Bawtry Heritage Group

Preserving our Past for the Future

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A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN ENGLAND WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BAWTRY

Peter Holland
2nd February 2026

Foreword

This paper is presented in an unfinished state. Its author, Peter Holland, started working on it at the beginning of 2025, since which time it progressed through numerous iterations, the last one being dated 2nd February 2026. Sadly, Peter died in March 2026 before completing the paper.

He had intended making some further additions and deletions, amendments, and clarifications to some sections. He also planned to illustrate it.

There are, therefore, some repetitions in the text, and some unclear meanings; doubtlessly these would have been addressed in a final edit.

Notwithstanding these imperfections, in my view the paper is an impressive, scholarly, but readily readable work. In presenting it in this format, I have made a light edit, confining myself to making a full table of contents, correcting obvious typographic errors and ensuring the formatting is consistent.

David Kirkham
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28th April 2026

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1. Religious Prehistory

Christianity did not appear in Britain in a religious vacuum.[1] Pagan religions permeated the life of people in Britain from earliest times until well into Roman times. The religious beliefs of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic peoples are generally only known to us in their burial customs. Neolithic peoples buried their dead in stone chambers, with grave-goods left with the dead, and the remains of ritual meals. The megalithic tombs were possibly symbolic entrances to the afterlife. Late Neolithic and early Bronze Age people built more elaborate stone circles and erected monoliths, some of which were memorials to the dead.[2]

The more complex monuments like Stonehenge and Avebury were traditionally thought to be religious and social centres, and often had astronomical functions to calculate significant phases of sun, moon and stars. Five thousand years after the first monument was erected, Stonehenge continues to attract modern archaeological enquiries which have offered other interpretations. A recent finding reported in 2024 that its central stone had been transported more than 700 km to Salisbury plain from the very north of Scotland. [3] It has been known for some time that the huge sarsens of Stonehenge came from more than 20 km away and its "bluestones" originated in Wales. Mike Parker Pearson has argued that the central stone (misleadingly known as the "altar stone" in popular culture) may have been taken from a distant Scottish monument as a gift or marker of political alliance. Parker Pearson argues that Stonehenge may have been erected to unite early farming communities across Great Britain at a time of cultural stress. No other monument incorporates stones brought such huge distances. As such we should consider Stonehenge a political monument as much as a religious one.

The Bronze Age people buried their dead under round barrows or cairns with grave goods, and many of these had features of symbolic significance. Cremations were often put into urns, buried, and then covered by barrows. Barrows of all shapes and sizes are to be found throughout the pre-history period and continued through into the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods.

The Iron Age saw temples and shrines being built. Also sacred places were being identified in natural settings such as woods, glades, springs and streams. Water was seen as particularly important and seen in the use of healing wells, beginning in very early pre-history and still to be found in Roman and later periods.

The worship of Gods and of nature spirits seem of importance to the people of Celtic times, and continued with the coming of the Romans. Temples and shrines were of various shapes and sizes. These could be square chambers (cella), containing statutes and ritual objects, surrounded by a veranda for memorials and public use, all set in a sacred enclosure

[1] E.S. Wood. Historical Britain. The Harvill Press. London. 1995. p. 257.
[2] E.S. Wood. p.257.
[3] E. Addley. 'Stonehenge may have been built to unite early Britons… The Guardian, 20th December 2024. p.13.

(temenos). The cella seems to have originated as a covering for the sacred pit which provided communication with the underworld.[4]

2. The Romans in Britain

Julius Caesar undertook a reconnaissance of Britain in 55 BC and a more serious campaign the following year when he was able to exercise control over the south east of the country. Almost a century later in 43 A D, the Emperor Claudius launched a major invasion of Britain. During the next few years, the Roman forces spread northwards from their base at Colchester. The 9th Legion advanced through what is now Cambridgeshire and established itself at Lincoln. To safeguard these newly conquered territories, the governor, P. Ostorius Scapula about 48 A D drew a frontier line across Britain from the Devon coast to Lincoln.[5] This consisted of a chain of fortified posts liked together by the road which is known as the Fosse. The Bawtry area was very much part of this defensive frontier.

Roman activity in the Bawtry area

Bawtry Heritage Group has recently completed a major new study project – 'The Hunt for Roman Bawtry' which revealed that there was a lot of activity in the Bawtry area in Roman times. [6] What we don't know is whether there was actually a settlement at what is now Bawtry. Certainly, there were farmsteads or villas scattered throughout the area. At Oldcotes, near Blyth, a mosaic floor was discovered during the building work in the 1870s on St Helen's Roman Catholic Church. The floor was recovered in order to preserve it. The site of another villa at Stancil, near Tickhill, has also been left largely untouched.

To the east of Bawtry, the remains of the Scaftworth Roman fort has been designated by Historic England as a Scheduled Monument (no. 1018529). Pottery found during archaeological surveys has dated the fort to the second half of the 4th century AD. It was very small, probably only accommodating a couple of hundred soldiers. Aerial photographs show that the fort had a bank and a triple ditch around it enclosing an area of 0.4 ha. It also shows there may have been an earlier (even smaller) fort on the same site. The fort guards the crossing point of the River Idle by the Roman Road 29a, an offshoot of a major road called Ermine Street which ran from Londinium (London) to Eboracum (York). This road split from Ermine Street to the north of Lincoln and crossed the River Trent at Segelocum (Littleborough) by means of a stone-paved ford.[7] Little is known about Segelocum apart from the finding of an altar, coins and the survival of Roman masonry in the walls of the tiny church.[8]

[4] E.S. Wood. p. 259
[5] A.C. Wood. p. 3.
[6] Bawtry Heritage Group. The Hunt for Roman Bawtry. Final Report 2025. See also D, Kirkham. Roman Bawtry - Speculation & Theories unproven by archaeological evidence. Bawtry Heritage Group. June 2023.
[7] The ford was visible at low tide and was demolished in the 19th century as it was hampering the barge traffic using the river.
[8] A.C. Wood. p.5.

There were other Roman military structures in the area including a vexillation fort at Rossington Bridge. Vexillation forts were rectangular structures of between 6.0 ha and 12 ha, which were occupied by up to 4,000 legionary or auxiliary troops on a temporary basis. Close to Bawtry, at Martin, is another Ancient Monument. The scheduling citation describes it as an early medieval fortified manor, but some think the earthworks may be much earlier, possibly Roman.

A possible Roman shrine was discovered a few hundred metres to the northeast of the town on a ridge of gravel within the floodplain of the Idle. A large quantity of Roman pottery, coins and other metal objects were found. The pottery included sherds of "tazzas", distinctive vessels used in making votive offerings. The tops of finely worked stone columns were also found, suggesting they could be a part of the structure underneath. The site was not, however, excavated any further and was reburied to protect it. It is thought a shrine, or small temple, would be the most likely interpretation of this distinctive combination of finds.

Attitudes to religion

The Romans believed that the world was inhabited by a wide range of different gods to whom it was appropriate to pay respect.[9] The Romans had no concept that their religion took precedence over that of others. Their acceptance of local gods was quite normal; they worshipped native gods in their own ways. Often, a local deity would be Romanised. The only exceptions were those religions which claimed exclusivity and thus denied the legitimacy of the Roman gods. This provides the context for understanding Roman attitudes to Judaism and Christianity. The Romans also detested ceremonies which involved human sacrifice, although they themselves had only recently abandoned the practice, and continued with the rituals of gladiatorial combat.

Religious practices

The Romans introduced their principal Roman state gods, Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, to centres like Londinium (London), but the worship of these gods would also be expected in other places populated with Roman citizens.[10] The Romans also built temples dedicated to emperors or other civic leaders who had been deified. For example, the temple at Colchester, dedicated to the deified emperor Claudius, was built between AD 54 and 61 and provided an important focus for loyalty of the conquered peoples.[11] The temples were used for religious festivals, often led by commanders of the local army unit, beseeching the god or goddess for favours, thanking them for their protection over the previous year and asking them for help in the year ahead.[12] For soldiers, as for everyone else, the year was punctuated by regular religious festivals of considerable importance for a society without weekends.[13] An appropriate sacrifice of a bull, ram or boar was made at the altar. The slaughtered animal was

[9] M. Millett. Roman Britain. English Heritage. London. 1995. p. 107.
[10] M. Millett. pp. 107-8.
[11] M. Millett. p. 57.
[12] M. Henig. Religion in Roman Britain in S. Gilley & W.J. Sheils (eds). A History of Religion in Britain. Blackwell. 1994. pp. 15-16.
[13] M. Millett. p.109.

opened up and its liver inspected so that the priest could read the omens.[14] Animals were usually barbecued and eaten communally as part of the festival.

The development of temples and shrines as specialized places of worship had profound implications, suggesting the beginning of a clear separation of religion from other aspects of life.[15] During the early Roman period, the temples consisted of a square or rectangular building (the cella), surrounded by a concentric wall which created a passage or ambulatory.

The temple stood within a sacred enclosure (temenos). Such temples were not for worship by a congregation but acted as shrines to a particular god. Variations of design were presumably determined by the character of the god worshipped. Religious ceremonies took place in the sacred enclosure where votive offerings were carefully buried. Archaeological evidence from Verulamium (St Albans) and elsewhere have found small pits containing animal bones, presumably from sacrifices. There were also a large number of miniature pots which may have contained liquid offerings or libations. Coins were a very common gift at sacred sites (the vast majority were of low denominations).[16] Collections of small lead tablets have also [17] been found within sacred precincts at Bath and Uley (Gloucestershire).[18] These curse tablets (defixiones) bearing inscriptions or letters to the gods provide insights into people's hope for divine intervention. Most were scribed in longhand onto the lead. They are extremely difficult to decipher as they were written backwards and had been rolled up before deposition. An example from the temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, reads in translation:

> "Docilianus *son of Brucerus to the most holy goddess Sulis. I curse him who has stolen my hooded cloak, whether man or woman, whether slave or free. May the goddess Sulis inflict death upon him and not allow him sleep or children now and in the future, until he has brought my hooded cloak to the temple of her divinity."*

A similar curse found at a religious site at Ratcliffe-on-Soar (Notts) invokes the help of Jupiter to recover a sum of money stolen from a man whose name was probably Canius Dignus.[19] The god is invited to plague the thief with all kinds of uncomfortable pains, physical and psychological, and in return for the recovery of the money is promised a tenth of its value as a reward. In the Roman world it was up to the wronged person to bring a thief to justice and prosecute him in the courts. Where the thief was not known, it was probably thought that placing a curse upon him might help in the initial detective processes.

