 October moved to Doncaster to confront the royal forces of Norfolk and Shrewsbury.⁷⁶ The siege of Skipton proved a mixture of success and failure. The castle itself proved impregnable. Cumberland remained within its walls avoiding capture by the rebels. The rebels did prevent Cumberland from acting as a military threat behind rebel lines, otherwise nothing productive occurred. The Richmondshire men did succeed in convincing Lord Scrope to take their part in the rebellion. Aske indicated in his deposition that Lord Scrope had joined the Pilgrims by 25 October. Darcy confirmed this in a letter dated 31 October indicating that Lord Scrope was one of the leaders of the Richmondshire host.⁷⁷ The Richmond host also grew larger while laying siege to Skipton, picking up support from the Craven region and possibly from the barony of Westmorland, so much so that although its numbers were about 12,000 when it left Spennymoor, it was calculated at 20,000 when it reached Pontefract.⁷⁸ The siege began on 21 or 22 October and lasted until 27 October, when Bowes responded to Aske's request to join the Pilgrims at Doncaster. In response to Aske's request, Robert Bowes stopped at Pontefract on 22 October and along with Aske and Darcy drew up battle plans. The plans designated the Bowes host as the rearward, and thus an essential part of the rebel army. The Richmondshire host finally arrived at Pontefract, probably on 27 October, and was enraged by the news that a truce had been

⁷⁶ LP XI, no. 604; XII (1), no. 709; *The Rebel Armies of October 1536*, 154.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 156; LP XI, 927; "The Manner and Taking of Robert Aske," 337..

⁷⁸ Ibid., 155; LP XII (1), no. 29, XI, no. 928.

established with Norfolk.⁷⁹ In letters to Shrewsbury and Norfolk, Darcy revealed that the Richmondshire men were indeed difficult to control after the establishment of the truce. In a letter to Shrewsbury dated 31 October, Darcy described the Richmondshire rearward as “few men of worship but wild people.” He also informed Shrewsbury that letters sent to the Earls of Cumberland and Westmorland by “Aske and us to the commons of the rearward have, since Norfolk’s departure, been the clear saving of the said earls.” In a letter to Norfolk dated 11 November, Darcy reiterated the difficulties controlling the Bowes host. He told Norfolk that on his return to Pontefract “it was all he and others could do to stay and return the rearward which my lord Scrope, Sir Christopher Danby, Sir William Mallory, and many other led, and did their parts very well therein.”⁸⁰

The Percy Host

One of the more interesting developments of the Pilgrimage of Grace was the taking of the two Percy brothers, Ingram and Thomas. It seems that the commons of the region knew of and understood the animosity that existed between the two brothers and their older brother the Earl of Northumberland. The government had manipulated Henry Percy, the sixth Earl of Northumberland, “ailing, deranged, and childless,” to name Henry VIII the heir to the Percy lands and title.⁸¹ This situation had immediately caused immense conflict with the younger brothers who believed they were the natural heirs. Obviously, this animosity made the two younger Percys targets of the Pilgrims since both had grievances against their brother the Earl of

⁷⁹ *The Rebel Armies of October 1536*, 163.

⁸⁰ *LP XI*, nos. 928, 1045.

⁸¹ *The Rebel Armies of October 1536*, 187.

Northumberland and Henry VIII. That the commons knew of and exploited the situation indicates how well informed its leaders were.

As we have already seen, Sir Ingram Percy took the oath without any pressure from the commons and in turn swore the gentry of Northumberland. Sir Thomas seems to have played the part of a reluctant participant in the Pilgrimage, as did many of the gentlemen involved. According to Thomas Percy, he learned of the Lincolnshire rebellion while visiting his mother in Yorkshire. Three days later, he received news that Aske had stirred Wressel and Holden. Percy also reported that the commons shouted at the gates of Wressel, "Thousands for a Percy." Sir Thomas next attempted to "steal away" to his home taking "but a man or two and his boy," put on one of his servant's coats and led his "male horse" himself. Along the way he met a man named Percey who informed Sir Thomas that the commons of Malton had assembled and "had laid watch" for him. Upon hearing this, he returned to his mother's home in Seamer, telling her he could not pass, "whereupon she wept and sore lamented." About 2 p.m. a group of commons with three or four gentlemen, led by a man named Preston, arrived at Seamer. Preston informed Percy "they were assembled for the weal of all; that lord Latimer, lord Neville, Mr. Danby, Mr. Bowes, and others were with them, and that they came to fetch him." Preston then read the oath and swore Thomas Percy. Percy agreed to meet them the next day at the Wold beyond Spittal.⁸² Once sworn Percy appeared at Spittal the next day where 3,000 or 4,000 men had assembled. According to Percy, the next day the men went to a Mr. Chamley's house to swear him. Chamley refused and the commons prepared to spoil his property. Percy refused to allow this and incurred the wrath of the commons. They turned on him threatening to cut off his head and elect a new captain. After spending a day at his mother's house, Percy traveled to Malton where

⁸² LP XII (1), no. 393.

10,000 had mustered. Percy led a host of men recruited from the Yorkshire moors, northern Yorkswold, and the surrounding area.

Richard Hoyle presents several possible means in which the rebellion spread into the wolds. One possibility he suggests is that the rebellion could have been spread by Friar Robert Esch, a member of the Trinitarian community at Knaresborough. As we have seen, Esch was in Beverley in the early days of the rising there and secured from William Stapleton a passport to go and raise Rydale and Pickering Lythe. Given permission on Tuesday, 10 October Esch disappeared only to reappear a week later outside of Hull, claiming to have raised Malton and “all that quarter.” There is no evidence that Esch was in Richmond, however he reported that Richmondshire had risen and that Lord Latimer had been taken. It is possible that this lone figure prompted the Malton muster. According to Hoyle, Esch evidently had contacts with the Richmondshire host before his return to Beverley.⁸³

The Percy host’s first appointed task was to provide assistance for Aske at the siege of York, but York submitted before Percy could act. His next objective was to assist in the capture of Hull. While Percy was at Seamer, he learned of the capture of Hull and “was countermanded to Pomfret.” Percy’s troops arrived at Pontefract on Saturday, 21 October having been at York Friday night.⁸⁴

The Richmondshire men were also responsible for spreading rebellion into North Craven and Cumbria. The first evidence for disturbance in North Craven is of the commons restoring the abbot and monks to Sawley on 12 October. Sawley Abbey had been dissolved on 13 May under terms of 1536 act that closed monasteries worth less than £200. Whether or not the abbot

⁸³ Hoyle, 225-27; TNA EB36/118 fos. 63-69; *LP XII* (1), no. 392, no. 1021; *LP XI*, no. 1047; *The Rebel Armies of October*, 188.

⁸⁴ Hoyle, 225; *LP XII* (1), no. 393.

and monks were willing to return to Sawley is unclear. The abbot in his deposition claimed he was put back in against his will. The house was clearly destitute and relied on the charity of local gentry. The monks petitioned Sir Thomas Percy for aid, and received aid from Sir Stephen Hamerton and Nicholas Tempest and others, which ultimately destroyed them all.⁸⁵ Members of Sawley Abbey also petitioned Robert Aske to come to their assistance. In a petition addressed to the “captain of the commons of Yorkshire,” twenty-one priests besides the abbot mentioned that the commons had restored them to Sawley on 12 October. The priests begged Aske not only to restore their corn and tithes of “laithes” in Tadcaster, but also their “Church goods, inventory of the abbey, &c” that they claimed Arthur Darcy had taken to Pontefract Castle. Darcy had obtained the grant to Sawley from Henry VIII earlier in 1536. Furthermore, they wanted “religious persons to re-enter their houses, make a bill indented of all their goods, delivering the one part to the farmer, and continue divine service till our petition be granted.”⁸⁶

Much of what we know about Craven comes from Stephen Hamerton’s examination, which is sketchy at best. Hamerton, after being sworn, and a party of eight others were sent to swear the Earl of Cumberland. Cumberland demanded they explain to him why they had risen. They answered “it was for fear of Bishopdale, Wensleydale, &c.” The earl attempted to get them to “be still” by promising “if they were robbed he would see them recompensed.” Hamerton’s delegation responded, “Nay, my lord, but this will not serve us.” Cumberland, clearly angered by their obstinate refusal, replied, “I defy you, and do your worst, for I will not meddle with you.” Hamerton’s delegation went back to a muster held at Monubent, on the unenclosed moorland north of Bolton by Bowland.⁸⁷ Focus drifted westward and southwards

⁸⁵ Hoyle, 228; LP XII (1), nos. 506, 1034; LP XI, no. 785.

⁸⁶ LP XI, no. 784.

down the Ribble Valley. The muster held at Monubent intended to raise the parishes of Gisburn, Bolton by Bowland, and Long Preston. When Hamerton returned from Skipton to Monubent he found that the commons had gone to take Nicholas Tempest, the younger brother of Richard Tempest.

Tempest's story was that on the Saturday after St. Luke's Day, 21 October, while he was away, the commons came to his house, spoiled his goods to the loss of £100, and seized his son, whom they threatened to kill unless he surrendered himself. Tempest came in that evening and took the oath. The following day, Sunday, the commons with Hamerton and Tempest in their company, again congregated at Monubent. The movement seems to have temporarily quieted down for a few days, until news came from Sawley that the earl of Derby was marching their way. Derby originally mobilized against Lincolnshire, but by a letter of 20 October, the king told him that he had become aware of rebellion on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and of the outrage committed by monks of Sawley returning to their monastery. The king ordered Derby to suppress the rebellion, and to execute not only any captains of commons whom he might capture but also the abbot of Sawley and the monks.⁸⁸ Derby received the letter on 23 October and immediately replied, saying he would move against rebels on Saturday 28 October. A letter circulated on 25 October calling on the earl's gentry to meet him at Whalley on Tuesday 31 October with as many men as they could gather, and with food for five or six days. Tempest set out for Whalley, arriving there on 23 October. For more than two hours, the monks refused to allow him entry, opening the gates only after Tempest threatened to burn the abbey. Tempest

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, XII (1), no. 1034; TNA EB36/14-17; Hoyle, 229.

⁸⁸ *LP* XI, nos. 783, 784, 785; Hoyle, 231.

administered the oath to the abbot and eight of the brethren that day. Stephen Hamerton arrived that night.⁸⁹

The Abbot of Whalley received word that Derby intended to set out from Preston on Monday 30 October and planned to camp four miles from Whalley. News of Derby's movement also stirred the commons. Warned by letters out of Sawley that the earl planned to advance on and destroy Whalley, Sir Richard Tempest's house, and Hamerton's the commons once again met at Monubent. At this muster, they resolved to advance to the banks of the Ribble and camp on the Preston side of Whalley. They appear to have mustered on Clitheroe Moor on Monday 30 October upon receiving a summons that forbade anyone to give aid to the earl or anyone unless he was sworn to the commonwealth.⁹⁰ The commons occupied Whalley before the Earl of Derby ever left Preston, denying him the base for his attack on Sawley. All the ingredients were in place for a pitched battle but a message to Aske, which he received as the commons and royal forces were dispersing from Doncaster, alerted him to events of which he seemed unaware. He "with all haste possible, sent posts to the knights and commons" at Whalley informing them of the order taken at Doncaster and that they should withdraw to the mountains. They were not to "meddle with the said earl unless he raised fire." If Derby did attack, they were to send word to Aske by post. Aske then had Darcy write to Shrewsbury to stay Derby. Aske's message reached Preston on 30 October and both sides disbanded without a confrontation. Aske sent another letter to the commons that "on no account they should assault or besiege the Earl of Cumberland" until they had received the king's response to their grievances.⁹¹

⁸⁹ LRO DDX 732/1/15; LP XI 892 (2); Hoyle, 231-32.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "The Manner and Taking of Robert Aske," 338; LP XII (1), no. 6; Hoyle, 232.

The events in this branch of the Pilgrimage are rather confused and somewhat detached from the rest of the movement. The first evidence of any disturbance in Lancashire is of the monks of Sawley Abbey reentering their monastery at the insistence of the commons. Hoyle contends that the larger movement came into being as a response to Richmondshire. What the Craven movement did have that connected it to the larger movement was the Pilgrim's Oath.

The revolt in Dent was initially a protest against the government's plundering of the realm. The same body of rumors that affected much of Lincolnshire and the north incited the revolt in Dent. These rumors, as we have seen, alleged that the dissolution would apply to parish churches as well as religious houses and that the government planned to impose new taxes that would fall heavily on the poor. According to Michael Bush, the Cumbria region produced three separate revolts in October 1536: one in the barony of Kendal, one in Westmorland, and a third in the county of Cumberland, each with its own army and its own captains.

Similar conditions to those of North Craven existed in the West Riding and the barony of Kendal in Westmorland, and in Furness. By the end of October, two of the most significant landowners—Lord Monteagle of Hornby and Sir Marmaduke Tunstall had taken refuge with the Earl of Derby at Preston. The abbots of Furness and Cartmel also fled. On 21 October word reached Kendal that Dent had risen. The men of Kendal wrote to those of Dent telling them not to meddle in the barony of Kendal. The Kendal men also refused to have anything to do with the Dent rebellion. The letter inflamed the Dent men, who demanded that the Kendal commons should meet with them on Monday 23 October at Ennesmoor or else they would come and spoil them. After taking the advice of a number of gentlemen, the Kendal commons met with a larger Dent contingent and took the oath. When the Dent men learned that the Kendal gentlemen refused the oath, they proclaimed “we shall rule them.” The captains of the Dent men conferred

and the vicar of Clapham read a proclamation in the name of “Lord Poverty” instructing the commons to muster the next morning to know “Lord Poverty’s” decision.⁹²

The remainder of the week was spent in a campaign to intimidate the gentry, especially Sir James Layborne, into joining them. After spoiling his house and threatening his manors, on Friday 26 October Layborne was sworn. On Saturday the combined forces of Kent, Sedbergh, and Kendal, in the company of at least six gentry, advanced on Lancaster, holding a muster at Kellet Moor. At Lancaster, the host swore the mayor and the town. There the Craven men had a proclamation read requiring all men to attend a muster on Bentham Moor on the following Tuesday. The muster might have been cancelled after the host received word from Robert Aske of the truce arranged at Doncaster.⁹³

The Earl of Derby reckoned the contingent that marched on Lancaster to be about 3,000 men, although he admitted that others placed the estimate at 5,000. He sent two of his servants to Lancaster to “advise and command them, in the King's name, to depart home.” The commons refused to disperse in very interesting language. One Atkinson, their captain, answered “they had a pilgrimage to do for the common wealth, which they would accomplish, or die.” The Earl’s servants challenged the commons that, if they “would not be thus advised, then if 12 of their chiefs would sign a promise to fight on Bentham More he would meet them and determine the quarrel by battle.” Again, the commons rebuffed Derby, “they would not fight unless the Earl interrupted their pilgrimage, but if he would resort to the lord Lieutenant they would fight him or them.” Hoyle suggests that the use of the language of pilgrimage and their awareness of

⁹² Hoyle, 235-36.

⁹³ Ibid.

the events at Doncaster implies that by 28 October, like the Craven movement, they were in contact with Aske in at least a general way and had adopted his language, if not his leadership.⁹⁴

The final rebellion inspired by Richmondshire occurred in Westmorland and Cumberland, which, originating in two separate risings in the Upper Eden Valley, progressively moved north towards Carlisle, mustering and recruiting as it went over a two-week period.⁹⁵ On the Sunday before St. Luke's day the priest of Kirkby Stephen while bidding the beads failed to mention St. Luke's day. The omission angered the parishioners so much they would have killed him, but he "took a sacring bell and rang it, and bade the said St. Luke's as holyday." The next day the commons of Kirkby Stephens summoned the county to muster on Sandeforthe Moor because they had learned that Richmondshire, Yorkshire, and the Bishopric of Dunham had risen.⁹⁶ The circulation of the proclamation announcing the truce at Doncaster and forbidding further assemblies prevented serious conflict from occurring in this region. Evidence for the risings in Cumberland and Westmorland comes almost entirely from the recollection of two clergymen participants, the vicar of Brough under Stainmoor, Robert Thompson, and the Bishop of Carlisle's chancellor, Dr. Bernard Towneley. Thompson was with the rebels from Monday 16 October onwards, Towneley from the following Monday. Although the two men cooperated during the rebellion, Towneley had little to do with Thompson. Towneley believed that the vicar of Brough was one of the leaders of the rebels and was so popular among the rebels that he "was taken for a prophet."

⁹⁴ *LP XI*, no. 947 (2); Hoyle, 236-7.

⁹⁵ Hoyle, 240.

⁹⁶ *LP XII* (1), 687.

According to Towneley, the cause of the insurrection in Cumberland was the vicar of Brough read a letter from Richmondshire that stated, "Well beloved brethren in God, we greet you well, signifying unto you that we your brethren in Christ have assembled us together and put us in readiness for the maintenance of the faith of God, His laws, and His Church, and where abbeys was suppressed we have restored them again and put the religious men into their houses: wherefore we exhort you to do the same." Thompson read this "calling himself Poverty, chaplain and secretary." Towneley also accused Thompson of being the author of the hosts ceremonial mass of the four captains. According to Towneley, there were four captains in Cumberland—Thomas Byrkbed, Gilbert Whepedale, John Beke, and Robert Movnsey—who went in procession in the parish church in Penrith daily, "when there, with their four swords drawn, following the vicar of Brough." After the Gospel, the vicar would preach on one of the Ten Commandments, "and this was called the captain's mass."⁹⁷ The vicar of Brough was no elderly priest,;Hoyle claims that he was a recent Oxford graduate, a former fellow of Queen's College, who had a college living, albeit a poor one.⁹⁸ Throughout Towneley's deposition he points to Thompson as one of the chief agents of the rebellion as well as one of the host's most revered leaders.

The Government's Response

The government was at a distinct disadvantage when the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace broke out. The government in London could only react to the rebellions since communication between the midlands and the North Country was relatively slow. Furthermore, the king relied on the gentry to provide him with news of the goings on outside of

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Hoyle, 242.

London. As noted above, many of the gentry fled the insurrections or became involved in the rebellions effectively slowing down communication even more. The letters that Henry and Cromwell received arrived two or three days after the risings had begun. Slow communications and the distance of the government from the areas affected by the rebellions hampered Henry's efforts to quell the risings quickly and decisively. The lack of a standing army and a police force stifled the king's ability to react in a timely and measured manner. Henry VIII had to call on his loyal nobles, issue orders for able-bodied men to muster, provide money and weaponry for those who formed the royal forces; all of which took a great deal of time. In the meantime, the rebels in Yorkshire were organizing and gaining in strength. By the time Norfolk arrived at the Don River in late October 1536, the Pilgrim's were in a much better state of military readiness and discipline.

While slow communication and preparation hampered the royal response, the rebels took advantage of an informal system of communication that allowed them to grow in strength much more rapidly. The methods used to alert the people of rebellion were, as we have seen, the ringing of bells, lighting beacons, letters, handbills, and word of mouth. The ringing of church bells in a town or village was a universal sound of alarm. The alarm was different from that of the church bells ringing to call the faithful to worship. Ringing the church bells backwards was a means of alerting the townspeople that something was amiss. The alarm brought the entire community into a central location and at that point, the people could learn what had happened. In the case of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace, the rebel leaders could announce their reasons for rising and then swear the men to the oath. Clearly, word of both rebellions traveled rather fast. Certainly, word of mouth accounts for the spread of some news, but news of the Pilgrimage of Grace traveled far too fast to be attributed solely to word of mouth.

People in Westmorland, for instance, knew of the risings in Lincolnshire and Beverley. The similarities in the various oaths administered to the rebels throughout Lincolnshire and Yorkshire is an indication that each area was aware of events elsewhere. As mentioned above, the rebels sent letters and handbills throughout the countryside informing men of the times and places of musters. This system seems to have worked relatively well since most of the musters held generally drew large numbers. Handbills nailed on church doors were an effective means of spreading the news of rebellion. In a number of instances clergymen, particularly the friars of St. Robert's of Knaresborough, drafted and delivered these seditious handbills and letters. This rather effective means of spreading the word and recruiting men for the rebellions put the government at a disadvantage early on.

While the Lincolnshire rebellion kept Henry and his royal captains preoccupied, the Yorkshire rebellion began. However, the main concern of Henry was to quiet Lincolnshire first. Henry summoned his main army to gather at Amphyll on 16 October, called Norfolk out of retirement, and sent Suffolk as his lieutenant to subdue Lincolnshire. Suffolk had only 900 men by October 10, and if the rebels had pressed on, they might have overwhelmed him. Obviously, it was welcome news that the Lincolnshire rebellion had collapsed. The king, believing the storm over, ordered Norfolk back to his own country and Suffolk to Lincoln. Henry told Shrewsbury to prepare to march into Yorkshire. The government dismissed the army of 19,000 troops stationed at Amphyll on October 19. These troops, which the King had intended to lead in person against the Lincolnshire rebels, became unnecessary after the collapse of the rebellion. It seems that at this time Henry perceived the Yorkshire rising as nothing more than a demonstration of sympathy with Lincolnshire.

