Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire

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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, an exploration of Dissent in Restoration Northamptonshire, a comprehensive survey of every parish reveals this phenomenon to be present within all socio-economic groups, both urban and rural, across the county. In explaining this fact, the thesis eschews mono-causal social, economic or topographic factors in favour of others more generally applicable, such as the influence of trade and communication and the persistence of puritan traditions.

An introductory survey of the physical and economic geography of the county, and a review of its puritan background, are followed by a brief historiography of Restoration Dissent. The sources, which include the returns from the 1674 Hearth Tax and the 1676 *Compton Census,* and methodologies used in the above survey, are then discussed.

Through ecclesiastical and secular courts records, Chapter 4 examines the effect of penal statutes on Nonconformists, presentments across the period being found to vary with the exigencies of local and national politics. The mismatch between reported Nonconformity and prosecution is also investigated, as is the persistence of 'obstinate' Dissenters in absenting themselves from the Established Church in favour of illegal gatherings, despite increasingly harsh penalties.

Chapter 5, a prosopographical analysis of dissenting and conformist clergy, suggests that the influence of their particular puritan education, rather than considerations of age, wealth or patronage, played a significant part in the choice of those refusing conformity. For Conformists, abhorrence of separatism was a major factor in their decision.

The final chapter places Northamptonshire Dissent in the wider seventeenth-century context, examining the spread of anti-tolerationist polemics during the Interregnum. The appeal, survival and growth of the Quaker movement are explored, as is the failure of post–toleration initiatives for unity amongst Nonconformists. Finally, the question whether the phenomenon of Dissent during the Restoration period should be considered a disjunction or a continuity in the puritan tradition is addressed.

[c. 78000 words]

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List of Abbreviations

CSPD.	Calendar of State Papers (Domestic).
DWL.	Dr Williams' Library, London.
FMH.	Friends' Meeting House Library, London.
NRO.	Northamptonshire Record Office.
ODNB.	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2000).
OED.	*Oxford English Dictionary.*
PRO.	Public Record Office, London.
QSR.	Quarter Session Roll(s).
VCH.	*The Victoria County History*: (Northamptonshire).
Al. Cantab.	Alumni Cantabrigiensis.
Al. Oxon.	Alumni Oxoniensis.
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford University.
n.d.	No date.

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Introduction

Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration England

Over the past quarter of a century there has been an increased historical interest in those members of post-Restoration English society, both lay and clerical, who in differing ways dissented from the liturgy, custom and practice of the re-established Anglican Church. Its 'spiritual hegemony'[1], newly strengthened by statute and by the reassertion of its canons and ecclesiastical powers following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, engendered disillusionment in those whose hopes had been raised by the promise of 'liberty to tender consciences' given by Charles II shortly before his return to England to take up the throne.[2] Frustration was increasingly experienced from the early years of the Restoration, by those who had hoped for some measure of accommodation within the re-established Church of England and by others who were committed to a 'Puritanisation' and purging of what they saw as a church based on ritual rather than on scriptural tradition, bent on a return to its pre-Civil War Laudian values. As legal enforcement and coercive measures to conform increased, so the degree and nature of Dissent varied. For some clerics, faced with subscription or ejection, and wrestling with their conscience, reluctant conformity with the required Articles outweighed the loss of their benefice. Similarly, for some laymen of pragmatic nature occasional Conformity was seen as a *via media* between conscience and liberty. Others, however, repeatedly or totally absented themselves from what was now compulsory attendance at state-prescribed worship. For more radical Nonconformists the only solution was total dissent from the Anglican Church

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[1] K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1982), p. 220.

[2] Declaration of Breda April 4th 1660 , in S.R.Gardiner (ed.), *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660* (Oxford, 1889), p. 466.

and a move to separatism through the development of alternative forms of worship more congenial to their 'tender consciences', following the path trodden during the Commonwealth by earlier separatists such as Quakers and Baptists. For all of these groups, the decision to dissent was made at considerable economic cost to themselves and, occasionally, to their life or liberty.

In an attempt to explain this phenomenon of Dissent, recent historical research has centred on a variety of core questions: How widespread were the various degrees of Dissent and Sectarianism? Could Dissenters be classified according to particular social, economic or occupational groups? Was the practice of Dissent a characteristic peculiar to certain geographical or topographical areas? Was it predominantly a rural or an urban phenomenon? Could Nonconformity, following the Restoration, be identified in families or in areas known previously to have been associated with earlier forms of Puritanism? These, and many other related questions, have been the focus of recent studies in Protestant Dissent and Sectarianism. As Tim Harris has observed in a survey of the literature on the socio-economic basis of Dissent and the differing conclusions reached by researchers, 'further work clearly needs to be done on the religious sociology of Restoration England .' [3] This thesis is an attempt to address this deficiency and to provide answers to these and other questions concerning Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire.

Following a brief overview of the physical and economic geography of the county and an exploration of the puritan tradition in Northamptonshire,

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[3] T. Harris, P. Seaward and M. Goldie (eds.), *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, 1990), p. 22.

this introductory chapter will examine the historiography of Restoration Dissent, and conclude by defining the objectives of the thesis.

Physical and Economic Geography

Writers of theses on Dissent in any particular county or region often consider it *de rigueur* to preface their research with a detailed geographical (and sometimes geological) survey of the area in question. Whilst such an approach may be of value in specific areas of enquiry, it would appear more suitable to commence this thesis with a general overview of the county, the geographical relationship with its bordering shires, its topography, its major towns and an indication of its rural and urban economies.

The seventeenth-century Rector of Oxenden, Rev John Morton, whose writings on Northamptonshire in 1712 include some pertinent observations of the county at a time close to the period covered by this thesis, described the 'figure' of the county as:

> Oblong and narrow in the North East and gradually stretched out and dilated to the South West, by some seen to resemble a Cone. But even on the basis of the Cone ...it is not Twenty Miles. And this is one of the Broadest parts of the County. The Circumference is usually computed to be 120 miles. [4]

Noting also that its 'Principal Town', Northampton, is 'well-nigh equidistant' from the eastern and western sea borders of England, Morton's 'General Description of the County' opens with a list of the numerous counties which border upon Northamptonshire. With Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire to the east, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire to the south, Warwickshire to the west and Leicestershire, Rutland and Lincoln

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[4] Rev John Morton MA, *The Natural History of Northampton-shire* ... (London, 1712), p. 2.

on its northern borders, it has also been observed by other contemporary and later writers that Northamptonshire has more counties bordering it than any other in England.

Whilst , on the face of it, the shape of the county might appear a purely fortuitous matter, this geographical phenomenon holds deeper significance. In the first place, the diocesan city of Peterborough, which was politically as well as ecclesiastically part of Northamptonshire during the period, was situated at the extreme north east corner of the county over which it enjoyed ecclesiastical oversight. Isolated in a landscape more closely associated with the fenlands of Cambridge which it adjoins, Peterborough also had, in terms of its topography and the consequent economy of the thinly populated Soke, little in common with that of populous Northampton, lying in the fertile land of the valley of the River Nene some forty miles to the southwest. The former city, exploiting its situation as an inland port with connections by river to the east-coast ports of Wisbech and Kings Lynn, was primarily noted for its economic function as an entrepot for the outward and inward shipment of goods. In contrast, the administrative capital of Northampton lay in an area noted both for rich arable farming and for cattle rearing for the burgeoning livestock markets of the town. This isolated position of the See from the rest of the diocese will be suggested as having considerable bearing on the distribution of Dissent within the county.

To the west and north of the county town, where the Jurassic ridge from Dorset to the Humber runs through the middle of the county forming the hilly backbone of limestone, the resulting pastoral uplands were noted for sheep raising. It is from this watershed that the county's rivers run south, east and west into neighbouring counties, forming the geographical as well as the

natural borders of the county along part of their course. Running parallel with the Nene Valley to its north and the Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire borders to the south, lies another of the county's natural regions, geologically described as Oxford Clay, which forms a flat landscape suited to the growing of arable, and especially cereal, crops. Within this area are situated the market towns of Higham Ferrers, Wellingborough and Thrapston. Two other areas where tracts of forest remained, Whittlebury and Salcey to the south of the county town and Rockingham to the north, form another distinct natural region of the county. As John Norden observed, travelling the county in the closing years of the sixteenth century, 'no shire within this land has so little waste grounds, for there is not in a manner any part thereof, but is farmed to some profitable use'.[5] The above brief description should serve to illustrate not only the varying topography of Northamptonshire but also its transitional character. Within its bounds, the physical features of the adjoining counties to the west are gradually assimilated and transformed into those of the counties lying on its eastern borders, with few sharp changes being evident in this subtle transition of landscape and economy.

The near-contemporary map shown in **Fig 1.**, drawn by John Harris, illustrates many of the topographical features described above. Produced in 1712 to accompany Morton's *Natural History of Northamptonshire,* it has been described as 'a map clearly drawn and well engraved, which makes a distinct advance on previous printed maps of the county', particular features of Harris' map being the labelling of the numerous counties which adjoin

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[5] J. Norden, *Peculi Brittaniae Pars Alters or a Delineation of Northamptonshire* (London, 1720).

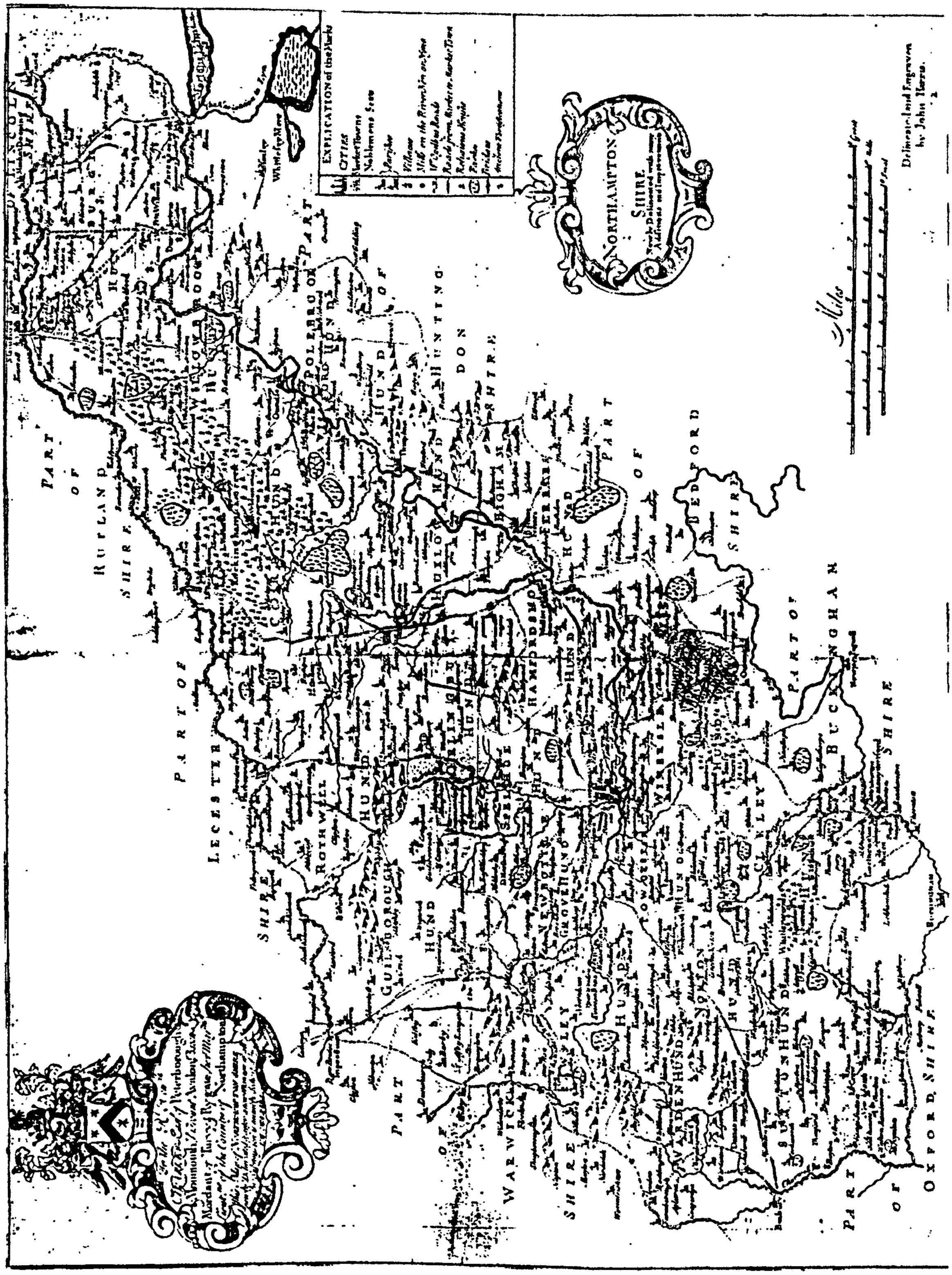

Figure 1: John Harris' 1712 Map of Northamptonshire
(Emblazoned border frame omitted)

Northamptonshire, and the inclusion of roads 'from Market to Market Town' within the county.[6]

Both William Stevenson and Margaret Spufford have argued that in order to achieve a balanced picture of the social and economic status of Dissenters a regional rather than a county-based approach needs to be adopted.[7] This assertion has resulted in other workers in the field feeling the necessity to justify their 'county-based' approach to the study of Dissent. For instance, H. Lancaster, in his research into Wiltshire Dissent, argues that 'dissent in this county was self-contained and that cross-border communication with other dissenters was restricted to only a few parishes.'[8] In contrast it can be argued that, in the case of Northamptonshire, the extra-territorial influences through the passage of trade along these roads both within and across the county, which arose from the county's unique geography, must have affected the daily lives of many of the inhabitants in towns and villages adjoining these routes to a greater extent than in other, more isolated, areas of the country. As Morton remarked, 'the county is a great thorow-fare from the north, [lying] in the trade-way'.[9] This factor of regular cross-border communication should therefore enhance rather than detract from this thesis, which is unashamedly county-based, and offers a unique opportunity to engage, *inter alia,* with the question of the spread of Dissent through the influence of long-distance as well as local trade.

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[6] H. Whitaker, *Printed Maps of Northamptonshire AD 1576-1900* (Northampton, 1948).

[7] W. Stevenson, "The Economic and Social status of Protestant Sectarians in Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire (1650-1725)" Unpublished PhD thesis (Cambridge, 1990). Ch. 1. Also Spufford, *Contrasting Communities – English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974).

[8] H. Lancaster, "Nonconformity and Anglican Dissent in Restoration Wiltshire 1660-1689" (Unpublished PhD thesis Bristol University, 1995) p. 7.

[9] Morton , *The Natural History,* p. 18.

Moving from topographical to economic considerations of Northamptonshire at the close of the seventeenth century, Morton notes the existence of some fourteen market towns, offering a brief yet penetrating description of each. The county town of Northampton, with its four parishes, 'for an inland Town that has no commerce by a Navigable River, is Populous and Rich', its principal manufacture being that of shoes, hosiery being a subsidiary trade. The City of Peterborough, despite its status as the Bishop's seat, is described as 'a Town of no great Esteem' where woollen manufacture is carried out, and where the 'Poorer Sort are usually employed in Carding, Spinning and Knitting of Wool'. The importance of the city as an inland port is also noted by Morton, as is its substantial brewing industry. The possibility of making the River Nene a navigable waterway all the way upstream to Northampton was, according to Morton, examined at the beginning of the seventeenth century and 'the charge ...computed with great exactness'. However, the advantages of transporting 'Sea-coal, Deal and other Commodities of Burthen...at much easier and cheaper rates, and a more advantageous vent for our own natural products [of] Barley, Wheat etc.' appear to have reached an impasse when balanced against both the protectionist interests of Northamptonshire's landed gentry, concerned with the threat of imports of cheaper cereals from neighbouring counties, and the commercial interests of the merchants of Peterborough itself.[10]

Daventry, 'being reckoned a Town of good business', is 'noted for good Inns [and] has a flourishing trade', whilst Wellingborough, 'a populous Parish', has 'besides its fairs and 'a noted corn-market ... and such a number

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[10] Morton , *The Natural History*, p. 5. Also P.R. Brindle, "Politics and Society in Northamptonshire 1649 –1714" Unpublished PhD thesis (Leicester University, 1985), p. 49.

of Lace-makers in the place as few Towns exceed'. Kettering is noted as 'another of our first rate Market Towns. A place of great trade and very full of people owing to the woollen manufacture, especially "Shaloons", 'for which the loom workers there are very famous.' [11] After Oundle, with 'a very good market' (noted by Leland nearly 200 years previously), the remaining towns of Rockingham, Rothwell, Thrapston, Higham Ferrers, Kingscliffe, Towcester, Brackley and Weldon are, according to Morton, of lesser status. Their market-dependent economies were being eclipsed by the rising fortunes of those towns which had developed the more diversified economies noted above. Notwithstanding its lack of a navigable waterway to the coast, by the end of the seventeenth century Northampton had become the pre-eminent market town of the county, in terms of both its prosperity and population. [12] With its famous livestock market, its burgeoning boot and shoe manufacturing industry aided by a plentiful supply of animal skins from Northampton's butchers and by the proximity of the county's oak forests, providing the essential bark for tanning, the resulting promotion of a diversity of associated crafts did much to assist this rise in its prosperity.[13]

The rural economies of sheep and wool, concentrated mainly in the enclosed pasture lands of the western uplands, had their outlets both within the urban woollen manufactories of the county, such as Kettering and Oundle, and in the eastern counties of Norfolk and Suffolk where they were wrought

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[11] Shalloon – a light woollen fabric used for coat linings etc. [OED]

[12] P. Clark & P. Slack make this point, especially in regard to Northampton and Nottingham, as an example of the "progressive polarization in economic fortunes [discerned] within the urban heirarchy" in the late Stuart period; in *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1976), p. 104.

[13] R.L. Greenall, *A History of Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough* (Chichester, 1979), p. 70.

into 'stuffs and bays'.[14] In the mainly 'open' (unenclosed) areas of the county, towards the south-east, especially around the lower Nene Valley and the region of Oxford Clay, the abundance of grain, remarked upon by John Speed, was grown and despatched 'to all quarters' of the Midlands through the grain markets of Peterborough, Wellingborough and Higham Ferrers. Stock raising in the upper Nene Valley served the leather requirements of the boot and shoe industry as well as the demand for horses 'for saddle, coach and cart' which were sold at the four horse fairs held in Northampton every year.[15] Other, smaller scale, industries of quarrying, basket weaving, flax dressing and frame-knitting have also been recorded by commentators on the county's economy, but were of little economic significance during the period in comparison with the major urban and rural activities outlined above.[16]

The above short topographical and economic survey of Northamptonshire will provide a useful background against which an examination of the many aspects of Restoration Dissent, and their possible relationships with the physical and economic geography of the county, can be carried out.

The Puritan Tradition in Northamptonshire

In an examination of the tradition of Dissent in the Elizabethan period in the post-Reformation diocese of Peterborough, Dr William Sheils has traced the rise and persistence of a vigorous, yet diffused, Puritanism in the county of

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[14] Morton, *The Natural History,* p. 15.

[15] Greenall *A History of Northamptonshire,* p .71.

[16] Thomas Fuller, *A History of the Worthies of England* (London, 1840), Vol 1 p.224.

Northamptonshire.[17] Having examined its early aspirations and the resultant confrontations with an established church securely bolstered by the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity, he believes that, after the turn of the century, the realisation by many Puritans that their early hopes for concessions from the establishment would not be forthcoming caused them to turn their efforts inward and away from the hoped-for institutional reforms. Of critical importance in his analysis is the assertion that the sixteenth-century puritan tradition, once established in a particular area, was sufficiently strong to withstand the threat from Arminianism in the early years of the following century and, as a consequence, 'established the main outlines of the ecclesiastical topography of the diocese for the next 150 years.' In his view, at the beginning of this period 'most [Puritans] would have settled for a substantial reduction in matters ceremonial and a reformed system of episcopacy which produced smaller diocesan units served by bishops who were in close touch with the parochial clergy in their charge.' It was the failure to achieve such concessions from the government and the stress by Puritans on regular and public preaching to the laity, together with their realisation that such changes could not be brought about within the existing church framework, which drove many to press for more fundamental reforms, thus giving vent to the increasing tensions between the Established Church and puritan ambitions. [18]

Percival Wiburn , a Marian exile who first described Puritans as 'the hotter sort of protestants', is acknowledged as one of the earliest clerical founders of the puritan tradition in Northampton on his return from Geneva in

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[17] W.J. Sheils, *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558 – 1610* (Northampton, 1979).

[18] Sheils, *Puritans,* pp. 3 & 147.

1559. His earlier sequestration and deprivation from a London benefice through his involvement in the 'Vestiarian Controversy', a refusal to assent 'to the prescribed costume and other requirements', characterised the early confrontations by Puritans with the church of the Elizabethan settlement. In the view of the former, matters of clerical dress and ritual, as practised by the Established Church, were scripturally improper, whilst Conformists believed that the civil magistracy had the right to determine such indifferent (*adiaphoric*) matters. It will be seen that this debate was to remain a continuing theme central to the controversy between Conformists and Dissenters over the period under discussion, with arguments for and against the accommodation of such views within a wider church on the one hand, and coercion, deprivation and prosecution of those who refused to subscribe, on the other.

Invited in 1570 to a Northampton living by a local group of puritan gentry closely associated with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Wiburn became 'prominent among the agitators for [further] reform'. Believing, like other Puritans, that the Edwardian Reformation had not gone far enough in its removal of all vestiges of papist rituals from the church, and in the institution of a truly bible-based church, he began a 'religious revolution which swept through the area in the following five years.'[19] Establishing 'exercises' or 'prophesyings' in the town, he finally fell foul of Bishop Scambler of Peterborough in 1571 over a proposal to institute a Geneva-style theocracy for Northampton. Presumably, for Scambler, charged with improving standards of clerical recruitment and pastoral care during the early years of

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[19] C. S. Knighton, 'Wiburn, Percival (1533/4 – 1606)' ODNB.

the Elizabethan settlement, this was a step too far, for it resulted in Archbishop Parker's removal of Wiburn from his living in the county town to nearby Whiston, where he continued to attract support.

With these 'exercises' and 'prophesyings', at first held chiefly in the county town, Wiburn offered the chance for regular meetings of the clergy to explore and discuss scriptural texts, providing 'an integrated and continuing opportunity for local initiative in matters of clerical discipline and pastoral care and working in support of the more distant episcopal authority [at Peterborough].' These gatherings, which were soon spreading out to other market towns, notably Daventry and Kettering and their hinterland, did much to advance the cause and intellectual standard of Protestantism in the area. Becoming the *classis* in the next decade and continuing as 'lectures by combination' in the following century, Wiburn's initiative established a continuing and markedly puritan tradition of Godly preaching. Whilst some modern historians support the Laudian claim that 'the ratsbane of lecturing' was both symptom and cause of the undermining of the established order of the Church of England , others, such as Patrick Collinson, who is at pains to play down the subversive potential of the open-air preachings, reject this post-revolutionary hindsight of a pre-revolutionary phenomenon and stress their normalcy as a 'device for a regular provision of preaching (by beneficed or other clergy), typically in a market town and weekly, on market day, or once a month.' [20]

Despite the personal ban on 'prophesyings' by Queen Elizabeth in 1577, it was not until the last decades of the sixteenth century that the

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[20] Notably supporters of the argument of lectures as subversive, are Christopher Hill, Paul Seaver and Mark Curtis: for the opposing view see P. Collinson, *Godly People -Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983), pp. 467 to 498.

tradition of puritan preaching in Northamptonshire and elsewhere underwent a significant transition. Following the suspension in 1577 of Archbishop Grindal, whose sympathy for puritan preaching had allowed these prophesyings to flourish, the 'uncompromising demands' of Archbishop Whitgift's 'three articles' of 1584 required unconditional subscription and the exclusive use of the Book of Common Prayer by all those who wished to practise their ministry. In the diocese of Peterborough alone, some forty-five of the parochial clergy initially refused to conform to Whitgift's demands. Although moderated after widespread opposition by members of both the ecclesiastical and political hierarchy, particularly Lord Burghley, in whose gift were a number of parishes in the Peterborough diocese occupied by puritan clergy, the end result was a containment of Puritanism to that of its moderate practitioners, characterised by Sheils as 'an acceptable level of dissent'. For these new 'Dissenters' this marked a time to move from conflict with the establishment to the task of reform through promoting a policy of 'presbyterianism within episcopacy'. It was, however, the publication by radical Puritans of the notorious 'Marprelate Tracts', printed and distributed during 1589 from the Knightley home at Fawsley, with their vicious attacks on the person of Whitgift and on the office of the episcopate in general, which was to attract the full force of the anti-puritan wing of the Established Church and have a major effect on the loss of sympathy for moderate Puritanism across the nation. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, there was a widespread clampdown on radical puritan preaching. Under the watchful eyes of Whitgift and of Bancroft, Bishop of London, 'lectures by combination' by moderate Puritans remained firmly within the Protestant main-stream, Godly but conformist, with the aim of 'promoting Protestant piety in parishes and

households across the land.'[21] Sheils cites the example of the Northamptonshire puritan cleric, William Proudlove of Weedon Bec in the west of the county, who was 'content to administer to the godly within [his] congregations', which ultimately paved the way to that form of puritan expression called non-separating Congregationalism.'[22] Those who decided not to conform and to separate totally from the Church of England suffered the serious consequences of imprisonment or death.

Robert Browne, (1550? - 1633), who was born and died within the Peterborough diocese, was one of the earliest Separatists who denied any form of episcopal authority and espoused a 'a true church composed of sincere Christians in gathered congregations' where election of ministers, dispensing of the sacraments, preaching and church discipline were administered by the whole congregation guided by its officers. During a turbulent life, Browne's nonconformist preaching, writings and extreme views led to his arrest in 1585. Only his distant family connection to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, saved him from imprisonment or execution, the fate of other active Separatists. For the 'Brownists' who remained, the shocking *volte-face* of their leader and pastor in signing a 'submission' as the price of freedom, in which he accepted the authority of Whitgift and the Church of England, was deeply distressing. It was made even less palatable to them by Browne's acceptance of a Church of England living six years later, at Thorpe Achurch near Oundle, where he continued until the year before his death. No doubt a deeply committed puritan thinker who saw no hope of reformation of

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[21] J.Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (London, 2000), p. 96.

[22] Sheils, *The Puritans* p. 68.

the church from within, Browne's character would appear, on the one hand, to have lacked the courage of his own convictions, whilst 'his views on ecclesiology, church polity and church discipline eventually merged with those of other Separatist, semi-Separatist and puritan thinkers to influence the development of Congregationalism in England and elsewhere.' [23]

In the years immediately following the accession of James I in 1603, the restrictions on 'prophesyings' and 'exercises' and 'lectures by combination' were eased somewhat. The new Stuart monarch desired religious peace and initially fostered a measure of accommodation, prepared to tolerate the moderate Puritanism of those who chose to remain within the Anglican Church. Whilst the more radical puritan preachers were ejected or deprived of their livings, only the more flagrant Nonconformists and Separatists were prosecuted. Among the former, some sixteen clergy in the diocese of Peterborough who refused to conform to these canons were deprived of their livings, a greater number than in any other diocese, greater even than in London (thirteen) and Norwich (nine), thus emphasising the strength and continuity of the puritan tradition within the county, and causing Bishop Dove to describe his diocese as 'the nest and nursery of factious ministers.' [24]

The accession of Charles I and his appointment of William Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury precipitated a collision course between the increasingly rigid conformist policy of the Established Church and the objectives of moderate Puritans working to establish a broad church with Godly preaching and ministry.

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[23] Michael E. Moody, 'Browne, Robert (1550? – 1633)', ODNB.

[24] Sheils, *The Puritans,* pp. 81& 84.

As Wrightson has observed, 'the 1630s ... saw the final parting of the ways between the hierarchical and puritan approaches to the problem of reformation'.[25] The disastrous policies of a monarch combining uncompromisingly anti-Calvinist beliefs and overtly Catholic sympathies within both church and court, resulted in increasing prosecution in Northamptonshire, as elsewhere, of puritan clergy whose ministries were not in line with the liturgical practices of an increasingly Arminian church. In Sheils' view, 'if the puritans had appeared dogmatic and intransigent in the 1580s, it was the establishment that was to appear so in the 1620s and 1630s'.[26] Despite this, in a number of parishes in the Peterborough diocese, notably the market towns of Daventry and Kettering and especially in the county town, puritan forms of worship were maintained. Amongst these, the most notable was in the parish of All Saints Northampton where Jeremiah Lewis embraced and continued the puritan practice of a preaching ministry and pastoral care which had been established there in the mid-sixteenth century by the incumbent William Jennings, countenanced at that time by the Bishop of Peterborough, and earning the church a reputation for its 'daring irregularities'. The association of All Saints Church with Puritanism continued throughout the Civil War, when the Arminian ascendancy was overthrown in a county whose puritan inhabitants embraced the Parliamentary cause with notable enthusiasm. This great church, in the centre of the town, 'virtually becoming a cathedral of Puritanism in Northamptonshire, both for the Borough and the surrounding countryside'[27] and, as will be seen,

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[25] Wrightson, *English Society,* p. 214.

[26] Sheils , *The Puritans,* p. 146.

[27] Alan Everitt, 'The Local Community and the Great Rebellion' in R C Richardson (ed),*The English Civil Wars – Local Aspects* (Stroud, 1997), p. 23.

continued this tradition into the Restoration under successive puritan ministers.

In a county where radical Dissent embraced such vigorous and diverse forms, the above resumé provides both the background and a springboard for detailed research into Dissent in Restoration Northamptonshire.

Historiography of Restoration Dissent

Since the emergence of Dissent in the seventeenth century, commentators and historians have theorised on the possible causal factors for the occurrence of this phenomenon in some areas and not in others, nationally, regionally and parochially. John Aubrey, the Wiltshire topographer and antiquary, writing in the 1680s, was possibly one of the first to link the existence or absence of Dissent amongst the population with certain topographical features of their environment and the social, cultural, and economical influences which he believed resulted from them.[28] His celebrated contrasting of North and South Wiltshire respectively into 'chalk and cheese' regions, and the differing characteristics of the inhabitants within them which predisposed them to favour or reject Conformity or Dissent, is acknowledged by many modern historians as worthy of further research. Refinements of this view, together with the positing of other contributory factors, have been the subject of continuing research by modern scholars, including David Underdown, Margaret Spufford, Joan Thirsk and Alan Everitt. [29]

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[28] John Aubrey, *The Natural History of Wiltshire* (Wiltshire Topographical Society, 1847).

[29] For a summary of Spufford's work on this subject see above pp. 17-20: Also: J. Thirsk, *Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History in England, 1500-1750* (London, 1987) and Alan Everitt, "Nonconformity in Country Parishes" in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *Land, Church and People*

The outcome of the work of these latter researchers would appear to suggest that there is 'no simple equation between agricultural society and Anglicanism' or 'industrial parishes and dissent' either in the seventeenth century or later. Nor, according to Margaret Spufford and William Stevenson, was Dissent the prerogative of any particular social or economic class. In order to obtain any plausible explanation for the proliferation (or otherwise) of Dissent in certain areas, such large-scale generalisations need to be eschewed in favour of 'a microscopic examination of the various ... economies within each society... and the social structure of each local community'. Professor Everitt also observes that, in his opinion, 'the proliferation of dissent was due to a conjunction of favourable circumstances rather than to any single universal cause'.[30] For a number of researchers into the phenomenon of Restoration Dissent, particular interest has centred upon the social and economic status of Dissenters, both individually and collectively. Various detailed studies have been carried out at parish, hundred and county level, both by those working in isolation and by others who see their more broad-based research complementing wider regional studies.

The work of Dr Margaret Spufford, which has centred on religious belief and Dissent in rural communities in East Anglia, has led her to search for possible determinants of Dissent within them. Examining a wide variety of possible factors including the influence of residential landlords, the provision of schools, the effect of pluralist clergy, and the differing topography of

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- *Essays presented to Professor H.P.R. Finberg.* (Brit Agricultural Hist Soc, 1970). For David Underdown's sustained support of Aubrey's 'Chalk and Cheese' theory, see this author's *Revel, Riot & Rebellion* (Oxford, 1985), chapter 4 especially .

[30] A. Everitt, in Thirsk (ed.), *Agricultural Regions.*

known areas of Dissent, Spufford rejects, as reductionist, the 'Terling thesis' espoused by Wrightson and Levine.[31]

From a comprehensive study of this eponymous Essex village, Wrightson and Levine have concluded that the phenomenon of Dissent was closely associated with the spread of literacy through a particular socio-economic class, giving this group an 'enabling skill' making its members more disposed than others towards the adoption of puritan and dissenting attitudes to religion in general, and to their own salvation in particular. Furthermore, the authors of this thesis assert that this dissenting group was 'disproportionately, though never ... exclusively, drawn from the middling sorts of people; minor gentry, yeomen, husbandmen tradesmen and their families.'[32] Dr Spufford's research, however, has led her to a different conclusion: that 'no single social background is common to all communities which were deeply affected by Dissent' and that 'no determinism, economic, social or geographical, will fully account for the existence of religious conviction.'[33] Her work has been the acknowledged progenitor of further studies by others who have concentrated on even more detailed research into the nature of Dissent in the East Anglia region, notably that of William Stevenson.[34] In his comprehensive and meticulous examination of the economic status of dissenting groups through the analysis of Hearth Tax returns and the collection of occupational data,

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[31] See K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty & Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525-1700* (London, 1979), *passim*, and a later reaffirmation by Wrightson in his postscript chapter "Terling Revisited" pp. 207-8 in 2nd edition (Oxford, 1995).

[32] Wrightson, *English Society,* p. 219.

[33]. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities,* p. 352. See also: "The social status of some seventeenth century Dissenters" in *Studies in Church History,* Vol. 8 (1972) and "The Dissenting Churches in Cambridgeshire from 1660-1700" in *Proceedings of Cambridgeshire Antiquarian Soc.* LXI (1968) by the same author.

[34] W. Stevenson, "Protestant Sectarians".

combined with a corrective and compensatory swing away from impersonal statistics to a microcosmic examination of personalities within a small community in Huntingdonshire, Stevenson has produced further evidence in support of Spufford's theories of the nature of Dissent.[35] This group of researchers has together concluded that Sectarianism and Dissent were never the sole prerogative of a particular social or economic group in general, but phenomena which were broadly shared across all major divisions of society. There is, however, a *caveat*: whilst research into individual dissenting communities might uncover a marked predominance of a particular social or economic class, meaningful conclusions can be drawn only from research data collected from 'whole heretical or sectarian groups' over a wide region.[36] Dr Stevenson's research has also pointed up the remarkable extent of social integration evident between heterodox and orthodox members of the community in the small Huntingdonshire parish of Fenstanton, which he has examined in detail, his conclusions challenging the view of Christopher Hill that 'popular sectarian religion (contributed) to the dislocation ...of traditional community life.'[37]

Other researchers in the 'Spuffordian' school have fitted further pieces into this increasingly comprehensive jigsaw of the pattern and spread of radical Dissent, through examination of a number of other pertinent areas of enquiry. Investigation into Lollard society in the Chilterns in the sixteenth century has led Derek Plumb to suggest that the establishment of Lollardy

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[35] The research topics embracing the broad nature of Restoration Dissent, and conclusions reached by Dr Spufford's 'team', are set out succinctly in "The Importance of Religion in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" in M. Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995).

[36] Spufford (ed.), *Rural Dissenters,* p. 5.

[37] Stevenson , "Protestant Sectarians".

there, at the time of the Reformation, appears to have exhibited a diverse range of socio-economic characteristics which were to be shared by Restoration dissenting groups, laying the ground for a nonconformist power base 'from which later sects were to spring'.[38] The critical importance of road communications and trading links in the spread of Dissent across the country, together with the persistent connections between certain occupations and Dissent and the more tentative suggestions of inherited family disposition to dissenting values, have also been explored. [39]

P.R. Brindle, in a socio-political study of Northamptonshire covering the period between the end of the Civil War and the accession of George I, whilst acknowledging the presence of Dissent in every income group, does however find a close correlation between poverty, political unrest and Sectarianism. [40]

In addition to the specific work of this dedicated group of researchers, various other studies of Restoration Dissent and Sectarianism over a number of different areas of the country have been carried out. Whilst socio-economic aspects of Dissent have been the particular interest of some historians, for others their main focus has been on the topographical and occupational factors associated within dissenting communities, the political consequences of

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[38] Derek Plumb, "A Gathered Church? Lollards and their society", in M. Spufford (ed.), *Rural Dissenters*, pp. 132 – 163.

[39] For discussion on trade and communications and on Dissenters' occupations see Spufford (ed.) *Rural Dissenters*, pp. 40-58. For a discussion on inherited heterodoxy see N. Evans, "The Descent of Dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds" in the same work, pp. 288 – 308.

[40] Brindle, " Politics and Society".

Dissent and Anglican reactions to it, and the internal divisions and organisational aspects of various dissenting groups.[41]

No study of Northamptonshire Dissent could be properly undertaken without considerable reference to the seminal works on the county history by both Bridges and Baker, the Victoria County History of Northamptonshire, and Isham-Longden's fifteen volume reference work on the clergy of Northamptonshire and Rutland.[42] There is also an abundance of secondary material from more modern historians dealing with Nonconformity which greatly assists in placing the experience of Northamptonshire Dissent within the wider national context.[43]

The work of other researchers is centred on particular aspects of Restoration Nonconformity. Typical of such works are those of William Braithwaite who, in his seminal work on Quakerism, provides much of the important background, both nationally and locally, on the early years of the 'Society of Friends', whilst Adrian Davies, a more recent researcher, concentrates on the sociological aspects of the movement.[44] Similarly, John Cliffe examines the support for Nonconformity offered by the gentry, and their

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[41] Typical of the wide range of research in this area are: P.W. Jackson, "Nonconformists and Society in Devon" Unpublished PhD thesis (Exeter, 1986) ; H.Lancaster, "Nonconformity and Anglican Dissent in Restoration Wiltshire" Unpublished PhD thesis (Bristol, 1995); D.L. Wykes, "Religious Dissent and the Trade and Industry of Leicester 1660-1720" Unpublished PhD thesis, (Leicester, 1987); A. Anderson, "From Puritanism to Nonconformity – a study in the development of Protestant dissent with special reference to Yorkshire" Unpublished PhD thesis (Hull, 1980) etc. etc. There are also a considerable number of short papers articles and monographs published by various county record societies dealing with particular dissenting denominations, sects and areas. See bibliography for details.

[42] J. Bridges, *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire* (1791).
G. Baker, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northamptonshire* (1822-1841)
A History of the County of Northamptonshire (VCH) 3 vols. (London, 1902-1930).
H.Isham-Longden, T*he Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500* (Northampton, 1942-52), 16 vols.

[43] See Secondary Bibliography.

[44] W. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism* (Cambridge , reprint 1955) , *The Second Period of Quakerism* (York ,1979) and A. Davies, *Quakers in English Society 1655-1725* (Oxford, 2000).

close ties with puritan Divines in the second half of the seventeenth century, whilst themselves remaining in communion with the Church of England. [45]

Since a considerable part of this thesis is given over to an exploration of the prosecution of Nonconformity in both the ecclesiastical courts of the diocese and civil courts of the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions, a familiarity with the workings of these two bodies has been found necessary. For the workings of the former courts, Colin Chapman's *Sex, Sin and Probate* has been an invaluable source of reference, as have the works of Dowdell, Osborne and Shoemaker in providing background knowledge on the workings the civil judiciary of the period. [46]

Victorian nonconformist writers, often inspired by the centenary of a particular church foundation or the celebration of a noted pastor, have provided a valuable source of interesting commentaries on the history and the 'founding fathers' of a number of Independent chapels in Northamptonshire. Although not always of the same disciplined form as the writings of academic historians, and often laced with over-elaborate encomia for their subjects, they nevertheless form important sources for the period. [47]

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[45] J.T. Cliffe *The Puritan Gentry Beseiged 1650-1700* (London, 1993).

[46] C. Chapman, *Sex Sin and Probate – Ecclesiastical Courts, ,Officials and Records* (Dursley, 1992). E. G. Dowdell, *A Hundred Years of Quarter Sessions - The Government of Middlesex 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 1932). Also B. Osborne, *The Justices of the Peace 1361-1848 - a History of the Justices of the Peace for the Counties of England* (Shaftesbury, 1960) and R.B. Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment – Petty crime and law in London and rural Middlesex, c. 1660-1725,* (Cambridge, 1991).

[47] T. Coleman, *Memorials of Independent Churches in Northamptonshire* (London, 1853) and N Glass, *The Early History of the Independent Church at Rothwell, alias Rowell in Northamptonshire* (Northampton , 1871).

Objectives

With the few exceptions already noted, the various aspects of Dissent and Sectarianism in Northamptonshire discussed above have not been widely researched for the Restoration period. A primary objective of this thesis will be to identify and determine the social and economic status of Dissenters during this period and their distribution within the county. It will explore the various groups into which those who eschewed the Anglican Church formed themselves and identify others who, though dissatisfied with many aspects of the Established Church, chose to remain within its bounds. Of equal importance will be the task of establishing which of the theories propounded above, those of Aubrey and Underdown, Spufford, Brindle, or Wrightson and Levine, explaining the existence and spread of dissenting opinions and practice, relate most closely to the various dissenting groups in Northamptonshire. The relationships between Dissenters and the communities within which they existed will also be investigated, as will the political, economic or hereditary factors which may have been formative or contributory in the adoption and spread of Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Northamptonshire during the period following the restoration of the Stuart monarchy.

In Chapter 1 the sources available - both quantitative and qualitative – for the investigation into Northamptonshire Dissent during the period will be reviewed, together with the necessary *caveats* on their use in this investigation. This will be followed by an assessment of the methodologies of other researchers, particularly that of Dr Stevenson in his use of the Hearth Tax as an indicator of economic status and its validity as a tool to be adopted for this particular county. Chapters 2 and 3 will undertake an extensive occupational,

socio-economic and geographical analysis of Dissent within the County, with a comprehensive statistical survey, parish by parish, which will allow conclusions to be drawn on the validity of the many possible factors, suggested by the work of previous researchers, as contributing to the existence and spread of Dissent. The various forms of Dissent, Separatist and semi-Separatist, and the nature of sectarian groups, are also explored.

In Chapter 4 an extensive statistical analysis of documentary sources will enable the local patterns of prosecution in the ecclesiastical and secular courts to be discerned which, when set alongside evidence from other counties, allows comparison and contrasts to be made. In addition, the effect of national politics on the actions of the diocesan and secular courts is examined, together with an assessment of the effectiveness of the measures introduced by Church and State in their attempts to enforce conformity across the period. Chapter 5 will examine the personalities and religious viewpoints of many of the notable conformist and dissenting clergy in Northamptonshire, using a prosopographical approach, in an attempt to counterbalance the inevitable depersonalisation inherent in the qualitative analyses offered earlier.

Chapter 6 will place Northamptonshire Nonconformity within the context of a wider period, exploring the phenomenon of separatism and Sectarianism and the effect of the anti-tolerationist legacy upon it, at the commencement of the second half of the seventeenth century. The fortunes of Nonconformity in the first post-tolerationist decade will also be examined. A concluding overview of the thesis will be offered, together with the question as to whether the experience of Dissent in Northamptonshire during the period of the restored Stuart monarchy should be properly viewed as a continuity or a

disjunction within the wider framework of the tradition of Puritanism from Reformation to toleration.

Chapter 1

Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire

Sources and Methodology

Ecclesiastical Sources

In an attempt to quantify the extent of Nonconformity and Sectarianism within the county in terms of its proportion to the total population of Northamptonshire, the *Compton Census* of 1676 for the Diocese of Peterborough, existing both in a copied manuscript form at Northampton Record Office,[1] and in a printed form in Anne Whiteman's *Critical Edition*, stands as a prime candidate among the documentary evidence extant for the period under investigation.[2] The Census itself is incomplete, with returns for the south-western deaneries of the diocese, those of Brackley, Northampton and Preston missing. However, in the County Record Office, amongst a collection of papers of John Palmer, Archdeacon of Northampton, there is a copy of the returns for the diocese compiled by him, dated April 1676. In addition, there is a summary of his answers to enquiries requested some six years earlier by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the subject of conventicles held in the western deaneries of the Diocese, dated 1669, which includes important data on the areas missing from the *Compton* returns.[3]

According to David Wykes, who has made a study of this latter return, the request for this was made by Archbishop Sheldon, in an effort to gauge the

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[1]NRO. X650.17 : MS Salt: "A Copy of a Religious Census of the Diocese of Peterborough made by Commission under order of the Bishop of London 1676", together with a table of all the returns from the Province of Canterbury.

[2] A. Whiteman, *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition* (Oxford, 1986).

[3] NRO. Fermor Hesketh (Baker) MS708. "An Account of the Conventicles Held in the Western Deaneryes of the Diocese of Peterborough. An Autographed Manuscript by John Palmer, with his conclusions in answer to enquiries from the Archbishop of Canterbury on the extent of Nonconformism in Northamptonshire – dated 11th August 1669. "

effectiveness 'as an instrument for the suppression of illegal Nonconformist assemblies'of the first Conventicle Act (16 Car.II c.4), which had recently expired.[4] As one of the few surviving records of the 1676 returns for the archdiocese of Canterbury, abstracted from the 'bills' submitted to diocesan authorities, Palmer's copy of the figures, collected for him in Northamptonshire, is of considerable interest. This manuscript shows evidence (and some explanations) of 'adjustments' to the figures carried out by him prior to the submission of the tabulated returns to Lambeth. R.H. Evans, in a similar examination of the 1669 returns for the Archdeaconry of Leicester, has pointed out that such discrepancies not only raise serious doubts as to the integrity of the returns, but also poses interesting questions as to the reasons behind them.[5] Whether such adjustments or omissions were due to genuine confusion, a misunderstanding by the collectors of the questions posed in the census, a conscious effort by parish officers or clerics to hide the truth, or errors of transcription, has also been extensively discussed by Whiteman. The resulting implications of these inaccuracies for Northamptonshire are examined below.

In its General Analysis, the neatly tabulated columns of Conformists, Papists and Nonconformists and the ratios between them, listed for nearly every diocese in the country, temptingly invite comparison both within and between them. But, as Whiteman has pointed out in her critical examination of the Census, there are many *caveats* to be observed in any attempted

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[4] D.L. Wykes, "The Church and Early Dissent" in *Northamptonshire Past and Present* Vol. 8 No 3: (Northampton, 1992), pp. 197-209.

[5] R..H. Evans, "Nonconformists in Leicestershire in 1669" in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society*, Vol. 25 (1949).

interpretation of these figures. The returns from the Peterborough Diocese in particular are idiosyncratic in respect of Palmer's understanding of the requirements of the Census questions, especially in the definition of 'Conformist' and 'Non-conformist' totals. Whilst the majority of the *Census* returns throughout the See of Canterbury interpret 'Conformists' either as men over 16 years old or (adult) men and women, Palmer's returns for Peterborough Diocese were, in many cases, compiled or adjusted to include children under 16 – effectively the total population of a Parish.[6] In the Archdeacon's private papers his own headings for the returns in various categories are individualistic in their listing of the various categories as 'Familys, 'Persons Young & Old', 'Popish Recusants' and 'Obstinate Separatists' whereas, in the final compilation of the Salt manuscript, they remain in the definitive 'Lambeth' form prescribed by Henry Compton, Bishop of London, who administered the Survey at Archbishop Sheldon's request. [7]

In view of the above, it might reasonably be assumed from Palmer's returns that the category of 'Conformists' for the Diocese of Peterborough would indicate a population figure for the whole Diocese. However, any conclusions drawn from these figures will depend on the reliance that can be placed on Palmer's arbitrary adjustments and his treatment of the returns before their onward transmission to Lambeth. The 'multipliers', which he used when converting individuals into family totals, are explained, to some

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[6] Whiteman compares the returns of Peterborough, where some 70% of the count of 'Conformists' included men women and children, with those of all other dioceses where the figure is believed to lie between 10% and 16%. See Whiteman, *Compton Census* , p. 380.

[7] NRO. Fermore Hesketh (Baker) MS 708, "1676 An Account taken at the Archdeacon's Easter Visitation April 10-19 upon 3 enquiries sent out by the Apparitors before the visit according to an order sent from my Ld Bishop of London to my LB of Peterborough and by him to the Archdeacon " pp. 85 *et seq.*

extent, in a gloss which accompanies his copy of the returns. However, the extent to which Palmer 'rounded up' his totals (there is a predominance of figures ending in a zero in the Peterborough returns), and the possible omissions or inaccuracies which may have occurred during the various stages between collection within the parishes and their final collation into the Salt MS, cannot be determined.

From Palmer's figures, the total population of the Peterborough Diocese would appear to be 91,958 souls, but since this thesis is concerned with the County of Northamptonshire, which forms only part of the Peterborough Diocese (albeit the major one), a deduction of Palmer's totals for the remaining geographical area - that of Rutland - must be made, making for a Northamptonshire total of some 82,000 souls, which does not allow for omissions in the Peterborough return, such as those for 'Parishes under Peculiar Jurisdiction'.[8] However, recent demographic research comparing the *Compton Census* figures with other population estimates for the period, has revealed considerable shortcomings in the figures for Northamptonshire as well as in other counties. Wrigley and Schofield have suggested, through back-projection of known demographic data, that the returns from the 1676 *Compton Census* , as well as those which survive from Archbishop Whitgift's 1603 enquiries into Communicants, Non-Communicants and Recusants, even when it is known that these have already been corrected/adjusted to include those under 16 years of age, result in a serious shortfall of some 33% of the real population totals. In this respect they conclude that 'it was under-enumeration, rather than the prevalence of Nonconformity in the later

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[8] Whiteman, *Compton Census* (Oxford, 1986), p. 379. Other calculations, based on the Compton returns but also taking other factors into account have arrived at a "constructed total" for Northamptonshire of around 88,750. [See p.lxxvi and Appendix G].

seventeenth century that was the chief cause of deficiencies in the returns' (of the *Compton Census*).[9]

The *Census* figures for 'Conformists' and whether these represent the total population, males only, or all those over 16, are relevant in this thesis only insofar as they relate to the associated figures for 'Non-conformists' within the county. Thus, the question of the validity of these latter returns arises in how Palmer interpreted the third question required by the Census – 'the number of [non RC] dissenters... who obstinately refuse or wholly absent themselves from Communion of the Church of England.' In the 1669 "Account of Conventicles in the Western Deaneries of the Diocese", compiled by Palmer in response to an enquiry inaugurated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, there is an indication that the Archdeacon recognised the common occurrence of partial-conformity amongst the church-goers within his Archdeanery. In the concluding remarks to the report, he makes a conscious distinction between the 'Conventiclers' as 'semi-Separatists' and the 'Separatists' who [taken together]...

> are in proportion to the rest of the people as 11 to a whole congregation. And if the one half of those do still frequent Church (as I verilly believe they do) then the number of them that wholly separate will be found to be but as 5 or 6 to a congregation [10]

Such a distinction may well have explained the title, in his collated returns of the third question in the *Compton Census* on the number of Nonconformists,

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[9] E.A. Wrigley & R..S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871- A Reconstruction* (London, 1981), p. 570.

[10] NRO. Fermor Hesketh (Baker) MS 708. [Palmer's General Answers (numbered 1 &2) to the enquiry propounded by his Grace the Lord Archbishop]. David Wykes, in his review of Palmer's "Account", also remarks that this "...partial Conformity is now recognised by modern historians as a particular feature of Presbyterianism. See Wykes, "Early Dissent", p. 209.

referring to them as 'Obstinate Separatists'. It would be reasonable therefore to conclude that, for Palmer at least, this category would be reserved for those such as Quakers and Baptists and the more radically minded Independents who had made a conscious and thorough-going rejection of the Anglican Church. As for partial Conformists, Presbyterians and the less radical Independents, Palmer may have given many of them the benefit of doubt in the 1676 *Census* Returns. Whether the incumbents of the parishes under his jurisdiction who were responsible for their own returns also thought the same way is, however, a matter for conjecture.

From the above it can be concluded that categorisation of Dissenters for the purpose of the 1676 Census, whether 'Obstinate' or 'Partial', let alone those who wished to conceal their true religious confession from the ecclesiastical authorities, is fraught with difficulty and as a result makes placing too great a reliance on quantitative analysis of data, derived from these returns, extremely questionable.

The overall figures given for the Peterborough Diocese in the 1676 Census returns indicate the degree of *reported* Nonconformity in the County to be less than 2.5% of the total population. However, bearing in mind all the above *caveats*, it would appear unwise to approach the exploration of Protestant Nonconformity in Northamptonshire using the numerical returns, in more than a very limited sense.

The same reservations also apply to the quantitative use of data from Palmer's 1669 report on the Conventicles in the western deaneries of the Diocese.[11] G Lyon Turner, in his *Detailed and Expository* of the Episcopal

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[11] See above p. 27.

Returns, has attempted to derive from available returns across the country, meaningful figures of the number of Teachers, Houses, conventicles and Conventiclers, together with an assessment of the relative strength of dissenting groups.[12] Despite the fact that Northamptonshire is not included in his tabulations, since the existence of a return for this county was not known to Turner at the time of the publication of this work, the somewhat tortuous process of attributing an unknown constant to the totals of these returns and then computing an average value for it across the country, seems to be a statistical exercise of dubious value. Turner's calculations appear to neglect plentiful evidence that Dissenters were in the habit of attending a number of conventicles held in different locations across the county, thus giving a very real distortion to any data derived from these returns. As will be suggested, a qualitative use of this data may well be more rewarding, the *Compton Census* and the "Account of Conventicles" being useful in identifying areas of known dissenting activity rather than its use in absolute quantitative terms. The difficulties described above, faced by those compiling the returns have, according to Anne Whiteman, made the hope of obtaining [from the Census] 'accurate numbers of papists and Dissenters at any specific time in the Restoration period... a pipe-dream.'[13]

Another major primary source amongst the ecclesiastical records of the period, is Bishop William Lloyd's 1683 report to his Archbishop following his first visitation to his new diocese of Peterborough.[14] In this, Lloyd details the

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[12] G. Lyon Turner, *Original records of early nonconformity under persecution and indulgence* (London, 1914), Vol 3 pp. 105 *et seq.*

[13] Whiteman, *Compton Census,* p. lxxvii.

[14] "An Account of the Present State of the Bishoprick of Peterborough delivered to my Lord of Canterbury's Grace in 1683". Bodl. Rawlinson MS. d.1163. f.8

degree of Nonconformity he has discovered within the diocese, together with measures he has taken, both disciplinary and pastorally, over his first three years, to re-establish conformity amongst his clerical subordinates and the laity. The value of this document lies not only in its informative data concerning the levels of Dissent and Sectarianism existing in the diocese some twenty years after the Restoration, allowing comparisons to be made across the period, but in what it reveals of the character of Lloyd himself. On the one hand a High-Churchman determined to serve his archbishop Sancroft in coercing uniformity through ecclesiastical sanctions, Lloyd is also revealed, through his own writings, to be a man of patience and encouragement in his dealings with his erring congregations. When set against the conventional perception of the Established Church and its hard-line approach to Nonconformity under Sancroft during the 'Tory Reaction', Lloyd's account invites an interesting revisionist interpretation.[15]

For the statistical analysis of the activities of the ecclesiastical courts from 1660 the records of the Archdiaconal and Episcopal courts are of prime importance. Although their varying condition, legibility and lack of completeness make a full analysis of ecclesiastical causes an impossible task, they constitute a vital primary source both in the study of the geographical distribution of Dissent in the diocese and in the patterns of prosecution during the period.[16] When compared with the returns of Nonconformists at the time of

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[15] The view of Lloyd as a 'rigorous supporter of the Restoration church settlement ... tough on refractory clergy and diocesan officials' expressed by Stuart Handley in an ODNB entry, is not challenged. It is Lloyd's patience and tolerance towards the non -communicating laity in his cure, evident from his own account, which reveals another side to this perceived intransigence. See below pp. 137-8.

[16] NRO. Peterborough Diocesan Records: *Liber Cleri., Liber Act., Liber Offic,* and "Visitation Books". (NRO. X611/637/638 – Corrections, Instances, Visitations and Presentments)

the *Compton Census,* they also throw an interesting light on the willingness, or otherwise, of the ecclesiastical authorities to prosecute known offenders.

The writings of many of the ministers ejected from their Northamptonshire livings, and their biographies collected and published by the eighteenth-century nonconformist writers Edmund Calamy and Samuel Palmer, provide an invaluable source of information on the lives of those clergy deprived of their livings following the Restoration.[17] Written some forty years after the event, Calamy's account is not without its critics and detractors. The work of an avowed apologist for the cause of Nonconformity, Calamy's commentary on the misfortunes of those ejected may well have been exaggerated, as was his inflating of the list of names by the inclusion of some who may well not have strictly fallen under this definition. His portrayals of those ejected at the Restoration were seen by John Walker, his vitriolic arch-critic, apologist for the Church Party, and composer of a retaliatory work concerning the sufferings those clergy dispossessed of their livings during the Civil War, as ridiculously eulogistic.[18] ' He has compleated the Calendar, with more than five times as many Saints as there are Days in the Year', he remarked in this 1714 riposte. Calamy's method and calculations have also been found wanting by both contemporary and modern critics, who have attempted corrections and the addition of further biographical material.[19] In 1775 Samuel Palmer, the nonconformist biographer and Independent minister,

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[17]Edmund Calamy, *An Abridgment of Mr Baxters' History of his life and times with an Account of many others of those worthy ministers who were ejected after the Restauration of King Charles the Second* (London, 1702): S Palmer (ed.), *The Nonconformists Memorial....* (London, 1775).

[18] A.G. Matthews, *Walker Revised, being a revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion 1642-60.* (Oxford, 1948), p. xii.

[19] A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised being a revision of Calamy's Account of the Ministers and others ejected and silenced 1660-2* (Oxford, 1934).

edited and published a revised version of Calamy's work, 'abridged, corrected and methodized with many additional anecdotes'.[20] Whilst Palmer identifies forty-five of the ministers ejected in Northamptonshire as remaining out of their clerical office, together with another fourteen conforming at a subsequent date, Matthews, revising Calamy's figures, numbered those ejected at forty-six, only seven of of them being classified as 'after-conformers'. Whatever the deficiencies in both Calamy's and Walker's work, in their revised forms they form an important basis for the exploration of the personalities of the Northamptonshire clergy, prior to,during and after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. Of considerable interest to this investigation, in placing Restoration Dissent within a wider perspective, are documentary sources such as the 1648 presbyterian *Testimony,* attested and signed by Northamptonshire ministers outlining their confessional position at the commencement of the Commonwealth, and the 'Manuscript Minute' of the Presbyterian Board of London, reviewing the state of Presbyterian and Congregational Nonconformity in the year following the 1689 Act of Toleration.[21] Archdeacon Palmer's returns in the 1676 *Compton Census,* showing the extent of 'significant' Dissent still remaining some fifteen years after the ejection of the nonconformist clergy, when used in conjunction with the other sources mentioned above, will enable us to gauge some measure of the net effect of

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[20] Samuel Palmer (ed.), *The Nonconformists Memorial* (London, 1775).

[21] *The Testimony of Our Reverend Brethren Ministers of the Province of London To the Truth of Jesus Christ and our Solemn League and Covenant etc. Attested by other Ministers of Christ in the County of Northampton* (London, 1648). Alexander Gordon (ed.), *Freedom after Ejection : A Review (1690-1692) of Presbyterian and Congregational Nonconformity in England and Wales* (Manchester, 1917).

attempts to enforce conformity during the Restoration and on the continuity or decline of the puritan tradition within the county. [22]

Quaker Records

A characteristic of the Quaker movement, a society withdrawn from the nation-state in the creation of its own administrative infrastructure, has been its belief in keeping precise records of all aspects of the Society of Friends. As one commentator on these sources has observed, the actions of Friends were 'recorded with an assiduity not found in any other denomination, ... the sinews that held the Society [of Friends] together were of ink and paper.' [23] Despite this assertion, which may well be true from the beginning of the eighteenth century, for the period 1660-1689 in Northamptonshire there are considerable problems in the lack of availability, completeness and reliability of such records for statistical analysis. Richard T. Vann and David Eversley, in their socio-demographic investigation of British & Irish Quakers from 1650-1900, have stressed the need for caution when interpreting the Quaker Registers of Births, Marriages and Burials, especially in the early period of the movement.[24] There is evidence that George Fox and his close associates were, from the late 1650s, encouraging their 'Friends in Truth' throughout the country to establish and maintain records of births, marriage and burials.[25]

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[22] Whiteman, *Compton Census*. For a definition of 'significant' Dissent as used in this thesis and the *caveats* in the analysis of this *Census*, see below pp. 50-51.

[23] M Mullett (ed.), *Sources for the History of English Non-conformity 1660-1830* (British Records Association, 1991) pp. 94 –5.

[24] Richard T. Vann & David Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death: The British & Irish Quakers in the demographic transition 1650-1900* (Cambridge, 1992), *passim.*

[25] William C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism* (Cambridge, 1955), in which see the 1656 'Balby' Lettter (Clause 8) on p. 313.

However, their repeated reminders during the following decades served to cast doubt as to whether, in earlier years, this requirement was speedily taken up. Thus the period from 1660 to 1675 at least, may well have been one of considerable under-registration. In terms of early Quaker marriage records, which in Northamptonshire are extremely thin on the ground, there is the additional problem, in this period, of converts to Quakerism having already been married (in the Anglican Church) before later 'convincement', or indeed of others deserting when the penalties of the Clarendon Code began to bite. Similar problems arise with non-registrations of neo-natal burials, the giving of the same Christian name to two children born consecutively within a given family with no record of the death of one of them, and the remarriage of a widow, with no associated entry of the burial of her former husband. All of these problems serve to illustrate Vann & Eversely's assertions that such records are unsuitable for pure aggregative demography, the attempt to determine from these sources the number of Quakers in a particular area at any given time.

As a record of the persecution of Quakers by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities, the information in the collective evidence of the *Great Book of Sufferings*, extracts of which were published by Joseph Besse (a convert from Anglicanism) in 1753, has no equal in the recorded annals of Nonconformity.[26] Instituted by George Fox in 1657 and continued thereafter, the detailed information derived from the Quakers' records of sufferings, both descriptive and statistical, and later collected and collated by Besse, forms an invaluable source for the investigation of the varying patterns of prosecution,

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[26] Joseph A. Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers* (London, 1753), 2 vols.

suppression and toleration of Quaker beliefs and practices across the period. Athough Besse's narrative must be viewed from the standpoint of an apologist for his adopted sect, the descriptions of the sufferings often being couched in extravagant prose, the accounts of Quaker Sufferings provide first-hand evidence of the treatment of members of this sect during their persecution by the authorities between 1660 and 1689, under the various provisions of the Clarendon Code.[27] For the purposes of this thesis, a data base has been built up from this comprehensive source of names, residences, and meeting houses which can be utilised with other records such as taxation, ecclesiastical and secular court proceedings, probate inventories, wills and parish registers, in order to gain the widest possible information on the socio-economic, occupational and geographic distribution of members of this sect who constituted such a significant aspect of Northamptonshire Dissent.

In contrast to the chronicles of sufferings undergone by many Quakers, the unique record of the spiritual journey of a humble Northampton 'Barber and Periwig Maker', whose move from confused adherence to the Established Church to Quaker Sectarianism, through his observation of the sufferings of the latter, provides a contemporary insight into the mind of one whose leanings towards Dissent were prompted by the very measures instituted to eradicate it.[28]

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[27] *The Voice of the Innocent Uttered Forth...* (1665) *Another Cry of the Innocent and Oppressed* (1666) are typical of the writings of Quaker Sufferings at this time.