Throughout the first four centuries AD the Roman world became increasingly susceptible to the appeal of cults originating in the eastern part of the Roman Empire.[20] There seems to have been a widespread desire to seek more spiritual explanations for life and its meaning, especially as Roman power waned. Towns were crucial to the spread of these cults or religions because they were centres of communication and trades and therefore new ideas. We know,

[14] M. Henig. op.cit. p.109.
[15] M. Millett. p.106.
[16] Guy de la Bedoyere. Roman Towns in Britain. English Heritage. London. pp.115 – 6.
[17] Guy de la Bedoyere. Ibid p. 113.
[18] M. Millett. p.111.
[19] J. Wacher. The Coming of Rome. Routledge & Kegan Paul. London. 1979. pp. 176-7.
[20] Guy de la Bedoyere. p.108.

for example, that in the first century AD, London had a temple to the Egyptian goddess Isis because a flagon has survived bearing the inscription 'Londinii ad fanum Isidii' (At London, by the Temple of Isis). The cult was still functioning two centuries later when a governor called Marcus Martiannius Pulcher arranged for a temple to Isis in London to be repaired.[21]

The cult of Mithras was one of a number of important cults found in Britain. The cult, exclusive to men, had attractions to the military and is best known in military areas.[22] The cult is concerned with a complex myth based on good versus evil and centred around the killing of a bull. The Mithraeum building or shrine acted as a stylized cave in which Mithras had killed the bull. The buildings had sunken floors and would not have had windows. Inside the devotees could conduct their initiation rites and other ceremonies in an atmosphere suitably heightened by darkness and the skilful use of artificial light. These conditions made the cult a self-contained and unobtrusive one.[23] The remains of a Roman temple dedicated to Mithras were excavated in London.

It may be conjectured that Roman Bawtry, with its strong military presence at the forts in Scaftworth, Rossington Bridge and Doncaster, may well have followed the cult of Mithras. A full archaeological excavation of the shrine site in Bawtry could well provide the answers.

Death and burial in the Roman world

All towns had burial areas which were set aside for the purpose.[24] These were outside the settlement area, enforced by law, and were demarcated by some sort of boundary. In general, cremation was customary during the first two centuries AD. In a cremation burial, the ashes of the deceased were placed in a container, usually a pottery or glass urn, and buried with other vessels containing libations and offerings. Usually, a pipe of some sort was inserted in the earth through which further offerings to the deceased could be passed. In the later years of the Roman Empire, inhumation or burial of the body became normal but not exclusive.

The arrival of Christianity

Relatively little is known of Christians and their activities in Roman Britain. There is a legend that Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy Jew who allowed Jesus to be buried in his tomb in Jerusalem, made his way to Britain and settled in the south west, where he supposedly founded the monastery of Glastonbury.[25] It is quite possible that the first Christians in Britain were traders not unlike Joseph, and it may be that they went to the south west, where they had long been attracted to the rich products of the tin mines of Cornwall. It seems more likely that they worshipped relatively inconspicuously in the tiny metropolis of Londinium (London).[26] Christianity might also have arrived with soldiers in the Roman legions. Britain was a highly militarized province and some of the soldiers posted there might have been Christians, but it is unlikely that they would have built churches. As soldiers they would have

[21] Guy de la Bedoyere. p. 108
[22] Ibid pp. 108-109.
[23] Ibid p. 108.
[24] Ibid p. 116
[25] G. Bray. The History of Christianity in Britain and Ireland. Apollos. London. 2021.p.1.
[26] G. Bray. pp.1-2.

sworn an oath of allegiance to the emperor as the son of a god, which went against Christian principles.[27] The early Christian church took a dim view of military service and discouraged individuals from joining the army.

Early monasticism

The first monks were Christians who removed themselves from society to the Egyptian desert - the word 'monk' is derived from the Greek 'monos' meaning 'solitary' or alone. They lived a life of hardship as hermits. Primitive monasteries were established when hermits formed into small groups, finding advantages in sharing the benefits of communal living and worship. These primitive monasteries were to be found in Celtic communities in Wales, Cornwall and parts of Scotland.

The martyrdom of St Alban

This is a story of a Roman soldier who met a Christian presbyter and was so impressed by him that he became a Christian himself. When the presbyter was arrested and sentenced to death, the soldier took his place and became the first martyr for the new faith to die on British soil.[28] This account is hotly disputed and was certainly embellished over time. The soldier is known as Alban, or Albanus, and is thought to have died near Verulamium, now the modern city of St. Albans, which preserves his name. We do not know when Albanus was put to death; there were periodic persecutions of Christians in the third and early fourth centuries and is evidence of secretive Christian groups operating at this time.

Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire (313)

Constantine the Great, proclaimed Emperor in Eboracum (York), and in the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313 granted tolerance to Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. The atmosphere completely changed and Christians were able to come out into the open. The Christian church could now develop and play a full part in the life of the community.[29] A wooden church was first built near St Paul's in Bailgate, Lincoln, in about 390, and may have been the seat of a bishop.[30] Bishops and priests, organised on a territorial basis, began to play a role in the general organisation of the Church. In AD 314, three British bishops, Restitutes of Londinium (London), Adelfius of Lindum Colonia (Lincoln) and Eborius of Eboracum (York), together with Arminius a deacon from Lincoln, attended a Council (Synod) at Arles. If we except Albanus, they are the first identifiable British Christians known to us. [31]

The fact that this party travelled to the Synod is an indication that bishops, priests and deacons already thought of themselves as officials in a Roman world. The emperor himself had summoned the Christian leaders, assuring them of his protection.[32] St Helena, the

[27] G. Bray. p. 2.
[28] G. Bray. pp. 2-3.
[29] Eric S. Wood. Historical Britain. The Harvill Press. London. 1995. p. 259.
[30] A. Gray. Restless Souls Pilgrim Roots: The Turbulent History of Christianity in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. Bookworm of Retford. 2023. p. 9.
[31] G. Bray. p. 3.
[32] D. L. Edwards. Christian England. Vol. 1. p. 21.

Yorkshire born mother of Constantine was also very active in promoting the Christian faith. A large number of churches in Yorkshire are named after her including the small church at Austerfield, near **Bawtry**.

Christianity probably remained very much a minority religion in the area around Bawtry, especially in the countryside. It does not seem to have enjoyed much support from the wealthy villa-owning classes. But there are some grounds for thinking that it gained adherents from the humbler people in the towns and villages.[33] Christianity seems to have had little or no hold over the general population during Roman times.[34]

3. Anglo-Saxon Britain

Arrival of the Germanic tribes

England was invaded by successive waves of tribes from Scandinavia and Germany from about AD 375. Sometimes they were invited as mercenaries by the Romans or the British. More often they arrived uninvited. The Roman legions left in AD 410, leaving the island's defence to the locals. For a time, they were remarkably successful at this, but gradually Romano-British people were worn down. The invaders – Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians and others – came to pillage and then to settle and mostly occupied farm land, ignoring the towns, villas and churches of Roman Britain. Only occasionally did they marvel at the higher civilization they now encountered.[35] It seems that the invaders found the Roman towns and villas decayed or abandoned and had few sensitive feelings about the ruins or about the way of life they represented. The substantial and elegant villas held no attraction – they made their peasant huts and manorial halls of wood and on a much smaller scale. However, very recent excavations have suggested that Roman lifestyles persisted in Britain long after the legions left. Mosaics found at Chedworth villa (Gloucestershire), for example have been dated to the late 5th or even 6th centuries.

The Romano- British people were largely Christianized by the end of the fifth century, but the Germanic invaders who were settling mainly in eastern England were pagans.[36] The invaders were initially confined to East and South Yorkshire; these areas may have already harboured Germanic troops from Roman times and may therefore have welcomed the invaders. [37] They formed the kingdom of Deira, which is now roughly the modern-day Yorkshire from the Humber to the Tees. Christianity was not driven out by the invaders. Early churches have been found in many places, sometimes buried in Roman edifices, and the religion flourished with the appearance of small monastic communities.[38] Although the monks from these small Celtic communities attempted to convert the Germanic invaders, England remained largely pagan until the arrival of Irish and Roman missionaries.

[33] A.C. Wood. p. 7
[34] E.S. Wood. p. 261
[35] David L. Edwards. Christian England. Vol.1. Its Story to the Reformation. Front Paperback. London. 1982. p.16.
[36] G. Bray. pp. 9-10
[37] P. Ackroyd. The History of England. Vol. 1. Pan Books. 2011. p. 51.
[38] P. Ackroyd. p. 51.

Irish missionaries

At the end of Roman occupation of Britain, Irish raiders stepped up their activities and transported many Britons to Ireland as slaves. These included a 16-year-old boy Patricius (Patrick) who, after seven years in captivity, managed to escape and returned to England where he was ordained into the Christian ministry.[39] After his ordination, he returned to Ireland and did much to establish a permanent Christian presence there, through a form of monasticism somewhat different to that prevailing on Continental Europe.[40] St Patrick established monastic communities which became the bases for evangelizing the many tribes in the country. Each tribe or clan had its own church and bishop, who was almost always a monk and often the abbot of the local monastery. Control of the monastery often passed from father to son as the Irish abbots were allowed to marry and bequeath their monasteries to their descendants, an unusual pattern that in some cases would survive until the 16th century Reformation.[41]

Patrick received the credit but the work of converting an entire country is seldom the work of an individual. Many Christian leaders who came after him contributed to the conversion of Ireland, and the Irish were later to embark on missions of their own – not least to parts of Britain and other parts of the world where the gospel was unknown or where the church had been wiped out by the Scandinavian and Germanic invasions. They voyaged to the Orkneys, the Faroes, the coasts of Scotland and perhaps even to Iceland.[42]

In 562 or 563, Columba left Ireland with twelve companions and established his mission to the English on Iona, a rocky island about three miles long and one and a half miles wide, off the west coast of Scotland. He is said to have been occupied with study, prayer, writing, fasting, and watching. [43] Columba made frequent journeys to what is now mainland Scotland, where the Christian faith had already been planted. His disciples told of miracles performed by Columba which had much to do with gaining respect for his teaching.