News of the extent of the Pilgrimage of Grace awakened Henry to the fact that the Yorkshire rising was a completely different and far more serious protest against his policies. He changed his policy immediately. Henry gave Norfolk joint command with Shrewsbury and ordered him to proceed against the York rebels and take command of the troops at Amphill before they dispersed. The king amended Shrewsbury's orders, informing him of the changes and directing him to put down the Yorkshire rebellion immediately if he had enough men. If not strong enough, he should wait for Norfolk, who would join him with 5,000 men.⁹⁹ Suffolk arrived in London on 17 October with the rest of the royal troops and placed them in a position to keep the area subdued. Shrewsbury arrived in Newark on the same day and received word that the Pilgrim host was 40,000 strong. He wrote to Norfolk that the rebel force was too strong to attack but that he planned to press on to Doncaster.

Meanwhile, Norfolk could not prevent the Amphill troops from dispersing and thus made his way to Cambridge. While at Cambridge, Norfolk formulated his 'politic device' to deal with the Pilgrimage. This policy recommended holding the line of the River Trent rather than advancing into Yorkshire against the rebels, as well as writing letters to convince the rebels to disperse or at least create division among the ranks. Norfolk also suggested the fortification of the bridges at Nottingham and Newark "and all other passages, so that the rebels shall be either enforced within short time to meet the strength of our forces or disperse." Henry received Norfolk's policy with great enthusiasm, thanking him profusely.¹⁰⁰

Shrewsbury and 6,000 troops reached Scrooby on 22 October. He dispatched Lancaster Herald to Pontefract with a proclamation from the king stating that the Lincolnshire rebels had dispersed and the Yorkshire rebels must do the same. As he approached Pontefract Lancaster

⁹⁹ *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 243.

¹⁰⁰ *LP XI*, no. 816; Hoyle, 288.

Herald encountered companies of common people. When he asked them why they were in harness, they responded “to prevent commonalty and Church being destroyed.” Lancaster Herald found Aske in Pontefract Castle but had to “await the captain’s pleasure” before meeting with him. After being summoned by Aske, Lancaster Herald informed him and the other lords present of his mission. Aske demanded the proclamation, “read it openly...and said he would of his own wit answer it.”¹⁰¹ Aske refused to allow the herald to read the proclamation. According to Aske, he forbade the reading of the proclamation for two reasons. First, he believed that if the commons at Pontefract learned that Lincolnshire “was down, and that...the same Herald...should have declared to the people the same, they would have killed him.” More importantly the proclamation contained nothing pertaining to a pardon or redress to the Pilgrims’ grievances.¹⁰² Aske boasted to the herald, “we are all of one accord with the points of our articles clearly intending to see a reformation or else to die in these causes.”¹⁰³ Lancaster Herald requested a copy of the Pilgrims’ articles upon which Aske supplied him with a copy of the Oath of the Honorable Men, claiming it contained their grievances.¹⁰⁴

Norfolk’s ‘politic device’ came to naught. He learned on 23 October that Shrewsbury had pushed on to Doncaster, voiding his plans to hold their line on the Trent. Realizing that the Pilgrim host was vastly superior in numbers and in better defensive positions, Norfolk abandoned his politic device and wrote to Shrewsbury proposing a truce and, if the Pilgrims rejected that, he would send a letter threatening war.¹⁰⁵ While holding a muster at Barnsdale on

¹⁰¹ *LP XI*, no. 826.

¹⁰² “The Manner and Taking of Robert Aske,” 336.

¹⁰³ *Humanist Scholarship*, 188.

¹⁰⁴ *LP XI*, no. 826; *Ibid.*, XII (2), no. 6.

24 October, Norfolk had Lancaster Herald deliver a message to Aske suggesting that in order to prevent bloodshed four captains of the north should meet with the lords at Doncaster and explain the causes of the rebellion. The Pilgrim captains refused Norfolk's offer because they did not trust him to guarantee safe passage for the four men. The captains decided that Aske should ride to Pontefract to consult with Darcy. After some discussion, the Pilgrims accepted the invitation with certain revisions to Norfolk's terms. The rebels proposed a meeting of delegates of lords and gentlemen from both sides at a neutral site rather than Doncaster. Aske offered to send four, six, eight, or twelve men to the duke to meet "with a like number" of his representatives. At this meeting, the rebel delegates would then declare their grievances.¹⁰⁶

The next day Lancaster Herald returned with a letter from Norfolk rejecting the Pilgrims' terms. Norfolk, angered by the Pilgrim response, countered that if they refused his original proposal he "would give battle in place convenient."¹⁰⁷ On the same day, a minor skirmish occurred outside Doncaster in which the rebels routed a small force of government troops. This victory inspired Robert Bowes to consider taking Doncaster by force. That night the Pilgrims convened a council at Hampole to discuss their course of action: war or peace. Many of the pilgrims, particularly Bowes, wanted to attack Shrewsbury's force, knowing their numbers were vastly superior. Aske favored moderate measures. Aske countered "that it was no dishonor but a duty to declare their grievances to their Sovereign." He argued that before they resorted to battle the Pilgrims must inform the king of the harm that "evil counselors" were doing to the person of their prince. Aske saw no harm in discussing their complaints with Norfolk. If the negotiations failed, then they could resort to war. Darcy pointed out that a truce would give them time to

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., XI, no. 887, XII (2), no. 854; "The Manner and Taking of Robert Aske," 337.

¹⁰⁶ *LP XII*, no. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

prepare for battle in case the king rejected their petitions. Aske and Darcy did not fear the royal troops; they feared civil war. Aske's argument won the day, the Pilgrims decided that they were strong enough to negotiate, and they accepted Norfolk's first offer.¹⁰⁸

The first appointment at Doncaster took place on 27 October. The Pilgrims selected Sir Thomas Hilton, Sir Ralph Ellerker, Robert Bowes, and Robert Challoner to represent them. At the meeting, both sides agreed to a truce. Norfolk consented to take the Yorkshire Articles to the king accompanied by the Pilgrim leaders Bowes and Ellerker. He also agreed that within two days following the Doncaster meeting the armies of both sides would disband. The truce was to remain in effect until Bowes and Ellerker returned with Henry's response to their articles. Norfolk also agreed to hold a parliament in Yorkshire and to a free and general pardon for all involved in the rebellion. With these terms agreed, an uneasy quiet fell on England at the end of October 1536.¹⁰⁹

Henry was furious when Norfolk informed him of the terms agreed to at Doncaster. In the letter explaining his actions, Norfolk advised the king that no promises he had made to the rebels were binding to the king. Norfolk stated, "I beg you to take in good part whatever (at the advice of others) I may promise the rebels for surely I shall observe no part thereof...longer than I and my company with my lord Marquess may be assembled together."¹¹⁰ Although unhappy with Norfolk's methods, Henry recognized the advantage gained at Doncaster.

Henry received Norfolk along with Bowes and Ellerker at Windsor on 2 November. Three days later, he prepared a skillful response touching on the York Articles and demanding the delivery of ten rebel ringleaders. Henry had second thoughts about his heavy-handed

¹⁰⁸ LP XII (1), no. 6; *The Rebel Armies of October, 1536*, 378-80; *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 252-54.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ LP XI, no. 864.

response and never delivered this reply. Instead, he refused any response as punishment for the rebels' violation of the king's peace; but in reality, the refusal resulted from the fact that the north was ready for military action and a hostile reply might trigger a march on London. Rather than use force, Henry resorted to a delaying tactic. He rightfully recognized that delay would benefit his cause. The longer he delayed, the more fragile the coalition between the commons and gentry became.¹¹¹

The envoys of the Pilgrims finally returned to Yorkshire on 17 November, with a message from the king that offered no direct reply to their demands. Claiming the articles too vague for a reply, Henry proposed that 300 representatives of the rebels meet Norfolk at Doncaster in December. The king insisted on a pardon with exceptions and a submission of the Pilgrims before he would answer their articles. The great council of the Pilgrims reassembled on 21 November at York to discuss the offer brought by Ellerker and Bowes. All of the Pilgrimage captains were present except Lord Darcy, who did not attend because of his advanced age (he was nearly eighty). In all about 800 gentlemen and commons attended the great council. Robert Bowes spoke to the assembly of the king's good will and in favor of accepting the most recent proposal. It seems that Henry won Bowes and Ellerker over while they waited for his reply to the Pilgrims' demands. Sir Robert Constable spoke in favor of military action. He believed the king would not honor any agreement and recommended armed confrontation. Many present were reluctant to accept Henry's proposal because they did not trust the government to hold up its part of the bargain. They cited letters written by Cromwell to Sir Ralph Evers in which he threatened that if "the commons were not pacified such vengeance should be taken as should make them an example to the whole world." Others argued that since the commons of Lancashire "and

¹¹¹ Ibid., 957; *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 279-80.

elsewhere” favored the Pilgrims cause they should stand and fight rather than negotiate.¹¹² The peace party prevailed, and the Pilgrims agreed to meet Norfolk on 5 December.

To address Henry’s charge of the York Articles being vague and obscure, the council agreed to meet at Pontefract two days before the Doncaster summit. This council would hear all grievances, work them into a clearer set of articles, and then send them to Norfolk. The council also instructed the Archbishop of York and other ‘learned men’ to draft spiritual articles addressing the religious grievances of the Pilgrims.¹¹³ The Pontefract council met on 2 December and drafted a list of twenty-four articles. The Pontefract Articles mainly reasserted the earlier religious demands. The articles contained new constitutional demands that targeted Parliament. The articles called for the reform of Parliament, the reduction of the influence of the king’s servants in the Commons, and greater free speech. The Pilgrims specified that the Convocation of Bishops, not Parliament, should settle religious matters. The northern clergy, in their deliberations, condemned all of the Ten Articles, denied the royal supremacy, “the punishment of the clergy by temporal powers...as contrary to the laws of the Church.” Furthermore, they upheld papal dispensations and demanded that all of the clergy who had opposed the “king’s superiority should be restored.” The clergy also insisted that first fruits and tenths “and other arrears” granted to the king by Parliament or Convocation, “and to be paid before next Parliament,” should be paid.¹¹⁴

While the Pilgrims were busy at York and Pontefract, Henry and his lieutenants were also hard at work. Henry sent word to Suffolk on 14 November granting a full pardon to all

¹¹² *LP XII* (1), no. 6.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, XI, no. 1064, XII (1), nos. 6, 392, 466, 698 (3); *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 313-18.

¹¹⁴ *LP XI*, no. 1245.

Lincolnshire men not in prison. Henry claimed that the repentant demeanor of the Lincolnshire commons during the Pilgrimage of Grace moved him to be lenient. However, Henry's leniency had little or nothing to do with the "repentant demeanor" of the Lincolnshire commons. He simply recognized that a pardon would most likely keep them from rising anew and joining the Pilgrimage. Norfolk and Suffolk each held the opinion that no hope of coming to terms existed unless the King granted a free and general pardon and a parliament in York. Henry finally consented, and on 2 December, the government drafted a free and general pardon and sent it to Norfolk. However, the king ordered Norfolk not to use the pardon at the second appointment at Doncaster. Instead, Norfolk was to demand that the rebels accept the limited pardon. If they refused, Norfolk was to explain that his orders went no further, but if the rebels accepted, he was to offer to extend the truce and personally bring their petitions to the king. Norfolk was to persuade them that they only wanted a general pardon and a free parliament. Then Norfolk might declare a truce for six or seven days, as if to send to the king the petitions of the Pilgrims. Then the duke could extend the general pardon and provide the king's promise that a parliament would convene on the last day of September 1537 at a site determined by Henry VIII. If this tactic failed, Norfolk was to extend the truce for twenty days and begin preparing to attack the rebels.¹¹⁵

The second appointment at Doncaster convened on 6 December 1536. Forty representatives of the Pilgrim host – ten knights, ten esquires, and twenty commons – met with Norfolk at Doncaster. They named Robert Aske as their leader and empowered him to speak in the name of all. Aske immediately demanded the king's free pardon, and from this point on the meeting did not follow the course set by Henry. Aske then began the discussion of the Pontefract Articles. At this point Norfolk abandoned his earlier instructions. He had, after all,

¹¹⁵ LP XI, nos. 1061, 1225, 1226, 1227, 1228, 1234; *The Pilgrimage of Grace* vol. 2, 7-10.

the freedom to grant a free pardon to all and to promise a parliament in the north. When and where the parliament would meet proved the main area of contention. Henry's proposed date of September 29, 1537 was too distant to satisfy the rebels. Norfolk convinced Aske that the parliament would convene earlier than late September of the coming year. He showed the Pilgrims a full and free pardon and stated that the York parliament would address their legal and economic grievances. Nevertheless, Norfolk could not convince the Pilgrims to drop their demand to allow the restored monasteries to stand. He agreed that they would stand for the time being, and with that, the conference ended.¹¹⁶

Aske returned to Pontefract with these terms – a free pardon, a promise of a northern parliament, and provisional restoration of the abbeys. The Pilgrim host of about 3,000 gathered at Pontefract on 7 December to hear Aske read the terms of the conference at Doncaster. The announcement of the pardon elicited such a “great shout” that Aske assumed all the terms to be ratified by acclamation. Believing the terms approved, Aske, accompanied by Lord Neville, returned to Doncaster to inform Norfolk. Upon further consideration of the terms, the commons became unsettled. The fact that the rebels had nothing in writing from the Doncaster appointment caused great concern among the commons. They immediately sent a letter written by Lord Lumley to Aske declaring that unless they had in writing the pardon with the king's seal and that the restored abbeys would stand and assurance of the York parliament then they would “burn beacons and raise the whole of Yorkshire.”¹¹⁷ Aske returned to Pontefract and convinced the commons there to accept the terms. He sent to Doncaster for Lancaster Herald to bring the king's pardon. The herald arrived that night and the next day the Pilgrims assembled on St. Thomas'

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 13-17; *LP* XI, no. 957, XII (1), no. 6.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., XII (1), no. 6.

Hill and heard the pardon read. After hearing the pardon announced, the commons dispersed and returned to their homes and the gentlemen rode to Doncaster to meet with Norfolk.

Next Aske and the other captains met with Norfolk to work out several minor details that had not been addressed. After receiving a reasonable answer, Aske knelt down and humbly implored the whole assembly that he should no longer hold the office or title of captain. When they agreed he tore off the badge of the Five Wounds, as did all the other Pilgrims, declaring, “We will all wear no badge nor sign but the badge of our sovereign lord.” Thus, the conference and the Pilgrimage of Grace ended.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Ibid.; *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, vol. 2, 17.

Chapter 7: The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace

By early December 1536, Henry VIII had apparently avoided an armed rebellion that could have realistically removed him from the throne. The result of the Second Doncaster appointment seemed to have averted such a devastating scenario. From the perspective of the Pilgrims, it seemed as though they had achieved a great victory. With the second appointment at Doncaster, Aske and his followers gained the free and general pardon they demanded and obtained the king's promise to hold a parliament at York allowing the people of the north to present their petitions and state their grievances. Had the truce agreed upon at Doncaster in December stood, the history of the Pilgrimage of Grace and indeed England might have been markedly different. However, this stunning success proved very short lived, for by the end of 1536 and early 1537 the Doncaster agreement had collapsed and much of the North Country was once again in a state of rebellion. These events violated the terms of the Doncaster agreement, allowing Henry VIII to crush the rebellion and wreak his vengeance on those involved.

These post-pardon risings, like those of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace, occurred primarily because of rumors that circulated following the second appointment at Doncaster. The main rumors centered on several supposed incidents. First, many believed that the Archbishop of York received letters instructing him to collect the clerical tenth, which violated the Doncaster agreement. Another rumor that surfaced was that the mayor of York allegedly received a royal letter commanding him to confiscate all harness from the commons. Evidently, these reports caused great concern in and around Beverley, for, according to John Hallom, these things “did set the people more a fire to make a new stirring.”¹ Another widely circulated rumor held that the king intended to fortify the towns of Hull and Scarborough to make the towns stronger and the country weaker, then, subdue the countryside as in Lincolnshire. Tales alleging that ships carrying ordnance had arrived in both towns prompted this fear. The alleged fortification of Hull and Scarborough led many to look upon the actions of the gentry with great suspicion. The steady stream of former leaders of the rebellion visiting Henry in London caused many of the commons to believe that their former captains had made a separate deal with the king at the commons’ expense. Many believed that with the fortifications of the two towns the gentlemen would go there and lead an attack on the commons. John Hallom was of this opinion. According to William Horsekey of Watton, Hallom told him “I fear me lest Hull do deceive us, the commons, for there is ordnance daily carried in thither by ships...and Scarborough shall be better fortified, and the gentlemen will deceive us the commons, and the King’s Grace intends to perform nothing of our petitions.”² Despite the granting of the free

¹ LP XII (1), no. 201 iv.

² Ibid., 201 I; Michael Bush and David Bownes. *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Post Pardon Revolts of December 1536 to March 1537 and their Effect* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1999), 35-38. Here after cited as *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*.

pardon many northern men, especially members of the commons, plainly distrusted the government, Norfolk, and increasingly the very men that had led them as captains during the Pilgrimage. For many of the commons the settlement at Doncaster was no victory at all, they had nothing in writing and only promises from a government that, from their point of view was not trustworthy. This lack of trust ultimately destroyed the Doncaster agreement

The truce agreed upon at the December 6 meeting at Doncaster was tenuous from the start. Even before the return of Bowes and Ellerker from London with the king's response to the Pilgrims grievances, Aske was busy trying to maintain the unofficial truce agreed upon at the end of October 1536. As mentioned earlier, he had to intervene to prevent the commons of Craven, Dent, Sedbergh, Kendall, Furness, Bowland and part of the edge of Lancashire from engaging in a battle to prevent the Earl of Derby from taking Sawley Abbey. Again, as we have seen, Aske sent a letter to the commons of Cumberland not to attack in any way the Earl of Cumberland. Following his return to York he declared the order taken at the first Doncaster appointment "and stayed the country." Hearing of trouble at Watton Abbey, he journeyed the fourteen miles to prevent any conflict that might jeopardize the truce. Watton Abbey lacked a prior because Cromwell's appointee fled when the rebellion began. The commons, led by John Hallom, wanted to choose a prior themselves but Aske "deputed the subprior to manage the house in the prior's absence" and pacified the commons. At Hull Sir Robert Constable retained his army of 200 men in violation of the truce. At Hull, Aske informed Constable of the agreement and apparently he dispersed the army. Aske also learned that news of an army at Hull caused the commons there to besiege Scarborough and to capture a royal ship and its captain, Edward

Walter, “which nearly occasioned new commotions.” Clearly, the conditions following the October 28 agreement were anything but quiet.³

Following the formal truce agreed upon at the second Doncaster appointment, the situation did not improve significantly. Trouble began almost immediately. As mentioned in the last chapter, questions about the validity of the royal pardon began before Aske had time to inform the Duke of Norfolk that the Pilgrims had accepted the pardon. Then, before Christmas, rumors began to circulate as described above. Henry VIII summoned Aske to spend Christmas with him in London. Upon his return from London Aske immediately went to Beverley to stay the commons there. On 9 January 1537, Robert Aske, alerted to trouble brewing in York, arrived in Beverley to allay the tensions. Aske declared that the king would honor the Doncaster agreement and the keeping of the York Parliament. John Hallom demanded that Aske account for the fact that the king’s letter to Archbishop Lee demanding the gathering of the tenth violated the Doncaster agreement, which concluded that there should be no payments gathered until the northern parliament met. Hallom added, “if that were so, he feared the people would rise.” Aske responded by saying the letter was for the tenths already collected by the archbishop.⁴ According to William Horsekey, Aske told them, “The King’s Highness is good and gracious lord unto us all and he hath granted us all our desires and he will keep a parliament shortly at York.”

Four or five days later, after receiving a letter from Lord Darcy, he traveled to Templehurst to “stay those parts.” Henry had also summoned Darcy and Sir Robert Constable to London; however, Aske perceiving the country “in a flutter and readiness to rise” wrote to the

³ “The Manner and Taking of Robert Aske,” 338-39; *LP XII* (1), no. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*

king asking him to allow them to remain in Yorkshire until Norfolk's arrival.⁵ Throughout this uncertain time, Aske was constantly working to prevent any action that would jeopardize the Doncaster agreement. Despite his efforts, he was unable to prevent the disastrous attempts on Hull and Scarborough. Conditions were clearly not stable throughout the north and the longer Norfolk tarried in London, the more volatile the situation became. Therefore, when rumors about the validity of the pardon began to circulate a number of the commons were willing to believe them.