[28] John Mulliner, *A Testimony against Periwig and Periwig Making and Playing on Instruments of Musick among CHRISTIANS...* (Northampton, 1677 , reprinted 1872), Bodl. Ref. G.A. NH 8o 17 and 17*.

Secular Records

Amongst the secular records available for the study of Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Northamptonshire during the Restoration, those concerning fiscal and judicial matters, held at the Northamptonshire Record Office and the Public Record Office in London, are of prime importance. As will be seen, the records of Hearth Tax and other lay taxation assessments on the population of Northamptonshire between 1662 and 1674 will form a major part in the exploration of the socio-economic status of Dissenters during the period. Judicial records, particularly the Quarter Session Rolls of the Northamptonshire County Courts, are an abundant source of information on the many presentments to the courts for offences of non-attendance at church and the holding of illegal assemblies. Together with other aspects of Nonconformity, such as sacramental certificates and notes to the county justices, these provide comprehensive evidence of the action of the secular authorities in their attempts to enforce Conformity within the county. [29] In addition, these records provide limited data on the occupations of those presented.

Occupational and Social Status

Whilst some information concerning the economic status of known Dissenters can be derived through the analysis of fiscal records, it is knowledge of the social and occupational status of individuals that researchers in this field acknowledge to be much more difficult to obtain. According to Spufford, 'by the 1660s a very considerable economic division existed between the wealth

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[29] NRO. Quarter Session Rolls 1661-1689, series 1/ 19 to 1/123 with some records missing or damaged beyond legibility, especially at the latter end of the period.

owned ...by men described by their neighbours at their deaths, as yeomen, husbandmen or labourers.' Whilst the self-proclaimed status, or even the occupation, of a testator in his will might undergo an element of correction in the associated probate inventory compiled by his neighbours, it is the information derived from this latter source which will be of the greatest use.[30] Thus "Abstracts of Administrations in the Archdeaconry of Northamptonshire", extracted from the Birmingham District Probate Registry by Rev H I Longden and others, for the years between 1546 – 1710, can help in the search for this information. [31]

Private Papers

In addition to the official sources, the private papers of a number of the Northamptonshire gentry families can be found at the Northamptonshire County Record Office. The Finch-Hatton collection, which during the writing of this thesis has narrowly escaped sale by an 'acquistion in lieu' arrangement through public funds, provides valuable insights into the public and private life of Christopher Hatton, Justice of the Peace, Knight of the Shire and one of the most influential Northamptonshire landowners. The collection of correspondence between Sir Justinian Isham, of similar social and judicial standing in the county, and Bishop Duppa of Salisbury, is particularly revealing in the strong views on Presbyterian and Quaker Dissent, expounded

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[30] M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities – English Villagers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 37.

[31] Rev Henry Isham Longden , *Administrations in the Archdeaconry of Northampton* 1546-1676 (London, 1939) and Lucy Druker (ed.), *Administrations in the Archdeaconry of Northampton* (1677- 1710) (British Record Society, 1947).

by Sir Justinian during the years immediately prior to the Restoration.[32] The valuable primary source material from *The Calendar of Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, together with his autobiography, provide a first hand account of Nonconformity throughout England, seen from the viewpoint of this widely travelled and influential Dissenter.[33] The views of Sir John Langham of Cottesbrooke in his dealings with the dissenting and conformist ministers who, at different times during the period, occupied the benefice within his gift, are similarly revealed in his private papers.[34]

Printed Primary Sources

Alongside the manuscript primary sources reviewed above, those printed in the Calendars of State Papers (Domestic) and in reference works such as Frank Bate's *Declaration of Indulgence* [35] and G Lyon Turner's *Original Records*[36] provide important sources of statistical information on Nonconformity during the period.

In addition to official ecclesiastical sources, the sermons, pamphlets and memoirs of Conformists and Dissenters, offering widely differing perspectives on personal attitudes so often absent from the official documents, provide rich sources from which insight can be gained into religious belief and

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[32] Giles Isham (ed.), *The Correspondence of Bishop Brian Duppa and Sir Justinian Isham 1650-1660.* (Northampton, 1951).

[33] N.H. Keeble & G. F. Nuttall (eds.), *Calendar of Correspondence of Richard Baxter* Vol. 2 1660-1696 (Oxford, 1991). N. H. Keeble (ed.), *Autobiography of Richard Baxter* (London, 1974).

[34] NRO. Langham MS L(C) 925.

[35] F. Bate, *Declaration of Indulgence 1672: A Study in the Rise of Early Dissent* (London, 1908).

[36] G. Lyon Turner, *Original Records* 3 vols. (London, 1911-1914).

practice in Northamptonshire. The writings of the Presbyterian minister Thomas Edwards, who expressed loathing for all forms of Sectarianism in his *Gangraena*, will be seen to have had considerable influence on contemporary views of Dissent.[37] Similarly the views of John Whitfeild, the ultra-conformist rector of Bugbrooke, evident from both his speeches and writings, leave no doubt as to his vigorous hostility towards Nonconformity.[38] His resultant alienation from many of his parishioners and neighbours he also records at length in a personal addendum to an entry in his Parish Register.[39]

Another Conformist, Edward Pearse, whose benefices included the parishes of Cottesbrooke and Aldwinkle vacated by ministers ejected in 1662, took the middle-ground in his plea for a broad church. His *Conformist's Plea,* which he wisely published anonymously, alienated the political establishment and the defenders of the Anglican Church both locally and nationally, and was presented by the Grand Jury to the Northamptonshire County justices in 1683, as a 'dangerous seditious and libellious booke', together with its author, 'if he can be detected.'[40]

In the defence of Nonconformity, Robert Wild, an ejected former Northamptonshire minister, employed his acerbic wit through published poetry and prose to ridicule the absurdities of enforced subscription to the Established

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[37] Thomas Edwards, *The First and Second Part of Gangraena or A catalogue and discovery of many of the errors, heresies, blasphemies and pernicious practices of the sectaries of this time vented and acted in England in these four last years* ... (London, 1646).

[38] John Whitfeild AM, *The Dreadfulness of the Sin of Despising Dominion and Speaking evil of Dignities* (London, 1682). Bodl. G Pamph 983(7) *passim.* [In most contemporary documents the spelling of his name is as shown, later references often describing him as *Whitfield*].

[39] NRO. Bugbrooke Parish Records 1617-1705.

[40] Edward Pearse, *The Conformists Pleas for the Nonconformist or a Just and Compassionate Representation of the present condition of the Nonconformists by a Beneficed Minister...* (London, 1681), and further editions.

Church.[41] In the most difficult of all areas for any researcher to explore, that of personal experience, anecdotal evidence passed down and recorded in a later generation, such as that of a Daventry inn- keeper, whose chance meeting with puritan traveller drew him to separatism, provides valuable evidence of the association of Dissent with trade and communication routes.[42]

The following section of this chapter will discuss the methodology through which many of the above sources may be utilised in the exploration of the many facets of Nonconformity across the county.

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[41] R.Wild, "The Recantation of a Penitent Proteus, or the Changling" (1663): "The Fair Quarrel" in *Iter Boreale with several other poems* (London, 1668): *The Loyal Nonconformist or An Account of what he dare swear, and what not (1666).*

[42] See Baker, *Northamptonshire* Vol. I p. 332.

Methodology:

The Hearth Tax and its use as an indicator of economic status

Both Spufford and Stevenson have based much of their research into the economic status of Dissenters on the close correlation which they perceive between relative personal wealth and Hearth Tax groupings within the geographical areas with which they have been concerned.[43] A prudent first step in the examination of Protestant Nonconformity in the county of Northamptonshire will therefore be to assess whether the methodologies employed by these researchers, working in a similar field elsewhere, can be legitimately applied to the sources available for study in this county. It is fortunate that the 1674 Lady Day Hearth Tax assessments and returns are almost complete for the whole county, and partial records also exist for various hundreds in 1662 and 1670. These will be of considerable use, not only in the context used by Stevenson *et al.* for a wide-ranging examination of economic status of Dissenters but also in the micro-examination of particular Northamptonshire parishes for which these records exist across the 14 years of this taxation from 1662 to 1674. Other useful taxation records such as the 'Free & Voluntary Present' of 1661-2, similarly used by Stevenson to cross-check the validity of Hearth Tax in his economic analysis, together with details of other 'minor' taxes levied across the County, also exist for Northamptonshire in both private and public papers.[44]

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[43] W. Stevenson, "The Economic and Social status of Protestant Sectarians in Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire (1650-1725)" Unpublished PhD thesis (Cambridge, 1990). Ch. 1. See also Spufford, *Contrasting Communities – English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974).

[44] PRO. E.179/157/446 & E. 179/157//448, E179/254/9, E.179/254/11, E.179/254/14, E.179/254/9 , E.179/254/ 10 & E.179/254/11. For 1/25th tax levied see NRO. Fermor-Hesketh (Baker) MS 703. For Pottersbury Poll Tax c1660 see NRO. MS YZ4397.

Employing two forms of comparative data similar to those used by Stevenson, ie probate inventory values across the county for the period 1674-1680 and the "Free and Voluntary present of 1661/2", the relationship between these returns and Hearth Tax groupings of the individuals listed has been explored. The following tables list the results of these investigations together with observations and conclusions drawn:

Hearths	No of People	Range of Probate Values £. s. d. to £. s. d.	Median Value £. s. d.
Exempt	8	1. 10. 0 - 92. 0. 8	19. 13. 4
1	45	1. 19. 10 - 211. 18. 4	32. 10 4
2	30	4. 7. 5 - 793. 13. 2	44. 16. 8
3	13	3. 16. 6 - 353. 13. 4	47. 16. 8
4	7	21. 13. 4 - 616. 3. 3	59. 1. 6
5	1	80. 13. 8	80 13. 8
6	2	59. 5. 9 - 1426. 0. 0	(no sensible median)
7 - 17	5	39. 15. 0 - 725. 0. 0	(no sensible median)
	(Total 111)		

Table 1.

Comparison of the 1674 (L) Hearth Tax valuations with Probate Inventory Valuations in the Archdeaconry of Northampton 1674-1680.[45]

[45] Probate Inventory Values extracted from Rev H.I. Longden *Administrations of the Archdeaconry of Northampton 1546 – 1676* (Mitchell Hughes & Clark, 1939): Lucy Drucker (ed.), *Administration in the Archdeaconry of Northampton 1677 – 1710* . (British Record Society, 1947).

The total number of individuals listed in Table 1 over the five years following the 1674L Hearth Tax returns, was limited either by lack of any information on Probate Value when a particular Administration was granted, or by the absence of a Hearth Tax return for an individual for whom Probate Valuation was available. However, from the figures which are available a clear distinction and progressive increase are apparent in both the range of values and their associated median value for each Hearth Tax grouping, from exempt through to Group 5, with the exception of that between 2 and 3. Groups 5 and upwards, with their minimal numbers, cannot be attributed with any sensible median value, but the actual probate valuations within these highest groups reflect, without doubt, the measure of wealth of a very small sector of the county's population. The exceptional value of £1426.0.0 in Group 6 might be explained by the fact that the listed occupation of Mr John Ventris of Northampton was in fact that of a Maltster, whose stock of a valuable commodity may have been high at the time of his death.

Despite this overall favourable interpretation, it was realised that the number of values widely divergent from the median value in several of the groups (notably Exempt, 2 and 6), and their inclusion in or exclusion from the table purely by the chance that both probate value and Hearth Tax return were or were not available in any particular case, could severely distort the resultant median values and hence the conclusions which might be drawn upon them.

In an attempt to resolve this problem, and to investigate further if a clearer distinction could be perceived between Hearth Tax groups 2 and 3, the subscriptions to the "Free and Voluntary Present to King Charles II (1661-2)"

from residents of the villages of Byfield & Weedon Beck and from the Hundred of Wymersley were compared with Hearth Tax returns for 1662 (M).

Hearths	No of People	Range of Subscription Values £. s. d. to £. s. d.	Median Value £. s. d.
1	20	0. 1. 0 - 0. 10. 0	0. 2. 6
2	19	0. 1. 0 - 0. 10. 0	0 2. 9
3	16	0. 1. 6 - 0. 7. 6	0. 3. 3
4	7	0. 1. 0 - 1. 1. 4	0. 5. 4
5	8	0. 3. 6 - 0. 10. 0	0. 5. 10
≥6	4	0. 5. 0 - 60. 0. 0	(no sensible median)
	(Total 74)		

N.B.: Only those whose *individual* subscriptions to the "Free and Voluntary Present" are clearly recorded, have been included in this table. Many entries on the lists are in more than one name, and where these subscribers have contributed a combined sum between them, with no apportionment, these have been omitted.

Table 2.

Comparison of 1662(M) Hearth Tax Valuations with Subscriptions to the "Free & Voluntary Present to King Charles II" of 1661-2 for the villages of Byfield & Weedon Beck and for the Hundred of Wymersley.[46]

As can be seen from the comparisons made in **Table 2**, the median value of subscriptions increases in discrete steps for each increase in hearths, with markedly accelerating increase in apparent wealth for those above group 3, although it should be observed that there are significant anomalies in the

[46] PRO.E.179/254/9. "Free & Voluntary Present 1661-2 for the County of Northamptonshire".

lowest and highest subscription values in Hearth Tax Groups 4 and 5 respectively, when compared with those above and below these tax groups.

A further check on the reliability of Hearth Tax groupings to discern between the personal wealth of individuals was attempted, using a local Poll Tax which had been levied on the villagers of Potterspury.[47] Although undated, the document is catalogued at the NRO as "c1660". In view of the uncertainty over this date, the Poll Tax returns were compared with the Hearth Tax assessments for inhabitants of the village who were listed in any one or more of the various extant Hearth Tax assessments over the ten year period, ie 1662/3, 1670 & 1674. Where the same name occurs with a wide disparity in Hearth Tax assessments, this name has been ignored. Where, however, the same name appears in two different Hearth Tax returns in adjacent groups, these are shown.

Hearths	**1**	**1 or 2**	**2**	**2 or 3**	**3**	**4**	**>4**
Poll Tax	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	£. s. d.	£. s d.	£. s. d.
	7. 6.	1. 6.	3. 0.	1. 6.	nil	2. 2. 0.	10. 0. 0. *
	2. 0.	1. 0.	3. 0.				5. 1. 0. †
	1. 6.	1. 0.	2. 6.				
	1. 6.		1. 3.				
	1. 0.		0. 6				
	1. 0.						.* 15 hearths
	1. 0.						
	1. 0.						† 9 hearths
	1. 0.						
	1. 0.						
	1. 0.						
	0. 9.						

Table 3

Comparison of returns from a Poll Tax levied on the villagers of Potterspury, Northants with Hearth Tax assessments in any of the years 1662/3, 1670 or 1674.

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[47] NRO. MS YZ4397 [Not dated but believed to be c.1660]. " Pottersbury August 9th A true note of all the inhabitants of our parish who are above the Age of Sixteen , liable to the payment of the Poll Money".

As can be seen from the above **Table 3,** it has been possible to reconcile only 23 names from the three Hearth Tax assessments out of a total of 87 families listed in the Poll Tax Return. It is difficult to conclude whether this indicates a poor degree of continuity within the community of Potterspury over the ten-year period, or whether the assumed date of the Poll Tax return is incorrect. In any event, such a low yield of data cannot be utilised to derive any dependable quantitative information, but the results have been included to illustrate a plausible relationship between Hearth Tax and perceived wealth within this small community.

Although the results of these comparative exercises (in **Tables 1,2 & 3** above) reveal certain anomalies which can emerge when different measures are compared, it is felt that a sufficient degree of correlation exists between these two factors to enable the Hearth Tax returns to be utilised, with an acceptable degree of confidence, in the interpretation of the socio-economic status of the various Dissenters in Northamptonshire whose identity can be gleaned through other sources.[48]

Measuring Dissent

Before commencing an in-depth analysis of Nonconformity within Northamptonshire it will be necessary to define 'significant' Dissent. The question of what constitutes this is a taxing one and for the purpose of this thesis is calculated as that where recorded Nonconformity exceeds approximately 2.4% of the parish (conformist) population. This figure has

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[48] I am indebted to the methodology of Dr W Stevenson in his work on the correlation between Hearth Tax assessments and personal wealth. Any observations on the perceived inadequacies of these results in relation to Northamptonshire are not intended as any criticism of his method.

been derived from a consideration of the total percentage of recorded Nonconformity in the county, with respect to its total population. In the case of Salt's General Analysis, this is some 2.3% and in Palmer's records (excluding Rutland) 2.46%. Thus if recorded Dissent in any parish exceeds this nominal value, it would appear reasonable to interpret it as 'significant'. A percentage rather than an absolute figure is offered, in the belief that where small totals are involved the significance of Nonconformists, especially in a small parish, is more accurately reflected. Whatever statistical interpretation of 'significant' Dissent is employed, there will be some argument as to its validity. However, bearing in mind the many *caveats* to interpretation of the returns, it is felt that the object will be best served by this method, especially when a close correlation can be readily observed amongst the data derived from the various sources.

Geographical Distribution of Dissent

As has been stated earlier, a major source for the study of Dissent within Northamptonshire is the "Account of Conventicles" compiled by John Palmer, Archdeacon of Northampton, in response to instructions received by him from Archbishop Sheldon in 1669. Its value as a descriptive account of dissenting activity within the county, rather than its use in a purely statistical manner, has already been discussed above.[49] Since the Archdeacon was reporting dissenting activity only within the western deaneries of the county, a more complete picture of the distribution of Dissent will be gained if data from the *Compton Census*, compiled some seven years later, is examined alongside this earlier survey. See **Figures 2(a) and 2(c).**

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[49] See above p. 32.

Although Palmer's 1669 "Account of Conventicles" was restricted to the western deaneries of the diocese there is documentary evidence in a 1683 account from William Lloyd, the new Bishop of Peterborough, to his Archbishop, of the persistence of conventicles in this area some ten years later, together with information on the existence of similar 'Seditious Meetings and Schismatic Conventicles' in the eastern part of the diocese.[50] The parishes mentioned in Lloyd's 'Account' are shown in **Figure 2(b)** and can be usefully compared with those of Palmer's earlier account.

In interpreting this evidence of the distribution of Dissent, several factors need to be borne in mind. In the first place, as Wykes has stressed, 'the [1669] returns are only a record of the conventicles known to the authorities and not a survey of the extent of the support for dissent.' In this respect the conventicles might be considered purely as 'small fluctuating pockets of Nonconformity which, depending on the level of local support or the pressure of persecution, appeared or disappeared into the anonymity of the parish.'[51] Secondly, as evidenced by Palmer himself, conventicles attended by the same group of Dissenters were often held 'by course' in different parishes 'and thereby seem more numerous.'[52]

In terms of the *Compton Census*, it is acknowledged that several parishes are missing from Palmer's returns, whilst others which are included have no nonconformist totals shown. This is in addition to the omission of 'Peculiars', whose administration fell outside the province of the Bishop of

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[50] "An Account of the present state of the Bishoprick of Peterborough delivered to My Ld. of Canterbury's Grace" (Bodl. Rawlinson MS d.1163. fo 12; dated 1683).

[51] D.L.Wykes, "The 1669 Return of Nonconformist Conventicles" in *Short Guide to Records* Second Series 25-48 (Hist. Assoc. publication, 1997) pp. 52-3.

[52] NRO. Fermor Hesketh (Baker) MS 708 "An Account of Conventicles".

Peterborough. Where full returns are recorded, the question of accuracy (already explored in detail above) arises. Despite all these reservations, the geography of Dissent is presented in **Figures 2(a) 2(b) & 2(c)** derived from the above-mentioned sources. It should be pointed out that the maps in these figures are not representative of a spatial distribution of Dissent, but purely highlight the boundaries of those parishes where such Dissent occurred. The geographical size of a particular parish is purely fortuitous and should not be seen as any indication of the measure of Dissent within it.

The parishes from which applications to the King for licences to preach, under the provisions of his 1672 Declaration of Indulgence, and for premises where dissenting forms of worship could be held, are shown in **Figure 3(a).** It can be seen from this that, although a number of persons in the eastern part of the county submitted applications or were granted licences, the percentage of recorded separatist Dissent is 'significant' in only two of these sixteen eastern parishes shown. Given the number of applications for licences from Nonconformists resident in many parishes where such Dissent, according to the *Compton Census* returns, is not 'significant', this serves further to stress Palmer's limited interpretation of Nonconformity and its resultant under-registration in the census returns and adds weight to Dr Wykes' observation of the partial conformity of Presbyterians at this time.[53] This is particularly reinforced by the fact that, whilst Quakers on the whole did not apply for licences under the Indulgence Declaration and only three licences were issued to those described as "Anabaptists", the remainder were split between Presbyterian and Congregational applicants. Thus the evidence gleaned from these licence applications submitted by the more 'orthodox' Nonconformists

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[53] See above p. 31 [fn 10].

serves both to augment the returns enumerating the more thorough-going Separatists in the *Compton Census* and as a corrective to the overwhelming majority of court presentations of separatist, especially Quaker, Dissenters evident in extant court records. Further exploration of the distribution of Dissent in Northamptonshire is offered by the data extracted from Joseph Besse's *Collection of Sufferings.* The parishes in which Quaker meetings were recorded as having taken place, and where those who were arrested at these illegal gatherings claimed to have been resident, have been collated and plotted in **Figure 3(b).**

The evidence provided by all the above sources, together with the proper *caveats* in its interpretation, will provide a sound basis on which to embark, in the following chapters, upon the study of Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire .

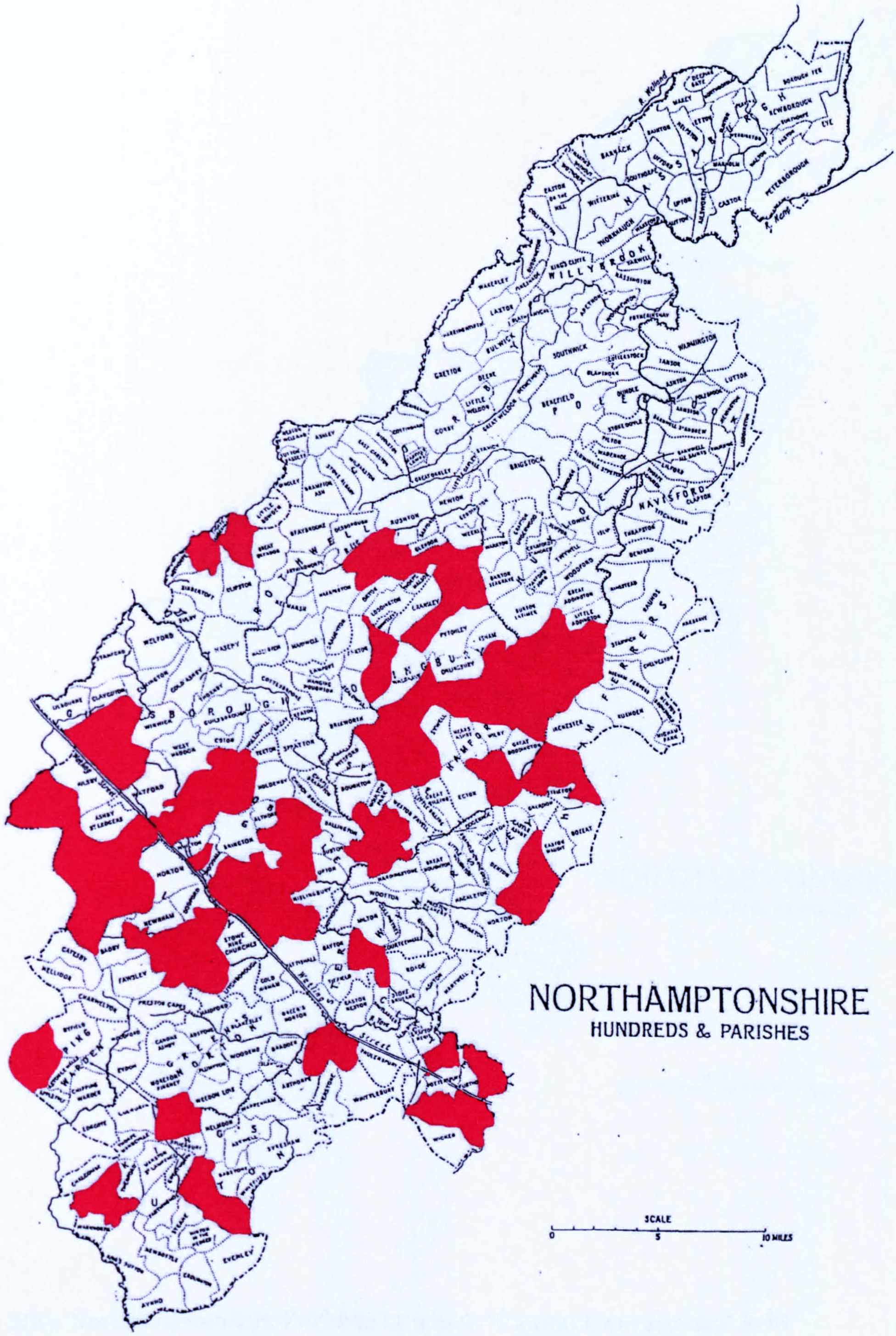

Fig 2(a). Northamptonshire Parishes listed in Archdeacon Palmer's 1669 "Account of Conventicles".

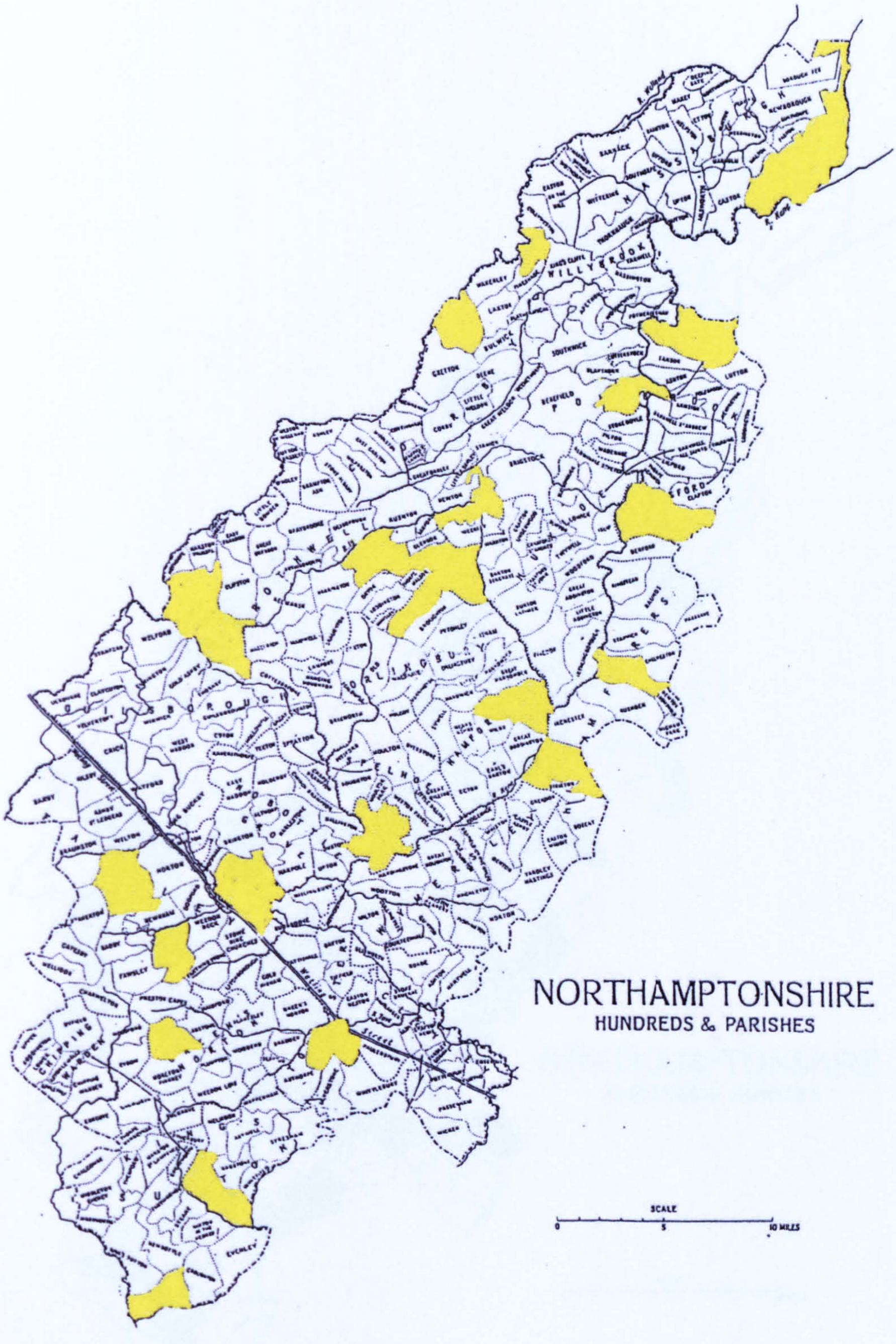

Fig 2(b): Northamptonshire Parishes in which 'Capital Conventicles' held between 1679 and 1680 were noted by Bishop Wm Lloyd in 1683

[Source: Bodl. Rawlinson MS d1163 f.12]

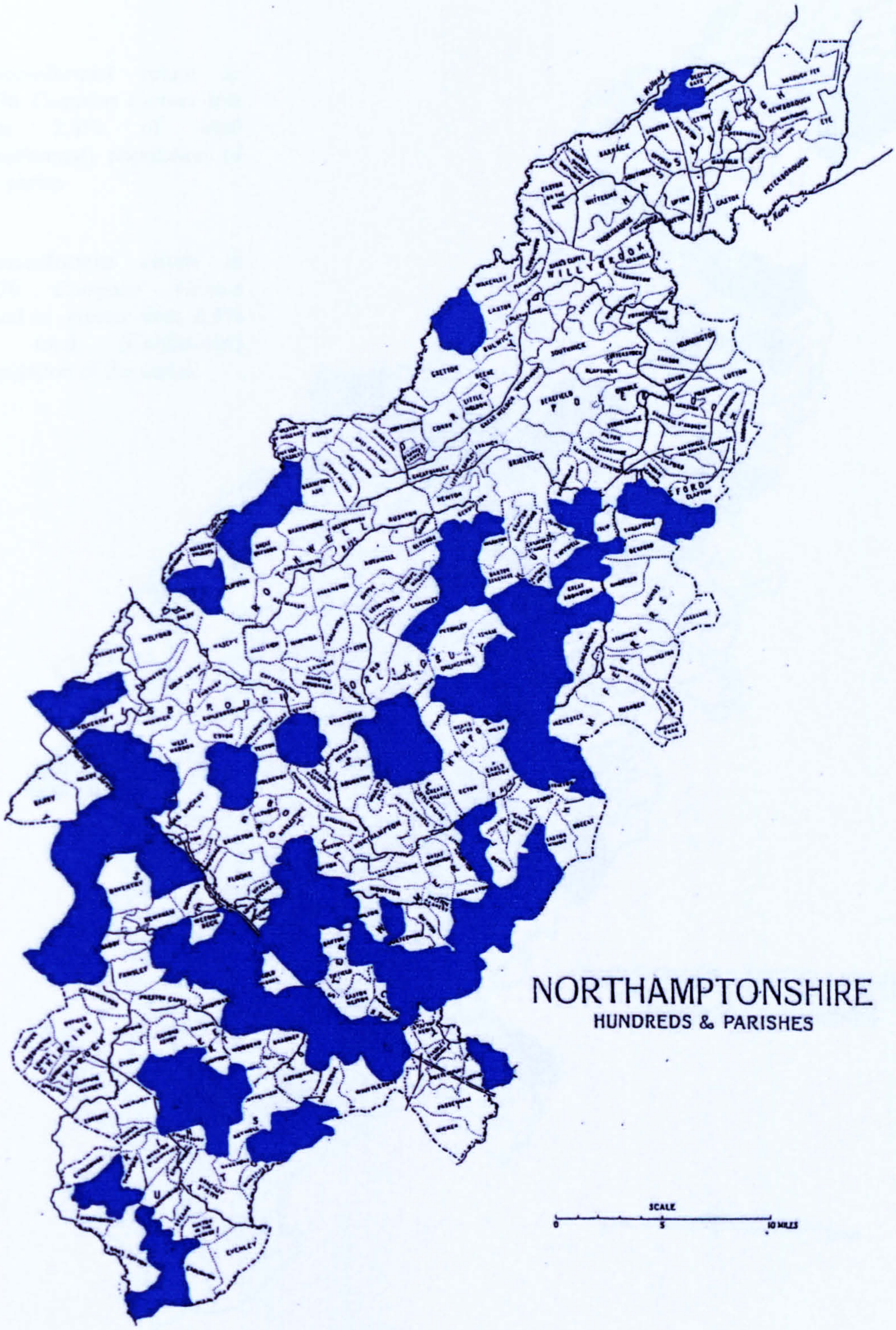

Fig 2(c): Northamptonshire Parishes in which Nonconformists exceed 2.4% of the parish total in Archdeacon Palmer's returns for the 1676 *Compton Census.*

No Nonconformist return in 1676 *Compton Census*

Nonconformist return in 1676 *Compton Census* less than 2.4% of total (Conformist) population of the parish

Nonconformist return in 1676 *Compton Census* equal or greater than 2.4% of total (Conformist) population of the parish

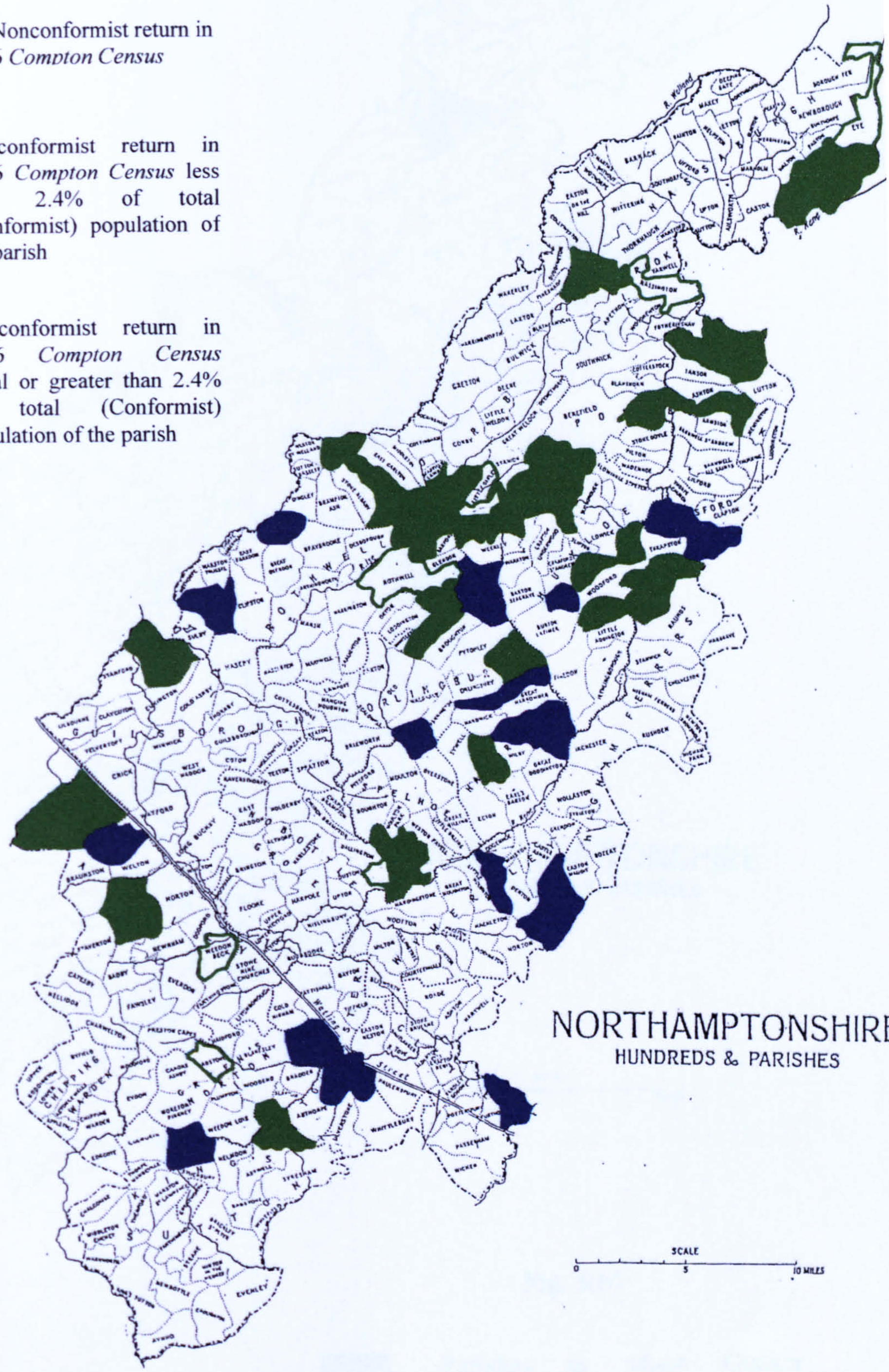

Fig 3 (a). Parishes in which licences for Nonconformist Preachers and/or premises applied for under the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence

Sources: G. Lyon Turner, *Original Records of Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence* (London, 1911)
F. Bate, *The Declaration of Indulgence 1672 – A study in the rise of organised Dissent* (Liverpool, 1908).

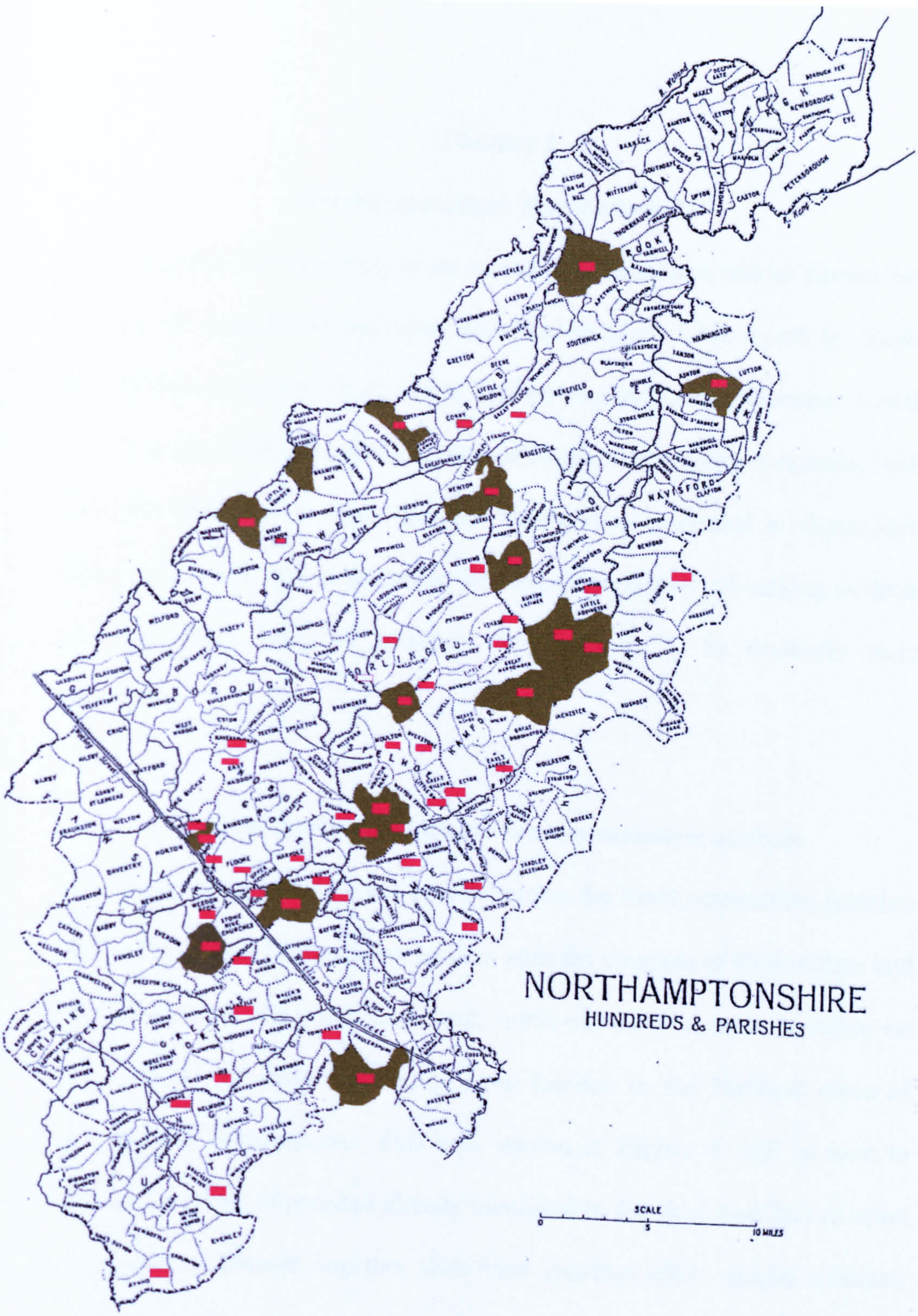

Fig. 3(b)

Sources:

Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the people called Quakers* (London,1753). Vol I.

NRO Quarter Session Rolls

Quaker Registers

Parishes in which Quaker Conventicles held 1660-1689

Parishes in which Quakers known to reside

Chapter 2

Northamptonshire Nonconformity

In this and the following chapter an extensive examination will be carried out, utilising the available documentary and other sources, in the search for causal or contributory factors which might explain reasons for the presence, growth or persistence of Dissent in the county of Northamptonshire, to examine their particular relevance in those parishes which have evidenced a 'significant' degree of Dissent, and to determine whether these factors are lacking in those parishes where religious practices were believed to be markedly more conformist.

Western Northamptonshire: A socio-economic analysis

To commence this investigation, I will examine the Northamptonshire parishes which extend from alongside its borders with the counties of Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, in the south and west, north-eastward to those parishes on either side of the main trade route from London to the Midland cities of Coventry and Birmingham. This area, shown in **Figure 4**, will be seen to embrace a number of parishes already identified in **figs 2(a) and 2(c)** as areas of 'significant' Dissent, together with other parishes where similar evidence shows the population to be more conformist.[1] Factors considered will include the size, population and economic structure of these parishes; the nature of the land (including the absence or evidence of enclosure) and the possible influence of a landlord through absence or residence, these factors often being interdependent. It has already been shown that there is sufficient correlation between hearth assessments and other indices of wealth to allow the 1674

[1] For the definition of 'Significant' Dissent as used in this context, see above pp. 50-51.

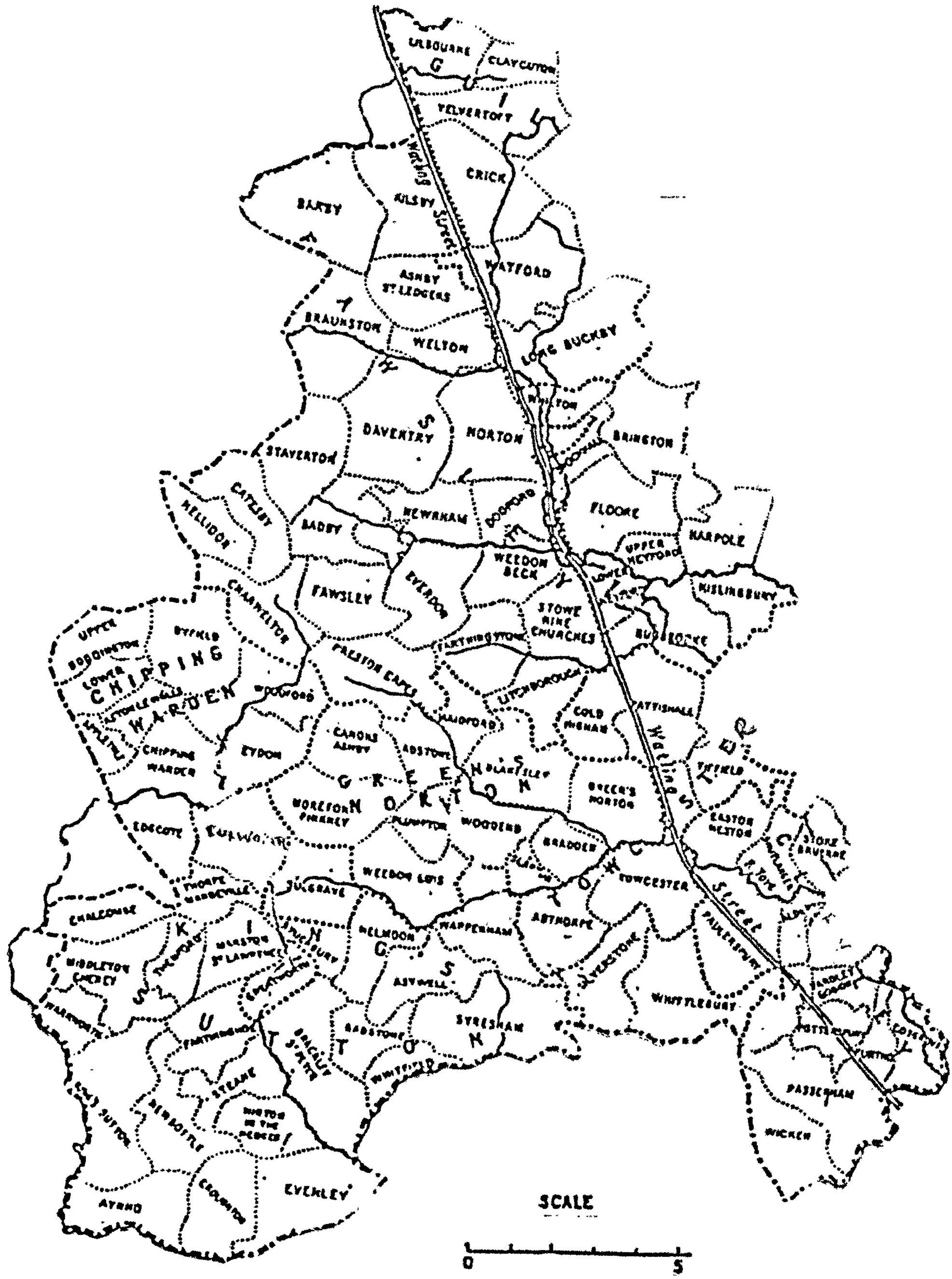

Fig. 4

Map of Western Northamptonshire showing parishes

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
1	Kilsby	280	2	0.7	87	23	no	yes	56	9	2	0	0	16.4
2	Crick	540	12	2.22	126	40	no	no	59	12	3	1	0	20
3	Ashby St Legers	200	8	4	51	33	part (1512)	yes	31	2	0	0	1	6
4	Watford	180	5	2.7	50	46	part (1550)	yes	21	4	1	1	1	19
5	Welton	352	12	3.4	48	37	no	yes	19	7	4	0	0	37
6	Daventry & Drayton	1450	8	0.55	297	42	no	no	87	51	22	3	4	45
7	Norton & Thrupp	167	5	2.9	52	42	part	?	25	4	0	0	1	14
8	Long Buckby	749	23	3	144	47	?	no	70	8	2	0	1	12.5
9	Whilton	196	3	3.1	43	44	?	no	23	1	0	0	0	4
10	Brockhall	70	0	0	17	23	yes (1574)	yes	9	3	0	0	1	25
11	Braunston	496	14	2.82	108	36	no	no	64	4	1	0	1	7
12	Dodford	143	0	0	39	38	yes (1623)	yes	19	2	2	0	1	17
13	Flore	411	6	1.4	105	35	part (1530)	yes	59	7	3	0	1	14
14	U/L Heyford	140	3	2.4	84	44	no	yes	42	6	0	0	1	12.5
15	Weedon Beck		no information		124	53	no	no	33	19	3	3	0	40
16	Stowe IX Churches	76	2	2.6	42	50	yes (1684)	no	15	4	1	1	0	25
17	Farthingstone	160	17	10.6	42	43	no	no	19	4	1	0	0	21
18	Litchborough	400	15	3.75	62	26	part (1647)	yes	34	9	2	0	1	24
19	Bugbrooke	300	100	33	93	51	no	no	31	11	2	1	0	30
20	Cold Higham	189	0	0	49	33	no	no	26	6	1	0	0	21
21	Pattishall	450	26	5.7	112	28	no	no	61	12	8	0	0	25
22	Greens Norton	306	17	5.55	86	37	part (1549)	no	35	13	5	0	1	10
23	Tiffield	76	0	0	30	33	?	no	15	5	0	0	0	25
24	Easton Neston	120	1	0.83	20	35	yes (1499)	yes	17	7	0	0	1	10
25	Towcester	560	30	5.3	302	43	no	no	109	41	17	2	3	35
26	Stoke Bruerne	450	16	3.55	51	39	?	no	20	7	3	0	1	33
27	Pottersbury	600	12	2	184	44	?	no	89	10	3	0	2	13
28	Paulerspury	400	11	2.75	133	34.5	no	yes	69	15	3	0	1	21
29	Passenham	500	3	0.6	134	54	part (1640)	?	48	8	3	2	1	19
30	Whittlebury	650	9	1.3	77	48	no		28	8	3	0	1	28

Table 4. Detailed Analysis of Parishes in Western Northamptonshire

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
31	Fawsley	40	0	0	8	0	yes (1477)	yes	5	0	1	0	2	16
32	Alderton	82	4	4.8	27	41	no	?	10	5	0	0	1	33
33	Wicken	275	0	0	58	48	?	no	18	9	1	1	1	36
34	Furtho	20	0	0	no information			no	no information					
35	Cosgrove	450	12	2.6	65	20	?	yes	38	8	4	0	1	24
36	Kislingbury	250	7	2.8	88	42	no	no	40	8	2	0	0	20
37	Blakesley	400	2	0.5	116	47	no	no	52	4	5	0	0	15
38	G/L Brington	400	0	0	98	32	part (1512)	yes	58	7	1	0	1	12
39	Harpole	250	7	2.4	59	15	no	no	40	8	2	0	0	20
40	Lilbourne	160	4	2.5	70	35	yes	no	38	7	0	0	0	15
41	Clay Coton	77	5	6.4	34	47	?	yes	13	5	0	0	0	28
42	Yelvertoft	409	3	0.7	88	37.5	?	no*	48	5	0	1	0	9
43	Newnham & Badby	420	0	0	164	35	no	yes	88	16	2	0	0	17
44	Barby & Onley	450	9	2	103	24	no	no	64	4	1	0	0	7
45	Everdon	400	10	2.5	96	37.5	part (1508)	no	51	7	2	0	0	15
46	Preston Capes	200	1	0.5	64	18.75	yes (1671)	yes	42	6	3	0	1	18
47	Maidford	165	2	1.2	46	48	no	yes	15	8	0	0	1	35
48	Staverton	415	10	2.4	90	27	no	no	57	8	0	1	0	12
49	Catesby & Hellidon	160	6	3.75	63	36	part (1595)	yes	32	5	1	1	1	18
50	Charwelton	120	0	0	27	37	yes (1480)	yes	12	2	0	1	2	14
51	Slapton	154	0	0	31	35	?	no	13	4	2	1	0	32
52	Byfield	556	9	1.6	124	38	part	yes	61	11	4	1	0	20
53	Woodford Halse	446	10	2.24	106	38	no	no	48	15	2	0	0	26
54	Eydon	350	2	0.6	94	47	no	yes	40	6	1	2	1	15
55	Moreton Pinkney	210	5	2.4	98	43	no	yes	36	12	2	1	0	28

Table 4. (continued)

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
56	Weedon Lois	260	17	6.5	71	49	no	no	25	9	2	0	0	31
57	Plumpton	34	0	0	12	50	?	no	4	1	0	1	0	20
58	Sulgrave	300	13	4.3	80	40	no	no	31	15	2	0	0	35
59	Culworth	300	0	0	72	45	yes (1612)	yes	29	8	2	0	3	26
60	Helmdon	348	13	3.7	91	35	?	yes	43	11	4	0	1	26
61	Wappenham	163	3	1.84	74	42	?	yes	36	4	1	1	1	12
62	Bradden	90	0	0	28	39	no	no	11	4	1	0	0	31
63	Syresham	500	30	6	125	54	no	yes	44	10	4	0	0	24
64	Brackley	1068	11	1	183	32	no	no	86	42	17	1	2	41
65	Aynho	345	15	4.35	85	49	?	yes	29	6	5	2	1	27
66	U/L Boddington	430	0	0	85	41	no	no	33	10	6	1	0	33
67	Aston le Walls	100	0	0	24	29	part (1720)	yes	12	3	2	0	0	30
68	Chipping Warden	364	8	2.2	84	42	no	yes	39	8	1	0	1	19
69	Edgcote	86	0	0	19	21	?	yes	13	0	1	0	1	7
70	Thorpe Mandeville	40	0	0	14	21	yes (1600)	yes	7	3	0	0	1	30
71	M/Cheney	300	13	4	139	65	no	?	29	16	4	0	0	4
72	Marston / Warkworth	262	4	1.5	100	27	no	yes	31	10	2	4	1	25
73	Farthingoe	220	0	0	42	43	yes (1612)	yes	16	2	4	1	1	27
74	Newbottle	225	6	2.67	73	42	yes (1621)	yes	23	15	1	3	3	41
75	Thenford	100	0	0	30	27	?	yes	15	5	1	0	1	28.5
76	Hinton	124	0	0	24	12.5	?	yes	12	5	3	0	1	40
77	Evenley	150	0	0	49	43	no	yes	18	6	3	0	1	33
78	Croughton	221	0	0	48	44	?	no	20	5	2	0	0	26
79	Steane	20	0	0		no information		yes						

Table 4. (continued)

Lady Day returns to be utilised in the assessment of relative wealth within Northamptonshire communities.[2] To this end, a detailed analysis of the Hearth Tax returns for every parish is also offered, from which an indication of the socio-economic composition of its inhabitants can be usefully compared with the respective degree of recorded (separatist) Dissent, as derived from the *Compton Census* returns. The results of this investigation are shown in **Table 4,** together with the detailed analysis which follows.*

The topography of the county has already been referred to in an earlier section, the area under examination in this chapter lying almost exclusively within the Northamptonshire Upland and Wold regions, predominantly one of pasture-land for sheep and cattle, with a lesser degree of arable.[3] Only in the extreme south, in the area of Whittlewood Forest roughly bordered by the parishes of Syresham, Whittlebury and Potterspury/Yardley Gobion, does a significantly different topography prevail. With as many parishes in the uplands tending to conformity as those dissenting, this varying pattern appears to demonstrate that little connection exists between topography and Dissent in the area under examination. Some of the aforementioned forest parishes, with varying degrees of conformity, do seem however to have been the site of several illegal conventicles. Their particular topography, in offering useful concealment from the authorities, might serve as an explanation for the conventicles reported to have taken place in these areas.[4] Similarly there

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[2] See above pp. 45-50.

[3] See above p. 8.

*Parishes referred to in the text are accompanied by a number in square parentheses, denoting their reference number in the statistical tables.

[4] NRO. Fermor Hesketh (Baker) MS708. "An Account of the Conventicles Held in the Western Deaneryes of the Diocese of Peterborough. An Autographed Manuscript by John

appears to be no widespread correlation between poverty and Dissent across Western Northamptonshire. Middleton Cheney [71], with 4% of recorded Dissent, together with Syresham [63], 6% of the parish being noted as nonconformist, and Bugbrooke [19], with an extraordinary 33% Dissent, have the three highest percentages of exemptions from Hearth Tax payments (being 65%, 54% and 51% respectively). Since the average Hearth Tax exemptions for the seventy-nine parishes examined comprise approximately 38% of their householders, when these three parishes are considered against other parishes enjoying a greater than average exemption from Hearth Tax, coupled with a low percentage of recorded Dissent, it would appear that Brindle's suggested link between poverty and Dissent does not appear to hold good for this particular area of Northamptonshire. [5]

Despite Camden's assertion that Northamptonshire was a county where ''tis everywhere full and overrun by sheep',[6] recent research has shown that by the end of the seventeenth century only 30% of the county had, in fact, undergone major enclosure. In the area under present examination, documentary evidence relating to enclosure exists for fifty-eight of the seventy-eight parishes within it.[7] Of these, thirty-four remained open, whilst partial enclosure, often limited to demesne or park land, together with total enclosure, made up the remaining total in about equal proportion. From **Table 4** it can be deduced that whilst 'significant' Dissent could be seen in only 2%

Palmer, with his conclusions in answer to enquiries from the Archbishop of Canterbury on the extent of Nonconformism in Northamptonshire – dated 11th August 1669. "

[5] P.R. Brindle, "Politics and Society in Northamptonshire 1649-1714" Unpublished PhD thesis (Leicester University, 1985).

[6] Rev John Morton, *The Natural History of Northamptonshire* (London, 1712), p. 15: quoting William Camden's "Britannia".

[7] The information for Northamptonshire enclosure is derived from D. Hall, *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1995).

of parishes enclosed by private act, in those which remained open until the parliamentary enclosures of the late eighteenth century, 'significant' Dissent occurred in over 55%. However, to what extent the phenomenon of enclosure in any parish, despite the socio-economic consequences to its inhabitants, can be associated with the absence of Dissent, may be difficult to evaluate. Closer inspection of the statistics relating to enclosed and partially enclosed parishes reveals that poverty, measured by those parishes whose inhabitants certified exempt from Hearth Tax exceed the overall average of 38%, is at a considerably lower percentage (25%) compared with open parishes of which nearly 60% exceed this figure. It is also evident that the parishes where major enclosure had taken place were considerably smaller, in terms of inhabitants, than open ones. Where the average population of all enclosed parishes in the county, evidenced through *Compton Census* returns, is around 280 persons, amongst enclosed parishes only Culworth [59] exceeds this number, the majority being considerably smaller. In addition, the Hearth Tax returns for nearly all these enclosed parishes show the Lord of the Manor to have been resident and, from other sources, also the holder of the advowson of the benefice.[8]

The absence of Dissent associated with enclosure may possibly be accounted for by paternalistic governance exercised by the owner of the Lordship, in terms of economic provision for his tenants. On the other hand, his residence and conformist leanings might well have acted as a brake on those who might otherwise have inclined to Dissent. As an example, the Knightley family, major landowners in the county, had embraced Puritanism

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[8] Information on Lordships and Advowsons from: J.Bridges, *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire (1791)* and J. Baker, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northamptonshire* (1822-41).

with great fervour in the late sixteenth century. Recently described by a local historian as a 'proto-presbyterian organisation made up of incumbents of six local parishes' and 'a cohesive group of Knightley proteges', they allowed the radical and subversive Marprelate Tracts to be printed in their Fawsley home in 1588.[9] This wealthy family and its descendants continued the tradition of radical Puritanism until the Restoration, when the penalties for Nonconformity, enshrined in the Clarendon Code, caused them, together with other gentry families in the county, to abandon outwardly such politically unacceptable beliefs.[10] Their apparent new-found conformist strength is reflected in the fact that not one Nonconformist was listed in the *Compton Census* returns of 1676 on the Knightley estate at Fawsley, where the advowson was held by the resident Lord of the Manor. Enclosed since 1477 with one of the largest sheep-holdings in the county, said to be over 2,500 in number at the time, [11] Fawsley parish in 1674 had a population of forty persons living in eight houses in which, significantly, the majority of this small congregation consisted largely of members of the family or those probably reliant on the Lord of the manor for employment or patronage. There is however a caution to be observed in this interpretation of absence of Dissent linked with some of the minimal size (often enclosed) parishes, where the Landlord held the right of presentation to the benefice. As John Cliffe has pointed out, there is considerable evidence that allows reinterpretation in a different light, of the data derived from the *Compton Census.*[12] The Knightley

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[9] R.L. Greenall, *Daventry Past* (Chichester, 1999), p. 23.

[10] *VCH Northamptonshire,* Vol 2 p. 62.

[11] D.Hall, *Open Fields,* p. 266, quoting Allison *et al,* "The Deserted Villages of Northamptonshire" (Leicester University, 1966).

[12] J. T. Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Besieged 1650-1700* (London, 1993), *passim.*

family, with a long tradition of Puritanism, may well have shown an *outward* conformity to the Established Church for social political or economic reasons and ensured that the incumbents of the benefices under their control did likewise. However, in common with other puritan gentry both in the county and elsewhere, they still maintained considerable links with those Divines who felt unable to conform and were consequently ejected on St Bartholomew's Day in 1662. Sir Richard Knightley, shortly after this deadline for conformity, felt strongly enough to make provision in his will for the distribution of £200 'to such poore ministers as my executors shall think fit, or such persons who lately exercised the office of Ministers, equally divided amongst them'. His executor was Richard Hampden, another member of the puritan gentry who employed ejected ministers as his domestic chaplains and gave help to others. It was not uncommon, according to Cliffe, for 'persons of quality with Godly inclinations' to maintain close ties with nonconformist Divines whilst remaining, themselves, in communion with the Church of England. 'It was comparatively rare', he writes, 'for upper class Protestants to abstain completely from attendance at Church of England services. Whatever reservations they might have had about the ecclesiastical settlement of 1662, few Godly at this level of society considered it desirable, or perhaps even feasible, to adopt a thorough-going separatist stance.'[13] Despite this, the continuity of puritan thought and tradition amongst certain county gentry was helped through their continued link with other gentry families of similar religious persuasion. In the case of the Knightleys, the continued presence at Fawsley of Lady Anne Knightley after the death of her husband, and his considerable forethought in placing the patronage of his two key livings -

[13] Cliffe , *Puritan Gentry,* pp. 47-48.

those of Fawsley and Preston Capes - in the hands of executors of known puritan persuasion, were major contributory factors in the persistence of Nonconformity within this family.

Such an enclosed parish is not unique. Steane [79], the country seat of John, Lord Crewe, whose puritan sympathies were recorded by Pepys in 1662,[14] together with Brockhall [10], Easton Neston [24], Dodford [12] and Charwelton [50], shared similar outward characteristics of near total conformity; those of a very small community with a lower than average degree of poverty, and a resident Landlord holding the benefice of the parish in his sway. Whilst such circumstances might well have ensured conformity in many of the small enclosed parishes mentioned above, it would appear, from the Knightley example, that any direct connection between enclosure and conformity and *vice versa*, the prevalence of Dissent in open parishes, must not necessarily be concluded. Of the thirty-four open parishes listed in **Table 4**, only half can be seen to be 'significantly' nonconformist, by the definition derived in chapter 1 above.