Several generations later, in a struggle for power in Northumbria, Oswald a prince of the royal blood, took refuge on Iona and was baptized there. When Oswald came to power in Northumbria, he asked the monks of Iona to conduct a mission for his people. He allowed them to set up their headquarters on the island of Lindisfarne off the east coast. St Cuthbert, who became bishop of Lindisfarne, did much to promote the conversion of northern England.

Roman missionaries

Important steps in the conversion of southern England came from Roman missionaries sent by Pope Gregory the Great at the end of the 6th century. How Gregory first became interested in the English we do not know.[44] Tradition has it that, before he became Pope, Gregory saw

[39] G. Bray. p.6
[40] G. Bray. The History of Christianity in Britain and Ireland. 2021. p. 8.
[41] G. Bray. Ibid.
[42] K.S. Latourette. A History of Christianity. 1955. p. 353.

[43] K.S. Latourette. p. 344.
[44] K.S. Latourette. p. 345

some young men in the slave market in Rome who had fair bodies and hair. He was told that they came from Britain where the population was pagan and that the young men were Angles. Not Angles, he said, but angels for they have angelic features and that they should be co-heirs with the angels in Heaven. Whether or not this story is true, Gregory as Pope had a wide-ranging vision to bring more pagans to the faith. He seems to have redeemed some English slaves with funds from the Church and expressed himself as grieved that the British bishops were doing nothing for the conversion of their pagan neighbours.[45]

The Roman mission, headed by Augustine, set out from Rome in 596. When the group reached Gaul, they became terrified by the dangers before them and Augustine returned to Rome to ask permission to discontinue the enterprise. Gregory sent him back with a kind but firm letter ordering them on. The missionaries landed on the Kent coast where they found that King Ethelbert had a Christian wife, a Frankish princess.[46] After a little hesitation, the king gave the mission his consent to establish themselves in his capital, Canterbury, and turned over to them an existing church building. Before long, the king was baptized and thousands of his subjects followed him to the baptismal font. Within ten years, Kent, Essex and London had accepted the Christian faith and new monasteries were created out of derelict churches throughout the area. Augustine was consecrated as the first Archbishop of Canterbury and established a monastery, using a pagan temple which had been given to him by the king. Following the Benedictine rule, it became the prototype of many Benedictine houses in England.

Battle of the River Idle (616)

By the 7th and 8th centuries, England was divided into small 'kingdoms', some Christianized others pagan, frequently at war with each other. Fighting for the sake of Christ became an integral part of medieval Christianity and one such event took place on the banks of the River Idle, close to what is now the centre of Bawtry. An account of the battle itself and the consequences of these events may be found in a paper by Michael P. Maguire, a member of the Bawtry Heritage Group.[47] The protagonists were Aethelfrith, King of Northumbia, and Raedwald, king of East Anglia. After a number of battles in the north, Aethelfrith had emerged as the pagan overlord of Northumbria, and desired to expand his realm. His opponent, King Raedwald, had been baptised as a Christian by Roman missionaries in AD 604. Raedwald had given sanctuary to Edwin, King of Deira, who had had to flee from Aethelfrith's forces moving south. Raedwald during this time was approached on three occasions by Aethelfrith's ambassadors to give up Edwin in return for promised riches. Raedwald was tempted to accept the inducement but was prevented by the intervention of his pagan wife (whose name is not known), who lectured the King on the morality of selling his virtuous and honourable position for a handful of silver or gold.[48] As a result of his wife's admonishment, once Aethelfrith's ambassadors had gone, Raedwald resolved on war. Details of the subsequent battle on the banks of the River Idle where Raedwald emerged victorious may be found in M. P. Maguire's paper.

[45] Ibid
[46] Ibid p.346.
[47] M.P. Maguire. The Battle of the River Idle AD 616 (Bawtry's Battling Saxons).
[48] S. Newton. The Reckoning of King Raedwald. Red Bird Press. 2003. p.30. As quoted in M.P. Maguire. pp.4-5.

Bringing Christianity to pagan East Anglia presented Raedwald with a considerable challenge and the imposition of the new order was likely to have been met by resistance. According to Bede, Raedwald was told by his pagan wife to forget his conversion, except to the extent of placing a Christian altar alongside the pagan one in his private temple.[49] M. Wood describes Raewald's approach as "ambivalent and cautious" while M.P. Maguire suggests that his approach might be seen as that of a wise and pragmatic leader.[50] An account of Raedwald's death is unrecorded, but in 1939 the discovery of an Anglo-Saxon ship- burial mound with exceptional rich treasures at Sutton Hoo, near Woodbridge, Suffolk, is thought to be his resting place. Among the objects found were spoons and bowls denoting Christian baptism.[51]

Christian baptisms at Littleborough

The fate of Edwin, King of Deira, after the Battle of the Idle, is also worthy of recording. Edwin was restored to his Northumbria kingdom after Raedwald's victory over Aethelfrith, and proved to be an able ruler. In 625, he married Ethelburga, daughter of King Ethelbert, and a Christian, who was accompanied to Northumbria by her chaplain, Paulinus. Edwin's victory over the West Saxons made him the most powerful monarch in England and was followed by his baptism at Paulinus' hands (627). A large number of Edwin's followers were also baptised in the River Trent near the modern day Littleborough, through which the Roman road from Lincoln ran through to **Bawtry**.[52]

Edwin appointed Paulinus Bishop of York and began building a stone church there.[53] However, his plans were foiled by the invasion of his kingdom by Penda, the pagan King of Mercia and his ally, Cadwallon of north Wales. Edwin's defeat and death at the battle of Hatfield Chase, near Doncaster, on the 12th October, 633 was followed by the breakup of his kingdom. Northumbria was ravaged by the forces of Penda and by Cadwallon, who, though nominally a Christian, was in Bede's phrase "a barbarian, more cruel than a pagan". [54] Paulinus fled to Kent and for a time Christianity in Northumbria was almost extinguished. However, on the death of Penda in 654, when Oswald who had learnt his Christianity from the Irish missionaries became King of Northumbria. He sent for Aidan and his monks from Iona, and gave them the task of re-establishing Christianity.

Though the story of the conversion of England gives the impression of a people ready to change its religion on the command of a king as were its descendants in the 16th century, closer examination of the evidence suggests that the process of conversion was more complicated.[55] Christianity prevailed and became the official religion of the English nation. However, the process was a long one and even after Christian victories, pagan practices lingered to the distress of the Church and of conscientious secular rulers. The use of charms and practices, some of which have survived to modern times, their origins having been

[49] D. L. Edwards. pp. 49-50

[50] M.P. Maguire. p.5.

[51] Bruce-Mitford. Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology: Sutton Hoo and other discoveries. Quoted in Wikipedia. Raedwald of East Anglia. Retrieved 3 December 2024.

[52] A.C. Wood. p. 12.

[53] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 447 Edwin was venerated as a saint; his festival being kept on the 12th October.

[54] As quoted in A.C. Wood. p. 13.

[55] G. Bonner. Religion in Anglo-Saxon England, in S. Gilley & W.J. Sheils (eds). p. 26.

forgotten. Perhaps Christianity offered a better explanation of the mystery of human life and death than did the older religions.

Early minsters, monasteries, churches and stone crosses.

The development of the Christian church throughout England in this era can be identified. First in order of time came the diocese with its bishop, cathedral and attendant clergy.[56] The bishop and his retinue of clergy travelled around the diocese, preaching, converting and administering the sacraments. Later came subsidiary churches, often of royal or episcopal foundation, which served large areas within the diocese. These "ministers" were sometimes genuinely monastic in character, but more frequently were collegiate in organisation, that is served by groups of clergy living a communal life. It is not known if there was a minster in the Bawtry area. The place-name Misterton (Minister-ton), a few miles from **Bawtry**, seems to indicate the presence of a minster church, though nothing whatever is known about it or its fate.[57]

Later in time and lower in precedence than the cathedral or minster came the evolution of the parish church serving the village community. Many of these were private churches or chapels, attached to the halls of the landowners who had built and endowed them. There is no trace to show when the earliest 'parish' churches came into existence and remains of Saxon churches in the area are very rare. The Saxon tower of the church at Carlton-in-Lindrick, which contains herring-bone masonry and windows characteristic of crude early Saxon work, probably dates from about 860 or before.[58] The tympanum depicting a 'serpent/dragon' creature in the south porch at St Helen's, Austerfield, may also be Saxon.

Where a church did not exist, a custom developed in the early church to erect a stone cross at which travelling clergy from a cathedral or minster could hold a religious service.[59] By the 8th century, Northumbria and northern Mercia was flourishing as a Christian area, identified by a considerable number of stone crosses, erected and carved with great skill.[60] Some of these were made using the first two letters of the word 'Christ' in the Greek spelling – X (chi) and P (rho). These chi-rho crosses were later developed to have the X in an upright position and the P being dropped. Later the cross was encircled, helping with the carving and manufacturing process. Some of the crosses were places where travelling clergy could stop to preach and attempt to make converts. In the 18th century, John Wesley travelled around the country stopping off to preach at a cross or in a churchyard. Other crosses served as Market Crosses, a place for people to conduct their business and for town officials to collect market tolls. Some again were placed to mark the boundary between shires. Some, like Eleanor crosses had a commemorative purpose. Eleanor was Edward 1's Queen who was very ill and died at Harby, Nottinghamshire, on her way to Lincoln to seek a miracle from St Hugh who was buried there. The King decided to erect a series of crosses on the route of her funeral

[56] A.C. Wood. p.16.
[57] A.C. Wood. p.16
[58] A.C. Wood. p.17
[59] A.C. Wood pp. 17-8
[60] M. Abrahamson. p. 100.

procession to London. Of the twelve crosses, only three still remain – at Geddington, Hardingstone, and Waltham.

The Market Cross at **Bawtry** consists, of a 4-metre-high obelisk mounted on a stepped base or 'calvary'. It is thought to be medieval in origin but has been extensively re-furbished over the centuries.