More serious trouble occurred when several persons raised allegations that inconsistencies existed in the pardon granted at Doncaster. According to Sir Francis Bigod and John Hallom, the pardon published throughout the north differed from the one read by Lancaster Herald at Doncaster. Bigod alleged that the dates of the pardon did not match up. In addition, Bigod noticed that in the printed version of the pardon the word "he" rather than the usual "we" appeared when referring to the king. Hallom, and presumably others, did not trust the pardon because it was not in the king's name. He said, "it (the pardon) was but lord Cromwell's deed and bishops (e.g. Cranmer and Latimer), and not the King's own knowledge."⁶ These inconsistencies led Hallom and Bigod, and others as well, to believe that the commons must take Hull and Scarborough in order to save the agreement at Doncaster and guarantee the York parliament. Thus began the disastrous last chapter of the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Following the meeting with Aske at Beverley on Tuesday 9 January Hallom returned home to Calkehill evidently convinced to delay any action until Norfolk returned. The next night, Sir Francis Bigod met with Hallom at Watton Abbey. At this meeting, Bigod convinced

⁵ TNA SP1/120 fos. 34-44; *LP XII* (1), no. 1175.

⁶ *LP XII* (1), no. 201 iv.

Hallom that the king had no intentions of honoring the pardon or allowing the York parliament. While at the abbey Bigod told Hallom that the agreement made at Doncaster “was not good, because it ran not in the King’s name but began as another man’s tale, albeit the King’s highness &c.” Bigod thought it was the work of Thomas Cromwell. Furthermore, “that the king’s office was to have no cure of souls.” Sir Francis then read a book he had written on this very subject to Hallom to convince him that they must take action.⁷

Bigod was the least likely of all the participants in the Pilgrimage of Grace. He is the only known Pilgrim to have adopted Protestant views and had in fact been one of the suppression commissioners. However, Bigod rejected the Royal Supremacy believing that only a clergyman could be head of the church. He believed that the pope should be head of the Church not Henry. If the pope was not the head of the Church in England then a cleric such as the Archbishop of Canterbury should have cure of souls, not the king. It is not clear whether he developed these ideas before or after taking the Pilgrim’s oath. Regardless, by January of 1537 Bigod was convinced that Henry did not intend to honor the Doncaster agreement. Bigod argued, “my lord of Norfolk would do this country no good for the purpose that they rose for in the beginning” unless he was forced to take the oath. Hallom testified that Bigod tried hard to make him accept this by saying “that if my lord of Norfolk came the country would take him...and swear him that they should have their intent that they rose for.” Hallom was clearly uncomfortable with this proposition. He told Bigod “he knew no man that would withstand the duke of Norfolk, but as for Suffolk they would hold him...as best they could.” The meeting with Bigod overturned

⁷ Ibid.

whatever decision Hallom had made after meeting with Aske. As a result of this meeting Hallom committed himself to the capture of Hull and Scarborough.⁸

From this point on events occurred at a very quick pace. Bigod remained at Watton until Friday 12 January. Sir Francis, knowing of the dispute between Hallom and the prior of Watton Abbey, got involved in the issue of appointing a new prior. Bigod took up the cause in all likelihood to gain Hallom's confidence. The result, contrary to the agreement worked out by Aske several weeks earlier, was that Bigod and Hallom forced the residents of Watton Abbey to elect a new prior. They elected Dr. Swinburne of Ellerton as the new prior, although he was hesitant to take the position. Knowing of Hallom's propensity for violence, Swinburn accepted and traveled to Watton, promptly leaving after Hallom and Bigod departed.

On Saturday 13 January, Bigod sent word for Hallom to meet him at his home at Settrington the next day. Hallom complied and met with Bigod that Sunday. When he arrived at Settrington, Hallom found that Bigod had also summoned Ralph Fenton of Ganton. The friar of St. Robert's was there as well. At this meeting, they decided to rise but made no firm decision on when. Bigod told the men there that he had heard that the men of the West Country and the Bishopric were up. Hallom and Fenton responded by saying that "we can see no remedy, but we must up again too."

On Sunday 14 January 1537, Bigod informed Hallom that the commons in the North Riding, Durham, and Northumberland were in open rebellion led by Thomas Percy. They agreed to send the friar of Knaresborough into the countryside to determine the accuracy of this news and to move against Hull and Scarborough if it proved true. That same day three men of Beverley—Wilson, Roger Kitchen, and Francis a baker met with Hallom and told him they would be ready when he sent for them and bring many men with them when called. Hallom,

⁸ Ibid.

upon receiving a letter from Bigod, sent Kitchen to Holderness to inform William Nicholson of Preston to “bring with him his neighbors” and meet Hallom at Hull the next morning. Nicholson had promised Hallom that he would provide at least 100 to 200 men out of Holderness when he decided to take Hull. Nicholson also told Hallom “the most part of Holderness was of the same mind except some gentlemen.” Apparently, Hallom believed that the commons of Yorkswold and Hull were of the same mind. Nicholson was also responsible for the decision to take Hull on a market day, carry no weapons openly, and go in small groups to avoid any suspicion. Hallom also testified that, near the end of the Christmas holidays, the bailey of Snathe sent word that “he and the commons thereabouts thought it best also to take Hull and Scarborough till the Parliament time and if they in these parts would do as they should send him word, and he and the commons there would take both Pomfret and Doncaster the same day.”⁹

That same night Hallom sent word to William Horsekey, Hugh Langdale, and Philip Utye to meet him in Beverley the next day, Tuesday 16 January. Horsekey, in his deposition, claimed that Hallom’s servant charged him to comply with Hallom’s request “on pain of death.” The next morning Horsekey met Langdale and Phillip Utye and traveled to Beverley. Langdale told his companions that Hallom had received a letter from Bigod desiring him to take Hull while Bigod would take Scarborough. When the trio got to Beverley, they met Hallom at one John Cooper’s house. There Hallom showed them Bigod’s letter and directed the three men to journey to Hull. He also revealed his plan for taking Hull. The men were to ride in groups of two or three with no arms visible so as not to draw attention to them. Since it would be a market day in Hull the conspirators should act as though they are in the town to take advantage of the market.

⁹ Ibid., 201 iv, v.

As Horsekey, Langdale, and Utye made their way to Hull, they agreed that they would go before Hull and show Hallom's purpose to some "trusty friends." The three discussed whom they should inform of the plot agreeing to meet with William Cockey, Robert Grey of Beverley, and Stephen Clere of Hull asking them to inform the mayor "without telling by whom it came." The three men met with Cockey around 11:00 a.m. on the pretense of purchasing a tun of wine. Horsekey pulled Cockey aside ostensibly to inform him of Hallom's plans. Horsekey, "abashed and trembling" caused Cockey to ask hastily, "What news? How do ye all in your parts?" Horsekey, collecting himself, responded by telling him that Hallom had sent them to Hull "this day...for to take the town." Cockey immediately went and spoke with Robert Grey who seemed unconcerned. He then found Mr. Johnson, an alderman, and went straight to the mayor's house, where Cockey discovered one Fowbery already "opening the matter" to the mayor. The men then went home, collected their weapons, and "assembled for the taking of Hallom and his company."¹⁰

Hallom arrived at Hull late that morning, certainly after Horsekey, Langdale and Utye met with Cockey, with 20 men in his company. Nothing went according to plan after that. At the January 15 meeting, Hallom instructed Roger Kitchen to bring word to Richard Wharton, John Thomson, the bailey of Braynsburton, William Barker, and William Nicholson to come to Hull and meet him there. Later that evening, around midnight, two messengers arrived at Kitchen's home in Beverley, Cante and Lowery, informing him that Hallom desired him to go to Holderness and inform the said men to meet him the next morning at Hull, "coming two or three together like market folk without any harness." The two messengers also informed Kitchen that Bigod would take Scarborough on the same day. That morning, around six, Kitchen set out for

¹⁰ Ibid., 201 i, iii (26 Jan.).

Holderness and informed the vicar of Preston “of all of this,” showing that he was bound to deliver the message to Nicholson and the others. The vicar informed him that Nicholson was not home, so Kitchen decided to journey to Hull, arriving there about two in the afternoon. He testified that he told no one else about the matter and only went to Hull to see how the “matter should go forward.”¹¹

Nicholson, upon whom Hallom depended for a substantial number of men, was in fact in Hull on 16 January, but had no knowledge of Hallom’s plan since Kitchen had failed to deliver Hallom’s message. Nicholson found Hallom at one William Hynde’s house where Hallom informed him that he was there to take the town. Hallom then asked Nicholson whether he had “brought his neighbors with him according to his promise.” Nicholson, clearly surprised by Hallom’s presence, said no, “for he had no warning.” Hallom, somewhat shaken by this news, commanded Nicholson to see if he could find anyone in the town and desire “them to tarry all night to see what would be said and done.” Hallom apparently wanted to get an idea if he could gain any support from the commons of Hull. Nicholson did as asked, meeting with several men but when they asked to what purpose they were to tarry all night, he replied that he knew not.¹²

Hallom believed that he would receive help from the commons of Hull, but he found “their minds were turned very much from that purpose.” This revelation coupled with Nicholson’s failure to provide men, forced Hallom to tell his company to go home. Hallom took his horse and rode out of town, stopping at a windmill “beside a watering place.” He looked back towards Hull and noticed the gates were closing, which trapped several of his men in Hull. An associate with him, identified only as Marshall, clerk of Beswick, said to him, “Fie! will ye go your ways and leave your men behind you?” Hallom then turned back toward the town.

¹¹ Ibid., 201 vii.

¹² Ibid., 201 v.

Fowbery, who had informed the mayor of Hull of the plot, was also with Hallom. As Hallom turned toward the gates Fowbery said, “And I will turn again to seek for some of my neighbors that be within.” When the two men arrived at the gates they found Mr. Knolles and Mr. Eland at the gates of Hull. Hallom requested that his men within the town be allowed to depart with him. The two guards opened the gate and Knolles stepped out and asked his name. When the guards heard Hallom’s name, Knolles said, “Thou art he that we seek for.” Eland grabbed the bridle of Hallom’s horse, drew his dagger, and a brief but pitched struggle ensued. Hallom with his dagger drawn was able to withdraw about 40 feet. Hallom dismounted and drew his sword and “stood at his defense, with his servant Thomas Water and one John Prowde.” The guards, with help by this time, overwhelmed Hallom and his associates and took them prisoner. Nicholson said it was a short time later that he saw Hallom and “others led between the townsmen towards the jail.” Nicholson asked them, “Jesus! what mean ye? Will ye murder me now?” The mayor’s men struck at him and took him prisoner as well.¹³

As we have seen, after the January 9 meeting with Aske at Beverley, Hallom decided to wait to see what the king’s next move would be. Francis Bigod headed in the opposite direction. He became increasingly suspicious of the Doncaster agreement and the general pardon granted at the December 6 meeting. Bigod met with Hallom on 10 January and at supper that evening, he produced a copy of the pardon and pointed out several inconsistencies. Most importantly, it was written in the third person throughout, using he instead of the customary we. This convinced Bigod that the document was the work of Cromwell, and finally the date was two days after it had been read. All these inconsistencies convinced Bigod that the commons must rise again to protect the Doncaster agreement. Besides taking Hull and Scarborough, Bigod suggested that

¹³ Ibid., 201 iv, v.

they take the Duke of Norfolk upon his return and swear him to the oath. Hallom testified that he hesitated at the idea of capturing Norfolk. Others deposed that they heard him say that if the Duke were captured Hallom would strike off his head.

Bigod's attempt to capture Scarborough experienced initial success, but it too failed. On 16 January, Bigod called for a rebel muster at Borough, near Settrington. At the muster, Bigod announced that the Duke of Norfolk with an army of 20,000 men was on his way to capture Hull, Scarborough, and other towns unless the commons took them first. George Lumley, son and heir to Lord Lumley, attended the muster. Lumley claimed that when news of the muster reached him he had no knowledge of who had ordered the muster. He contemplated ignoring the order, but after deliberating with his wife and Richard Simpson, constable of Thwyng, he thought it best to go. If the assembly were for the king it was his duty to attend, and if it were "for some new commotion" then he might be able to stay the commons. Bigod arrived with 100 or more horsemen and Lumley asked to speak privately with him, but Bigod refused, replying "he would speak nothing that all were not privy to." Bigod approached Lumley, stating that he should command the expedition to capture Scarborough. He delivered a speech in which he declared to the commons "they had many things to look to or they would be destroyed." Bigod went on to tell them that the gentry had deceived them and that Cleveland and the Bishopric had risen "for their articles, and I trust you will not desert them." He continued by informing them that he had written to Thomas Percy calling on him to come forward. Furthermore, Bigod attacked the pardon, which he affirmed to be no pardon for it referred to the commons as rebels" by which you will acknowledge yourselves to have acted against the King, which is contrary to your oath." At that moment one of the commons yelled, "The King hath sent us the faucet and keepeth the spigot himself;" another said "it mattered not whether they had a pardon or not, for they had

never offended.” Bigod pointed out that although the king promised a parliament, no time or place had been set. He concluded saying, “If you take my part I will not fail you: and who will do so, hold up your hands.” The commons responded with a great shout.¹⁴ A tall man dressed as a priest also spoke, saying, “if they went not forward, all was lost that they had done before, for all was but falsehood that was wrought against them.” The Dodds suggest that this man was one of the “overzealous friars of Knaresborough.”¹⁵

After delivering this rousing speech, Bigod departed for Hull, while Lumley, with a company of forty men, headed for Scarborough. Bigod before departing commanded Lumley’s men to see that he raised Dickering and “the rest of the country.” Lumley found the men of Dickering mustering at Monyhouse but he only took two men of each town with him dismissing the rest of those gathered. After the muster, which collected about 100 men, Lumley marched on Scarborough. According to Lumley, the commons became concerned with the small size of the company, and demanded that he raise Pickering Lythe. Having no other choice but to heed the will of his men, Lumley warned the constable of Seamer to muster Pickering Lythe the next day, Wednesday 17 January, at Spittals, and he would come there from Scarborough. That day Lumley’s tiny army of perhaps 140 entered Scarborough without opposition and captured the town. Lumley immediately proclaimed that his men would pay for their food and not “quarrel against any that belonged to young Ralph Evers.” The commons, fearing that the castle posed a threat to them, wanted to seize it. Lumley refused to allow this, saying it was the king’s house and against their oath to enter it. Instead, he allowed the commons to mount a guard over Scarborough Castle. Unknown to the commons, Lumley around midnight sent a message to old

¹⁴ TNA SP 1/115, fos. 209-215; *LP XII* (1), no. 369.

¹⁵ *The Pilgrimage of Grace* vol. 2, 68.

Sir Ralph Evers to warn his son not to try to enter the castle that night because of the watch. He also informed Evers that he intended to dismiss his company soon.

The next day Lumley met with the town officials at the Grey Friars and swore them to an oath devised by Bigod, which included that the town officials “should counsel none to sit idle until they had obtained their articles.¹⁶ The commons demanded that three men, all servants of young Ralph Evers, should be executed for assisting Evers in keeping the castle before. Lumley refused to allow this and once again refused to permit them to enter the castle. Lumley then announced that he had business at home and prepared to depart. Before he left Lumley appointed John Wyvell to replace him as captain while he was away. When he left, Lumley took the soldiers who had come with him and promised to send Wyvell some more. At Pickering Lythe he found a number of men and ordered them to send aid to Scarborough for that night. He arrived late at Spittals and found that the assembly had dispersed. As he made his way home, Lumley dismissed the soldiers attending him, promising to bring their grievances to the Duke of Norfolk. He also convinced them that they would rise for no man except him or Sir Thomas Percy. Lumley sent to Scarborough one of the open letters circulating within the area designed to reassure the commons of the king’s good purpose. He instructed the rebels to trust the letter and return home. The next day, Thursday or Friday, Lumley wrote to Wyvell and the commons at Scarborough telling them to depart for he “heard the King would come to York about Whitsuntide to hold Parliament and have the Queen crowned.” He also informed them that Norfolk was coming only with his servants “to pacify the country.” Lumley subsequently surrendered to Sir Oswald Wilstrop and then appeared before the Duke of Norfolk. The commons only abandoned Scarborough after Sir Ralph Eure, the occupant of Scarborough

¹⁶ TNA SP 1/115, fos. 209-215; LP XII (1), no. 369.

Castle, returned and dispersed them. Eure arrested only the two captains, Wyvill and Fenton, chastising the remainder of the commons.¹⁷

Bigod clearly understood that Hull was the more important city if the commons were going to defend themselves from the expected assault by Norfolk. Thus, he enlisted the first gentlemen who appeared to lead the assault on Scarborough and made his way toward Hull. Before leaving Borough, Bigod commanded those who had been at Doncaster to assemble the next day at Bainton. Evidently, Bigod intended to raise enough men so he and Hallom could capture Beverley as well. However, Bigod's plan collapsed with Hallom's failure to capture Hull. On Thursday 18 January, he held a muster at Bainton, about nine miles north of Beverley. By this time, he knew that the assault on Hull had failed and Hallom was in jail. Bigod sent three messengers to Hull to demand Hallom's release. Sir Ralph Eure refused to release Hallom, imprisoning two of the messengers because they were traitors. Next Bigod wrote to Sir Robert Constable including in his letter a copy of the oath he had devised. In the letter he explained the reasons for his actions, and asked for advice. Constable assured him that Norfolk's progress north included only his household servants and no army. Constable also reminded the commons that their gathering violated the Doncaster agreement and implored them to remain patient until Norfolk's return. Robert Aske, visiting Constable at the time, also drafted a letter to the commons urging them to reject Bigod, claiming that Bigod wanted to destroy the arrangement granted by the king. Aske emphasized that the king would be true to his word pointing out that Henry himself had told him as much in London. William Levening in his deposition claimed that the commons demanded that Aske be given safe conduct so he could speak with them. Either Bigod refused or events moved too quickly to allow such a maneuver. In the midst of all

¹⁷ Ibid., *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, 56-61.

this, William Woodmancy of Beverley arrived and “rowned” with Bigod. That night Bigod took matters into his own hands, marching an army of 800 into Beverley.

Once in Beverley the tide turned against Bigod quickly and decisively. Upon his arrival in the city, Bigod received a letter from Sir Oswald Wolsthorpe demanding that the commons disperse. Bigod responded, telling Wolsthorpe that the commons refused to disperse because they did not trust him “because you and other gentlemen have deceived them, though you were so earnest at the beginning.” After replying to Wolsthorpe, Bigod wrote to the dean and chapter of York asking them “whether they shall have their support as in the first ‘journey.’” Bigod stated that all will be undone if they do not “go forward” while they still could lest they end up in captivity like the men of Lincolnshire. He then attempted to intimidate the dean and canons of York by stating it “behooves the clergy to prevent the danger, for the King understands from the gentlemen that the Church began the last assembly.” These letters reveal that Bigod was not only desperate but confused as well. In the letter to the dean and canons of York he indicated that he planned to march on York and in the note to Wolsthorpe his target was Richmondshire. Bigod’s confusion and desperation is understandable since his prospects were quickly dimming.¹⁸ Soon after writing the letter to Wolsthorpe, Bigod’s force was soundly defeated in the streets of Beverley by Sir Ralph Ellerker the elder. Bigod managed to escape making his way across Yorkshire and Westmorland to Cumberland. Along the way, he discovered that the commons had turned against him declaring that he “was false to them” and rejected him as another leader who had betrayed them.¹⁹ Norfolk reported to Henry that Sir John Lample and others captured Bigod on 10 February in Cumberland and had him taken to Carlisle Castle. Norfolk clearly

¹⁸ TNA SP1/114 fos. 174-76; SP1/114 fo. 177; LP XII (1), nos. 143,144, 177; *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 74.