Turning to the exploration of other possible contributory factors towards Dissent, we may derive useful indications of the socio-economic structure of individual parishes from a close examination and analysis of the proportionate groupings of the hearths assessed for every residence. The information thus derived, when compared with the percentage of Dissent within the same parish, can be used to explore whether any useful connection

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[14] Cliffe, *Puritan Gentry*, p. 49. See also C. Tomalin, *Samuel Pepys – The Unequalled Self* (London, 2002), citing F.R. Harris, *The Life of the First Earl of Sandwich* (London, 1912), vol. 1 p.19, for references to Crewe's Puritanism, his Parliamentary allegiance in the Civil War, his family relationship with Sir John Montagu, latterly Earl of Sandwich, and with Sir Gilbert Pickering of Titchmarsh. The well-documented consequences of the latter's resistance to the intrusion of a crown appointee into his parish are covered on pp.109-111 below.

can be established between these factors. To this end, in **Table 4,** the numbers of householders whose hearths total between 3 and 7 are expressed as a percentage of all those whose hearths total from 1 to 7 (excluding those certified exempt). By omitting the 'major elites' (ie the very wealthy, the titled gentry, and landed magnates) from the calculation, it can be argued that the figure thus derived can reasonably be taken to express the percentage of what has been termed 'the middling sort' (or 'minor elites') within any community. The former term would thus embrace all those with a standard of living markedly above those dwellers whose tax assessment is widely considered to relate to an economic status at, or below, 'subsistence' level.[15] Such residents in rural communities would include those ranging from minor gentry to prosperous yeomen - the majority of whom would have been owners, or at least freeholders - of land of varying size. By virtue of this, a varying but important degree of independence from manorial or other control might be inferred. The economic independence of such members of the community, in contrast to that enjoyed by those tied to 'spire and squire' for land home and employment, could offer a useful adjunct for those whose spiritual and/or political inclinations might lead them away from the path of religious conformity. However, an examination of the figures in **Table 4** cautions against deducing any such correlation between the percentage of this 'middling sort' and the existence of Dissent within any community. Whilst in 85% of parishes with 'significant' Nonconformity at least 10% of the residents could be classified in this socio-economic category, an equal or larger proportion is seen to have existed in parishes returning a low percentage, or a

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[15] W. G. Hoskins, *Industry Trade and People in Exeter 1688-1800* (Manchester, 1935), pp. 117-118.

complete absence, of Dissent. A number of explanations might account for this phenomenon. Under-reporting of Nonconformity in the *Compton Census* returns, either through error or by deliberate manipulation, is one possibility.[16] On the other hand, the above definition of this 'middling sort' may be too wide to have an over-reliance placed on it as a single contributory factor in Dissent. This grouping of the 'middling sort', for the purposes of analysis, may have embraced as many who saw their responsibility and interests lying in the maintenance of social order through ensuring religious conformity as those who exploited their independence as a benefit to active Dissent.

P.R. Brindle, in searching for economic factors associated with Dissent in Northamptonshire, suggests a higher than average incidence of 'forty-shilling freeholders' in nonconformist localities.[17] However, his evidence, derived mainly from Poll Books for the early eighteenth century, when combined with the non-specific definition of 'nonconformist localities' makes this assertion somewhat imprecise. When the criterion of 'significant' Dissent as defined in *this* thesis is employed, as many parishes appear to be an exception to this rule as appear to fit with it. A similar conclusion has been reached by Nesta Evans, investigating Dissent in Buckinghamshire, who found 'a lack of conclusive evidence of a causal connection between the liberty of being a freeholder and the liberty of dissent' in that county.[18]

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[16] R.H. Evans, in his investigations into Nonconformity in Leicestershire poses the possibility that in some instances the clergy might have 'discreetly suppressed the names of the wealthy and influential [residents]' in Nonconformist returns. See R.H.Evans, "Nonconformists in Leicestershire in 1669" in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Soc.* (Vol. 25 1949), p. 111.

[17] P. R. Brindle, "Politics & Society in Northamptonshire 1649-1714" Unpublished Ph D thesis (Leicester University, 1985), p.56.

In terms of the socio-economic structures of the urban communities within the area under examination, and their relationship to Dissent, the picture is similarly equivocal. Whilst the market town of Towcester [25], with 35% of its population in the category of the 'middling sort', had a 'significant' proportion of Dissent within its parish, Brackley [64], another market town with a higher proportion of minor elites, had considerably less Dissent recorded. Daventry [6], with the highest population of any parish within the area and its almost total absence of recorded Nonconformists – an absence which in the light of frequently recorded conventicles and other plentiful evidence of its long association with puritan and later dissenting activities is extremely questionable - had a similarly high percentage of the 'middling sort' within its community. [19] There may well be more sophisticated explanations for this variance, not least the fact that of the twenty-two Daventry dwellings with Hearth Tax assessments between 5 and 7 hearths, more than half of these pertained to the residences of those holding municipal office in the Corporation of Daventry between 1662 and 1680. The provisions of the Corporation and Test Acts during this time required *certified* conformity to the Anglican Church by those holding such public office. It is therefore unlikely that such stalwarts of the local community would have embraced any open form of Dissent, preferring perhaps the *via media* of semi-separatism, offered within the presbyterian fold. Thus, the agenda and interests pursued by those who made up this middle stratum of society can be seen to be

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[18] M. Spufford , *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995). p.61: and Nesta Evans, "The Descent of Dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds" *loc.cit.*, p. 302.

[19] See Baker, *Northamptonshire* Vol I. p.332, where he asserts that "Nonconformity took early root in this parish... and that after 1662 secret meetings for worship were frequently held late at night at a house in the hamlet of Drayton". Also Palmer, in his "1669 Account of Conventicles in the Western Deaneries", who cites John Manley , a previous Bailiff of the town Daventry, as the owner of this house.

as equally varied in urban as in rural parishes. It is also evident from the analysis of the various socio-economic groups above, that the proportion of the 'middling sort' within a community, despite the narrowing or qualifying of this definition, can have little value as a predictor of the incidence or absence of Dissent.

Trade, Communication and Dissent

The investigation into factors related to the adoption or spread of Dissent in Western Northamptonshire has so far been based on quantitative data. As can be seen in **Figs 2(a)**and **2(c)** and **Table 4** above, there is a marked degree of dissenting activity, both in terms of significant percentages and recorded conventicles,in those parishes bordering 'Watling Street', the main thoroughfare across the western side of the county. The search for an explanation of the apparent association between the spread of Dissent and the good communications brought about by trade and commerce has already been researched in other counties, notably by Michael Frearson in the case of Buckinghamshire.[20]

On the map in **Figure 5**, showing the parishes in Western Northamptonshire in which either 'significant' Dissent or the holding of known conventicles has already been noted, the major routes across the county, in addition to Watling Street (already shown) have been superimposed. The route of these roads across the area, noted as 'Mr Ogilby's

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[20] M. Frearson, "The Mobility and descent of Dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds - Communications and the continuity of dissent in the Chiltern Hundreds during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" in Spufford., *Rural Dissenters.*

Roads' in the legend of John Harris's 1712 map of the county [21], and whose significance is supported by other evidence, shows an interesting correlation with many of the parishes where this dissenting activity has been noted. Only seven of the twenty-five parishes which straddle or adjoin the major route of Watling Street through the county would appear to have little or no connection with such activities. About halfway along Watling Street, as it passed through Weedon Bec, an important diversion from this earlier trade route gave easy passage from the south to the burgeoning market town of Daventry. In this respect, Daniel Defoe, writing in the early eighteenth century, considered Daventry's considerable market town as subsisting 'chiefly by the great concourse of travellers on the old Watling Street way'.[22] In addition to this, the weekly Wednesday markets 'well served with horses, cattle, sheep, corn, and provisions' and its special annual fair days, all of which attracted people to the town, Daventry's position on the route to Coventry, Birmingham and Chester began to assume an even greater importance. [23] The town's thriving economy as a staging post for stabling transport and accommodation on the route to and from London and the Northwest brought with it as many passing through the town as those with interests in it. Anecdotal evidence of Dr Caleb Ashworth, a minister and tutor at Daventry's Dissenting Academy in the mid-eighteenth century, through information communicated to him by an elderly Nonconformist, gives testimony of the influence of one such late seventeenth-century visitor passing through the town:

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[21] See **Fig. 1** above. John Ogilby (1600-1676), publisher and geographer, became the King's 'Cosmographer' in 1671. His 'tables of measur'd roads ... to which is added a true Account of the markets and fairs collected in his survey' published in 1676, are seen as 'the first major advance in cartography since the Tudor period'. Charles W. Withers, "Ogilby, John (1600-1676)", ODNB.

[22] Greenall, *Daventry Past*, p.55, quoting Defoe, *A Tour through England & Wales* (Everyman), p. 86.

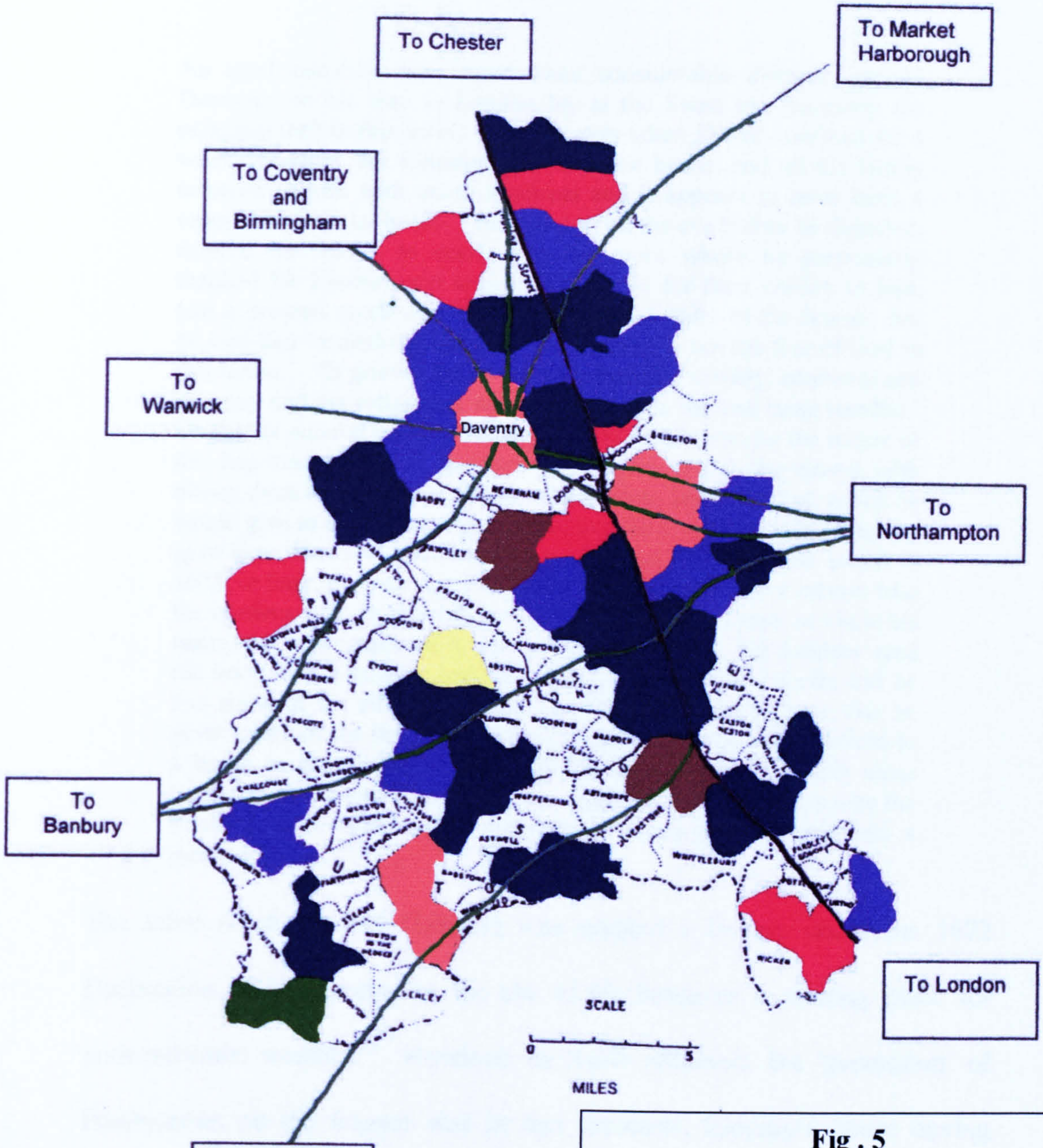

Fig . 5
Trade routes through Western Northamptonshire and their association with Dissent.

Trade routes approximated from John Harris' *Map of Northamptonshire* (1712)

Parishes where 'significant Dissent' noted in 1676 *Compton Census*

Parishes listed by Palmer in 1669 "Account of Conventicles"

Conventicles reported in Bishop Lloyd's 1683 Visitation Report

Conventicles reported by Palmer (1669)and Lloyd (1683)

Parishes where 'significant Dissent' noted in 1676 and Conventicles in 1683

Parishes where Conventicles noted in 1669 and 'significant Dissent' in 1676

Parishes where Conventicles and "significant Dissent" noted in 1669, 1676 and 1683

An aged minister, who lived some considerable distance beyond Daventry, in his way to London lay at the Swan Inn (formerly the principal inn) in this town, where he was taken ill and confined for a week or longer. Mr Lindsay, who kept the house, and all his family behaved to him with much kindness and it appears to have been a remarkably regular house. The minister, on the eve before he departed, desired the family to come into his room where he particularly thanked Mr Lindsay and each of his family for their civility to him, and expressed much satisfaction in the good order of the house; but he said that 'something leads me to fear there is not the fear of God in this house.' 'It grieves me to see such honesty, civility, economy and decency and yet religion is wanting., which is the one thing needful.' On this he entered into a close conversation with them on the nature of the importance of real and inward religion, which he closed with telling them that he had with him a little book, lately printed, which he would give to them, and wished them to read it carefully. On which he gave them Baxter's Poor Man's Family book that fixes the action to 1672, or later, the year that the book was printed. It is not certain who the minister was, or that Mr Lindsay ever saw him again; or knew his name, but it is suspected it was Mr Baxter himself. Mr Lindsay read the book with pleasure, sent for others of Mr Baxter's books and he and some of his children became excellent characters. Upon this he grew weary of the Inn, and being in plentiful circumstances, retired to a house in the middle of the High Street which had a small close behind it, at the extremity of which, upon the back lane [opposite the Inlands], there stood some outbuildings which he converted into a meeting house. [24]

The same Allen Lindsay (Linzey) was granted a licence under the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence for the use of his house as a meeting place for nonconformist worship.[25] However, as Baker observed, the 'persuasion' of Presbyterian on the licence was in fact incorrect, Lindsay's house having become the first legal meeting place for Independent/Congregational worship in Daventry 'which the people enjoyed during [Lindsay's] life, having [later] got a settled minister and formed themselves into a church. This was probably after the Revolution [of 1688].'[26]

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[23] Greenall, *Daventry Past,* p. 55, quoting Celia Fiennes, *Through England on a Side-saddle.*

[24] Baker, *Northamptonshire* Vol. I p. 332.

[25] G. Lyon Turner, *Original records of early nonconformity under persecution and indulgence (London, 1911-1914)* Classified Summary p. 807: also F. Bates, *Declaration of Indulgence 1672: A Study in the Rise of Early Dissent* (London, 1908), p. lxxv.

[26] Baker, *Northamptonshire,* p.332.

In connection with the above narrative, several details are open to question. There is no apparent record in Baxter's diaries or in his calendared correspondence of an episode of illness necessitating a stay at Daventry in, or around, 1672.[27] Baker is incorrect in dating Baxter's *Poor Man's Family Book* to that year, its first publication being two years later. Finally, it would stretch credibility somewhat to believe that Lindsay became a convert to the 'Inward Spirit' of Christianity, sold his business, purchased a new house, converted it into a meeting place and applied for a licence for nonconformist worship, all within such a short space of time! Despite the inconsistencies surrounding the time-scale of the above episode, and the identity of the minister in question, his influence on Lindsay is undoubted. Whilst not all visitors to the town would necessarily have brought about such a direct and lasting effect on the townsfolk, the above recorded episode, singularly valuable in the area of personal belief which, by its very nature, is often difficult to quantify, serves to illustrate the importance of Daventry's pivotal position on the road network, laying it open to the interchange of new and radical ideas between inhabitants and visitors.

Another aspect of the association between trade routes and the spread of religious Dissent is the part played by those who, through their labours, linked manufacture with the supply of the necessary raw material and the distribution of finished goods. Both Spufford and Frearson have underlined this important connection by pointing out, in particular, the association

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[27] N.H. Keeble & G.F. Nuttall (eds.), *Calendar of Correspondence of Richard Baxter* Vol. 2 1660-1693: also N.H. Keeble, (ed.), *Autobiography of Richard Baxter* (London, 1974). Also *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford, 1982), by the same author.

between leather workers and the cattle trade in the Chilterns.[28] In the context of Northamptonshire, whose major industries in and around the county town were heavily dependent upon leather, this association with a mobile group of workers whose occupation as cattle dealers caused them to move constantly along the country's roads between market towns, is highly significant. [29]

In a study of the Welsh cattle trade and its connection with Northamptonshire grazing pastures and cattle markets, Richard Colyer explores the routes used by the cattle drovers across the East Midlands during the nineteenth century through the examination of extant account records.[30] With the assertion that this trade was 'of considerable antiquity', albeit without the ability to make use of the later constructed turnpiked roads between market towns, there is little reason to doubt that similar routes and stop-overs were being followed by the drovers two centuries earlier. On Colyer's map **(Fig. 6)** the importance of Daventry is again emphasised, not only in its role as a town with an important cattle market but also as a provider of grazing for the cattle and of taverns for the drovers' sustenance and accommodation. With the regular passage of these drovers through the county, the association between their routes and the parishes where 'significant' Dissent is noted cannot be denied. Of particular interest in this respect is the inclusion of Syresham. Although both the significance of this small town in its connection with the cattle trade and the exact routes used by the drovers to and from it appear to be unstated, its association with one of the highest

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[28] See M. Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725* (Cambridge ,1995), p.53 also pp.275 *et seq.*

[29] See above p.6.

[30] R. J. Colyer, 'A Nineteenth Century Welsh Cattle Dealer in Northamptonshire.' in *Northamptonshire Past & Present* Vol 5 (Northampton, 1974), pp. 121-126.

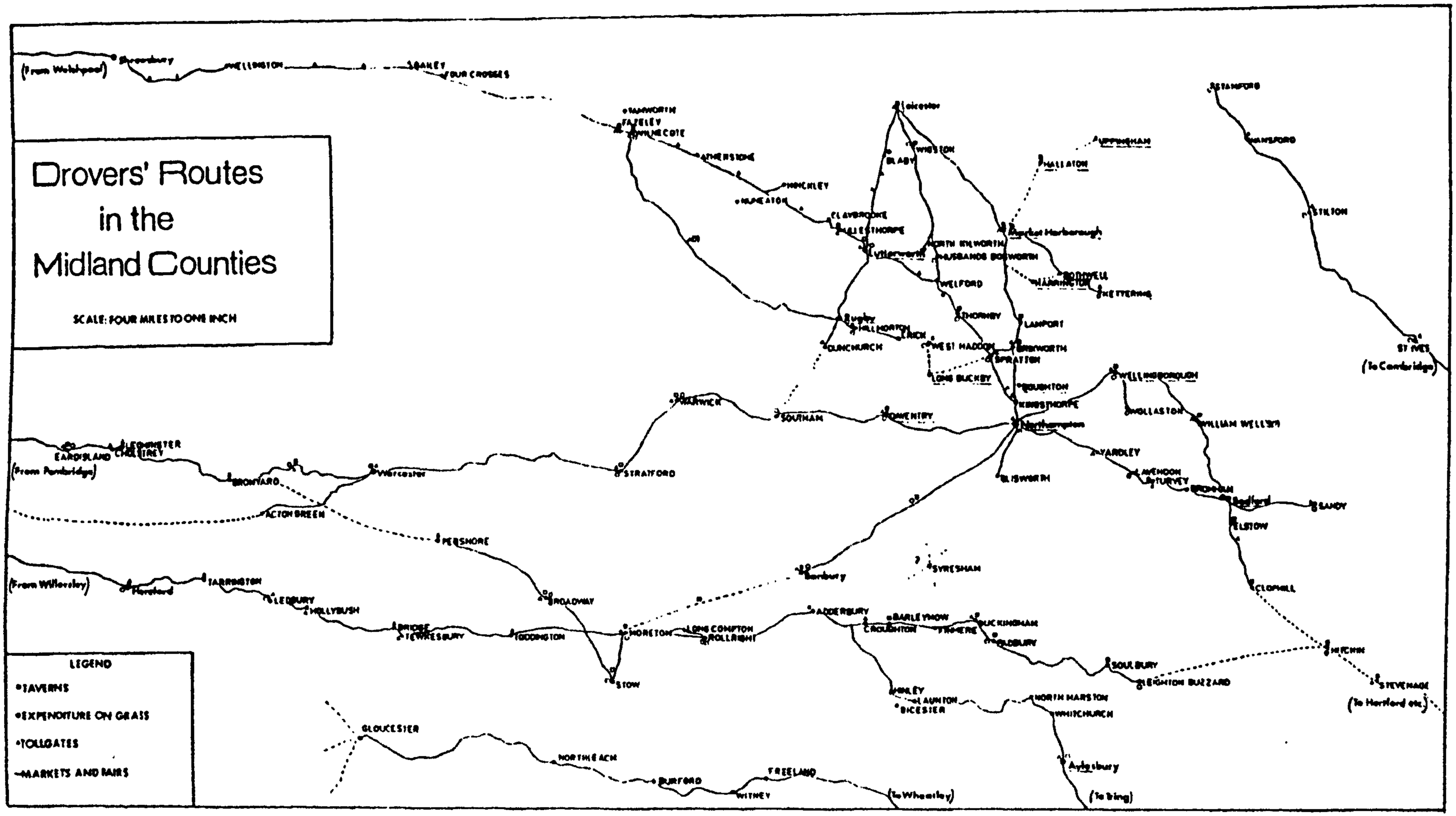

Fig 6: Trade Routes in the Midland Counties
from R J Colyer, 'A Nineteenth Century Welsh Cattle Dealer in Northamptonshire.'
in *Northamptonshire Past & Present* Vol 5 (NRS, 1974),

recorded percentages of poverty and Dissent has already been mentioned.[31] It could be argued that the plentiful supply of oak-tree bark from the surrounding Whittlewood Forest, so essential to the leather tanning industry in Northampton, might have made it a profitable diversion for the cattle drovers on their way through the county. At the same time it may have promoted an interesting interchange of radical and alternative ideas for a poverty-stricken community by means of which the inhabitants might gain a measure of spiritual satisfaction and consolation through a form of religious worship of a nonconformist kind. Such ideas might well fall fruitfully on ground on which the seeds of Dissent had been already been sown over a century earlier, when John Kurde, a shoemaker from Syresham, was put to death at Northampton during the Marian persecutions for his refusal to accept the established Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.[32]

Separatists and semi-Separatists

Having explored possible contributory factors in the incidence and spread of Nonconformity in the western part of the county, attention should now be turned to an examination of the nature of the gatherings of those seeking alternative forms of worship, from those offered by the Established Church of England. The geographical distribution of these illegal assemblies of disaffected or dissatisfied Protestants, the socio-economic ranking and

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[31] See above p. 57.

[32] Rev J. Jackson Goadby FGS, "Lectures on the History of Baptists and Quakers in Northamptonshire 1650-1700" (Northampton, 1882), citing Foxe's Actes and Monuments. See also Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite texts and Lollard history* (Oxford, 1988), p.479, and Margaret Spufford's observations on Dissent as a phenomenon transmitted within the family, in *Contrasting Communities* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 280.

numbers of those attending, and the fundamental differences between 'Separatist' and 'semi-Separatist' gatherings will also be investigated.

As has already been pointed out, the practice of partial conformity amongst church-goers was a phenomenon recognised by the archdeacon of the diocese, who estimated that some half of those who attended conventicles in 1669 could be classified as only semi-Separatist and, in his belief, still frequented the Established Church. In his report to the Bishop of Peterborough, detailing the activities of Quakers, Independents and 'Anabaptists' in various towns and villages, Archdeacon Palmer tended to play down the social or economic status of those leading and attending conventicles, in an attempt to minimise the implied threat to the well-being of the Church of England and to the stability of society in general. Of the thirty-four conventicles reported to him in the western deaneries of the County, Palmer asserted that of the estimated 2400 persons believed to frequent these illegal gatherings 'there is scarce any gentleman of £100 per annum that forsakes the Church, nor 10 yeomen of that estate that I can find few men of £50 a year'. In addition, he stated that, of those attending the conventicles, 'there are far more women than men [and] many children and servants.'[33]

The general feeling amongst the ecclesiastical and civil authorities that the Act for the Suppression of Conventicles in 1664 [16 Car II, c.4] may not have been totally successful can be deduced from both the contents of Palmer's report and the defensive tone of his conclusions. With a few notable exceptions, there is an underlying attempt to discount both the significance and the number of conventicles in existence in the western deaneries of Northamptonshire some five years after the enactment of this legislation, and

[33] NRO. Fermor-Hesketh (Baker) MS 708, "Account of Conventicles".

to emphasise the general low estate of the majority of people attending them. In concluding his account, Palmer offered the firm assurance to the Archbishop of Canterbury that, with the Justices taking a firm stand, these gatherings 'may be easily suppressed'.

In a comprehensive analysis of Palmer's "Account", David Wykes emphasises many of the salient points which it reveals on the nature and number of conventicles in the county, their relative importance and the denominational persuasion and socio-economic make-up of those attending, hosting or teaching in them.[34] Whilst aware of the deficiencies of Palmer's document, especially in relation to the denominational labels attributed by him to the various conventicles, Wykes concludes that although assemblies of Baptists in the county were more numerous than those of other Nonconformists, the members attending were considerably fewer than those at meetings classified by Palmer as Independent. When the pattern of religious Dissent is compared with evidence from other counties, the activities of Congregationalists or Independents were stronger in Northamptonshire and its neighbouring counties to the east than they would appear to have been in counties to the north, where Presbyterianism tended to dominate. However, the fact that no Presbyterian conventicle is described as such in Palmer's account is seen by Wykes as misleading, since the evidence of ejected ministers still preaching at conventicles and the Licences issued to them and other teachers under the Declaration of Indulgence three years later, suggests to him that there was significant Presbyterian activity by both ministers and

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[34] D. L. Wykes, "The Church and Early Dissent: The 1669 Return of Nonconformist Conventicles for the Archdeaconry of Northampton" in *Northamptonshire Past & Present* (Northampton 1991/2), Vol 8 pp. 197-209.

their lay patrons in the county. At Daventry, where frequent, but not fixed, conventicles were held 'commonly at the house of Mr John Manly', their mainly itinerant teachers included several ejected ministers: 'Mr Alsop from Somerset', Mr Edward Bagshawe, 'who persuades to separation', and other ministers, who 'pretended to be journeying upon that rode', being amongst those listed.[35]

The socio-economic status of the hosts and a number of those attending the Daventry conventicles named by Palmer, and also noted in many of the the Quarter Session records of 1669, would indicate that not all were numbered amongst the 'inferior sort'. John Manley 'gent' appears to have been a man of considerable means, having previously held the office of Bailiff of Daventry, his house in Drayton being assessed at eight hearths in the 1662(M) Hearth Tax records.[36] The 'unlawfull meeting or conventicle' held 'in a riotous manner at the house of Mrs Hannah Manley' (also assessed at eight hearths) was attended by some one hundred persons or more, a number of whom would appear, from the evidence of Hearth Tax returns, to have been persons enjoying considerable social and economic status in the town. Allen Linzey (Lindsay) and his wife, mentioned above as early Daventry converts to Nonconformity [37], the widows Hannah Manley and Prudence Manley and a number of the wives of other wealthy town residents (whose tax assessments varied from four to six hearths) were presented before the Quarter Sessions

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[35] NRO. Fermor-Hesketh (Baker) MS708 f.2. William Alsop, ejected from Ilminster Somerset, should not be confused with Vincent Alsop, ejected from Wilby Northants and later to become a prominent member in the Presbyterian Church . See A.G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised being a revision of Calamy's Account of the Ministers and others ejected and silenced 1660-2* (Oxford, 1934), pp. 8-9.

[36] PRO. E179/254/11 (Daventry cum Drayton Hearth Tax returns).

[37] See above pp. 67-68.

held at Northampton Castle in 1669 and fined for their part in this conventicle. According to the presentment, 'they or some of them, did refuse to let the constables of Daventry to come...with a warrant... to disperse the said persons so unlawfully assembled and reviled them saying that they did not care a fart for their warrant, or words to that effect'.[38] Although perhaps not the wisest course of action for those partaking in this illegal assembly, and resulting in heavy fines for the main participants, such open impertinence to the representatives of the King's Justices is indicative of the self-confident nature of their social position held by these leading urban Presbyterian or Independent Dissenters.[39] Similarly, amongst the Towcester Independents presented and fined for holding an illegal conventicle at Caldecote in 1670 were John Grundon (Grindon?), the host (whose identity in Palmer's "Account" gives a clue to the persuasion of this particular meeting), and Charles Gore, a mercer, both prosperous residents in the Towcester district, having been assessed with four hearths in the 1674(L) tax returns.[40] Whether the above named were fairly representative of the socio-economic 'condition' of those urban dwellers attending these Independent or Presbyterian gatherings, or purposefully singled out by the authorities as worth prosecuting, is , however, open to question. [41]

The fact that the Daventry conventicles seldom appeared to be held on Sundays, and that of those attending 'not about 6 of them forsake the Church'

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[38] NRO. QSR 1/55/34,35,36 37 & 84 (Michaelmas, 1669).

[39] Wykes states that before the early eighteenth century, conventicles described as Independent or Presbyterian often contained supporters of both groups, the denominational labels being somewhat fluid; see "The Church and Early Dissent" (Northampton, 1991/2), Vol.8 p. 200. See also Baker, *Northamptonshire* Vol 1 p.332 especially re Allen Linzey

[40] Charles Gore applied for a licence for his house to be used as a place of worship under the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence . (See Table 7).

[41] NRO. QS/1/60/11 (Epiphany, 1671).

serves to stress the semi-Separatist nature of those attending these meetings, whilst at the same time offering a reasonable explanation for the low figure of 'Obstinate Separatists' in the *Compton Census* return for Daventry. However, a notable exception to this semi-Separatist practice of many Independents and Presbyterians is evidenced from the Towcester and Passenham gatherings of Independents 'of mean estate [which] meet every Sunday' under their Minister Mr Edward Bagshaw.[42] Ejected from his living in Oxfordshire in 1662, later imprisoned for sedition and yet continuing to preach, Bagshaw was a vociferous opponent of the leading Presbyterian Baxter and noted in Palmer's account to 'persuade to separation'. Baxter, on the other hand, was a resolute advocate of an 'irenicist' policy which favoured 'purity through unity' with the Established Church, rather than favouring a separate existence outside it. Unable to accept Baxter's defence of partial conformity or his justification of such a position through Old Testament exegesis, Bagshaw viewed this half-way house of semi-separatism as abhorrent and grievously damaging to the cause of Dissent. It is interesting to note that these fundamentally different dissenting views, with far-reaching consequences for nonconformist practices in the post-toleration era, were propounded by both their leading exponents, in Presbyterian conventicles held in Western Northamptonshire.

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[42] NRO. MS 708 (Fermor-Hesketh) Baker f. 2.

Baptists and Quakers

In the rural area surrounding Daventry, the conventicles reported by Palmer appear to have been mainly 'Anabaptist' or Quaker gatherings. Of the former, Staverton appears to have hosted the largest gathering, with about 100 meeting on a monthly basis, 'a great part being from this town'. Although the 'receivers' appear to have been composed of minor trades-people, a shoemaker and carpenter being mentioned specifically, their teachers included Benjamin Morley, whom Palmer describes elsewhere in his report as 'reputed to be a Bishop or Superintendent [who]...over a yeare goes to visit other congregations in the counties of Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Berkshire, and spends therein divers works'. Morley was also teaching at conventicles at Braunston, Welton and Everdon and in the Northamptonshire parishes at the northern end of Watling Street, as well as in his home village of Ravensthorpe. He and Francis Stanley of East Haddon, styled by Palmer as 'yeomen', were both described by later commentators as 'the leading spirits in the cause [of the Baptist Church] in this county in the middle of the seventeenth century'.[43]

As Wykes has pointed out, Palmer's specific linking of Morley and George Bett, another teacher at the Anabaptist conventicle which met 'by course' at Crick, Yelvertoft and Long Buckby, with their known roles in the Parliamentary forces in the Civil War, is of more than passing significance. Any perceived connection between Sectarianism and previous Cromwellian support by its members was sure to add weight to the belief in the minds of

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[43] John Taylor, "The Baptists in Northamptonshire in the Seventeenth Century" in John Taylor (ed.), *Antiquarian Memoranda Northamptonshire* (Northampton ,1901), No XII.

both ecclesiastical and civil authorities that dissent from the national church could be equated with the threat of political instability. [44]

In common with the Baptist conventicles, the meetings of Quakers can be regarded more as a 'gathered church' for committed Separatists than as a conventicle offering alternative worship to those who chose nevertheless to remain broadly within the 'Anglican' fold. The majority of entries in Palmer's "Account", covering both 'Anabaptist' and Quaker Sunday gatherings, stress this feature of their worship practices: 'most every Sunday' (Middleton Chainey): 'frequently on Sundays' (Passenham) 'one Sunday at Fleurr and the next Sunday at Harpole' are typical descriptions of the occurrences of such meetings. With smaller meetings in the villages of Farthingstone, Heyford and Muscot, a major venue for the declared separatist groups of Quakers south of Daventry was, according to Palmer, in the village of Bugbrooke. In both Palmer's 1669 "Account" and his 1676 *Compton Census* return, no effort is made to play down the significant presence of Quakers centred on Bugbrooke. In the former report it is stated that 'sometimes 200' attended the Bugbrooke meetings, the latter listing 100 Nonconformists in the parish. If Palmer's practice of equating 'Conformists' with the whole population of a parish is consistent, this would indicate that some 33% had opted out of the cure of the Bugbrooke rector, Rev John Whitfeild, the largest numerical return for Dissent in any rural parish in the county and the highest percentage in the whole diocese.

Although the majority of the Bugbrooke 'Obstinate Separatists' would appear to have been Quakers, evidence from a 1671 presentment to the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions indicates that there had been very

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[44] Wykes, "Early Dissent", p. 204.

considerable concern by Rev Whitfeild at this time at the rumoured presence of Mr Edward Bagshaw at a conventicle 'of very dangerous consequence' in his parish.[45] For Whitfeild, an ultra-Conformist whose hostility to all forms of Dissent was well-documented, Bagshaw's radical views urging total separation by Protestant Dissenters may have represented an even greater threat to the well-being of his church than that offered by those Quakers in his parish, who were, already *ex ecclesia.* [46]

Separatists in Western Northamptonshire : Socio-economic status

The socio-economic or occupational status of some of the known Quakers in the area of Western Northamptonshire, whose names have been identified, either through civil prosecutions or Quaker records, for their non-attendance at conventicles, for refusal to swear an oath or to pay tithes, is shown in **Table 5.** The number of known Quakers obtained from these records is considerably higher than those for whom it has proved possible to attribute either an occupation or a Hearth Tax assessment. Amongst the reasons for this is the scant record of occupations in Palmer's "Account" and in the earliest Quaker records, particularly those prior to the mid-eighteenth century. A more profitable source of occupational data can be gleaned from the names recorded in Quarter Session proceedings. Difficulties have also been encountered in correlating names with Hearth Tax assessment returns, a considerable number of Quakers being identified, but not traceable, within a particular parish. This may occur when a wife or other non-householder is cited in a particular record. There is also the added complication that the 1662(M) Hearth Tax

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[45] NRO. QSR 1/61/32 (Michaelmas, 1671). Also see below. p.201.

[46] See above p. 75.

returns for many parishes do not appear to include a list of those certified exempt, denying further the possibility of obtaining much needed socio-economic data. Where identical names occur within a parish in the Hearth Tax returns, creating an obvious anomaly, this has been pointed out or the name has been omitted from the data in the table.

Similarly, a comparison of entries for the same name in a given parish in the different returns for 1662, 1669/70 and 1674 may show variations in the number of hearths assessed, which might be explained by factors such as an increasing diligence on the part of the assessors, or by a change in status or residence of the named person over the period. In such cases, both assessments are shown. In order to maintain an acceptable degree of confidence in this analysis, the names identified in the data in **Table 5** have been cross-checked with other records such as Besse's *Sufferings* or, in the case of those prosecuted for attendance at conventicles, their religious persuasion has been deduced from the identities of others at the same gathering who were known to be Quaker. In the case of those identified from Quaker Burial Records, names accompanied by the note 'son/daughter /infant' have been omitted. Whilst this will inevitably reduce the number available for analysis, it does guard against the possibility of non-adult members of Quaker families being inadvertently included. Accepting the premise of a correlation between Hearth Tax and personal wealth and its consequent use as a valuable indicator of economic status, already explored in Chapter 1 above,[47] the list of names provides useful material for analysis, provided that the association between these two factors is bounded by a reasonable time-scale. As Stevenson has pointed out in

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[47] See above pp. 45-50.

Name	H/ T [1]	Date	Residence	HT [2]	Occupation	Source [3]	Remarks [4]
Bob Curtis		1659	Cold Higham	1	Shepherd	1662M	Besse
John Ayres		1659	Everdon	2		1662M	Besse
Margaret Parker		1659	Aynho		Widow		Besse
Wm. Evans	H	1660	Farthingstone	2		1662M	Besse
John Hart	T	1660	Towcester	4	Brassier	1662M	Besse
Tho. Miller		1660	Brackley	3		1662M	Besse
Joseph Gammage		1661	Bugbrooke	2		1662M	Besse
Wm Barns		1662	Kislingbury	1		1662M	Q Birth Records
Henry Hopkins	H	1662	Muscot	1		1662M	Besse
Robert Ashby	H	1662	Bugbrooke	3	Yeoman	1662M	Besse
Tho. Dent		1663	Kislingbury	1		1662M	Besse
Arthur Green		1663	Bugbrooke	2	Husbandman	1662M	Besse
Wm Evans		1664	Farthingstone	2		1662M	Q Burials
Tho. Arnold		1664	Heyford	3		1662M	Q Burials
Tho. Hasker		1664	Bugbrooke		Servant	Besse	Besse
Richard Gill		1664	Whilton	1		1662M	Besse
Henry Harding		1664	Whilton	1		1662M	Besse
Tho. Linnell	H	1664	Whilton	1		1662M	Besse
Tho. Langton		1664	Whilton	2		1662M	Besse
Hannah Gennaway		1664	Murcutt	2		1662M	QS 1/35/86
William Dunckley		1664	Weedon Bec	1X		1674L	QS 1/35/87
John Dunckley		1664	Weedon Bec	1X		1674L	QS 1/35/87
Widow White		1664	Sulgrave				QS 1/35/89
Tho Smallbone		1664	Eydon	3/2		1662M	QS 1/35/91
Richard Smallbone		1664	Eydon	1/2		1662M	QS 1/35/91
Robert Hall		1664	Bugbrooke		Servant		QS 1/37/35
John Bottwell		1664	Whilton	1	Mason	1662M	QS 1/37/35
Thomas Goodman		1664	Towcester	2	Whitawer	1670M	QS 1/37/35
John Gearby (?)		1664	Towcester		Carpenter		QS 1/37/35
Wm Carr		1664	Kislingbury	2		1662M	Q Burials
Daniel Rowe		1664	Whilton		Miller		QS 1/37/36
Richard Parsons		1665	Abthorpe		Labourer		QS 1/37/8
John Cory		1665	Towcester		Carpenter		QS 1/37/9
Eliz Harris		1665	Eastcote		Spinster		QS 1/37/37
Wm Robinson		1665	Eastcote	1	Mason	1662M	QS 1/37/11
Wm Sharpe		1665	Flore	1	Tailor	1662M	QS 1/37/49
Wm Gennaway		1665	Flore	1	Labourer	1670M	QS 1/37/49
Jane Curtis		1665	Grimstoke	(1)	*w. of Bob Curtis*		QS 1/37/49
Eliz Greene		1665	Bugbrooke		*wife of Labourer*		QS 1/37/49
Anne Gennaway		1665	Muscott		Widow		QS 1/37/49
Eliz Harris		1665	Eastcote		Spinster		QS 1/37/49

[1] H=Host/Receiver: T = Teacher: as classified in Palmer's 1669 *Account of Conventicles*
[2] Hearth Tax Assessment: X = Certified Exempt (in 1674L only)
[3] Date of Hearth Tax Assessment
[4] Remarks indicate source of identification as Quaker.
QS/*/* = Northampton Quarter Sessions Roll No: (app)= appended to main roll
Q Births = Quaker Birth Records at NRO (In Quaker Birth records names/residence of parents are indicated)
Q Marr = Quaker Marriage Records at NRO
Q Burials – Only those believed to be adult are recorded
Besse = Quaker Sufferings

Table 5: Economic and/or Occupational status of some identified Quakers resident in Western Northamptonshire.

Mary Ayres		1665	Farthingstone		Spinster		QS 1/37/49
Sarah Greene		1665	Bugbrooke		Spinster		QS 1/37/49
Katherine Ellis		1665	Bugbrooke		Spinster		QS 1/37/49
Anne Ellis		1665	Bugbrooke		Spinster		QS 1/37/49
Alice Ashby		1665	Bugbrooke		Spinster		QS 1/37/49
Eliz Grey		1665	Weston		Spinster		QS 1/37/49
Christn Wallington		1665	Heyford		Spinster		QS 1/37/49
John Simpson		1665	Bugbrooke	1	Cordwinder	1670M	QS 1/37/49
Wm Dimbly (?)		1665	Weedon Bec		Labourer		QS 1/37/49
Tho Tibbs		1665	Bugbrooke	2	Husbandman	1670M	QS 1/37/49
Alice Wilkins		1665	Eastcote		Spinster		QS 1/37/49
John White		1665	Sulgrave		Tailor		QS 1665
Elener Simpson		1667	Bugbrooke		Widow		Q Burials
Tho. Poole	T	1669	Flore	1	Carpenter	1662M	1669 Conventi
Robert Curtis		1669	Bugbrooke	1X		1674L	Q Birth Records
Wm. Hopkins	H	1669	Heyford	4		1674L	Q Birth Records
Grace Hopkins		1670	Heyford		Wife of Wm		QS 1/60/3 (app)
John Dunckley		1669	Weedon Bec	1X		1674L	Q Marr Records
John Kenning	T	1670	Kislingbury	1		1674L	QS 1/60/3 (app)
Geo Bradshaw		1670	Flore	2		1674L	QS 1/60/3 (app)
Nathan Brown	T	1670	Harpole	2	Carpenter	1674L	QS 1/60/3 (app)
Francis Butlin		1670	Harpole	3		1674L	QS 1/60/4 (app)
Wife of Butlin		1670					
Ann Rowledge	H	1670	Flore	(2)		1674L	QS 1/60/4 (app)
Laurence Proctor		1670	Flore	1	"Yeoman"	1674L	QS 1/60/4 (app)
Alice Proctor		1670					
Francis Fairfax		1670	Heyford	1X	Labourer	1674L	QS 1/60/5 (app)
Mary Robins		1670	Heyford		Labourer's w	1674L	QS 1/60/5 (app)
Eliz Hollowell		1670	Flore		Labourer's w	1674L	QS 1/60/5 (app)
Wm Campion		1670	Bugbrooke	3		1674L	QS 1/60/10 (app
Tho Baseley		1670	Farthingstone	1	Husbandman	1674	QS 1/60/10 (app
George Bliss		1671	Heyford	1X		1674L	Q Marr Records
Jane Kenning		1673	Kislingbury	(1)	*W of John*	1674L	Q Burials
Benjamin Wright		1673	Blakesley	1		1674L	Q Birth Records
John Ellis		1675	Bugbrooke	1		1674L	Q Burials
Richard Bradshaw		1675	Flore	2		1674L	Q Birth Records
George Eyres		1678	Farthingstone	2		1674L	Q Birth Records
Wm. Tibbs		1678	Bugbrooke	2	Yeoman	1674L	Besse
John Gybons		1679	Whilton	1X		1674L	Q Burials
Margaret Adams		1682	Farthingstone	(2)	*W of John*	1674L	Q Burials
Ann Bliss		1682	Heyford	(1X)	*W of George*	1674L	Q Burials
Tho. Fowler		1683	Aynho		Mercer		Q Marr Records
Dorothy Paine		1684	Heyford	1	Widow	1674L	Q Burials
Ann Line		1684	Heyford	(1)	*W of Richard?*		Q Burials
Mary Barnes		1684	Kislingbury	(2)	*W of Wm*	1674L	Q Burials
Nicholas Read		1684	Towcester	3/1		1674L	*2 listed - uncer*
Richard Ellis		1684	Bugbrooke		Mason		Q Marr Records
Sarah Ellis		1685	Heyford		Widow		Q Burials
John Gibbins		1688	Bugbrooke		Shoemaker		Q Marr Records
Christine Dunckley		1685	Weedon Bec	(1X)	*W of John*		Q Burials
Tim. Burbro		1685	Aynhoe		Baker		Q Marr Records
Tho. Billing		1685	Weedon	1	Labourer	1674L	Q Marr Records
Wm Barnes		1686	Kislingbury	2		1674L	Q Burials

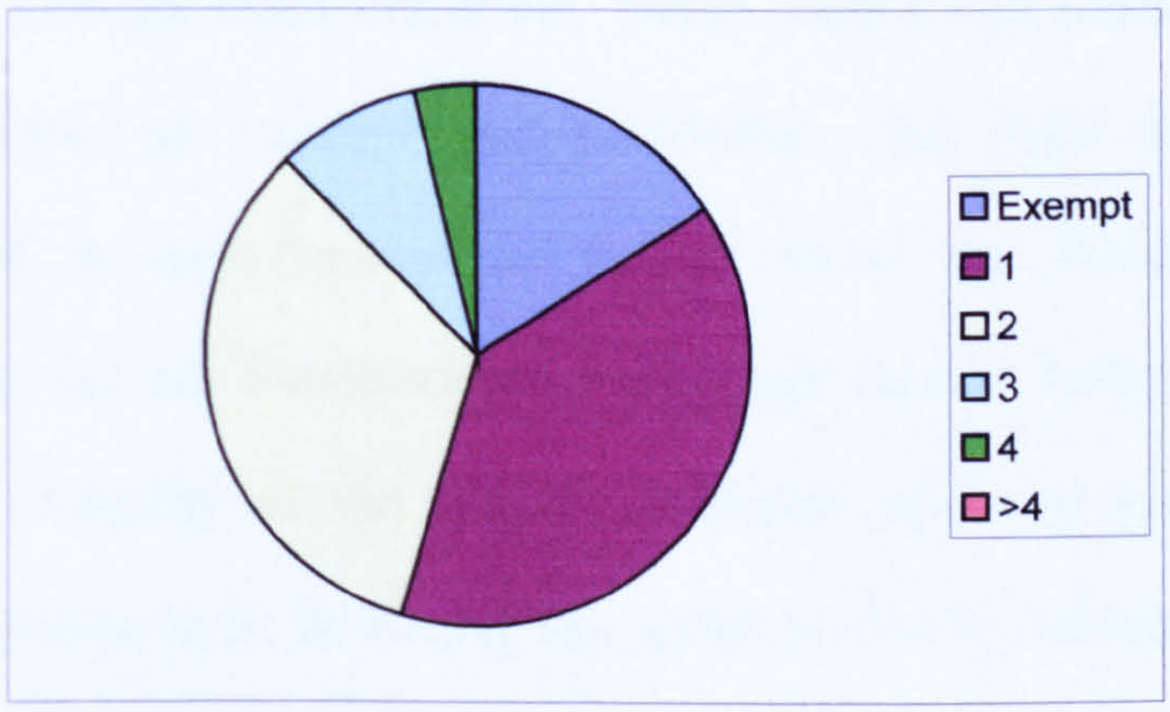
Table 5: (Cont'd).

Hearth Tax Assessments
(Number of hearths)

Exempt	1.	2.	3	4	>4
9	22	19	5	2	0
15.8%	38.6%	33.3%	8.8%	3.5 %	0 %

Table 6a & 6b: Analysis of economic status of known Quakers in Western Northamptonshire from the data in Table 5.

(excluding three ambiguous returns)



his analysis of socio-economic and occupational data for Dissenters in East - Anglian counties, changes in occupation, status or religious persuasion, or even confusion of identity, could occur unrecognised if such a time-scale is not adhered to.[48] With the availability of fairly comprehensive Hearth Tax returns for Northamptonshire covering the period from 1662 to 1674, the observation of a time -scale of around five years maximum between identification and the associated socio-economic evidence has proved possible across this period in the majority of cases. However, in some cases both before and after 1674, the last Hearth Tax records for the county, adherence to such a strict criterion has proved more difficult.[49]

An examination of the data in **Table 5** and the accompanying economic analysis in **Tables 6a & 6b** shows the Quaker following in Western Northamptonshire to have embraced a wide range of persons within the lower socio-economic and occupational strata, from the poorest (exempt) and poor labourers, through small craftsmen, trades people and husbandmen, to a minority styled as 'yeoman' and freeholders, this latter category being exemplified by such persons as Robert Ashby and William Tibbs of Bugbrooke, Thomas Smallbone of Eydon, and Thomas Miller of Brackley. Whilst the majority of the Quaker Dissenters whose economic status is identified appear to lie in Hearth Tax group 1, closely followed by those in group 2, it is noticeable that less than half that number are drawn from the poorest group, certified exempt from tax. The status of the teachers and hosts

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[48] Stevenson, "Protestant Sectarians", pp. 23-30.

[49] In this connection, it is re-assuring to note that W. G. Hoskins, in his *Industry, Trade and People of Exeter 1688-1800* (Manchester, 1935), considers data derived from a 1671 Hearth Tax Roll as a valid basis for examining the social and economic status of Exeter's inhabitants some 17 years onward.

at these conventicles similarly varies, from John Hart of Towcester, a wealthy brazier, to Thomas Poole, a carpenter of Flore. In connection with these latter, the size and accessibility of the houses of those hosting conventicles and the disposition of the local authorities (from village constable to local magistrate) towards the prosecution of those holding conventicles within the area under their jurisdiction, may have played as much a part in the choice of venues for illegal assemblies as the social or economic status of the hosts themselves. Whilst Quaker meetings depended significantly on local teachers, Palmer's "Account" shows that meetings were also visited in the early period by such leading Quaker personalities as William Dewsbury, the distinguished itinerant Yorkshire preacher and author of religious tracts, who was numbered among George Fox's leading 'Publishers of Truth'.[50]

Another notable feature evident from the collected data of Quakers in Western Northamptonshire, in common with that of other dissenting persuasions, is the significance of women, both widows and spinsters, at conventicles. However, in contrast to information on the gatherings of Independents and Presbyterians, the data on Quaker gatherings appear to stress the predominantly rural characteristic of their members.[51] It is also particularly noticeable that presentments to the civil courts and the resultant fines and/or imprisonment of Quakers seem to include whole groups attending illegal meetings, whereas in the case of the urban Dissenters it was only the wealthier, and possibly more influential, amongst those present who appear to have been acted against.

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[50] W. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (York, 1979), p. 451.

[51] See Fig. 3(b).

Whilst the limited size of the sample in **Table 5** precludes deeper conclusions being drawn from it, such as the 'average' hearth assessment of Quakers in the area, the above analysis will allow a useful comparison to be made with data, presented in the next chapter, where the socio-economic and occupational status of Quakers resident in both rural and urban areas of Central and Eastern Northamptonshire have been deduced through similar evidence.

In the use of occupational data for assessing the economic status and personal wealth of identified Quakers where no Hearth Tax return is available, the contrasting cases of William Robinson, a mason of Eastcote, and Richard Parsons, a labourer from Abthorpe, will serve as a useful *caveat.* At the 1665 Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions both these men, together with Elizabeth Harris a spinster of Eastcote, were sentenced to transportation to Jamaica for a period of seven years as a result of a third presentation for attendance at an illegal Quaker gathering. Whilst there is no record of the sequestration and valuation of the goods of Elizabeth Harris, there is a wide variance in those of Parsons and Robinson. Those of the former, which 'beside other things which at present cannot come to light will amount to a good value', included a number of debts upon bond owing to Parsons amounted to an astounding total of £480, in addition to 'two cottages in Abthorpe'.[52] In contrast, the goods sequestered of Robinson amounted to 'A tabell and a forme, a cuberd ...a bed and some other small things of a smaller value'.[53] A salutary lesson in attempting to deduce too much from purely occupational data!

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[52] NRO. QSR 1/37/8 (Easter, 1665).

[53] NRO. Appended to QSR 1/37/11 (Easter, 1665).

Semi-Separatists: Socio-economic status

We turn now to an examination of those who espoused the more 'orthodox' forms of Dissent. In contrast to the Quaker obsession with careful record keeping of all of its activities, there is a marked scarcity of evidence available from which individual Presbyterian or Independent/Congregational Dissenters can be identified. Apart from those few already identified through presentations at Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions, the other extant sources for the period serve very unsatisfactorily in the identification of members of these predominantly 'semi-Separatist' groups.[54] However, whilst in no way compensating for omissions from the 1674 *Compton Census,* which concentrated on 'Obstinate' Separatists, the records of applications for licences for dissenting preachers or teachers and their places of worship, together with the granting of these under the Declaration of Indulgence, can assist in identifying the socio- economic or occupational status of some of the teachers and hosts of these dissenting groups in 1672. In this connection, Lyon-Turner, in his examination of the episcopal returns for the Lincoln Diocese, cautions against inaccuracies in these records: 'the dishonesty [in these records] which deliberately ignores the fact that Mr Edward Bagshaw MA [who was also preaching in neighbouring Buckinghamshire] was the ejected Minister of Ambroseden in Oxfordshire, [the record] simply calls him "late student of Christ Church Oxon", as though he had never been in the ministry at all'.[55] Similar problems occur in the use of Palmer's 1669 "Account", which names only the teachers and hosts at the conventicles, others attending being mentioned only by their number, their all-embracing

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[54] See above pp. 72-74.

[55] Lyon Turner, *Original Records* Vol 3 p. 87.

description being 'inferior persons of mean estate', the semi-Separatist character of their Dissent being continually stressed.

Bearing this in mind, from an analysis of **Table 7,** which shows the social and/or economic status of those identified as Presbyterian and Independent Dissenters from the above sources, it can be seen that teachers and hosts of these illegal conventicles and meeting places later licensed, appear to have enjoyed a markedly higher status than those of the thorough - going Quaker Separatists shown in **Table 5.** Of the ten teachers listed in Palmer's account, eight are seen to have been ministers ejected or 'silenced', following their refusal to conform in 1662. From the same source, the itinerant nature of ministry and preaching among Presbyterians and Independents is also evident. Mr Wells of Banbury, John Noreman of Horly in Oxfordshire, John Gibb of Newport, Mr Smith from 'Bristol-side', Mr Alsop from Somerset, and the ubiquitous Mr Edward Bagshaw are noted by Palmer in this respect. As David Wykes has pointed out, in areas where there were no resident teachers or preachers there was a considerable reliance on 'the heroic efforts of a number of individuals who travelled long distances in order to serve these congregations.'[56]

Among the hosts of meetings licensed under the Declaration of Indulgence, the exalted social and economic status of Edward Harby Esq. is also worthy of comment. As Lord of the Manor of Adstone, Harby became patron of Robert Allen on this former minister's ejection from his nearby parish of Norton, and 'entertained both him and his wife' in his house until the latter's death in 1685.[57] Whilst Edward Bagshaw's strongly held views on

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[56] Wykes, " Early Dissent", p. 204.

[57] Matthews, *Calamy Revised* , p. 7.

Name	H/ T [1]	Date	Residence	HT [2]	Occupation	Source [3]	Persuasion [4]
Nathan Blancore	H	1669	Brackley	4		Palmer	Independent
John Hill	T	1669	Helmdon	2/3		Palmer	Independent
Edward Bagshaw	T	1669	Culworth	7	Ej. Minister	Palmer	Presbyterian
John Hawtyn	H	1672	Daventry	6		Indulgence	Congregational
James Cave	H/T	1672	Daventry	3	Ej Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Allen Linzey	H	1672	Daventry	5	Ex Innkeeper	Indulgence	Independent
Ralph Punne	H	1672	Greens Norton	3		Indulgence	Presbyterian
J Overton	H	1672	Greens Norton	1X		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Rebecca Mulsoe	H	1672	Greens Norton	1?	Widow	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Tho. Heycock	H	1672	Sulgrave	3	"Chief Constable"	Indulgence & Palmer	Presbyterian
Tho. Pitman	H	1672	Sulgrave	2		Palmer	Independent
Mr Harrison	H	1669	Passenham	9/4		Palmer	Independent
John Grundon	H	1670	Towcester			QS1/60/11	Independent
Charles Gore	H	1672	Towcester	4	Mercer	Indulgence	Independent
Stephen Fowler	T/H	1672	Kilsby	4	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
Wm. Butler	T/H	1672	Ashby St Legers		Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Edwd. Harby	H	1672	Adstone	14	Sheriff	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Robert Allen	T	1669	Adstone	*	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Widow Manley	H	1672	Daventry	8		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Robt. Rogers	T/H	1672	Wappenham	8	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Danl. Williams	T	1672	Daventry		Silenced Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
John Worth	T	1672	Weedon		Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
John Billing	H	1672	Weedon	2/1		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Wm. Wells	H	1672	Woodford Halse			Indulgence	Congregational
Tho. Ward	H	1669	M/Cheney	5		Palmer	Independent

Table 7:
Economic and/or Occupational status of some of those identified through Presentments, Episcopal Returns or Licence Applications as "orthodox dissenters", in Western Northamptonshire.

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[1] H=Host/Receiver: T = Teacher: as classified in Palmer's 1669 *Account of Conventicles*

[2] Hearth Tax Assessment: X = Certified Exempt

[3] Palmer = 1669 *Account of Conventicles:*
Indulgence= Application for, or granting of licence under 1672 Declaration of Indulgence as listed in G Lyon Turner *Original Records*

[4] Religious Persuasion. See pp. 83-4 in text re unreliability of denominational labels.

* Calamy cites Edward Harby(e) as host of Robert Allen (*Original Records* p. 808)

separation from the orthodox church, and his imprisonment for refusal to take the oath of allegiance have already been noted [58], the more predominant 'Baxterian' view of Presbyterian partial conformity, together with unreserved allegiance to the crown, is exemplified by Edward Harby who swore Oaths of Allegiance in 1673 and again in 1676, [59] the manner of his patronage echoing that of the Knightley and Hampden families mentioned earlier. [60]

Conclusion

Throughout this investigation, it should always be borne in mind that the prime 'cause' of Dissent was, by its very nature, the appeal to an individual of a particular religious philosophy. However, the above examination has shown that none of the possible contributory factors to the significant practice of Nonconformity in some parishes and the adherence to Conformity in others can be universally applied across the whole of Western Northamptonshire. Through the failure of this analysis to establish a clear and invariable correlation between any one of the factors examined, either in terms of topography, land ownership and control, or the social and economic composition of any parish and the associated degree of Dissent or Conformity within it, the conclusions of Spufford, Everitt and others have been borne out in the case of Western Northamptonshire. In addition, it has shown that considerable caution must be exercised when using contemporary evidence in the determination of the real proportion of Dissent within communities. However, in the less easily definable area of the influence on Dissent of the

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[58] See above p. 75.

[59] NRO. Oath Roll Entries 1673-1688.

[60] See above pp. 60-61.

trade and communication routes through this part of the county, there would appear to be some interesting and significant connections.

An attempt to identify individual Dissenters through the use of ecclesiastical and secular records has also been carried out, the deficiencies in these sources and the care to be exercised in their interpretation being continually stressed. In particular the limitations of Palmer's evidence are recognised, together with his almost exclusive concern with 'obstinate separatists' In addition, the abundance of evidence from Quaker sources and from the many presentments and prosecutions of members of this sect, in contrast to the scarcity of evidence of 'orthodox' Dissenters and sectarians of other persuasions, has resulted in an overall picture of Dissent which unavoidably lacks balance. Despite these shortcomings, matching the identities of Dissenters against their Hearth Tax assessments provides useful material for analysis of the various social, economic and geographical backgrounds of members of various dissenting 'persuasions'. In order to preserve the integrity of this material, various parameters have been adopted, such as a limited time-scale over which these comparisons have been made and even stricter adherence to the identification of a particular person within the Hearth Tax returns by actual, rather than familial, name. Inevitably, such restrictions have resulted in a reduced level of material available for statistical analysis.

The result of this latter investigation would appear to show that Quaker separatism in Western Northamptonshire, throughout the period, was a predominantly rural phenomenon. From 1660 its membership of teachers, hosts and adherents was composed almost exclusively of the economically

'meaner sort', although the very poorest do not appear to have been a major constituent amongst members. In contrast, the predominantly urban teachers and hosts amongst 'orthodox' Dissenters are of a markedly higher status, although it must be stressed that the evidence in this respect, mainly limited to the applications under the 1672 Declaration, includes a disproportionate number of ejected ministers seeking licences to preach.

The accuracy of Palmer's description of the predominantly lowly status of the numerous semi-Separatist attenders at illegal conventicles may well be questionable, but in the light of available evidence unlikely to be challenged. It is also evident that in some parishes where Separatist Dissent was 'significant' (defined earlier as having over 2.4% of 'obstinate' Dissenters listed in the *Compton Census*) the alternative practice of 'orthodox' Dissent is seen, from other evidence, to have been co-existent. Of the eleven parishes in which licences were applied for under the Declaration of Indulgence, the four parishes of Sulgrave, Green's Norton, Towcester and Cosgrave (Old Stratford) fall into this category.[61] The co-existence of both 'semi-Separatist' and 'obstinate' Dissenters within these parishes serves to illustrate that Nonconformity practised by any one group did not necessarily cause a polarisation towards any particular form of Dissent in any parish. In other parishes, where no return is listed in the *Compton Census*, the evidence from Indulgence Licence applications is a valuable indication of dissenting activity which would otherwise have gone unrecognised.

The identity of many of the adherents to forms of 'orthodox Dissent', whose numbers at illegal conventicles in various towns and villages were

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[61] See fig 3(a) above.

shown not to be insignificant, will probably never be discovered. Acceptance of the Established Church's self-serving and purposeful stress on the humble status of the majority of these 'orthodox Dissenters', which with the lack of evidence cannot be gainsaid, would however appear unsatisfactory in the light of those, both clerical and lay, whose status of no mean standing and influence has been positively identified. The semi-Separatist nature of such Dissent, which in general appears not to have attracted the stigma or penalties associated with 'thorough-going' Nonconformity, together with the considerable numbers reported at various conventicles, would tend to suggest that a larger and more socio-economically significant corpus of 'orthodox' Dissent existed in Western Northamptonshire than these sparse records are able to show.

It remains to be seen whether the results from similar investigations to be carried out for Central and Eastern Northamptonshire in the following chapter will reinforce the preliminary conclusions drawn from the above investigations into the nature of Dissent in the western part of the county.

Chapter 3

A Socio-economic Analysis of Protestant Nonconformity in Central and Eastern Northamptonshire

This chapter will continue the search for socio-economic and other factors which may be associated with the existence of Dissent, firstly in Central Northamptonshire and secondly in the remainder of the county. In conclusion, these findings will be combined with those of the previous chapter to provide an analysis of the relative socio-economic status of both Separatist and semi-Separatist Dissenters across the whole of the county.

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Central Northamptonshire

This area will be arbitrarily defined as embracing those parishes east of Watling Street, the primary north-south trade route of the county, continuing eastwards across the county to the River Ise where its course runs southward to meet the River Nene at Wellingborough.[See **Fig. 7**] The investigation will be similarly based on analysis of statistical data derived from recorded returns of Nonconformists in the 1676 *Compton Census*,[1] the Hearth Tax of 1674,[2] and the records of enclosure of open fields,[3] as shown in **Table 8**, together with the exploration of non-quantitative data such as that relating to topographical and occupational characteristics.

This central area can be split into three main topographical regions, each running parallel to the main NE/SW axis of the county. From the north, where the River Welland defines the county's border with Leicestershire,

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[1] A. Whiteman , *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition* (Oxford, 1986).

[2] PRO E 179/254/14 – Northamptonshire Hearth Tax.

[3] D. Hall, *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1955).