The Synod of Whitby (664)

Although significant progress had been made to convert southern England to Christianity, the pace of conversion had been much slower in northern England. King Oswald of Northumbria had been converted and installed Aidan and his missionaries on Lindisfarne in 635. But it was a later Northumbrian king, Oswy, who brought matters to a head between the Celtic and Roman doctrines. As his wife came from Kent, their differing interpretations of worship and dates on the calendar caused conflict and confusion. Oswy decided that matters had to be resolved and called the Synod of Whitby where both sides argued the merits of their respective cases. Disagreements had revolved around the date of Easter and the seemingly trivial matter of how a monk should be tonsured, but at the heart of the debate was about the basic organisational structure.[61] The Celts in a less formal, liberal approach towards monastic life, accepting that a monk could roam away from the monastery to preach. The Roman group followed the Benedictine Rule, demanding absolute authority and conformity with the monastery. An eloquent speech from Abbot Wilfred from Ripon swayed the decision in favour of the Roman approach. The date of Easter was now fixed according to the Roman tradition and monasteries were organised according to the Rule of St Benedict. Reactions from the Celtic faction varied from total acceptance and compliance to an unhappy complaining and a retreat back to Ireland and Scotland. England severed her connection with the old Irish Church in favour of Rome. The way was thus open for an extension of the authority of Canterbury over the whole of England.

The Council (Synod) of Austerfield (702 or 703)

An important religious event in the Bawtry / Austerfield area was the Council of Austerfield. The Synod or Council was called by King Aldfrith of Northumbria to discuss a number of ecclesiastical issues which had arisen at the time. An important concern was whether Wilfrid, formerly Bishop of York and living in exile, should be restored to his lands and office. Wilfrid was supported by King Aethelred of Mercia but faced strong opposition from Berhtwald, Archbishop of Canterbury, and King Aldfrith of Northumbria, who successfully prevented his restoration. There is no record of a Church building here during this period – possibly the site was chosen for its location on the ecclesiastical boundaries of Canterbury and York and close to the border of Mercia where Wilfrid had sheltered in exile.

Most of the bishops and abbots attending the Council are believed to have opposed Wilfrid, possibly because they wanted to take control of Wilfrid's properties. Berhtwald, Archbishop of Canterbury suggested a compromise which would have allowed Wilfrid to retain some

[61] D. Brabbs. Abbeys and Monasteries (2003). p. 10

monastic properties but would have prevented him from continuing as Bishop of York. The main difficulty lay in Wilfrid's refusal to obey Berhtwald who had archiepiscopal authority over him. The decision of the Council was that Wilfrid should remain exiled from York and return to the monastery at Ripon and cease to be a bishop. Wilfrid disagreed with this decision and once again appealed to the Pope in Rome. Wilfrid was eventually reconciled to the archbishop, bishops and laymen at the Council of Nidd in 705.

4. The Viking invasion and Settlement 700 - 1066

Targeting monasteries and ministers

English monasticism entered a golden age in the 8th century; highlighted by the detailed writings of the Venerable Bede from the Jarrow monastery, the production of illuminated manuscripts such as the Lindisfarne Gospels and the rise of the monasteries as centres of learning. This was to change following the Viking raids which began on the Dorset coast in 787. Six years later, the great sack of Lindisfarne and other coastal areas of Northumbria caused enormous concern in the Christian community.[62] In 793 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recorded:

> "In this year dire portents appeared over Northumbria and sorely frightened the people. They consisted of immense whirlwinds and flashes of lightning, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air. A great famine immediately followed these signs and a little after in the same year, on 8 June, the ravages of the heathen men miserably destroyed God's church on Lindisfarne, with plunder and slaughter." [63]

Monasteries and ministers, mainly built in wood, proved easy targets for the invaders, and were periodically plundered and often destroyed. For the Vikings, the buildings were little more than unprotected storehouses of treasure. Although there are instances of English Christian leaders attacking religious sites, notably King Eadred who destroyed Ripon in 948, the Church had generally been able to depend upon spiritual sanctions for its safety.[64] The Viking raiders had no respect for such conventions. Yet there is no evidence that the plundering of churches by Vikings stemmed from any pagan hatred of Christianity; it was simply that they were regarded as available sources of loot.

The settlement between the Vikings and the native English

But this is only half the story. The Vikings were farmers and traders as well as pirates, and both their ferocity and their heathen faith readily evaporated once they had settled in their newly-conquered homes.[65] Moreover, when the first shock of invasion was over, the Englishmen showed no distrust of their new neighbours, especially after the Dane exchanged

[62] J.D. Richards. Viking Age England. English Heritage. London 1991.

[64] J.D. Richards. p. 97.

his sword for the plough. The Vikings soon established control over a large part of eastern England which was termed the Danelaw.

The Vikings were heathens at the time of their settlement. We have no details, but it is certain that their invasions brought destruction to most of the churches and religious houses in Danelaw, the confiscation of estates which had been gifted to the Church over the past two centuries, and the complete overthrow of ecclesiastical organization.[66] The tide of destruction soon ebbed in Danelaw, of which the **Bawtry** area was a part. There was no wholesale massacre or dispossession of the original English inhabitants of the Danelaw who, in many districts, must have outnumbered their new masters. It seems probable that they retained their Christianity and, in some cases perhaps, their churches and priests.[67] Once they had settled down, there is little evidence that the Danes were fiercely opposed to the Christian faith. Indeed, the readiness with which they accepted baptism and the rapidity with which they were converted suggests that their paganism was only loosely held. [68] Very little is known of the methods by which this conversion was achieved. The impression is that Christianity made an early appeal to the Danes and it seems certain that by the 10th century the mass of the new settlers were won over to Christianity.

The Viking Age witnessed church foundation on a massive scale and the further development of the parish system. Changes in ecclesiastical structure mirror those in land ownership. The monopoly of the monasteries and minster churches was broken as the old estates were fragmented.[69] The new secular landowners sought to demonstrate their power and wealth by the construction of private churches. Later they would tend to endow a chapel within an existing church, but for the present each manor had its own chapel, which would be used for burial. Such displays of power and prestige were not confined to Saxon lords and Viking leaders competed to demonstrate their authority. Indeed, the changes in land ownership which led to this spate of church building may have been a direct consequence of the Scandinavian settlement.[70]

5. The Norman Invasion and Settlement

After defeating the Danes at Stamford Bridge in 1066, King Harold hurried south to confront the Normans, who were landing on the south coast. Harold is believed to have crossed the River Idle at Bawtry, and the River Trent at Littleborough, before marching south through Lincoln and London to the south coast. Within a few weeks of the battle of Hastings all the leaders of Anglo-Saxon England had submitted to the victorious William, Duke of Normandy. But the prompt submission was deceptive. There was smouldering resentment as Norman nobles took over the estates of the conquered people.

[66] A.C. Wood. p. 23.
[67] A.C. Wood. pp. 23-4
[68] A.C. Wood. p. 24.
[69] J.D. Richards. p. 101.
[70] J.D. Richards. p. 101

The Normans in the Bawtry area

The important Norman magnate in the Bawtry area was Roger de Busli (or Builli) who fought alongside William, Duke of Normandy at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. He was richly rewarded with vast tracts of land over Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and at least three other counties, making him the second largest landowner in the region, after William Peverel. He was a man of high birth, came from Builly-en-Brai, near Rouen, and is thought to have been related to William's Queen Matilda. Roger de Busli established his 'caput' or headquarters in Tickhill, where he built a timber castle with a keep on the motte (mound) and a bailey, encircled by a high and thick wall, and a deep moat. The whole area, including the moat covers nearly seven acres. Eleanor, the queen of Henry 11, founded within the walls a chapel dedicated to St Nicholas.

The Norman Conquest had long term impact and consolidated the establishment of Catholicism as the only religion of the time. England was to witness a huge building programme - churches, monasteries, cathedrals and castles, built in stone for durability. The buildings were also designed to impress the locals that their Norman conquerors were immensely powerful and were here to stay. The building of monasteries and churches was also based on the belief that showing this outward devotion to God by such a generous foundation would be rewarded by the reciprocal requirement for the monks and priests to pray for the souls of their benefactors.

Impact on the Church in England

At first the Norman Conquest did not affect the Church in England because its Anglo-Saxon bishops and clergy remained in place, but that situation did not last long.[71] There was resistance to the Normans among the defeated English, and the Church hierarchy was suspected, rightly or wrongly, of aiding and abetting it. A thorough reorganisation of the Church was soon underway; no more English bishops were appointed and future abbots of the leading monasteries were also French. However, by 1100, Anglo-Saxon saints were being honoured with new church and abbey dedications like Bury St Edmund, named after a king of East Anglia who had been martyred on 20th November 869 for refusing to abjure his faith when he had been defeated by Viking invaders.

6. Monasticism in medieval times

Developments from Early Christianity: Hermits, anchorites and anchoresses

Hermits, anchorites and anchoresses were an important feature of the early Church and may be defined as persons who, for religious reasons, have retired from the world to live a solitary life of silence, prayer, and mortification. Christian hermits, as we have seen, were first found

[71] G. Bray. p. 59-60.

in Egypt and other parts of the Middle East towards the end of the 3rd century and became especially popular in the centuries which witnessed the disintegration of the Roman Empire.[72] There were many hermits in Anglo-Saxon England; a significant example was Richard Rolle, a Yorkshireman who went to the university of Oxford and left it to become a wandering hermit. He was not a priest, but lived on the alms of his patrons, moving his habitation from time to time.[73] The hermits observed no uniform rule of life. While some lived in isolation, others were united in loosely organised communities, which sometimes formed the nucleus of a new monastery or order, as with the Augustinian Hermits. Several Italian congregations of hermits were banded together under the Rule of St Augustine by Pope Alexander 1V in 1256, with a constitution modelled on that of the Dominicans. Hermits finally disappeared after the Catholic Counter-Reformation, though much of their tradition is retained in an organised form in certain monastic orders, notably the Carthusians and Carmelites. The Augustinian hermits suffered considerably from the impact of the Reformation but still survive in parts of Western Europe and also in South America.