¹⁹ *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, 65; LP XII (1), no.533.

uneasy about the situation did not want to transport Bigod through Westmorland for fear that the commons might attempt to free him.²⁰

Bigod's inept and ill-timed rising created serious problems for the northern gentry. The vast majority of those who had led the Pilgrimage of Grace had committed themselves to the Doncaster agreement and the truce. Bigod's rebellion had put that agreement in jeopardy and men such as Robert Aske, Robert Constable, Ralph Ellerker, and Robert Bowes worked hard to prevent Bigod from destroying the agreement. In a January 18 letter to Henry VIII Aske reported that Constable had sent letters to "Howdenshire, Marshland, Hull, Beverley, Birlington, Flamburgh, Poklington, Malton, Heymsley, and those parts, to stay the commons" in an area between the Humber and the Vale of Pickering.²¹ Aske followed with letters of his own. Aske wrote to Darcy, and wrote or spoke to the people "betwixt Ouse and Derwent, Selby, Cawood, and the Ainsty and city of York."²² Interestingly, Aske's January 1537 letters contained the salutation "neighbors" rather than being addressed to the commons as most of his pronouncements were during the risings of 1536. It seems that Aske, recognizing the potential danger to the agreement Bigod's rebellion presented, did not want to take the risk of possibly inflaming the situation further. Aske informed the king that "parts of Dent, Settbeirgh, Kendall, Lancashire, the bishopric of Durham, Cumberland, and Blakamore are ready to rise; they repair to no worshipful men, but to captains of the commons such as Hallom."²³ Aske implored the king to send Norfolk northward "in all haste." Aske's account reveals that the trouble brewing in Lancashire, County Durham, and the northern moors centered on the commons. The prime

²⁰ *LP XII* (1), no.401.

²¹ TNA SP 1/114 fos. 164-65; *LP XII* (1), no. 136; Hoyle, 384.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

movers of rebellion in these areas were not the gentry that had led during the 1536, but rather were former captains chosen from the commons. Several of them were rebels from Lincolnshire and Holderness. The gentry of these areas, like those of the East Riding, remained committed to the Doncaster agreement. The situation described by Aske meant that he was unable to prevent trouble in these areas. With no gentlemen to keep the commons in check, they chose their own captains, men of stature similar to John Hallom.²⁴

Sir Francis Bigod had hoped to tap into this popular discontent in order to force Norfolk and the government to address the commons petitions and grievances. However, as shown above, his misguided, ill-planned, and inept attempts failed miserably. Bigod sent letters to Swaledale and Durham in an attempt to gain support for his plan to take Hull. Sir William Malore reported to Norfolk on 18 January that he had captured a messenger carrying a letter from Bigod with the intent of raising men to support the capture of Hull.²⁵ Bigod's expectation that Richmondshire would rise may have been delusional, but he did attempt to stir that area. The countess of Westmorland reported to her husband the appearance of letters for Duresmen, Aukland, Standhope, and Richmondshire brought by a messenger of Sir Francis Bigod. The countess indicated that the messages included Bigod's new oath. There were a series of small disturbances throughout the area unrelated to Bigod's rebellion, but may have given him hope that he could succeed. According to Norfolk in a letter to the king's council, one was in Cleveland, another within five miles of Sheriff Hutton, and another beside Middleham. The duke noted that these were small and localized, stating that none involved over 200 people. However, Norfolk mentioned that the disturbance in Cleveland involved over 800 men. Sir

²⁴ Hoyle, 385.

²⁵ TNA SP1/115, fos. 176-77; *LP* XII (1), no. 139.

Thomas Curwen had sent word to him that at Cockermonth 800 men or more “made their quarrel to take every man his corn that he had tithed, and would have the same for their money, and so took all that was in the tithes barns in the country, without paying anything therefore.” Norfolk also mentioned trouble in Westmorland where “a great number of people have thrown down my lord of Cumberland's enclosures, and the people were never in the insurrection time more full of ill words than now.” The duke blamed “these ungracious doings” on “Bigod, Leach of Lincolnshire, and the friar of Knaresborough,” all of whom he was trying to apprehend.²⁶

Disturbances also occurred at and near Jervaulx Abbey. These disturbances, like Hallom and Bigod's rebellion, reveal the heightened anxiousness that existed concerning the Duke of Norfolk's return. It appears that throughout Richmondshire and the North Riding of Yorkshire the gentlemen who had acted as captains of the commons during the Pilgrimage of Grace fell under increased suspicion by the very people they had represented. As mentioned above, the steady stream of former Pilgrim captains to London caused concern that these men would abandon the commons and negotiate a separate deal with Henry VIII. The abbot of Jervaulx, Adam Sedbar, seemingly succumbed to this fear. Sedbar sent one of his servants, Simon Jackson, into Lincolnshire during the Christmas holidays on the pretence of collecting rents there. The real purpose of Jackson's sojourn into Lincolnshire was to remain there until the duke's return, and then report “how the duke was accompanied.” Jackson returned on 6 January reporting that “that the Lincolnshire men were busily hanged” and “the Duke would deal similarly with those of the North.” Furthermore, and perhaps more important to Sedbar, Jackson reported that Jervaulx's charter “stood them in no stead.”²⁷ These revelations, according to Ninian Staveley, were the source of the insurrection in Richmondshire. Until Jackson's

²⁶ Ibid., no. 319; Hoyle, 385.

²⁷ LP XII (1), no. 1012.

revelations most of the people in this region had supported the December agreement; this news destroyed that support and altered the view of Norfolk's mission. On 19 January, Sir Thomas Wharton intercepted a handbill in Richmond demanding that "the commons in every township should rise on pain of death and make all lords and gentlemen swear on the mass book" to four articles. The first article called for the maintenance of the profits of the Holy Church and for "the upholding of the Christian faith." The second article stated that no lord should take anything of their tenants except their rents. The third called for "the putting down of Cromwell and all his sect" for making "the King put down praying and fasting." And finally, that no lord or gentleman go to London. If any gentleman refused the oath the bill instructed the commons to put him to death.²⁸

Clearly, the return of the Duke of Norfolk had taken on sinister tones and certainly caused great fear among the inhabitants of Jervaulx Abbey. The implications of Jackson's report caused Adam Sedbar and several monks to take actions that ultimately led to their deaths. Ninian Staveley deposed that two monks of Jervaulx Abbey, Roger Hartlepool and John Stainton, urged him and Edward Middleton from Christmastime until Candlemas to "gather a company to destroy the duke of Norfolk, so that their abbey might stand, and Holy Church be as it was in Henry VII's days; for if Norfolk came into the country their abbey would be put down and they would go a-begging." Staveley indicated that he and Middleton resisted the monks' advances until the Sunday after Candlemas, 28 January, when the men finally consented. That same day, Staveley, Middleton, and the monks made bills to set on all church doors in Richmondshire calling all from 16 to 60 to appear at a muster on Middleham Moor on Tuesday 30 January. Staveley and Middleton then had a falling out with Thomas Loble and Laurence

²⁸ Ibid., no. 163; TNA SP1/114 fos. 201-02.

Servant of Masham, both of whom wanted to hold the muster at Richmond on Wednesday. Staveley claimed that he and Middleton would have “gone no farther” but for the fact that around midnight on Monday, Hartlepool and Stainton arrived at his home harnessed and with battle axes, forced him out of bed “crying that unless he would go forward both he and they should be destroyed.” On Tuesday, Staveley, Middleton, and ten others arrived at Jervaulx Abbey and instructed Sedbar and all of the monks to march with them. Sedbar rather than allow the monks to go forward instructed Staveley to take the abbey’s servants instead. The abbot promised that he and the monks would join them the next day. The quondam of Fountain Abbey, William Thirske, who had earlier offered Staveley and Middleton 20 nobles in case of any new insurrection, was present at Jervaulx. Thirske now offered Staveley 20 nobles to restore him to Fountains, “saying he was unjustly put out by the visitors.” Staveley and Middleton with his men and the abbot’s servants went to Middleham Moor for two or three hours and dispersed, apparently finding few if any men gathered there.²⁹

Staveley waited to hear from the other company, led by Lobley and Servant, mustering in Richmond on Wednesday. Lobley, Servant, and a man identified as Hutton held the muster at Richmond and decided to write to the constables of Richmondshire, the Bishopric, Cleveland, Westmoreland, and “the country round to send two of each parish to meet at Richmond” on the following Monday, 5 February, “to settle how to meet the duke of Norfolk.” Apparently, one of these letters reached Kendall. However, nothing came of this plan because the gentlemen had gone to meet the Duke of Norfolk.³⁰ Norfolk took effective measures to prevent this situation from escalating. He successfully prevented the people of Richmondshire from rising, informing Cromwell “that the inhabitants of that town would not condescend to their opinion, and they and

²⁹ *LP XII* (1), no. 1012.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Hoyle, 387

others of Wensleydale, Dent, Sedbergh, and Mashamshire, departed without anything done.” He saw to it that the gentry of the areas affected took action to prevent any insurrection. Norfolk attributed their cooperation to the fact “if the commons be not shortly brought to better obedience they will lose their lives and goods.”³¹

The opening weeks of 1537 were anxious and confusing days, characterized by the gentry attempting to hold on to the substantial gains that they, with the support of the commons, had wrested from the government at Doncaster. The former Pilgrimage captains cooperated and supported Norfolk upon his return to preserve the December agreement. Their devotion and commitment to the agreement effectively convinced the commons that their former leaders had, or planned, to betray them. Bigod and others like him throughout Yorkshire and the North Country believed that in order to protect what they had gained at Doncaster they would have to negotiate with Norfolk from a position of strength. This belief caused the commons to take action, leading to the various disturbances that arose throughout January and early February 1537. Just as Aske, Constable, Darcy, and other former Pilgrim captains feared the agreement collapsed, opening the door for Henry VIII, through his representative the Duke of Norfolk to punish those who had dared defy and threaten his rule.

The Duke of Norfolk finally returned to the north, arriving at Doncaster on 1 February 1537. His first order of business was to administer the pardon, which he did at Doncaster and York by 7 February. On 7 February, Norfolk informed Henry of the indictment of eighteen persons. These indictments led to the first trials of the northern rebels and by the end of the week he sent his first judicial victims to London. The group included two canons of Warter, for reasons that remain unclear and the sub-prior of Watton who was only marginally involved in

³¹ *LP XII* (1), nos. 336, 362.

Hallom's rising. Nine of the eighteen victims were arraigned before Norfolk at York on the charge of treason. According to Norfolk's letter of 13 February, the two canons were to be hanged in chains at York and the sub-prior would meet the same fate at Watton. Non-clerical victims included John Wyvill and Ralph Fenton, Lumley's successors as captains at Scarborough, and several others who attempted to raise rebellion in the area. Wyvill went to the gallows in Scarborough and Fenton and one other died at York. Anthony Peacock, hanged at Richmond, met his fate for stirring rebellion around Barnard Castle.³²

Norfolk next intended to address the restored religious houses. Evidently during the early days of his return Cromwell questioned his resolve to deal with the abbeys "and the traitors therein." Norfolk responded angrily informing Cromwell that "neither here nor elsewhere will he be reputed papist or favorer of naughty persons." To further impress Cromwell of his determination to do the king's will, Norfolk disclosed that "gentlemen yesterday warned him to take heed what he ate or drank in religious houses."³³ The duke made it clear that he meant to advance on Sawley Abbey and expel the monks whom the commons had reinstated. Norfolk planned to be at Leeds on 20 February and from there proceed to Sawley Abbey and then on to Ripon. On 14 February, while at Fountains Abbey, Norfolk learned that Cumberland and Westmorland had risen once more.³⁴

Despite the unrest and numerous disturbances that plagued Yorkshire, Richmond, Durham, Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire there were only three armed risings following the Doncaster agreement. Lumely's march on Scarborough and Bigod's attempt on

³² Ibid., no. 416 (2); TNA SP1/116 fos. 20-23 .

³³ Ibid., LP XII (1), no. 416.

³⁴ Ibid., no. 730; *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, 62-72; David M. Head, *The Ebbs and Flows of Fortune: The Life of Thomas Howard, Third Duke of Norfolk* (Athens, GA: University of Athens Press, 1995) 142-146 .

Beverley marked the first two. The final armed uprising of 1537, and indeed of the Pilgrimage of Grace, took place at Carlisle on 12 February. Like many of the disturbances that occurred after Christmas 1536, this particular revolt was only marginally connected with the rebellions of 1536. The confrontation at Carlisle grew out of a combination of the simmering suspicions about the royal pardon and the Doncaster agreement and a number of local disputes that remained unresolved at the close of 1536.

Like much of the North Country, Westmorland experienced a great deal of unrest since Christmas. On 6 January, Sir Thomas Clifford, deputy captain of Carlisle and the bastard son of the Earl of Cumberland, traveled to Kirkby Stephen to arrest Nicholas Musgrave and Richard Tibbey. Musgrave and Tibbey had both actively participated in the 1536 rebellions and had served as captains of the Westmorland host. Both men had presented the agricultural grievances of the commons at the York and Doncaster conferences. Musgrave was particularly upset that both conferences rejected most of the agricultural grievances of the commons of Westmorland. Only two of the twenty-four Doncaster articles mention agricultural concerns. Upon his return Musgrave and later Tibbey took up the cause of the commons while the majority of the gentry of the area declared their support for the Doncaster agreement. Much of the unrest and anger displayed by the commons in the region resulted from their sense of betrayal by the captains of the Pilgrimage of Grace. According to Bernard Towneley, the trouble in and about Kirkby Stephen occurred because Robert Pulleyn, one of the main Pilgrim captains, paid his “noutgeld,” put “divers men in possession of lands,” and took bribes. The commons viewed Pulleyn as a traitor and would have “pulled him out of his house in the Christmas holiday” but he had fled the area. This put the country out of order.³⁵ Another source of disquiet was the fact that several

³⁵ LP XII (1), no. 687.

rebel leaders had taken up residence in and around Westmorland. John Atkinson, who had captained the host drawn from Kendal, Dent, and the dales, William Leach, chief instigator of the rebellion in Horncastle, Ninian Staveley, and probably the friar of Knaresborough, Robert Esch, were all in Kirkby Stephen.

Clifford's attempt to capture Musgrave and Tibbey was in line with instructions Henry VIII had given the Earl of Cumberland in a letter dated 1 November. The letter instructed the earl "to travail yourself all you possibly can to get into your custody such as were traitors in this matter."³⁶ Although most likely a violation of the Doncaster agreement, young Sir Thomas Clifford entered Kirkby Stephen to take the two former rebel captains. Musgrave and Tibbey received warning of Clifford's mission and took refuge in the Kirkby Stephen church steeple. Clifford was unable to dislodge the two men from their lofty sanctuary and he had to retreat empty handed. In response to Clifford's attack, the commons of Kirkby Stephen destroyed all the enclosures in their parish and encouraged the people in the surrounding areas to do the same. Two weeks later Burgh followed suit. Norfolk reported to London that "divers new insurrections" had occurred in the northern shires. The stirrings were small in most places only 200 or so men participated. However, in Cleveland there "were said to be more than a thousand" and at Cockermouth "above 800 made their quarrel to take every man his corn that he had tithed, and would have the same for their money, and so took all that was in the tithe barns in the country, without paying anything therefore." Norfolk attributed "these ungracious doings" to Bigod, Leach of Lincolnshire, and the friar of Knaresborough.³⁷ The commons targeted the person they held responsible for their plight: the Earl of Cumberland. Clearly unhappy with

³⁶ Hoyle, 391-2.

³⁷ TNA SP1/115 fo. 176-177; *LP* XII (1), no. 319.

Clifford's treatment of them, the commons pillaged the tithe barns and pulled down the enclosures put up by the earl and his men. The attacks seemed to have been motivated by increased rents and the belief that the commons had been betrayed by their former captains. When Norfolk arrived, he commented on the poverty the commons of Cumberland and the surrounding area. In a letter to Cromwell Norfolk attributed the poverty of the people to "the spoiling of them now and the gressing of them so marvellously sore in time past and with increasing of lords' rents by inclosings." Furthermore, the duke believed that harsh treatment of the people in times past "was the only cause of this rebellion."³⁸

Things were no better in Cumberland. Thomas Curwen reported to the king's council that the west parts of Cumberland "were all aflutter, and more rebellious than ever in both words and deeds." Into this situation came one Robert Wetlay, a servant of one of the most despised suppression ministers, Dr. Legh. The next day, 14 January, the commons rose, took him prisoner, and transported him to Cockermouth. Monday 15 January, the commons assembled in the Cockermouth market place with the intention of killing the unfortunate man. Shouts from the crowd of "strike off his head" and "stick him" revealed the murderous mood of the people. The people searched Wetlay hoping to discover incriminating letters from the king "to any man in the country." The only letters discovered were from Legh "but nothing in them concerning the King nor the commons."³⁹ The crowd still demanded Wetlay's execution. John Swenburn spoke up, preventing the unfortunate man's execution. Swenburn proposed that the commons allow him to hold Wetlay until the next Monday. This would allow the commons to conduct a more thorough search for letters "from the King or his Council" and if they found such letters then Wetlay would stand trial. The people accepted Swenburn's proposal and according to

³⁸ Ibid., no. 478.

³⁹ Ibid., no. 185; *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, 272.

Curwen sent inquiries concerning Wetlay's mission as far as Skipton. Since Curwen was in Yorkshire on 21 January, the day before the Wetlay was to stand trial, we have no knowledge of how the situation concluded.⁴⁰

Curwen fearing being forced to take the commons' oath or killed, fled the area as did most of the gentry of Cumberland and Westmorland. The lack of gentry only added to the disorder plaguing the region. Norfolk sent orders for Clifford to apprehend Musgrave and Tibbey, both still in Kirkby Stephen. Clifford recruited his company from among the moss-troopers and border rieviers from the waters of Esk and Line, "strong thieves of the west lands." On 12 February Clifford and his force of about 500 men appeared at Kirkby Stephen to carry out Norfolk's directive. As they had done in January, Musgrave and Tibbey took refuge in the church steeple and once again defied Clifford and his men. Initially the people of the town remained uninvolved. Nevertheless, when some of Clifford's men began looting the town, people took action. Grabbing any weapon handy, the men of the town assailed the looters. A skirmish erupted leaving two townspeople dead but forced Clifford's men to withdraw, eventually taking refuge in Brougham Castle.⁴¹ This incident set off a wider rebellion. Panic seemed to spread throughout the area causing many to believe that their towns would receive the same treatment as Kirkby Stephen. Musgrave, Tibbey, Leach, Staveley, Atkinson, and the friar of Knaresborough attempted to raise the countryside in an effort to retaliate against Thomas Clifford. One of the captains drafted a Captain Poverty letter and sent it to the constable of Melling. The letter was a proclamation announcing a muster for the barony of Kendal and the areas bordering Lancaster and Yorkshire. The letter, dated 12 February, announced that "our enemies the captain of

⁴⁰ *LP XII* (1), no. 185.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, no. 419; *The Pilgrimage of Grace* vol. 2, 113.

Carlisle and gentlemen of Westmorland...hath destroyed and slain many of our brethren and neighbors.” It warned the people of Kendal that if they do not respond “according to your oaths...we are likely to be destroyed.” Other bills appeared on church doors exhorting the men to rise, “alleging that one of the Percies would shortly join them.”⁴² Staveley, Atkinson, Leach, and Musgrave began distributing the bills designed to stir the commons not only in the barony of Kendal but throughout the North Riding and even into Richmondshire. William Collyns, the bailiff of Kendal, just returning from meeting with the Duke of Norfolk, carried the letter into the surrounding townships. Nothing is known about the musters held but it is clear that the rebels intended to seize Carlisle. These letters along with the attack on Kirkby Stephen seemed to verify the suspicions that many of the commons had about Norfolk’s mission and the treachery of the gentry. Bigod was imprisoned in Carlisle Castle and with Norfolk conducting hangings throughout Yorkshire, what had been prophesied appeared to be coming true.

Norfolk received word of the rebellion on February 14 while at Fountains Abbey near Ripon in the West Riding. The duke informed the king telling him that “no such thing would have occurred if this enterprise had been handled as it was promised me.” Obviously, Norfolk was not pleased with Clifford’s use of the border reivers in the attempt to take Musgrave and Tibbey. Norfolk also informed Henry that he had issued orders to raise an army to march on the rebels, stating he hoped to “look on them by Saturday night.”⁴³ Thursday and Friday, he was in Richmond. Norfolk called on all lords and gentry to assist him but refrained from including the commons. Because of the unrest, the duke understood that he could not trust the commons. Norfolk, earlier in February, had informed the king that he had been unable to collect the king’s

⁴² *LP XII* (1), no. 520.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, no. 419.

rents because of the unrest. Furthermore, he had to be careful of his actions for “force must be ‘medled’ here with pleasant words.”⁴⁴ Next, on 16 February Norfolk sent Sir Thomas Wharton, Sir Thomas Curwen and four gentlemen of Westmorland back to their own lands to persuade their tenants to remain loyal to the king. That night he sent 200 or 300 light horse to them and commanded them that they were to “fire the rebels’ dwellings.” If the traitors persisted, Norfolk commanded his agents “not to spare shedding of blood.” He informed Cromwell that he planned on Sunday or Monday at the latest to “be busy” with the rebels.⁴⁵

In spite of his bold words to Cromwell, Norfolk realized that the distance between himself and Carlisle was far too great for any army under his command to arrive in a timely fashion. Recognizing that the situation demanded quick action, he sent two letters to Sir Christopher Dacre ordering him to disperse the rebel army approaching Carlisle. The Dacres had remained loyal during the commotions of 1536 and thus far, their tenants had not risen. With Clifford pinned down in Carlisle Castle and most of the gentry out of the area, Sir Christopher was the only individual who could deal with the rebels swiftly. However, this action was a risky one and Norfolk knew it. He well knew of the long-standing and simmering feud between the Dacres and the Cliffords. Moreover, Norfolk was asking a Dacre to go essentially to the aid of a Clifford. He thus constructed the letter to make it clear to Dacre that he was doing the king’s business and his loyalty to his sovereign was at stake. The letter, typical of Norfolk, was a combination of praise, motivation, and threats. Norfolk began by stating that he doubted “not you will gather such company as you may trust and...use those rebels in a way to deserve the King’s thanks.” Again, typical of the duke, he instructs Sir Christopher in his relief of Carlisle to

⁴⁴ Ibid., no. 362.