Fig. 7

Map of Central Northamptonshire showing parishes

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
80	L/Bowden	130	10	7.7	79	45	no	no	31	6	5	1	0	26
81	Braybrooke	230	4	1.7	85	28	no	no	53	6	1	0	0	12
82	Desborough	388	0	0	88	49	no	yes	37	4	1	2	0	12
83	Arthingworth	200	3	1.5	36	25	no	no	20	4	2	0	0	23
84	Grt Oxendon	115	2	1.7	72	55	?	no	29	3	0	0	0	9
85	E Farndon/ Lub'ham	280	10	3.6	65	29	no	no	37	4	4	1	0	18
86	Dingley	80	5	6.3	34	38	?	yes	16	3	1	0	1	20
87	M/Trussell	180	4	2.2	38	18	?	?	26	2	2	1	0	13
88	Brampton Ash	127	0	0	44	39	yes (1658)	yes	21	3	2	0	1	19
89	Sibbertoft	257	20	7.8	60	38		yes	31	3	2	1	0	14
90	Sulby	no information			5	0	?	yes	3	1	1	0	0	40
91	Welford	500	2	0.4	93	52	no	yes	37	4	2	1	2	14
92	Stanford	93	0	0	36	28	no	yes	22	3	0	0	1	12
93	Elkington	no information			7	29	yes (1540)	?	4	0	1	0	0	20
94	Cold Ashby	178	0	0	39	21	yes (1625)	?	20	8	3	0	0	35
95	Thornby	133	0	0	24	21	yes (1623)	no	11	6	2	0	0	42
96	Winwick	109	0	0	25	28	yes (1607)	yes	15	1	1	0	1	12
97	Naseby	400	1	0.3	74	30	no	no	48	3	0	0	1	6
98	Clipston	460	4	0.9	91	37	no	no	45	10	1	0	1	20
99	Kelmarsh	78	1	1.3	26	58	?	yes	5	1	3	1	1	44
100	Rushton	116	1	0.9	51	47	no	yes	17	5	4	0	1	35
101	Hannington	170	3	1.7	38	37	?	no	20	4	0	0	0	17
102	Weston/Sutton	250	1	0.4	61	52	no	no	14	12	3	0	0	52
103	Ashley	280	6	2.1	57	28	?	no	32	7	2	0	0	22
104	Stoke Albany	190	4	2.1	89	44	?	yes	41	5	3	0	1	16
105	Wilbarston/Pipewel	500	2	0.4	118	41	?	no	53	14	2	0	0	23
106	E Carlton	198	0	0	45	60	?	yes	13	2	2	0	1	24
107	Haselbech	140	3	2.1	32	59	?	yes	10	2	1	0	0	23
108	Harrington	130	0	0.0	49	27	?	?	28	6	1	0	1	20

Table 8. Detailed Analysis of Parishes in Central Northamptonshire

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
109	Rothwell		no information		259	53	?	no	87	24	9	0	1	28
110	Thorpe Malsor	160	0	0	38	45	?	yes	17	1	2	0	1	15
111	Loddington	107	2	1.9	25	24	yes (1656)	no	10	7	1	0	1	44
112	Orton		no information		31	39	?	no	18	1	0	0	0	5
113	Draughton	200	1	0.5	33	42	no	yes	12	2	5	0	0	37
114	Maydwell (St Mary)	180	0	0	37	41	yes (1691)	yes	18	2	0	1	1	10
115	Cottesbrooke	112	0	0	45	38	?	yes	25	1	1	0	1	7
116	Lamport & Houghton	220	3	1.4	55	62	part (1650)	no	13	3	3	0	2	32
117	Faxton	180	0	0	34	41	no	yes	18	1	0	0	1	5
118	Scaldwell	250	0	0	50	44	no	no	22	4	2	0	0	21
119	Old [Wold]	400	7	1.8	80	59	no	no	23	8	2	0	0	30
120	W Haddon	440	6	1.4	107	22	no	no	73	8	3	0	0	13
121	Guilsboro'/ Nortoft	400	0	0	56	54	part (1588)	yes	16	4	2	3	1	27
122	Coton		no information		15	47	?	no	5	3	0	0	0	38
123	Creaton / Holowell	111	1	0.9	71	42	no	no	23	15	2	2	0	43
124	Spratton	450	16	3.6	102	45	no	yes	42	10	2	0	0	22
125	Glendon in Barford	no information			6	0	?	yes	5	0	0	0	1	0
126	Cot'ham/Middleton	500	1	0.2	140	39	?	no	68	10	4	1	2	17
127	Rockingham	194	0	0	46	48	?	yes	20	3	0	0	1	13
128	Corby	421	4	1	117	38	no	no	64	6	2	0	0	11
129	Kettering	1350	300	22	293	38	no	yes	127	44	12	0	1	31
130	Cransley	160	0	0	49	43	before 1720	yes	21	4	2	0	1	22
131	Broughton	260	15	5.8	66	32	no	no	34	9	2	1	0	24
132	Walgrave	456	8	1.75	98	61	no	yes	27	9	0	1	1	25
133	Pytchley	243	1	0.4	60	38	?	yes	27	5	3	1	1	23
134	Isham	210	2	1	58	43	?	?	27	3	2	0	0	16

Table 8. (continued)

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
135	Orlingbury	200	5	2.5	29	27.5	?	yes	15	2	3	0	1	25
136	L/Harrowden	200	20	10	59	47	?	no	22	7	0	0	0	24
137	Gt/ Harrowden	92	3	3.2	25	32	?	yes	10	3	1	2	1	29
138	Hardwick	65	4	6.2	14	21	?	yes	8	1	0	1	1	11
139	Mears Ashby	340	3	0.9	86	42	no	yes	37	8	1	2	0	20
140	Sywell	142	0	0	35	40	no	yes	18	0	2	0	1	10
141	Holcot	300	10	3.3	84	37	no	no	46	7	0	0	0	13
142	Wellingboro'	2520	193	7.7	508	51	no	?	145	79	18	3	2	40
143	Wilby	160	2	1	43	37	no	no	19	5	1	2	0	24
144	Overstone	220	6	2.7	42	26	no	yes	27	2	1	0	1	10
145	Moulton & M'park	520	29	5.6	115	39	no	no	58	10	0	1	1	15
146	Pitsford	216	1	0.5	41	46	?	no	16	5	1	0	0	27
147	Boughton	110	0	0	35	34	yes (1540)	yes	14	8	0	0	1	36
148	Brampton(s)	264	3	1.1	70	46	yes (c 1640)	no	31	3	4	0	0	18
149	Holdenby	no information			9	22	yes (1580-7)	no	2	3	1	0	1	67
150	East Haddon	350	13	3.7	84	23	part (1600)	no	48	8	4	1	0	20
151	Ravensthorpe	284	29	10.2	63	44	part (1592)	no	31	3	1	0	0	11
152	Harlestone	450	7	1.56	115	68	no	no	29	5	2	0	1	19
153	Gt Doddington	380	24	6.3	76	47	no	yes	29	4	7	0	0	28
154	Earls Barton	620	7	1.1	144	42	no	?	67	16	0	0	0	19
155	Ecton	450	1	0.2	90	50	no	yes	32	9	1	2	1	24
156	G/ Billing	208	1	0.5	48	31	no	yes	26	5	1	0	1	19
157	L/Billing	110	1	1	21	38	yes (1630)	yes	10	1	1	1	0	17
158	Dallington	230	0	0	51	61	no	?	17	2	0	0	1	11
159	Duston	220	0	0	72	49	?	no	33	4	0	0	0	11
160	Upton	no information			13	31	?	yes	7	1	0	0	1	13
161	Weston Favell	200	2	1	44	41	?	yes	17	4	1	2	2	23
162	N'ton (sepulchre)	433	5	1.15	155	28	no	?	66	28	12	3	3	38

Table 8. (continued)

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
163	N'ton (s. Peter) W	no information			153	31.3	no	?	48	30	19	8	0	51
164	N'ton (s. Giles) E	508	0	0	156	48	no	?	49	14	10	6	3	33
165	N'ton (All ss)s+c	1594	38	2.4	375	31.2	no	?	137	64	37	13	7	42
166	Brixworth	600	3	0.5	138	61.5	no	yes	39	5	5	2	1	20
167	Scaldwell	250	0	0	50	44	no	no	22	4	2	0	0	21
168	Gt Oakley	200	0	0	61	44	?	yes	29	4	0	0	1	12
169	L/Oakley	100	0	0	25	32	no	yes	11	4	1	0	1	31
170	Newton	92	0	0	18	33	no	?	8	1	1	1	1	20
171	Geddington	500	3	0.6	121	50	no	no	48	11	3	0	0	23
172	Weekley	110	5	4.5	30	23	no	yes	17	5	0	0	1	23
173	Rothersthorpe	172	0	0	47	49	no	no	21	2	1	0	0	13
174	Gt Houghton	160	3	1.9	48	58.3	yes (1612)	yes	14	4	1	1	0	26
175	L/Houghton	280	1	0.35	66	25.7	no	yes	38	8	2	0	1	21
176	Brafield on Green	230	10	4.3	68	34	no	no	34	8	3	0	0	24
177	Cogenhoe	150	4	2.7	29	31	no	no	15	3	1	1	0	21
178	Whiston	90	0	0	15	47	no	no	4	4	0	0	0	50
179	Castle Ashby	116	0	0	37	38	yes (1651)	yes	14	5	1	1	1	30
180	Grendon	340	0	0	91	32	no	yes	46	13	1	1	1	23
181	Wollaston	700	20	2.9	144	39	no	no	66	19	1	2	0	23
182	Irchester*	500	3	0.6	102	30	no	no	53	12	4	2	0	23
183	Strixton	35	0	0	8	62.5	yes (c1620)	yes	1	1	0	0	1	50
184	Bozeat	380	5	1.3	103	38	no	?	57	4	1	0	2	8
185	E Maudit	150	3	2	38	45	yes (1639)	yes	16	1	2	0	2	16
186	Yardley H	530	26	4.9	105	53	no	no	37	6	4	2	0	21
187	Denton	318	2	0.6	75	43	no	yes	34	6	1	2	0	17
188	Hackleton/Piddington	300	20	6.7	109	54	?	yes	44	5	1	0	0	12

Table 8. (continued)

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sor (%)
189	Horton	70	3	4.3	12	42	yes (1561)	yes	4	2	0	0	1	33
190	Preston Deanery	53	0	0	10	30	?	yes	5	1	0	0	1	17
191	Quinton	100	0	0	28	32	?	no	16	2	1	0	0	16
192	Roade	330	30	9	79	28	?	no	49	6	2	0	0	14
193	Ashton	115	10	8.7	61	41	?	no	24	7	3	0	2	29
194	Hartwell	320	42	13.1	80	36.3	no	no	37	8	3	1	0	23
195	Grafton Regis	no information			29	35	?	no	9	5	2	1	1	44
196	Courtenhall	185	0	0	45	33.3	yes (1650)	yes	26	1	2	0	1	10
197	Collingtree	140	3	2.2	30	13.3	?	no	22	2	2	0	0	15
198	Milton	300	2	0.6	74	43.2	?	no	32	7	1	2	0	20
199	Blisworth	300	12	4	77	39	no	no	34	8	5	0	0	28
200	Gayton	no information			46	61	yes (c1630)	yes	6	6	5	0	1	65
201	Wootton	320	3	0.9	80	62.5	no	no	23	5	1	1	0	21

Table 8. (continued)

southward to the valley of the Ise, which has an almost parallel course, lie the parishes of the Northamptonshire uplands mainly supported by a pastoral economy and the associated crafts of cloth weaving and lace making. Amongst the rural parishes in this area, a small cluster abutting the Leicestershire border, Sibbertoft [89], L/Bowden [80], East Farndon/Thorpe Lubbenham [85] and Dingley [86], has a notably 'significant' return of reported Nonconformists in the *Compton Census*. However, the percentage of certified exemptions from the payment of Hearth Tax in these parishes is, with the exception of Little Bowden, lower than the 40% average for the whole county. Conversely, no other parish in this northern area, whose percentage of certified Hearth Tax exemption exceeds the county average, appears to have a recorded instance of Nonconformity in any significant degree. Thus any suggestion of poverty as a mono-causal factor in Dissent cannot be sustained in respect of this area. Further analysis of the statistics does however reveal that parishes in this upland area, which were enclosed by the mid-seventeenth century, have significantly lower percentages of recorded Dissenters than those of comparable size which remained open at this time. This echoes the findings in the western area of the county, where similar inferences have been drawn.[4]

Similarly, in this northern area there does not appear to be any general relationship between the size of any parish and the recorded degree of Nonconformity practised by its inhabitants. In the aforementioned cluster abutting the Leicestershire border, two of the smallest parishes have a recorded number of 130 or fewer souls, the two other parishes having more than three times this population, whilst all four show evidence of a high

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[4] See above p. 59.

percentage of 'obstinate' Dissent. Examination of the socio-economic composition of inhabitants within each of these parishes, through the consideration of the percentage of the 'middling sort' amongst the total of tax payers, offers no possible causal link. Whilst the dissenting percentages of the population of Little Bowden [80] and Sibbertoft [89] are comparable, the former parish has almost double the percentage of this socio-economic group within it. [5]

The close economic and commercial associations with the Leicestershire town of Market Harborough, lying less than two miles away from these parishes, rather than the geographic or political associations within their own county, may offer a possible explanation for the spread and significant incidence of Dissenting activities within them. With its weekly livestock markets, Market Harborough, like Daventry in the west of the county, would have acted as a focus for social as well as commercial interchange. The marked concentration of trade routes from Daventry, Rothwell and Northampton, passing through these parishes in order to enter the town from the south over the River Welland, may well have facilitated the exchange and dissemination of radical or alternative social and religious ideologies by a travelling public, having various interests and purposes within the market town , as they passed through.

The town of Market Harborough itself would also appear, from episcopal reports, to have been an epicentre of dissenting activity within its joint parishes of Harborough and St Mary in Arden, where both Quaker and Presbyterian meetings are said to have taken place, and in a number of other

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[5] For the concept of the 'middling sort' or 'minor elites' used in this analysis see above, p. 62.

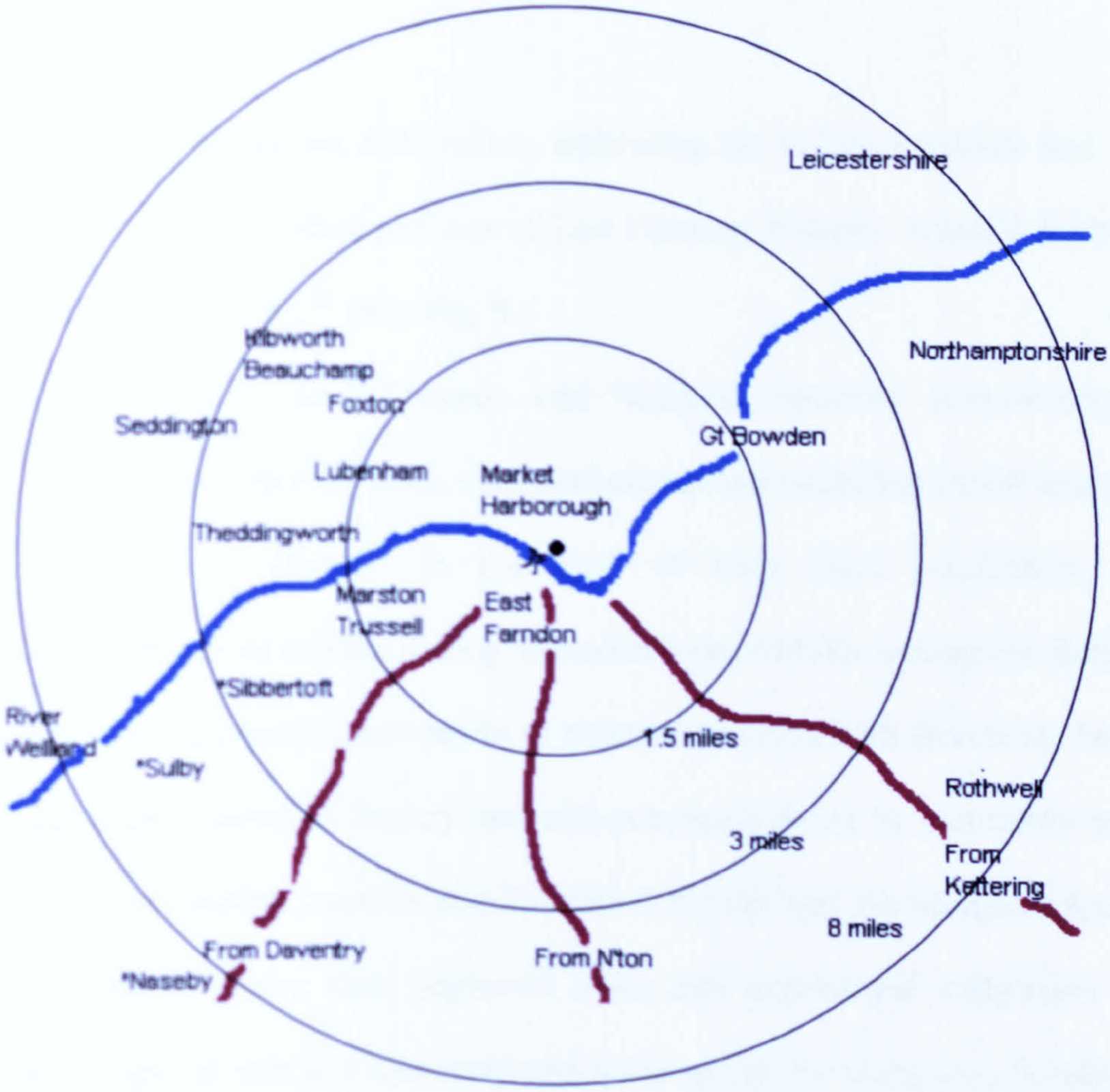

Fig 8.
Reported Conventicles and trade routes
within 10 miles of Market Harborough, Leicestershire.

Sources:

Episcopal reports of Conventicles in the Lincoln and Peterborough Dioceses (1669)

**Account by Bishop Lloyd of Peterborough (1683)*

Trade Routes:

From "Mr Ogilvy's roads" delineated on John Harris' (1712) Map of Northamptonshire

parishes within a six mile radius, embracing six in Leicestershire and in the five Northamptonshire parishes of East Farndon, Marston Trussell, Sibbertoft, Sulby and Naseby. [6] (See Fig. 8.)

Both Michael Frearson and Margaret Spufford acknowledge the critical importance of trade, communications and marketing in the spread and continuity of Dissent. In the view of both these researchers, good communications and the linking of market areas with the metropolis facilitated not only the essential movement of material goods in both directions, but also the dissemination of literary and oral communications by constantly mobile chapmen, pedlars, carriers and Dissenters themselves. As Margaret Spufford has put it, 'more than improved seeds and agricultural techniques were exchanged at inns and alehouses and nodal points for marketing. So also was print ... and verbal information and news'.[7] The conclusions of Frearson's study, although specific to the Chiltern market towns, would appear to be of equally validity in Northamptonshire, a county described by Morton as 'a

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[6] The number and 'persuasion' of these conventicles are listed in Whiteman, *The Compton Census of 1676* as follows:

Lincoln Diocese:
Market Harborough / St Mary-in-Arden = 2 conventicles (1 Quaker 1 Presbyterian)
Lubenham (Anab.) Theddingworth (Presb/Ind) Saddington (2 conventicles: Anab./Presb./Ind.)
Foxton (Presb.) Kidworth Beauchamp (Presb. & Ind.). Great Bowden (Presb.)

Peterborough Diocese
East Farndon/Marston Trussell (2 Quaker conventicles)
Rothwell (Independent)
Sibbertoft, Naseby & Sulby (conventicles of unknown persuasion reported in 1683 by Bishop Lloyd).

[7] M. Spufford, 'The Importance of Religion' in *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725* M. Spufford (ed.) (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 47 *et seq.*, and Michael Frearson 'The Mobility and Descent of Dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds: Communications and continuity of dissent in the Chiltern Hundreds during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' in the same publication, pp. 273-287.

great thorow-fare from the north, [lying] in the trade-way' linking major Midland markets with London.[8]

We have the uniquely documented episode in Daventry, but no direct evidence of the influence of the nonconformist leanings of any passing visitor to Market Harborough on those he may have met en route.[9] However, in the absence of any causal explanation through quantitative analysis for the incidence of orthodox or heterodox Dissent in these particular northern parishes, their situation so close to the convergence of major routes into this important market town, and within the proven ambit of its influence as a focus of regional trade, is offered as a likely explanation.

Archdeacon Palmer, in his 1669 "Account of Conventicles", reported decreasing numbers of Quakers attending the two Northamptonshire conventicles at East Farndon and Marston Trussell at this time, stating that they 'haunt other places'.[10] Combined with reports of Independents from Rothwell who, in addition to attending a large conventicle in their town where 'meet 200 or 300 at a barn every Sunday', travelled to Leicestershire to attend meetings there, this serves to underline not only the willingness of Dissenters to travel considerable distances to worship, but also the unity amongst active members of a particular persuasion, the diocesan or county divisions being no bar to the spread and practice of their beliefs.

In addition to the evidence of Separatist and semi-Separatist dissenting activities in the form of illegal conventicles and 'gathered churches', there is also evidence of 'orthodox' Dissent in this area of the county. Matthew

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[8] Rev. John Morton MA, *The Natural History of Northamptonshire,* (London, 1912), p.18.

[9] See above pp. 66-67.

[10] NRO. Fermor Hesketh (Baker) MS 708, "An Account of Conventicles Held in the Western Deaneryes of the Diocese of Peterborough. 11th August 1669".

Clarke, an ejected minister from Narborough in Leicestershire, and James Taylor, both resident in Little Bowden, are recorded as having applied for Presbyterian licences under the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence, whilst Samuel Sturgess similarly applied for a licence to use his house in Sibbertoft for the same purpose.[11] The conformist rector of Dingley [86], Thomas Ashenden, may well have been enraged by the presence of active Dissent in and around his parish when he published a vicious attack on both Presbyterian and Independent Dissenters. By employing a parody of the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments as the vehicle for his wrath, he satirised their anti-monarchical, anti-episcopal and Calvinist leanings and their 'keeping the holy remembrance of [16]41'. Despite his intended defence of the Established Church he incurred the severe displeasure of his Bishop, not least for implied profanity in the style of his pamphlet.[12]

The second topographical region within this 'arbitrary' central region of Northamptonshire covers the area enclosed by the Rivers Ise and Nene, which includes rural parishes in the southern uplands and in the fertile Nene valley the market towns of Rothwell, Kettering and Wellingborough, together with the county's principle manufacturing, market and political centre, the town of Northampton. Detailed analysis of the parishes enclosed between these two rivers yields an ambiguous picture in terms of the relationships it reveals between poverty and Dissent. Although some thirty-three of these fifty-eight parishes (56%) recorded a degree of poverty higher than the county average (as calculated from Hearth Tax exemptions), in only four of these,

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[11] G. Lyon Turner, *Original records of early nonconformity under persecution and indulgence (London, 1911-1914)* Classified Summary p. 807.

[12] *The Presbyterian Pater Noster, Creed, and Ten Commandments* (Westminster , 1681). See below pp.138-140 for details of this episode.

Spratton [124], Wellingborough [142], Ravensthorpe [151] and Great Doddington [153], was any 'significant' measure of Dissent recorded in the *Compton Census* returns. A 'significant' degree of recorded Dissent was present in ten parishes whose poverty levels were less than the county average, some being parishes where exemptions from payment of Hearth Tax were less than half of this average figure. In the central cluster of parishes from Brixworth northward to the River Ise, where the level of poverty appears to have been at its highest (some 60% of the inhabitants being certified exempt from Hearth Tax), the level of recorded Dissent was not 'significant'.

With the notable exception of the four large towns, Wellingborough (pop. 2520), Kettering (pop.1350), Northampton (pop.3000-4000), and Rothwell, parishes in this central area had a population of between 100 and 500 souls. The omission of any return for Rothwell in the 1676 *Compton Census* is unfortunate, but through a computation of 4.5 to 5 persons per household, a fairly acceptable 'multiplier' in this central area, the market town of Rothwell would have had a population similar to that of Kettering, around 1250 persons in the 259 houses enumerated in the 1674 Hearth Tax returns. Rothwell's high level of poverty and associated decline, compared with that of Kettering, appears to have been the economic consequence of the latter town's burgeoning market and newly introduced weaving and manufacture of woollen products.[13] However, the high figures of recorded Dissent, expressed as a percentage of the population, in the market towns of Kettering (22%) and in Wellingborough (7.7%) which, in actual terms, represent considerable numbers of people (300 and 193 respectively), cannot be correlated with the widely varying levels of poverty within them.

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[13] Morton, *The Natural History of Northamptonshire,* (London, 1912), p. 27.

Once again, where socio-economic analysis appears to fail in providing any causal link with Dissent which can be applied generally across this central area of the county, the consideration of other, non quantifiable, factors would appear to be more rewarding. Examination of John Harris' map **[Fig 1]** shows Kettering, a town with the highest number of recorded Dissenters in the Peterborough Diocese, to be situated at a vital intersection of trade and communication routes across Northamptonshire. The apparent relationship between trade routes and Dissent already expounded in the case of Market Harborough, Daventry and Towcester cannot be ignored. However, if it is to be sustained as a major contributory factor, an explanation must be sought for the absence of significant Dissent apparent in Palmer's episcopal returns for Northampton, the major crossroads and premier market and commercial centre of the county.

Leaving this temporarily aside: the illegal meetings recorded by Palmer attended by Separatists and semi-Separatists in this central area of the county are particularly revealing in terms of the numbers attracted to them, their personal and occupational characteristics and the 'social condition' of some of the teachers and hosts. However, the particular 'persuasions' of some of the 'orthodox' Dissenters are less easy to determine

The populous market town of Wellingborough [142] was, according to Morton, 'famed for its corn market', being seated in open corn-country, the manufacture of lace appearing to have been its major 'industrial' base. 'The lace making trade returns no less than fifty pounds per week into the Town in moderate computation, the second town of Northamptonshire', wrote this

observer,[14] despite a degree of poverty considerably above average being evident from an analysis of the Wellingborough Hearth Tax returns.

A 'Great Conventicle' of over 400 was 'kept [here] every Sunday...whereof 100 come from the near towns'. The semi-Separatist nature of this great conventicle is intimated by Palmer's account from his statement that 'most of them go to their parish church also.' Similarly the social condition of half those attending - 'yeoman, tradesmen, feoffees and subsidie men of the town' - should not be remarkable in a town where the 'minor elites' constituted some 40% of the adult population.[15] Of the Separatists, according to Palmer, some forty or fifty Quakers met in this town, as well as in adjoining parishes to the north and others across the River Ise to the east, both severally and together, their teachers being both high-profile itinerant Friends and local teachers.[16]

The conventicle at Rothwell has already been mentioned in connection with Market Harborough, where 200-300 met every Sunday, 'commonly 3 women for a man.' The repeated emphasis on the gender ratio of conventiclers is stressed in the 'general answers' with which Palmer concludes his account, 'there being far more women than men, many children and servants'. By deliberately emphasising the predominance of the disenfranchised at these

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[14] Morton, *The Natural History* ,p. 14.

[15] NRO. MS 708, "Account of Conventicles", and Table 8 above.

[16] William Dewsbury from Yorkshire, and John Whitehead are named as itinerant preachers at these meetings 'not seen of late'. Their appearances before the Northampton magistrates in 1655 and their subsequent imprisonment there for fifteen months and ten months respectively,. are chronicled in detail in Besse *Sufferings* pp. 523-528. As David Wykes observes, since neither returned to the county after their release in 1656, the memory of their presence and ministry in Northamptonshire may have had a greater influence on the authorities than the supposed more immediate information in Palmer's "Account", composed over ten years later. [See D. Wykes, 'The Church and Early Dissent' in *Northamptonshire Past & Present* Vol VIII No 3 (Northampton, 1991/2) p. 201.]

illegal meetings, the author of the "Account" may have hoped to lessen the prevailing perception of Dissent as a threat to social order in the minds of the authorities.

The largest conventicle in the whole of Northamptonshire was that held at Kettering, where some 400-500 people, 'half the town', met constantly 'on Sundays around noone' together with 'many from other towns', other meetings being held during the week. The social composition of this great semi-Separatist meeting (for 'most of them come also to Church') includes 'some few gentlewomen, the rest [being] yeomen, husbandmen, tradesmen and inferior people'. Mr Maidwell, Mr Alsop and Mr Wills, who also appear at the Wellingborough conventicle, were regular teachers at this meeting, Mr Maidwell , although having been ejected from the parish of Kettering in 1662, preaching in open contempt of the Five Mile Act of 1665, which would have forbidden his presence within the town.[17] In this connection, David Wykes sees the flourishing state of Dissent in Kettering and the delay in filling livings vacated by ejected ministers at the time of Palmer's Account, as a possible explanation as to why John Maidwell was able to remain there, gathering together the Dissenters from his former congregation and continuing to preach illegally to them.[18]

The question of Northampton's apparent lack of recorded dissenting activity in Palmer's returns, despite the socio-economic condition of the town's population and its position as the administrative, economic and

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[17] The Five Mile Act (17 Car.II. cap. 2) excluded ministers from teaching in schools or living within five miles of any corporate or Parliamentary Borough , *or of any place where they had preached*, unless they took an oath never to endeavour any alteration of government in Church or State. (Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 52.

[18] Wykes, 'The Church and Early Dissent', p. 203.

geographical hub of the county and focus of the county's trade, will now be addressed. As has been shown in the case of Daventry, sole reliance on the *Compton Census* returns as an indication of Dissent is an inadequate approach, since other sources may well provide evidence of Nonconformity considerably in excess of that suggested by the above.

The puritan antecedents of the town of Northampton and their continued connection with later post-Restoration Dissent have been emphasised by William Sheils.[19] In his view, which is similar to that of both Spufford and Frearson, the close association between the spread of puritan ideas and the network of communications both between markets within the county and with London, allowed later sixteenth-century Northampton to play an important part in local religious life. The establishment of the *classis* as a regular meeting place for the clergy and Godly of the neighbouring parishes, and the attendance at the market-day lectures, often brought the first contact with puritan ideas to inhabitants both in the town and in the rural hinterland. The Borough Records of the town show that the churchwardens and clergy at All Saints Church were supported through close connection with the Corporation of Northampton, the owners of the benefice from 1556, and by the Bishop of Peterborough, who seems to have encouraged 'the most daring irregularities' in the form of worship by allowing teaching and customs to continue in direct violation of any principle of conformity to the book of Common Prayer. Despite the removal, in 1579, of Mr Jennings, the incumbent of All Saints Church, by the Bishop of London (who described him as 'a very unquiet and indiscreet person'), this dissenting tradition appears to have

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[19] W. J. Sheils, *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558-1610* (Northampton, 1979), pp. 11 and 147: and pp. 16-17 above.

persisted through another half-century. However, the continuing and often hostile relationship between the influential and radically-minded inhabitants of Northampton and the Diocesan Court there finally caused John Lambe, Chancellor of the Diocese and 'an arch-enemy of Puritanism', to remove his court to Rothwell in 1624.[20] Following Archbishop Laud's visitation to Northampton in 1638, it was noted that 'they do what they like in church services at All Saints Church.'[21]

.In the mid-seventeenth century, the economic chaos and disorder, engendered by six years of civil war and a succession of poor harvests, allowed political unrest and sectarian activity to gain ground. In this climate, the politico-religious groups such as Levellers, Diggers and Ranters gained considerable (if short-lived) support both in Wellingborough, where a notable Digger colony was established, and in Northampton. This phenomenon, according to Brindle, was linked directly with the economic conditions prevalent in these 'sinks of poverty'.[22] Similarly, Christopher Hill notes that Wellingborough, 'with 1169 persons in receipt of alms in the parish', where there existed a long-standing puritan tradition, was a fruitful ground for radical Dissent. He also detects, from the anti-establishment 'Ranter-like' sentiments expressed by early Quakers presented to the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions under the Blasphemy Act, a direct link between these earlier

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[20] Sheils, *The Puritans*, p. 6.

[21] J. Charles Cox (ed.), *The Records of the Borough of Northampton 1550-1835* (Northampton, 1898), Vol 2 pp .386 *et seq.*

[22] P.R. Brindle, "Politics and Society in Northamptonshire 1649 –1714" Unpublished PhD thesis (Leicester University, 1985), p.154.

communities and the growing Quaker presence in this area some ten years later.[23]

Despite the ejection or silencing of some forty-five of the clergy in the Peterborough diocese shortly after the Restoration and the withdrawal of much of the gentry support for Dissent in the county at this time, the tradition of resistance to orthodoxy over the previous century proved durable enough to withstand the pressures of the post-Restoration Established Church in its pursuit of conformity and its attempts to suppress the activities of Nonconformists in Northampton town. Although Archdeacon Palmer reported no fixed conventicles in the town in 1669, but only meetings of Dissenters 'in [Northampton] houses where sometimes 50 sometimes 100 have met', a number of other regular conventicles, described as either Anabaptist and Quaker, were reported to have taken place in villages within a few miles of the county town, where presumably those attending were less at risk from the local magistrates. Presentments and prosecutions at the Quarter sessions also show evidence of continuing Dissent by Quaker inhabitants of Northampton throughout the period., many of those cited being frequent and repetitive offenders.[24] Similarly, analysis of the applications for licences under the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence shows applications for eight licences for meeting places in the town and two for Dissenting preachers ejected for Nonconformity in 1662, together with their own houses as meeting places.[25]

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[23] C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), pp. 124 – 125.

[24] See below Chapter 4.

[25] Lyon Turner and Bates seem to be at variance over the 'persuasion' of the two applicants for these licences. Richard Hooke, ejected from Creaton, is listed by Lyon Turner as a Congregational minister [*Original Records* pp.812 and 813], and by Bates [*Declaration of Indulgence 1672* p.lxxv] as a Presbyterian. Similar ambiguity exists with the record of the host Sam Wolford.

Thus these civil and ecclesiastical records, when taken together, indicate a level of Dissent in Northampton town more consistent with the theory of an association between Dissent and trade routes already suggested elsewhere, than could be interpreted from the *Compton Census* returns alone, whose actual (albeit incomplete) figures for recorded Dissent must in themselves be suspect. In this connection, the Kettering Constable's 1667 report to the Quarter Sessions that 'we have no Conventicles in our towne', when set against Palmer's 1669 account, would suggest a certain economy with the truth being exercised by the authorities![26] That Palmer himself, seated in his own parish when collating the parochial returns for the *Compton Census*, would be unaware of the level of 'obstinate' Dissent there, is also hard to believe. All that can be positively asserted concerning the veracity of ecclesiastical returns for the Diocese of Peterborough at this time is the experience of Bishop Lloyd who, on his first visitation in 1680, 'thought that his lott and solicitude was fallen in a pleasant place, for most of his presentments were *omnia bene*'. However, he was soon to discover 'by sad experience that my Churchwardens had deceived me and the face of affairs was quite otherwise ...than what they had exhibited unto me in their presentments.'[27]

Assuming that the level of Dissent in Northampton itself was, as the above evidence suggests, considerably higher than that indicated in the deficient figures of the *Compton Census*, the high percentage of the 'middling sort' within the town's population, similar to that of Wellingborough and

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[26] NRO. QSR 1/45/76 (Easter, 1667).

[27] "An Account of the present state of the Bishoprick of Peterborough delivered to My Ld. of Canterbury's Grace". (dated 1683). Bodl. Rawlinson MS d.1163. f.8.

Kettering, might suggest a link between the socio-economic composition of these urban populations and Dissent. However, since no similar correlation appears to exist in the rural parishes of the region, it must be concluded that the proliferation of the 'middling sort' in these towns and the level of Dissent within them reflect rather the characteristics of an urban society than being indicative of any particular economic determinism. Middlemen, merchants and agents could thrive both numerically and economically in market towns, their daily existence within such focal points for meeting and social interchange possibly making them more open to the reception, *inter alia,* of new religious ideologies.

The third area within this 'central' region of Northamptonshire lies south of the River Nene, extending to the county's border with Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. In the Hundred of Wymersely, the dense woodland areas of the forest of Salcey and Yardley Chase embrace a number of small rural parishes, those lying close to the Buckinghamshire border recording some of the highest levels of Dissent within the county. In some of these parishes, notably Ashton [193], Hackleton/Piddington [188], Horton [189] and Yardley Hastings [186], there is also a high level of exemption from Hearth Tax assessments. However, parishes closer to the valley of the Nene such as Wootton [201], Great Houghton [174] and Milton [198], also with higher than average Hearth Tax exemptions, show no sign of significant dissenting activity in the *Compton Census* returns. Away from the forest areas, in the parish of Woollaston further eastwards along the Nene valley, two Anabaptist conventicles were recorded by Palmer in 1669. This village, the most

populous in this southern area, had a level of Hearth Tax exemptions around the average, together with a significant proportion of recorded Dissent. One conventicle was described as 'more perfect, consisting of about 12 persons'; another, presumably Separatist, as a place where about 100 meet 'commonly on Sundays in time of divine service' of which 'some 10 of whom are small freeholders, the rest of inferior ranks', the teachers at this latter meeting being tailors, carpenters, a shoe-maker a weaver and two labourers.[28] In addition, three applications for Presbyterian teachers and meeting places in this parish were sought here under the 1672 Indulgence Declaration. It could therefore be argued that the correlation drawn by some researchers between poverty, 'woodland' living and Dissent, whilst supported in some parts, is not universally valid as a contributory factor in the practice of Dissent throughout the southern part of the county.[29]

The economic and occupational status of a number of Quaker Dissenters resident in Central Northamptonshire and identified through episcopal returns, presentments at Quarter Sessions and Quaker records, are shown in **Table 9.** In identifying and correlating individual Quakers with their Hearth Tax assessment, the same governing criteria as used for Western Northamptonshire have been employed. [30] As a result, in order to maintain an acceptable degree of confidence in the analysis, the number of Quakers in this table listed falls considerably short of those identified purely by name. The correlation between individuals and their Hearth Tax assessment was found to be particularly problematic in the populous urban areas such as Northampton,

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[28] NRO. Fermore Hesketh (Baker) MS 708, " Account of Conventicles".

[29] See J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* (London, 1967), Vol 4.

[30] See above pp. 79-80.

Name	H/ T [1]	Date	Residence	HT [2]	Occupation	Source [3]	Remarks [4]
Simon Mutton		1660	Geddington	1		1662	Q Burials
Benoni Bradshaw		1660	Northampton	4	Baker	1662	Besse
Wm. Daniell		1660	Northampton			1662	Besse
Walter Farr		1660	Northampton W	2		1662	Besse
Richard Wright	H	1660	Holcot	1		1674	Besse
Daniel Wills	H	1660	Northampton W	4		1662	Besse
Laurence Gilgrass		1660	Northampton C	1		1674	Besse
Richd. Painter		1660	Northampton	4	Farrier?	1662	Besse
James Pratt		1660	Barton	1		1674	Besse
Wm. Atton	H	1660	Middleton	1		1674	Besse
Samuel Simcock		1660	Billing	1		1674	Besse
Tho. Boon		1662	Corby	2		1662	Besse
Mary Dent		1662	Dallington	(1)	W of Wm. Dent	1674	Besse
Mary Cooper	H	1662	Northampton C	7	Innkeeper	1662	Besse
Frances Gilgrass		1662	Northampton	(1)		1674	Besse
Jane Hunt		1662	W'boro		Widow		Q Burials
John Allen		1663	Dingley	1		1674	Q Marr
Tho. Botrill		1664	E Haddon	1X	Labourer	1674	QS 1/32/36
Tho. Allen	H	1665	Dingley	2/4	(Jun/Sen)	1662	QS 1/37/5
Alex Clark		1665	Geddington	1		1669	Q Births
Wm. Browne		1665	W'boro		Cordwainer		QS 1/37/25
James Harriott		1665	W'boro		Yeoman		QS 1/37/25
Tho. Browne		1665	W'boro		Butcher		QS 1/37/25
Philip Lambert		1665	Hackleton	1		1662	QS 1/37/32
Nicholas Holte		1665	Hackleton		Weaver		QS 1/37/32
Tho. Mercer		1665	Hackleton	4	Yeoman	1662	QS 1/37/32
Wm Slater		1665	Hackleton		Taylor		QS 1/37/32
Robt. Old		1665	Piddington		Labourer		QS 1/37/32
Henry Smyth		1665	Piddington		Carpenter		QS 1/37/32
John Nottingham		1666	W'boro	2		1674	Besse
Wm. Tymson		1666	Farndon	2		1662	Q Births
John Ellington		1666	W'boro	3		1674	Besse
Tho. Olive		1666	W'boro	3		1674	Besse
Tho. Page		1666	W'boro	1		1674	Besse
Wm. Page		1666	W'boro	1X		1674	Besse
Eliz. Rose		1666	L/Harrowden	1?		1674	Besse
Wm. Pell		1666	L/Harrowden	2	Blacksmith	1674	Besse
John Treslo(w)e		1666	Farndon	1		1674	Besse
Geo. Warner		1666	Kettering	3		1674	Besse

Table 9. Economic and/or Occupational Status of some identified Quakers resident in Central Northamptonshire

[1] H=Host/Receiver: T = Teacher: as classified in Palmer's 1669 *Account of Conventicles*
[2] Hearth Tax Assessment: X = Certified Exempt
[3] Date of Hearth Tax Assessment
[4] Remarks indicate source of identification as Quaker.
QS/*/* = Northampton Quarter Sessions Roll No: (app)= appended to main roll
Q Births = Quaker Birth Records at NRO (name and residence of father, first incidence indicated)
Q Burials= Quaker Burial Records (no sons daughters or infants, if classified)
Q Marr = Quaker Marriage Records at NRO
Besse = Quaker Sufferings

Name	H/T	Date	Residence	HT	Occupation	Source	Remarks
James Warner		1666	Kettering	4		1674	Besse
Robert Cox		1666	W'boro	1		1674	Besse
John Treslow		1667	N'ton	2		1674	Q Marr
Nicholas Bayes		1668	L/Harrowden	1		1674	Q Births
Wm. Pell		1669	L/Harrowden	2	Blacksmith?	1674	Q Births
(Widow) Roberts	H	1669	Overstone	2	Widow	1674	*Account*
Wm. Lark	T	1669	Moulton	1	Miller	1674	*Account*
(Widow) Brauston	H	1669	Ravensthorpe		Widow	1669	*Account*
Bennett Brown		1670	Gt Billing		Widow		Q Burials
Tho Binyon		1670	Holcott	2		1674	Q Births
Tho. Nottingham		1670	W'boro	2	Late H of listed widow	1674	Q Burials
Geo. Warner		1670	Kettering	3		1674	Q Births
John Linnell		1670	Holcot: L /Harrowden	2		1674	Q Births
Eliz. Allin		1671	Dingley	(1)	*W of John*	1674	Q Burials
Joseph Garrett		1671	Kettering	2		1674	Q Births
Eliz Bull		1672	Isham	(2)	*W of Thomas*	1674	Q Burials
Tho. Clark		1672	Geddington	1X		1674	Q Burials
Edw. Cowper		1672	Northampton	4		1674	Q Births
Tho. Wright		1673	W'boro	1X		1674	Q Births
Samuel Gaines		1673	Northampton W	1X		1674	Q Births
Tho. Smith		1674	W'boro	1X		1674	Q Births
John Houghton		1674	W'boro	2		1674	Q Burials
John Smyth		1674	W'boro	1		1674	Q Births
Wm. Williamson		1674	Northampton W	3		1674	Q Births
John Lane		1676	Hackleton	1		1674	Q Marr
Henry Hackney		1678	W'boro	1X		1674	Q Births
Tho. Cowper/Cooper		1679	W'boro	2		1674	Q Births
Geo Mackerness		1680	Scaldwell		Husbandman		Besse
John Bradford		1683	L/Billing	1		1674	Besse
John Bosworth		1684	Geddington	3		1674	Q Burials
John Bosyeat		1684	Geddington	3		1674	Q Burials
John Gill		1685	Rothersthorpe		Husbandman		Q Marr
Wm Griffin		1685	Northampton	2		1674	Q Births
Samuel Clark		1689	Kettering	4		1674	Q Burials
Judith Bosworth		1690	Geddington	(3)	*W of John*	1674	Q Burials

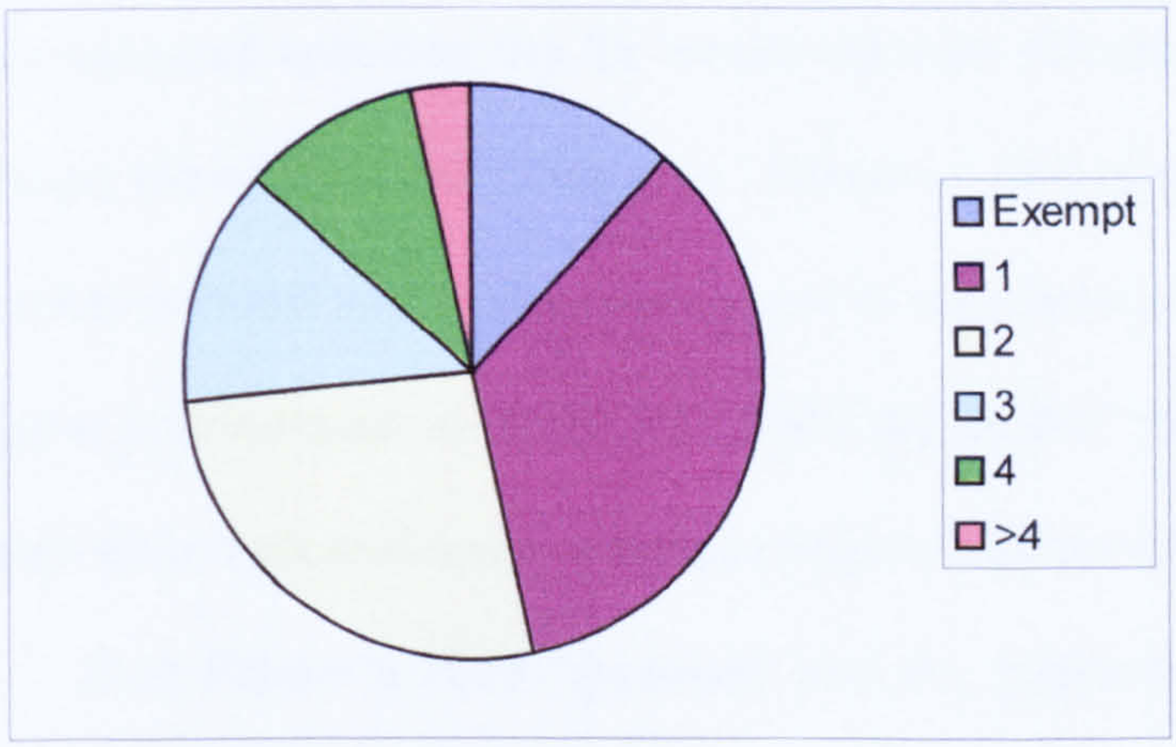
Table 9 (contd.): Economic and /or Occupational Status of some identified Quakers resident in Central Northamptonshire

Hearth Tax Assessments
(Number of hearths)

Exempt	1.	2.	3	4	>4
7	21	16	8	6	2
11.7%	35%	26.7%	13.3%	10 %	3.3 %

Table 10a & 10b: Analysis of economic status of known Quakers in Central Northamptonshire from the data in Table 9 above.

(excluding the one ambiguous return)



Wellingborough, Rothwell and Kettering, where the same name (both given and family) occurs so frequently. Similarly, the attribution of a Hearth Tax assessment to individual members of a family in which the head of the household is not specifically identified as a Dissenter cannot be sustained in the interest of providing accurate data for analysis.

The analysis of this data is presented in **Tables 10a & 10b** and also offers a useful basis for comparison with the data for Western Northamptonshire in **Tables 6a & 6b**. As in Western Northamptonshire, the majority of Quakers listed in Central Northamptonshire are those assessed with one hearth, a slightly smaller percentage being assessed with two. However, the percentage of those assessed with three, four or more hearths - ie the 'middling sort' - is considerably higher in Central Northamptonshire, particularly in the urban centres. The higher socio-economic status enjoyed by a number of Quakers in this central region of the county is partly a reflection of the increased opportunities for wealth creation offered to these residents of the larger towns included in this area . However, in this respect the acquisition of greater personal wealth does not appear to have been a bar to the continuing religious commitment of many 'obstinate Separatists' who had 'made-good' through their trade and commercial activities within an urban environment.

Both Palmer's 1669 "Account" and the applications for Licences for teachers and places of worship under the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence, when linked with Hearth Tax returns, offer considerable material for the socio-economic analysis of 'orthodox' Dissenters in the central region, as shown in **Table 11.** Whilst ejected or silenced ministers form the highest socio-economic group amongst the teachers, it is notable that there is an even greater number of lay teachers from the 'meaner sort'. Similarly, those hosts and

Name	H/ T [1]	Date	Residence	HT [2]	Occupation	Source [3]	Persuasion [4]
Mr Quinton	H	1669	W'boro	3	Tradesman	Palmer	Indep/Presbyt
Mr Barnes	H	1669	W'boro	4	Tradesman	Palmer	Indep/Presbyt
Mr (Vincent) Alsop	T/H	1669	Geddington	6	Ej Rector of Wilby	Palmer/Indg	Indep/Presbyt
Mr Thorpe	T	1669	Hartfordshire		Chaplain to Sir Jonathan Keate	Palmer	Indep/Presbyt
Mr Hook	T	1669/72	Northampton C	2		Palmer/Indg	Indep/Presbyt
John Harding	T/H	1672	Northampton		Ej Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
John Clark(e)	H	1672	Northampton (c)	3		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Valentine Chadock	H	1672	Northampton (c)	6		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Eliz Mulsoe	H	1672	Northampton (c)	4		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Tho. Aldwinckle	H	1672	Wilbarston			Indulgence	Congregational
Tho. Browning	T/H	1672	Rothwell	6	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
Susanna Ponder [5]	H	1672	Rothwell			Indulgence	Congregational
John Courtman	T	1672	Thorpe Malsor	6	Ej Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
John Mansell	H	1672	Thorpe Malsor	13		Indulgence	Congregational
John Maydwell	T/H	1669/72	Kettering	7	Ej Minister	Indulgence/Palmer	Presbyterian*
Widow Cooper	H	1672	Kettering	-	Widow	Indulgence	Congregational
Thomas Perkins	T	1672	Kettering		Ej Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Francis Dandy	T	1672	Oakley Magna			Indulgence	Presbyterian
Mrs Margaret Brookes	H	1672	Oakley Magna	13		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Robert Maunsell	H	1672	Newton	20		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Tho. Edmonds	T	1672	Woolaston	1		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Strickland Negus	T	1672	Geddington	2	Ej Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
John Brynard	T	1672	Isham		Ej Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
Robert Guy	H	1672	Isham	7		Indulgence	Congregational
Richard Barnes	H	1672	W'boro	4		Indulgence	Congregational
Richard Atkins	H	1672	W'boro	3		Indulgence	Congregational
Robt Martey	H	1672	Northampton			Indulgence	Congregational
Sam Wolford	H	1672	Northampton (s)	2		Indulgence	Congregational

[1] H=Host/Receiver: T = Teacher: as classified in Palmer's 1669 *Account of Conventicles*

[2] Hearth Tax Assessment: X = Certified Exempt

[3] Palmer = 1669 *Account of Conventicles:*
Indulgence= Application for, or granting of licence under 1672 Declaration of Indulgence
as listed in G Lyon Turner *Original Records* or Bates *Decl. of Indulgence* [Not necessarily granted]

[4] Religious Persuasion. See. pp.83-4 in text re unreliability of denominational labels.

* Some confusion exists over John Maydwell's application for his house to be used as a meeting place. Although Lyon Turner includes this under Presbyterian, Maidwell is licenced as a Teacher of Congregational persuasion.

[5] Susanna Ponder is believed by Lyon Turner to be the sister or sister-in-law of Nathaniel Ponder, the Northampton printer and agent for many Indulgence Licence applications in the county. See Lyon Turner, *Original Records* p. 809

Table 11. Economic and/or Occupational status of some of those identified through Presentments, Episcopal Returns or Licence Applications as "orthodox dissenters" in Central Northamptonshire.

Name	H/ T [1]	Date	Residence	HT [2]	Occupation	Source [3]	Persuasion [4]
Christopher Stanley	T/H	1672	Brafield	3		Indulgence	Congregational
George Bidbanke	T	1672	Denton		Ej Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
James Taylor	H	1672	L/Bowden	+		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Matthew Clarke	T	1672	L/Bowden		Ej Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Wm Garrett [5]	H	1672	Mears Ashby	(4)		Indulgence	Congregational
Sam Sturgess	H	1672	Sibbertoft	4		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Henry Steele	H	1672	Welford	3		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Mr Tho. Andrews	T/H	1672	Mears Ashby	3		Indulgence	Presbyterian
John Morrice	H	1672	Woolaston	1		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Tho. Brett	T	1672	Woolaston	1		Indulgence	Presbyterian

Table 11 (cont'd): Economic and/or Occupational status of some of those identified through Presentments, Episcopal Returns or Licence Applications as "orthodox dissenters" in Central Northamptonshire.

[1] H=Host/Receiver: T = Teacher: as classified in Palmer's 1669 *Account of Conventicles*

[2] Hearth Tax Assessment: X = Certified Exempt

[3] Indulgence= Application for, or granting of licence under 1672 Declaration of Indulgence as listed in G Lyon Turner *Original Records* or Bates *Decl. of Indulgence* [Not necessarily granted]

[4] Religious Persuasion. See pp. 83-4 in text re unreliability of denominational labels.

[5] 1674 Assessment listed under Widow Garrett

+ James Taylor of Little Bowden assessed in 1674 Hearth Tax returns as owner of two houses – total 6 hearths

would-be hosts offering their houses for meetings of orthodox and semi-Separatist Dissenters range across the whole socio-economic spectrum from poor labourers and craftsmen, through wealthier urban tradesmen to rich country gentry patrons such as Robert Maunsell of Newton (20 hearths), Mrs Margaret Brooks of the Mansion House in Oakley Magna (13 hearths), John Mansell of Thorpe Malsor (13 hearths) and Robert Guy of Isham (7 hearths).

The above examination of the distribution of Dissent in the arbitrarily defined area of Central Northamptonshire and the search for possible predetermining factors have shown no universally applicable connections between poverty, socio-economic composition or the widely varying topography of the area. As in the case of Western Northamptonshire, the relationship between Dissent in its various forms and the network of communication and trade, both local and national, appears a more fruitful contributory hypothesis. Despite the lack of quantitative evidence in the case of Northampton itself, persuasive connections can be drawn between commerce and Dissent, especially within the major towns of the area. What may have been 'sinks of poverty' for many of the inhabitants of these towns, whose wretched state may well have precluded them from any active form of religious adherence, for other residents Dissent, both sectarian and orthodox, appears to have embraced the whole socio-economic spectrum.[31] Amongst the Quakers, the relatively better-off townsfolk of the 'middling sort' make up a significant proportion of the whole group. Similarly the 'orthodox' Dissenters show a wide variety of adherence, from wealthy country patrons and ejected ministers to those of the 'middling' and 'meaner' sort, this latter group being markedly active as lay preachers or teachers as well as in hosting gatherings of

[31] See above p. 100.

considerable size, both in the major towns and in the country parishes immediately adjacent to them.

Eastern Northamptonshire

Moving on to a similar examination of the remainder of the county, the eastern region can be arbitrarily defined as lying to the east of the River Ise, north-eastwards to the county's border with Rutland, where extensive forest stretched from Rockingham to Kingscliffe (formerly Cliffe Regis), and continuing to Peterborough in the eastern extremity of the diocese where the flat fenland area, particularly characteristic of neighbouring Cambridgeshire, predominates. South of these two differing topographic areas lies the clay vale which runs parallel with these, south of the River Nene, embracing the minor market towns of Higham Ferrers and Thrapston and continuing to the county's eastern border with Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. (See **Fig. 9**).

The statistical data for this region, derived in a manner similar to that for Western & Central Northamptonshire, are presented in **Table 12.** Taken together with **Fig. 2 c)** we can see that, with the exception of eight parishes, the *Compton Census* reveals a dearth of reported 'significant' Dissent in the eastern end of the county. Four of those parishes where such Dissent is noted, ie Burton Latimer [235], Finedon [236], Woodford [237] and Cranford St John [232], are closely grouped together near the confluence of the Rivers Ise and Nene and are more properly associated with the considerable dissenting activity already noted in the town of Wellingborough and its adjoining Parishes on the western side of the Ise. Despite the high level of Dissent recorded in these four parishes, there appears to be no common factor in the

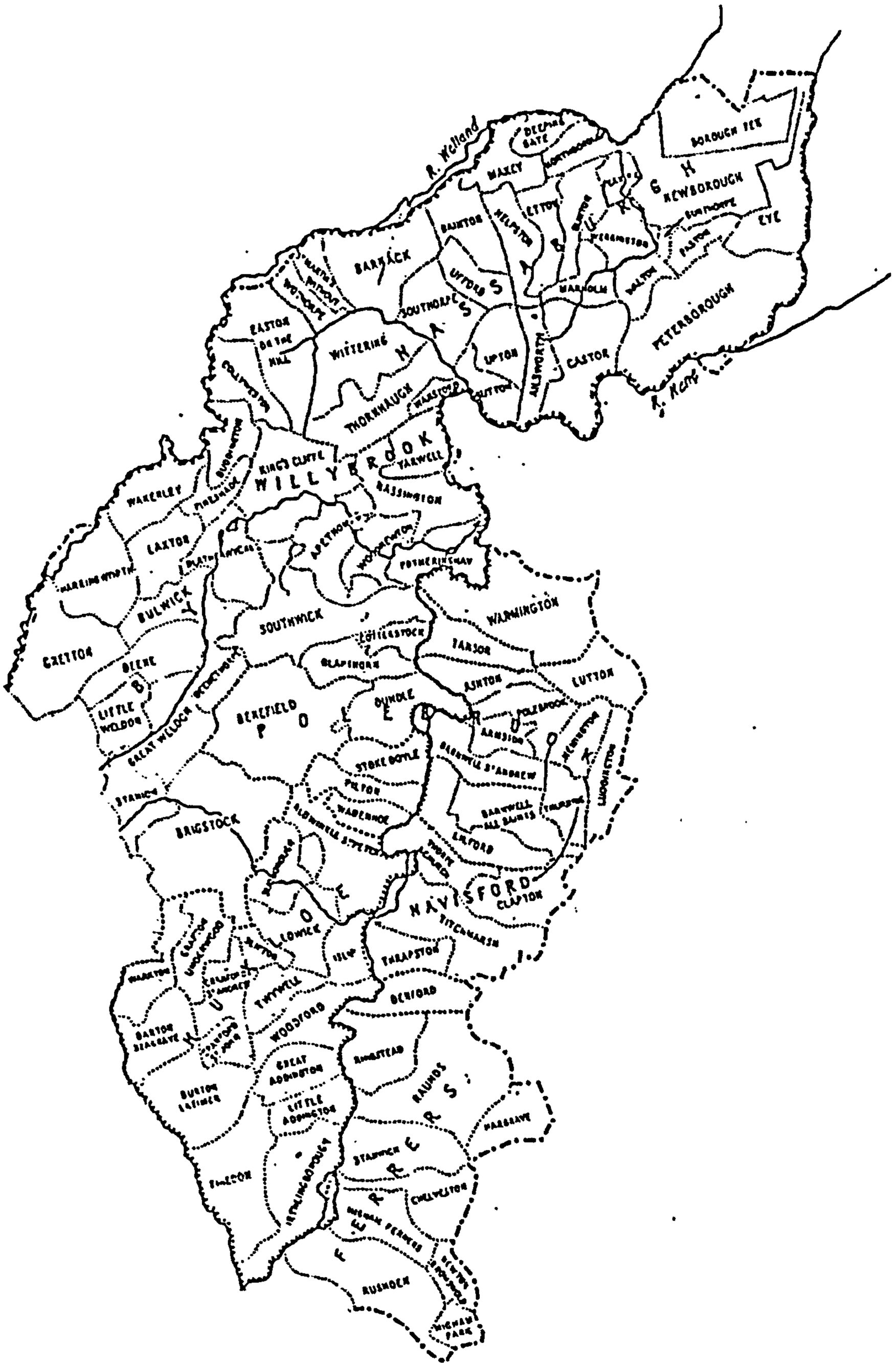


Fig. 9
Map of Eastern Northamptonshire showing parishes

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
202	Gretton		no information		149	41	no	yes	59	19	8	1	1	31
203	Deene+D'thorpe	350	0*	0	62	31	yes	yes	34	4	4	0	1	19
204	Gt & Lt Weldon	750	2	0.26	156	42	?	no	70	15	4	2	0	21
205	Stannion	240	5	2.08	59	56	no	no	21	4	1	0	0	19
206	Brigstock	900	10	1.1	189	44	no	yes	75	24	4	1	1	27
207	Grafton U'wood		no information		43	44	no	yes	19	5	0	0	0	21
208	Benefield	700	0	0	144	38	no	?	76	14	0	2	1	16
209	Bulwick	242	0	0	97	61	no	?	25	9	3	0	1	32
210	Blatherwick	200	0	0	47	40	no	yes	20	4	3	0	1	26
211	Southwick	126	0	0	32	28	?	yes	20	2	0	0	1	9
212	Harringworth	400	60	15 (Q)	108	44	no	no	48	7	3	1	1	17
213	Laxton	169	1	0.6			?	?						
214	Duddington		no information		84	49	?	no	29	no information 10	4	0	0	33
215	Collyweston	160	0	0	53	32	no	no	24	7	5	0	0	33
216	King'scliffe	750	8	1.1	209	50	no	no	78	19	6	1	1	24
217	Apethorpe		no information		44	28	part (c 1500)	yes	34	8	1	0	1	21
218	Cotterstock	100	0	0	24	46	?	no	8	3	0	1	1	27
219	Glapthorne	240	3	1.25	63	52	no	no	25	4	1	0	0	17
220	Oundle/Ashton	2250	4	0.2	385	12.5	part (1525)	no	232	62	38	3	2	30
221	Stoke Doyle	110	0	0	33	27.2	?	yes	15	6	1	0	1	32
222	Pilton	100	0	0	34	44	yes	yes	12	5	1	0	1	33
223	Wadenhoe	220	0	0	47	36	no	no	20	8	1	1	0	31
224	Aldwinckle(s)	537	2	0.4	123	52	no	no	42	11	5	0	1	28
225	Sudborough	135	0	0	32	41	?	no	12	5	2	0	0	37
226	Lowick	300	7	2.3	70	47	no	yes	23	10	2	1	1	34

* Deene: 30 "Papists " listed in Compton Returns. See pp. 151-2 in text

Q Palmer queries this return for Harringworth./ See p.108 in text.