Before either hermit, anchorite (male) or anchoress (female**)** established themselves, they had to seek permission from the bishop, show that they had sufficient endowment, or some prospect of maintenance, and were suitable in character.[74] Anchorites and anchoresses must have sufficient resources to support one or two servants, as they could not fetch food for themselves. Many had cells in towns, where alms would be bestowed on them: many hermits did work on the maintenance of roads and bridges. They might be priests or lay-people, and their primary task was prayer, though they might give spiritual counsel to those who sought it. An anchorage generally consisted of two or three rooms on the outside of a church. This would be close to the chancel of the church so that the enclosed person might, through a little slanting window (squint) in the wall, follow the Mass and other services. The anchorite's own cell also had two other windows, one into the servant's room for the passage of food, the other covered by a curtain with a big cross on it, for conversation with visitors. In the early Church, this way of life was entirely the choice of the anchorite who was free to leave the cell. Later, rules were laid down by the Church with the bishop enclosing the anchorite, who was henceforth confined within the walls of the cell.

An early set of rules for anchoresses was the 'Ancren Riwle' written in the 12th century in old French. The Ancren Riwle contained interesting and explicit directions: they must never be idle, but sew and read and do manual work when not praying. They must not gossip at the window and keep their servants from idleness and gossiping. They must not have more than one cat, for more might lead to quarrelling.[75]

Perhaps the best- known anchoress is Julian of Norwich (1342 – after 1413) who lived outside St Julian's church, Norwich.[76] Little is known of her life except that she probably lived as an anchoress, outside the walls of St Julian's Church in Norwich and took the name of the church. She is thought to have been born somewhere in the East Midlands. It is not known when or

[72] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 642.
[73] M. Deanesly. p.217
[74] M. Deanesly. p. 216-220.
[75] M. Deanesly. p. 219.
[76] S. Upjohn. In Search of Julian of Norwich. 1989; M.L. Delmastro. Julian of Norwich: The Revelation of Divine Love. 1994.

why she became an anchoress, nor when she died. Little is known of her early life: not so much as her given life survives.

According to her own account she received on the 8th May 1373, a series of 15 revelations, in a state of ecstasy lasting five hours. One other vision followed the next day and her book, 'The Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love', was written twenty years later. A great problem for Julian is how there could be such suffering and evil as she saw around her, not only in physical respects such as the Black Death which was then ravaging Europe, but also in terms of sin, for which the church declared the doctrine of eternal hell. This she found incompatible with the absence of wrath in God, and repeatedly asked God to explain it to her.[77] Throughout, her message is one of encouragement and love.

An important feature of the early Church had been the existence of hermits, anchorites and anchoresses in search of a solitary life-style. In Anglo-Saxon times, people looked to 'enclosed' religious life, and there was a great expansion of monasteries and religious houses in general. After the Viking depredations of the 9th century, English monasticism went into decline. The Norman Conquest acted as a catalyst for developments that were already taking place. The monasteries that were then being revived all followed the rule laid down in the 6th century by St Benedict of Nursia. But by about 1100 there was an increasing discontent across Europe with what was perceived as the growing worldliness of monasteries and various reform movements began to make themselves felt.[78] Before long the reformers, most important of which were the Dominicans and Franciscans. The Dominicans or 'Order of Preachers', founded by St Dominic, saw themselves as an elite band of defenders of the Christian faith. The 'black friars' as they were called, arrived in England in 1221 and soon made their way to Oxford where they began teaching in the schools there. The Franciscans or 'grey friars', formed by St Francis of Assisi, were not at first a learned order, but sought to share the hardships and squalors of the poor, proclaiming the gospel of love, service and humility.

Monastic Institutions

Abbeys were the largest monasteries whose existence was usually formally sanctioned by the Pope or some senior ecclesiastical figure such as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Abbeys were administered and run by an Abbot or Abbess assisted usually by a Prior or Prioress. The monks were educated men, some of whom were ordained priests or canons. They would take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The lay brothers were mostly uneducated men, and attended to farm work or domestic duties. Abbeys could be double houses, for monks and nuns.

Priories were lesser houses, with a smaller number of monks or nuns, headed by a Prior or Prioress. The monks and nuns would have been educated (though not all) and took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The lay brothers or nuns were mostly uneducated, and attended to farm work or domestic duties. Priories could be double houses for monks and nuns.

[77] G.M. Jantzen. In Hastings. p. 398.
[78] G. Bray. pp. 57-8.

Convents or nunneries were religious houses for women only, run by a Mother Superior. The nuns (sisters) would have been educated (though not all) and took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They had lay sisters to attend to domestic duties. An ordained male priest would administer to their religious needs.

Friaries were the houses of friars and usually headed by a prior. The friars accepted the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and were not 'enclosed' but were called to work in the world, to aid the sick, help the poor, and promote the word of God by preaching in the community. Only men could become friars in the First Order; Second and Third Orders have different admittance regulations.

Monastic Orders

A wide range of monastic orders were established in Britain and are considered below. Many established houses near **Bawtry** and had a considerable impact on religious life in the area. Joseph Hunter has remarked upon the unusually large number of monasteries in South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire in Medieval times.[79] The monasteries were run by different orders of monks or nuns and were to play important roles in the development of Christian thought and practice in the **Bawtry** area.[80]

Augustinians (also called Austin)

A number of religious communities of men and women had constitutions based on the Rule of St Augustine of Hippo. The Rule was drawn up in the 6th century and was in two parts; a short prologue laying down certain monastic observances and a longer and more general consideration of life within a community. The order originally developed in northern Italy and southern Spain. The Rule was little used in the early Middle Ages but was brought more into prominence in the 11th century by various religious communities.

Augustinian Canons
Also known as Black Canons from the colour of their clothing or habit, they formed communities of clergy in the middle of the 11th century who gave up their possessions to live a monastic life. They lived according to the Rule, but were expected to work in the outside world, serving in parishes. The Augustinian Order founded **Worksop Priory** in 1103 (See Gazetteer). **Thurgarton Priory** founded in 1119, and **Newstead Priory** in 1170, were also in Nottinghamshire.

Premonstratensian Canons
Also known as the 'White Canons' from the colour of their habit, they were founded by St Norbert at Premontre, near Laon in France in 1120. They also used the Rule of St Augustine, with additional austerities including a complete abstinence from meat. They also came under Cistercian influences through Norbert's friendship with Bernard of Clairvaux (see below).

[79] Hunter, *Collections*, pp.24-6
[80] R. Tansey. A County Guide to pre-Reformation Monasteries of England and the Monastic Way of Life (Nottinghamshire) Undated.

Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire, was founded for Premonstratensian canons in 1153. **Broadholm Priory**, formerly in Nottinghamshire now in Lincolnshire, was founded for Premonstratensian canonesses in 1145.

Augustinian Hermits

Also known as Austin Friars, these emerged as one of the important mendicant (begging) orders along with the Franciscans and Dominicans. The members were originally hermits living in Italy, who, in the interests of ecclesiastical efficiency were banded together under the Rule of St Augustine by Pope Alexander 1V in 1256. The later Middle Ages saw the rise of certain local reformed communities of the order including the German Reformed Congregation, to which Martin Luther belonged.

Benedictines

Little is known of the life of St Benedict (c.480 – c.550). He was born in Nursia and educated at Rome where the licentiousness of contemporary society led him to withdraw from the world. He lived as a hermit for some years before moving with a small band of monks to Monte Cassino. It was here that he drew up his plans for the reform of monasticism and developed his Rule. Until recently considered Benedict's original work, the Rule is almost certainly dependent on a text of a previous generation.[81] By pruning luxuriant detail, changing or inserting passages, and adding several chapters at the end, Benedict produced a document of overall sanity and balance.

The Benedictine monastery was safeguarded and lead by an abbot, chosen by all or some of his monks, rather than appointed by his predecessor, which was the prevalent practice. The Rule placed strong emphasis on community: the monks should seek mutual service by way of obedience to the abbot, seen to hold the place of Christ in the monastery, but even to obey one another since it is by obedience that they will go to God. The abbot's office is a stewardship, placing him not above his monks but in a position to serve them. The central act of the community is the Divine Office, which with private prayer, spiritual reading and work fills the day. All possessions are held in common; the regime is austere but not exacting.[82]

The Benedictine Rule was open to diversity and modification in the light of other factors of time, place and character which made it not only eminently adaptable but capable of varied application.[83] Cistercians and other monastic reformers of the 11th and 12th centuries were to draw heavily on the Rule. The Rule was brought to northern England by St Wilfred and it was familiar to Bede. For many centuries, the Rule of St Benedict was the only visible link between the multitude of autonomous abbeys throughout the country. Attempts were made in the 10th and 11th centuries at collective reform to bring the monasteries closer together. Such were the methods of Cluny which founded an order in the 10th century.

[81] M. Truran in A. Hastings (ed). p. 69.
[82] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 154.
[83] M.Truran p. 69.

The Cluniac Order

Important monastic developments came from Burgundy in France, and in particular from the monastery of Cluny, founded by William the Pious, Duke of Aquitaine, in 910.[84] Here a confederation was established of Benedictine monasteries, with Cluny taking the lead as the 'mother' house. Moreover, because of the privileges granted by the Papacy, Cluny was able to organise and administer its 'daughter' houses in a more rigorous fashion than ever before.[85] Under the leadership of outstanding abbots, such as St Odilo and St Hugh the Great, the Cluniac Order achieved considerable success in the 10th and 11th centuries, but it had represented a decided shift from the views of St Benedict who had emphasised the autonomy of individual monastic houses. Moreover, Cluny had established a reputation for worldliness and wealth which contrasted with the simple spiritual life advocated by St Benedict. In the 11th and 12th centuries, the Cluniac Order exercised an important influence on the life of the Church. Leading figures in the Order came from noble families who increasingly enjoyed the confidence of sovereigns and popes. By the middle of the 12th century, the Order had over 1,000 houses in Europe. In the later Middle Ages, the influence of Cluny had greatly declined with the emergence of new monastic orders. **Blyth Priory,** the Cluniac Benedictine Priory at Blyth, founded in 1088, was the first Norman monastic building in the area. The priory was to have an important role in the religious life in **Bawtry** (See Gazetteer).