⁴⁵ Ibid., no. 439.

“slay plenty of these false rebels.” Norfolk closes the letter with a clear and unmistakable threat. He concludes by saying “make true mine old sayings, that Sir Christopher Dacre is a true knight to his sovereign lord,...and a man of war. Finally, now, Sir Christopher, or never. Your loving cousin if ye do well, or else enemy forever.”⁴⁶

No complete account of the events that occurred at Carlisle exists; what we do know is somewhat confused. It is certain that on 16 February the commons held a muster at which 6,000 men gathered and began their march to Carlisle. The abbot of Holm Cultram Abbey, upon being informed of the insurrection by Hugh Williamson, answered “All mighty God prosper them, for if they speed not this abbey is lost; and upon the saying he sent for his sub-prior and commanded him to cause the brethren to go daily with procession to speed them the commons' journey.”⁴⁷ Although there was little religious impetus in this rebellion, the comments of the abbot indicate the attitude of many of the clergy and religious of the region. On 17 February, the commons prepared for the assault, approached the walls and with longbows fired arrows into the city. They continued this until they had exhausted their supply of arrows. After spending their arrows the commons withdrew a short way off to decide what to do next. As the commons considered their next move, Sir Christopher Dacre suddenly and unexpectedly appeared with a force of 500 men. Caught unaware and without weapons to defend themselves the commons broke and turned to flee. At that moment, Sir Thomas Clifford attacked from the castle, pressing the pursuit for twelve miles or more. When the battle, now a complete rout, ended reports surfaced in London that the Dacre and Clifford forces had killed 700 commons. Norfolk’s account claimed that the two men had taken 700 or 800 prisoners, which seems the more likely result.

⁴⁶ Ibid., no. 426.

⁴⁷ Ibid., no. 1259.

The defeat of the commons at Carlisle marked the end of the post-pardon risings and the final defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace.

The rout of the rebel forces at Carlisle raises some questions about the actual threat the Pilgrimage of Grace posed to Henry VIII. Obviously, a much smaller army attacked and routed a rebel army of 6000. It would be easy to interpret the largest armed confrontation of the Pilgrimage of Grace as clear evidence that the overwhelming numbers on the part of the rebels meant little when confronted by determined royal forces. Certainly, Sir Christopher Dacre had something to prove after being challenged by Norfolk and he acquitted himself quite well at Carlisle. Yet to view the battle at Carlisle as indicative of what may have occurred had the royal forces engaged the rebels at Doncaster or York seems shortsighted and assumes that conditions of say October 1536 and February 1537 were identical.

The situation at Doncaster in 1536 had few similarities to that at Carlisle in February 1537. Obviously, a smaller loyalist force confronted a much larger rebel force. However, outside of this rather simplistic resemblance the two situations were vastly different. For one thing, as the account of the assault on Carlisle shows the rebel forces lacked leadership, discipline, and a plan of attack. The fact that the rebels fired all of their arrows over the city walls at the outset of the battle reveals a woeful lack of organization and discipline. The rebel motivation for the attack was clearly revenge on Clifford and his forces for the looting of Kirkby Stephen. The rebels had no plan of attack; they simply mustered and marched on the city. They were caught totally off guard when Dacre's men slammed into them. Had any leadership existed among the rebel force a counter-attack might have occurred, but having no apparent leadership the rebel force disintegrated. There is no proof that Dacre had any plan of attack either, he was

able to take advantage of the lack of preparation of the rebel force, which amounted to nothing more than an angry mob.

Vastly different conditions existed in Yorkshire in October 1536. The Pilgrim army had a number of committed leaders, among them Robert Bowes and Robert Constable, both of whom were willing, at least early on, to engage the royal forces if necessary. The Pilgrim army was in fact well organized and fairly well armed. With numbers upwards of 47,000 men, the Pilgrim clearly posed a considerable threat to Henry VIII. Furthermore, the Pilgrimage captains kept their troops in a fair state of preparation and discipline, recognizing the importance of such in case battle ensued. Norfolk certainly recognized the threat the Pilgrim army presented. He acted with great caution in his dealings with the Pilgrim captains, much to the chagrin of the king. At one point, the two armies faced each other at Doncaster. Norfolk's troops were on the east side of the Don River, while the Pilgrim army occupied the west bank. A tense moment existed, but a heavy rainstorm prevented an armed confrontation. Norfolk later claimed that the river rose to a depth that made it impossible to cross. A more likely explanation for Norfolk's failure to attack at Doncaster was the overwhelming advantage in numbers of the rebels. He chose instead to negotiate, which ultimately turned out to be the deciding factor in defeating the rebellion. Henry, at least publicly, did not seem to consider the rebels gathered at Pontefract a significant threat. The king constantly chastised Norfolk and his other royal captains for not taking a more aggressive stance against the rebels. Obviously, we will never know if the rebel forces would have been successful since no large-scale confrontation took place. Nonetheless, it is presumptuous to assume, based on Carlisle, that the Pilgrimage of Grace was not a real and present danger to the reign of Henry VIII.

Retribution

These risings and those that preceded Norfolk's return to the north proved disastrous for the arrangement agreed to at the second Doncaster appointment. All of these incidents violated the truce and allowed Henry to unleash his wrath on the rebellious subjects without fear of violating the December agreement. Summary executions took place throughout the northern counties with great care to insure that every area affected witnessed some horrible example of the fate of those who dared rebel against the king. Norfolk became the agent of this policy of retribution ultimately behaving in precisely the manner that Bigod, Hallom, and the commons of the north feared in the months following the second appointment at Doncaster.

Norfolk apparently received news of the rout of the rebels at Carlisle the same day as the battle. He immediately reported the victory to Henry. The Duke of Norfolk informed the king that he planned to go "thither near 50 miles and shall make all the haste I can possible." The duke planned "to do such execution that others shall be afraid." Norfolk arrived at Carlisle on 18 February and immediately sent out "such sharp proclamations to the parts where this last rebellion was" to the effect that a number of "wretched people" came in to submit to the king's mercy. He chose "above 70 of the chief misdoers" and put them in jail. Norfolk informed the king that he planned to proceed against them Friday or Sunday because there were still other rebels at large that he wanted captured. He sent Derby and Monteagle to Furness Abbey "and all wild parts about them" to apprehend rebels still at large in those parts.⁴⁸ In a rare moment of humanity, Norfolk expressed pity for the "poor caitiffs" of Westmorland and Cumberland. He told Henry that "they may well be called poor caitiffs; for...they lost all they had upon them." Norfolk recognized that the spoiling of the commons lands, increased rents caused by enclosures,

⁴⁸ Ibid., nos. 448, 478.

“and for lack of the persons of such as shall suffer...the more pity they deserve, and also that they have been so sore handled in past times.” He went on to inform Henry that he believed this treatment was the only cause of this rebellion.⁴⁹

Three days later Norfolk reported to the king that upon the advice of the council he had chosen seventy-four as “principal offenders” and judged them to “suffer death by martial law. The men were to die in the towns where they dwelled. Twelve were to die in Carlisle for their part in the attack on the city, and “as many as chains of iron can be made for in this town and in the country shall be hanged in them; the rest in ropes.” Those executed were to suffer in their own towns as a stark message to their neighbors of the fate of rebels. Norfolk also reported that he resorted to martial law because “had he proceeded by jury...not the fifth man of them would have suffered.”⁵⁰ Henry thanked Norfolk for his great service and was glad to hear how he advanced “the truth, declaring the usurpation of the Bishop of Rome,” and how discreetly the duke painted those “persons that call themselves religious in the colors of their hypocrisy.” The king commanded Norfolk that “before you close up our banner again you must cause such dreadful execution upon a good number of the inhabitants, hanging them on trees, quartering them, and setting their heads and quarters in every town” so as to make a fearful warning that “shall ensue the preservation of a great multitude.” Henry also ordered his lieutenant to repair to Sawley, Hexham, Newminster, Lancercost, St. Agatha, “and other such places as have made resistance” since the Doncaster agreement. Norfolk was to act “without pity or circumstance...cause the monks to be tied up without further delay or ceremony.”⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., no. 498.

⁵¹ Ibid., no. 479.

Norfolk remained in Carlisle until 25 February in order to carry out the executions and to insure the country remained peaceful. He planned to meet with Sir Anthony Browne the next day at Hexham. Norfolk informed the king that if Browne “has been hindered” he would do his best to displease those who caused the commotion around Hexham Abbey. On 26 February, Norfolk was at Hexham and dissolved the abbey.⁵² As he made his way towards Durham Norfolk seized Predo castle for the king after the imprisonment of Sir Thomas Percy. Norfolk informed the king that he had found a letter that the abbot of Sawley had sent to Sir Thomas Percy, “which I think will touch the abbot very sore.”⁵³ Norfolk arrived at Durham on 8 March where he was to “sit upon the execution of offenders” in the Bishopric. While in Durham, Norfolk discovered that he had no judicial authority in the Bishopric, which had the status of a county palatine. He quickly wrote to London to provide him with a revised commission. In the meantime, his council determined to hold the trials as scheduled but delay judgments until the new commission arrived.⁵⁴ Norfolk then planned to make his way into Yorkshire to begin the executions there, “so that within three weeks or a month such a number there shall be executed that all will fear to offend hereafter.”⁵⁵

The Duke of Norfolk was once again in York on 22 March to oversee another series of trials. Two of trials there resulted in acquittal, Thomas Lutton and William Levening, a companion of Francis Bigod. Both men claimed to have joined the rebellion only after being coerced to do so. Lutton received his acquittal first and apparently, his verdict became the precedent used in Levening’s trial. The jury reasoned that if Lutton was found innocent by

⁵² Ibid., no. 546.

⁵³ Ibid., no. 577.

⁵⁴ Hoyle, 395.

⁵⁵ LP XII (1), no. 498.

reason of coercion then so should Levening. According to his testimony, Levening had turned himself in to Aske, Darcy, and Constable and “showed them he had gone with Bigod unwillingly.” The three men in turn promised to make the best report they could for him to Norfolk. The duke, although angry at Levening’s acquittal, sent this news to Cromwell. The fact that the three former Pilgrim captains had harbored Levening after the failure of Bigod’s rebellion led to their destruction by the king.⁵⁶

By this time the king had ordered Norfolk to arrest and send to London an increasing number of people. While at Carlisle Henry ordered him to send Bigod, a friar of Knaresborough, William Leach (who had not been captured), Robert Thompson, vicar of Burgh, Dr. Towneley, and Dr. Pickering, a canon of Bridlington. Norfolk sent Thompson and Towneley to London on 8 March although he could find no proof that either man had done anything to merit indictment since the pardon. The only thing he found that Thompson had done was pray for the pope. Thompson testified that three men commanded him in “name of the parish to pray for the Pope; and “for fear of his life,” prayed the old way.⁵⁷ Henry responded by informing Norfolk that “as to the friar that prayed for the Pope, it is thought here to be treason.” Furthermore, the king ordered that the duke move against Thomas Hutton of Snape. Again, Norfolk had found no evidence that Hutton had violated the truce. Hutton had participated in the call for an assembly at Richmond on 5 February to prepare a supplication. As with Thompson, the king and his council “thought his assembly on pretence of making a supplication no less than high treason.”⁵⁸ Henry demanded that Norfolk proceed against the abbot of Jervaulx and the quondam of Fountains, and

⁵⁶ Hoyle, 395-96.

⁵⁷ *LP XII* (1), no. 687 (2).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 666; Hoyle, 396.

the abbot of Sawley “if you can find matter worthy of it, as we doubt not you will.” Norfolk was also to move against the Friars Observant who the king described as “servants of the bishop of Rome, and sowers of sedition.” He wanted the duke to take as many of that faction and imprison them until he could determine “our further pleasure about them.”⁵⁹

A pitiable and final sequel to the Carlisle rebellion occurred following Norfolk’s business ending in Cumberland on 25 February. Norfolk recognized that although order had been restored, there were still pockets of resistance in Cumberland, Northumberland, and Durham. He noted in a letter to Henry that he thought the king’s rents would be paid when asked indicating that collection of those rents had not yet occurred. Norfolk also notified the king “none of the King’s farmers come to him to be put in possession except Sir Reynold Carnaby, either for Cumberland, Northumberland, or the Bishopric nor any man to take the goods to the King’s use.”⁶⁰ The unrest among the commons had thus far prevented any real progress in these areas. We will recall that the duke through declaration of martial law sentenced 74 men to death because of the failed assault on Carlisle. Those executions took place on 25 February after which Norfolk departed for Northumberland and Durham. By Easter time the bodies were still hanging from the trees and gallows as a stark and grisly reminder of the penalty for those who defied their king. In what amounted to the last act of defiance, the wives of those executed removed the bodies and attempted to give them proper Christian burials. All those involved were women; according to Norfolk not a single man took part in the action.

The action of these women outraged Henry and he demanded to know who was involved, apparently believing that men had to be responsible. Thomas Curwen and Thomas Wharton

⁵⁹ *LP XII*, (1), no. 666.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 498.

deposed women in Cockermonth, Penrith, and Carlisle. They discovered that all but one of those executed were cut down by their wives and most were cut down at night. One man, a brother and cousin to two of the men hanged, died from disease contracted when he helped remove one of the putrefied bodies. Henry was not satisfied with these accounts, informing Norfolk that these acts “could not have come only of women's heads. If those depositions had been earnestly taken the truth might have been known. Norfolk must find out and punish the principal doers.” Norfolk, clearly uncomfortable with the situation, blamed the incidents on those he left in charge and sidestepped the whole issue. Thus, the final act of defiance ended in a victory for the commons and was perpetrated by a group of women who simply wanted their loved ones properly buried.⁶¹

Henry VIII soon turned his attention to the men who had led the commons during the Pilgrimage of Grace. On 19, February the king summoned Sir Robert Constable to London. For some reason Constable ignored the summons causing greater suspicion to be cast upon him. Evidently, Henry ordered Norfolk to keep close watch on Constable believing he might attempt to flee by ship. Norfolk did not believe that Constable could escape from his home in Flamborough without someone noticing and if he attempted to flee via Scarborough or Hull Sir Ralph Evers would know of his departure.⁶² It seems that Aske and Darcy had also become targets of Henry's wrath as well as Constable. As we have seen, the harboring of Levening during Bigod's rebellion provided the king with the evidence to have all three arrested. Norfolk, in a letter dated 22 March, suggested to Cromwell that he should “examine well the prior of Bridlington” who was very familiar with Sir Robert Constable. Norfolk suggested that by

⁶¹ Ibid., nos. 1214, 1246, 1257, 1258, 1307.

⁶² Ibid., no. 594.

examining the prior Cromwell would “thus find if my lord Darcy or Sir Robert Constable have done amiss since the pardon.” Clearly, the government viewed all three men with great suspicion. As for Aske, Norfolk had the former great captain ride with him “thinking him better with me than at home.” He described Aske as “marvelous glorious, often time boasting to me that he hath such sure espial that nothing can be done nor imagined against the King’s Highness, but he will shortly give me warning thereof.” Norfolk claimed that the gentlemen who talked with him hated Aske and “impute him to be the whole beginning of the mischief.” He also suggested that if the king would secretly meet with Aske “and wade with him with fair words, as though he had great trust in him,” Aske would reveal everything he knew about Darcy and Constable.⁶³

By late April 1537, all three men were in London locked in the Tower. All three had gone freely and each had a letter from Norfolk vouching for their character and loyalty to Henry VIII. Unknown to Aske and the others the crafty duke had informed Cromwell to ignore such statements. On 24 March, Norfolk sent letters to Cromwell and Henry informing them that Aske “desired leave of me to go up to London.” Norfolk begged the king “to be his gracious lord.” Two days earlier, Darcy, writing from Pontefract, informed the king that he was anxious to repair to him at Easter.⁶⁴ It seems surprising that with the executions taking place at Carlisle, York, and Lincoln that these three and other members of the gentry made the fateful journey to London during March and April 1537. Perhaps they believed the king simply wanted to meet with them about the post-pardon rebellions or maybe they recognized that resistance would be futile. Some,

⁶³ TNA SP1/117 fos. 75-82; *LP* XII (1), no. 698.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, nos. 699, 710, 712.

such as Aske, probably believed that they had done all they could to preserve the Doncaster agreement. After all, in the case of Aske, Darcy, and Constable Norfolk had said as much.⁶⁵

Officials had John Hallom and two others hanged on 4 February. On March 6, an assize in Lincolnshire found guilty thirty-six prisoners denied the pardon and hanged them the next day. Among those hanged in Lincolnshire were Thomas Moigne, Guy Kyme, and the abbot of Kirkstede Abbey. In May, eighteen people stood trial for their involvement in the Pilgrimage and the post-pardon rebellions. Among them were Thomas, Lord Darcy, Sir Robert Constable, Sir Francis Bigod, Sir Thomas Percy, Sir Stephen Hamerton, George Lumley, Robert Aske, James Cockerell, prior of Guisborough, Nicholas Tempest, William Wood, prior of Bridlington, Adam Sedbar, abbot of Jervaulx, and William Thirsk, abbot of Fountains. Hamerton, Tempest, Thirsk, and Cockerell went to the gallows at Tyburn on 25 May. June 2, 1537, witnessed the hangings of Sir Thomas Percy, Sir Francis Bigod, and Adam Sedbar, the Abbot of Jervaulx at Tyburn. Lord Thomas Darcy met his fate on Tower Hill on June 30. Robert Aske went to the gallows in York and was hanged in chains on 12 July. In all, according to records, about 199 persons suffered the death penalty, and others died in prison.⁶⁶

Aftermath

The fiasco of the post-pardon rebellions meant that the Pilgrimage of Grace ended in resounding failure. The post-pardon risings allowed the government to disregard the December agreement and punish those responsible for promoting and spreading sedition. The failure of the 1537 risings prevented any of the Pilgrims demands for the north from receiving any government consideration and allowed London to dictate policy to the north. Failure allowed Henry VIII to

⁶⁵ TNA SP1/117 fos. 75-82; LP XII (1), no. 698; Hoyle, 397.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 406-10; *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, 411-14, especially appendices 3, 4, and 5, 430-41.

establish the exact style of government that many of the rebels hoped to prevent. The religious demand calling for the halt of the dissolution and the restoration of suppressed houses met with complete rejection. In fact, not only did the dissolution of the lesser monasteries continue, but also within two years of the failure of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the large monasteries met the same fate.

Of course, the promised parliament at York never transpired. In February, Henry had stated that the Doncaster agreement aside, since the gentry had broken their promise to take possession of “religious houses to his Grace's use,” he saw no need to honor his promise to hold a York parliament. As with much of what transpired in 1537, Bigod’s rebellion most likely brought about the collapse of the promised parliament. As late as the beginning of May, Henry was still promoting a progress to grant the general pardon in the north. However, Queen Jane Seymour’s pregnancy caused Henry to alter his plans. The king cancelled his northern progress on 12 June; he would make his one and only visit to the northern part of his kingdom in 1541.⁶⁷

The religious grievances of the Pilgrims also came to naught. The religious calendar, the bidding of the beads, and the royal supremacy remained as they were in 1536. Cromwell remained in power and indeed reached the zenith of his influence with Henry VIII. Archbishop Cranmer would retain his position as Archbishop of Canterbury until the reign of Mary Tudor at which time he went to his death for refusing to accept the reunion with Rome. The only victory, if one can call it such, was that following the tumult of 1536-37, Henry VIII had the Ten Articles, the first doctrinal statement of the Church of England, rescinded and replaced by the much more conservative Six Articles in 1539. The Six Articles, among other things, restored many of the aspects of traditional worship that the Ten Articles had jettisoned. The Act of Six Articles restored among other things auricular confession, private masses, celibacy for priests,

⁶⁷ Hoyle, 411.

the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the real presence at mass. Coming only two years after the defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the Six Articles represented a retreat from true Protestant principles and slowed England's advance toward a truly reformed church. This withdrawal to a more traditional, conservative theology was clearly in line with many of the Pilgrim's demands and grievances. Nonetheless, this one feeble victory cannot hide the fact that the Pilgrimage of Grace was an abject failure.