Table 12. Detailed Analysis of Parishes in Eastern Northamptonshire

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
227	Barnwell All SS	150	3	2	37	22	yes (1683)	no	20	7	1	0	1	29
228	Islip	240	2	0.8	51	43	no	?	14	9	6	0	0	51
229	Twywell	200	0	0	40	53	no	yes	12	2	4	1	0	33
230	Warkton	166	0	0	28	18	no	no	16	5	2	0	0	30
231	Barton Seagrave	75	0	0	14	36	yes (1683)	no	4	1	3	0	1	50
232	Cranford St J	160	70/20*	44/13	32	28	no	yes	17	3	2	1	0	23
233	Cranford St A	143	3	2.1	20	59	no	no	4	7	2	0	1	69
234	Woodford	374	10	2.7	96	47	no	no	37	9	4	0	1	26
235	Burton Latimer	565	15	2.7	110	50	no	yes	46	5	3	0	1	15
236	Finedon	660	24	3.6	129	29	no	yes	73	11	5	1	1	18
237	Irthlingboro'	600	10	1.7	158	39	no	no	78	11	6	1	0	18
238	Lt Addington	140	1 family	2.9	41	32	no	yes	21	5	1	1	0	22
239	Gt Addington	130	0	0	41	37	no	yes	21	2	2	1	0	16
240	Rushden	600	6	1	157	39	no	yes	68	21	5	0	2	28
241	Newton B'wold	100	0	0	23	13	no	yes	16	4	0	0	0	20
242	Higham F	600	2*	0.3	159	35	no	no	57	31	12	2	1	43
243	Chelveston				52	31	no	yes	31	5	0	0	0	14
244	Stanwick	282	3	1.1	57	25	no	?	33	8	0	2	0	20
245	Raunds	980	9	1	180	27	no	no	106	23	2	1	0	19
246	Hargrave	200	0	0	35	26	no	no	22	3	1	0	0	15
247	Ringstead/Denford	270	4	1.5	134	40	no	no	60	15	2	2	0	22
248	Thrapston	340	3	0.9	83	51	?	no	18	17	6	0	0	56
249	Titchmarsh	480	40	8.3	112	21	no	yes	72	12	1	2	1	15
250	Clepton	70	0	0	15	7	1633-1702	yes	12	0	1	0	1	8
251	Thorpe Achurch	200	0	0	53	40	?	no	23	7	2	0	0	28
252	Luddington	62	0	0	10	30	no	no	5	2	0	0	0	29
253	Hemington	35	0	0	12	17	yes	yes	6	3	0	0	1	33
254	Barnwell St A	150	3	2	43	14	yes (1683)	yes	21	11	4	0	1	42
255	Armston/Polebrook	350	0	0	63	25	part (1683)	no	31	13	3	0	0	34

* Cranford St Johns: see p. 108 [fn 32] in text.

Table 12. (continued)

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
256	Tansor	200	0	0	42	17	?	no	31	2	1	1	0	11
257	Warmington	328	2	0.7	23	13	yes	yes	17	2	0	0	1	11
258	Lutton		no information		22	14	no	no	17	1	1	0	0	11
259	Fotheringay	250	0	0	68	35	?	no	31	11	2	0	0	30
260	Wodnewton				70	34	no	no	41	4	1	0	0	11
261	Nassington				97	31	no	no	45	18	3	1	0	33
262	Yarnwell				50	26	no	yes	25	7	4	0	0	31
263	Thornhaugh/Wansford	243	1	0.4	36	33	?	?	17	3	3	0	1	25
264	Northboro'	180	4	2.2	44	7	?	?			returns illegible			
265	Wittering	110	1	0.9	26	31	?	no	13	2	3	0	0	27
266	Easton on Hill	260	0	0	106	22	no	no	65	15	3	0	0	21
267	Wothorpe		no information				no	?						
268	St Martin's W	400	7	1.75			no	?			Returns illegible			
269	Barnack	370	1	0.27			no	?						
270	S'thorpe/Pilsgate/Walcot						no	?						
271	Sutton	80	0	0	30	40	no	no	15	5	0	0	0	25
272	Upton	58	0	0			no	?						
273	Ufford/Bainton	300	0	0			no	?						
274	Bainton						?	?						
275	Maxey	370	20	5.4	70	17	?	no	44	7	5	1	0	23
276	Helpston	300	6	2			?	?						
277	Ailsworth						no	?						
278	Deeping Gate						?	?			Returns missing or illegible			
279	Etton	54	0	0			part (1547)	?						
280	Warholm						yes	?						
281	Castor	340	2	0.6			?	?						
282	Werrington						?	?						
283	Peakirk	220	1	0.45	32	25	no	no	17	4	3	0	0	29

Table 12. (continued)

Ref No:	Parish	Persons	Dissenters	%'age	Houses	% exempt	Inclosure	Res Landlord	Hearth Tax Assessments 1/2	3/4	5/7	8/10	>10	'middling sort' (%)
284	Walton				5	0	?	no	3	1	0	0	1	25
285	Peterboro'	1950	20	1.02			no	?						
286	Paston/ Werrington	480	0	0			?	?						
287	Gunthorpe				17	30	?	no	11	0	1	0	0	8
288	Newboro'	No information					?	?	Returns illegible					
289	Borough Fen						no	?						
290	Eye						no	?						

Table 12. (continued)

size of their population, Cranford St John being a small village parish of some 160 souls, the other three being much larger. The inclusion of Little Addington [238] with a calculated 2.9% Dissent, although within the adopted criterion of 'significant', is however a casualty of the statistical analysis, since in proper terms only 'one family', say 4 persons, is noted in a small parish numbering 140 souls, and must therefore be disregarded. The high nonconformist figure for Cranford St John is particularly interesting: although open to question, it cannot be associated with a high degree of poverty or an excess of the 'middling sort' within this similarly small parish.[32]

Away from this concentration of Dissent, significant numbers of Nonconformists are recorded in the parish of Harringworth [212] and in Maxey, [275], both parishes abutting the county's northern border. Sixty Nonconformists, some 15% of the population, are recorded in 1672 in the former parish, which was reported by Bishop Lloyd to be the site of one of the 'Capital Conventicles' in existence at the end of the 1670s. Thus Palmer's marginal gloss 'Q' against the entry for Harringworth, carrying the ambiguous meaning of either Quaker or Questionable, appears more likely to reflect the persuasion of those attending the reported conventicle there. Notably, the high proportion (44%) of the households in Harringworth exempt from the Hearth

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[32] Anne Whiteman has pointed out in her *Critical Analysis* of the Compton returns that the Salt MS gives 70 Nonconformists for Cranford St John, whereas Palmer writes 'Separatists & goers to Conventicles Q of [?if] 20. Mr Whiting saith but 3'. In her view Palmer's often enigmatic use of Q in this case probably stands for *quaere.* If Mr Whiting , the incumbent of both Cranford St. Andrews and Cranford St. John, was correct in his count of Separatists, then his parish can be discounted from those exhibiting 'significant' Dissent.

Tax of 1674, is in considerable contrast with the 17% in the similar sized parish of Maxey, where twenty Nonconformists were reported.

The remaining parish in the Eastern Region where significant Dissent is recorded is that of Titchmarsh, a medium-sized parish near Thrapston, where 8.3% of the parishioners, some forty persons, are noted by Palmer as 'Obstinate Separatists'. In a village of lower than average Hearth Tax exemptions and no significant number of the 'middling sort', there would appear, from the data in **Table 12,** to be no specific social or economic factors which might be interpreted as possibly lending themselves to the promotion of Dissent. However, the personality and influence of Sir Gilbert Pickering, the resident Lord of the Manor, whose advowson had been confiscated by the Crown at the Restoration, must be seen as the *primum mobile* in the persistence of active Dissent and resistance to Conformity in Titchmarsh. Described by a Northamptonshire cleric as 'first a Presbyterian, then an Independent, then a Brownist, and afterwards a Baptist, most furious fiery and implacable, a principal agent in casting out the most learned clergy', Pickering had adopted the Parliamentary cause from the beginning and was 'active in carrying out its ecclesiastical policy' throughout the Interregnum.[33]

Not surprising, therefore, was the hostility engendered amongst the villagers to the arrival of the King's appointee in September 1660 to take possession of the benefice. Lady Pickering, Sir Gilbert's 'Amazonian' wife, the sister of the Edward Montagu Earl of Sandwich, whose 'great engine of battery was her tongue,' was supported by 'her male and female Myrmidons' from the village, forcefully resisting the Sheriff and his *posse comitatus* in

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[33] G Lyon Turner, *Original Records* p. 767. Also see above p. 60 fn.17. According to Claire Tomalin, Sir Gilbert was 'one of the very few who sat at the trial of Charles I who escaped a death penalty, saved by his brother-in-law [Montagu] and '£5 for [his secretary] Pepys'. See C. Tomalin, *Samuel Pepys – The Unequalled Self*, (London, 2002), p. 109.

their efforts to gain entry into the church and the parsonage house. Although ultimately unsuccessful, this physical resistance to a Crown appointment, vividly described by the new incumbent Dr Henry Deane in a letter to a friend within weeks of the event, is an indication of the strong support by the parishioners for Sir Gilbert's radical puritan values. As Deane observed of his new parish, 'they are generally Anabaptists and Independents, and I have an Herculian (*sic*) labour, an Augean stable to purge'.[34]

Over the seventeen-year duration of his tenure of the benefice of Titchmarsh, partly in residence and latterly licensed as *'rectore absento'*, there is evidence that the conformist Dr Deane singularly failed in his declared 'Herculian' task. In 1672, three Indulgence licences were issued for Titchmarsh, two of these to Lady Pickering for the use of her 'Mansion House' by Henry Searle, a Presbyterian who had been ejected from nearby Cranford, as a meeting place for nonconformist worship, and by Nathaniel Whiting, a Congregationalist ejected from Aldwinckle.[35] As Lyon Turner observed of Lady Pickering, she had been 'widowed but four years [when] she so boldly espoused the unpopular cause of the Nonconformists'.

The third licence was granted for George Fowler, an ejected minister and Congregationalist, to preach in the village in the 'house and barn' of James Cole. In 1680 Titchmarsh was also amongst the twenty-nine parishes listed in Bishop Lloyd's 1683 visitation report to his Archbishop where

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[34] Fermore Hesketh (Baker) f. 719, *Letter from Dr Henry Deane to his much honoured friend John Heath Esq Attorney of the Duchy* dated St Luke's Day [18th October] 1660. See also Helen Belgion, "Village Violence at Titchmarsh in 1660" in *Northamptonshire Past and Present* Vol. IV No 3, pp. 155-7.

[35] Nathaniel Whiting appears to have been licensed in addition to Henry Searle, because the latter died about April 1672. See F.Ives Cater, *Northants Nonconformity* (Northampton, 1912). However, J.B.Marsh in *Nonconformity in Northamptonshire 1672* (Northampton, 1875), suggests that Lady Pickering 'allowed a Presbyterian to preach in her house one day and a Congregational preacher on another' (p. 7).

'Capital Conventicles' were reported to have been in existence. [See **Fig. 2 (b)**].

The residence, within the village, of a Lord of the Manor holding strong views on the nature and practice of his faith certainly suggests the influence of such a factor in the persistence of Dissent in the case of Titchmarsh, where attempts at 'enforced ' conformity are seen to have failed. However, whilst the case of Titchmarsh is fortunate in being well documented, the same social factor may have been of equal significance in other parishes where a resident Lord of the Manor could promote Dissent - or conversely conformity - through the influence of his social position.

The socio-economic and/or occupational data concerning identified Quakers and the analysis of these are presented in **Tables 13, 14a & 14b** respectively. There are, however, particular problems associated with this eastern region of the Diocese, in terms of the available sources. Whilst Archdeacon Palmer's 1669 "Account" is a major source both of dissenting activity and the identification of a number of teachers and hosts at Conventicles, the information therein is limited to the western deaneries of the county. In the Eastern area under examination, this deficit of source material is partially compensated by Bishop Lloyd's visitation report made some ten years later. Although no denominational labels were credited to any of the gatherings mentioned, nor were the names and numbers of those attending given, Lloyd expressed his concern over the persistence of conventicles, that 'these meetings were great and numerous, and by the midwifery of the popish

Name	H/ T [1]	Date	Residence	HT [2]	Occupation	Source [3]	Remarks [4]
Geo. Whitlock		1660	Finedon	2		1674	Q Births
John Wallis		1661	Finedon	1		1674	Q Births
Humphrey Whitlock		1662	Finedon	1		1674	Q Births
Tho. Cooke		1662	Lt. Weldon	1		1674	Besse
Richd. Barnes		1666	Finedon	1		1674	Q Births
Anne Nichols		1666	Raunds	1	*W of John*	1674	Besse
Tho. Austin		1666	Stanwick	1		1674	Besse
Laurence Key		1666	Irthlingboro'	1		1674	Besse
Robt. Wallis		1667	Finedon	2		1674	Q Births
John Whitlock		1667	Finedon	1X/1		1674	Q Births
Peter Mackerness		1667	Finedon	2		1674	Besse
Richd. Whitlock		1668	Finedon		Yeoman		QS 1/79/37
John Bland		1669	Brigstock	1		1674	Q Births
Wm. Miller		1670	Finedon	2		1674	Q Births
John Garrett		1670	Finedon	3		1674	Q Births
Nicholas Day		1671	Finedon	2		1674	Q Marr
John Mackerness		1671	Finedon	1X	(Junior)	1674	Q Births
James Garrett		1674	Finedon	1X		1674	Q Births
Tho. Wallis		1675	Finedon	5/2	Yeoman	1674	QS/1/79/37
Valentine Mackerness		1675	Finedon	2	Yeoman	1674	QS/1/79/37
Ann Brookes		1675	Finedon	1X		1674	Q Burials
John Knighton		1684	Raunds	3/2		1674	Q Marr
Tho. Boughton (jun)		1684	Kingscliffe	3		1674	Besse

Table 13: Economic and/or Occupational status of some identified Quakers resident in Eastern Northamptonshire.

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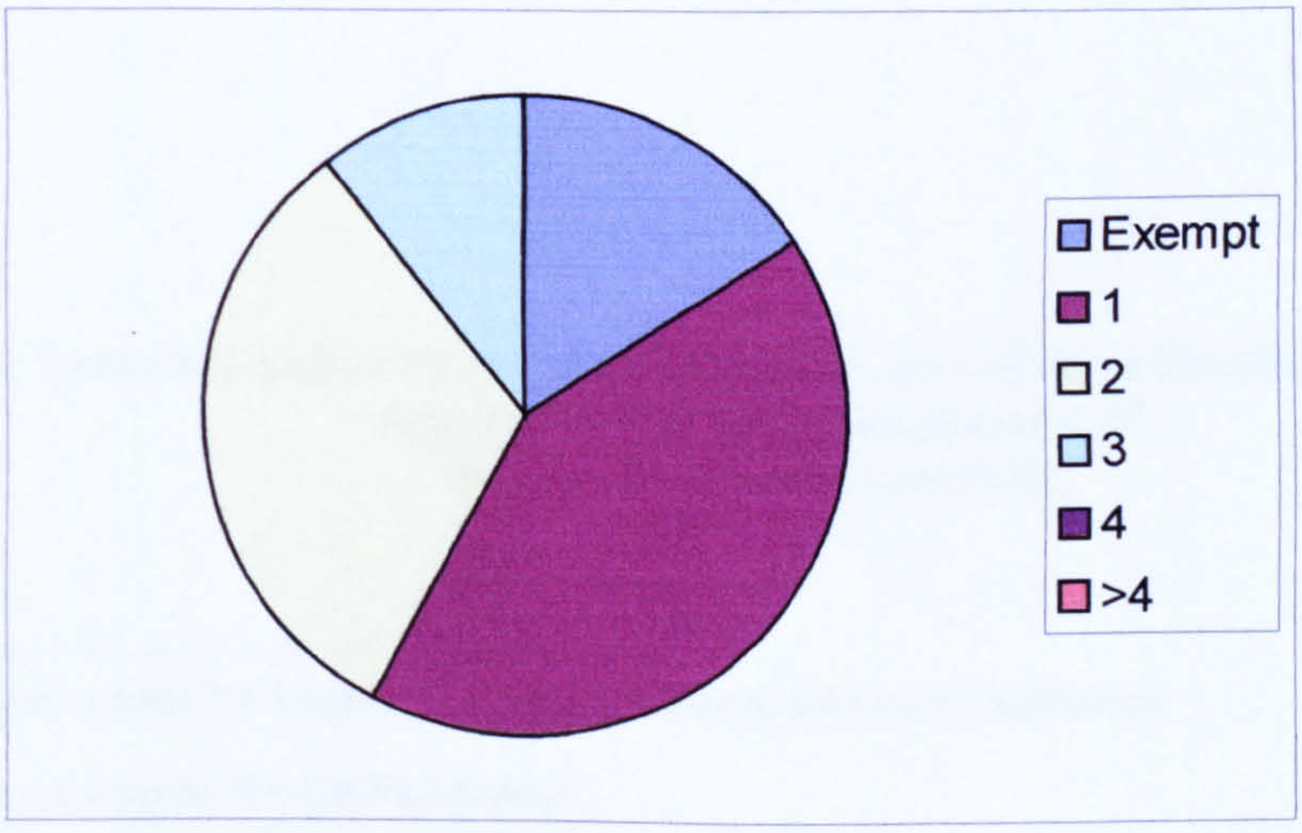
[1] H=Host/Receiver: T = Teacher: as classified in Palmer's 1669 *Account of Conventicles*
[2] Hearth Tax Assessment: X = Certified Exempt
[3] Date of Hearth Tax Assessment
[4] Remarks indicate source of identification as Quaker.
QS/*/* = Northampton Quarter Sessions Roll No: (app)= appended to main roll
Q Births = Quaker Birth Records at NRO (name and residence of father, first incidence indicated)
Q Burials= Quaker Burial Records (no sons daughters or infants, if classified)
Q Marr = Quaker Marriage Records at NRO
Besse = Quaker Sufferings

Hearth Tax Assessments
(Number of hearths)

Exempt	1.	2.	3.	4.	>4.
3	8	6	2	0	0
15.8%	42.1%	31.6%	10.5%	0%	0%

Table 14a & 14b: Analysis of the economic status of known Quakers in Eastern Northamptonshire from the data in Table 13 above.

(excluding three ambiguous returns)



Name	H/ T [1]	Date	Residence*	HT [2]	Occupation	Source [3]	Persuasion [4]
Nathaniel Whiting	T	1672	Cranford	4	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
Henry Willis	T/H		Cransley	-	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Henry Searle	T		Titchmarsh	-	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
Lady Pickering	H		Titchmarsh	23		Indulgence	Congregational
Geo. Fowler	T		Titchmarsh	-	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
James Cole	H		Titchmarsh	1		Indulgence	Congregational
Matthew Orlebar	T/H		Polebrook	6	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Wm. Shipp	H		Peterborough			Indulgence	Presbyterian
Barnaby Knowles	H		Peterborough			Indulgence	Presbyterian
John Bladwicke	H		Peterborough			Indulgence	Presbyterian
Wm Oliver	T/H		Nassington		Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
John Oliver	H		Nassington			Indulgence	Presbyterian
John Rowlett	T		Warmington		Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Mrs Anne Elmes	H		Warmington	12		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Robt. Wilde	T/H		Oundle	5	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Tho. Fowne	H		Oundle			Indulgence	Presbyterian
Mary Briton/Brittaine	H		Oundle	6		Indulgence	Presbyterian
Walter Slye	H		Dogsthorpe			Indulgence	Presbyterian
Baxter Slye	H		Eye			Indulgence	Presbyterian
John Seaton	T		Islip/Thrapston		Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Presbyterian
Twyford Worthington	T/H		Higham Ferrers			Indulgence	Presbyterian
Tho. Broome	H		Kingscliffe			Indulgence	Congregational
Richd. Resbury	T/H		Oundle	-	Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
John Morton	H		Ringstead			Indulgence	Congregational
John Willes	T		Ringstead		Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
Ed. Brooke	H		Brigstock			Indulgence	Congregational
Robt. Ekins	T		Twywell		Ej. Minister	Indulgence	Congregational
Eliz. Mulso	H		Twywell	?		Indulgence	Congregational

Table 15: Economic and/or Occupational status of some of those identified through Licence Applications as "orthodox dissenters" in Eastern Northamptonshire.

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[1] H=Host/Meeting place T = Teacher: as classified in Indulgence Licence application

[2] Hearth Tax Assessment: X = Certified Exempt

[3] Indulgence= Application for, or granting of licence under 1672 Declaration of Indulgence as listed in G Lyon Turner *Original Records* or Bates *Decl. of Indulgence* [Not necessarily granted]

[4] Religious Persuasion. See pp.83-4 in text re unreliability of denominational labels

* Teachers not necessarily resident in parish where licence to preach was issued.

plot they daily increased and thereby become insolent and regardless of all laws civil and ecclesiastical'.[36]

Thus Palmer's earlier account and the data from his census returns, if taken on their own, would have provided a very incomplete picture of the true state of Dissent in the eastern part of the diocese. An examination of the 1672 Licence applications for preachers and meeting places of nonconformist worship (see **Fig. 3(a)**), reveals that considerably more applications were received in respect of these eastern parishes than of any other part of the diocese, the majority of these being in parishes where little or no 'significant' Dissent had been recorded earlier. (See **Table 15**). Similarly, out of the eight 'Capital conventicles' mentioned by Lloyd in this region, six were in parishes within which Presbyterian, Congregational or Baptist licences had been sought. It would thus appear that, whilst 'obstinate' separatism may not have been prevalent in the extreme east of the county, possibly explained by its proximity to the seat of the diocese, the practice of 'orthodox' or semi-Separatist Dissent, together with conventicle-going, was certainly being actively pursued.

Quaker records are also deficient in the information from which the level of activity of this separatist sect in the north-east of the county might be gauged. For instance, in the extant Quaker Registers there are very few entries of Births, Marriages and Burials for the period from 1668, when the Kettering Monthly Meeting, responsible to the Northampton Quarterly Meeting, was established for the administration of this particular area. [37] Records of Quarter Session presentations are similarly unrewarding in this respect, such a lack of

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[36] Rawlinson MSS, (Bodl. Ref d.1163).

[37] Information from the Friends' Meeting House Librarian , London.

recorded activity, begging the question as to whether this results from lack of documented evidence or is a reflection of the true situation. It will be seen from **Table 13** that the few entries concerning Quakers resident or meeting in the north-eastern end of the county are derived from Besse's Record of Sufferings. Since this source is comprehensive in its chronicling and identification of Quaker sufferers elsewhere in the county, it may well be that a dearth of activity amongst Quakers in this area was more likely.[38] The self-imposed ban by Quakers on applying for licences under the Declaration of Indulgence only adds to difficulty of making a valid assessment of their activities in this region .

Conclusion

From the investigations carried out into socio-economic factors associated with Dissent across Northamptonshire in Chapters 2 and 3 above, and the conclusions drawn from them, several factors become evident. There are, to be sure, some very poor parishes within the county whose high rates of exemption from Hearth Tax can be equated with significant levels of recorded Dissent. Equally, there are others whose householders are relatively affluent yet still show evidence of dissenting activities, either through their absences from the Established Church, or from illegal conventicle-going. In terms of the socio-economic composition of particular parishes, derived from an analysis of the proportionate Hearth Tax assessments of the inhabitants, there is no coincidence between a higher proportion of the 'middling sort' within a community and any significant measure of Nonconformity associated with it which could be applied universally across the county. Only in the larger,

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[38]For Besse's reliability, see below page 166 [fn.86].

thriving market towns does this relationship appear to be a common feature, but, as has already been pointed out, this may be due more to the opportunities for wealth creation offered within these environments than a predisposing factor towards a particular religious affiliation.

The influence of a personage of strong political or religious convictions resident within a community has also been shown to have been an important factor in determining the nature of the practice of faith within a parish, notably that of Titchmarsh on the one hand, and the parishes under the sway of Sir Richard Knightley and Lord Crewe on the other. However, the evidence to support such a conclusion is often less easily available than that derived from the more impersonal statistical analysis. A tradition of Dissent already established prior to the Restoration can also be seen to have been a powerful influence on the continuation of nonconformist practices within certain communities, those of Syresham and Wellingborough serving as examples.[39]

Topography as a predisposing factor towards the adoption of a nonconformist philosophy, propounded so eloquently by John Aubrey, has also been found to have little validity in the case of Northamptonshire. In a county encompassing wide variations in its landscape (ranging from rich pastoral uplands and fertile river valleys, to forests and fenlands and a low-lying clay vale) there is little evidence to connect any particular region of the county with a predominance of Dissent or Orthodoxy. The urban areas mentioned above are often seen to have been marked centres of dissenting activity, their geographical position at crossroads of communication and

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[39] For an in-depth examination of the continuing tradition of puritan thought within the county, and its effect on Restoration Dissent, see Chapter 6 below.

economic infrastructure appearing to be significant factors in the spread of dissenting ideas and gatherings of those seeking alternative forms of worship. However, such an association cannot be accepted as a totally satisfactory explanation of a phenomenon which was often as potent in some country villages as in the towns. In Bugbrooke, a small village of some 300 persons, 33% dissent was recorded, whereas in Kettering, a large and thriving market town, the 22% dissent noted by Palmer serves to discredit the notion of an urban/rural divide as a valid explanation for the adoption of the particular religious beliefs of their inhabitants.

From the evidence derived from the above investigation, the relative distribution of both 'orthodox' and separatist Dissent across the various socio-economic groups can now be examined. The data from the 136 Dissenters who were identified as Quaker and for whom it was possible to derive a Hearth Tax assessment, and thus an indication of relative level of wealth, are shown in **Tables 16a & 16b**. As can be readily seen, the majority of these lie, in about equal proportion, within the assessment of one or two hearths, there being slightly more of the former. It is striking, however, that those whose income or property allowed them to be certified as exempt from the Hearth Tax form a considerably lower proportion amongst the separatist Dissenters. As their relative wealth increases there is a marked reduction in the number of Quakers assessed at four or more hearths, those with three hearths showing a significant presence, particularly in the urban areas.

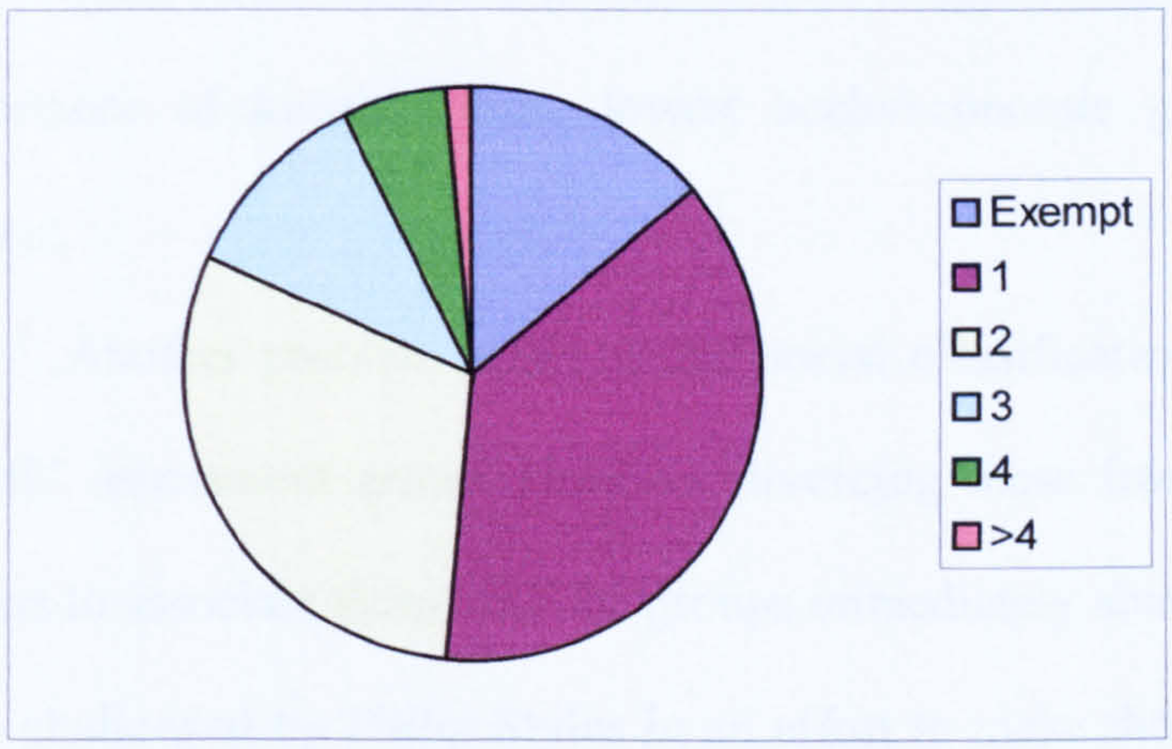
Whilst it has been possible to make a valid connection between Hearth Tax assessments and relative wealth (see Chapter 1 above), there is no agreement amongst economic historians as to an appropriate and all-embracing description of those lying within any category or group of

Hearth Tax Assessments
(Number of hearths)

Exempt	1.	2.	3	4	>4
19	51	41	15	8	2
14.0%	37.5%	30.1%	11.0%	5.9 %	1.5 %

Table 16a & 16b: Analysis of the economic status of identified Quakers In the whole of Northamptonshire from Tables 5, 9 & 13 above.

(excluding all ambiguous returns)



categories. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of occupational descriptions, particularly in many Northamptonshire records, before the beginning of the eighteenth century. Where such descriptions do exist, in court records and probate inventory valuations, they are often so ambiguous as to be of little use. The description of the same person as 'yeoman' in one source and 'husbandman' in another is illustrative of this dilemma. Professor Hoskins, in his study of Exeter, groups those in the exempt category with those assessed with 1 hearth, describing them as 'very poor'; 2 as 'poor'; 3, 4 & 5 'relatively comfortable'; 6-9 'prosperous' and 10+ 'wealthy'.[40] However, the grouping of those certified exempt with those of 1 hearth, similarly adopted by Wrightson & Levine, would have seriously obscured the widely varying and important differentiation between the proportion of Dissenters in these two groups, as discovered in the tables above. Stevenson, in his treatment of these two groups in East Anglia , similarly sees the critical importance of keeping these lowest socio/economic groups separate and distinct.

Another problem arises in the social classification of those in the '3 Hearth' assessment group. Hoskins, divorcing these from the group below, prefers to associate them with the groups immediately above, although this has been challenged by Philip Styles in an effort to make the former researcher's urban groupings more valid in a rural context.[41] The occupants of this group fall into the category described by Wrightson and Levine as 'yeomen and

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[40] W. Hoskins, *Industry, Trade and the People of Exeter 1688-1800* (Manchester, 1935), pp. 118-119.

[41] J. J. Hurwich, 'The Social Origins of the Early Quakers' in *Past & Present* No. 48, p.160, [fn.10]. The rationale for Styles' adjustments does not appear valid in the case of many parishes in rural Northamptonshire, where householders who would not be described as gentlemen often enjoyed residences of three hearths or more.

wealthy craftsmen ' being associated with those in the two groups above.[42] Stevenson, however, chooses to associate those of group 3 with those of group 2, from the similarities in the ranges of the probate values of those classified as such. It can be argued that the same 'massive lift-off' in the median values of apparent wealth from Group 4 and above, used by Stevenson in his justification of this, also appears in the association between Hearth Tax assessments and other indices of wealth examined in the case of Northamptonshire.[43] In this thesis, however, it is felt that the bracketing of those Group 3 householders with those of the group below would seriously detract from the importance of identifying this former group with the 'middling sort', whose position within the community often gave this latter group a measure of considerable influence within both urban and rural communities.

From the above it can be seen that combining the occupants of particular economic groupings with those above or below, and giving individual groups or combinations a particular social 'tag', is fraught with difficulties. Since any decision on this is, in the main, a subjective one, it is thought best to avoid too rigid a social or occupational classification, relying on the relative values of wealth derived from a study of Hearth Tax assessments. Such an approach does however preclude objective comparisons with the work of those researchers who insist on such subjective categorisations. [44]

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[42] Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village; Terling 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995), p. 35.

[43] See **Tables 1, 2 & 3** in Chapter 1 above.

[44] Despite this qualification, the term 'middling sort' has been used in this thesis to encompass all those householders lying in Hearth Tax bands from 3 to 7 hearths. See above p.62 for a discussion of this.

Turning to the social position of Dissenters other than Quakers, in respect of those seen as semi-Separatist in their nonconformity, the picture is more difficult to assess. As has been shown above, identification of members of these latter groups, especially in the western deaneries of the county, has relied heavily on details derived from Archdeacon Palmer's 1669 "Account of Conventicles", in which details of those attending, and their persuasion, are often sketchy, ambiguous or unclear. The only source suitable for proper analytical treatment is that of licence applications for preachers and premises under the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence.

The vast majority of those listed in these applications were dissenting ministers who, by their very nature, often enjoyed privileged economic status. Much more significant are the entries concerning lay Dissenters who offered themselves as teachers and their premises as places of nonconformist worship, or those who sponsored licence applications. From the analysis of these, it has been found that their status ranged across the whole economic spectrum from extremely wealthy gentry patrons, through those of the 'middling sort', down to the poorest labourers. A particular difficulty, which has been a problem for many researchers, is the identification of Presbyterian, Independent and Baptist Dissenters during the period, due to the sparse numbers recorded through presentments and prosecutions, compared with those in respect of Quakers. In view of this scarcity it appears sensible to refrain from deriving definitive conclusions from the breakdown of the social and economic status of both Northamptonshire 'orthodox' Dissenters and Baptists offered in **Tables 17(a) & 17(b).** In the case of the former, the evidence derived would , however, suggest a much wider base of appeal across the whole social and economic spectrum than that noted for the totally separatist Quakers. In the

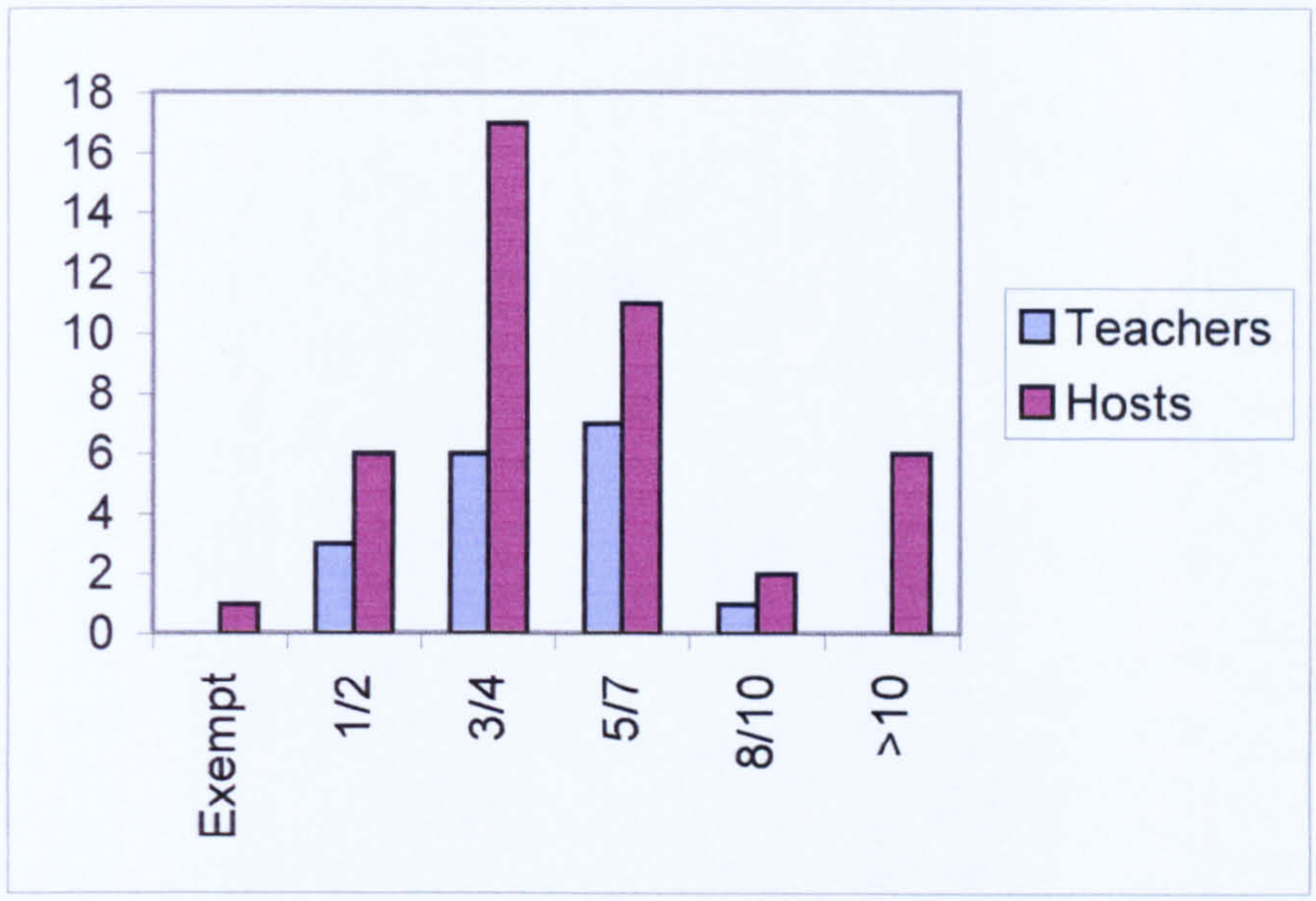

Table 17(a)
Economic analysis, through Hearth Tax assessments in Tables 7, 11 and 15, of identified Teachers and Hosts of 'orthodox' Dissent in Northamptonshire between 1669 and 1672

Name	H/ T [1]	Date	Residence	HT [2]	Occupation	Source [3]	Persuasio
John Houghton	H	1669	Blisworth	1	Baker	Palmer	Anabaptist
Benjamin Morley	T	1669	Ravensthorpe	5	"Bishop or Superintendent"	Palmer	Baptist
Francis Stanley	T	1669	E Haddon	2	Yeoman	Palmer	Baptist
John Traselloes	H	1669	Ravensthorpe	1		Palmer	Anabaptist
John Stanley	T	1669	E Haddon	4	Yeoman	Palmer	Anabaptist
Tho. Boss	T	1669	Harlestone		Weaver	Palmer	Anabaptist
James Harris	H	1669	Earls Barton	2		Palmer	Anabaptist
John Cole(s)	H	1669	Moulton	1		Palmer	Anabaptist
Widow Appleby	H	1669	Hardwick	2	Widow	Palmer	Anabaptist
John Brooks	T	1669/72	Woolaston	1	Tailor	Palmer/Indg.	Anabaptist
Wm. Farrow	T	1669	Woolaston	1	Tailor	Palmer	Anabaptist
- Adcock	T	1669	Woolaston	-	Carpenter	Palmer	Anabaptist
Tho. Marston	T	1669	Woolaston	1	Carpenter	Palmer	Anabaptist
- Birr	T	1669	Woolaston	-	Shoemaker	Palmer	Anabaptist
- King	T	1669	Woolaston	-	Weaver	Palmer	Anabaptist
John Neale	T	1669	Woolaston	1	Labourer	Palmer	Anabaptist
- Gregory	T	1669	Woolaston	-	Labourer	Palmer	Anabaptist
Dan Barniam	T	1669	Woolaston	1		Palmer	Anabaptist
John Smith	T	1669	Woolaston	1		Palmer	Anabaptist

Table 17 (b).
Economic and/or Occupational status of some of those identified through Episcopal Returns or Licence Applications as Baptists or 'Anabaptists' in Northamptonshire.

[1] H=Host/Receiver: T = Teacher: as classified in Palmer's 1669 *Account of Conventicles*

[2] Hearth Tax Assessment: X = Certified Exempt

[3] Palmer = 1669 *Account of Conventicles:*
Indg.= Application for, or granting of licence under 1672 Declaration of Indulgence
as listed in G Lyon Turner *Original Records* or Bates *Decl. of Indulgence* [Not necessarily granted]

[4] Religious Persuasion. See p.209 in text re use of 'Anabaptist' as a denominational label.

case of Baptists, the evidence available is insufficient to draw any valid conclusions.

The major sources employed in this investigation, the *Compton Census*, Palmer's "Account of Conventicles", the documents associated with applications for Indulgence Licences, and Bishop Lloyd's visitation report, all occurred within the space of some ten years. Against these, with the exception of the latter where no Dissenters are identified by name, the Lady Day Hearth Tax of 1674 has been most widely used for deriving socio-economic data. Whilst this gives reasonable confidence in the resultant analysis, it also inhibits investigation into the possible change in social or economic status of Northamptonshire Dissenters across the wider period under discussion. However, what can be deduced from the secular Quarter Session records is a degree of constancy in the family names of those presented to the courts. The variety of Christian names under the family names of those presented or prosecuted across the period would appear to indicate the persistent refusal, often extending over two or even three generations, of many Quaker families to conform.

The sparsity of evidence has forced some researchers 'to lump together individuals practising various degrees of Nonconformity to the Established Church and from this to derive causation theories such as the degree of education and the spread of literacy.[45] In the light of the above analysis, this approach cannot be justifiably sustained across the whole demographic or nonconformist spectrum. The views of Margaret Spufford, who rejects both economic and 'pastoral' determinism as wholly satisfactory pre-determinants of religious conviction, whilst acknowledging significant

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[45] Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety, passim* and especially pp. 166-7

connections between trade and the spread of Dissent, would appear to be wholly supported in the case of Northamptonshire. Her conclusion that 'dissenters were to be found everywhere' has, in a geographical sense, certainly been borne out by the investigations carried out above.[46] In terms of socio-economic groupings, however, the picture is not totally clear. There is sufficient evidence to deduce that the Quaker following in Northamptonshire in the 'second period of Quakerism' was very much the prerogative of the lower economic groups, whilst a satisfactory social or economic identification of the followers of 'orthodox' Dissent will remain difficult to resolve.[47]

The following chapter, which examines the work of Northamptonshire's secular and ecclesiastical courts in their efforts to enforce orthodoxy, will throw further light on the extent, if not the personal motives, of those who no longer saw church attendance as a necessary part of 'men's lives and manners'.[48]

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[46] M. Spufford, *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), p.42 & fn. 128.

[47] Braithwaite, *The Second Period*, *passim*.

[48] Bodl. Rawlinson MS d.1163. f. 9.

Chapter 4: Prosecution of Dissent: Patterns and Effectiveness

Introduction

This chapter will examine the nature and extent of the prosecution of Dissent by the ecclesiastical and secular courts in Northamptonshire between 1660 and 1689. The activities of these courts, obtained from sources mentioned below, will be presented and analysed in the form of statistical evidence which, together with evidence from elsewhere, will determine whether the local pattern of prosecution across the period was similar to the regional and national experience. An assessment will be offered of the effectiveness or otherwise of the measures enacted and implemented by the secular courts under the 'Clarendon Code', together with those of the ecclesiastical authorities, to stamp out any remnants of pre-Restoration Puritanism, in their quest to achieve an exclusive, undeviating and uncompromising Church of England. The primary sources available for this study include records of the Peterborough Diocesan Consistory and Archdiaconal courts and those of the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions. Together with these is the body of anecdotal evidence of the sufferings of Northamptonshire Quakers during this period, collected and chronicled both by contemporary witnesses and by the 'martyrologist' Joseph Besse, an Anglican convert to Quakerism in the century following these events. The general pattern of prosecution during this period, together with the interpretative difficulties associated with an analysis of the sources, will also be explored.

Accompanying the requirement for compliance by the clergy with the 1662 Act of Uniformity, earlier Elizabethan and Stuart statutes were reinstated by the 1661 Ecclesiastical Causes Act and reinforced through specific civil

legislation against Dissenters to ensure the religious discipline of the laity. These latter measures, introduced between 1661 and 1665, were specifically directed against those attending conventicles, restricting the residence and preaching activities of ejected ministers, prohibiting the holding of civil office by non-communicants, barring the meeting together of groups of Quakers and penalising those who refused to swear a legally tendered Oath of Allegiance to the sovereign. This raft of legislation introduced by the Restoration 'Cavalier' Parliament, collectively referred to by later (Victorian) historians as the 'Clarendon Code', was intended to stamp out the puritan influences which they held responsible for the Civil War and the Commonwealth which followed, allowing the Anglican Church, bent on revenge for the sequestrations of the 1640s, to re-establish its sole authority in matters spiritual. It will be seen that the vigour or leniency in the application of these penal measures was consistently underpinned by the fear of any alliance between Dissenters and disparate political or supra-national groups which might threaten the newly restored monarchy. It was also used, together with intervening Declarations of Indulgence, as a means of controlling or courting Dissent as the changing political climate across the period made expedient.

Political influence over the workings of the courts in their efforts to enforce conformity is also evident both locally and nationally. In the second half of the seventeenth century there was 'a widespread idea that Quakers were Jesuits in disguise.'[1] Departure from state-prescribed religion was viewed by those in authority as suspicious or seditious and indicative of political radicalism. Those of Quaker persuasion, whose 'first allegiance was given to an inward Sovereign whom the world did not know', were, like the early

[1] W. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism* (Cambridge , reprint 1955), p. 446.

Christians, regarded as 'very real enemies to much in the existing order of things'.[2] Their belief in creating a spiritual kingdom of their own within the secular state, and of openly denying all forms of custom and authority outside those of God, was frequently exhibited in the evidence given by Quakers to the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions. Such notions reinforced the public perception of these Sectaries as a political threat to the stability of the English nation similar to that with which Popery had traditionally been associated ever since the Elizabethan Settlement. This link between Popery, theocracy and radical Dissent, as perceived in the minds of the political and ecclesiastical establishment, is well illustrated in the lines of a contemporary poem: 'Rome and Geneva both strive to pull down/The envied mitre and imperial crown'.[3] The same attitude of mind is also evidenced in the inclusion, in many of Northamptonshire's ecclesiastical and secular records, of known Quakers amongst those listed as 'Recusants', a term more usually reserved for Roman Catholics. Not only was this notion held by many rigid Conformists, but it was also propagated through the speeches and writings of notable mid-century Nonconformists such as the Presbyterian William Prynne in his vitriolic pamphleteering against Quakers, and by Richard Baxter, whose 'charity towards those from whom he differed in non-essentials' was equally matched by 'the controversial vigour with which he assailed extreme opponents'.[4] This

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[2] W. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (Cambridge, reprint 1979), p.16.

[3] Quoted in T. Harris, Paul Seaward and Mark Goldie (eds), *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (London, 1990), p. 15.

[4] According to Braithwaite, Prynne's widely circulated 1654 pamphlet entitled *The Quakers Unmasked and clearly detected to be but Spawn of Romish Frogs Jesuits and Franciscan Fryers sent from Rome to seduce the intoxicant giddy-headed English Nation* did much to spread this libel throughout England. See Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 172 and also p. 193. Also A. Davies, *The Quakers in English Society 1655-1725* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 18 and 19 quoting Baxter's view of Quakers 'like those who have pretended to prophecy as crack-brained persons near to madness'.

obsessive fear throughout the period, linking radical sects with violent revolution through such public writings, is also seen in private correspondence. Cecilia Tufton, writing from London in 1666 to her fiancé Christopher (later Viscount) Hatton, a leading landowner and county JP of Kirby Hall Northamptonshire, expressed her anxiety at

> ...such strange friscados in Moor Fields of Quakers beating down constables whereupon they weare imprisoned and they threaten if they have them not out this night to fier the town. When you are with me I feare no danger yet I am not so simple as to believe it but a London taile. [5]

Communications such as this, between the Capital and the provinces, serve to illustrate that the county community was not a self-contained society, and that news from London in any form must have played a considerable part in keeping the county abreast of wider affairs, as well as spreading and fuelling the fears and prejudices of the wider Nation.

The 'received' prejudice of local magistracy against Quakers was commonplace even before the Restoration. When sentenced to prison in 1655 for exhorting the people of Daventry to repentance, Thomas Stubbs asked the justice, 'By what law do you proceed?' The justice replied, 'By that law that says, all Quakers must go to prison.'[6] From first-hand accounts of those Quakers brought to the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions during the 1660s, any chance of a fair trial would appear to have been doomed to failure under

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[5] NRO. Finch Hatton MSS (The Earl of Winchelsea and Nottinghamshire Collection). FH1415.

[6] J. Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers ... (Northamptonshire) Vol I* (1735) p.529. Referring ironically to this remark as 'a specimen of magisterial sapience', William Braithwaite named the Daventry Justice to whom it is attributed, as John Farmer. See *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 445, and also fn. 1 on p. 446. Similar instances of Quakers urging the populace to repentance through public displays of nakedness or other 'antics' are noted by Pepys , see Davies, *Quakers in Society*, p. 26.

such notorious Quaker haters as Judge Rainsford and Justice Yelverton.[7] 'Knowing that they had a Jury upon whom they could set their own stamp as easily as upon a lump of clay' and jurors who feared that if they delivered a true verdict of not guilty 'the Judge would have laid them by the heels' allowed such men the opportunity to vent their hatred of such radical sects and to pass extreme sentences upon members of them, in the form of excessive gaol terms and transportation, with utter disregard for the due process of the law, which might hinder their perceived mission as 'agent[s] of wrath against the wrongdoer'.[8] Sir Justinian Isham, a fervent Royalist and wealthy landowner, Knight of the Shire and frequent Justice on the bench at the Northamptonshire Quarter sessions, in a 1660 letter to his friend Bishop Duppa of Salisbury was quite clear about his views on Quakers and the way to treat them.

> As I lately told some of that rabble if they come cover'd before mee as a Justice of the Peace ...[I] shall bind them to their good behaviours, let their religion or fancie be what it will. Last week at our Quarter Sessions some of them ...not only refus'd to put off their hatts before the bench but upon question began their canting and making strange faces. I freely told them they were much mistaken for they were now under a lawfull and no mountebank government .[9]

The ecclesiastical hierarchy was equally outspoken in its feeling that the laws against Quakers were still too favourable to them, despite the passing of even stronger measures against Dissenters with the Second Conventicle Act of 1670, and was not reluctant to use its political 'clout' to press for even stronger

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[7] Justice Yelverton boasted that he had signed the committals of eighty Quakers in a single year. See *VCH Northamptonshire* Vol 2, p. 69.

[8] *Another Outcry of the Innocent & Oppressed* (London, 1665), pp 3-4: J. Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (London , 2000), p. 14.

[9] Sir Gyles Isham Bart. (ed), *The Correspondence of Bishop Brian Duppa and Sir Justinian Isham 1650-1660* (Northampton, 1954), *Reply to Letter CXXII*, p. 186.

legislation through Parliament. According to a letter written by some 'Friends' in Wellingborough 'on the 13th of the fourth Month 1670',

> The Bishop of Peterborough visited at Rowell [Rothwell] last Week, and there said openly in the Mass-house, after he had given every Officer a Charge to put the late Act in Execution; *that when they met again,* (meaning the Parliament) *they would make a stronger for them, they would get a Law made to take away their Lands and Goods, and then they should be sold for Bond-slaves.*[10]

Even accepting the likely bias of the authors of this letter and the probable hyperbole of the Bishop's words, this inflammatory statement from such a personage still serves to illustrate the serious gulf at this time between Conformists and radical Dissenters.

Not only judicial irregularities in connection with the prosecution of Dissenters would appear to be widespread, but financial corruption amongst the law enforcers themselves, from the highest level down to the 'Constables, Headboroughs, Tythingmen Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor', both locally and nationwide, is hinted at in a Treasury Mandate addressed to Sir Christopher Hatton and 'His Majesties Justices of the Peace of the County of Northampton' in 1684. Requiring a more exact execution of the act preventing and suppressing seditious conventicles, and to ensure the proper payment of the 'King's Third' of the fines received, the authors of this document remind the Justices that:

> considerable sums of money ... have not been brought into His Majesties Receipt of the Exchequer' [through the frequent convictions and fines] ...either by reason that the constables and other officers who have been authorized to levy the said moneys have not delivered the same to the Justices or Chief Magistrates or because the Justices have not paid his Majesties part of the moneys coming into the Court of Quarter Sessions. [11]

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[10] Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 537.

[11] NRO. Finch Hatton MS FH2853.

Problems in Interpretation

The difficulties associated with the use of ecclesiastical and secular court records to assess the extent of both Dissent and Conformity within any area have been acknowledged by many researchers in this field. Before any 'cause' would be heard in either court, an ascending series of reporting and actioning procedures would need to have been followed. Presentments for religious non-observance or any other infringement of the laws against Dissent could, in many cases, only have been initiated from the lowest administrative levels of society, namely the parish constable or the churchwarden. The enthusiasm, or lack of it, in the carrying out of their duty by these minor parochial officials would have been the major factor in deciding whether there was even a 'cause' to be answered. The method of appointment of churchwardens, as with parish constables, varied in different communities, one often being appointed through election by the parish, a second nominated by the incumbent. By whatever means, this inevitably resulted in the appointment of men of varying opinions, inclinations, social and religious *mores*, all of which would have a bearing on their actions. A recent study of the office of churchwarden in the diocese of Ely in the years following the Restoration has highlighted the many difficulties and issues surrounding the performance of this role.[12] Whilst its author admits the widely held perception that many would perjure themselves through concealment of offences 'rather than incommode themselves or their neighbours', and cites the rector of Saddington accusing his wardens of 'dancing to the pipes of some grandees in the parish and according to their dictates presenting a perjured *omnia bene* at the Visitation', he argues that this

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[12] Eric Carlson, 'The origins, functions and status of the office of churchwarden, with particular reference to the diocese of Ely' in M. Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520–1725* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 178.

view was not entirely justified. By matching up presentments for non-attendance at church with the known numbers of Nonconformists from the *Compton Census* in particular Cambridgeshire parishes, Carlson believes that the churchwardens were conscientious in carrying out their duties and that their own socio-economic status had little effect on the decisions they made.[13]

David Wykes, in an examination of the patterns of prosecution of Dissenters in Leicester, sees the irregularity and inconsistency of ecclesiastical presentments by churchwardens as partly explained by the very nature of their appointment, 'an onerous and often unpopular parish office to which even dissenters were eligible'.[14] Extracts from Visitation reports for the Peterborough Diocese, such as Bishop Lloyd's 1683 assertion that he had been deceived by his Churchwardens, and from Quarter Session records such as that concerning the Recognizance issued to Stephen Peasnell, the village constable of Bugbrooke, for refusing to do his duty, offer some support to this latter view that the administration of ecclesiastical and civil affairs at this basic level was not as conscientiously carried out in this county as Carlson would suggest for neighbouring Cambridgeshire. [15]

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[13] It should be noted in this connection that, theoretically at least, churchwardens were protected in their duty by the 1604 canons.

[14] D. L. Wykes, "Religious Dissent and the Trade and Industry of Leicester 1660-1720" unpublished PhD thesis (Leicester University, 1987), p. 42.

[15] Bodl. Rawlinson MS d.1163. "An Account of the Present state of the Bishoprick of Peterborough delivered to my Lord of Canterbury's Grace in 1683." f.8. Re Peasnell see below pp.160-161.

At higher levels of juridical administration the attitudes of local magistrates towards the prosecution of Dissent would also have played a vital part. An endorsement of *ignoramus* by a Grand Jury to a charge laid by vestry or constable could indicate either that there was no evidence, or perhaps no desire, to proceed further. It will also be noted that, in many cases, the denomination of those Dissenters involved would be the deciding factor on whether to proceed against them. In many parishes where evidence of a 'significant' degree of Dissent was recorded in the *Compton Census*, there often appears to be little correlation with resulting prosecutions by church or state. A notable exception, however, is seen in the enthusiasm with which Quakers were persecuted in the early years of the Restoration. The fervent hunting down of Quakers in the western part of the county by the locally notorious clerical triumvirate of Whitfeild, Harris and Hutton, incumbents of Bugbrooke, Kislingbury and Farthingstone respectively, is comprehensively reflected in both the ecclesiastical and secular court records, and recounted in detail by the Quaker sufferers in Northampton gaol.[16] However, such activity was in marked contrast with the ecclesiastical intervention at the highest level by Bishop Laney and Archdeacon Palmer against the prosecution of the former Presbyterian ministers of Kelmarsh and Earls Barton during the same period.[17] Such differing examples, together with the tendency to prosecute Sectarians rather than the more 'orthodox' Dissenters, serves to illustrate the difficulties in interpreting the presence or absence of prosecution as an

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[16] Besse, *Sufferings,* passim. Also see: *Another Outcry of the Innocent &Oppressed* (Northampton, 1665), p. 5, where these named are described as 'they which ride upon the back of the beast to make him the executioner of their bloody interests' .

[17] See below pp. 184 and 192.

indication of the real measure or nature of Nonconformity and Dissent across the county and diocese.

The most difficult area in the interpretation of court records in the investigation of Dissent is that of definition. In the statistical analysis which will be offered, the 'causes' and presentments concerning religious non-observance cover a range of offences including attendance at conventicles, non-attendance at church or not receiving the sacrament of communion, irreverent behaviour, and neglecting to catechise or bring children to baptism. Whilst conventicle attendance could be interpreted as an active sign of Dissent, especially by separatists such as Quakers and Baptists, it has also been shown that many who attended the more 'orthodox' conventicles were also frequent church-goers.[18] It was the exception in bills of presentment to state the particular persuasion of a conventicle, merely describing it as 'an assembly, conventicle or meeting under colour or pretence of exercising religion in other manner than is allowed by the liturgy or practice of the Church of England'. Thus 'gadders', curious to hear alternative sermons, are difficult to distinguish from thorough-going Separatists. Similarly, non-attendance at church, regular or irregular, and failure to bring children for baptism, although clearly an offence, might be explained as much by sheer indifference to religion as by active Dissent through open defiance of the law. Whilst statistical analysis of these sources does shed considerable light on the workings of these courts and their varying role across the period, in the prosecution of what the civil and ecclesiastical establishment defined as Dissent, conclusions from these on the real extent of Nonconformity must be drawn with caution.

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[18] See above p. 71.

The fundamental question prompted by these sources defies an answer: can non-attendance at church or non-reception of the sacrament at Holy Communion really be interpreted as conscious Dissent from established norms of worship, or are they purely a mark of apathy towards religion?

Margaret Spufford, in her defence against the use of a quantitative approach in gauging the level of religious conviction or indifference within a given population, points out that the ecclesiastical sources are, by their very nature, 'biased records, ... some written with deliberate, if convinced, propagandist intent'.[19] Thus the assumption that everyone presented for an offence under the above categories of religious non-observance was, in reality, a Dissenter cannot be comfortably sustained. We cannot know, for instance, the real motives behind the actions of one Widow Hawkins, a pauper of the parish of Harrington Parva, presented to the Consistory court in 1683 'for profaning of the Holy Sacrament in taking and carrying away consecrated bread and giving it or permitting it to be given to her dogg'. [20] Was this really an act of defiance against established religion, or purely the actions of a desperately poor dog lover?

The Patterns of Presentments

The patterns of presentments in the Northamptonshire secular courts and the ecclesiastical courts of the Peterborough Diocese across the period concerning Dissent, religious non-observance and attendance at illegal meetings are presented in graphical form in **figures 10, 11 and 12** below. Data for the

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[19] M. Spufford, 'Can we count the "Godly" and the "Conformable" in the Seventeenth Century ?' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* vol 36 No. 3 (1985), p. 424.

[20] NRO. Peterborough Diocesan Records: Episcopal Visitation Book no 14 (1683).

compilation of these tables have been derived respectively from the extant court books (*Liber Cleri., Liber Act., Liber Offic.* and Visitation Books etc.) of the Peterborough Diocese, the Quarter Session Rolls of the Northamptonshire County Court, and from Joseph Besse's chronicled *Sufferings*.[21]

Ecclesiastical Courts

The totals of causes heard by the ecclesiastical courts across the period relating to religious non-observance can be seen in **Fig. 10** below. Although such causes were often numerically greater than those relating to other matters, in the years from 1662-1675 they never appear to have occupied more than half of the total business with which these courts concerned themselves. Only after this did religious non-observance become the major concern of the ecclesiastical courts of the Peterborough diocese. The majority of these latter causes concerned non-attendance at church and non-reception of the sacrament, particularly at the all-important Eastertide services, where a detailed tally of communicants was kept.

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[21] In the case of the ecclesiastical returns, the necessary workload in gathering this data has been considerably eased by utilising the detailed statistical information on causes heard by the Consistory and Archdiaconal courts compiled by M.D.W. Jones in his comparative study of the roles of the Peterborough and Oxford Consistory Courts in the period before the Civil War and after the Restoration. [See M.D.W Jones, 'The ecclesiastical courts before and after the Civil War: the office of jurisdiction in the dioceses of Oxford and Peterborough 1630- 1675', unpublished B Litt thesis (Oxford University, 1977)] .
There is a considerable gap in retrievable data from these records between 1665-7, these being almost illegible due to their decayed condition. I have compiled data for the period after 1675, not covered by Jones, through examination of the numerous causes heard in 1683, a particularly significant year for presentments following the early visitations by Bishop Lloyd to his new diocese, recorded in the Office, Act and Visitation Books of that year. Unfortunately no other record of causes pertaining to infringements of religious observance heard by the ecclesiastical courts of the Peterborough diocese appears to exist for the remaining period to 1689. [See NRO. Peterborough Diocesan Records: Visitation Book 14 (Apr – July 1683), *Liber Offic.* X638.8 (July 1683 - January 1683/4). The only other extant records for this period, *Liber. Dmi.Epi.* X638.9 (June 1685-Dec 1686) and Instance Book 62 (Feb 1687/8 – Feb 1689), deal exclusively with matrimonial causes, recovery of rates, probate and inter-party disputes.]

Offences such as irreverent behaviour in church - typically refusing to remove a hat, not kneeling at communion, profaning the sacrament - or not bringing children to baptism or catechising them, were less numerous amongst presentments for breaches of conformity, as was the attendance at or 'keeping a conventicle.' Significantly, this latter offence appears to have been of minor concern to the ecclesiastical authorities, whereas it played a major part in the business of the secular courts throughout the period.[22] 'Recusancy', that ill-defined and all-embracing label which was often, but not exclusively, interchangeable with 'Papism', was the basis of a number of causes, and where these can be seen to have referred exclusively to Roman Catholic Dissenters they have been omitted from the above offences grouped as 'other religious non-observances.' In order to maintain comparability between Jones' statistics and those of 1683 (collected by me) and to correlate as closely as possible with those which could be exclusively identified as dissenting practices, the same classifications have been used. In both cases the numerous presentments for failing to pay the church levy or rate have been omitted, since such practices would appear to have been widespread amongst both church-goers and Dissenters.

The pattern of ecclesiastical prosecutions can be seen, in many respects, to be closely associated with the political dynamics prevailing at any time across the period. The first causes relating to religious observances that

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[22] In the Peterborough Consistory Courts from 1662-4, there were two cases of attending a conventicle. In the Archdeaconry Courts 1667 - 1669, there were three cases heard. In 1672-5 there were seven cases cited for keeping or teaching at a conventicle and five for attending. Source: Jones, *Ecclesiastical Courts*,. Tables 5.3, 5.5 and 5.7.

In 1683, the Consistory court held at All Saints Church in Northampton heard only two cases 'for keeping a conventicle'. (Visitation Book 14).

were heard by the Peterborough diocesan courts after their reinstitution following the Restoration were those immediately following the 1662 Act of Uniformity. Over the next two years 771 causes were heard in this respect, 'non-attendance at divine service' being the major preoccupation of the prosecuting 'Cavalier Anglicans', whose desire to enforce uniformity was prevalent at this time. Jones' detailed analysis of these causes also reveals that nearly one-fifth of those cited were married couples, suggesting that the family unit was seen at this time as a significant constituent of parish Dissent. [23]

In the years immediately following the installation of Bishop Joseph Henshaw in 1663, the lack of useful records makes it difficult to gauge the activities of the ecclesiastical courts in ensuring religious conformity. It is during this period, up to 1667, that the measures enacted in the 'Clarendon Code', the subsequent prosecutions under the Quaker Act (1662) and the First Conventicle Act (1664), together with presentments for non-attendance and non-reception of the sacrament, reached a peak in the secular courts of the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions. (See **Figs. 11 & 12** below)

From 1667 to 1671 the ecclesiastical court records, though incomplete, show citations for non-attendance at church rather than for non-reception of the sacrament as the major concern in causes of religious non-observance heard by these courts at this time, though these still formed a relatively minor part of the total business dealt with at Consistory and Archdiaconal sittings. A significant drop in the level of presentments over that of the previous period can also be assumed from Jones' abstracted figures, despite a six-month gap in the data in early 1671.

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[23] Jones, "Ecclesiastical courts", p. 140.