Carmelites

The order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was founded in Palestine c. 1154 when some former pilgrims and crusaders began to live like hermits. The primitive rule adopted in 1209 was one of extreme asceticism, involving absolute poverty, total abstinence from meat, and solitude.[86] When the failures of the crusades made life difficult in Palestine, they moved to Europe and to England and became a mendicant order. From 1452, women joined the order. During the 16th century the discipline among friars and nuns was relaxed considerably. The most famous of the nuns was Teresa of Avila (1515- 82), who introduced a stricter life style, with additional features intended to follow a contemplative life. Her disciple, St John of the Cross, introduced similar rules for the friars. Followers of Teresa's reforms wore sandals rather than shoes and came to be called 'Discalced' (barefooted) Carmelites in contrast to the 'Calced' Carmelites who continued to follow the more relaxed rule. The habit of the order was dark brown with a brown scapular and a white mantle (therefore the order was known as the 'Whitefriars'). A Carmelite convent was established at **Doncaster** in the 14th century (See Gazetteer).

Carthusians

This was founded by St Bruno of Cologne in 1084 on a remote mountain side in the Alps at the Grande Chartreuse. At first it had no special Rule, though it demanded perfect

[84] F.L Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p.307
[85] D. Marcombe & J. Hamilton. p.1
[86] F. L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. pp. 240-1

mortification and renunciation of the world.[87] The order was open to men and women. The monks lived almost as hermits in small, two-storey houses with small gardens, surrounded by a high wall, and quite separate from each other. They lived for much of their time in silence and isolation, but their living quarters were quite substantial compared to other Orders. Each monk's house was divided into three small rooms or areas and an upper floor used as a workshop. The rooms were sparsely furnished; a bed with a straw mattress, a table and chair, and a prie-Dieu (a bench used by the individual for kneeling at prayer). Fragments of a chimney were found during excavations at **Beauvale** in 1908 so it is likely that each cell had a fireplace – something of a luxury in medieval times (See Gazetteer). There was a supply of fresh water formed by the diversion of a nearby stream. Lead piping also indicated that rain water was collected. There was a latrine for each cell and the walls of each garden were built so high that there would be no visible contact with neighbouring cells or with any other area of the priory. The basis of the Carthusian rule or 'custom' was a combination of Benedictine rule and the asceticism of a hermit. Their habit was white with a white leather belt.

The order also included a few houses of nuns who lived under a similar rule to the monks. The government of the order was with the General, who is the Prior of the Grand Chartreuse, elected by the monks of his house. The General is assisted by a General Chapter, consisting of the priors of the individual houses, which meets annually. **The Blessed Trinity Priory, Beauvale,** Nottinghamshire, was founded by Nicholas de Cantelupe in 1343. It was built for a prior and twelve monks and was the third of nine houses of the Carthusian Order established in England.

Cistercians

New religious orders emerged in the 11th and 12th centuries which sought to return to earlier Benedictine values. The Cistercian Order, also known as the White Monks because their habits were made of un-dyed wool and they wore a black scapular over it. The Order was founded in 1098 by St Robert of Molesme at Citeaux. The Cistercians rose to prominence under the leadership of St Bernard of Clairvaux, and by the end of the 12th century some 530 Cistercian abbeys had been established in almost every part of western Europe.[88] The Cistercian life was one of austerity. Abbeys were erected only in remote locations, whilst its churches were plain in character and ornaments and vestments were not made from precious materials. Strict rules on diet and the keeping of silence were laid down and manual labour given a prominent position. The Cistercians became important agricultural pioneers, playing a notable part in English sheep farming, with the work on their estates being undertaken by lay brethren who lived under somewhat less severe rules.[89] The Cistercian Order adopted a constitution known as the 'Charter of Love'. This came into force in 1155 and provided for a religious order of autonomous houses; it established annual visitation of each house by the abbot of the house which founded it. Each house was governed by a General Chapter, which maintained discipline and the due observance of old customs and the establishment of new

[87] F.L. Cross & E.L. Livingstone. p. 244

[88] J-F Leroux-Dhuys. Cistercian Abbeys: History and Architecture. 1998.

[89] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone

ones. There were general instructions for the election of abbots and disciplinary procedures for delinquent abbots and monasteries.[90]

Bernard of Clairvaux has been recognised as one of the great spiritual leaders of western Europe in his own lifetime, and has exercised enormous influence ever since, not least on the Protestant Reformers. The Cistercians founded **Roche Abbey,** near Maltby, South Yorkshire, in 1147 (See Gazetteer).

Dominicans

The Dominicans, also known as the black friars from the black mantle worn over a white habit, were formed by St Dominic at Bologna in 1220-1.[91] Initially it was decided that the new order, like the Franciscans should practise individual and corporate poverty, that it should have no possessions other than its houses and churches and live by begging. The order spread rapidly throughout Europe and into Asia. In the 14th and 15th centuries, it was troubled by constitutional and disciplinary controversies and there was a considerable relaxation of discipline. In 1475 Pope Sixtus 1V revoked the law on corporate property and allowed the order to hold property and have permanent sources of income. The Dominicans concentrated their efforts on education and established houses in most university towns. Importantly, they established representative institutions to govern the Order. From each house, representatives (the prior and one chosen by election) would be sent to the annual provincial chapters; and the provinces in turn sent representatives to the Chapter General, the supreme legislative authority in the order which, among its other functions, chose the 'Master General'. There are grounds for believing that the representative system of the Dominicans influenced the development in England of the Church Convocations of Canterbury and York and perhaps even the British Parliament.[92] The Popes used the Dominicans for carrying out diplomatic missions and in the Inquisition for which their position 'as watchdogs of orthodoxy' gave them a certain suitability but not one calculated to increase their popularity.

Franciscans

The First Order of Friars Minor (or Grey Friars) was founded by St Francis of Assisi in 1209 when he gave his followers their first rule, now lost.[93] The rule was redrawn in 1221 and received Papal approval in 1223. Only men could become friars in the First Order. As will be seen, Second and Third Orders of friars have developed with different admittance regulations and different ways of working.

The Franciscans offer important contrasts with other religious orders considered above. The original rule for Order of Friars insisted on complete poverty, not only for individual friars but corporately for the whole order. The friars were to live by the work of their hands or, if need be, by begging and were forbidden to own any property or accept any money. With the rapid

spread of the order and the need for settled houses, this ideal soon proved unworkable if taken literally. Two schools of thought emerged: one whose members were called 'Spirituals' insisted on a strict interpretation of the Rule; the other, followed by the majority, preferred a more moderate view in accordance with the requirements of the times. The discussion grew violent and threatened the unity of the order. The issued was debated before the Pope, and in 1317-8 John XX11 decided against the stricter group. Many of the Spirituals fled and became schismatics under the name of 'Fraticelli'. The Order went through a difficult time in the 14th century when the Franciscans were in heated scholastic discussion with the Dominicans as to whether Christ and the Apostles had owned property.[94] Efforts at reform and a return to poverty were brought about when a group known as the 'Observants' gained ecclesiastical recognition for their stricter views and separated in 1517 from the 'Conventuals' who advocated a more moderate regime. An offshoot of the Franciscan Order were the **Capuchins**, founded by Matteo di Bassi of Urbino in 1529. He was an Observant Friar who wanted to return to the primitive simplicity of the order.[95] At first the order encountered considerable opposition from other Franciscans, and nearly folded. But their enthusiastic preaching and missionary work gained them popular support and they took an important role in the Catholic Counter-Reformation.

The 'Second Order' of St Francis was founded by him and St Clare between 1212 and 1214, was known as the **Poor Clares,** whose convents for women were strictly contemplative, devoted to prayer, penance and manual work. The early rule, based on that of St Francis was very strict and laid down complete poverty both individual and corporate. This rule was not accepted by all convents and in 1263 Pope Urban 1V sanctioned a milder one which was observed by a majority, those nuns which follow it being called 'Urbanists'.[96] The order was thoroughly reformed in the 15th century by St Colette who restored the principle of strict poverty in her houses. Since that time, the Urbanists and the Colettines have remained the two main branches of the order. The Poor Clares practise the strictest of enclosure, undertake severe fasts and are regarded as the most austere women's order of the Roman Catholic Church.

The 'Third Order' of St Francis came into existence in the 13th century, when the need was felt to give lay people opportunities for self-dedication in religion in accordance with the Franciscan spirit. The term 'tertiary' is used of those members living in the world, as distinct from 'regular tertiaries' who live in communities. Tertiaries observe a rule, recite certain prayers, and keep certain fasts. They are not bound by vow, but make a solemn promise; they may not leave the order or join another without grave cause, nor may they belong to more than one at a time. Normally, but not always, they form chapters under the leadership of one of their number.[97]

[97] Ibid p. 1351-2

Gilbertines

This Order was founded by St Gilbert of Sempringham in Lincolnshire in c. 1131. It was the only completely English Order. While parish priest at Sempringham, Gilbert encouraged seven women of his parish to adopt a rule of life based on the Cistercian model. He soon developed the house by incorporating groups of lay sisters and lay brothers to help with the manual work of the community.[98] Their numbers grew and in 1139 a second foundation was established and further foundations followed. In 1148, Gilbert journeyed to Citeaux to seek incorporation of his nuns in the Cistercian Order, but the Chapter declined to govern communities of women. Gilbert returned home and arranged for the spiritual direction of his communities by Augustinian Canons. The Pope gave approval to his work. By the time of his death in 1189, nine double monasteries (with men and women having separate quarters) and four of canons only. **St Helen's Priory, Mattersey, Nottinghamshire** was founded by Roger FitzRalph, son of Ranulph de Mattersey in c. 1185.[99] (See Gazetteer) It was designed to house six canons and unlike many other Gilbertine priories, Mattersey was not a "mixed-house" with male monks and female nuns; it was home to only male canons. The Order at its peak had twenty-six houses in England but none elsewhere. Gilbertine monks wore black habits and white cloaks.

The Monastic Way of Life

Life in any monastery was based on the Rule as laid down by the Order's founder. These would commonly have been based on the Rule of St Benedict or the Rule of St Augustine, with some orders adopting variations. All took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The Rule laid down a strict daily routine, or prayer, work and study, and was compulsory; only through serious illness or other matters could anyone appeal not to participate in the regime.