The Pilgrimage failed for several reasons. First, the Pilgrims held a basic misconception of Henry's character. They never realized that to change the king's policy they must change the king. The Pilgrims professed loyalty to Henry VIII and considered no pretender. This attitude, while it may seem somewhat odd today, was common throughout England during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. People accepted the notion that the king was infallible; thus, his ministers were responsible for bad government. It made perfect sense to Englishmen of that era to rebel and profess loyalty to the king. In fact, this attitude may have doomed the Pilgrimage from the start. Robert Aske exemplified this attitude. Aske was both Henry VIII's most loyal and most critical subject. He absolutely believed that Henry would hear and act on the petitions of the Pilgrims. A loyal rebel to the end, he could not bring himself to doubt the king's judgment. It was his integrity, his confidence, and his trust that Henry would hear their petitions, his faith that Henry would keep his word and not take revenge that defeated the Pilgrimage of Grace.⁶⁸ The failure of the Pilgrimage of Grace to achieve any of its desired goals did not reflect a lack of commitment to the Catholic Church and the pope. It reflected primarily that the rebel leadership accepted that the king would honor the Doncaster agreement

⁶⁸ *Henry VIII*, 342.

Closely related to this factor was the marked weakness in the opposition to Henry VIII. One of the great weaknesses of the Pilgrimage of Grace, which also helps us understand its ultimate failure, was the lack of a charismatic, viable alternative to Henry VIII. Clearly, Robert Aske, a common lawyer, was not going to rally a significant number of people to him. Thomas Percy, while popular in the north, was neither strong enough nor committed enough to present a viable option to the Tudor dynasty. Without a leader capable of inspiring the public imagination, the Pilgrimage was destined to fail. Even if the Pilgrims had marched on London and had succeeded in forcing Henry off the throne, which of course was never their intent, there was no one among them strong enough to command the loyalty of the kingdom.

Another source of failure was the conflict between the interests of the gentlemen and the commons. The gentry and the commons clearly had different concepts of what the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace set out to accomplish. The majority of the gentry ultimately were not committed to the grievances of the commons. When the decision to go forward and actually confront a royal army became a reality, most of the gentry opted to retreat from such a dangerous option. The possibility of losing their property, their good names, and their lives prevented them from taking any military action, much to the anger of the commons. These differences in interests led to the breakdown of the coalition of gentry and commons during both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. In both rebellions, a strong distrust of the gentry permeated the commons. This distrust caused the Lincolnshire rising to collapse as events of October 10 foreshadowed and as evidenced in the post-pardon rebellions. Henry's policy of delay also played a role. Much of the friction between commons and gentry resulted from the delay of the return of Bowes and Ellerker with Henry's response to the Pontefract Articles. Norfolk's long delayed return sparked, as we have seen, a great deal of

tension and suspicion among the commons. The actions of Sir Francis Bigod and John Hallom in stirring rebellion in the East Riding resulted from the growing belief that the gentry had struck a deal with Henry. The growing suspicion of the commons toward the gentry destroyed the trust among the classes, which in turn destroyed the Doncaster agreement and brought about the utter failure of the Pilgrimage of Grace.⁶⁹

The one entity strong enough to unite the gentry and commons was the power of the Church. Yet, the Pilgrimage received no support from Rome and little or no support from the clergy as a whole. Pope Paul III made overtures about possibly assisting the Pilgrims. In December a letter to the pontiff suggested that he send Cardinal Pole to England as legate “with money for distribution amongst the poor people, as the affairs of the Church will proceed most prosperously.”⁷⁰ Paul III apparently planned to persuade the king of Scotland, James V, to march against Henry VIII “with all his forces in favor of the Church, and make a vigorous attack, being always ready to do the Pope every other service.”⁷¹ The pope never acted on either of these plans, ultimately his concern focused on the war between Charles V and Francis I.

The lower clergy, both secular and regular, committed themselves to the cause. In addition, as we have seen they played a significant role stirring and spreading the rebellions. However, the upper level clergymen gave little or no support. The bishops who opposed the Henrician reforms either fled before the rebels or took the oath under compulsion. They were reluctant to share their assistance in the face of danger and offered no real support to the movement. As mentioned earlier, most of the men who held bishoprics during the Pilgrimage of

⁶⁹ *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, Vol. 2, 329-334.

⁷⁰ Rawdon Brown, ed. *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice*, Volume 5: 1534-1554 (1873), pp. 51-52.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Grace had received their positions from Henry VIII. Many of these men had supported the divorce and the king had rewarded them for that support. Apparently, they were more loyal to their high ecclesiastical rank and the king than to the ancient faith.

It is truly remarkable that a failed rebellion has garnered so much attention from so many distinguished historians. The Pilgrimage of Grace, as discussed in chapter 1, has attracted a surprising number of very prominent historians of Early Modern England. G.R. Elton, Christopher Haigh, Richard Hoyle, Michael Bush, G.W. Bernard, and Ethan Shagan, to name a few, have all attempted to make some sense of the events that occurred during the autumn of 1536 and winter of 1537. Michael Bush alone has written three books on the Pilgrimage of Grace in the last dozen years. As we have seen, there is very little agreement on the nature and causes of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. Perhaps the attraction stems from the notion that the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace represent a microcosm of the English Reformation. Although no Tudor rebellion attained the size and scope of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the fundamental causes of the rebellion and the motivations of those involved reveal the tensions and fears unleashed by Henry VIII's rejection of papal authority. The various religious motivations outlined above, as well as the social and economic concerns that existed, allow us some insights into the personal impact the religious changes in England that ensued had on all Englishmen. Prior to the Henrician Reformation, the English people were, as far as historiography can reveal, relatively contented Medieval Christians. Obviously, some Englishmen happily embraced Protestantism, as the anti-clerical sentiment among some members of the House of Commons illustrated. Nevertheless, as this account has emphasized most Englishmen had no deep-seated animosity toward Catholicism and many remained loyal to the Old Faith. The speed and scope of the reforms, as I have argued, caused many in northern

England to attempt to force Henry and his ministers to revoke the acts that disrupted the traditional methods and practices of worship. That attempt failed, allowing Henry VIII to retain the title as Supreme Head of the Church of England as well as his throne. Although the Pilgrimage of Grace may have caused the king to retreat from some of the religious reforms, as evidenced by the Act of the Six Articles of 1539, the religious demands of the Pilgrims failed to deter the development of Protestantism in England.

Chapter 8: Stirrers of “this Pestilent Sediton”

Sir Arthur Darcy, son of Thomas, Lord Darcy, wrote to Thomas Cromwell on 25 February 1537 to keep the Lord Chancellor abreast of the efforts to pacify the North Country. Darcy sent an examination of one of his tenants showing that the “religious persons stirred this pestilent sediton, and not only that but would have eftsoons quickened and revived the same.”¹ Darcy expressed what many loyal to Henry VIII, and indeed the king himself, believed about the source of the rebellions that swept through Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, and the North Country from October 1536 to February 1537. Interestingly, no historians of the Pilgrimage of Grace have explored the possibility that the clergy were quite possibly the prime movers of rebellion during this period. Several, such as Richard Hoyle, have indicated that it is quite likely that the clergy and religious fomented rebellion, but none have analyzed the role of the clergy in Lincolnshire or the Pilgrimage of Grace. As mentioned in chapter 1, most of the debate about the Pilgrimage centers on the causes and motives of those involved. The central argument of this dissertation is that a significant number of clergymen and religious not only spread rumors and supported the

¹ *LP* XII (1), no. 506.

rebellions. They also stirred and promoted insurrection in several areas of Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, Durham, and the North Country. As the evidence below will show, a strong case can certainly be made that the priests, friars, and monks played a pivotal role in supporting, spreading, and stirring the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. While no smoking gun exists that can definitively indict the northern clergy, a surprising amount of evidence does exist indicating that a number of priests and religious actively engaged in sedition and spread rebellion from Lincolnshire to Carlisle.

As discussed in chapter 4, a great deal of evidence exists clearly showing that a number of clergymen and religious in Lincolnshire and throughout Yorkshire supported the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. The evidence against the priests and religious as fomenters of rebellion is not as clear-cut as their involvement in the upheavals. Much of the evidence indicting them is in the form of accusations leveled in depositions given following the revolts. These sources identify the vicars, priests, monks, and residents of the various abbeys, to use Lancaster Herald's words, as "the greatest corrupters of the temporalty and have given secret occasion to all the mischief."² Lancaster Herald certainly had knowledge of the events that took place throughout Yorkshire due to his several missions into the area. Unlike many of the sources available, his comments resulted from his observations rather than testimony given during a deposition.

Richard Bowier in a letter to the Duke of Norfolk advised that if he wanted to mitigate his labor in finding who began, aided, and supplied the rebels with money, the duke should first examine "abbots, priors, and spiritual men who should be examined as follows:—1. What thing they gave to any man at the time of the commotion, as horse, ring, cowl, plate, or money. 2. How

² TNA SP1/113 fo. 30; LP XI, no 1372.

much they gave or promised. 3. To whom. 4. And for what purpose. 5. When, where, and in whose presence it was delivered, and whether all that he promised was paid before the proclamation of the pardon.”³ These comments strongly suggest that those who witnessed the rebellion recognized the role the clergy played in stirring the insurrections.

The mayor of Newcastle informed a Mr. Blithman that he had written a letter to the Duke of Norfolk informing him “of our ungodly and dissembling knaves the Friars Observants. After you went away we had to suffer them to enter their house; for Sir Thomas Hilton and others, who would have quarreled with us, were their speakers...This was against my will, but by it we thought to keep the town without strife, since it hangs upon this town to stay a great part of the country.”⁴ William Fairfax in a letter to Cromwell corroborated these sentiments. He informed the vicegerent “The houses of religion not suppressed make friends and ‘wag’ the poor to stick hard in this opinion, and the monks who were suppressed inhabit the villages round their houses and daily ‘wag’ the people to put them in again. These two sorts hath no small number in their favors, arguing and speaking.” Fairfax continued, “The head tenants of abbots, bishops, and prebendaries have greater familiarity with their landlords than they used to have. None are more busy to stir the people than the chief tenants of commandry lands of Saint John of Jerusalem. Where the archbishop, bishops, abbots, and spiritual persons have rule the people are most ready at a call.” He then recommended that Henry “should command his lord Deputy to put out the rulers made by spiritual men, for their bailiffs are brought up from childhood with priests, and are malicious in their quarrels. There will never be peace so long as the spiritual men have so

³ Ibid., SP1/117 fo. 150; LP XII (1), no. 749.

⁴ TNA SP1/113 fo. 31; LP XI, no. 1372.

much temporal power.”⁵ Clearly, these comments indicate that those assigned to quell the rebellions or maintain order in their aftermath believed that the clergy and religious were behind the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Direct evidence that the clergy did in fact stir the rebellions of 1536-37 does exist. Nevertheless, most of the evidence about clerical involvement in the Lincolnshire rising and the Pilgrimage of Grace comes from depositions taken in the aftermath of both insurrections. The detail in many of these depositions does indicate that many of those deposed were telling the truth and in several of the extant sources, different deponents corroborated each other’s testimony. John Overey of Louth stated, “the priests were the occasion” of the Lincolnshire rebellion. John Taylor substantiated Overey’s testimony claiming that “the parson of Sowthesomarcocoke and of Byrscarthorpe, the vicar of Hauton with the great club,” and many other priests were at Louth on the Monday the rebellion began. Taylor added, “but for them the people had been stayed by Mr. Hennage.” Henry Childe testified that on “Monday there were in the Market Place 40 priests and they said with a loud voice Let us go forward and ye shall lack no money.”⁶ Marmaduke Neville believed that the priests and religious favored the Pilgrimage of Grace and he even implied that the Archbishop of York was a supporter of the revolt. Neville claimed that the priests and religious men praised the conduct and grievances of the rebel leaders. He also stated that “them that were in his company” believed the Archbishop of York “held the same opinion at the beginning” of the rebellion but once Norfolk appeared on the scene “he preached to the contrary.”⁷

⁵ *LP XII* (1), no. 192.

⁶ *LP XI*, no. 972.

⁷ *Ibid.*, *XII* (2), no. 29.

As stated above, the vicar of Louth with an incendiary sermon provoked the Lincolnshire rebellion. What we know of the sermon indicates that Thomas Kendall used the rumor that the government planned to confiscate church plate and jewels to incite his parishioners to rebel. The sermon, along with the comments of the singing man of Louth, roused the parishioners to protect the church from the coming visitation. By the evening of 1 October, a number of people gathered at the choir door and took the keys from the churchwardens “for the saving of the church jewels for safe keeping.”⁸ Moreover, following the collapse of the Lincolnshire rebellion, Kendall fled the county. He made his way to the Charterhouse in Coventry. Kendall arrived there sometime before Christmas Eve 1536. He informed the monks there that he came from Oxford and held a benefice within three miles of Colchester. Kendall “desired to be received into their religion.” Those present communicated with the prior who was away in London, and refused to receive him. Nonetheless, Kendall remained at the Charterhouse “using physic within the city and in the country, sometimes lodging in their house, and sometimes in the city.” While there the vicar of Louth sent messages to certain men of Louth by a messenger of the Coventry Charterhouse. On Christmas Eve the Duke of Suffolk’s deputy at Lincoln arrested Kendall and delivered him to London.⁹ Kendall’s actions, particularly his continued contact with certain men in Louth, seem to signify that he was still attempting to urge his parishioners to continue to rebel or perhaps to join the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Similar evidence exists to indict the clergy and religious as instrumental agents in the stirring of the Pilgrimage of Grace. Evidence similar to that indicting the vicar of Louth points to Sir Robert Thompson, the vicar of Burgh, as the chief agent in provoking the rebellion in

⁸ Ibid., XII (1), nos. 380, 828.

⁹ Ibid., no. 19.

Cumberland. According to the confession of Bernard Towneley, Thompson caused the insurrection when he read a letter from Richmondshire. Towneley claimed that the vicar's words had this tone, "Well beloved brethren in God, we greet you well, signifying unto you that we your brethren in Christ have assembled us together and put us in readiness for the maintenance of the faith of God, his laws, and his Church, and where abbeys was suppressed we have restored them again and put the religious men into their houses: wherefore we exhort you to do the same." Towneley further reported that the four captains of Cumberland went in procession to the Penrith church each day where they "with their swords drawn following the vicar of Burgh" attended mass. The vicar after the gospel, in his homily, preached on one of the Ten Commandments, "and this was called the captains' mass." Towneley claimed that the vicar "was taken for a prophet."¹⁰

In a letter to Sir Arthur Darcy dated 11 November 1536, the vicar of Brayton, Thomas Maunsell, claimed that the "last insurrection did much come from the friars of St. Robert's of Knaresborough, who made bills and proclamations...Now by their superiors other devices are made, wherein the people are determined against the King's council."¹¹ William Horsekey in his deposition, accused the "sub-prior, the confessor of the nuns, the vicar of Watton, and one Anthony, canon of Watton, are great setters forth of sedition, for he heard them say several times since Christmas "that it would never be well as long as the King was supreme head of the Church, and that it would not be reformed unless the people set forward again with a new insurrection."¹² Moreover, as we have seen, Sir Arthur Darcy believed that the clergy were the main source of sedition in the north.

¹⁰ TNA SP1/117 fos. 43-56.

¹¹ *LP XII* (1), no. 1047.

A number of priests and religious were accused of being the principal stirrers of sedition and procurers of rebellion. Most of these charges against the clergy came in the aftermath of the post-pardon rebellions. Although the charges leveled stemmed from the 1537 disturbances, it was their involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace that caused their arrest and eventual execution. Many of those deposed identified a number of priests and monks as the main instigators of the insurrections. William Collyns, himself deeply involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace and the post-pardon risings, accused the vicar of Clapham of being one of the chief ringleaders of the Dent rising of 1536. Furthermore, the vicar, in the name of Captain Poverty, called the men of Dent to meet in Kendal the next morning “to know the lord Poverty’s pleasure.” According to Collyns, the vicar of Clapham “was the common swearer and counselor in all that business and persuaded the people that they would go to heaven if they died in the quarrel.”¹³ As mentioned above, another priest accused of participating and conspiring in rebellion was the vicar of Watton. In several depositions of those involved in Hallom’s rebellion, the vicar of Watton figured prominently in the planning of Hallom’s assault on Hull. The vicar attended clandestine meetings between Hallom, Francis Bigod, and several other conspirators. He even allowed the conspirators to meet in the Watton parish church. William Horsekey, as shown above, identified the vicar of Watton and several others as “great setters forth of sedition.”¹⁴ Roger Kitchen, one of the chief instigators in the Beverley rising in October 1536 and in Hallom’s rebellion, testified that a priest by the name of John Tuvye was responsible for ringing the common bell that signaled the beginning of the Beverley rebellion. William Stapleton in his deposition indicated that an Observant friar, Sir Thomas Johnson, also known as Bonaventure, was, if not involved in

¹² Ibid., no. 201 i.

¹³ Ibid., no. 914.

¹⁴ LP XII (1), no. 201.

stirring the commons of Beverley, at least a vocal and enthusiastic supporter. Stapleton reported that Johnson “rejoiced much their rising...oft laying scriptures to maintain their purpose.” The friar, according to Stapleton was also responsible for the commons naming him captain. Johnson used Stapleton’s wife, who evidently supported the rebellion, to convince him to take the oath. Following Stapleton being sworn as captain of the Beverley host, the Observant friar offered to “go himself in harness to the field,” which he did at the first appointment at Doncaster.¹⁵

By far the most convincing example of clerical involvement in stirring rebellion and spreading sedition is that of the friars of St. Robert’s of Knaresborough and particularly the so-called friar of Knaresborough, Robert Esch. As we have seen the friars of St. Robert’s were extremely active in the formulation and spread of various rumors as well as distributing seditious handbills. They were also active supporters of the rebels during the Pilgrimage of Grace. The actions of the ubiquitous Robert Esch provide a very clear picture of the depth of clerical involvement. Esch participated in the spread of seditious rumors and handbills. Lancelot Collyns, the treasurer of York, stated in his deposition “the insurrection was spread by letters of a friar of Knaresborough, who said churches should be pulled down, men taxed for christenings, marriage, etc.”¹⁶ Dr. John Pickering, a canon of Bridlington, who was himself executed for his role in the post-pardon rebellion, corroborated Collyns testimony. Pickering when asked what religious men were provokers or aiders of the insurrection he replied he knew of none except a friar of St. Robert’s of Knaresborough.¹⁷ John Hallom in his examination reported the writing of letters at Beverley by a “friar of St Robert’s of Knaresborough, and sent to the townships around,

¹⁵ TNA EB36/118 fos. 63-69.

¹⁶ Ibid., no. 1018.

¹⁷ Ibid., no. 1021.

commanding them on pain of death to assemble at Hunsley on St. Wilfrid's Day to take the same part that Lincolnshire took."¹⁸ William Stapleton in his confession reported that on 10 October 1536 Sir Robert, a friar of St. Robert's of Knaresborough, arrived at Westwood green and "sued the said William for a passport and he would raise them all in Rydale and Pickering both." The friar of Knaresborough reappeared five days later as the Beverley host besieged Hull. Esch boasted that he had "raised all of Malton and that quarter." He also informed Stapleton that Richmondshire was up and that the commons had taken Lord Latimer.¹⁹ This boast seems to suggest that Sir Robert Esch quite possibly played a role in the Richmondshire commons joining the rebellion. At the very least Esch clearly knew a great deal about the spread of rebellion throughout the North Riding.

Robert Esch also played an integral role in the stirring of the post-pardon insurrections led by Bigod and Hallom. Roger Kitchen gave evidence to support the critical role Sir Robert played in the rebellions of 1537. Kitchen reported that John Hallom, the said friar, and other conspirators "held great council together since Christmas." He also testified that he heard Hallom say openly "that he had given him (the Friar of Knaresborough) some money, and he was gone abroad to the country." Sir Robert seems also to have been involved in the planning of the assault on Hull and Scarborough. John Hallom in his deposition reported that Sir Robert Esch was present at the meeting where he and Bigod decided to seize Hull and Scarborough. This evidence clearly indicates that the well-traveled friar of Knaresborough was privy to and most likely in on the planning of the unfortunate scheme.²⁰ Hallom later sent Esch north to see if the

¹⁸ Ibid., no. 201 iv..