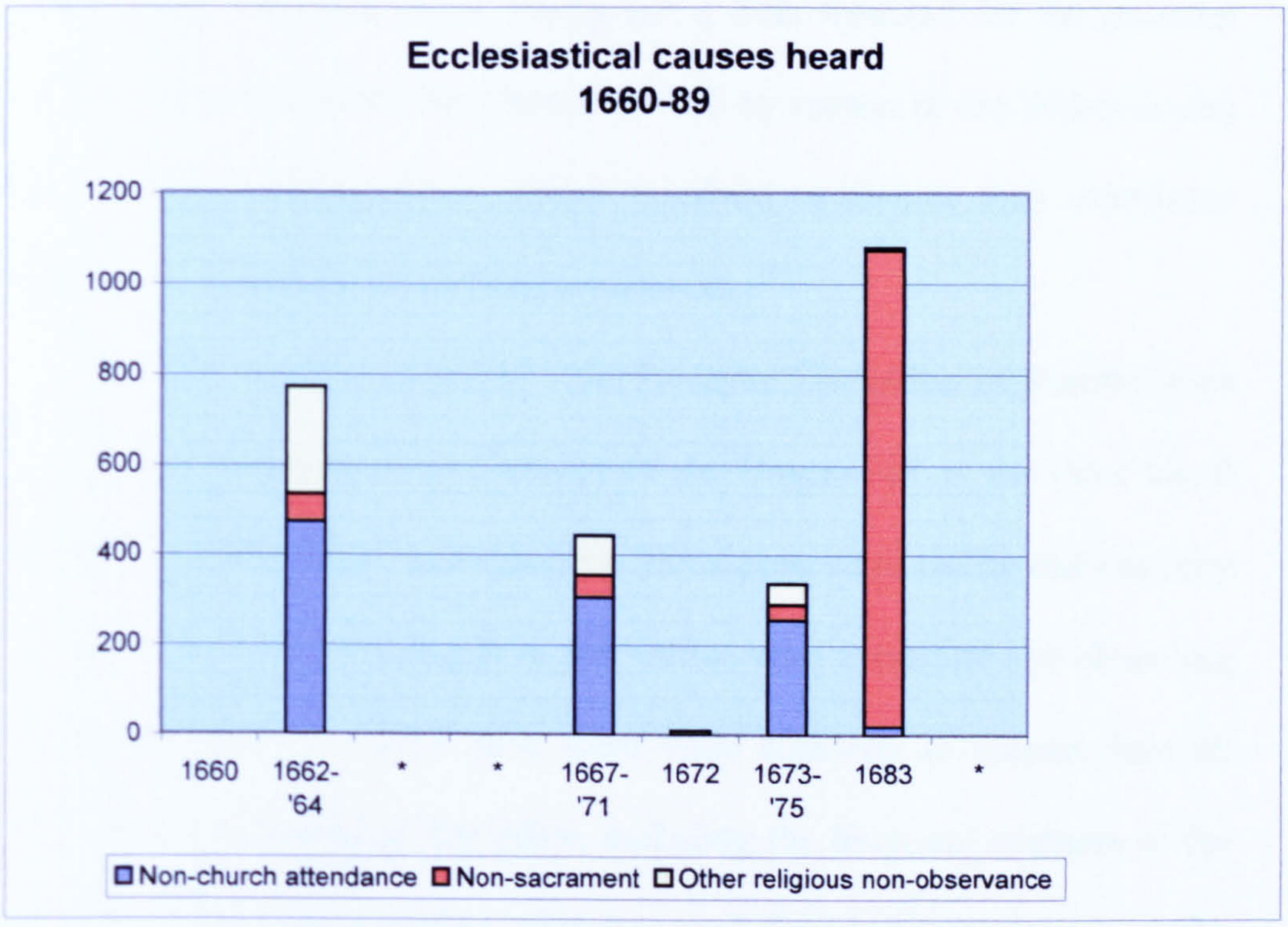

Figure 10

Sources: 1660-1675: Jones, "The Ecclesiastical Courts". 1683: Visitation Book 14

*No useful records available 1664-67 and 1675-1689 [excepting 1683 above]

The Declaration of Indulgence of 1672 saw an almost complete stop to causes being heard concerning breaches of conformity. However, in the immediate aftermath of the withdrawal of the Declaration, forced on the King in the following year, ecclesiastical presentments for religious non-observance began to rise again, continuing over the remaining years of Bishop Henshaw's tenure, but never reaching the totals of the early 1660s. Shortly after William Lloyd's appointment to the See of Peterborough in 1679, when the Cavalier High-Churchmen, encouraged by the failure of moves towards the toleration of Dissent, began to take the 'driving seat' in ecclesiastical polity it appears, from his own accounts, that the new Bishop took a much firmer line on church discipline. Putting much of the blame for laxness amongst his congregations

on the church officers, and determined to bring about a reformation in the churches under his jurisdiction, 'being not a little troubled for the growing mischiefs that might befall the Church of God by reason of the falseness and perjury of the Churchwardens', Lloyd 'resolved to obviate their customary carelessness' through a series of new measures.[24]

His first was the revival of 'the Decayed Discipline of Rurall-Deans ... by making choice in every Deanery of the Diocese of ... the most loyall and confiding Clergymen' and requiring 'these persons of ability and sincerity ... to serve God and His Church in that Office with a vigilant eye observing any Transgression'.[25] Lloyd gave them wide authority to enquire into all aspects of the ecclesiastical discipline, including the lives and manners of the clergy, their liturgical practices, and the need for churchwardens to make proper presentments of those who absented themselves from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. As he explained:

> I visited my Diocese in April and May last past and having observed that the Parishioners in most Parishes of the Diocese were strangely averse to the Liturgy of the Lord's Supper, I sent an order (which required the Church wardens) to use all diligence ... to present to us at our next Visitation all such persons ...as shall not (being above sixteen years of age) according to their duty receive the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Easter next.[26]

That this new approach, aimed at both the clerical and lay parochial authorities in his charge, met with a considerable measure of success can be seen from the number of causes heard in respect of non-reception of the sacrament in the Archdiaconal and Consistory Courts held in 1683. It was

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[24]Bodl. Rawlinson ,MS d.1163. f. 8.

[25] Bodl. Rawlinson,. MS d.1163. ff. 8 and 9.

[26] Bodl. Rawlinson., MS d.1163. f. 17.

now this offence, rather than merely non-attendance at church, which became the prime concern of the ecclesiastical authorities in the diocese of Peterborough. In the first half of that year more than 713 cases (98% of all presentments) related to such matters, and 231 cases (68%) in the latter. Although the records of these courts are not available for the first three years of Bishop Lloyd's translation to Peterborough, it can be deduced from his 1683 report that the drive towards uniformity, especially in respect of attendance and reception of the sacrament, had already reaped considerable rewards:

> This order (which only quickens and incites the Discipline of the Church) brought in a vast number of persons throughout the whole Diocese to heare Divine Service and to receive the Blessed Sacrament of the Lds Supper, insomuch as I dare confidently affirme that the number of Communicants last Easter was (in proportion) throughout the Diocese, ten to one that communicated before. [27]

Lloyd's interest in bringing his 'lost sheep' back to the communion rail, in preference to prosecuting them for neglect, is evident from his approach to

> those persons in most Parishes [who] have desired us further time to fitt and prepare themselves for Receiving of the Lds. Supper and have promised to apply themselves to their respective Pastors and Ministers for Ghostly Advice in order thereunto ... so that those 2200 who have not communicated at Easter and Whitsuntide last past may have an opportunity to do it and thereby avoid such Censures and Penalties as the Law of this Realme inflicts upon obstinate offenders, or be left without any just reason to palliate their neglect after a first second and third admonition. [28]

Even after this 'softly-softly' approach, Lloyd deferred denouncing excommunicate 'the scarce 100 of those 2200 who were presented last Easter ... and not yet certified as having communicated ... most of them [being]

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[27] Bodl. Rawlinson, MS d.1163. f. 17.

[28] Bodl. Rawlinson., MS d.1163. ff. 18 and 19.

poor Anabaptists and Quakers' in the light of letters received from several of the clergy 'desiring a forbearance and respite,' and expressing their 'great hopes to prevail them in the meantime ... that they may returne into the Communion of [the] Church.'[29]

Disrespect towards the Christian liturgy was also a matter of concern to Bishop Lloyd and his court. Thomas (John) Ashenden, the rector of Dingley, whose 'scandalous Pamphlett ...which instituted the Presbyterian Pater Noster Creed and ten commandments made in prophenation, Derision, Derogation and abuse of the Lord's Prayer ... to the great scandal of Religion and the Church function and to the evill example of others', was ordered by the Consistory Court to confess and make a public recantation:

> the said John Ashenden...shall personally appear and be in the Cathedral Church of Peterborough immediately after the end of the first Service. Shall by two of the clergy there present, be conducted to the steps of the Upper End of the Quire, where standing he shall plainly, distinctly and with an audible voice read the Recantation, Confession and Acnowledgement [of his grevious offence.][30]

Ashenden, an ultra-conservative Anglican, had made a vicious attack on the pernicious influence of all forms of Dissent on church and state, Presbyterianism being his particular target.[31] Although it would appear that it was the literary style through which this diatribe was conducted that was the cause of much offence to the court, it is probable that Ashenden's implied hard-line against all Dissenters was not shared by a bishop whose more gentle pastoral approach to Nonconformists is evident from the sources already cited

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[29] Bodl. Rawlinson. MS d.1163. f. 20.

[30] Bodl. Rawlinson. MS d.1163. f. 22.

[31] *The Presbyterian Pater Noster, Creed, and Ten Commandments* (Westminster, 1681). Also see above p. 94.

above. In a footnote to Lloyd's account of this incident, Lloyd states that 'this [recantation] was carried out by John Ashenden who bewail[ed] with unfeigned sorrow both the notorious offences and "all my other sins" '.

Outside the sphere of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, opinions varied as to the wisdom of instituting prosecution against the author of this 'Creed'. In a letter written to a publisher who had 'found a place for this scurrilous, if not prophane paper on [their] counter'. The writer complained of:

> This rash author, whose Supereminent Zeal for Loyalty was perhaps the only Occasion of his Indiscretion in venturing upon such Irreligious Allusions ... not thinking their Familiarity and Sawciness with God Almighty hath been more directly and notoriously Prophane ...[32]

A more sober reflection on this 'Prophane and Irreligious Pamphlet ... which hath scandaliz'd not only the Protestant Nonconformists, but even many of the Church of England' was offered in the same year by a writer styling himself 'DM'. Writing to 'a Noble Lord', he reminds him of the use, in an earlier age, of ridicule of the Lord's Prayer to 'possess all Christians with the due abhorrence of the Pope's fopperie and usurpations':

> How then can this Imitation be counted now prophane when former ages knew no such thing? Or can it be tolerable when level'd against the Pope, but criminal when used against the Presbyterians ... I think it not so great a Crime as some people would fain perswade us ...we are too much alarmed by Presbyterians proceedings than of the Papists themselves. [33]

Whatever the perceived justification of the sentence passed on this Northamptonshire rector, whose anti-Presbyterian stance had incurred such

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[32] *Some Reflections upon a late Pamphlet in a Letter to J.H,* (London , 1681).

[33] 'D.M.', *A Letter to a Noble Lord concerning a late Prophane Pamphlet entitled The Presbyterians Pater Noster, Creed and Ten Commandments* (London, 1681). The work of an 'earlier age' referred to in this letter, was that of Dr John Boys (1571-1625) , sometime Dean of Canterbury.

displeasure amongst his superiors, the differing reactions to Ashenden's pamphlet of both clerical and lay members of the Established Church reveal some fundamental differences in their views on Nonconformity and its cure. Rev. Isham-Longden, in his record of Northamptonshire clergy, notes that Thomas *(sic)* Ashenden resigned his Dingley living some three years later, becoming Prebend of Armagh Cathedral in 1686 until his death in 1723.[34]

It is also evident from the visitation records that Bishop Lloyd's unhappiness with the conduct of many of his churchwardens, stated in his 1683 account to his Archbishop, was no empty observation. On his second visit to the parish of Lewesweedon in the west of the county it is recorded that action would be taken against any churchwarden absent from his Visitation 'without good reason'. In the Episcopal court records of the same year, some thirty churchwardens from nineteen parishes across seven of the eight western deaneries were presented in this respect.[35] The mention in Lloyd's 1683 report of 'those 2200 that were presented last Easter' for non-sacramental observance is a useful indication of the high level of court activities in this respect, missing from records for the previous year. Since there is no clear indication as to the proportion of these offences dealt with by the Consistory courts as opposed to those presented to the Quarter Sessions, extrapolation for the purposes of **Fig. 10** has not been included. What may be deduced from this, however, is that the increased level of presentments, rising from 1681/2 to the highest total of presentments in the ecclesiastical courts of the diocese

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[34] H. Isham-Longden, *Northamptonshire & Rutland Clergy from 1500* (Northampton, 1938) vol. I, p. 93.

[35] NRO. Episcopal Visitation Book 14 (1683).

since their reinstatement at the Restoration, was closely associated with Archbishop Sancroft's elevation to the See of Canterbury in 1678.

Following the demise of Shaftesbury, the Whig involvement in the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis and the consequent rise of Tory supremacy in political and Anglican Church affairs allowed this new High-Anglican prelate to pursue harder measures against Nonconformity and Dissent. That Bishop Lloyd shared similar beliefs, that the vicissitudes of national politics were a dangerous driving influence in the promotion of Dissenting activities within his own diocese, can be deduced from his comment on the 'great and numerous meetings [which] by the Midwifery of the late Popish Plott [had] daily increased and thereby become insolent and regardless of all laws civill and ecclesiastical'.[36] On the matter of illegal conventicles, Lloyd showed similar determination to eliminate the '29 Capital Conventicles' which he had discovered through enquiry in his diocese during his first eight months in office, which [had] to the best of [his] knowledge and information' been totally suppressed by 1683.[37] Later events, following the accession of William III, in which both Sancroft and Lloyd were deprived of their office in the 1690s as non-jurors, would also indicate their shared politico-religious beliefs.

Examination of the pattern of prosecutions also reveals considerable variations in the vigour with which Nonconformity was pursued by the ecclesiastical authorities across the various parishes in the diocese. To illustrate this, the totals of citations in the Archdiaconal and Consistory courts

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[36] Bodl. Rawlinson, MS d.1163. f. 12 .

[37] Bodl. Rawlinson, MS d.1163. f. 13. (See also fig 2b., in Ch. 1 above).

for breaches of Conformity within the parishes of the western deaneries of the Peterborough Diocese, from 1672 to 1675, are shown in Table **18** (columns A, B & C below). A further comparison of these totals with the returns of Protestant Nonconformists enumerated in the *Compton Census* a year later reveals considerable inconsistencies in the efforts of the episcopal courts to stamp out Dissent. The comparison of triennial court totals with a later-dated census might have its detractors, but bearing in mind that the request for the returns for this latter census would have been sent to the parishes by the apparitors some considerable time prior to the Archdeacon's Easter visitation in 1676, to allow time for collection and collation, and that Dissent was hardly an instant phenomenon, it is felt that the latter figures have sufficient validity to illustrate the serious mismatch between official returns of Dissent and evidence of prosecution across the western part of the Diocese during the 1670s.

	1672-75 *		1676 ⌀		
A Deanery + (Western Division)	**B** No. of parishes from which Noncon-formists cited	**C** Total Nonconfor-mists cited	**D** No. of parishes in which Nonconf-ormists listed	**E** Total Nonconfor-mists listed	**F** Col. C/ Col.E Percentage cited of total Nonconformists listed in the *Compton Census*
Brackley	10	34	21	232	14.6 %
Daventry	6	46	14	110	41.8 %
Haddon	14	46	27	181	25.4 %
Higham	15	93	18	493	18.8 %
North'ton	3	7	4	56	12.5 %
Preston	11	31	22	230	13.4 %
Rothwell	13	75	32	175	42.8%
(Totals)	(72)	(332)			

+ There is insufficient data for the Eastern Deaneries (Peterborough, Weldon & Oundle).
*Source: M.D.W. Jones, "Ecclesiastical Courts". ⌀Source: *Compton Census*

Table 18.
Analysis of Consistory Court Citations by Deanery & Parish, 1672-75

From the above it would seem that urban Nonconformity (as evidenced in Northampton Deanery), even when reported, appeared to be of little concern to the Episcopal authorities at this time. Perhaps the status and influence of Dissenters in these parishes, where a higher proportion of the 'middling sort' in the make-up of Dissent has already been noted, might explain this anomaly.[38] The high levels of presentments for infringement of religious observances in the predominantly rural deaneries of Daventry and Rothwell, where the total number of Nonconformists listed was considerably less than those of Preston, Brackley and Higham, contrast markedly with the parishes of these latter similar rural Deaneries whose market towns were of similar size and standing.[39] In the following decade the acceleration and geographic distribution of prosecutions under Bishop Lloyd show a very different pattern:

Deanery	1683 Parishes cited*	1683 Total Nonconformists cited*
Brackley	14	92
Daventry	9	90
Haddon	18	163
Higham	14	176
Northampton	6	107
Preston	12	213
Rothwell	29	237
Totals	(102)	(1078)

* Source: NRO. Episcopal Visitation Book 14 and *Liber Offic.*X638.8

Table 19.
Analysis of Consistory Court Citations by Deanery & Parish, 1683

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[38] See above p.103

[39] See Chapter 1.

Not only had the number of Nonconformists cited in the Episcopal court in 1683 for religious non-observance increased substantially, there was now a significant increase in the number of parishes from which these presentments came. Those deaneries that had seemed reluctant to send parishioners to the Consistory courts a decade earlier were now presenting a considerably greater number, especially for non-reception of the sacrament at Eastertide. The parishes of Northampton Deanery are particularly noted in this respect, with a fifteenfold increase in reported offences against Conformity, the bulk of which being cited from All Saints Church, renowned as the 'cradle of Puritan thought' in the previous century and for its persistence of 'daring irregularities' under Simon Ford in the 1660s.[40] Whether this changing pattern of presentments was the direct result of Bishop Lloyd's initiative to reinstate the office of Rural Dean with his 'most loyall and confiding Clergymen ... with a vigilant eye observing any Transgression' is open to question, but the evidence would appear to suggest this as an important contributory factor.[41]

In order to place the pattern of ecclesiastical prosecution in Northamptonshire and the Diocese of Peterborough into a comparative context, evidence from other dioceses needs to be examined. There appears to be considerable correlation between the general pattern of presentments to the Peterborough ecclesiastical courts with those of the neighbouring dioceses of Oxford and also with Lincoln in the Leicester Archdeaconry, the peaks and troughs of activity in all these courts being coincident with the same national

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[40] See above p. 16.

[41] See above p. 136.

events across the period.[42] The rise in presentments to the courts of the Peterborough Diocese at the time of the withdrawal of the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence is similarly reflected in these other dioceses. The priority given to presentments for non-reception of the sacrament rather than for non-attendance at church is also evident in all these dioceses, during the early 1680s, when the Exclusionist Cause was particularly identified with Dissenting interests, and the need of the ecclesiastical authorities to ensure rigid conformity through reception of Holy Communion became of paramount importance. In this respect, only two presentments for keeping a conventicle appear in Lloyd's 1683 visitation records. In the account of his visitation the Bishop of Peterborough observed that

> The care and vigilancy of [the] loyall and worthy Justices of the Peace, together with the proceedings of the Consistory, hath totally suppressed and routed those great and numerous Conventicles, insomuch that I doe not know of any publick notorious Conventicle in the whole Diocese, [43]

suggesting that the onus for prosecuting offenders under the Conventicle Act had, by this time, passed in great measure to the secular courts.

The Secular Courts

The extant records of the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions held between 1660 and 1686 vary in both completeness and legibility. In any Quarter Session Roll there appear many different classes of papers. Amongst these are recognizances, presentments, indictments, jury lists, and the Acts and Orders of the court. A large majority of cases dealt with by the court appear to be

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[42] For data on Leicester Archdiaconal court see Wykes, *Religious Dissent*, p. 41. For Oxford Diocese see Jones, "The Ecclesiastical Courts", passim.

[43] Bodl. Rawlinson, MS d.1163. f.14. Also see above p. 133 [fn.22].

concerned with bastardy, theft, assault, trespass, non-payment of wages, removal orders and the many infringements of the laws concerning parochial duties and maintenance of civic property (such as roads, bridges, streams), all of which are of considerable interest to the social historian of the period.

From these documents it is also possible to discern the general, if incomplete, pattern of presentments to the secular authorities of those who 'absented themselves from divine service at their parish church, contrary to statute'. The extent to which absence from worship can be interpreted as active Dissent rather than apathy to religious practice of any kind has already been discussed.[44] Notwithstanding this, the general pattern of religious non-observance offered by an analysis of the village constables' presentments included in the Quarter Session Rolls cannot be ignored within the proper investigation of Protestant Nonconformity over the period.

As discussed earlier, the lowest administrative level of late seventeenth-century society was that occupied by the churchwardens and the village constables, the conscientiousness with which these officials carried out their role being a matter of controversy amongst researchers in the field of religious Dissent.[45] The presentments made by village constables to the local justices and sworn at their local Court Leet, as well as those by churchwardens to their ecclesiastical superiors, could be ignored or promoted

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[44] See above p. 130.

[45] See above pp. 127-8.

by the interests of those occupying the succeeding rungs of the administrative ladder. It would therefore appear that the documents emanating from this lowest stratum - the constables' bills of presentment - might give us a truer picture of religious non-observance than those that which emanated from higher authority. There is, however, need for caution in any expectation that the extant bills will tell the whole story. As Bertram Osborne points out, in his work which traces the role of the Justices of the Peace from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the village constable was 'the main channel for information for the Justices on the goings-on within the parishes' and in this respect every constable was under liability to deliver to the Quarter Sessions a report on the state of law and order within his 'constablewick'. [46] However, according to Osborne, 'quite a lot of these presentments failed to arrive, and there was little to choose between the constables who failed to make a presentment and the large numbers of others whose reports consisted of no more than the laconic "all is well". In his view, 'the capacity to let sleeping dogs lie was a highly developed quality of most constables.'[47] Perhaps this is too sweeping a generalisation, especially when one considers the thoroughness (and perhaps courage)of the constable of Rushton who regularly reported 'the Dowager Lady Cullen and Lady Elizabeth Cullen for absence from Divine Service' in his bills of presentment to the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions at which O'Brian, Lord Viscount Cullen, frequently sat as one of the Justices, endorsing these Bills '*juratus coram me*'.[48] Despite this

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[46] B. Osborne, *The Justices of the Peace 1361-1848 - a History of the Justices of the Peace for the Counties of England* (Shaftesbury, 1960), p. 20.

[47] Osborne, *Justices of the Peace,*. p. 21.

[48] NRO. QSR 1/73 (Easter, 1674),; QSR 1/110 (Trinity, 1683); QSR 1/111 (Michaelmas, 1683); and QSR 1/112 (Epiphany, 1684).

particular example of devotion to duty, there must be some truth in Osborne's assertion which would go some way in explaining the paucity of constables' bills of presentment in many of the Quarter Session rolls. The dilemma in which some constables found themselves *vis-a-vis* their neighbours is well illustrated by a number of recorded instances. In 1664 the village constables of Heyford, in their list of presentments of thirteen continual and obstinate absentees from Divine Worship, appended a poignant note that 'all of these wee present and they laufe at us for our pains'.[49] The Wellingborough constables were themselves presented to the Quarter Sessions in 1682 for refusing to present Dissenters from the church, saying 'that they would not do it for their neighbours, and that it would not cost them above six shillings and eight pence if they did it not'[50] Similarly, Robert Emerton, a constable of Woollaston, was presented by his fellow constables 'for not doing of his office' in his failure to present six Dissenters from the parish church.[51]

E.G. Dowdell, another researcher into the workings of county administration, points out, in the case of Middlesex, that the study of Quarter Session records 'cannot enable us to form a quantitative estimate of the amount of action taken', since much could be done by local Justices through summary jurisdiction 'out of sessions.'[52] Such an assertion, if equally applicable to Northamptonshire, might not only explain the lack of

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[49] NRO. QSR 1/32/91(Epiphany, 1664).

[50] NRO. QSR 1/107 (Michaelmas, 1682).

[51] NRO. QSR 1/33/70 (Easter, 1664).

[52] E.G. Dowdell, *A Hundred Years of Quarter Sessions - The Government of Middlesex 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 1932), p. 29. See also: R.B. Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment – petty crime and law in London and rural Middlesex, c. 1660-1725* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 35: 'Because of their procedural simplicity ... summary convictions were increasingly used as an alternative to the more formal traditional legal procedures during this period'.

documented action taken as a result of many of the constables' presentments included in the rolls but also serve to strengthen the case for using these bills, originating at the lowest levels of judicial administration, as the basis for this investigation.

The Pattern of Prosecution in Secular Courts

The village constables' bills of presentment, whose pattern over the period is shown below, vary from carefully itemised statements of every statutory requirement of village life, written in elaborate hand, to others, almost illegible, scrawled on a scrap of paper declaring with admirable, if questionable, brevity, "omny beny" (*omnia bene*). Absentees from Divine Worship, listed by name, are sometimes additionally described in the bills as 'Dissenters from the Church', 'Recusants', 'Popish Recusants', 'Quakering or Quaking Recusants', 'Reputed Quakers or Anabaptists', and 'known Quakers', this variety of terminology serving only to compound an already confusing situation, especially when such diverse terms are used for the same named person across the period.

Figure 11 (below) shows the general pattern of presentments by village constables to the Quarter Sessions, of those absenting themselves from 'Divine Worship' over the period 1660 – 1686. It must be stressed that the totals shown for any given year cannot be seen as an indication of the total number of *different* absentees, since it is the continuing presentment in every parish of many of the same persons for the same offence, Quarter Session after Quarter Session over the entire period, evident in the constables' bills, which is quite remarkable.

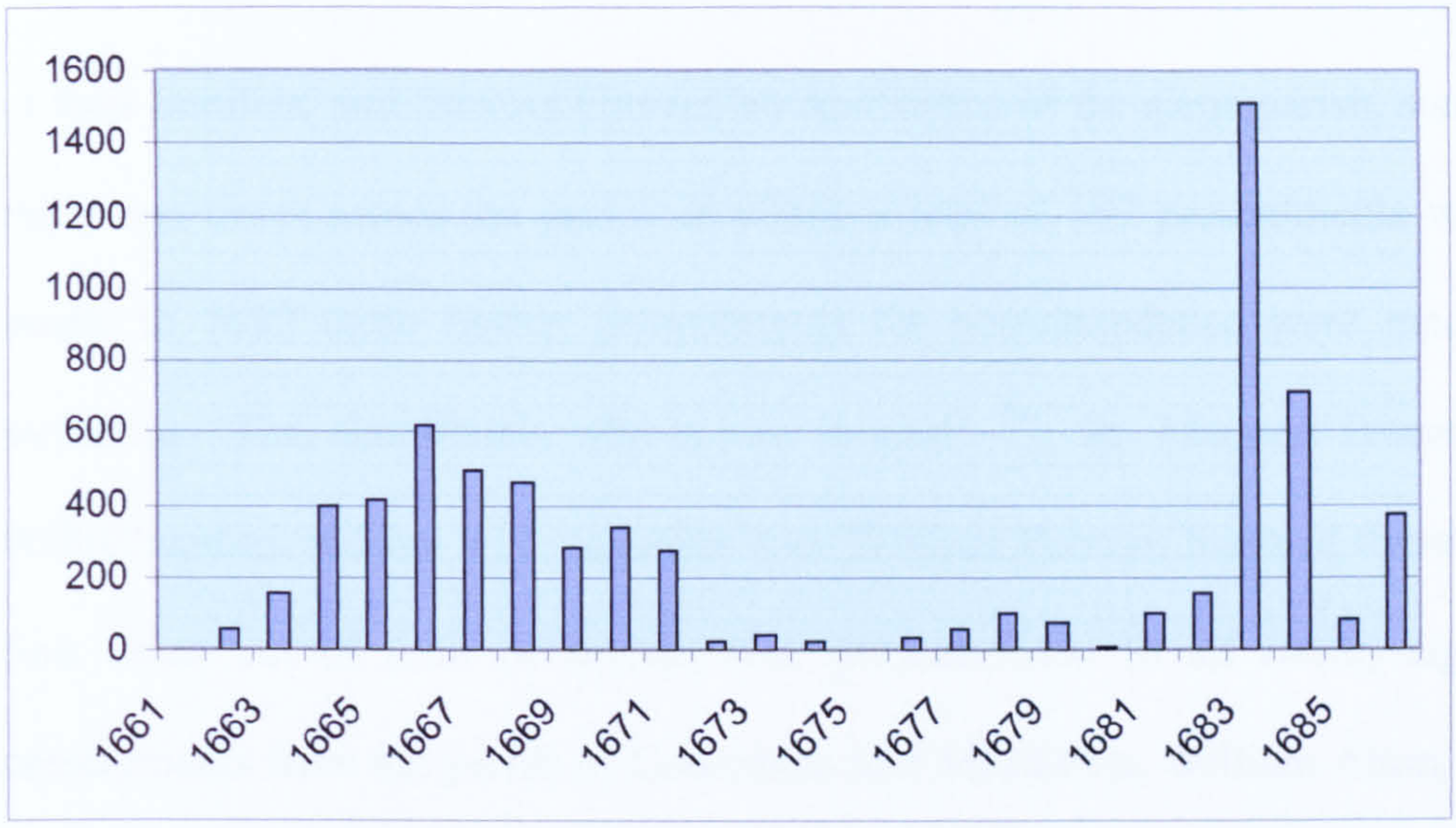

Figure 11
Presentments to the Quarter Sessions for non- attendance at church
Source: NRO. *Village Constables' Bills of Presentment in Quarter Session rolls QSR 1/33 – 1/121 (1665 incomplete)*

Thus the same offenders were often cited up to four times in the same year, their period of absence from worship being noted as 'for the last two weeks', 'for the last month', even 'since the last sessions', or, most exceptionally, describing a group of obstinate separatists from Kilsby as those 'who hath not been at church this 3 or 4 years'.[53] When taken together with the lack of any documented action in many of the associated Quarter Session rolls (similarly noted by Dowdell in the case of Surrey) such a phenomenon can only beg the question as to the effectiveness of any punishment or fine imposed, or whether the local Justice saw fit to do anything at all. A detailed analysis across the period of the village constables' presentments in parishes where these exist in sufficient quantity for valid conclusions to be drawn illustrates this persistence of obstinate Dissent. In Eydon, a small parish in the west of the county, the records show that the Quakers Richard and Thomas Smallbone were presented thirty-six times, often together with other members

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[53] NRO. QSR 1/44/134 (Epiphany, 1667).

of their families, and Edward Greene, an Anabaptist of the same parish, some thirty-one times across the period in which a total of 197 presentments was made. In 1682 three further presentments for non-attendance were made, including 'Tho. Smallbone, who is now in gaol'. [54] In Marston Trussell, Will Chapman and his wife, together with William Ponton, featured twenty-four times out of total of seventy-four presentments. In all twenty-eight presentments from the parish of Cottenham and Middleton, William Atton, 'a Quakering recusant', was listed. Similar evidence of repeated refusal to conform can be seen in many other parishes, Sulgrave, Oundle, Harringworth, Corby and Deene being notable examples. (However, it should be noted that this latter group embraced a number of Catholic families – see below).

The general pattern of secular presentments for Nonconformity can usefully be compared and contrasted with those in the ecclesiastical courts, as shown in **Fig. 10** above. The swearing of the constables' bills of presentment at their local Court Leet and their presentation to the Quarter Sessions from 1661 to 1672 reached a peak in 1667, the secular records providing useful data where those of the ecclesiastical court are lacking. From 1672, the year of the Declaration of Indulgence and its subsequent withdrawal the following year, there appears to have been a general decline in the presentment of Dissenters. Where sufficient data are available to make any valid interpretation there is evidence that the majority of citations by constables through to the end of this decade were in those parishes of the county where Roman Catholicism and its associated recusancy was still an active and persistent force. A small but steady number of presentments for non-

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[54] NRO. QSR 1/107 (Michaelmas, 1682).

attendance continued in parishes such as Ashby St Ledgers and Aston Le Walls in the west of the county, and in Oundle, Harringworth, Lowick and Deene, bordering Rockingham Forest in the north-east. These parishes, where the major landowning families such as Catesby, Tresham, Vaux, Mordaunt and Brudenell all held extensive estates, also shared long-established and historical Catholic connections.

By the early 1680s, however, the pre-occupation with Popish recusancy appears to have been matched by increasing determination and action by the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions against *all* Dissenters by encouraging Justices and constables to enforce with renewed vigour the somewhat neglected Elizabethan statutes for weekly attendance at church. In 1682, the Grand Jury of the County was stressing that it be absolutely necessary that

> all Lawes be put into Execution against all Dissenters from the Church of England as is now by law established of what Persuasion soever, it being impossible to distinguish the Popish from others, and all being dangerous and obstructive to the established Government .[55]

The following year a similar order to the General Sessions of the Northamptonshire Court stressed 'the great remissness and negligence of the Bayliffs in executing the warrants directed to them upon the process issuing out of this court', reminding all Sheriffs, Bailiffs and other persons to whom such warrants be directed that 'all and every further warrant be executed' under the threat of 'indictment or other punishment as the law shall direct.'[56]

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[55] NRO.'The Presentments of the Grand Jury of the County of Northampton (1682)' in QSR 1/108 (Epiphany, 1683).

[56] NRO. QSR 1/110 Order No. 7 (Trinity, 1683).

And again in the following year:

> Whereas it appears to this court that there have been severall presentments made from time to time at the Quarter Sessions of the Peace held for this County upon penal statute against Dissenters from the Church of England and that for the want of service and execution of the process of law issued from this court thereupon (through neglect of the Bayliffs) the said offenders cannot be brought to appeare and answer the same, for the great encouragement of Offenders and obstructing of Justice; for the preventing whereof for the future and to the intent the said persons soe offending may be brought to answer for their said offences as the law requires. It is thought fitt and expedient...that the Clerke of the Peace of this County shall...make out certificates ... of all such persons as now due or hereafter shall be indicted for not repairing to their Parish Church to heare Divine Service and Sermons according to the lawes and statutes of this Realm. And shall send the same to the said Justices of the Peace as live near to the habitations ... of such Dissenters...And it is desired and ordered by this Court that upon receipt...the said Justices shall issue out their warrants to the Constables and other Officers of the respective parishes where such Dissenters doe or shall live or be found...for the apprehending of the said Dissenters and bringing them before the said Justices to the end they may enter into Recognizances before them with sufficient suretyes for their appearance at the next General Sessions of the Peace ... to answer such indictments and presentations. If any ... shall refuse ...then the said Justices shall comitt them to the Common Gaol ...there to remain till they shall be discharged by due course of the Law.[57]

Clearly, in the view of the justices, the blame for lack of prosecution of Dissenters presented to the courts lay fair and square, not with themselves, but on the heads of the 'Bayliffs'! That the above orders had some considerable effect is evidenced in the records of Quarter Sessions immediately following, where, over a period of three months in late 1684, certificates were issued to some 118 persons in the Corby Hundred alone

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[57] "An Order requiring the Clerk of the Peace to certify ...the names of all persons as stand indicted for not repairing to their Parish Church" in NRO. Finch-Hatton MSS (FH3515) appended to QSR 1/113 (Easter, 1684).

'who stood indicted for not coming to their parish church.' [58] In the Quarter Session rolls for the first session of the following year recognizances were issued to 189 persons across the whole county to appear at Sessions to answer the indictment 'for not resorting, repairing or coming to church to hear divine service and sermons'.[59] Whilst the ecclesiastical courts, under the new initiatives of Bishop Lloyd, were similarly increasingly occupying themselves at this time with the prosecution of those who were not receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the business of the secular courts was the pursuit of Nonconformity in the wider field of non-attendance, where civil penalties (monetary or custodial) rather than ecclesiastical sanctions could be imposed. In many instances the same person could be reported by both churchwarden and village constable, for action by their respective superiors.

Many of those prosecuted as a result of the above indictments sought a certificate proving their new attendance at church and their receipt of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, or a letter from the minister or other influential member of the local gentry pleading mitigation of the penalty incurred. A declaration by Hattill Gent, Rector of Woodford cum Membris, certified the new conformity by three of his parishioners, coupling their poverty and willingness to blame 'the weekly conventicles ...which was the one means to seduce them' with an assertion 'they are now long since returned into communion with the Church of England'.[60] Others looked for mitigation on health grounds, such as age, sickness or infirmity. In one case,

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[58] NRO. Finch-Hatton MSS (FH3516A/3516B).

[59] NRO. QSR 1/116 (Epiphany, 1685).

[60] NRO. X3313B (Sacramental Certficates) No. 2, dated 11 Jan 1684/5.

where this debarred church attendance at Eastertide, the local doctor was called upon to give witness that

> Mrs Orlebar [of Polebrook] was taken very ill about a week before Valentine's Day last and whereas I was sent upon the 14th day of Feb last past to be her physician and accordingly was for and did frequently visit her in her sickness. These are to certify that said Mrs Orlebar was soe very ill of a feavourish distemper, as it would have hazarded her life had she stirred out of her chamber from the time I first saw her untill a fortnight at least after Easter.[61]

Unavoidable work on the Sabbath would appear to have been the reason for non-attendance at church by one parishioner of Towcester. According to the vicar of this parish,

> Augustine Harris was at his parish church this day at morning and evening service and does promise to frequent his parish church as often as is consistent with his employment. That is to say he promises to come to divine service three times in a month.[62]

Over sixty similar statements declaring conformity 'of late' by former Dissenters, 'separationists' and excommunicates can be found in the extant Quarter Session records of 1684/5. However, an analysis of those named in these Sacramental Certificates who had returned to the 'fold' in 1685 through a new conformity shows that very few of those who had been continually and repetitively presented in village constables' returns across the period (of whom many are identified as Quakers) were included in this list. However, for Elizabeth Staunton of Woodford cum Membris, who 'hath repaired for a month last past' after 'fines *paid by her son Thomas* [my italics]- 20s in full', in

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[61] NRO. X3313B (Sacramental Certficates) No. 6 Certificate of John Laughton practioner in physicke , dated 13 May 1684. It is significant that Matthew Orlebar of Polebrook was granted a licence in 1672 'to be a Pr [Presbyterian] teacher at his house in Polebrook'. See Lyon-Turner, *Original Records.*

[62] NRO. X3313B (Sacramental Certficates) 1683-5 (No.27, n.d.).

common with many other 'obstinate Dissenters', conformity itself would appear to have been too high a price to pay. [63]

Although non-attendance at Divine Worship was of major concern to the courts, profanation of the Lord's Supper was as serious a matter to the secular courts as the improper use of the Liturgy was to the ecclesiastical authorities nearly twenty years later.[64] In 1668 one David Soames, the brother of the churchwarden of Haselbeach, was instructed on Easter Eve to bring wine for the sacrament on the following day. According to several witnesses in Nathaniel Soames' yard who saw David Soames,

> who was newly come from Northampton with wine intended for the Sacrament in a sack laying his hand on the sack sayd to those that were present I have brought your damnation in a sack. Mr John Wicke delivereth upon his oath that the said David Soames within a little while after being in his house [he] did ask him why he did pass such an uncharitable sentence upon the wine that he had brought for the sacrament to say that he had brought damnation in a sack. He answered againe I do acknowledge that I did say so. Mr Bagley, minister of the town being then by, doth testify the same on oath.[65]

David Soames was fined one hundred marks and sentenced to one month's imprisonment for his 'ill advised and unworthy expressions'. When compared with the small fines levied for non-attendance at Divine Service, this episode is indicative of the seriousness with which the court viewed blasphemy. His plea to the court to remit his prison sentence was rejected but, according to a note appended to the order, his fine was 'mitigated to £5 to be paid before the end of the sessions' and later endorsed 'and paid accordingly'. [66]

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[63] NRO. X3313B (Sacramental Certficates) 1683-5 (No. 55, dated 9th January 1684/5).

[64] See above pp. 138-140.

[65] NRO. QSR 1/50/63 (Trinity, 1668).

[66] NRO. QSR 1/50/64 (Trinity, 1668).

In another case, in 1683, fifteen members of the Grand Jury at the Easter Sessions at Northampton presented

> A Certaine Booke entitled *The Conformists Second Plea for the Non-Conformists* to be a dangerous seditious and Libellious Booke to the destruction of the religion of the King and the Prerogation of His Majesty's Royal Crown and His dignity, And we also present the Author of the same if he can be detected as a person deserving the severest punishment of the Law for the same. [67]

Edward Pearse, the conformist rector of Cottesbrooke and Aldwinkle and the author of this book, had wisely published it anonymously, describing himself as 'a Beneficed Minister and a Regular Son of the Church of England', espousing a latitudinarian approach to the problems of relationships between Conformists and other Protestants.[68] The presentment of such a book, without knowledge of its author, is an interesting illustration of the concern of the secular courts at this time with anything which in their view supported any tolerance towards a wider church, equating such deviation from strict conformity as sedition which, by implication, 'rocked the boat' of stable and secure government.

Pearse's view of limited toleration of Dissent which was so vigorously opposed by the magistracy was also embraced at the time by others of considerable social standing, enjoying political, if not judicial, influence In 1681 Sir Peter Pett, 'a virtuoso, and a great scholar and a Fellow of the Royal Society', began to employ his pen to eschew the views of the Tory magistrates and High-Churchmen, putting the case for latitude and tolerance, whilst embracing the utmost loyalty to the throne. In his *Happy Future State of England,* espousing the views of such notable 'trimmers' as Halifax and

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[67] NRO. QSR 1/109 (Easter, 1683).

[68] See above p. 43.

Anglesey, this author attempted on the one hand to allay the populist fears of Popery, and on the other to play down the threat of Nonconformity. Divorcing the concept of popery from Catholicism, he declared that the latter 'have no Plot but to get to heaven'. As for Protestant Dissent, he did not see it as a serious threat to the stability of the nation and, through a statistical analysis of *Compton Census* and Hearth Tax returns, pronounced it be grossly over inflated and a spent force 'languishing under its old age'. Mark Goldie, in a review of Pett's treatise, points out that Pett's attitude and his proposed solution to Protestant Dissent, whilst not acceptable to the Tory magistracy, was not uncommon in the 1680s. At the same time, Goldie does not hesitate to point up Pett's polemical purpose 'to convince the English that a Catholic King was safe.' As can be seen from **Fig.11** (above), neither Pearse's *Plea* nor Pett's polemical work (delayed in its publication to late 1687) did anything to modify the zeal of the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions against any toleration of Nonconformity, and with the Catholic James II in his final days on the throne Pett's plea for Catholic toleration was overtaken by events. [69]

Conventicles and 'Unlawful Assemblies'

In both ecclesiastical and secular records the lack of comprehensive data on the number of people attending conventicles or unlawful assemblies over the period makes any useful statistical analysis a difficult task. The ecclesiastical sources from which any information in respect of these can be derived are lacking in precise detail. Both Palmer's 1669 "Account of Conventicles" and Bishop Lloyd's 1683 visitation report to his Archbishop, whilst revealing the

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[69] The foregoing review of Pett's treatise *The Happy Future State of England* is from M. Goldie, "Sir Peter Pett, Sceptical Toryism and the Science of Toleration in the 1680s" in *Studies in Church History:* Vol 21 *Persecution and Toleration* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 247-273.

existence and geographical location of many illegal meetings during these specific years, are of limited use in gauging the real numbers of illegal gatherings across the period or the numbers attending.[70] The records of the ecclesiastical courts are deficient for the years immediately following the introduction of the 1664 Conventicle Act, a time when the prosecutions in the secular courts were at their highest. However, in many of the records of the secular court at this time, where individuals are named in indictments and memoranda and their penalties detailed in the orders of the court, these are frequently restricted to prominent members of these meetings, ie the leaders, hosts, and teachers arrested at any particular gathering. Often these meetings included a much larger number who either escaped arrest or whom the court thought not worth prosecuting. In 1669 'Mrs Manley together with about one hundred persons did meete [at Daventry] and thereby make an unlawful assembly', but the records show that only around five of this number, in this case the more prominent citizens of the town, were actually presented to the court. [71]

Besse's narrative of the persecution undergone by Quakers also reflects the high level of prosecutions for illegal meetings at this time.[72] David Wykes notes that of thirty-five Separatist conventicles prosecuted in Northamptonshire during these years, some thirty of them were likely to have been gatherings of Quakers.[73] (See **Figure 3(b)** above)

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[70] NRO. MS 708 Fermor Hesketh (Baker), "An Account of the Conventicles held in the Western Deaneries of the Diocese of Peterborough, by Archdeacon John Palmer 1669" and Bodl. Rawlinson MSS d.1163.

[71] NRO. QSR 1/55/34 *et seq.* (Michaelmas,1669).

[72] See below p. 165 **[Fig. 12]**.

[73] D. Wykes, 'The Church and Early Dissent' in *Northamptonshire Past & Present* (Northampton, 1991/2), p.205.

What is notable is the repetitive and stubborn refusal of those previously arrested and fined, to desist from attending these illegal assemblies. Refusing sureties of good behaviour and the non-payment of fines invariably resulted in a minimum of fourteen days in gaol. For the third conviction, 'for being present at an assembly or exercise of religion in any other manner than is allowed by the Liturgy or Practice of the Church of England', a sentence of banishment and transportation to Jamaica for seven years was imposed, although in the case of Northamptonshire, the 1674 Declaration of Indulgence intervened to save these Quakers from the actual passage to Jamaica, many serving, however, a lengthy period in Northampton gaol. [74]

The village constables' bills of presentment used in the analysis of absentees from worship also include some seventy-eight names of those also reported for attending illegal conventicles across the period from 1660-1689. Whilst these numbers reported in the constables' bills are of little use in any attempt to quantify the number of conventicle-goers, the incidence of these reports is an indication of the prevailing attitude across the period to the prosecution of these 'seditious separatists'. A further *caveat*, which might also explain the paucity in these particular returns, is the reluctance of many informers to report occurrences of illegal meetings to their village constable. The refusal of Stephen Peasnell, the constable of Bugbrooke, to act on the information given to him by the rector concerning an illegal meeting in the village in 1671, and the presentment of the constable of Weekley who

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[74]According to Besse, ' On the 4th and 6th days of the month called *April* [1665] five People called *Quakers* received Sentence of Banishment to *Jamaica*, on Conviction for the third Offence in meeting together for religious worship ... and at another [on the 12th and 13th of February in the same year] four others were also sentenced to be transported to the same place.' From the same record, six further sentences for transportation to Jamaica for seven years were passed in 1666/7 . In 1672 thirteen of those previously sentenced to transportation were 'set at Liberty from their long and grievous confinement in Northampton gaol [awaiting transportation]', whilst others had died whilst in prison. See Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 533-535. See also NRO. QSR 1/37/5-11 (Easter, 1665), and QSR 1/44 (Epiphany, 1667).

'willingly and wittingly permitted and suffered an unlawful assembly [in his village]' in 1684, both of which resulted in the harsh penalties, serve as examples of this. [75] Also, since there was a 'bounty' payable to the informant as a portion of the fine levied by distress, it was not unusual for those who informed on conventicles to go directly to the local magistrate and provide him with a sworn statement in order to their ensure their reward.

The Second Conventicle Act of 1670, with harsher penalties both for those attending illegal gatherings and for those failing to report them, was reflected by another short period of prosecutions in the county before the Act of Toleration was introduced two years later. Memoranda of convictions were entered against those attending assemblies in Marston Trussell and Rothwell in the north, and in the west of the county in Muscot , Towcester and in Nether Heyford , where 'some 30 persons met in the streete' in this year.[76]

Following the 'Tory Reaction' in the early 1680s, the vigour with which prosecution of illegal assemblies recommenced affected especially the meetings of Quakers at this time.[77] This must surely have been motivated as much by political uneasiness on the part of the authorities concerning any meetings which might plot or lend support for exclusion of the monarchical succession of James, as by their interest in conformity *per se*. That this

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[75] NRO. QSR 1/61/32 (Mich. 1671). Stephen Peasnell was deprived of his alehouse licence for a period of three years. Also see QSR 1/113 (Easter,1684), in which John Persevall was 'fined £20 and £5 as being a constable – the total to be levied by distress in the sale of household goods'.

[76] NRO. QSR 1/60/3 (Epiphany, 1671).

[77] See Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 540-9.

national fear was also shared locally can be seen in a statement from the Northamptonshire Grand Jury in July 1683 wherein

> They had strong apprehensions of great danger in a disaffected part of this county who did openly show their principles by presenting a seditious address... at the last eleccon of the Knights of the Shire, tending to the alteracon of the succession of the Crowne and an intended association in it to that purpose and an assurance they would stand by them with their lives and fortunes without any regard or notice of their allegiance to his Majesty as they are duty bound ...
> The same disaffected persons have been encouraged to meet from time to time openly and doe still shew their wicked designes by their frequent meeting in Clubbs Caballs and notorious bold discourses. We the Grand Jury doe for the prevention of all future dangers [that] may happen to His Majestie or his Government present it very expedient and necessary that all persons more than two who have or shall meet or Caball may give security for the Peace and good behaviour. And particularly we desire that the Mayor and Magistrates of the Towne of Northampton would take care [that] the same be put into execution within their Libertyes. And also take notice of the meeters who used to keep their Clubb at the Swann Inn in Northampton.[78]

Shortly before the openly Catholic King James II announced his intention to seek enactment of his 1687 Declaration of Indulgence through Parliament, in a letter dated 16th August 1688 the Earl of Sutherland (who had considerable patronage and landowning interests in the county) wrote to the Mayor of Northampton,

> The King being informed that one John Bayley, who keeps a coffee house in Northampton, is a very seditious person, would have you and the rest of the Justices of the Peace take care that his coffee house be suppressed.[79]

Whether John Bayley's sedition was that of a disaffected Anglican resisting James II's new policy of wooing Protestant Dissenters along with Catholics

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[78] NRO. QSR 1/112 (Epiphany, 1684).

[79] Calendar of State Papers (Domestic) 1688 SP44/56, p. 426.

cannot be ascertained, but at this time of heightened Anglican tension it is highly feasible. The link, however, between coffee houses and supposed meeting places for the organisation of seditious activities was obviously not a new concern to the authorities.[80] Some six years earlier, at the time of the Tory Reaction, another presentment of the Grand Jury of the county to the Quarter Sessions in 1682 reminded the magistrates of their duty to suppress all unlawful associations:

> because we daily find by experience that they are the nests in which have beene hatched all the seditious practices which of late have disturbed the peace and infested the Nation. More particularly we present all unlicensed Coffee Houses or Places wherein false and seditious Newes are invented and spread about to delude and Poyson People.[81]

The changing policies of James II, who had equated Dissent as 'a faction not a religion' during his first year on the throne, brought relief to the prosecution of Dissenters, both Protestant and Catholic, in the following year. Whether his 1687 Declaration, 'that conscience ought not to be restrained, nor people forced into matters of mere religion', was pragmatic or principled, cynical or idealistic, his consequent actions of pushing the Catholics into positions of power brought about his final demise.[82] At the same time, the suspension of the penal laws brought the persecution of

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[80] The perceived link between coffee houses, Puritanism and republican politics has been explored by Steve Pincus, who states that coffee houses had proliferated dramatically from the first one opened in Oxford in 1650[*]. By the end of the century London alone had more than 2000, where people met to read newspapers and discuss politics. One high Church Anglican declared that 'a coffee house is a lay conventicle, good fellowship turn'd Puritan'. See S. Pincus, ' "Coffee Politicians does create" : coffee houses and Restoration political culture' in *Journal of Modern History* 67 (1995), p. 834. This extract, quoted in Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, p. 181. *According to N. Aubertin-Potter and A. Benson, in: *Oxford Coffee Houses 1651-1800* (Oxford, 1987), the first coffee house in England was opened in Oxford, in 1651, by Jacob the Jew at the Angel Inn.

[81] NRO. QSR 1/108 (Epiphany, 1682/3), "Presentment of the Grand Jury of the County of Northamptonshire to the Epiphany Quarter Sessions" (dated 9th Jan).

[82] Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, p. 188.

Dissenters to an abrupt halt. In his review of the Conventicle Acts, Professor Fletcher sees the application of these measures as both sporadic and discretionary, and in some cases a divisive influence on the Justices in a number of counties [83] When applied in Northamptonshire, the evidence would show that these penal measures had a considerable effect on the Separatist, particularly Quaker, conventicles. Whether or not they led to any increase in Conformity is dubious when one considers the suffering endured so stoically and continuously by the many who were heavily fined and imprisoned for lengthy periods 'without baile or mainprise' in Northampton Gaol.[84]

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[83] A. Fletcher, 'The Enforcement of the Conventicle Acts 1664-1679' in W.J. Sheils (ed.), *Studies in Church History* (London, 1984) , pp. 235-246.

[84] NRO. QSR 1/37/35 (Easter, 1665) and *Another Outcry of the Innocent &Oppressed* (Northampton, 1665), p. 5. Also see Friends' Meeting House Library, *Great Book of Sufferings* (Northamptonshire), *passim.*

Quaker Prosecutions in the Secular Courts

Among the records of prosecution of Nonconformity in the secular courts during the Restoration period, that of Joseph Besse is unique in its detailed narrative account of the sufferings of the Quakers in Northamptonshire and other counties of England during this time. Despite its openly apologist style in defence of the members of this sect, there would appear to be no reason to doubt much of the first-hand information derived from those involved, and later collated by Besse.[85]

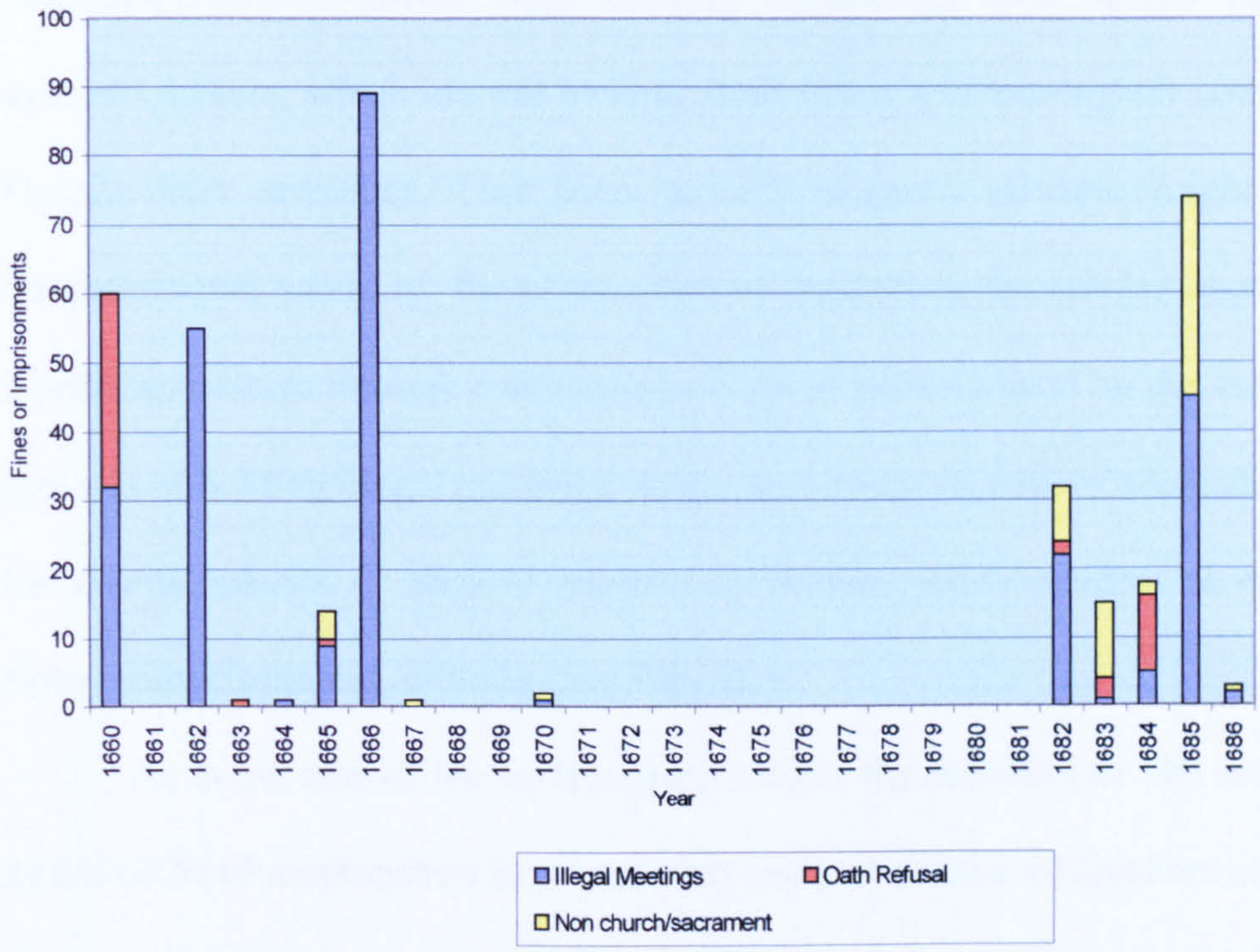

Figure 12.
Quaker Fines and Imprisonments 1660-1686
[Excluding non-payment of tithes]

Source: Besse, *Sufferings* (vol.1), ch.xxvii at pp. 518-55.

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[85] For a critique of Besse's *Sufferings* , its similarities with Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and its reliability as a factual source, see John R. Knott 'Joseph Besse and the Quaker Culture of Suffering' in Thomas N. Corns and David Lowenstein (eds.), *The Emergence of Quaker Writing - Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1995), pp. 126 to 141.

This said, however, there do appear to be certain shortcomings in the narrative Besse presents, particularly in the period 1668-1670. During this time, where the narrative is somewhat thin on the ground in relation to actions against Quakers, he states (in his narrative for the year 1670) that 'in the two last years we find but few instances of Persecution in this County'.[86] During this time, in the run up to the second Conventicle Act, the evidence from the Quarter Session rolls would appear to show significant activity in prosecution of Quakers at the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions. Similarly, in the decade following the withdrawal of the 1672 Act of Indulgence, the Northamptonshire Assizes were busying themselves with further causes against Quakers, which are not evident from Besse's chronological account. Despite these omissions, it has been possible to gain a valuable insight into the pattern and nature of the prosecution of Quakers in the secular courts of Northamptonshire through a tabulation of those presentments on the various grounds of holding illegal meetings, refusing to swear an oath of allegiance or for non-attendance or abusive conduct at church, which resulted in either fines or imprisonment, or both. (See **Fig. 12.**)

As in the case of the ecclesiastical courts, the activities of the secular courts of Northamptonshire in prosecution and persecution of Quakers across the period can be seen to echo broadly the national concerns raised by the establishment, who saw this group as made up of ultra-puritan fanatics and constituting a threat to national stability. From the earliest years of the Restoration the fears of the new anglican establishment were focussed upon

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[86] Besse, *Sufferings,* p. 536. See comments by Richard Vann when comparing Besse's work with court records of Quaker sufferings, and his conclusion that 'given the attitudes of Friends and the state of historical scholarship in his times [it is hard to imagine that Besse could have been] any more accurate or complete'. Cited by Knott, "Joseph Besse" in Corns and Lowenstein *The Emergence of Quaker Writing,* p.139 fn.5.

suppression of Dissent, especially in its most radical forms. The Fifth Monarchist uprising in 1661 was a catalyst to the passing of the Quaker Act in the following year and the Conventicle Act two years later. The exercise of these measures can be seen in the many prosecutions of Quakers by the Northamptonshire magistrates, for refusal to swear oaths of allegiance and for attending illegal meetings during this period, whilst the ecclesiastical courts busied themselves with causes mainly concerning non-attendance at church services.

With the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, according to Besse, some thirteen Northamptonshire Quakers were set at liberty.[87] The Quaker historian Braithwaite stated that 491 persons nationally were included in the Great Pardon at this time, pointing out that not all were Quakers. George Whitehead, a leading Quaker 'Publisher of Truth', having advised friends of these other sectaries to petition the King to insert their names in the Pardon, remarked later that John Bunyan, 'whose first book had been directed against the Quakers, now owed his liberty to their assistance.'[88]

The national hysteria against Dissent in all its forms reappeared in 1678 with the 'Popish Plot' and the Exclusion Crisis which followed shortly after, although as John Coffey has noted, in 'the years between 1678 and 1686 [which] saw the last severe religious persecution in English history, the repression up until March 1681 was almost entirely focused on the Catholic community .[89] Once again, an examination of **Figures 10, 11 and 12** shows

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[87] See above p. 160 [fn. 74].

[88] Braithwaite *The Second Period* , p. 85.

[89] Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration,* p. 173.

that Northamptonshire's experience reflected the national trend in the patterns of persecution of Dissenters during the period of the 'Tory Revenge' which followed, when these rose to levels exceeding those of the early 1660s in both ecclesiastical and secular courts.

Nationally the Quaker prison population, which numbered about 500 at the Great Pardon in 1672, had nearly trebled by 1685.[90] The vigour with which the hunting and prosecution of members of the Quakers sect was carried out in the county of Northamptonshire at this time, not only for attendance at illegal meetings, but also for lesser offences such as failure to pay tithes or absence from national worship, was typified by the actions of John Hutton, priest of Farthingstone, together with his informer and assistant Thomas Hogg. Incidents chronicled by William Pooley in 1683 tell of confiscation on a vast scale, by warrant of Justice Henry Benson, such as that from Quakers such as George Ayres of Farthingstone:

> Two Horses, six Cows, two Calves, fortyone Sheep, a Sow and six Pigs, a Waggon, Corn, Utensils for Husbandry, Wood, Household Goods, and other things worth £46 15s 11d...and for Absence from the National worship, pewter worth 15s. [91]

According to Besse, who continued an account of this same incident,

> John Hutton...after his service was over, spake to the Parish - Officers about making the Distress, desiring them *to do their Work thoroughly.* At which time Thomas Hogg...promised the Parson that he would take care to see it thoroughly managed ...[and] attending the Officers, urging them to take all they could find: But the Officers thinking they had sufficient, did not take away their Bedding which the Informers would have done .... A short time after, the said George Ayres with his wife, and Susanna Bilton Widow, each of the Women having a sucking child at her Breast, were sent to prison for Want of Distress, for Absence from the National

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[90] Braithwaite, *The Second Period*, p. 114.

[91] W. Pooley, *Part of the Sufferings of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire by Informers and Priests*...(London, 1683), pp. 4 *et seq.* On the attitude of Quakers toward the legitimacy of tithes, see Davies, *Quakers in Society* p. 12 and pp. 30-33.

> Worship, the said Priest Hutton, their Prosecutor, having said, as was credibly reported, *that he would rid the Town of them all.* [92]

A postscript to the sufferings of the Quakers in Northamptonshire, noted by Besse, was that of Thomas Boone of Corby who,

> on the 21st of the month called April [1686]...for being present at the Interment of his own Wife was fined as a Transgressor of the Law against Conventicles and suffered Distress of his Goods for that supposed Offence, to the value of £7. [93]

This act must surely have ranked as one of the most spiteful applications of a piece of near-obsolete legislation, which forbade the meeting together of five or more persons for the purpose of religious worship outside the household without the use of the Anglican Prayer Book and liturgy.

Conclusion

It would appear, from the above investigation, that the prosecution of Dissent during the period was influenced by a wide variety of factors across the whole range of officialdom, from the lowest levels of village constable and churchwarden, through local justices and parish incumbents to the higher courts of the County Quarter Sessions and the Episcopal and Archdeaconery courts of the Peterborough Diocese. In addition, the effect of individual attitudes towards Dissent by those initiating proceedings, hostility or toleration by clerics and others with influence in the community, local interests, and pressures from higher authority both within the county and the diocese, all served to further or to abate prosecution.

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[92] Besse, *Sufferings,* p. 541.

[93] Besse, *Sufferings,* p. 551.