The basic daily routine

This would be followed subject to variations according to the particular Order:

2.30 am	**Lauds.** This was the traditional morning prayer. It was a night time canonical office and usually involved a hymn, several psalms, a short Biblical reading, the Lord's Prayer, the Benedictus (a short hymn of thanksgiving).
6.00 am	**Prime.** This was the first of the daytime offices and appears in the Rule of St Benedict. It consisted of hymns and prayers and a reading of the Martyrology, which involved the naming of the martyr and the place of the martyrdom.
7.00 am	**Tierce (**sometimes known as Terce**).** This would begin with Mass and then followed by the office of Tierce which consisted of prayers, psalms and a reading of a chapter from a devotional book.
8.00 am	Meeting in the Chapter House.
9.00 am	Work period
12 noon	**Sext.** The sext covers a wide range of miscellaneous subjects and also reflects the growing tendency to centralisation in the later medieval Church.

[98] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 566.
[99] W. Page (ed) Victoria County History. pp. 140-141

12.15 pm Work period.
1.15 pm **Nones.** In many orders it came to be said either after the principal Mass earlier in the morning, or at noon with the Terce and Sext.
1.30 pm Dinner
2.00 pm Work period.
5.30 pm **Vespers.** This was originally celebrated after dark and candles were lit. Since the late Middle Ages, it was celebrated in the afternoon and consisted of four Psalms, a short lesson, culminating in the canticle Magnificat (Song of Praise).
6.00 pm Supper.
7.00 pm **Compline.** The last of the canonical offices said before retiring for the night. It is based on parts of the Rule of St Benedict and consisted of hymns and psalms appropriate to the time of day.
7.30 pm Retire to bed.

Silence

Generally speaking, most of the day, including meal times, was completed in silence in the monastery. The exceptions to this were at the daily meeting in the Chapter House and after supper before Compline. Limited talking was allowed during work periods, but only if it was concerned with work or other tasks needed to be performed.

7. The Medieval Parish Church

The Church and its place in society

The Church was a hierarchical institution whose structure had mirrored the hierarchy of feudal Europe during the Middle Ages. To that extent, it was eminently suited to the society it both shaped and reflected.[100] Church institutions were of ancient and natural growth, producing a very complex arrangement. England was divided into two provinces (Canterbury and York) each headed by an archbishop; about nineteen dioceses each under a bishop and each subdivided into archdeaconries and rural deaconries; and parish churches which numbered about 9,600 in medieval times. Parish churches would have working procedures common to Christianity; the Latin Mass and services, the sacraments, and the observance of feast days or holy days. They might also enjoy local observances or traditions.

Whatever the extent of imperfection, and indeed corruption, that faced the Church in England in the early 16th century, it appeared to contemporaries to be impregnable.[101] It faced no major challenges to its existence, either from the public, or from the monarch and central government to usurp its jurisdiction, redefine its theology or seize its property and lands. The Church had many and obvious failings and had its critics throughout much of its history. But,

[100] M. Pearse, *The Monarch History of the Church; Vol.5. The Age of Reason* (2006) p. 20.
[101] K. Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth 1 to Elizabeth 11* (1996) pp.1-2

as Eamon Duffy observes, throughout medieval times, the traditional, universal Catholic religion exerted "an enormously strong, diverse, and vigorous hold over the imagination and loyalty of the people up to the very moment of Reformation."[102] The conventional beliefs and practices of the pre-Reformation Church promoted salvation through devout practices including emphasis on saints, relics and pilgrimages. The concept of Purgatory had been given an important place in the church's teaching, providing the rationale not only for indulgences but also in the medieval cult of intercession for the dead.[103] The whole structure of Masses for the dead, the setting aside of areas of churches as Chantry Chapels, often endowed by the wealthy families to continue the saying or chanting of prayers, were based on the belief this would hasten the soul's passage through Purgatory. Pilgrimages to the shrines of saints were a most important feature of English church life.

The Church as the centre of community life

The church itself was not merely a place of worship but an active centre of community life. The Church festivals were themselves enriched by drama, especially at Easter when the internment and resurrection of Christ were symbolically re-enacted. The sound of parish churches' bells calling the laity to its services, floating over the village and countryside was a common sound on Sundays and Holy Days. The parish church managed to conflate the sacred with the profane, even though the purists disapproved of the secular activities which took place there.[104] It was a sanctuary where the outlaw from justice could find refuge. It was the place where games and even dancing occasionally occurred as did funeral wakes, parish feasts and the selling of church ales. Business deals were often transacted in the church porch, or even within the church itself

The communal life of the peasantry centred on work and worship, the first in the fields, the second at Mass in the parish church.[105] The seasons of the Church and the agricultural year had similar rhythms of fast and feast, sowing and harvesting, dying and resurrection. Bread was the common substance of the daily meal and the daily Mass. Throughout the year, ceremonies were carefully performed as precautionary acts against misfortune. Rituals focused on people's fears and anxieties and promised safeguards against catastrophe, disease and famine in this world and damnation in the next. Other more pleasant events were celebrated in feast and thanksgiving.

The church was quite a hive of activity including sometimes secular activity, though the church authorities tried to restrict that.[106]The interior of the medieval church, though lacking much in the way of furnishings, was a very colourful place with vivid wall paintings depicting Biblical

[102] E. Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580 (1992) p.4
[103] K. Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth 1 to Elizabeth 11* (1996) pp.3-4

[104] V. Green. pp. 113-4
[105] G. Harriss. Shaping the Nation: England 1360-1461. Clarendon Press. Oxford. 2005. p. 249.
[106] N. Tanner. Piety in the Later Middle Ages in S. Gilley & W.J. Sheils (eds) p. 65.

scenes and images of saints. It would probably also have been a blaze of colour, especially in the late medieval period – a point worth emphasizing, because we tend to think of medieval churches as simple and bare. That austerity, however, was largely the result of the Reformation and afterwards, when so many of the statues, wall-paintings and stained-glass windows were destroyed. When the whitewash is removed, we are sometimes able to see just how much of the walls were formerly covered with religious paintings. This is the case with **Blyth Priory Church in Nottinghamshire** where the removal of the whitewash in the 1950s revealed the remains of the 'Doom Painting' which would have focused the thoughts of the congregation on the afterlife (see Gazetteer).

The interior of parish churches

The main parts of the church were the **nave** which was assigned to the parishioners and the **chancel** was for the officiating clerics. The nave was separated from the chancel by the rood-screen and from side aisles by columns or pillars.

Chantry Chapels and guilds

Important features of church life centred on Chantry Chapels and guilds. Chantry chapels were areas of the church set aside for the saying or 'chanting' of Masses and prayers for various people, especially souls in purgatory. Priests said the Masses but the laity, as founders and benefactors of the chantries, could exercise much control in other respects, determining the number and even the times of the Masses as well as the various supplementary prayers to be said.[107] Chantries were a way of beautifying and diversifying the worship in cathedrals and parish churches, and the priests assigned to them often assisted with parochial duties.

Craft guilds and pious confraternities (or religious guilds) were important developments in the 14th and 15th centuries. Craft guilds were associations of the members of a a particular craft or trade in a particular town. Their primary purpose was the social and economic regulation of the craft or trade, but almost all of them had a religious dimension, including arranging for Masses for deceased members. Pious confraternities had similar religious activities but were normally centred on a parish church or a religious house, rather than on a craft or trade. A central feature was the annual 'day' of the guild or confraternity, usually the feast day of the saint to whom it was dedicated. The day comprised a mixture of religious and social activities: usually a Mass for all living and dead members. Many guilds and confraternities made provision for members in need, whether from sickness or poverty, and a few had their own hospitals. They took part in civic and religious processions, and the craft guilds were normally responsible for the mystery plays. These gave full representations of the

[107] N. Tanner. p. 67

stories from both the Old and New Testaments. The plays would act as a tourist attraction, drawing people in from the countryside.[108]

The primary role of the parish priest

The parish priest was the central figure in the ordinary Christian's life. Through him people learned the rudiments of their faith. It was he who mediated God's ways through the sacraments to the people. It is difficult to make generalisations about the effectiveness of individual parish priests during a period of some four hundred years or so. The priest was often drawn from the same social background as the members of his flock. He was often very inadequately trained either in the local grammar school or in the bishop's household, and perhaps later at a university. Complaints about clerical ignorance were a medieval commonplace. Very few priests, it was said, were capable of reading even slowly, syllable by syllable from the scriptures, much less of understanding the words and their meaning. There can be little doubt that a deep understanding of Christian theology was reserved for a privileged few, not that this can have been a matter of much moment to the people of the parish.[109] What they wanted was a pastor who would by his personal example bring home to them the message of the gospel. It was only in the parish church that they could be baptized, married or buried.

The spiritual work of the parish priest was to take the services – Matins, Mass, and Vespers. He was also required to instruct his parishioners on the commandments, sacraments, the creed, seven works of mercy, seven virtues, and the seven deadly sins. Importantly, he administered the sacraments.

The Sacraments

In most Christian churches, certain important rituals are called sacraments. The word is derived from the Latin '*sacramentum*,' meaning a sacred sign or symbol. Around 1250, a scholastic theologian Peter Lombard compiled a list of seven important rituals which came to be regarded as sacraments which marked the lives of Christians from cradle to grave. The seven were baptism, confirmation, penance, eucharist, ordination, matrimony, and extreme unction. Unlike many other church ceremonies, these seven were understood to produce spiritual effects.

A list of seven sacraments formally affirmed at the Council of Florence (1439) and the Council of Trent (1545 -1563) were: Baptism, Confirmation, Penance (Reconciliation), Eucharist, Matrimony, Ordination and Extreme Unction (Anointing of the sick). According to the Council of Trent, all seven Sacraments were instituted by Christ; but in the case of some (Confirmation, Extreme Unction, and Matrimony) there is much disagreement among Catholic theologians as to the occasion when Christ instituted them.[110]

[108] N. Tanner. p. 68
[109] V. Green. A New History of Christianity. 1996. p. 106-7.
[110] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. pp. 1218-9

Baptism

This is an initiation rite which admits a candidate to the Christian Church. The term is derived from the Greek word meaning to immerse and early Christian baptisms were either full or partial immersions in water. The early Christians were probably following the example of John the Baptist, who is mentioned in all four Gospels, though they may have also been influenced by the Jewish practice of baptising entrants. Immersion and submersion were the usual methods of earlier times. By the later Middle Ages, affusion or the pouring water over the head became acceptable, whilst reciting a short formula with the words at the end of Matthew's Gospel becoming standard; Christians were baptised 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. An alternative commonly used today is Aspersion whereby the candidate is merely sprinkled with water.