¹⁹ TNA EB36/118 fos.63-69.

²⁰ LP XII (1), no. 201 iv..

men of Durham and the North Riding were up. The friar reported that the men of Durham and the North Riding had risen, when in fact nothing of the sort occurred. The friar of Knaresborough also reported to Francis Bigod at Settrington that the Durham men, under the leadership of Sir Thomas Percy, were on the march. This misinformation convinced Bigod and Hallom to go ahead with their ill-planned and ill-fated attempt to capture Hull and Scarborough.²¹ Esch may have also been with Bigod at the muster held at Borough. George Lumley claimed that a tall man “dressed as a priest was present and spoke to the commons there, exhorting them to follow Bigod. It is quite possible that this man was Sir Robert Esch. As we saw in chapter 6 the Dodds believed this man to be one of the overzealous monks of St. Robert of Knaresborough. Robert Esch would certainly qualify as an “overzealous” supporter of rebellion.

There is evidence that links Esch to the disturbances around Westmorland. The Duke of Norfolk, on 2 February, informed the king’s council that a great number of people had thrown down the Earl of Cumberland’s enclosures, “and the people were never in the insurrection time more full of ill words than now.” The duke claimed the “ungracious doings proceed from Bigod, Leach, of Lincolnshire, and the friar of Knaresborough,” whom he was trying to apprehend.²² Shortly thereafter, Norfolk issued a proclamation forbidding all assemblies without the king’s permission, “ringing of bells backwards, lighting beacons, setting bills on church doors, &c., or conveying of bills.” He clearly connected this trouble and that of Bigod’s rebellion in part to Sir Robert Esch. Norfolk also announced in this decree that “Sir Francis Bigod, Leach, of Horncastle, a monk, late of Louth Park, Lincolnshire, and a friar of St. Robert's, Knaresborough,

²¹ LP XII (1), no. 201 iii, vii; 370, 578; *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, 50.

²² LP XII (1), no. 319.

have craftily persuaded divers that the King's pardon shall not be available according to the tenor of the proclamations of the same.²³

On 13 February, Norfolk reported to Henry VIII that certain ringleaders of the Bigod rebellion were still at large, among them the friar of Knaresborough. It is important to remember that by late January 1537, a number of prominent rebel leaders had found their way to Kirkby Stephen. Among the rebel leaders who consulted with Musgrave and Tibbey were William Leach, John Atkinson, and Ninian Staveley. Although there is no positive proof that the friar of Knaresborough was in Kirkby Stephen it is interesting that his name appears so prominently in the communications following the failed attempt on Carlisle. Following the defeat of the commons at Carlisle Norfolk reported that Sir Robert Esch was among those captured following the confrontation. Furthermore, the king in a letter dated 22 February ordered the duke to “send up to us” among others the friar of Knaresborough.²⁴ These comments suggest that not only was Esch at Kirkby Stephen. It is quite possible that he assisted Musgrave, Tibbey, and Atkinson in planning the attack on Carlisle. Esch may have also participated in the attack on Carlisle since rumors indicated he had been taken prisoner following the defeat. The reports of Sir Robert Esch’s capture were erroneous; he escaped to Scotland and as far as we know, avoided capture completely.

A number of abbots and monks also felt the wrath of the government for their participation in the Pilgrimage of Grace and the post-pardon rebellions of 1537. Many of the religious that went to the gallows did so not only for stirring rebellion, but for also attempting to save their monasteries from dissolution. Several of these cases involved the abbot and monks of

²³ Ibid., no. 322. The monk of Louth Park mentioned was most likely William Morland, one of the chief leaders of the Lincolnshire rebellion.

²⁴ Ibid., no. 479.

houses restored by the Pilgrims during the 1536 disturbances. The actions of these men reflected their desire to maintain their houses and at the same time the fear that the return of the Duke of Norfolk would lead to the destruction of their abbeys. As discussed in the previous chapter, the abbot of Jervaulx succumbed to this fear and actually sent a spy into Lincolnshire to see “how the duke was accompanied.” The servant, Simon Jackson, returned and reported that mass hangings had taken place in Lincolnshire at Norfolk’s command and the same would happen in Yorkshire. This report turned many against the Doncaster agreement as it reinforced the rumors about Norfolk’s true mission in the north. Ninian Staveley attributed the post-pardon rising in Richmondshire to Jackson’s report. Staveley also reported that two monks of Jervaulx, John Stainton and Roger Hartlepool, convinced him and Edward Middleton to engage in a plot to destroy the Duke of Norfolk upon his return into Yorkshire.²⁵ William Thirsk, the quondam of Fountains, offered Staveley and Middleton 20 nobles to restore him to Fountains abbey saying, “he was unjustly put out by the visitors.”²⁶ Sir Francis Bigod’s testimony was also damaging to Thirsk. Bigod, prior to the attempts on Hull and Scarborough, had shown Thirsk a copy of a book he had written on the king’s supremacy. Bigod did not accept the notion that a layman could rightfully be head of the Church and his book argued this point. The quondam of Fountains, according to Bigod, supported this notion, commenting, “no man could mend it and he durst die in the quarrel with Bigod.” The fact that Thirsk was willing to die in the quarrel with Bigod certainly indicates strong support for the post-pardon risings. Furthermore, Thirsk agreed to keep a copy of Bigod’s book and “make as much thereof as of a piece of St. Augustine’s works.”²⁷ The actions of these men led to their arrest and execution.

²⁵ *LP XII* (1), no. 1012.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

A similar situation existed at Sawley Abbey. Thomas Bolton, the abbot of Sawley, like the abbot of Jervaulx, attempted to save his house, which ultimately cost him his life. As seen in chapter 5, Sawley Abbey was the first abbey restored by the rebels at the outbreak of the Pilgrimage of Grace. The commons put the priests and monks back in and several members of the local gentry protected the abbey throughout the Pilgrimage. In the aftermath of the Doncaster agreement, abbot Bolton had concerns about the agreement and its effect on Sawley. In a letter written to Sir Thomas Percy following the second Doncaster agreement, Bolton begged Sir Thomas to consider their present need due to the suppression of the monastery. The abbot wrote:

The whole country supports them in entering their house and is ready to extend the pilgrimage of Christ's Faith and the common wealth, because it is rumored that the captain has resigned his captainship, and that order is made for the farmers of suppressed houses to enter and occupy, and the religious to avoid possession until the Parliament, whereof neither place nor time is yet fixed, and this has given rise to suspicion.²⁸

The letter reveals the anxiety the abbot and the entire abbey felt about the truce and the return of Norfolk. The passage also strongly suggests that Bolton supported the Pilgrimage of Grace and was committed to preserving Sawley Abbey.

Before Christmas 1536, Bolton attempted to save Sawley Abbey from dissolution. He sent one of the monks of the abbey to Sir Stephen Hamerton with a message desiring him to contact Robert Aske about what would become of the monastery. The monk returned without a letter, but reported that Hamerton promised to write to Aske in the name of the abbey. The abbot

²⁷ Ibid., no. 1087.

²⁸ LP XI, no. 785.

next sent George Shuttleworth to Hamerton to obtain Aske's response and bring it back to Sawley. Aske instructed Bolton and the brethren of Sawley not to "withstand any man that came to them in the King's name to put them out of possession." Aske also advised them to stay the commons about them as best they could "otherwise they should lose both themselves and their house."²⁹ Aske's response seems to have done nothing to alleviate the anxiety of the abbot or the brethren of Sawley.

Bolton's next move was to appeal to Sir Thomas Percy primarily because a Percy founded Sawley and he was the living representative of the founder. As we have seen, the abbey begged Sir Thomas to intervene in their defense. George Shuttleworth and Richard Estgate, the abbot's chaplain, were designated to deliver the letter to Percy. Along the way the two messengers met with Sir Stephen Hamerton and offered him "a certain wood he was to have bought from them two years before" for nothing if he would protect the abbey. Hamerton replied he would have nothing of their house. Shuttleworth then informed Hamerton that he had a letter to Sir Thomas Percy to inform him the residents of Sawley Abbey "were set in by the commons" and to ask him "if they should have his favor." Hamerton responded that he did not know that Percy could do anything to help them but he saw no harm in the mission. In his deposition, he also testified that after this the abbot held him in great suspicion "because he set men to arrest persons posting seditious letters upon church doors." Hamerton's statement implies that the abbot knew of and supported the posting of these seditious bills.³⁰ Estgate apparently returned to report of Hamerton's response to Bolton, while Shuttleworth continued on to deliver the supplication to Sir Thomas.

²⁹ Ibid., XII (1), no. 491.

³⁰ Ibid., 491, 1034.

As Shuttleworth made his way to Predo castle to deliver the letter to Percy, he met up with a group of men, among them William Leach of Horncastle. Leach joined Shuttleworth and traveled with him to Predo castle. This coincidental encounter with Leach, the man who had raised Horncastle during the Lincolnshire rebellion, played a crucial role in Shuttleworth's eventual execution. Shuttleworth met with Percy, who like Aske, suggested that the "abbot make no resistance if any commission came down from the King, but speak fair to such as should come withal." Shuttleworth and Leach returned to Sawley and delivered Percy's response. The abbot upon learning that Shuttleworth's companion was a notorious rebel, ordered Leach to leave the abbey and "to avoid that quarter." Bolton sent Leach away for fear he would hinder the abbey.³¹

Following Norfolk's return to the north, one of his first tasks was to take possession of Sawley Abbey. He finally addressed the task on 9 February, but found that others had completed the task in his absence. It appears that the monks of Sawley surrendered the abbey to Sir Richard Tempest, who then turned it over to its farmer, Sir Arthur Darcy. When Darcy arrived at Sawley, he managed to discover the whereabouts of the abbot and took him prisoner. Although Henry VIII instructed Norfolk to deal with the monks who had reentered the suppressed monasteries "without pity or circumstance," the duke seems to have ignored the order.³² Nevertheless, the actions of abbot Bolton and Shuttleworth led to their executions on the charge that they had violated the Doncaster agreement. Percy's involvement in this episode, although apparently not a violation of the December agreement, contributed to his eventual execution.

³¹ Ibid., no. 491.

³² Ibid., no. 479.

Another monastery that witnessed upheaval during the post-pardon period was the Lancashire priory of Cartmel. Cartmel, dissolved in September 1536, fell into the hands of Thomas Holcroft, the king's farmer of the abbey and its lands. Like at Jervaulx, Sawley, and Hexham, Cartmel Abbey fought to maintain control over its lands and treasure. On 19 December, when Clarencieux Arms, the royal herald arrived to proclaim the pardon, some of the king's farmers complained to the herald that "divers brethren took their corn from them and therefore like to have murder between them about the same." The herald in an attempt to prevent any more trouble openly commanded, in the king's name, "that no man should be disturbed in the possession of land or tithes, but all to continue as at the last meeting at Doncaster till the duke of Norfolk came again to the country." As Clarencieux Arms was leaving, two brethren of Cartmel priory stopped him, asking the herald to put his pronouncement in writing. The herald was in a hurry and asked William Collyns to write "them a word or two of the effect of the order," which he did.³³

The trouble at Cartmel began in February 1537 when William Holcroft, the king's farmer, attempted to enforce his right to the abbey and its lands. William Collyns disclosed that the disturbance around Cartmel began when the canons of the priory and most of the servants and tenants of the lordship of Cartmel prevented Holcroft from taking possession.³⁴ There is some evidence to suggest that Holcroft attempted to do more than gain access to the abbey's lands. Robert Southwell, in a letter to Cromwell, praised Holcroft's diligence in pursuing his rights "though only put in trust to pluck down the church." This seems to indicate that Holcroft's main objective was to tear down the priory church. The townspeople supported the canons in part because in the original act of suppression the commissioners had planned to tear down the

³³ Ibid., no. 914.

³⁴ Ibid.

priory church, which served as the town's parish church.³⁵ Collyn's deposition indicates that the repulse of Holcroft resulted in the execution of "four of the brethren of Cartmel and eight yeomen."³⁶ The prior of Cartmel escaped punishment because he had fled to London at the outbreak of the Pilgrimage of Grace.

The last abbey to face suppression by the king's lieutenants was Whalley Abbey. Although not covered by the Act of Suppression of the Lesser Monasteries, for its annual income on rents alone surpassed £500 per year, it fell victim to the aftermath of the post-pardon rebellions. As mentioned earlier, the people around Whalley Abbey rallied to the monks there when they learned that the Earl of Derby planned to march against the monastery. Robert Aske was able to avert a full-scale battle only by sending word of the October truce. When the Earl of Sussex arrived in Lancaster in the first weeks of March 1537, his first order of business was to address the reported post-pardon rising allegedly fomented by Whalley Abbey. His instructions and indeed his aim seemed to target specifically the religious of the area. Sussex in a letter dated 11 March announced to Cromwell, "You will see I keep promise for the punishment of such traitorous monks."³⁷ It is difficult to determine what actually occurred since no documents remain concerning the events around Whalley before or after Sussex's arrival. What is clear is that Whalley's fate was bound to that of Sawley Abbey. The chief evidence against Whalley seems to have been that Richard Estgate, the abbot of Sawley's chaplain, fled to Whalley where his brother John was a monk. Estgate, it should be recalled, also assisted George Shuttleworth in delivering the abbot of Sawley's supplication to Sir Thomas Percy. About the time Shuttleworth

³⁵ LP XII (2), no. 205; *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, 236.

³⁶ LP XII (1), no. 914.

³⁷ LP XII (1), 630.

was giving his deposition in London, Estgate fled to Whalley arriving there while brethren were at supper and sheltered by monks unknown to abbot. Evidently, Sussex used this to charge John Paslew, the abbot of Whalley, with treason, which led to his execution.³⁸

Although a number of monks struggled against suppression and supported the Lincolnshire rebellion, Pilgrimage of Grace, and the post-pardon rebellions, as we have seen the only abbey that actively resisted dissolution was the Augustinian priory at Hexham. The king's commissioners upon arriving in Hexham discovered that the monks had stirred the town and refused to allow the king's commissioners to take possession of the priory. The master of Ovingham informed the commissioners that the twenty brethren of Hexham abbey would all die before the king's commissioners should take possession. The commissioners immediately informed Henry VIII and the Earl of Northumberland of the situation at Hexham. Northumberland, in a letter dated 4 October, wrote to Cromwell and informed him of what had occurred at Hexham and asked what he should do.³⁹ Henry, the following day, issued instructions evidently intended for the Earl of Cumberland on how he wanted the situation handled. The king demanded that the monks had "made resolute answer that they would lose their lives before the law was executed against them," and therefore the Earl of Cumberland should "assemble all the force you can make, with such others as we have appointed to do the like, either to apprehend them by way of their submission, or if they will not yield, to treat them as arrant traitors and put the commissioners in possession."⁴⁰ It is unclear what happened next but it does appear that with the outbreak of rebellion in Yorkshire that Cumberland was unable to

³⁸ LRO DDX 732/1/32.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 535.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 544.

carry out the order. Nevertheless, Henry wrote to Darcy on 9 October and stated that he expected that the business in Northumberland “was ere suppressed.”⁴¹

Sir Reynold Carnaby, the man who was the king’s farmer for Hexham abbey, found it impossible to find anyone to help him take possession of the abbey. At this time, one John Heron entered the picture and offered to solve the problem. Heron, described by the Dodds as a local freebooter and a follower of Sir Thomas Percy, saw an opportunity to profit from the impasse between Carnaby and the monks of Hexham abbey.⁴² Heron’s plan was to play one side against the other in an attempt to see which side would pay him the most handsomely and to rob Carnaby. On Sunday 15 October, Heron met with William Carnaby, Sir Reynold’s father, and offered to act as intermediary between his son and the abbey. Carnaby “thinking this was devised by a true heart” agreed and Heron rode off to Hexham abbey. At Hexham, Heron met with the canons and their friends for the defense against “all of the contrary part,” meaning the king’s commissioners and the Carnabys. He told the monks that if they “would give certain fees to certain men of Tyndale, he doubted not...all Tynedale would die and live with their quarrel.”⁴³ It would seem that the canons recognized that Heron and his plan were not particularly honest. The monks instructed Heron to deliver a message to William Carnaby “before they joined with thieves.” The monks were willing to turn over the abbey to the king’s commissioners if Sir Reynold would act as their suitor “so that they might serve God there though they begged for their livings.”⁴⁴ Heron went to William and told him he got no answer from the monks because too many of them were away from the abbey. The next day Heron returned to Hexham abbey

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, no. 611.

⁴² *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 195.

⁴³ *LP XII* (1), no. 1090 (35).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

and informed the monks that Sir Reynold would have nothing to do with their plan, demanding that he “would have four heads of the canons and four of the town and shire to send up to the King.” Hearing this news, the monks decided their only recourse was to accept Heron’s offer and defend the abbey.⁴⁵

As he departed Hexham Abbey and made his way toward William Carnaby’s house, Heron must have been quite pleased; all was going according to plan. Because of his association with Sir Thomas Percy, Heron was aware of the animosity Thomas and his brother Ingram held towards Sir Reynold Carnaby. Part of the plan was to deliver Sir Reynold to Ingram Percy, then, with the help of the Tynedale men to raid Carnaby’s house, steal his money and plate, and then plunder the surrounding area. However, Heron’s plan came to naught. A servant of Sir Reynold’s met Heron and Carnaby and quietly informed William that Heron was a traitor and would betray him. William and the servant escaped, eventually making their way to Langley castle.

Heron, whose plan had suddenly begun to fall apart, went to Sir Reynold Carnaby’s home but found neither money nor plate. Heron then rode to Halton and asked William Carnaby’s wife if her son, Sir Reynold, had any money. She turned over a chest with her son’s money to him, but one of the Carnaby’s relatives, Arthur Errington, seized the chest and rode off with it. Heron gave chase but was unable to overtake Errington. The next day he returned to Halton only to find Lewis Ogle, Lord Ogle’s brother, in control of the city. Heron attempted to drive Ogle away but failed. Unable to drive Ogle out of Halton, Heron “rode home and never came thither after.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *LP XII* (1), no. 1090 (35).

Apparently, for the remainder of the Pilgrimage of Grace Hexham Abbey remained untouched by Carnaby or any royal agents. The primary reason Hexham escaped dissolution was due to the unsettled nature of the North Country. Following the Doncaster agreement, the Pilgrim leadership believed that the restored monasteries would remain untouched until Norfolk's return. Although, as we have seen, Hexham had only avoided dissolution by stirring the people to prevent that from occurring, the monks there must have felt the Doncaster agreement applied to their situation. Whatever the case, action was not taken against Hexham until after the routing of the commons at Carlisle. In a letter dated 22 February, Henry VIII gave the Duke of Norfolk instructions on how he was to deal with the monks in the area. He said "as these troubles have been promoted by the monks and canons of these parts, at your repair to Sawley, Hexham, Newminster, Lanercost, St. Agatha, and such places as have made resistance since the appointment at Doncaster, you shall without pity or circumstance" execute as many monks as necessary "without further delay or ceremony."⁴⁷ Norfolk dissolved Hexham Abbey without resistance on 26 February.

Judging by the number of charges brought against priests and religious and the number of executions that clergymen suffered it seems clear that the government wanted to present them as the primary source of sedition and rebellion. The preceding examples indicate that a number of priests, friars, and abbots stirred, spread, and participated in the insurrections that occurred in 1536 and 1537. It also seems evident that Henry VIII and his ministers wanted to punish those clerics that participated in the Pilgrimage of Grace. The governmental assault on the northern clergy in the wake of the post-pardon rebellions does in fact over emphasize their involvement in the 1537 disturbances. Still, the involvement of the clergy in the post-pardon risings was vastly

⁴⁷ Ibid., no. 479.

greater than that of the gentry. The extant sources clearly indicate that the government viewed many of the northern clergy chiefly responsible for the Lincolnshire rebellion and Pilgrimage of Grace. As the sources cited throughout show, Henry and his ministers time and again looked to the actions of the clergy as the source of sedition and insurrection. In the interrogatories posed to those deposed in the wake of the rebellions a significant number of questions dwelled on the behavior, movements, actions, and words of the priests and religious. For the Lincolnshire rebellion questions ranged from who aided and counseled the rebels by words or writing to who were the “suggesters and surmisers to stir the people?” Interrogatories asked of the leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace had a similar tone. The government was particularly interested in who invented and spread the rumors and who set forth and spread the rumors. Government officials also wanted to know what communications and advice the rebel leaders had with religious persons.⁴⁸

The total number of northern rebels executed because of their involvement in the Lincolnshire Rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace stands at about 199, 153 resulted from involvement in the Pilgrimage and 46 for participation in Lincolnshire. In addition, two friars received banishment and at least eighteen men suffered imprisonment without trial, five of them dying in prison. Twenty-five rebels, among them the notorious Friar of Knaresborough, saved themselves by escaping to Scotland.⁴⁹ Of the 46 executed for their participation in the Lincolnshire rebellion, 26 were monks or priests, amounting to 56 percent of those put to death. The numbers are not as staggering for the Pilgrimage, but still represent a substantial percentage. Of the 153 executions resulting from involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace 25 were members

⁴⁸ LP XI, no. 70; *Humanist Scholarship*, 206-09.