Over and above all of these factors two major elements appear to have determined the whole pattern of prosecution: the nature of the Dissent and the perception, both locally and nationally, of the threat presented to state and church by those who chose not to conform (seen by the post-Restoration authorities as one indivisible entity). The above patterns, derived from statistical analysis, leave little doubt that measures enacted against Nonconformity across the period, and the vigour with which prosecutions were instigated, mirrored the prevailing political ambitions and fears. At times when leniency towards Dissent appeared to be politically expedient, indulgence and toleration were reflected in the pattern. As John Spurr has commented, 'the 1672 Indulgence was a wartime concession designed to neutralize Nonconformity as a potential ally of the Dutch enemy'.[94] At other times, when Dissent was perceived as an ally of those interests opposed to government and the opportunity arose for extracting revenge for past deeds, edicts from court, parliament and Archbishop were passed down the administrative chain, increased legislation was introduced, and harsher penalties applied to an increasing number presented to the courts. The effect of prosecutions, fines and imprisonment imposed by the secular courts, and spiritual penalties by the ecclesiastical ones, in terms of achieving an undeviating, uniform and uncompromising Church of England is, however, much more difficult to assess.

Whilst the abundance of source material concerning the prosecution of through-going separatist Quakers, in comparison with the paucity of similar evidence for other Nonconformists, might be seen as providing an unbalanced

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[94] John Spurr, "Religion in Restoration England" in Lionel Glassey (ed.), *The Reigns of Charles II and James VII and II* (London, 1997), p. 121.

view, there is little doubt that this former group of radical Sectarians became the major target of nonconformist persecution and prosecution in Northamptonshire, as in many other counties, during the period. As Adrian Davies has pointed out in his study of Quaker Society in the county of Essex, the very nature of the belief shared by these 'Friends' made the effect of their prosecution in the ecclesiastical courts a dubious one. For those who refused to accept the authority of the Church on matters doctrinal, claiming that this body had no legitimate claim to summon or to discipline them, the threat of excommunication and the consequent exclusion from the reception of the sacrament, which they condemned as a superstitious rite, were of little consequence. On the rare occasions when citations to attend the ecclesiastical courts were obeyed by Quakers, 'the court and its officials were left in no doubt as to the contempt in which they were held, Quaker defendants sometimes laughing dismissively at the verdicts brought against them, or cocking a snook at the court's authority by wearing their hats as judgements were recorded.'[95] From the number of citations for non-attendance at Divine Service recorded in the documents of the ecclesiastical courts of Northamptonshire to which, as the result of non-appearance at the court or non-response to the citation, the *decree viis et modis* was appended by the clerk, it would appear that a similar contempt existed in the Peterborough Diocese.[96] In the secular courts, despite the considerably greater threat to their liberty, there is similar evidence of the contempt of the authority of the

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[95] Davies, *Quakers in Society,* p. 24.

[96] *Decree viis et modis* : using all possible ways and means to bring an absent respondent to an ecclesiastical court to answer the charges laid against him or her. For further explanation of this and other legal terminology in ecclesiastical court documents see: C. Chapman, *Sex, Sin and Probate – Ecclesiastical Courts, ,Officials and Records* (Dursley, 1992).

state by Quaker Dissenters. The procedures of the justices in Quarter Sessions and the response of the Quakers appearing before them are evidenced both in Besse's narrative accounts, and by personal views of their behaviour of such as Sir Justinian Isham, as revealed in his private correspondence.[97]

The stoicism with which the Quakers accepted and endured their punishments is evident from both contemporary and later chroniclers, there being little or no evidence in their writings that the sufferings of these thorough-going separatists brought about any fundamental change in their religious confession or belief. As Richard Baxter remarked, 'many turned Quakers, because the Quakers kept their meetings openly, and went to prison for it cheerfully.'[98] Recidivism by those previously fined or imprisoned is much evident from Quarter Session and Estreat Rolls at the later end of the period, between 1681 and 1686, where continued and mounting fines are recorded against persistent absentees, and annotated *non venit ad ecclesiam.*[99]

On the other hand it could be deduced, from the evidence available, in the case of those with an apathetic attitude towards church attendance, and for those amongst the wealthier and more influential elements of society where Presbyterian and Independent 'semi-Separatists' were more numerous, the increased incidences of prosecution and harsher penalties for non-attendance between 1683 and 1685 brought forth a flurry of demands from many of them for sacramental certificates, recording their promises of a new conformity and attendance at divine service. [100]

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[97] See Besse, *Sufferings,* passim., and for Isham's comments see above p.125.

[98] N.H. Keeble (ed.), *Autobiography of Richard Baxter* (London, 1974), p.190.

[99] NRO. Presentments and Fines for non-attendance at Church by Recusants and Dissenters.1681-6. Also QSR 1/122: Estreat Rolls - Recognizances (Trinity, 1686).

[100] NRO. Sacramental Certificates 1683-5 Box X3313B.

Whilst legislation, persecution and prosecution may have induced some to return to conformity with the Anglican Church, the experiences of many thorough-going and 'obstinate' Separatists, crushed under a system seemingly unable or unwilling to differentiate between political and religious Dissent and determined by whatever means to coerce conformity, certainly demonstrate the failure of such measures to succeed.

Chapter 5

Northamptonshire Dissenters and Conformists

In the investigation of the phenomenon of Restoration Dissent across Northamptonshire, the previous chapters of this thesis have depended, to a large extent, on statistical analysis based on particular social or economic groupings. This approach has allowed some general conclusions to be drawn concerning the degree of Dissent and its distribution across the county, and has aided in the search for possible predisposing factors that may have played some part in its adoption by various sections of society. By its very nature such a methodology has tended towards a de-personalisation of those individuals who made up the 'mathematics' of Conformity and Dissent, as well as ignoring the unknown number for whom religion played no part in their daily life. It is also recognised that, whatever the socio-economic factors 'measured' through this analysis, the decision by any individual to adopt a particular religious persuasion would have been, first and foremost, a personal and spiritual one. As a counterbalance, this chapter will adopt a prosopographical approach, employing both statistical analysis and anecdotal evidence in an attempt to gain some insight into the personal lives and actions of individual clergy who conformed willingly or with some reserve to the requirements of the national Church, and of those who defied the requirements of the Restoration Settlement and chose outright Dissent.

An earlier Protestant monarch, in attempting to impose religious conformity on her subjects in the sixteenth century, remarked that she 'would not open windows into men's souls.'[1] Were this possible, the task would be

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[1] J.B. Black, *Reign of Elizabeth 1558-1603* (Oxford, 1936), p. 19.

made so simple. For us, however, to gain an insight into the lives of those individuals in Northamptonshire who wrestled with similar problems a century later following the re-imposition by the state of the canons of an Established Church, we must resort to an examination of the public records and private writings of those involved, together with the works of contemporary, near-contemporary and later authors of the ecclesiastical history and reference works covering the period.

A prosopographical approach.

'How deep was thy distress, O Zion, say,
What tears, what groans, what terrors mark'd that day,
That by one barb'rous mandate swept away
Two Thousand Shepherds, who with God-like zeal
Tended thy flocks ……..' [2]

The 'barb'rous mandate' of St Bartholomew's Day 1662 is for many observers the day upon which Puritanism was redefined for ever as Dissent. Edmund Calamy (1671-1732), the grandson of one of those nonconformist ministers ejected in 1662, is the earliest source of information concerning the ejection and lives of those 'two thousand ministers across the country who refused, through conscience, to conform to the Act of Uniformity.'[3] From evidence contained in this near contemporary work, together with other sources, an exploration of such aspects as the education, age, wealth and patronage of those ministers ejected from Northamptonshire livings between 1660 and 1662

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[2] Thomas Gibbons, *An English version of the Latin Epitaphs in the Nonconformists Memorial; To which is added a poem sacred to the memory of the Two thousand ministers ejected or silenced by the Act of Uniformity 1662* (London, 1775), pp. 27-28.

[3] Edmund Calamy, *An Abridgment of Mr Baxter's History of his life and times with an Account of many others of those worthy ministers who were ejected after the Restauration* of *King Charles the Second* (London, 1702).

can be undertaken.[4] Thus, it may be possible to discern whether common factors existed amongst these men whose lives were radically changed following the acts of the Restoration Settlement, particularly as a consequence of the St Bartholomew's Day edict of 1662.

Of the forty-six ministers listed by Matthews in his revision of Calamy's *Account* as having been ejected in Northamptonshire, a number are recorded as having been deprived of their livings prior to 1662. Under the Act 'for the Confirming and Restoring of Ministers sequestered during the Civil War and Commonwealth' eleven were forced out of their 'intruded' livings in 1660 to allow reinstatement of their predecessors. During the short period between these two Acts three others resigned their Northamptonshire livings by their own choice, or through pressure exerted by their parishioners or patrons. **Fig. 13** below shows those Northamptonshire parishes from which ejection or resignation took place between 1660 and 1662.[5] Its use, in conjunction with other evidence, will also assist in the investigation of the question to be posed later in this chapter as to whether the influence of particular parochial clergy in place before, during or after the Restoration, or the persistence of a puritan tradition in certain parishes, were the deciding factors in the choice of Dissent or Conformity by their parishioners.

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[4] A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised being a revision of Calamy's Account of the Ministers and others ejected and silenced 1660-2* (Oxford, 1934). J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses* (Cambridge, 1922I) Part 1, J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses* vols i to iv.(Lichenstein Reprint, 1968), and the local work of H.Isham-Longden, *The Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500* (Northampton, 1945-52), are invaluable sources in this connection.

[5] See above pp. 35 – 36 for comments on Calamy's work and its reliability as a documentary source. The deficiencies in Calamy's *Account* are not fully clarified in Matthews' Revision, which in itself leaves some difficulties in reconciling the detailed entries for individual ministers ejected, with the county totals of fourteen ejected in 1660, thirty-one in 1662 plus one of uncertain date, including seven after-Conformists, presented in the latter's introduction. Similarly there are minor differences in the data presented by Calamy and Palmer and in the Alumni records of Venn and Foster.

The loss of about 2000 'learned and pious orthodox divines' across the country was seen at the time as a considerable blow both by those Dissenters who had striven for some form of accommodation within the Established Church, and also by many of the Conformists who remained within it.[6] Later observers have echoed the same sentiments. In the late nineteenth century Bishop John Ryle, a staunchly Calvinist Evangelical and the first Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, in characterising these early Nonconformists stated his belief that the ejected 'were 2000 of the best clergy … but for conscience sake they left their cathedrals, deaneries, universities, and rectories for direst poverty, obscurity, prison, silence and death.'[7] In the view of Frank Bate, an early twentieth-century nonconformist historian with a more questionable objectivity, 'without doubt the Church lost the very cream of Dissenting ministers, retaining only those whose convictions were weak and ill informed. The places rendered vacant …were filled either by inferior men, or left vacant for years.'[8] Bate's assertion, implying that only 'inferior' men remained or moved into the conformist fold, therefore suggests an appropriate starting point for this prosopographic investigation.

Educational background

The normal route for aspiring clergy was entry through matriculation (a sworn oath to uphold the statutes of the University) into one of the colleges of

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[6] F. Ives Cater, *Northants Nonconformity 250 years ago* (Northampton, 1912), p. 6.

[7] John Stanley. *Lest We Forget :A Commemoration of the 2000 ministers who left their livings and were ejected on St Bartholomew's Day 1662 rather than make a nick in their conscience.* (London, 1912), p. 12.

[8] F. Bate, *The Declaration of Indulgence 1672: A Study in the Rise of Early Dissent* (London, 1908).

Oxford or Cambridge University, graduation to a BA degree being followed, in the majority of cases, by the award of an MA.[9] From the data in **Table 20** below it is evident that the large majority of those clergy ejected in Northamptonshire between 1660 and 1662 were graduates from colleges of the University of Cambridge.

(1) **University**	(2) **College**	(3) **No. Ejected 1660-62***	(4) **1648 *Testimony* signatories conforming in 1660-62 Ø**
Cambridge	Emmanuel	9	4
	Sidney Sussex	7	
	Clare	5	1
	Trinity	4	2
	Queens'	4	2
	St John's	3	1
	Magdalene	1	
	Jesus	1	
	St Catherine's	1	
	Unspecified	1	
	Christ's	1	3
	Totals	**(37)**	**(13)**
Oxford	Magdalen Hall	2	
	Magdalen		4
	Oriel	1	
	Wadham	1	
	St Alban's	1	
	Brasenose	1	
	New Inn Hall	1	2
	Lincoln	1	
	New College	1	
	Merton		1
	St Edmund's		1
	Univ. College		1
	Totals	**(9)**	**(9)**

Table 20.
Ejected and Conforming Clergy : University Education.
*Sources: Matthews, *Calamy Revised:* Venn, *Al. Cantab.*: and Foster, *Al. Oxon.*.
Ø Source: 1648 *Testimony* and Isham- Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500.*

[9] Exceptionally,Vincent Alsop, a leading dissenting figure both within Northamptonshire and nationally, is not recorded as having graduated from Cambridge University, but only matriculating in 1648.

In the years between Reformation and the Restoration, with the predominating ethos of many of the colleges of both Universities changing with the vicissitudes of the political and religious climate, it might be incautious to place too direct a correlation between education at a particular college and resultant religious affiliation. However, the graduates from Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex colleges, established in the final decades of the sixteenth century with avowedly puritan foundations, figure prominently in the table. The former college, founded in 1584 by the Calvinist Sir Walter Mildmay, Queen Elizabeth's Chancellor of the Exchequer, was designed as a particular stronghold of Puritanism, solely for ordination candidates. Sidney Sussex, established twelve years later with a similar protestant ethos, professed to be opposed to 'Popery' and 'other heresies', enrolling Oliver Cromwell as one of its early students.[10] Over the next twenty years these two colleges were outstripping, in student numbers, longer-established institutions such as Queens', Pembroke and Peterhouse.[11] These latter colleges, known for their High-Church associations in the years leading up to Civil War, continued in their Laudian/Royalist support, paying the penalty through the purging of teaching posts and iconoclasm during William Dowsing's Parliamentary visitations in the 1644.

Many of the future Northamptonshire clergy later to be ejected for Nonconformity, particularly those with local attachments through birth,

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[10] Admitted to Sidney Sussex College in 1616, Oliver Cromwell apparently left it in the following year without taking a degree. See M. Grant, *Cambridge* (London, 1966), p. 112.

[11] Grant, *Cambridge,* p.112.

residence, or schooling, had been enrolled at these puritan establishments for their theological education.[12]

Thus the evidence would suggest that Mildmay's 'acorn' may well have grown into his hoped-for oak tree, its fruits being seen in those who, through the enduring puritan values inculcated in their education, exercised their choice not to countenance the Established Church. Together with those other colleges purged of Laudianism in the 1640s,[13] the puritan values established or restored cannot be ignored in the search for explanations behind the decisions of the many of the *alumni* of these Cambridge colleges who chose not to conform at the Restoration.[14]

On the other hand, Oxford University, whose colleges were chosen for the education of many of the sons of gentry and nobility, had become deeply imbued with High-Church views and values under Archbishop Laud, its chancellor in the 1630s. These academic and political persuasions came together a decade later when the city, and Christchurch in particular, became the temporary headquarters of the King and his Royalist supporters. With the upheavals of the civil war and the subsequent purges inflicted by the victorious Parliamentarians - the Independent John Owen becoming Dean of Christchurch in 1651 and vice-chancellor of the University a year later - the overall anti-puritan stance of this University was reversed during the

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[12] Of the thirty-seven Cambridge students listed in Table 20 above, twenty-two had prior connections with the Eastern Counties.

[13] Of the students from Queens', St John's or Christ's, later ejected from Northamptonshire livings only three received their theological education at these 'High-church' colleges prior to the parliamentary purges.

[14] It would have been interesting, had time permitted, to pursue this area of investigation within other counties.

Interregnum. It is significant, however, that amongst those Northamptonshire ministers who later refused to 'declare their unfeigned assent and consent' to everything in, or prescribed by, the Prayer Book, a significant number were from colleges such as Magdalen Hall, Brasenose and New Inn Hall, whose continuing and close associations with puritan thought from the earliest years of the seventeenth century can be seen through the noted Calvinist and anti-Arminian Philosophers amongst their *alumni*.[15]

The Ejected Clergy: age, wealth and patronage

The demands of the 1662 Act of Uniformity and the penalties of the Clarendon Code which were to follow doubtless made 'intolerable to any but men of the strongest conviction.' the position of the clerical Dissenters prepared to sacrifice the wellbeing of their families along with their own ministerial career and proceed into the 'wilderness of dissent'.[16] Richard Baxter, one of the most outstanding figures amongst the ejected ministers in England, expressed so elegantly what many others of strong conviction must have felt at this time:

> Must I be driven from my books?
> From house and goods and dearest friends?
> One of Thy sweet and gracious looks
> For more than this will make amends! [17]

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[15] John Davenport, Sir William Petty, and Daniel Greenwood are amongst those with close associations with these 'Puritan' colleges.

[16] VCH *(Northamptonshire)*, vol. 2. p. 69.

[17] R. Baxter, *Poetical Fragments* (London, 1681), "The Resolution" p.54. It is interesting to note that, in this quote, Baxter gives primacy to his books over all his other possessions. For his claim that his considerable knowledge came from a lifetime habit of reading, his love of books and his belief that the true Christian should be 'much in reading,' see N.H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford, 1982), Ch. 2 especially.

Baxter, surrendering his Kidderminster living at the age of forty-seven, was in the mid age-range of those similarly ejected in Northamptonshire (see **Table 21** below). Older men like Daniel Cawdry of Great Billing, ordained in 1613 at the age of twenty-five, faced an equally uncertain future, as did young men such as Thomas Browning of Rothwell and Edward Matthews of Woolaston, received into the church only a few years before the Restoration. For none of the men who were left with a choice in 1662, the young with future ambitions unfulfilled and the older with years of faithful service behind them, did their age at the time of ejection appear to have been a factor influencing their decision not to conform.

Age	Under 30	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over	Unknown
Total (44)	3	8	13	10	6	4

Table 21.
Ages of Northamptonshire Dissenting Clergy at Ejection.

However, for some of those ejected, with many of the professions officially barred to them, the loss of their living brought them and their families into great financial hardship. Thomas Tarrey, ejected from Thrapston at the age of thirty-two, was 'reduced so low that his wife made Band-strings (much the fashion in those days) for a livelihood.'[18] Edmund Matthews 'liv'd privately at Wellingborough [with his wife and seven children] and practic'd physick for a living, being reduced to great straits.'[19] For both of these men,

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[18] Matthews, *Calamy*, p. 476. [OED: Band-string: An ornamental collar worn around 1600 or (in pl.) a pair of strips hanging at the neck opening of some legal, academic and clerical gowns.]

[19] Matthews, *Calamy*, p.344.

improvements in the financial circumstances of their families that were to occur in later years were cited by Calamy as examples of the workings of God's Providence.[20] After Matthews' death his widow and family were provided with food and clothing, two of his sons later graduating from Oxford, his daughter marrying a Knight. Thomas Tarrey, 'having been brought so low', was appointed after some time to the Free School at Higham Ferrers, where he grew rich through instructing the sons of Gentlemen.

On the other hand, there were some ministers whose personal circumstances allowed them to remain in comfortable style following their ejection. John Bazley of Broughton was described as 'a man of substance', having bought a house and estate at Kettering after his ejection, and Richard Hooke of Creaton, deprived of his living less than a year from his installation, removed to Northampton 'where he had some estate.'[21] Thomas Andrews, 'a man of great courage and boldness', retired from his Wellingborough parish at the age of forty-nine in preference to Conformity, despite his relationship through marriage to the sister of Archdeacon Palmer. According to Calamy, Andrews' noted frugality 'saved him some hundreds of pounds against his ejectment: so that he was better provided for than many of his Brethren.'[22]

Inducements were offered to a number of nonconforming ministers, though not always taken up. Nathaniel Whiting, although offered the choice of any of three livings by his patron the Earl of Peterborough if he would conform, refused, saying that 'the door is too narrow for me to enter in.' [23]

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[20] See Chapter 6 below for a discussion on the phenomenon of Providentialism.

[21] Matthews, *Calamy,* pp. 41 and 274.

[22] Matthews, *Calamy,* pp.11-12.

[23] Palmer (ed.), *Nonconformists Memorial* pp. 213-214.

As a consequence he lost both his living and his Mastership of the Free School at Aldwinckle which, as a man of 'plentiful estate', together with his wife, he later endowed.[24] Daniel Cawdrey, Rector of Great Billing for nearly forty years and numbered amongst those leading puritan members of the 1643 'Westminster Assembly of Divines', despite being recommended to Lord Clarendon for a Bishopric at the Restoration, refused to submit to the Act of Uniformity, becoming the oldest Northamptonshire minister to be ejected from his living. His indictment for Nonconformity is recorded in Northampton Quarter Session Bills of Presentment for Easter 1662 as follows:

> We doe indight Mr Daniel Cawdry *(sic)*, Rector of Billing, for not reading the Book of Common Prayer for the Day of Humilliation for Murthering the late King and for not reading the Book of Acts of Parliament for the preservation of the King['s memory].[25]

After ejection, Daniel Cawdrey retired to Wellingborough, where 'he liv'd in great pain and uneasiness' for another two years, 'when he breath'd out his Spirit...aged forty days short of Seventy-six years.' [26]

An unusual indulgence, described by Calamy as 'through connivance', was exhibited by Benjamin Laney, the Bishop of Peterborough, towards Samuel Ainsworth, an earlier colleague and the vicar of Kelmarsh. According to Palmer, the Bishop 'looked through his fingers...and suffered Ainsworth ...tho a Nonconformist, to preach publickly near him at Brampton in Huntingdonshire, for some years together.' However, in his revision of

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[24] Matthews, *Calamy* p. 527.

[25] NRO. QSR 1/25/58 (1662, Easter).

[26] Matthews, *Calamy*, p.106.

Calamy, Matthews questions whether Ainsworth was, in fact, ever ejected from his living at Kelmarsh.[27]

Patronage, in the form of hospitality or private employment as chaplain to a gentry family whose sympathies lay with the ejected Nonconformists, was also a way of alleviating the sufferings of some. Robert Allen, ejected from Norton, removed to Adstone 'where Esquire Harvey [Harbye] entertained both him and his wife; and there he died.'[28] The widow of the patron of the living of Great Oakley from which Francis Dandy was ejected opened her house to him, 'where he took up residence to his dying day.'[29] Another generous benefactor to an ejected minister was Justice Norton of Cotterstock. By his will of 1662/3 he made provision that William Malkinson, the ejected vicar of the benefice, should live rent free in his residence, and that his [Norton's] wife and son 'should have a tender respect to Master Malkinson and take care that hee bee otherwise comfortable provided dureing his life', with the additional favour of a bequest of £10 each to Malkinson's children.[30] Thomas Burroughs of Cottesbrooke was similarly favoured by his patron, Sir John Langham, whose puritan sympathies led him to employ Burroughs as his private chaplain, leaving him £100 in his will, following the installation of the Conformist Edward Pearse into the vacated living.[31]

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[27] Matthews, *Calamy*, p.3. See also Foster, *Al. Oxon,* [Ainsworth entry].

[28] Matthews, *Calamy,* p.7.

[29] Matthews, *Calamy*, p. 156. This is another instance of discrepancy between Calamy/Palmer and Foster's *Al. Oxon.* There is no mention of Francis Dandy or his ejection in the latter publication. [See fn. 5 on p.176 above.]

[30] Matthews, *Calamy,* pp.334-5.

[31] PRO Wills: PROB 11/336/79. Quoted in J T Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Beseiged* (London, 1993) p. 220. Although, according to Geoffrey Holmes, fines were imposed on both nonconformist ministers and their lay patrons 'with numbing frequency', I have found no evidence of this occurring to any of the latter in Northamptonshire at this time. [See G. Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power 1660-1722* (London, 1993), p.149.]

Presbyterians and Conformity

At the close of the Civil War, sixty-nine ministers in Northamptonshire signed a *Testimony* 'in support of their Reverend Brethren of the Province of London.'.[32] Despite the credible link established between the puritan-led university education received by many of the Northamptonshire ministers who later refused to conform,[33] inspection of **Table 20** above shows that any association between declared Presbyterianism in 1648 and later Conformity, in terms of university education, is more difficult to establish. Of those concerning whom information is available, who in 1648 had signed the *Testimony* abhorring heresies and schism and reaffirming the Solemn League and Covenant's opposition to an episcopally dominated church, some twenty-three were Oxford *alumni*, twenty-eight others being from Cambridge and one from a Scottish University.[34] Out of the surviving Northamptonshire ministers who earlier signed this essentially 'Presbyterian' document and conformed in 1662, no common pattern of educational background can be observed, despite the relatively short period of time between these two events.[35] Thus, an exploration of reasons for Conformity by the majority of Presbyterian clergy in Northamptonshire must be sought in fields other than education.

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[32] *The Testimony of Our Reverend Brethren Ministers of the Province of London To the Truth of Jesus Christ and our Solemn League and Covenant etc. Attested by other Ministers of Christ in the County of Northampton* (London, 1648).

[33] See above pp. 177-181.

[34] Isham-Longden, *Northamptonshire Clergy.* Out of the sixty-nine signatories to the Northamptonshire *Testimony*, it has been possible to find data on the *alumni* of only fifty-two of the total. Archibold Symmer, Rector of Ashton, was a Graduate of Glasgow University.

[35] See **Table 20** column 4 on p. 178 above. Of the Northamptonshire signatories to *Testimony* fifteen are definitely known to have died before the Restoration.

According to William Sheils the Northamptonshire signatories to the *Testimony* represented almost thirty-five percent of the total clergy in the county, a greater proportion than in either Warwickshire or Norfolk, counties also noted for their puritan following.[36] Thus it can be deduced that the total number of clergy in Northamptonshire at this time would have been about 200, a considerable number of whom must have enjoyed pluralist livings in a county of about 300 parishes.[37] From an analysis of Matthews' revision of John Walker's *Sufferings,* out of over a hundred Northamptonshire clergy whose livings had been plundered and sequestered between 1642 and 1660 as a penalty for their royalist support, of those surviving the Interregnum twenty-one were restored to their livings on the return of the Stuart monarchy.[38]

It would appear from the overwhelming number of the clergy in the remaining Northamptonshire livings who conformed at the time of the Restoration that the majority were willing to accept an episcopalian church.[39] Amongst these there were no doubt those who, in order to preserve their livings, were able to trim their sails to follow the changing ecclesiastical breeze, moving with little difficulty from committed Presbyterianism in the Interregnum to a support of episcopacy at the Restoration. In this connection, an examination of the 1648 *Testimony* shows that only twelve of its sixty-nine

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[36] W.J.Sheils, *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558 – 1610* (Northampton, 1979), p. 147.

[37] In a lecture delivered by Rev Jackson Goadby in 1882, a 'Certificate from Northamptonshire to the Parliamentary Committee on Ministers' dated 1641 is cited, in which it is stated that there existed 316 benefices in the county at this time. This document , which he described as a 'rare tract', has not been located. See: Rev Jackson Goadby, *The Baptists and Quakers of Northamptonshire 1650-1700* (Northampton, 1882), p.9.

[38] A. G. Matthews, *Walker Revised, being a revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion 1642-60.* (Oxford, 1948), *passim.*

[39] VCH *(Northamptonshire),* Vol 2 p. 62.

original signatories who were still resident in Northamptonshire thirteen years later refused to conform.

Resistance to an episcopalian church and the refutation of Arminian rites, the corner stones of radical Presbyterianism, appear to have been sidelined by this majority, many of whom may have favoured the adoption of the compromise position first promulgated in 1641 by James Ussher (1581-1656). In his *Reduction of Episcopacy* this scholarly Calvinist Archbishop of Armagh and outspoken critic of the excesses of the Laudian regime, had set out an alternative to the demands of thorough-going Puritans for root and branch reform of the Church. It was the opposition to Sectarianism, with its perceived attendant threats to church and state and a need to embrace uniformity, which may have convinced many of these 'moderate' Presbyterians to subscribe in 1662.[40]

Though not a signatory to the 1648 *Testimony*, Robert Wild (1615-1679) was appointed Rector of Aynho two years earlier. He welcomed the Restoration but, refusing to conform, was amongst those ejected in 1662. A friend of Baxter, particularly in their shared dislike of sectaries, Wild reserved his greatest scorn for those Presbyterians who did conform in 1662. Exercising scathing wit though an acerbic pen he wrote a satire on Nathaniel Lee, a Presbyterian minister during the Interregnum, encapsulating him in the weak character of such turn-coat ministers:

> If the Great Turk to England come, I can
> Make *Gospel* truckle to the *Al Coran*.[41]

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[40] For an exploration into influences on Presbyterian opposition to separatism, see below Chapter 6 pp. 221-225.

[41] R. Wild, *The Recantation of a Penitent Proteus, or the Changeling* (1663).

Wild professed that he was happy to take an oath to support monarchical government, but not to condone any move to abjure the Solemn League and Covenant, endorse enforced usage of the book of Common Prayer or, like those Vestarian Controversialists a century earlier, adopt the wearing of church vestments.

I never will endeavour alteration
Of monarchy, or that of Royal name
Which God hath chosen to com(m)and this Nation,
But will maintain his Person, crown & Fame.

For Holy Vestments I'll not take an Oath
Which Linen most Canonical may be;
Some are for *Lawn, some Holland some sackcloth*
And *Hemp* for some is fitter than all three.[42]

Continuing to employ his pen against enforced Conformity, in a 1666 poetic letter to a conformist 'son of the church', he satirized in scatological terms the restrictions and injustices embodied in Five Mile Act of the previous year:

Nor is there any Statute of our Nation
That sayes, *in five miles* of a *Corporation*
If any *Outed-man* a Fart should vent,
That you should apprehend the *Innocent*.
If you so soon could smell the *Powder-Plot*,
What had you said if I had *bullets* shot?
Fye man! Our *mouths* were stopped long ago,
And would you have us silent too *below*? [43]

Preaching whenever he could, and indicted for holding an illegal conventicle in 1669, Wild characterized in his poems the feelings of those who saw the preservation of the puritan tradition, even when practised within the framework of a legitimate government, as one of no compromise.

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[42] R. Wild, *The Loyal Nonconformist or an Account of what he dare swear and what not* (London, 1666).

[43] 'The Fair Quarrel' in R. Wild D.D., *Iter Boreale with several other poems* (London, 1668), p. 107.

For those whom subscription to the canons of the Established Church in order to preserve their ministerial office was not acceptable, the personal situation in which they found themselves, either unemployed and brought to desperate straits, comfortably provided for by their own wealth or frugality, sustained through the intervention of God's providence or the assistance of generous patrons with nonconformist sympathies, seems not to have been a consideration. The basis of one Dissenter's decision not to conform was expressed in unequivocal terms by Walter Hornby, son of the 'ejected' minister of Marston Trussell, for whom his father had bought the advowson.[44] When pressed by his widowed mother to conform, he was clear in prioritising spiritual duty over bodily needs, saying: 'If I want bread you can help me: but if I go against my oath and have a guilty conscience, you cannot.' [45]

After-Conformists

Amongst those nonconformist ministers classified by Calamy as 'after-Conformists', seven had been ejected from Northamptonshire livings for refusal to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity in 1661/2 but later returned to the Church of England. In the forty-one English counties listed in Matthews' *Revision*, only three others had a total of after-Conformists exceeding that of Northamptonshire.[46] Since the data from Northamptonshire are insufficient, in

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[44] Calamy states that Walter Hornby senior was not actually ejected but died in 1662, before the Act came into force.

[45] Palmer (ed.), *Nonconformists Memorial,* p.230. In a letter from the latitudinarian minister Edward Pearse to Richard Baxter in 1687, the writer tells of a meeting that year with the Nonconformist Walter Hornby who had 'had 5 opportunities by death and removes of ministers to better his woldly condition by conformity ... but was fully persuaded in his own mind'. N.H. Keeble & G.F Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (Oxford, 1991), Vol II p. 292 [letter 1186].

itself, for any proper investigation into the ages of after-Conformists, a comparison with ministers in other nearby counties, similarly conforming after ejection, might provide enough information to determine whether those who had a change of mind following ejection were typically of any particular age group. From **Table 22** below it would appear that the majority of those who conformed after ejection, both in Northamptonshire and elsewhere, were men in their thirties, well-established in their clerical careers at the time of their deprivation

County	Under 30	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over	Age Unknown
Northamptonshire (7)		3		1		3
Rutland (3)	1		2			
Oxfordshire (4)		2	2			
Leicestershire (3)		2				1
Nottinghamshire (7)	1	1				5 (includes 3 newly ordained)
Totals	2	8	4	1	0	-

Table 22.
Ages at ejection, of 'after-conforming' ministers in various counties.

Of the Northamptonshire ministers, Samuel Howlet, ejected from his Horton living at the age of thirty-five, 'was at length prevailed upon by George Montagu Esq. and his Lady to use a little of the Common Prayer', and in doing so continued there until 1690.[47] Edward Trott, Rector of Draughton, ordained in 1657, resigned his living at the age of thirty shortly before the Act of

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[46] Although Matthews, in his introduction, expresses considerable reservations as to the accuracy of Calamy's categorisation of 'after-conformers', he accepts them as worthy of inclusion in his work.

[47] Matthews, *Calamy*, p. 280.

Uniformity, only to be re-presented by his patron two years later to another living in the county. Philip Tallents, another young minister, ejected from Lilford for non-subscription at the same age, became a conformist Vicar in a Lincolnshire living in 1674.

Lionel Goodrick, ejected from Overstone at the age of fifty-four, was an exception to the above age-range of after-Conformists, reappearing in an Essex curacy some twelve years later. Whilst a number of younger men, including those newly ordained in the earliest years of the Restoration, appear in the other counties, in Northamptonshire there is no apparent evidence of after-conforming by any of those ejected in this age group.

Nicholas Kenrick, who was ejected from his living at Earls Barton, recanted and on returning, according to Calamy, 'never went up the pulpit stairs with comfort' thereafter. Having previously written against the ceremonies of the Anglican Church, he was seen as only a 'half-Conformist', for which he was cited in the Ecclesiastical Court, but he was protected by Archdeacon Palmer 'under pretence of his bodily infirmities.'[48] Whether or not this feeling of unease was also shared by other 'after-Conformists', it is a valuable testimony of one whose decision to reach an accommodation with the Established Church was not a wholehearted one, coloured perhaps by his fear that the heavenly reward anticipated by the thorough-going and steadfast Nonconformist Baxter might not also be his to enjoy.

Continued Commitment

Following the ejection in 1662 of about one-fifth of the county's total clergy and the restoration to their livings of twenty-one of those who had suffered

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[48] Matthews, *Calamy,* p.305.

deprivation during the Interregnum, both Church and State may have felt, in the decade following the Restoration, that they were well on the way to a successful re-establishment of a uniform Church of England. However, despite the introduction of ecclesiastical sanctions and civil penalties, it is evident that, both before and after the short-lived Declaration of Indulgence of 1672, many nonconformist clergy continued to practise Dissent through unauthorised preaching, teaching or ministering at illegal gatherings in the county, both risking and accepting imprisonment as a result. As Geoffrey Holmes has observed, 'more than 200 of the ejected ministers of 1662 tasted prison at some time.'[49]

Vincent Alsop, a Congregationalist and fervent opposer of the episcopalian stranglehold on the Church of England, who continued to preach both in Rutland and Wellingborough despite his ejection from Wilby, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment in Northampton gaol for 'praying with a sick person'. John Maidwell, another Congregationalist, who incurred imprisonment in Leicester gaol during the 'Tory Reaction', ministered to large congregations at Kettering, from where he had been ejected, in open defiance of the Five Mile Act. The figure of 300 Dissenting souls in the 1676 *Compton Census* returns for Kettering, the highest recorded number of Nonconformists in the whole diocese, must be seen as the legacy of Maidwell's persistent and conscientious ministry there.[50] Thomas Browning, after his ejection from Desborough, became pastor of a Congregational church

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[49] Holmes, *Making of a Great Power*, p. 149.

[50] See above p. 98.

at nearby Rothwell, taking with him 'many of the pious people of his flock'.[51] Undeterred by a three-month prison sentence for attending and preaching at illegal conventicles in 1669, Browning 'returned to Rothwell ... in great triumph and seeks to redeem the time lost by doubling his pain since his return', according to a report written by one restored minister.[52] Richard Thorpe, who achieved his desire to die 'in the true faith of Christ ... in the Religion of a right old English Puritan'[53] one year before the Indulgence Declaration , appears to have adopted the stance of a Sunday Conformist at Barby Church whilst continuing to preach in his house 'on Thursdays without molestation' after his ejection.

As a result of the Indulgence Declaration and its consequent suspension of penalties for Dissenters, the record of applications received from , and licences issued to, Clergy and laity to preach or to offer their houses as places of nonconformist worship underlines the continued commitment and widespread support across Northamptonshire by those whose resistance to Conformity had not been extinguished by the legal and ecclesiastical sanctions in the intervening ten years since enforcement of the Act of Uniformity.

Licences	Presbyterian	Congregational/ Independent	Baptist
'Teachers'(44)	21	19	4
Meeting Places(74)	38	34	2

Table 23. Summary of Licences granted in 1672 to Dissenting Ministers and Meeting Places

Sources: G. Lyon-Turner, *Original Records* and F. Ives Cater, *Northants Nonconformity.*

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[51] N. Glass, *The Early History of the Independent Church at Rothwell, alias Rowell in Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1871), pp. 16-17.

[52] Calendar of State Papers (Domestic) Car. II 265 No. 14: 1669. Letter from Dr Jos Bentham to Williamson [later as Secretary of State, Sir Joseph], dated Sept 6th 1669.

[53] Dr Williams Library [DWL] MS 38.59 "Abstract of Wills of Ejected Ministers presented by A. G. Matthews (1934)" ff. 970-972.

Of the forty-four 'teachers' noted in **Table 23** above, half were ministers who had been ejected from their Northamptonshire livings between 1661 and 1662 but who were still living in the county. Taking into account the eleven ejected ministers who had died before this Indulgence came into force, and others who were no longer resident in Northamptonshire, there can be little doubt that the efforts of Church and State to coerce the subscription of these nonconforming ministers and to deter the laity from supporting them had failed. The remainder of the list of 'teachers' included four former ministers ejected from parishes outside the county, some of whom had previous local connections and sought the opportunity to return to Northamptonshire, another three holding general licences to preach in any licensed meeting place, and a number of unordained Baptist and lay 'teachers' .

Sir John Reresby, a contemporary observer, described the public emergence of Sectaries and Separatists during the short-lived Indulgence as 'the greatest blow that was ever given since the King's Restoration to the Church of England ... insomuch that all the laws and care of their execution against these separatists afterwards could never bring them back to due Conformity.'[54] In the opinion of Ives-Cater, the Indulgence of 1672 was the turning point which, despite the withdrawal of all the licences in the following year, had enabled a regrouping and strengthening of Nonconformity, never to be totally lost again.

Whilst the above observation may well be true, an earlier and more persuasive indication of the persistence of the puritan tradition and its nonconformist inheritance in Northamptonshire can be noted in the close

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[54] Cited in F. Ives Cater, *Northants Nonconformity.*

coincidence between many of the parishes where signatories to the 1648 *Testimony* were incumbent [See **Fig 14**] and those where illegal conventicles had been reported by Archdeacon Palmer in 1669, some three years *before* the short-lived Declaration. [**Fig. 2(a)**]. Whilst it might have been thought that it was the 1672 Indulgence which induced many occasional Conformists into full-blown separatism, and that withdrawal of it would stem its rise, it is in these earlier events reported by Palmer that the first real indication of the strength of post-ejection Nonconformity in the county is apparent.

Taking this into account, and considering the removal of a fifth of the county's clergy and replacement in their parishes by those of declared Conformity between 1660 and 1662 [See **Fig. 13**], the question of what influence or change any new incumbent was able to bring about amongst his parishioners must therefore be asked. Or, put another way, can this be seen as the legacy of a deeply entrenched puritan tradition unaltered by ecclesiastical manoeuvrings? In parishes where, according to Sheils, the 'main outlines of the ecclesiastical topography of the Diocese' had already been established, [55] the above evidence would show that the legacy of many of the ejected ministers had continued to have a lasting influence where neither the half-way house of 'moderate Presbyterianism' nor an Erastian form of church government was acceptable to the parishioners in many areas of previously established puritan tradition. Disapproval of such 'accommodation' may well have led members of their former congregations to spurn church attendance and become the 'obstinate separatists' reported by Palmer in 1676, many of

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[55] Sheils, *The Puritans,* p. 147.

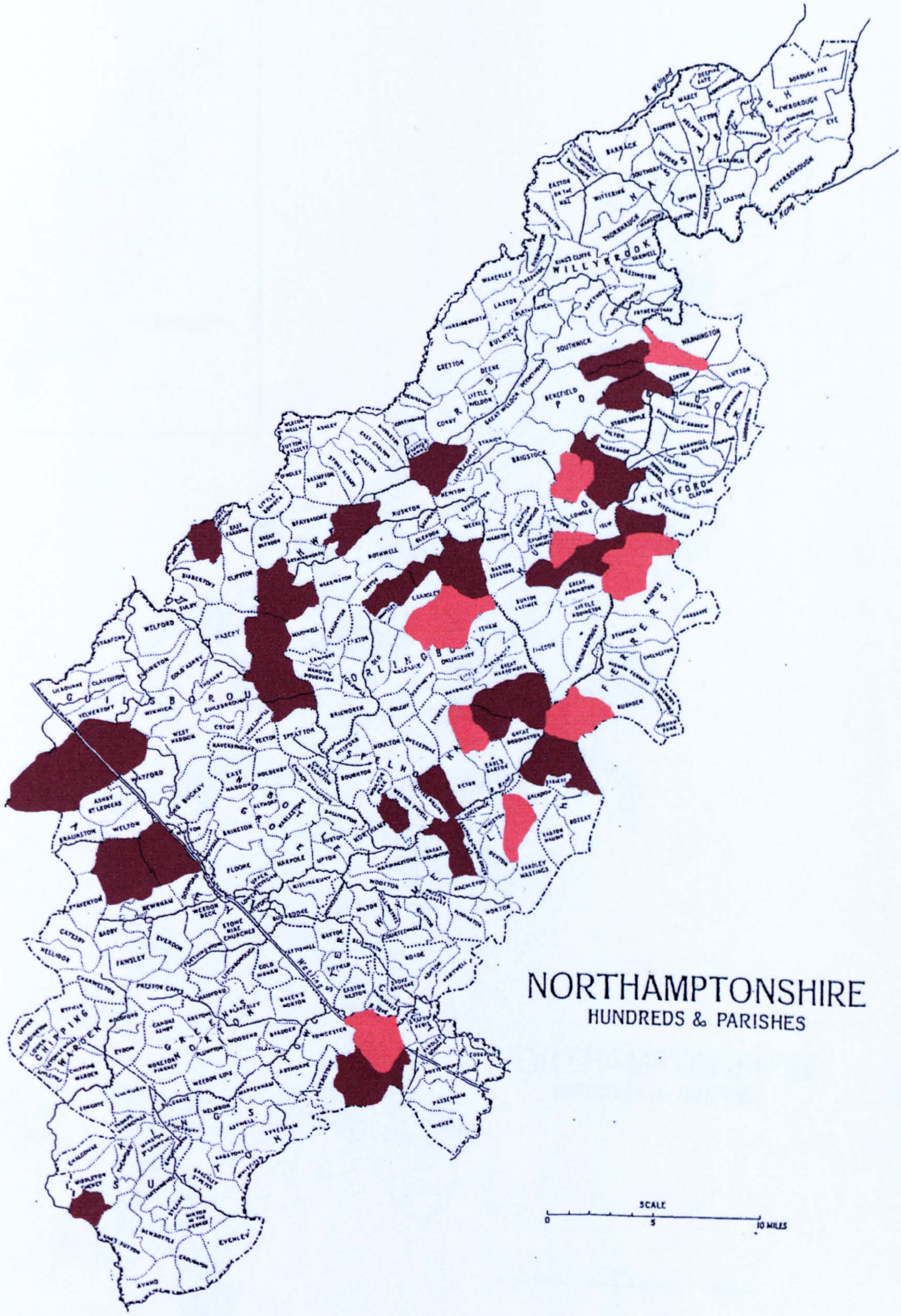
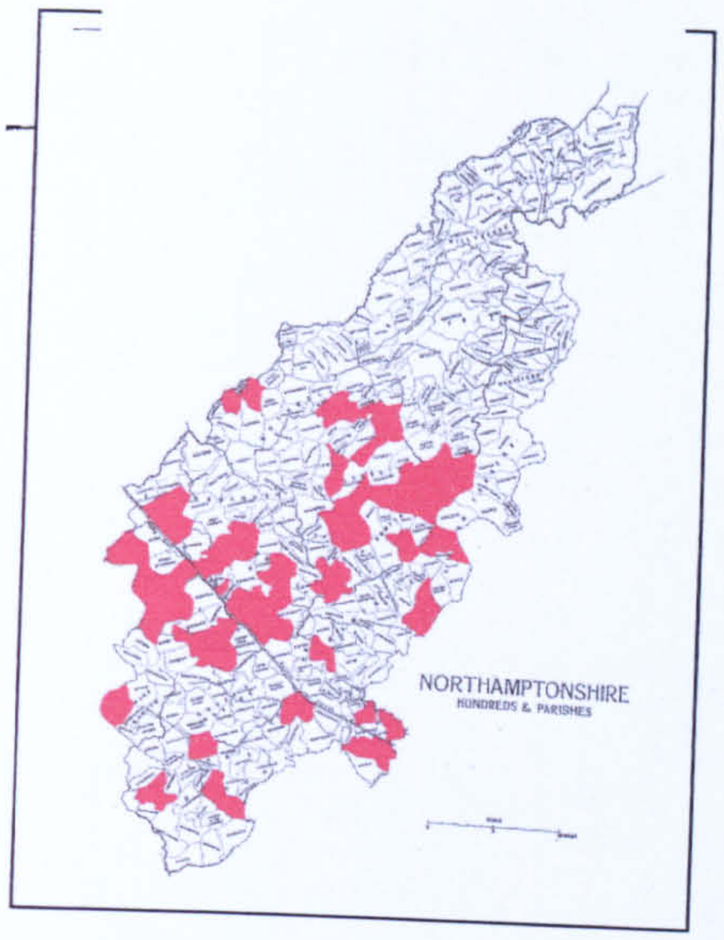


Fig. 13
Parishes from which Ministers ejected, silenced or resigned 1660-1662.

Sequestered living: Previous incumbent restored 1660--1662

Incumbent ejected 1662


NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
HUNDREDS & PARISHES

them continuing to practise active Dissent through attendance at conventicles often hosted and taught by their former silenced and ejected ministers even as late as 1683.[56]

The Conformist Clergy

Amongst the Anglican clergy who subscribed to the 1662 Act of Uniformity, believing that Dissent in any form was anathema, there were those who felt considerable anxiety about the future state of the Church, and for the souls under its cure.

John Spurr, in his analysis of religion in Restoration England, expresses the need to qualify the widely held belief that the newly-restored Church was a confident institution, 'enjoying inordinate power and privileges' which, together with its political influence exercised both in the House of Lords and in the Commons, was 'bolstered by its close association with the monarchy and the Stuart dynasty.'[57] In his view the Restoration Church felt 'persecuted and vulnerable', the clergy being 'prey to anxiety on a grand scale.' The preaching of explicitly political sermons, 'lambasting the seditious Nonconformists [and] castigating Popery', was commonplace across the nation, emphasising the sacredness of the monarchy and the Church's reverence for kingship as being part of her scriptural heritage. 'Our minister doth yearly, if not weekly, declare the sole interest of authority in all cases ecclesiastical and civil to be in the king' quotes Spurr, from the Episcopal Visitation returns for Cambridgeshire.[58]

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[56] See above, **Figs 2(b)** and **2 (c).**

[57] John Spurr, 'Religion in Restoration England' in Lionel Glassey (ed.), *The Reigns* of *Charles II and James VII & II* (London, 1997), pp. 97-100.

[58] Spurr, 'Religion in Restoration England', p. 99.

In this tradition, preaching a sermon before the Lord Mayor of London at the Guildhall chapel in 1682 entitled *The Dreadfulness of the Sin of Despising Dominion and Speaking Evil of Dignitaries,* John Whitfeild (or Whitfield), Rector of the parish of Bugbrooke near Northampton, heaped coals of fire on those who dared to defy the legal authority of the King in all matters spiritual.[59] Since the Act of Uniformity required an oath of allegiance to the monarch, Whitfeild employed exegeses from a wide range of Old and New Testament passages, particularly the Letter of Jude v.8, from which his title derives, to demonstrate the inexorable link between the need 'to fear God and honour the King, which the Apostle (Jude) joyns so indivisibly together'. 'He that is not a good subject cannot be a good Christian' was the crux of his argument. [60]

> The true original of this so grand despise and defamation in them that contemn Dominion ... and blaspheme Dignitaries [Whitfeild declaimed] are Ignorance and Atheism, there's the source of it all.

Continuing in this vein he described Nonconformists as those 'that are transported with delusive dreams and so [through] their blasphemous phantasies ... have all their senses seal'd up in profoundest slumber.'[61] It was not only their 'stupendous ignorance' but the character of the Dissenters themselves for which Whitfeild reserved his greatest wrath.

> [The Dissenter] is the devil's grand design, ever was and will be so, to nuzzle up men in profound ignorance of God and themselves and as contemptuous also (next to God) of their superiors.... Like a crafty Thief or Setter he draws them aside into some dark and uncouth passage , some cunning Corner,

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[59] J. Whitfeild, *The Dreadfulness of the Sin of Despising Dominion and Speaking Evil of Dignitaries* (London, 1682), Bodl. G. Pamph 983. (7).

[60] Whitfeild, *The Dreadfulness of the Sin,* p. 33.

[61] Whitfeild, *The Dreadfulness of the Sin,* pp. 5 and 6.

> Conventicle or Cabal, and there robs them of the best Treasures , that of their Allegiance towards God and Man for the Lord's sake. He shuts the eyes and stops the ears from giving entertain to anything of Sound Doctrine, and then opens it up to what is Corrupt, Perverse, Rebellious and the only saving Gospel Truths. He and his factors go out like beasts in the night, though of latter days with us their impudence as well as ignorance (the two prime accomplishments amongst them) have dared, with Absalom's brutality, to stare the Sun in the face. Such insinuating serpents that spit much of their venom everywhere against our Government established by law, promote an Apostasie and Rebellion. [62]

The justification of the Divine Right of the monarch in matters spiritual, and the requirement of conforming to the canons of the church established by his authority which therefore follows, were for Whitfeild unassailable Biblical truths:

> ...that Kings should come out of him [Abraham] that is descend lineally from him, by the unalterable and indefatigable right of inheritance...part of the sacred covenant ...that the Sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a law giver, until Shilo (the Great Sovereign) come. And unto him shall the Collection and Submission of the People be, and that for ever, no intercision is allowed of. The powers that were then are now ...the Legal and Imperial...to make the Monarchick Power, and submission to it, a Divine Ordinance. [63]

This was a sermon calculated, no doubt, to flatter and assuage the Lord Mayor of London and his Court of Aldermen, assembled to hear the fiery rhetoric of this Northamptonshire cleric defending the values of Divine Right and *suprema Rex,* and expounding his belief in the insidious political dangers of granting any measure of toleration to Nonconformists. The timing of this address is also of particular significance, when it is noted that the sermon was delivered during the mid-years of the 'Tory Revenge' against Dissenters,

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[62] Whitfeild, *The Dreadfulness of the Sin,* pp. 13 –15.

[63] Whitfeild, *The Dreadfulness of the Sin,* pp. 19 and 24.

following the failure of the Exclusion movement in which they had sided with the Whigs, the party of religious toleration, and by association were thereby seen as seditious and an undermining influence on the Royal authority.[64]

A graduate of Jesus College Cambridge, John Whitfeild succeeded his father Thomas in 1657 on the latter's death, having been intruded into the living of Bugbrooke on the nomination of the Lord Protector, and conforming at the Restoration.[65] In view of this, it is especially difficult to reconcile the concluding statement in his sermon, that 'the same fool that says in his heart there is no King, sayeth also, there is no God,' as being uttered by one whose nominator would have been considered, in the eyes of many who were dispossessed of their livings after the Civil War, as the usurper *par excellence* of royal authority. [66]

The intolerance shown by Whitfeild in his vitriolic rhetoric against Nonconformists in general was similarly reflected locally, particularly in the bad relations which he engendered with many of the inhabitants of his own parish. There is clear evidence in the Parish Records of this 'bad blood' between Whitfeild and the Quaker sectaries of Bugbrooke. In the margin of the Parish Register, alongside details of the burial of Margaret Goodwin, Widdow, on May 5th 1662, there is an asterisked entry which reads:

> *At whose burial the minr Mr John Whitfeld was throwne into the grave by a cruell and cursed sort of people call'd Quakers not without danger of being therein buried alive which he has here set upon record to live, when he is dead [67]

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[64] J. Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (Longman, 2000), pp.186-7.

[65] Isham-Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500* (Northampton, 1939), p. 43.

[66] Whitfield, *The Dreadfulness of the Sin,* p. 43.

[67] NRO. Bugbrooke Parish Records Burials 1617-1705.

Secular records also show evidence of a deep-seated and continuing antagonism between the Rector and many of his parishioners. In 1671, the village constable of Bugbrooke was reported to the authorities by Whitfeild, for not carrying out his office according to the law.

> ...I went to the house of Stephen Peasnell Constable of Bugbrooke and told him that I had heard there had been a conventicle in the Town of Bugbrooke of very dangerous consequence where one Mr Edward Bagshawe a silenced minister preached and that there were several to hear him and advised the said Stephen Peasnell to do his office according to the law which the said Stephen Peasnell refused to do and uttered these words following: that he cared not a turd for me bid me doe my worst for he valued me not a fart bid me kiss his arse a turd in my teeth and used these and like words over and over. [68]

In response to this, a recognizance was issued to Stephen Peasnell to appear in court to answer for 'having spoken oprobious and reviling language to and against Mr John Whitfeild of Bugbrooke Clarke, and committed other misdemeanours'. The *Acta* appended to the Roll of this same Quarter Session include the following order that

> Stephen Peasnell of Bugbrooke be suppressed from brewinge and selling of Ale or Beere for the space of three yeares next ensuing. And that none other sell Ale or Beere in that house wherein he now lives during this tyme. [69]

It must be assumed from this order that Peasnell was carrying on the occupation of alehouse keeper in addition to his duties as village constable and that the withdrawal of his Licence was considered by the court to be a fit punishment for his misdemeanour. Although there is evidence to show that in some counties there was a bar to the appointment to this office of any person

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[68] NRO. QSR 1/61/32 (Michaelmas, 1671) dated May 3rd : also see above p. 160.

[69] NRO. QSR 1/61/24 (Michaelmas, 1671)

interested in the sale of liquor, it would appear not to have been so in Northamptonshire at this time.[70]

In the following year William West, a servant to Edward Pickering of Bugbrooke, was accused of 'breaking the cart of one Mr Whitfeild, Clarke of Bugbrooke'.[71] The increasing isolation from his parishioners felt by the Rector is further evidenced by Joseph Besse in his chronicle of the sufferings of Northamptonshire Quakers. Appearing before the Justices in Northampton against two men taken at a Bugbrooke meeting in 1682, Whitfeild hoped to have them convicted 'on his own single Information, but told the justices that he could not get one soul else in all his Parish to appear against them.'[72] This continuing mutual ill-feeling appears to have come to a head in 1688, when a major altercation between the Rector and a number of the villagers is recorded. In a lengthy entry in the Parish Register, dated 16th May of that year, Whitfeild felt compelled to record this dispute '*in perpetuam cujus memoriam.*'[73]

From the Rector's account it would appear that the two constables of the parish, 'with the assistance instigation and abetment' of a number of the Bugbrooke parishioners, had 'by clamour and tumult obtained an order of sessions for [John Whitfeild] to pay his Tithe and Gleabe in an undue proportion towards the whole of two constables levies upon distress to the value of one pound and two shillings.' Despite his plea that such tithes had

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[70] E. G. Dowdell , *A Hundred Years of Quarter Sessions - The Government of Middlesex 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 1932), pp. 19 and 20.

[71] NRO. QSR 1/69/5 (Easter, 1673).

[72] Joseph A. Besse: *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers* (London, 1753), Vol I. p. 543.

[73] Bugbrooke Parish Register entry dated May 18 1688.

never been demanded of him nor of his predecessors, his protests could not obtain any hearing and acceptance. In addition these same parishioners had caused Whitfeild to be called and cited in the Courts Leet and Baron held at Banbury for the Lord of the Manor 'in a most illegal as well as unusual way ...and there to be amered in severall great and considerable summes of mony, clearly contrary to all Law and Conscience.' As a result of this judgement the constables, together with the above parishioners, 'seised by distress in my absence the best cow I had of very good value and occasioned her death by their violent and furious driving her six miles into a Bailiff's hands, who kept her forcibly from me.' Finally, Whitfeild felt 'necessitated for Peace and Quietness sake ... and against all [his] inclinations and utmost endeavours... to pay each of the severall assessments and amerciamts (*sic*) so forcibly imposed ... in that surreptitious and rapacious manner' upon him, concluding his account by registering his protest that 'no such violent invasion ..of the rights and priviledges of his successors ... nor the unjust and unusuall charge be hereafter entailed upon any of them.'

The parishioners named by John Whitfeild as being involved in the above episode, although not readily identifiable as Quakers, would most likely have been among this number of 'Obstinate Separatists', since several of their names appear in the Bugbrooke churchwardens' returns as non-attenders at Communion and other church services. In addition several of them were men who, according to the Hearth Tax returns, were of considerable socio-economic status within their community. Edward Pickering, who had already been named as employer of the William West who was arraigned some years earlier for malicious damage to the Rector's cart, had five hearths, Samuel Preston and Thomas Garlick each being assessed with four.

It will be recalled that, in the returns of the 1676 *Compton Census*, the parish of Bugbrooke was recorded as having one of the highest number of Nonconformists in the whole of the Peterborough Diocese, being some 100 souls or one third of the whole adult population of the village. In addition, Bugbrooke was earlier reported in 1669 as the site of a number of illegal conventicles attended by large numbers. It has not been possible to offer any comprehensive explanation for the high incidence of Nonconformity and Separatism in the parish of Bugbrooke. However, the personality of John Whitfeild with his intolerant and outspoken views on Nonconformity, together with the evidence of sustained alienation between himself and many different inhabitants of Bugbrooke, culminating in the concerted actions against him led by influential citizens of the village, may go some way towards explaining why so many turned to other, albeit illegal, gatherings for worship or absented themselves from his church altogether. Conversely it might be argued that Whitfeild's ultra-extremist views, developed and expressed in a national forum, may well have had their genesis locally in the deteriorating relationships between him and many of his dissenting community.

Diametrically opposed to the views expressed by Whitfeild were those of another Northamptonshire cleric, Edward Pearse, whose 1662 appointments included the livings vacated by the ejection of Thomas Burroughs at Cottesbrooke and Nathaniel Whiting at Aldwinckle. A conforming minister, Pearse espoused a latitudinarian view urging, for the sake of the Church, an element of accommodation, rather than confrontation, with those Protestants who had chosen not to conform. His belief in a broad church that would accommodate Dissenters within its fold was articulated in an anonymous

pamphlet, running to several editions, entitled *The Conformist's Plea for the Nonconformist.*[74] In the introduction to the 1683 edition of his work, he explained his position and the main thrust of his plea made by one who, like his readers, was 'against Dissenters also, but [also] against Dissenters within doors that keep other Dissenters out.' 'Let us make up the breach as fast and as strong as we can', he urged, whilst stating that he did not 'speak for Dissenters, neither is he hired by them, nor is he speaking for them in the hopes of Preferment under the non-partisan position.' Pearse voiced his concern for 'the vast damage to thousands of souls ... who, by the exclusion and suppression [of Nonconformists], are committed, in the meanwhile, to them that neither can nor will.' He acknowledged the danger of granting toleration to Dissenters whilst they remain Dissenters, which 'is strongly suggested from the multiplication of Papists, Socinians and Jews, as the effect of toleration [granted] in the Netherlands.' If the terms were widened, he argued, there would be no need of toleration, since they would be incorporated within the national church.

> There can be no such danger from Christians of the same faith and substantial worship but of different accidental modes, as from Socinians, Papists and Jews of a contrary faith and worship. Why we cannot be as kind and liberal to natives, indulging a liberty to them in small things, as we are to French Dutch and Lutherans, I do not know.

Not reluctant to condemn certain elements within his own church, Pearse was particularly outspoken about the exclusivity exhibited by many of his fellow clergy.

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[74] *The Conformist's Plea for the Nonconformist or a Just Compassionate Representation of the present condition of the Nonconformists by a Beneficed Minister.....* (London, 1681), and further editions.

> I am for Unity and Conformity, but not such a Uniformity which hinders Unity, by turning the Church into a Party. The Church (party) by monopolizing the Church...have no greater share of the Spirit of the true Catholic Church than their despised Brethren, commonly called Schismatics, by them. These are *Supra* or *Transconformists* that keep the rule of Conformity as much as they do their residence. These men are Nonconformists too and are a Rubrick to themselves. I am for the calling of more Nonconformists into the company and for making Nonconformists Conformists. [75]

Turning to the question of the sufferings endured by those who had been ejected, Pearse was equally condemnatory of the actions of their ejectors, most of whom were single persons who, 'having eaten the cream of preferments in their rising times, had shown little consideration towards those conscientious young ministers 'who had had little time to lay up for their families and themselves.'[76]

The effect of divorcing the ejected ministers from those whom they had baptised and espoused to Christ Pearse likened to 'the changing of a nurse to a weakly child', which would, in his opinion, 'make many stagger and call into question those tasks that had been delivered to them, since that their preachers are judged unfit to be continued in the trust of souls.'[77] Pearse admitted that Nonconformists, like other ministers, had their faults, and did not pass up the chance to take a side-swipe at the pointlessness of the literary theological controversies which had raged between the Dissenter Alsop, with his *Mischief of Impositions* (1680), in reply to the latitudinarian Dean of St Paul's, Edward Stillingfleet's *Mischief of Separation* (1679). Referring to the

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[75] *Conformist's Plea* (3rd edition, London , 1683), p. 8.

[76] *Conformist's Plea* , p. 9.

[77] *Conformist's Plea,* p. 19.

qualities of nonconformist preachers, he stated that 'The angels of the Church are not the Angels of Heaven... but their holiness and morality is conspicuous ... up and down the land.'[78] Having opened his Plea with the opinion that the Church is 'as ill at ease, as at any time, in a wasting complaining declining state', the author concluded his argument by quoting a recently deceased contemporary poet and politician: 'Let Religion be our *Primum Quaerte,* for all else are but etceteras to it.'[79]

In reading *The Conformist's Plea for the Nonconformist* it is easy to understand why, in his introduction, Pearse urged the 'Bookseller' to preserve his anonymity, describing himself as 'a Beneficed Minister and Regular Son of the Church of England.'[80] Dr Robert South, the renowned defender of the Established Church and one who certainly would not have described the distinguishing theological and liturgical differences between the Dissenters and those of the Established Church as being 'either accidental modes' or 'etceteras', predictably denounced Pearse's plea as 'like all the Pleas and Apologies for Non-conformists (tho' made by some conformists themselves) senceless and irrational.' [81] The publication of Pearse's *Plea* during a time of critical relations between Dissenters and the Crown, when viewed against the widespread and increasing tide of invective against Nonconformity in any form and typified in the county by those such as John Whitfeild, serves to

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[78] *Conformist's Plea,* p. 37.

[79] *Conformist's Plea,* p .62, quoting from Sir Benjamin Rudyerd (1572-1658).

[80] *Conformist's Plea,* p.1.

[81] Dr South's response quoted in: Leonard W. Cowie, 'Pierce , Edward (1630/31-1694)', ODNB. There appears to be some ambiguity in the spelling of the surname, Pearse, Pierce and Pearce all being found in various references to this author.

explain the actions of the Northamptonshire justices in presenting this book to the Quarter sessions and their attempts to prosecute this anonymous author.[82]

Whether the latitudinarian views espoused by Pearse were borne out of concern for the parishioners within his own churches or engendered by other influences is difficult to assess. Whilst in neither of his livings had any 'significant dissent' been recorded in the *Compton Census* in the decade previous to the publication of Pearse's *Plea,* there is a marked absence of persons of the 'middling-sort' in the socio-economic composition of the parish of Cottesbrooke who might have supported the views of the High-Church Tory party in its extreme reaction to Dissent at this time. Despite Pearse's assurance to the 'Reader' of his non-partiality towards Nonconformists, there is much within his text that would lead many to see this outspoken cleric, who remained in Northamptonshire from 1663 to his death in 1694, as an apologist for their cause. All the more so when one considers that his wife Elizabeth was the niece of Sir John Langham, who had shown so much sympathy to Pearse's predecessor, 'taking him in after his ejectment' from the living at Cottesbrooke.[83]

In a collection of the Langham papers there is an undated and unattributed notebook containing preparatory notes for a history of the family in which the unknown author remarks on Pearse's marriage as follows:

> And though in those days a clergyman was not generally looked upon as a suitable match for a lady, there must have been exceptions and Sir John is sure to have done his best he could for his orphan niece.[84]

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[82] See above pp.157.

[83] See above p. 185.

[84]NRO. Langham MS L(C) 925.

The 'Gathered Congregations'

In addition to those clergy who were unable to conform to the requirements of the 1662 Act, the all-embracing category of Dissent was extended to cover separatists who had no interest in membership of any national church. According to Mark Bell, a Baptist historian, these 'gathered congregations' in seventeenth-century England 'signified a community of believers existing outside of the Church of England on a voluntary basis, constituting their own church'.[85] However, as Barry White has pointed out, 'since the vast majority of Baptists ... rejected the whole concept of an established church ... the Act of Uniformity was marginal for most Baptists in its immediate personal impact at the time'.[86] An examination of the writings and experiences of this separatist group will be seen to shed an interesting light on the personal beliefs and activities in this significant area of Northamptonshire Dissent.

The confusion over the loose ascription of a particular 'persuasion' to adherents of the various 'gathered churches' has already been mentioned, especially in the use of the term 'Anabaptist' as an all embracing label which often covered both Baptists and Independents, latterly described as Congregationalists.[87] It would appear that the label 'Anabaptist' was used against seventeenth-century English Baptists by contemporaries, as a purposeful smear to link them with the atrocities of the Munster revolutionaries of the previous century.[88]

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[85] M.R. Bell, *Apocalypse How? Baptist Movements during the English Revolution* (Macon, Georgia, 2000), p.3.

[86] B.R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1983), pp. 101-2.

[87] See above p. 149.

[88] See White, *The English Baptists,* p. 30.

In many cases there was nothing in common between the university-educated but ejected Presbyterian and Independent ministers and the 'unlearned' lay preachers in these 'gathered' churches.[89] Francis Stanley and Benjamin Morley, two of the earliest Northamptonshire leaders of a gathered congregation at Ravensthorpe in the north of the county, have been variously described as Baptists, Anabaptists or Congregationalists, although the phrase 'Gathered according to the Primitive Pattern' would appear to be the most accurate description of their persuasion. A Declaration of Faith under this title was signed in 1652 by these and other 'General Baptists' throughout eight counties who, together with a rejection of infant baptism, espoused the Arminian belief in Christ's atonement being for all people.[90] In this respect they differed from those Baptists 'of a Particular sort' who, whilst holding similar views on the fallacy of infant baptism, held a Calvinist belief in salvation as the preserve of the elect.

The teaching role of Benjamin Morley, who was described by Archdeacon Palmer in his "Account of Conventicles" as an Anabaptist 'Bishop or Superintendent', and by later commentators as one (with Stanley) of the 'leading spirits in the cause of the Baptist Church' in Northamptonshire, has been noted in an earlier chapter.[91] The church and gathered congregation at Ravensthorpe constituted part of an inter-congregational network of thirty churches stretching from Lincolnshire to Oxford, with Morley continuing the evangelistic preaching work pioneered by Samuel Oates of the London Baptist congregation at Bell Alley, advancing the cause of these General Baptists and

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[89] Spurr, 'Religion in Restoration England', p. 105.

[90] *The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations Gathered According to the Primitive Pattern* (1651) Reprinted by Taylor & Sons (Northampton, n.d.).

[91] See above p.76.

bringing the disparate churches closer together 'both in theology and cooperation'.[92] Morley's wide-ranging 'divers works' around Midland counties are also evident in an account written in 1672 by the Elder of a 'Gathered Church' in Lincolnshire.[93]

Like many others of the Godly, Morley held a 'providentialist' belief in divine intervention in the affairs of man, interpreting through such phenomena God's implicit approval of their faith and actions. Unlike others, however, Morley was careful also to counter possible charges by sceptics that a particular incident reported to him was 'a false forged lie of the Independent and Baptist people, scarce credited by any'.

> [Morley,] a person well-known to thousands (in Lincoln) ...and of Good Repute'...and unwilling (if truth) such a mighty Providence should pass, without the utmost Testimony of its certainty, resolved himself to ride on purpose to the Town of Northwillingham...and was so satisfied in the truth of what (was) attested ...that it might gain credit in the minds of all that should hear it. [94]

From this contemporary account one could conclude that Morley was energetic, thorough and open-minded in his pursuit of the truth and accuracy of a manifestation of God's Providence that had been related to him. Others, with a less thorough-going approach, might well have seized on and promulgated this episode with evangelistic fervour, without the exercise of the

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[92] Bell, *Apocalypse How?*, p.122. See also White, *The English Baptists*, p.36-37. Samuel Oates, the father of the notorious Titus Oates, was amongst those sectarians whose evangelistic activities were attacked by Thomas Edwards and his correspondents in his *'Gangraena'*. See below pp. 220-1.

[93] R. James, *A True and Impersonal Narrative of the Eminent Hand of God that befell a Quaker and his Family at the Town of Panton in Leicestershire.* (1672) Bodl. Gough Lincs 15(1).

[94] James, *A True and Impersonal Narrative.* For details of this 'manifestation' see below pp. 234-5.

obvious care and careful regard for his church, whose reputation Morley was keen to preserve from continual attacks by Presbyterian interests.

Francis Stanley's 1655 treatise *Christianity Indeed,* the 'General Baptist' view of the required relationship between Church and State, 'neither [to] desire nor design to diminish the power of the king', echoes the view expounded in the *The Humble Representation and Vindication* signed by Morley and others a year earlier.[95] In the introduction to his work, Stanley explains the reason for his first incursion into print and its value in promulgating the Gospel, together with his overriding belief in the authority of the scriptures:

> ... looking towards the Press ... because a paper direction may be received, where a Man's person will be refuted; and as a matter printed may be imbraced, where a sermon cannot be preached. ... As a Mapp directs us both to Town and Country, so doth holy writ discover the Borders and Treasures of the Heavenly and Holy City.[96]

A major section of his earlier work is devoted to stressing the duty of all Christ's congregation to submit to the civil power. In this unambiguous statement of a Christian's duty, Stanley distanced his 'gathered church' from the Fifth Monarchists and others who totally rejected Erastianism, and reproached the Presbyterians who, in league with the Established Church, had made common cause in attempting to group the Baptists with Quakers as 'seditious sectarists'.

> By the authority of [the same] scriptures and holy writings we are injoyned to be subject to civill powers and civill things and that under the penalty of condign punishments ; not only for wrath but for conscience sake we ought to obey not for

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[95] F. Stanley, *Christianity Indeed; or a well disciplined Christian the Delight of Christ...* (1655) [Bodl. Ref : Mason AA 150]. B. Morley *et al, The Humble Representation and Vindication of Many of the Messengers,. Elders and Brethren belonging to severall of the Baptized Churches in this Nation.* (1654).

[96] Stanley, *Christianity Indeed.*

> fear of vengeance but because of a good conscience. .. wherein our submission may tend to the civill peace of our Country and Nation... 'Tis therefore our burthen to hear ourselves misreported, as if we were no well wishers to National Government. [97]

There is, however, little in the above treatise from which an insight into Stanley's character can be gleaned. A man of rigidly fundamentalist views with little tolerance of either Presbyterians or Quakers, he shared the view, common to many, that:

> A Heretick should be cast away because one corrupted person may corrupt the whole body, being one that is perverted or willingly turned aside from the Truth. An actor of Sexts, or maintainer of a false believe...becomes an instrument of his own condemnation.[98]

Some six years later, following the January uprising of the Fifth Monarchists in London in 1661, the increasing perception of all Dissenters as a danger to the state resulted in intolerance and comprehensive persecution of all who chose not to conform. As co-signatory, with seven others, to a pamphlet entitled *Sions Groans for her Distressed*, Stanley urged the sovereign power

> to heed the great controversie that now is afoot as to uniformity in Worship, to impose by violence, where they cannot perswade under seeming pretence of scripture, warrant and antiquity, the contrary to which is asserted in the words of Truth and soberness by Scripture Reason and Practice of Primitive times... that we might live a peaceable and a quiet life in all Godliness and honesty. [99]

It would appear from this that Stanley's early enthusiasm for a church whose practices would be subservient to the civil magistracy, purified of sectaries and heretics, was now turning into a plea for toleration for his particular brand of separatism.

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[97] Stanley, *Christianity Indeed,* p. 38.

[98] Stanley, *Christianity Indeed,* p. 77.

[99] Fra. Stanley et al, *Sions Groans for her Distressed* (London ,1661), Bodl. Pamph C116 (19) f. 7.

Reviewing the history of the Baptist Church in Northamptonshire, Rev Jackson Goadby, in a lecture delivered in 1882, remarked on the lack of records of the activities of Baptist congregations in the county prior to the 1651 *Faith and Practice* declaration. Lacking a chronicler to equal the Quakers' Joseph Besse,

> With no scribe among them ... and chiefly drawn from the humbler classes and disposed to speak lightly of learning, the General Baptists suffered from their lack of men of culture, and we are left very largely in ignorance of their early evangelizations, the extent of their work and the sufferings [under the persecution of Dissenters] they were called upon to endure.[100]

A further indication of the importance of Morley and Stanley within the General Baptist churches, can be seen from their presence among the forty signatories of 'Elders Deacons and Brethrens' to a petition, a 'confession of faith of those who are (falsely) called Ana-baptists', delivered to the new King at the Restoration.[101] As to the numerical strength of this dissenting movement, according to Goadby the presenter of this petition remarked to the King that those who 'owned and approved' it were more than 20,000'.[102]

Despite the sparsity of information on the occupation and character of 'lay' preachers in the 'Gathered Churches' of Northamptonshire, some clue may be found in a Tract entitled *The Prerogative Priests Passing Bell*, written

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[100] J. Goadby, *The Baptists and Quakers of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1882), p.19. Similarly the lack of extant records of members of the Baptist churches in late seventeenth-century Northamptonshire, has made any useful socio-economic analysis of its members impossible. (See above p. 119 and **Table 17(b)** in this respect).

[101] Anon, *A Brief confession or declaration of the faith set forth by many of us, who are (falsely) called Ana-baptists* (London, 1660).

[102] Goadby, *The Baptists and Quakers of Northamptonshire,* p.19.

by one William Hartley of Stony Stratford, a village on the south-west border of the county.[103] Although the tract was penned in the decade prior to the Restoration, in response to an attack on the preaching by 'Mechanicks or Tradesmen', there is no reason to suggest that the occupations of those engaged in the lay ministry in the following decade were particularly different. Hartley, describing himself as 'a well-wisher unto truth', hotly disputed the view of Thomas Hall, a Presbyterian Worcestershire curate and close friend of the vociferous anti-separatist writer Thomas Edwards, who saw the pulpit as the sole prerogative of the canonically ordained. [104]

> You are pleased to say that although we have not the Latin tongue, yet we have the lying tongue. 'Tis pity that they are so inseparable in yourself; your animosity is against laymen's preachings; sure you are from Rome for your speech betrays you; in the Commonwealth of Saints there is no such distinction of Laity and Clergy, but all are one (or alike) in Jesus Christ.[105]

Writing in order to show the 'Usefulness, Equity, Lawfulness and Necessity of Private persons to take upon them Preaching and Expounding of the Scriptures', Hartley listed their occupations as a Nailer, a Baker a Plowright a Weaver and a Baker's boy, with a humorous addendum to each name in the form of an apt association between their trade and their spiritual gifts. In concluding this section of his 'Brief Reply' he stated that

> Peter was a Catcher of fish by nets, and men by preaching and both allowable by Jesus Christ. Therefore trading and preaching is legitimate in the self-same person. [106]

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[103] W. Hartley, *The Prerogative Priests Passing -Bell or Amen to the Rigid Clergy* (London, 1651), Bodl. C1.16 (2) Linc.

[104] Tho. Hall, *The Pulpit Guarded with XX arguments (London, 1651),* Bodl. C 1.16 (1) Linc.

[105] Hartley, *The Prerogative Priests Passing -Bell* p. 3.

[106] Hartley, *The Prerogative Priests Passing-Bell,* p. 6. Also see below p. 230, where Mulliner in his *Testimony* similarly stresses the humble status of his fellow Quakers as 'simple mechanicks and poor tradesmen' .

Hartley also commented on the conduct of meetings held in the town:

> What care and industry the Presbyterated Party do take to render both persons and meetings of the Separation odious in the eyes of the magistrate and people, for taste thereof I thought it good to insert the carriage of Mr Farmer and Gore etc of Towcester, whose malicious and envious spirit could not be satisfied in setting Major Duckets Troopers to fall upon us ... whilst Captain Elliot was speaking. [107]

If this was the same Charles Gore, a wealthy mercer of Towcester presented in 1670 for holding an illegal Independent Conventicle at a house near the town, Hartley's observation serves to stress not only the continuity and persistence of those whose separatist persuasions were undaunted by the change from a legal to an illegal activity, but also an example of the antipathy shown by radical Presbyterians towards other separatist groups, against which Morley and the General Baptists had been continually on their guard. Moreover, the listed occupations of lay preachers in the gathered churches in Towcester provide useful information where so little is known. Despite his attacks on the Baptist 'mechanick preachers' and their rejection of infant baptism, Hall's own career as an ordained minister came to an end when, unable to come to terms with the Restoration, this teacher and controversialist defender of Cromwellian Presbyterianism was ejected from his parish in King's Norton. [108]

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[107] Hartley, *The Prerogative Priests Passing –Bell* p. 9.

[108] C.D, Gilbert,'Hall, Thomas (1610-1665), ODNB. Also Tho. Hall. *The Font Guarded with XX Arguments, or that great controversie of infant- baptism, proving the lawfulness thereof.*, (London, 1652).

Conclusion

Throughout the above analysis, the persistent and recurring themes of tension and conflict between those on each side of the ecclesiastical divide, noted by Spurr in his revisionist view of the Anglican Church as an 'anxious and vulnerable' institution during the years of the Restoration, are evident throughout the diocese of Peterborough.[109] The deep-seated views inherited from their puritan-led educational establishments hostile to an episcopally-dominated and state-controlled church, which stressed the ritualistic aspects of liturgy over the scriptural, would appear to have been influential factors in the rationale of those clergy who chose the path of Dissent .

However, it is also apparent from this investigation that very real tensions existed *within* the various strands of conformist and nonconformist thought. Ultra-conformist clergy like Whitfeild shared little in common with latitudinarians like Pearse, with the exception of a shared fear of separatism. Moderate Presbyterians, who abjured their previously-sworn *Solemn Oath and Testimony* by choosing 'accommodation' with the Restoration Church, drew scorn from those of the radical wing who elected for self-governing separatism. Whilst Conformity, with its perceptions or misperceptions of the dangers of separatism, led parish clergy to guard their pulpit through condemnation of preaching by the non-episcopally ordained, the separatist groups themselves struggled against each other to preserve their identity, scriptural authority and reputation. The need to distance themselves from the millenarianism of Fifth Monarchists or the subversive Quaker notions of a congregation of all believers (whose 'lay' church will be considered in the

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[109] See above p. 197.

next chapter) was also paramount in their struggle to be seen as credible alternatives to mainstream Protestant worship.

Whilst Northamptonshire's experiences can be seen as a microcosm of the conflicts between Conformity and Dissent across the nation, the above evidence has also underlined the effect of these tensions at parish level. Many on either side of the ecclesiological debate were content to air their differences through acerbic pamphlets, others expressing their opinions more forcefully. Hartley's report of a physical confrontation between Presbyterians and Baptists at Towcester may have been a reference to an isolated incident, but the increasing alienation of the Rector of Bugbrooke from a large number of his parishioners over a long period demonstrates a serious fracturing of relations between local Conformists and Dissenters and lends support to Christopher Hill's observation (albeit of pre-Restoration radicalism) of the 'dislocating effect' of Sectarianism on community life.[110]

There remains, however, the problem of the religious affiliation of an unidentifiable number who left no record of their religious persuasion, as does the issue of those who were totally indifferent to religion, for whom any changes in its state-prescribed form would have been a total irrelevance to them and to their way of life. Spurr makes the general assertion that, throughout the country, 'Dissenters had a much richer sacramental life than Anglicans', contrasting the need of the former 'to strengthen their common resolve through participation in the corporate communal act of the sacrament ...[whereas] Anglican parishioners were simply residents of a particular area.'

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[110] See above p. 20., and C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972) *passim*.

Contemporary commentators certainly noted that wherever they looked in society 'reverence for religion was ebbing away on all sides.' [111]

William Lloyd, the Bishop of Peterborough, found, on his first episcopal visitation in 1680, that the parishioners in most parishes of the Diocese 'were strangely averse to the Liturgy and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper' and that 'the Churchwardens have been generally remiss in due Presentments, particularly of such as Absent themselves from the Sacrament.' [112] Similarly, the incumbent of the Oxfordshire parish of Adderbury, only a mile from Northamptonshire's south-western border, noted the 'indifferency and coldness in religion, and that worldly mindedness, which possesses the generality.'[113]

Perhaps the most significant fact emerging from the above analysis is that the personal experiences of those dissenting and conforming clergy for whom evidence is available, were not unique to Northamptonshire. Their own experiences and concerns appear, in many ways, to have been common to many others in post-Restoration England.

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[111] Spurr, 'Religion in Restoration England', p. 114.

[112] Bodl. Rawlinson MS d.1163, ff. 16 and 17.

[113] Spurr, 'Religion in Restoration England', p. 117.

Chapter 6:

Puritanism and Dissent: Change and Continuity

In this final chapter the phenomenon of Restoration Dissent in Northamptonshire will be considered within a wider context. The growing intolerance of Presbyterians towards separatist groups during the Interregnum, and its legacy during the Restoration, will be examined, as will the short-lived hopes of unity between different nonconformist groups in the early 'post-toleration' years. The continued growth of the Quaker movement and its attraction despite periods of intense persecution, as expressed through the personal experience of one Northampton citizen, will be explored. The influence of 'Providentialism' as a justification and comfort for the actions of both sides in the religious conflict will be discussed from both contemporary and modern historical perspectives. In conclusion, together with a review of the findings of this thesis, the question will be addressed as to whether events during the Restoration period should be viewed as a disjunction or continuity in the wider tradition of puritan thought.

Gangraena, Separatism and Sectarianism.

The puritan tradition established in England from the late sixteenth century had reached a distinct crossroads by 1660. From a 'world turned upside-down' by the political and religious turmoil of the 1640s, the Restoration settlement effected a re-establishment and re-orientation of authority, together with strictly controlled Protestantism, through an uncompromising and increasingly sacramental and ritualistic church. Those unable to accommodate their anti-episcopal beliefs within this new Conformity sought separatism from the Established Church. For others, 'true' Puritanism *ex ecclesia* was

exercised through Sectarianism, the foundations of which had been laid during and immediately after the Civil War, in the emergence of radical religio-political groups in the 1640s.[1]

The Presbyterian clergyman and religious controversialist writer Thomas Edwards (1599-1648) listed in his *Gangraena,* published in three parts in 1646, over sixteen different sects which he believed to be in existence in England at that time.[2] In his attacks against both Separatists and Sectaries, and particularly against the growing popularity of the 'dangerous schism of Independency', Edwards 'willingly confronted the sectarian menace both in the pulpit and in print, in a land where separate congregations and heretical opinions proliferated.'[3] His work attracted both ridicule and vociferous attacks from leading Independents such as John Goodwin and earned him praise from fellow Presbyterian Thomas Hall, together with the sobriquet 'the true hammer of the heretics'.[4] As a rallying-point for correspondence, Edwards collected and catalogued the sects in detail including 'all who question every thing in matters of Religion; namely, all the Articles of Faith, and first Principles of Christian Religion, holding nothing positively nor certainly, saving the doctrine of pretended liberty of conscience for all, and liberty of Prophesying.'[5] To what extent these numerous sects listed by Edwards had enjoyed a significant following in Northamptonshire in the 1640s is a matter of debate. However, the anecdotal and unscholarly

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[1] C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), *passim.*

[2] Thomas Edwards, *The First and Second Part of Gangraena or A catalogue and discovery of many of the errors, heresies, blasphemies and pernicious practices of the sectaries of this time vented and acted in England in these four last years* (London, 1646).

[3] P.R.S. Baker, 'Edwards, Thomas (c. 1599-1648)', ODNB.

[4] For Hall's disputations with the Baptist sect, see above pp. 216-7.

[5] Edwards, *Gangraena,* p. 13.

approach to his research has led contemporary readers and modern historians to debate the accuracy of Edward's treatise and its influence on sectarian activities and religious opinion in the years immediately after the Civil War.[6] Whilst fellow Presbyterian zealots saw Edwards as a 'faithful friend of truth ... bolstering the zeal of the orthodox Godly', others blamed him for 'smearing the sectarian Godly and inflaming divisions'.[7] Amongst modern scholars there are varying opinions as to the intrinsic value of *Gangraena* as a reliable source of historical data, with Christopher Hill, in particular, championing Edwards as a valuable source for the study of radical Puritanism in the 1640s.[8] The following excerpt, describing an incident in Northamptonshire, gives a flavour of Edwards' particular hatred for the New Model Army, its invasion of the pulpits and its support for the Independent cause.

> In Northampton-shire some of the Souldiers who are Sectaries, and are of that part of the Army which came out of the West ... and have come into the Parish Churches, and put by the godly Ministers who should preach, and by force against the will of the Ministers and people, have set up Captaines, and others of the Souldiers to preach in their Pulpits, and to vent their Fancies and Errours...Many Sectaries have disturbed godly conscientious Ministers in the Pulpits, standing up in the verie face of the Congregation, and speaking to them, giving them the lye, charging them with false Doctrine, calling them Antichristian Ministers, and such like: ...

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[6] See especially: A. Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution,* (Oxford, 2004), *passim.*

[7] Hughes, *Gangraena,* Preface and p. 320.

[8] C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), *passim.* David Masson, the Victorian biographer of John Milton, although valuing Edwards' work as a historical source, described its author as 'a fluent, rancorous, indefatigable, inquisitorial and, on the whole, a particularly nasty sort of Christian'. [Hughes, *Gangreana,* p. 430.] See also: A. Hughes, "Popular Presbyterianism in the 1640s and 1650s" in N. Tyacke, *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800,* (London, 1998), p.238, in which she takes an opposing view, stressing that 'we cannot use the printed works of men such as [Thomas] Hall and Edwards as direct sources of information on religious developments in the 1640s and 1650s'.

> Mr. Andrews of Wellingborough had the lye given him whilst hee was preaching; and many Ministers have been put by preaching, and kept out of their own Pulpits by force of Arms, Captains and Troopers coming up into the Ministers Pulpits with their swords by their sides, and against the mind of Ministers and people: Thus Paul Hobson hath done in Northampton-shire.[9]

Of the persistence of these Sectaries and their contempt for the law, even after their appearance in front of Ministers and magistrates and 'their promise never to go about preaching or dipping any more', Edwards observed ...

> yet afterwards, when free ... [they] come to their companions, go on in their wayes, both against their hands, promises, professions; and of this there are many examples and instances among us, as of a Sectarie an Emissarie sent into Northamptonshire, being for his Doctrines, separated meetings, affronting a Minister in the Pulpit, complained of by some Ministers, and questioned by the Magistrates, gave it under-his hand to forbeare his course, and return home; yet afterwards goes to other parts of the Countrey, and drawes the people into houses, preaching to them, &c. [10]

Ann Hughes, whose comprehensive analysis of Edwards' work favours *Gangraena* as a textual source rather than as a factual one, sees this heresiography as a central element 'in highlighting the dangers of error and separatism and stimulating an orthodox fightback' in what she terms a 'Presbyterian mobilization'.[11] Hughes is cautious in not making too direct a link between *Gangraena's* publication and the Westminster Assembly's 'Presbyterian' *Confession,* accepted by Parliament two years later. However, the style of a local *Testimony,* drawn up by Northamptonshire Presbyterian Ministers 'in support of their reverend Brethren in the Province of London',

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[9] Edwards, *Gangraena* pp. 142-143. Paul Hobson, a Particular Baptist preacher, was an opponent of the Solemn League and Covenant and a member of Liburne's army regiment.

[10] Edwards, *Gangraena,* pp. 118-119.

[11] Hughes, *Gangraena,* p.17 and chapter 5 *passim.*

reflects Edward's intolerance towards separatism and Sectarianism, and his urge 'for Ministers ... to warn the people in the name of God to be aware of the errours of these times'.[12]

> Are not all the Elders of the church to take heed unto themselves ... especially when they see that grevious wolves are entered among them not sparing the flock ... speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them.[13]

Edwards' friendship with John Bellamy, a major London Presbyterian bookseller with interests in Northamptonshire, must be seen as having played a significant part in the introduction and dissemination of Edwards' polemic into the county, which would surely have influenced the drafting of the *Testimony,* to which Thomas Ball of Northampton, 'an old acquaintance of Edwards', and Thomas Andrewes *(sic)* of Wellingborough, 'the butt of the radical soldiery', were amongst its sixty-nine signatories.[14]

The fear of sects and separatism, promoted and encouraged by *Gangraena,* was no short-term phenomenon, its author and others giving the heresiography the status of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments,* a work which had done so much to influence anti-Catholic sentiment in the previous century.[15] For many of the clergy its long-term legacy could have acted as a major factor in their decision to conform in 1662. Despite the widely- differing views, held by many, on the future direction of the Restoration Church, only twelve of the surviving Northamptonshire Presbyterian ministers amongst

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[12] Edwards, *Gangraena,* i.. p. 73.

[13] *The Testimony of Our Reverend Brethren Ministers of the Province of London To the Truth of Jesus Christ and our Solemn League and Covenant etc. Attested by other Ministers of Christ in the County of Northampton* (London, 1648).

[14] Hughes, *Gangraena,* p. 378, and p. 223 above.

[15] Hughes, *Gangraena,* p.117.

those who signed the *Testimony*, refused to conform.[16] It is also likely that the anti-tolerationist views of John Whitfeild, the ultra-Conservative and conformist rector of Bugbrooke, evidenced both locally and in the national forum throughout the years of his incumbency, were inherited with the benefice from his father Thomas, who was amongst those Northamptonshire clergy who attested to the 1648 *Testimony.* [17]

The Quaker response to persecution

With the abolition in 1650 of the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity requiring compulsory attendance at church, an 'intoxicating freedom' was offered to the separatist sects for the recruitment of 'lost souls who, deprived of the certainties offered by a single church, wandered in search of truth.'[18] Despite the country-wide dissemination of Edwards' 'catalogue of heresies, blasphemies and pernicious practices of the sectaries' and its undoubted influence on public opinion, the emergence of the Quaker movement in the early 1650s, shortly after the publication of *Gangraena*, was to become 'the runaway religious success of the Interregnum', with a following of some 50,000 converts across England by 1660.[19] This new and fast growing ultra-puritan sect which, in the opinion of Christopher Hill, developed out of the politically radical dissenting groups such as Diggers, Levellers and Ranters, appealed to many who saw in this 'Society' a true Christianity without

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[16] See above pp. 186-8.

[17] See above pp. 198-9.

[18] J. Miller, *After the Civil Wars – English Politics and Government in the reign of King Charles II* (London, 2000), p.131.

[19] J. Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (London, 2000), p. 151.

ceremony, rites or liturgy, a strict code of morals and ethics and the reliance on the 'inner light' and personal spiritual experience to guide them..[20]

The *Testimony* of one John Mulliner, 'a Barber in Northampton ... who Joyned with the People of God, in scorn called Quakers,' is particularly revealing.[21] As a young man Mulliner had witnessed the 'shock tactics' of the earliest Quakers to draw attention to their message by interrupting the puritan 'assemblies' which he had attended at All Saints Church, in a similar manner to those adopted by the Puritans of the New Model Army described by Edwards a decade earlier. Impressed by the fervour, faith and stoical endurance of members of this sect to the punishments inflicted upon them for bearing witness to the 'testimony of Jesus', Mulliner eventually chose to join with them and to share in their sufferings.

Addressing his 1677 *Testimony* to 'loving Neighbours and Acquaintances', Mulliner described his spiritual journey as starting from the age of ten to twelve years, when he 'began to think that there was a God', and preferred 'to have his Hell or Sorrow and trouble here in this life, than to endure the Everlasting Displeasing of the God of Heaven thereafter'. This earnest young man 'loved to write sermons' and travelled two miles 'to hear the best of teachers, as I thought then, at the time of my Apprenticeship, rather than I would have gone to sport or play my time away'. Setting up his trade as a maker of borders and periwigs in the town of Northampton, he became 'a great hearer of Simon Ford who belonged to the Parish of All Hallows' and,

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[20] C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), pp. 124 – 125, and pp.100-1 above.

[21] John Mulliner, *A Testimony against Periwig and Periwig-Making and Playing on Instruments of Musick among CHRISTIANS, or any other in the Days of Gospel, Being several Reasons against those things , By one who for Good Conscience Sake hath denyed and forsaken them.* (Northampton, 1677 reprinted 1872). Bodl. Ref. G.A. NH 8o 17 and 17*.

after writing down and reading his sermons, 'kneeling down to pray God that if there was anything in them whereby I might come to the Knowledge of God's Everlasting Truth'.[22]

Still much distressed in his spiritual quest and achieving no comfort from a book recommended to him by Simon Ford 'who was my teacher', he related how he first came across the Quakers and their disturbing behaviour.

> When they [came] amongst us when I was a hearer of Simon Ford, into the very assemblies, and though they said very little what a confusion there was among Teachers and Hearers. And sometimes I have seen them, two or three that came into this Place, which was suffered by Judgement though Fire to be laid waste, that they have come into the assembly at All Hallows with Sack-Cloth and Ashes upon their Heads, bare foot and bare-headed. Which I did at that very time, very much strange at. And another time I saw another come into the School when they were acting their parts in strange Dresses and wished them to train up their Children in the Fear of the Lord; and they did lay violently upon him with their sticks so that I was much troubled to see it And several times I have cryed and prayed to God to know why was it so, so that this People came amongst us after this matter. [23]

Torn between an interest in the ways of these People of God and the fear of ridicule 'by reason of [his] great Acquaintance and Business in the way of his trade', he went to 'Halson Horse Race, about two miles off Northampton and then if I wandered thither, I thought they would not take notice of me for such an one.'[24] His hope for anonymity appears to have been in vain, since 'as

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[22] Mulliner, *Testimony,* p. 4.

[23]Mulliner, *Testimony,* p.5. Simon Ford, later Dr Ford, was intruded as vicar of All Saints Church Northampton in 1659. Expelled from Wadham College Oxford in 1641 'for his Puritan leanings', he preached against 'extravagant religious views' whilst vicar of Reading. As a prolific writer he entered into much controversy both with Independents and Quakers. Conforming at the Restoration, he became a chaplain to the King. (See Serjeantson, *History of the Church of All Saints, Northampton* (Northampton, 1901), pp. 213-218.

[24] Mulliner, *Testimony,* p .6.

soon as I come I thought they took notice of me and said What, we here *(sic)* you are turned Quaker.'[25]

From Mulliner's account, his seeking of spiritual instruction through attendance at All Hallows (All Saints) Church in the town is of interest. This parish, noted for its unconventional and 'daring irregularities' in the previous century and the persistence of its puritan traditions into the following one, has already been mentioned, as has its proportion of Dissenters in comparison with that of other Northampton parishes, as recorded in the 1676 Census.[26] Similarly, his first hand account of the violent and disturbing intrusion of Quakers into their midst during the 'Assemblies' and 'School' being held at the church is clear evidence that, at the time of this incident, presumably in the 1650s, the era of Quaker 'Quietism' had yet to arrive. [27]

The dramatic moment of Mulliner's conversion was clearly recognized and came as follows:

> At about this time there were several of this people carried out dead out of the County Goal which lay in the Dungeon FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS...I could not understand that anything was laid to their charge except it was as concerning the worship of their God. And then I wished, if they suffered for God's Sake and for Righteousness sake, that I might suffer with them.[28]

The Clarendon Code, intended to enforce Conformity through its repressive penalties and which, for many, led to imprisonment, starvation and death, had

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[25] The 'Halson Horse Race', may have taken place in the village of Harlestone, close by Northampton, where in Palmer's 1669 "Account of Conventicles" it was reported as the site of an illegal Conventicle at which 'some 40 anabaptists' met.

[26] See p.16 and Table 8 above.

[27] After the granting of Toleration in 1689, the Yearly Meeting in May of that year issued advice that would 'prove the keynote of the Society's policy through the next generation.': 'Walk wisely and circumspectly to all men, in the peaceable spirit of Jesus Christ ...That, as the Lord's hidden ones, that are always quiet in the land ...you may approve your hearts to God.' Braithwaite, *The Second Period*, p. 160.

[28] Mulliner, *Testimony*, p. 6.

an effect on this Northampton barber and wig maker far removed from that intended by its authors. Mulliner's testimony also gives us an interesting and unique insight into the personal consequences which followed from his decision to join with the 'People of God'. Thereafter his relationship with his neighbours and acquaintance underwent a subtle change, many of these seeing his conversion as 'a Fancy and a Whimsie, Bewitching and Delusion.'

> As long as I could talk (among my very relations and Acquaintance) about these things (foresaking the Devil and all his works) and not do them, no notice was taken of me, but when I came to do these things, what a do was here, and what strangeness did it beget amongst my very familiar acquaintance.[29]

In his own profession and life-style there was considerable upheaval as he adopted new attitudes, particularly those identified generally with Quaker *mores*. He abandoned his love of playing Music on the Treble Viol, burning his instrument and achieving peace of mind in doing so; 'what good can these sounds do me when my soul wants peace with God? ... for it doth stir up laughter and lightness of Spirit to make me forget my maker.'[30] He abandoned his employment of periwig and border-making, seeing the wearing of such items a symbol of pride and hypocrisy. His justification for refusal to conform with the norms of hat etiquette and the conventional forms of 'second person' address are less personal, drawing on textual justifications which were common amongst all Quakers.[31] In a passage concerning the established

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[29] Mulliner, *Testimony* pp. 6 & 13. For a discussion on the changed relationships between newly converted Quakers and their former friends and families, see A. Davies, *Quakers in English Society 1655-1725* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 35 *et seq.*

[30] Mulliner, *Testimony,* p. 7.

[31] Mulliner, *Testimony,* p. 17 (incorrectly paginated in folio as p.71).

church to which he was expected to conform, Mulliner is quite clear on its shortcomings:

> If there had been anything in your Teachers Doctrines, Reasons, Uses and Applications, and if crying and Tears, Sighs and Groans would have offered me any cmrt [comfort] in them, the Lord would have satisfied me in them. But I could not get Peace in them. [32]

In the concluding passage of his testimony John Mulliner shows his faith and increasing confidence in the rightness of the cause he has adopted, together with a hint of a more quietist approach to the anticipated sufferings of himself and his Friends.

> And though you may Goliah like come in defiance against this Host of the Living God, yet let it be known to you, *you are but men and not Gods* and though we are but poor Striplings and simple Mechanicks, poor Tradesmen and some coming from their flocks and herds, we do not encounter you with Swords or Spears; but in the name of the Lord we go on, and here the Lord hath given strength and patience to suffer, whatever hath come upon his poor People for the trial of their Faith. [33]

A far cry from the timid lad who had feared to be recognised at the Halson Horse race!

Of course, Mulliner's view of the social standing of these Northamptonshire 'People of God' whom he chose to join may have been intentionally underplayed in order to equate their humble status with that of Christ's earliest disciples. However, in his published testimony of the struggle with his 'Inward Condition', his fear of mockery, and the lip service paid by many of his relations and acquaintances to the conventions of a state-

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[32] Mulliner, *Testimony* p.20 (incorrectly paginated as p.12). In this connection see Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 155 where he states that (in the case of Essex) 'there is plenty of evidence that many, prior to joining the Quaker ranks, were at odds with the ethos of the parish community'.

[33] Mulliner, *Testimony* p.20 (incorrectly paginated as p.12)

regulated religion which he felt had failed him, he is unequivocal. Together with the moment when, in contradiction of the expected reaction to the penal laws enacted against Nonconformists, he resolved to join with 'those in scorn called Quakers', Mulliner offers us a unique insight into the life of this former barber and periwig-maker in the town of Northampton who, unable to find spiritual satisfaction within the national church, became a Sectarian.

Two themes which occur frequently in Quaker documentary sources may furnish explanations for the survival of this radical dissenting movement during a period in which the legacy of *Gangraena* was constantly in the mind of the civil and ecclesiastical courts when implementing increasingly draconian measures against this particular brand of radical Nonconformity. Through the writings, behaviour and attitudes of members of this sect, it is possible to sense the role of martyrdom and, particularly in the case of prominent 'Friends', a measure of combative enjoyment when brought before the county's magistrates. As with other sectarians, Quakers equated their persecution and sufferings with those of the early Christians. Similarly, there are signs that a firm belief in Providentialism and its manifestations of revenge on the perpetrators of their distress, were a comfort and sustaining strength throughout their tribulations.

The earliest Quaker prosecutions in Northamptonshire, in 1654, seem to have set the pattern which, through the manner of their denial of the charges against them, their refusal to remove the hat in front of the magistrate, to swear the oath of abjuration or to pay sureties for good behaviour, would cause the defendants to end up in prison, often for many weeks or months before facing another justice with the same result. William Dewsbury, the itinerant Yorkshire Friend and a leading 'Publisher of Truth',

when facing a charge of blasphemy at Wellingborough, refused to remove his hat in front of the magistrate, stating that 'honour is not in pulling off the hat, but in obeying the just commands of God'.[34] Joseph Storr, arrested for making a great disturbance in the church, refused to find sureties to appear at the next assizes, saying that 'he that walks in the truth is of no ill behaviour'.[35] As to their refusal to swear an oath, all Friends upheld the Biblical text, 'swear not at all'. This particular tenet was frequently seized upon by prosecutors who, finding no other basis for accusation, would press for the oath knowing that, in faith, this could not be fulfilled. The frustration of the magistrates at the conduct of these extra-ordinary and 'other-worldly' defendants appears to have hardened their resolve to deal with Quakers by applying the strictest measures available to them. Lengthy periods in gaol 'among thieves and debtors and contagious fevers' and confiscation of property for the most trivial of offences whilst awaiting further court appearances were commonly reported in Besse's *Collection of Sufferings.* Over the years that followed the first prosecutions there were many instances of this same pattern being repeated as these doughty defendants appeared before the bench time and again, writing of their treatment in gaol in prophetic terms.

> O thou County of Northampton, who art placed upon the middle and top of the Nation , whose Waters fall from the East, West, North and South, into the Ocean, thou hast in this work of persecution exceeded all the Counties of this Nation, thou wert the first that in all the South of England...imprisoned the true prophets of the Lord, whom the Lord had raised in the North Country... with many more ; the devil hath had his chief Inland Garrison in the midst of thee, and his instruments hath continually to this day cast into thy Prison the Servants of the

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[34] Besse *Sufferings,* p. 520. For an explanation for the Quakers' denial of hat etiquette see A. Davies, *Quakers in Society 1655-1725* (Oxford, 2000), p. 49.

[35] Besse, *Sufferings,* p. 523.

> Lord, and they hath borne their faithful Testimonies for the Lord's truth...[36].

Despite the 'Cavalier axiom' which underpinned the philosophy of zealous episcopalian magistrates and members of parliament such as Sir Christopher Yelverton in Northamptonshire, that 'religious Dissent and political subversion were indistinguishable', the very persistence and adherence by these sectaries to their faith at whatever cost must have ultimately helped to bring about the realisation in both Church and State that 'uniformity was no longer an attainable dream' and that continued prosecution would not achieve the desired effect.[37]

Providentialism

The faith that sustained those who had been the target of so much persecution derived considerable comfort, and perhaps an element of *schadenfreude*, from the providentialist view of God's judgement visited upon their persecutors. Quaker printed literature abounds with details of the sufferings of Friends, meticulously recorded and expressed in grandiloquent biblical phraseology drawing on Old and New Testament exegeses to liken their plight with that of the Jews in Egyptian captivity and the early Christians suffering under Roman domination. National events of their recent past, from the defeat of the King at the Battle of Naseby to the visitation of the Great Plague, together with

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[36] Anon, *Another Out-Cry of the Innocent and Oppressed* (London, 1665), pp. 4 - 5. See also *The Voice of the Innocent uttered forth...* (London, 1665), *passim.* In a footnote to the application of the 1st Conventicle Act, Braithwaite states that of the fifty-three cases outside London which resulted in a sentence of banishment, Northamptonshire, with sixteen cases, had the highest number. See Braithwaite, *The Second Period.* p. 50 [fn. 1].

[37] R.A. Beddard, 'The Restoration Church' in J.R. Jones (ed.), *The Restored Monarchy 1660-1688* (London, 1979) pp. 157-8 and pp 163-4, also G. Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power 1660-1722* (London, 1993), p.151.

more local phenomena, were interpreted by sufferers as divine retribution for the injustices of their persecution.

> The Lord sent a Rain in May that drowned a Town called Weedon, and other Towns on the top of England to the damage of many thousands of pounds, and never did no hurt in places where it went lower; and now this last Visitation this year no less than 16 Towns were visited with the Plague, and yet they repent not of their wickedness but still go on to provoke the Lord. [38]

Even more personal were the Quaker interpretations of God's vengeance upon named individuals in Northamptonshire: 'Thomas Pentlow, called Justice, who executed his wickedness upon Friends, whom the Lord smote with an incurable disease'; John Brown, Justice, 'whose wife was delivered of a man-child who was so deformed in all parts of the body the like was scarcely ever seen'; and Guy, Clark of the Peace, 'a great and wicked persecutor whose wife was suddenly smote to death by the Lord, so that Guy's house thereby was dispersed, seven or eight children put forth to nurse abroad, and he comfortless of his wife'.[39]

Providentialism could also be interpreted as proof of the veracity of the beliefs of one sectarian group over that of others. One such account was attested by local witnesses to the Baptist minister Morley, on his visit to the 'Churches in Lincolnshire'. Richard Anderson, a Quaker of Panton, had attended Baptist gathering in the village of Northwillingham. After hearing the preaching of the Gospel by Ralph James, an Elder of the Church, he was persuaded of the value of Baptism as an ordinance of God. After being reproached by his Quaker brethren and told that 'he must not look upon those outward ordinances but must mind the Light Within', Anderson returned to

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[38] Anon, *Another Outcry*..., pp. 5 - 6

[39] FMH Library. "God's Vengeance upon Certain Persecutors in Northamptonshire", from *The Great Book of Sufferings* (London,1665), p.162.

Northwillingham and entered into a dispute with James, exhorting the latter to 'return to the Light Within'. He warned him that if he would not, he [James] would be pronounced a leper 'from the Crown of the Head to the sole of the Foot' and this would be a sign 'whether I am a true or false prophet'.[40] According to the author of this narrative , on the return of the Quaker to his home,

> The Lord was pleased to smite one of his children spotted all over, Himself and his Wife and other children a restless pain in their Bodies also. [41]

James then relates how he prayed with a Baptist congregation at Dunnington, as a result of which 'the Lord was merciful' and restored the Quaker and his family to full health.

Whilst examples of this belief in the providence of God were peculiarly intense amongst the Godly sectarians, they were not unique to their cause. Much to the annoyance of the Northamptonshire Quakers, those who had sat in judgement upon them were reported as offering different providentialist interpretations in order to justify the need for prosecution.

> Judge Rainsford said [in] this session in Open Court that the Reason was that God's judgements were so in the Nation [was] because they had not removed the Quakers out of the Land.[42]

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[40]R. James, *A True and Impersonal Narrative of the Eminent Hand of God that befell a Quaker and his Family at the Town of Panton in Leicestershire.* (1672), pp. 7-9. Bodl. Gough Lincs 15(1) . For Morley's reaction to this reported 'manifestation', see above pp. 211-2.

[41] James, *A True and Impersonal Narrative*, p. 10.

[42] *Another Outcry,* p. 8.

An entry in CSPD in March 1661 reads:

> Judges Atkins and Turner who went on the Midland Circuit are taken ill, the latter struck blind and deaf. It is thought a judgement for their severe conduct to poor honest men. God keeps up the spirits of his people and when they can get leave to preach they do it clearly and boldly. There are some private meetings of churches notwithstanding the persecution; It is in the King's interest to give general liberty, but he does not see it. [43]

Like that of many other residents of the county town, the Quaker convert John Mulliner's interpretation of the great Fire of September 1675, which destroyed some four-fifths of Northampton including the Church of All Saints, was that of a judgement from God. In his *Testimony,* recalling the condition of many of the people at the time, he remarked, 'Oh what a tender flame of Spirit were many of you in then! Oh, that you had kept to that'.[44] However, Edward Pearse, in a commentary published shortly after the event, was certain that 'It has pleased God to strike at *all* Conditions of Persons and *all* the Sins of the Town. [My italics]. It hath happened to the Good to make them better...and to the wicked God Saith, why will you die?'.[45] It is interesting that the latitudinarian views of this conformist minister could reconcile providentialism with both sides of the ecclesiastical divide!

The intervention of God's providence in striking down the enemies or alleviating the distress of some of the ejected ministers was also a notable and recurring theme in the anecdotes of nonconformist writers. Among such instances, Edmund Calamy relates that Thomas Tarrey, ejected from

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[43] CSPD Charles II 19th March 1661. Q to John Blewet, Canterbury. Whether this entry, from an official source, is indicative of the writer's own belief in Providentialism, or a report of that of others, is difficult to establish.

[44] Mulliner, *Testimony*, p.21 (incorrectly paginated as p.13).

[45] *The State of Northampton from the beginning of the Fire, Sept 20th 1675 to Nov 5th. By a Country Minister* (Northampton, 1675), Bodl. Ref: Gough Add. NH 8.17* 9.

Thrapston after having been brought so low together with his family, was later 'invited to the Free School at Higham at a salary of £10 per an., and many Gentlemen sending their Sons to him for Instruction, [where] he grew rich.'[46] In similar vein, Edmund Matthews, ejected from Wollaston and practising Physick for a livelihood, on his death-bed 'committed his wife and seven children unto the care of Providence'. According to Calamy, God's mercy provided his widow and children with food and clothing through the good offices of two of his relations, two of his sons later graduating from Wadham College Oxford and entering the Anglican Church, his daughter marrying a Knight.

Edward Pearse related an episode in the life of the dissenting Minister Thomas Browning, who was preaching illegally at Rothwell on Low Sunday in 1682, when some soldiers came to break up this meeting and take him into custody:

> The constable admonished them to be well advised in what they did; for (said he) when Sir --- was alive he eagerly prosecuted these meetings and engaged eight soldiers of the country troop therein whereof I myself was one. Sir --- himself is dead, six of the eight soldiers are dead; some of them were hanged and some of them broke my collar-bone in the act of prosecuting them, and it cost 30 shillings to be cured. It hath given me such warning, that I for my part am resolved I will never meddle with them any more.[47]

According to Palmer, it was remarked by Pearse that 'this story ... shows how readily conscience, when a little awakened, construes the divine providences to be acts of judgements and admonitions to them.' Whether this comment was intended as a sardonic observation on those too eager to rush into

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[46] Matthews, *Calamy Revised,* p. 476

[47] Palmer (ed.), *Nonconformists Memorial* vol. 2 pp. 219-220.

providentialist interpretations, or a justification of this practice amongst the Godly, is difficult to tell.

In a recent work on the phenomenon of 'providentialism' in early Stuart England, Alexandra Walsham has concluded that, at that time, providentialist interpretations were not restricted to the Godly congregations but were 'part of the mainstream of religious culture'. However, in the light of the above contemporary evidence, it would appear that, by the Restoration, providentialism had become much more the prerogative of radical Nonconformity.[48]

Puritan Persistence: the 'Happy Union' and beyond.

The nature of record keeping by members of the 'Society of Friends' tends to result in an unbalanced view of the size and activities of the other dissenting groups within the county during the period of this thesis. In the years following the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence and the 1689 Act of Toleration, evidence of the persistence of puritan preaching and the dissenting tradition by the less radical Puritans such as Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists can be derived from documentary sources associated with both of these. The inconsistencies between parishes in which applications in 1672 by members of these nonconformist groups for licences to host, preach and teach were granted, and their data in the nonconformist returns of the 1676 *Compton Census* have already been discussed.[49] For the 1689 Act, a valuable documentary source in the years directly following, is the manuscript minute

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[48] A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 2.

[49] See above p.53.

of the Presbyterian Board of London. According to Alexander Gordon, this document, drawn up between 1690 and 1692, is 'in the nature of a review of the state of several counties enumerating the dissenting ministers, whether settled or itinerant, noting their particular personal circumstances, stating the places at which meetings for worship were held or might reasonably be begun, together with the amount of financial support in each case [and] enumerating also the students who were being educated in "University learning".'[50] Together with the setting up of a 'Common Fund' in 1690, the purpose of which was 'to assist in an affaire ... common to all who desire the advancement of the Interests of our Blessed Lord', was the desire to remove the divisions between both Presbyterian and Congregational ministers and merge them into one 'Happy Union'.[51] Although this embryonic attempt at co-operation between the two Protestant dissenting groups was, due to doctrinal differences, short-lived at a national level, the 'Common Fund' continued to operate independently of the 'Union' for some time.

The data from these returns, gathered for the setting up of this 'Common Fund', provide us with unique information on the degree of Dissent existing both nationally and locally at this time. In the introduction to his work on the original manuscript, Gordon refers to 'a summary religious census, presented to [King James II] on 3rd May 1688, [which] estimates the total of Protestant Dissenters as 108, 678 souls'. Although this particular figure may be open to challenge by later scholars, the change from the 'few thousand Protestants daring to worship outside the established church [in the 1640s] to 'greater than a quarter of a million, some 5 percent of the total

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[50] Alexander Gordon (ed.), *Freedom after Ejection : A Review (1690-1692) of Presbyterian and Congregational Nonconformity in England and Wales* (Manchester, 1917), p. 175.

[51] Gordon (ed.), *Freedom after Ejection,* pp. 157-8.

population, who were worshipping openly following the 1689 Act' is a remarkable comment on the persistent presence of Dissent and Nonconformity ready to emerge into the open after 1689.[52]

Of the 759 dissenting ministers across the country listed in the 'Manuscript'(which is in itself, incomplete), 380 of these were identified as 'Bartholomeans' who had been ejected at the time of the Restoration over quarter of a century earlier and were still living. With the exception of seventeen of those listed, all were, according to this source, 'more or less...in active service'.[53] In the county of Northamptonshire, ten dissenting ministers, eight of whom had been ejected from their livings, were listed as having 'a Competent Supply' through donation or financial support from their congregation to enable them to continue their ministry, a further two required assistance from the Common Fund, and a further five persons described as 'qualifying for the ministry'. Significantly, nearly all of those listed and ordained prior to 1672 were those who had been granted licences to preach under the short lived Indulgence of that year.

The returns also list eight villages and towns in Northamptonshire where dissenting congregations had previously gathered and were 'formerly now discontinued [and] if they had Ministers there is a likelyhood of great Good', and a further five places 'where there may be an opportunity of Publick Service'.[54] In the village of Pottersperry, 'where Mr Harrison is

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[52] J. Coffey, 'Scepticism, Dogmatism and Toleration in Seventeenth –Century England' in R.Bonney and D. Trim (eds.), *Calvinist and Religious Minorities in Early Modern Europe* (Peter Lang, forthcoming). p.3. Also see below p.244 for Dissenter statistics at the beginning of the Hanoverian period.

[53] A. Gordon (ed.), *Freedom after Ejection* p. 177.

[54] Gordon (ed.), *Freedom after Ejection*, p. 77.

fixing desire', the people there undertook to provide him a maintenance, the fund being asked to provide him with 'some assistance towards repairing their meeting house.' According to Calamy, who preached at its opening, so keen was this Presbyterian preacher, previously vicar of Caversfield in Oxfordshire, 'to gather a congregation of Dissenters about Potterspury, [and] designing to quit the Church and settle among them' that he brought a pulpit with him and fitted up a barn as a meeting house.[55]

Whilst the above record demonstrates the opportunities offered for closer co-operation between dissenting denominations after 1689, the new measures of 'toleration' granted by the state opened the gates for disputes over doctrinal matters both within and between them. Conflict arose between those who saw a new future for Dissent and its methods of spreading the Gospel message, and the more staid practitioners of the 'older school'. The collapse in 1692 of national efforts to merge Presbyterian and Independent Nonconformists into one 'Happy Union' can be traced in major part to the consequences of the activities of Richard Davis, the Calvinist pastor of Rothwell in Northamptonshire, appointed to lead the Independent congregation there in 1690. His ' earnestness of spirit ... and untiring energy', the fervour of his 'aggressive itinerant preaching, his use of lay preachers and his high-Calvinism', although attracting many new members, soon aroused opposition from both neighbouring Independent ministers and the more conservative members within his own church'. Together with his 'lay agency' emissaries, scathingly described by his detractors as 'shoemakers, joiners, dyers, taylors, weavers, farmers etc.', Davis was accused of 'execrable and noisome errors and abominable and damnable

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[55] Gordon (ed.), *Freedom after Ejection*, p. 280.

heresies' in a pamphlet written in 1692, under a pseudonym, by the Independent minister of neighbouring Wellingborough, John King, 'inhabiting on the east side of the seat of the plague'.[56] Efforts by leading united dissenting ministers to examine the charges against Davis were dismissed by this zealous evangelist as the 'Kettering Inquisition'. His refusal to attend the hearing resulted in the withdrawal of the Independents from the now not-so-happy 'Union' and marked the break-up of any real hopes of a united Nonconformity across the country. [57]

The Puritan tradition : Continuity or Disjunction?

For the successors of Wiburn's 'hotter sort of Protestants' the Restoration period presented a serious threat to the continuity of a deeply-rooted tradition in the English Protestant Church. In terms of worshipping within the Restoration Church it was, for many of them, a disjunction. However, the determination and conviction of those adherents to puritan forms of worship, their resistance to the threat of being subsumed into an increasingly ritualistic, and, in their mind, non-scriptural, church gave rise to the development and membership of sectarian and schismatic alternatives to the state-prescribed uniformity. With scriptural interpretations at variance not only with the Church of England but also among the sects themselves, persistent Northamptonshire Nonconformists continued to exercise their faith in gathered congregations, meetings and conventicles.

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[56] P. Rehakosht, *A plain and just Account of a most horrid and dismal Plague begun at Rothwell alias Rowell, in Northamptonshire which has infected many places round about ...* (London, 1692).

[57] Gordon (ed.), *Freedom after Ejection* pp. 184-187. See also T. Coleman . *Memorials of the Independent Churches of Northamptonshire* (London , 1853), pp.54 –65; D. L. Wykes, 'Davis, Richard (1658-1714)', ODNB.

The continued existence of these illegal assemblies across the county and the persistent prosecutions for non-attendance at Divine Worship in the national church, despite the increasing measures of coercion by the ecclesiastical and secular courts in Northamptonshire seeking to achieve conformity in worship as a *sine qua non* of the Restoration, favour an interpretation of the puritan tradition as one of continuity, over its short-term disjunction, throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century.

With the suspension of penalties under the Act of Toleration, those for whom rejoining the Anglican communion had proved impossible and others who had made 'token' attendance to keep within the law were now free to assemble within their own legally sanctioned places of dissenting worship.[58] The inheritance and continued development of puritan traditions, established in the county by Wiburn a century earlier, opened the way to the development of alternative and diverse forms of dissenting worship. With Quakers and Baptists offering the 'enthusiasm' of radical Puritanism on the one hand, and separatist Presbyterians and Independents with a more moderate approach to bible-based worship on the other, these various forms of Nonconformity all shared a common rejection of both the episcopal and ritual-based worship of the Anglican Church. At the same time, as society had begun to come to terms with the practice of religious pluralism outside the Established Church, latitudinarians both in Northamptonshire and elsewhere began to promote the idea of accommodating the less radical Presbyterians and other Dissenters within a new and broader fold.

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[58] Throughout this chapter, the Act of 1689 which relieved Protestant Dissenters from the penalties laid down in earlier statutes has been referred to as the 'Toleration Act'. As Geoffrey Holmes has pointed out, this Act did not actually repeal the 1662 Act of Uniformity, the provisions of the Clarendon Code or proclaim a state of Toleration. See G. Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power 1660-1722* (London, 1993), pp 353 and 458-9.

Geoffrey Holmes, reviewing the strength of post- toleration Dissent in its first twenty-five years, believes that, to many contemporaries, it had appeared that 'dissent was gaining ground alarmingly at the expense of the establishment.' The building of over 300 new meeting-houses during this period, in attracting 'great congregations ... some with more than a thousand hearers each' with an estimated total dissenting strength of at least 400,000 in England and Wales by 1720, together with a near-doubling of the number of meeting-house licences issued, must surely speak for itself.[59]

Conclusion

In this exploration of Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Northamptonshire during the Restoration period, the findings of a number of scholars on a wide range of aspects of Restoration Dissent have been borne out whilst others have been rejected. The coincidence between the areas of Northamptonshire where 'significant' Nonconformity occurred during the period and areas where the puritan tradition had previously been established, in some parishes as far back as the previous century, cannot be ignored and can be seen as a major contributory factor in the continuing practice of Dissent. Through the detailed study and identification of Dissenters, the conclusion of Dr Spufford and others, that Nonconformity was a phenomenon evident across the whole socio-economic spectrum, has been justified in the case of Northamptonshire, whilst the association of Dissent with poverty, although evident in some parishes, cannot be supported as a general rule. The concept of Dissent as having its origins amongst members of a particular socio-economic class whose acquired literacy and 'enabling' skills, together

[59] Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power*, p. 353.

with a marked concern for their salvation, made them more disposed to the adoption of alternative religious attitudes, as espoused by Wrightson and Levine, has not been borne out by the findings of this thesis. However, in common with other researchers, their defining of the social and economic class of Nonconformists has been beset with difficulties and hedged with qualifications.

The 'chalk and cheese' theory first posited by the seventeenth-century Wiltshire antiquary John Aubrey and later espoused by David Underdown, associating Dissent with specific topographical areas, has also been found to be unsustainable in such a geologically diverse county as Northamptonshire. Similarly, whilst the 'gathered congregations' of urban and rural Nonconformity may have been composed of different socio-economic groupings, the practice of Dissent is evident in both environments.

Communication, associated with transport and trade, has been shown to have had an indisputable link with the dissemination and promotion of alternative religious ideologies. Through the spoken word of itinerant preachers and other travellers, and the written word through printed books and pamphlets, ideas of Dissent reached a wide audience in a county at the cross-roads of trade-routes. Similarly, communications by private letters and printed material disseminating from the capital could equally militate against heterodoxy, bringing disturbing and alarming news of sectarian activities to a provincial public.

Individual personalities, both lay and clerical, from village constables at the lowest stratum of juridical authority to manorial lords and justices at the highest, are also seen to have been important factors in both the protection of

Nonconformists on the one hand, and their prosecution on the other. The strength of their puritan faith, inculcated through education in puritan-orientated university colleges, has been found to have played a significant role in the decision of many ministers in Northamptonshire livings not to acquiesce to the Act of Uniformity in 1662. Similarly, the same faith and belief in God's Providence, engendered through familial or religious tradition, sustained many of those who defied legal and ecclesiastical measures to coerce conformity, and gave support to the increasing realisation by the late 1680s that 'continued persecution for conscience sake was likely to be counter-productive.' [60]

Some may argue about the underlying realities of the 1689 Act, whether its enactment rested on short-term political expediencies or on a genuine sympathy for the rights of Dissenters. It is perhaps stating the obvious that no Protestant worship other than in the form decreed by the Restoration Settlement would have remained without the continuity of Dissent and the puritan tradition in both Northamptonshire and elsewhere during this time. Despite the failure of attempts to form a united Nonconformity after this date, or perhaps because of it , the diverse strands of liturgy, ecclesiology and biblical interpretation that have enriched English Protestantism over succeeding generations, liberated by the Act of Toleration, owe their very existence to the courage and persistence of those who continued to practise their Nonconformity during the last great period of religious persecution in England.

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[60] Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power*, p.151.

A post-script to the study of Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire

A statue of Charles Bradlaugh, the nineteenth-century radical free-thinker and reformist, stands at a crossroads in the centre of Northampton, a county town now renowned for its multi-cultural demographic mix. It should remind the citizens that whilst a limited toleration had been extended by the 1689 Act to those Protestants who chose not to conform to the Established Church of England, over the following two centuries toleration slowly widened, eventually accommodating those who held other religious affiliations or even none at all. In a society where the open admission of ungodliness or non-belief had, for over a thousand years, been a punishable offence, official toleration of secularism and atheism was finally brought about through the persistence and legal skills of this Liberal MP for Northampton.

The arrival in the 1570s of Percival Wiburn in Northampton, with his 'religious revolution' and radical support of Puritanism urging Godly preaching in a more Bible-based Protestant Church, had caused huge unrest and alarm in ecclesiastical and political circles. By the middle of the following century the struggle for dominance of these puritan values, which the county embraced with notable enthusiasm, was followed by the *volte-face* of Restoration Conformity. By the end of the century, as a consequence of a 'Glorious Revolution', increasing political and social stability severed the long- perceived association between sedition and Dissent, giving rise to further measures of toleration to Protestant Nonconformists and finally implementing Charles II's unfulfilled Breda declaration of 'liberty to tender consciences'. By the mid-eighteenth century Philip Doddridge (1702-51) was carrying the torch lit by Percival Wiburn, in becoming 'the leading representative of the dissenting interest, furthering the cause of Protestant

Dissent and evangelical Christianity both at home and abroad.'[61] Pastor of the Independent Chapel at Castle Hill in Northampton, Doddridge embraced Baxter's views on unity expressed in his search for a 'middle way' between Calvinism and Arminianism.[62] A renowned hymnodist, Doddridge may well have been thinking of his own inner struggle in his relationship with his Saviour in one of his hymns, but his words could equally well have expressed the feelings of many within the wider English Protestant Church some half-century earlier, as toleration began to prevail both within and outside the Established Church.

> Now rest my long-divided heart,
> Fixed on this blessed centre, rest. [63]

Northamptonshire's experience may not have been unique among English counties, but it can be seen to have been a major player in both the continuities and the changes of attitudes towards religious beliefs and practices before, during, and after the Restoration.

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[61] Isabel Rivers, 'Doddridge, Philip (1702-1751)', ODNB.

[62] G. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge : A Study in Tradition* (London, 1951). p.3.

[63] Philip Doddridge , 'O Happy Day' in *Hymns Founded on Various Texts in the Holy Scriptures*, No. 312. (Published posthumously, 1755).

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