⁴⁹ *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, 363, especially notes 3 and 4.

of the clergy, or a little over 16 percent of the total executed.⁵⁰ However, when one considers that of the 18 imprisoned without trial nine were clerics and three of the five who died in prison were clergy the numbers become more significant. In addition, of the twenty-five who fled to Scotland following the Pilgrimage of Grace 15 were clergymen. Of the 18 men imprisoned without trial, those that died in prison, and escaped to Scotland, 27, or 60 percent, were priests or religious. The total executions of clergymen in both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace totaled 51, slightly more than one-fourth of those executed. When compared to the executions of gentlemen these numbers become more impressive. Only about 25 members of the gentry, or just over 12 percent of the total executions, suffered a traitor's death.

While it certainly appears the clergy had the motive and the means to promote sedition and rebellion, no absolute proof exists. Nonetheless, given what we know about the northern counties on the eve of the Pilgrimage of Grace and Lincolnshire Rebellion, the evidence points to the clergy as the main stirrers of the commons. As stated earlier, one must use caution when using the primary sources on the Pilgrimage. Some who leveled accusations against the priests and monks had axes to grind. Yet the government, despite accusations otherwise, did not institute a reign of terror in Lincolnshire and the northern counties. Very few of the executions resulting from the rebellions occurred under attainder or martial law. Only in Carlisle did Norfolk resort to the use of martial law in order to punish the rebels. Norfolk had seventy-four men hanged; claiming that without martial law local juries would not have convicted one in five

⁵⁰ Ibid., also see *LP XII* (1) nos. 581 and 734.

of the rebels.⁵¹ Moreover, Norfolk displayed restraint in his dealings with the priests and religious upon his return. He clearly ignored Henry VIII's orders that he deal with the clergy without mercy and circumstance. In the majority of cases, the conduct of the trials of the accused rebels adhered to the accepted procedures of sixteenth century England.⁵² Michael Bush, in *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, concludes that of the 153 executions that resulted from the Pilgrimage only seven or eight occurred as the result of contrived evidence.⁵³ In fact, if one of the commissioners believed the charges against one of the accused were false he informed Cromwell of his doubts. Sir Thomas Butler wrote to Cromwell in November of 1536 informing him that, as per his orders, he had arrested and imprisoned two canons of Norton and their abbot for "divers misdemeanors charged against them at the suppression." Butler, more importantly, tells Cromwell "he would not intercede for them if he believed them guilty, but the common fame of the country imputes no fault to them." Obviously, before Butler carried out any penalties against the men he sought to affirm the truth of the charges.⁵⁴

The number of priests and religious tried and executed for their role in the rebellions certainly suggests that the government recognized the pivotal role played by the clergy in both the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. The fact that more than twice the number of clergymen as gentlemen went to the gallows is significant.⁵⁵ It also seems clear that

⁵¹ David M. Head, *The Ebbs and Flows of Fortune: The Life of Thomas Howard, Third Duke of Norfolk* (Athens, GA, University of Georgia Press, 1995) 144.

⁵² For a detailed discussion of the conduct of the government in treason cases, see G.R. Elton, *Policy and Police* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), especially chapters 7, 8, and 9.

⁵³ *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, see Appendix 2, 411. Three of those were Lord Darcy, Robert Aske, and Robert Constable.

⁵⁴ LP XI no. 1019.

⁵⁵ The numbers for the gentry executed for their role in the Lincoln rising is unclear. The sources indicate which were members of the clergy but fail to distinguish commons or gentry for the remainder. See LP XII (1) nos. 581 and 734.

the number of clergy involved was well above their proportion of the general population. Furthermore, if one adds the 15 clergy who fled to Scotland and the nine imprisoned without trial to the 51 clergymen executed by the government the numbers approach those of the 110 commons put to death. These numbers certainly suggest that the government believed the clergy played a greater role in promoting, spreading, and supporting the Lincolnshire Rebellion and the Pilgrimage than did the gentry. That the northern clergy displayed widespread contempt for the religious policies of Henry VIII in the years and months before the outbreak of the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Lincolnshire rebellion is beyond doubt. That they were motivated to foment rebellion and, with access to the pulpit and confessional, had the means to incite their parishioners to rise is also indisputable. The government was keenly aware of the influence and authority the clergy had over their parishioners. The government's concern over the ability of a priest in the confessional to influence political attitudes is clear evidence of the great influence the parish priest elicited. With the evidence available, it is certainly plausible to argue that no group had as much to lose due the ecclesiastical reforms of Henry VIII. Moreover, no other group had the motivation, opportunity, means, and ability to stir rebellion than did the priests and religious of the north.

Most of the scholarship on the Pilgrimage of Grace over the last twenty years has centered on the causes of the rebellion. Historians of both insurrections have fallen into two basic schools of thought—economic and social factors versus religious causes for both events. Even those historians who attribute religious factors as the primary source of the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace have paid little to the role of the clergy. G.W. Bernard focused on the clergy's role in opposing Henry VIII's religious reforms, but devoted little attention to the Pilgrimage of Grace. Ethan Shagan viewed the Pilgrimage as political theater,

giving little attention to clerical involvement. Michael Bush, who has written more on the Pilgrimage of Grace than any other Tudor historian, focuses primarily on the economic and political factors that led to Lincolnshire and the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Henry VIII and many of his ministers unquestionably looked to the clergy as the chief instigators of both insurrections. This is an important development since it would have been more self-serving for Henry to blame the uprisings on other factors, economic concerns for instance, than on the religious reforms. As noted earlier, there were enough economic concerns voiced by the commons and gentry for the king and his ministers to lay blame on granting of the subsidy, the Statute of Uses, and anger over enclosures. Nonetheless, Henry focused his wrath on the clergy. Laying the blame on members of the clergy was evidence that the king and his ministers recognized the depth of popular anger over the alterations to traditional religious methods of worship and took steps to eliminate those responsible for rousing that anger.

It seems clear that many of the priests and monks not only supported the Lincolnshire rebellion and the Pilgrimage of Grace. It also seems evident that a number of them spread sedition throughout the countryside. The historiography of the Pilgrimage has utterly ignored the role of the clergy. I find this surprising since the sources available leave little doubt about the clerical and religious support for the rebellions as well as significant involvement in fomenting and spreading rebellion. One can point to a number of factors to explain this omission, however, it is important to recognize that the clergy came under intense pressure and scrutiny as a result of the religious reforms enacted beginning in 1534. Many of the English clergy, particularly the bishops, chose to accept quietly the new order. On the other hand, and I think more importantly, a number of priests and monks chose to undermine that new order by stirring their parishioners. The hope was to force the king to withdraw the reforms, restore traditional religious practice, and

for some to return to full communion with Rome. The result, as we have seen, was abject failure. They won no concessions, witnessed no withdrawal of reforms, and failed to prevent the march toward Protestantism.

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Appendix 1

The York Articles¹

October 1536

To the King our sovereign lord.

- (1) The suppression of so many religious houses as are at this instant time suppressed, whereby the service of God is not well [performed] but also the commonalty of your realm be unrelieved, the which as we think is a great hurt to the commonwealth and many sisters be put from their livings and left at large.
- (2) The second article is that we humbly beseech Your Grace that the Act of Use may be suppressed because we think by the said act that we your true subjects be thereby restrained of our liberties in the declaration of our will concerning our lands, as well for payment of our debts, for doing of Your Grace service, as for helping and relieving of our children, the which we had by the suffering of your laws by a long continuance the which we think is a great hurt and discomforth to the commonwealth.
- (3) The third article is that where Your Grace hath a tax or a quindene granted unto you by act of Parliament payable the next year, the which is and hath been ever leviabie of sheep and cattles, and the sheep and cattles of your subjects within the said shire are now at this instant time in manner utterly decayed and perished whereby Your Grace to take the said tax or quindene your said subjects shall be distrained to four pence for one beast and twelve pence for twenty sheep, the which would be an importunate charge to them considering the poverty that they be in already and loss which they have sustained these two years by past.
- (4) The fourth article is that we your true subjects think that Your Grace takes of your Council and being about you such persons as be of low birth and small reputation who hath procured the premises most especially for their own advantage, the which we

¹ *Humanist Scholarship*, 166-67.

suspect to be the Lord Cromwell and Sir Richard Rich, chancellor of the [Court of] Augmentation.

- (5) The fifth article is that we your true subjects find us grieved that there be diverse bishops of England of Your Grace's late promotion that hath perverted the faith of Christ, as we think, who are the Bishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Rochester, the Bishop of Worcester, the Bishop of Salisbury, the Bishop of St. Davids, the Bishop of Dublin, and in especial we think, the beginnings of all the trouble of your commons and the vexation that hath been taken of your subjects, the Bishop of Lincoln.

Appendix 2

The Pontefract Articles¹

December 1536

1. The first touching out faith to have the heresies of Luther, Wycliffe, Hus, Melancthon, Oecolampadius, Bucer, Confessio Germaniae, Apologia Melanchtionis, the works of Tyndale, of Barnes, of Marshall, of Rastell, Saint German, and such other heresies of Anabaptists thereby within this realm to be annulled and destroyed.
2. The second to have the Supreme Head of the church touching *cure animarum* to be reserved unto the see of Rome as before it was accustomed to be, and to have the consecrations of the bishops from him without any first fruits or pension to him to be paid out of this realm or else a pension reasonable for the outward defense of our faith.
3. Item, we humbly beseech our most dread sovereign lord that the Lady Mary may be made legitimate and the former statute therein annulled, for the danger of the title that might incur to the crown of Scotland, that to be by Parliament.
4. Item, to have the abbeyes suppressed to be restored unto their houses, land, and goods.
5. Item, to have the tenths and first fruits clearly discharged of the same, unless the clergy will themselves grant a rent charge in generality to the augmentations of the crown.
6. Item, to have the Friars Observants restored unto their houses again.
7. Item, to have the heretics, bishops and temporal, and their sect, to have condign punishment by fire or such other, or else to try their quarrel with us and our partakers in battle.
8. Item, to have the Lord Cromwell, the Lord Chancellor, and Sir Richard Rich, knight, to have condign punishment as the subverters of the good laws of this realm and maintainers of the false sect of these heretics and the first investors and bringers in of them.²
9. Item, that the lands in Westmorland, Cumberland, Kendal, Dent, Sedbergh, Fornes and the abbeyes lands in Mashamshire, Kyrkbyshire, Notherdale, may be by tenant right, and the lord

¹ *Humanist Scholarship*, 168-171

² The Lord Chancellor at this time was Thomas Audley.

to now have at every change two years rent from gressom and no more according to the grant now made by the lords to the commons there under their seal. And this is to be done by act of Parliament.

10. Item, the statutes of handguns and crossbows to be repealed, and the practice thereof unless it be in the King's forest or parks for the killing of His Grace's deer, red and fallow.
11. Item, that Doctor Legh and Doctor Layton must have condign punishment for their extortions in their time of visitations, as in [taking] from religious houses £40, £20, and so the many horses, chattel, leases, under...bribes by them taken, and of their abominable acts by them committed and done.
12. Item, reformation for the election of knights of shire and burgesses, and for the use among the lords in the Parliament House after their ancient custom.
13. Item, statute for enclosures and intacts to put in execution, and that all intacks [and] enclosures sith 4 Henry VII be pulled down except mountains, forest, and parks.
14. Item, to be discharged of the quindene and taxes now granted by act of Parliament.
15. Item, to have the Parliament in a convenient place at Nottingham or York and the same shortly summoned.
16. Item, the statute of the declaration of the crown by will, that the same may be annulled and repealed.
17. Item, that it be enacted by authority of Parliament that all recognizances, statutes, penalties new forfeit during the time of this commotion may be pardoned and discharges as well against the King as strangers.
18. Item, the privileges and rights of the church to be confirmed by act of Parliament, and priests not [to] suffer by sword unless he be disgraced, a man to be saved by his book, sanctuary to save a man for all causes in extreme need, and the church for forty days and further according to the laws as they were used in the beginning by this king's days.
19. Item, the liberties of the church to have their old customs as the county palatine at Durham, Beverley, Ripon, St. Peter of York, and such other by act of Parliament.
20. Item, to have the statute that no man shall not will his lands to be repealed.
21. Item, that the statutes of treasons for words and suchlike made since anno 21 of our sovereign lord that now is to be in likewise repealed.

22. Item, that the common laws may have place as was used in the beginning of Your Grace's reign and that all injunctions may be clearly denied and not to be granted unless the matter be heard and determined by the chancery.
23. Item, that no man upon subpoena is from Trent north [to] appear but at York or by attorney unless it be directed upon pain of allegiance and for like matters concerning the King.
24. Item, a remedy against escheators for finding of false offices and extorting fees, taking which be not holden of the King and against the promoters thereof.

Appendix 3

The General and Free Pardon for the Participants in the Pilgrimage of Grace¹

Richmond, December 9, 1536, 28 Henry VIII

Albeit that you the King's Highness' subjects and commons dwelling and inhabiting in the shires of York, Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland, the bishopric of Durham, the city of York and the shire of the same name, the city of Kingston-upon-Hull and the shire of the same, the city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the shire of the same, and other shires, cities, bailiwicks, places privileged, franchises, and liberties within the limits of the said shires, cities, towns, wherever and however, or in any of them or being reputed or take for any part, parcel, or member of any of them, and such other the King's said subjects inhabited in the town of Lancaster and elsewhere by north in the shire of Lancaster, have now of late attempted and committed manifest and open rebellion against His most royal Majesty; whereby was like to have ensued the utter ruin and destruction of these whole countries to the great comfort and advancement of your ancient enemies the Scots, as His Highness is credibly informed, do with a great readiness watch upon the same; and to the high displeasure of God, who straightly commandeth you to obey your sovereign lord and king in all things and not with violence to resist his will or commandment for any cause whatsoever it be. Nevertheless, the King's royal Majesty, perceiving as well by the articles of your petitions freely [?] sent to His Highness as also duly informed by credible reports that your said offenses proceeded of ignorance and by occasion of sundry false tales never minded or intended by His Highness or any of his Council, but most craftily, untruly, and most spitefully set abroad amongst you by certain malicious and seditious persons; and thereupon His Highness, inclined to extend his most gracious pity and mercy toward you, having the chief charge of you under God, both of your souls and bodies, and desiring rather the preservation of the same and your reconciliation by his merciful means than by the order and rigor of justice to punish you according to your demerits, of his inestimable goodness and benignity mercy and

¹ *Humanist Scholarship*, 197-200.

pity, and at your most humble petitions and submissions made unto His Highness, is contented and pleased to give and grant, and by this present proclamation doth give and grant, unto you all and every your confederates, wheresoever you or they be, or by what name or names soever they or you be or may be called, his general and free pardon for all manner of treasons, rebellions, insurrections, misprisions [of] treasons, murders, robberies, felonies, and of all accessories of the same and every of them, unlawful assemblies, unlawful conventicles, unlawful speaking words, confederacies, conspiracies, riots, routs, and all other trespasses, offenses, and contempts done and committed by you or any of you against the King's Majesty, his crown, or dignity royal withing the same time or beginning of the said rebellion, whensoever it was until this present day of proclaiming of this proclamation; and of all pains, imprisonments, and judgments of death, and all other penalties, fines and forfeitures of lands, tenements, hereditaments, goods and chattels by any of you incurred by reason of the premises or any of them: which fines, forfeitures, lands tenements, hereditaments, goods, and chattels the King's said highness, of his special grace and mere motion, by these presents giveth to such of you as have or should have forfeited or lost the same by occasion of the premises of any of them...

Furthermore the King's most royal Majesty straightly chargeth and commandeth that you and every of you shall from henceforth like true and faithful subjects use yourselves in God's peace and his, according to your duties and allegiance; and that ye shall in no wise hereafter attempt to make or procure any such rebellion, unlawful assemblies, riots, routs, and conspiracies; not at the commandment nor by the authority of any person, of what estate or degree or for what cause so ever it be, shall arise in any forcible council and array, unless it be at the special commandment of the King's Highness or his lieutenant sufficiently authorized for the same.

Appendix 4

Clergy Executed for Involvement in the Post-pardon Revolts¹

Figures in parentheses represent additional executions that probably occurred. They were of the clerics, Swinburne from East Riding, Staynhus from North Riding, Sawley and [Broughton] from Lancashire, and Carter from Cumberland.

Convictions on good evidence

| County | Clergy | Total (including gentry and commons) |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Yorkshire: | | |
| East Riding | 4 (+1) | 11(+1) |
| North Riding | 2 (+1) | 9 (+4) |
| West Riding | 2 | 5(+1) |
| Durham | 2 | 19 |
| Lancashire | 6 (+1) | 16 (+1) |
| Westmorland | -- | 55 |
| Cumberland | 1 (+1) | 21(+1) |
| Northumberland | -- | 1 |
| Total | 17 (+4) | 137 (+8) |

On contrived evidence²

| | | |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Yorkshire: | | |
| East Riding | 2 | 4 |
| North Riding | 1 | 1 |
| West Riding | -- | 2 |
| Lancashire | (+1) | (+1) |
| Total | 3 (+1) | 7(+1) |

¹ Figures taken from *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace*, 411-412.

² Contrived evidence indicates that the accused did not violate the December agreement and the government interpreted their actions to be treasonable.

Names of the rebels condemned at Lincoln³

John Fisher of Scartho, priest
 John Lyon of Buscarthroe, priest
 William Smyth of Donington, priest
 Thomas Yolle of Louth, priest
 William Holton, vicar of Cokryngton
 Ralph Grey, priest
 Thomas Bradley, Richard Warren, William Holme, and James Hodgeson, monks of Barlings
 John Tenant, William Coy, John Frances, William Cowper, Richard Philip, and Hugh
 Lonsedale, monks of Bardeney
 Richard Harrison, abbot of Kirksteade
 Reynold Wade, William Swale, and Henry Jenkinson, monks of Kirksteade

Total: 20 of 34 condemned on 6 March 1537.

Clergymen considered chief instigators of the Lincolnshire rebellion (not included in original indictment)⁴

Thomas Kendal, vicar of Louth
 William Moreland, alias Burreby, monk of Louth Park
 Matthew Mackerel, abbot of Barlings

³ *LP XII* (1), no. 581.

⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 734. Twelve men involved and convicted, including the three clergymen listed above, were in the Tower and were hanged, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn on 26 March.

Vita

Daniel Keith Altazin was born in 1956, the same year that Don Larson of the New York Yankees pitched the only perfect game in the history of the World Series. A lifelong resident of Baton Rouge, Keith received a fine Catholic education at St. Gerard Majella Elementary school until the tuition increased and his working class parents could no longer afford the cost. He then entered the wild and wooly world of public education, attending Lanier Elementary for one year and Park Forest Junior High for three years. Keith graduated from Glen Oaks High School in 1974 and entered LSU that same year. He received his bachelor of science in social studies education in December 1978 and began teaching immediately. Along the way, Keith became a coach, eventually coaching football, basketball, and baseball. In 1987, he accepted the head basketball position at Broadmoor High School in Baton Rouge, a position he held until 1999.

The years of coaching explain why Keith, who often coached three sports, delayed his post-graduate education. However, after experiencing “burn out” due to the rigors of being a head coach, Keith decided it was time to complete his education. His long and storied career as a coach explains his status as a non-traditional graduate student. Thus, in 1999 Keith entered the mater of arts program at Southeastern Louisiana University and received his master’s degree in December of 2003. In March of 2004, Keith was accepted into the doctoral program at LSU.

Under the guidance of Professor Victor Stater, Keith completed his dissertation in May 2011, and earned his doctorate in August of that year.

Keith's wife and travel partner of twenty-seven years, Valerie, has put up with all these years of post-graduate study and now demands that they take dance lessons; Keith remains noncommittal on that issue. They have three wonderful children Kelley, Ryan, and Paul. The couple plans to relocate to Italy in the near future.