In Christian communities throughout the Roman Empire, baptisms were generally performed once a year, usually with the celebration of Easter or Pentecost. Those who went through the initiation process were generally adults, although children could also be baptised with their parents. The number of initiates remained relatively small as long as Christianity remained an illegal religion. Christians would gather for the ceremony in private homes, and baptisms were performed in water tanks and cisterns as well as natural pools. Matters were to change after 313 when the Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the empire and virtually all adults had been brought into the Church. Baptism was beginning to be understood as conferring a new life of grace and as being necessary for salvation. This being the case, Christian parents sought to have their children baptised younger and younger and by the 5th century it was not uncommon for children to be baptised at a fairly early age. Some clergy argued that any sickly new-born baby was to be baptised immediately, otherwise its soul would be lost. Midwives were instructed to baptise it themselves if the priest could not get there in time.

Confirmation

This is an initiation ceremony involving the laying of hands, an anointing with oil, or both. The name of the sacrament dates from the 5th century when bishops used to confirm baptisms that had earlier been performed by priests. In the early Church, the sacrament was administered to quite young children by the bishop as he travelled around the diocese, accompanied by his retinue of perhaps thirty horsemen. The administration of confirmation in early medieval times seems have been casual: a careless bishop blessing the children without troubling to dismount, and the children themselves running about among his retinue, between the horses' legs.[111] By the 14th century, the bishop usually blessed the children in church or in the chapel of his manor. In medieval times, not many Christians were confirmed.[112] Unless parents lived close to the bishop's cathedral or palace, they did not undertake to bring their children to him for the sacrament. Unless bishops were vigorous in

[111] M. Deanesly. p. 207
[112] J. Bowden. p.1064.

fulfilling their pastoral responsibilities, they did not journey into the countryside to confirm these new additions to the church. When they did, the anointing could be a rather perfunctory task amidst a show of pageantry.

Anglicans have retained confirmation as a minor sacrament, performed usually when adolescents formally accept membership of the Church into which they were baptised as infants. However, adults who were confirmed earlier in their lives, can take the sacrament again if they desire to make a public affirmation of their commitment. Methodists, Presbyterians and other Protestant denominations have ritual affirmations of baptism for adolescents and adults but practices vary widely.

Penance (Reconciliation)

Christians have had sacraments or rituals of repentance and reconciliation since the earliest centuries, but these have taken a wide variety of forms.[113] The New Testament records the importance Jesus placed on the sacrament; he both forgave sins and exhorted his followers to forgive one another.

In the early Church, a process of public repentance was available throughout the Christian world. This was partly to help individuals who had left the Church and asked to be readmitted, a process that would available only once in a parson's lifetime lest people think that they could sin and be forgiven as often as they liked. Sometimes called canonical penance, because it followed certain canons or rules, public repentance became primarily used for notorious sinners whose behaviour had scandalized the community.[114] An outward display of repentance was always required for apostasy, murder and adultery; local regulations required the process for various other sins as well. The canons or regulations required sinners to admit their guilt to the bishop who then assigned public works of penance. Penitents wore sackcloth and ashes, or they fasted and begged forgiveness of the faithful. They had to stand or kneel apart from the community during the eucharist and were not allowed to share communion. This period of repentance might last a few months to a few years. When the bishop was convinced that the penitents were reconverted to the Christian way of life, they were ceremoniously welcomed back to the Church.

This severe regime worked well when Christians were few in number but when the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, the system began to fail.[115] More Christians meant more people undertaking penance. In some places penances were made more severe, in others longer. People reacted to the situation by postponing becoming public penitents until later in life when penances would necessarily be shorter, or even until they were dying, when they would ask the bishop to be merciful and forgive them.

[113] J. Bowden. pp. 1065-6.
[114] J. Bowden. p.1065
[115] J. Bowden. p. 1065-6

With the fall of the Roman Empire, this penitential system fell into disuse and was eventually displaced.

Private confession of sins to a spiritual adviser was a common practice in monasteries. Over time, monks were ordained as priest and sent as missionaries into the wider world, and took this monastic practice with them. By the 10th century it was accepted as normal practice in church life. In the Middle Ages, private confession was to a priest, and was repeated as often as was needed.

Everyone was to undertake an annual confession which was an obligation introduced by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. This put into the hands of the parish priest an immensely valuable pastoral and educational tool.[116] In confession, the priest could explore not only the moral condition of their parishioners, but also their knowledge of Catholic faith and practice. Confessors were to examine each penitent on the **Creed** (see below) and on their ability to recite the Lord's Prayer. But the obligation of annual confession placed enormous demands on both confessor and penitent. The penitent needed to know how and what to confess, the priest needed to be able to distinguish between what was serious and what was trivial, impose the appropriate penance and give absolution to the penitent. In practical terms, with the queues of fellow parishioners looming close behind, the confession had to be kept within manageable dimensions; in the time-honoured formula the penitent was instructed to be brief, be brutal, be gone.[117]

The priest heard all his people's confessions on Shrove Tuesday or sometime during the season of Lent. He questioned them about their sins, under the heading of the seven deadly sins (pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony and sloth) and then gave them advice, penance, and absolution. There were no confessional boxes in medieval times; the priest sat on a chair or stool, somewhere in the chancel, and the penitent knelt before him. Confessional boxes are mostly dated from the late 16th and the 17th centuries, and are usually wooden structures with a centre compartment, entered through a door or curtain, where the priest sits, and on each side is a latticed opening for the penitent to speak through and a step on which they kneel. The perception of being less visible (identifiable) perhaps encourages penitents to be more honest.

Sometimes, clergy may have been slapdash or negligent in undertaking confessions. The medieval jest book 'A Hundred Merry Tales' has a joke about a priest hearing confession on Ash Wednesday with a massive hangover as a result of Shrove Tuesday junketing. He falls asleep in the midst of one woman's confession that she had stolen a pot, and in disgust she gets up and goes away. The next woman in the queue kneels down and begins with the traditional request for a blessing, the 'Benedicite'. At which the priest wakes confused and

[116] E. Duffy. p. 54.
[117] E. Duffy. p. 60.

exclaims: “What, art thou now at benedicite again! Tell me what didst thou when thou hadst stolen the pot”. [118]

Although the priest was bound by the seal of secrecy, confession placed members of the laity at the mercy of the priest. The Church’s final sanction for an erring member was excommunication, involving the tolling of the church bell, tossing a lighted candle to the ground to symbolize expulsion, and excluding the excommunicate from the services of the Church.

The priest’s absolution was understood to bestow God’s forgiveness, but the mild penances that were assigned seemed insufficient to satisfy God’s justice, so theologians theorized that most souls would have to undergo a period in **purgatory** before being allowed to enter heaven. Satisfaction had to be made for sins committed and, according to the theory of **indulgences,** Christians could obtain merit for themselves or others by doing good works such as going on a Crusade, giving alms to the poor, performing religious rituals, or giving money to the Church. By the 16th century, the sale of indulgences fostered the belief that people could in effect buy salvation for their departed loved ones.

Eucharist or Holy Communion

The Eucharist or Holy Communion is the main form of worship in Roman Catholic and Anglican and some Protestant churches. The name ‘eucharist’ comes from the Greek word meaning to give thanks. In the early Church its central prayer is one of giving thanks to God. In the New Testament it was referred to as the breaking of bread or the Lord’s Supper, which is the name most often used by Protestant churches. In the Middle Ages it came to be called the Mass, the name most commonly used by Catholics. The Gospels refer to Jesus’ last meal as a Passover meal during which he blessed the bread and wine, identified himself with those elements and told his Apostles to eat and drink them. In the Acts of the Apostles, there is evidence that they regularly met to share meals.

By the end of the 2nd century, the eucharist evolved from a full meal to a symbolic meal with prayers, readings from scripture, and holy communion. In the 4th century, Constantine had legalised Christianity in the Roman Empire and Sundays were set aside as public holidays, with the eucharist expanded into a formal liturgy including stylised vestments and sacred vessels. The Mass, as it was increasingly called, was thought of as a sacrifice. Through the priest’s recitation of Jesus’ words at his last supper, the bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ, though their appearance remains the same. This is the doctrine of ‘transubstantiation’. The doctrine was first officially announced at the Fourth Lateran Council. 1215 which talked of the ‘real presence’ of Christ at the Eucharist, the central part of the Mass.

[118] As quoted in E. Duffy. p. 61.

Matrimony

In the ancient world, marriage was primarily an arrangement between families, with the heads of families presiding over nuptial arrangements. Early Hebrew law, for example, was founded on marriage by purchase, which assigned a low status to the woman who became in effect the property of her husband, though he could not sell her.[119] The woman could neither own nor inherit property and had no rights of divorce, while the man might divorce her for some 'uncleanness'. Polygamy was practised, sometimes with the consent of the wife so that the bond might be preserved but in later Judaism there was a growing realisation that monogamy represented the ideal.

In early Christian times, marriage continued to be a secular affair with little Church involvement. The New Testament laid down certain guidelines; Christians were told not to marry outside the faith and not to desert an unbelieving spouse, although if the unbelieving partner wished to leave the marriage of their own accord, that was to be accepted. Only much later the Church had taken control of matrimony and was legislating for it. [120] One of the Church's demands was that the marriage had to be by consent; a woman could not be forced to marry against her will, nor could child betrothals (very common) be regarded as legally binding. How many women defied custom and refused to marry a man chosen for them by their parents is impossible to say, but at least they could do so in law.

The medieval marriage service was quite short, consisting of the troth-plight with the ring, before the church door. This usually preceded the Nuptial or wedding mass, which contains suitable lessons and prayers and the nuptial blessing. The marriage might be celebrated by a Nuptial or wedding Mass which contains the Nuptial blessing. Under the present law of the Roman Catholic Church, a Nuptial Mass may be celebrated on Sundays and feast days; on those days the Mass of the day is said, though one lesson may be taken from the Nuptial Mass (except on a few feasts of greatest importance) and the prayers of the nuptial blessing are inserted. Since 1966 a Nuptial Mass has been permitted at a mixed marriage, though the non -Roman Catholic partner may not receive communion.[121]

Many parish priests were married and fully integrated into parish life, but celibacy was increasingly encouraged and became compulsory after the First Lateran Council in 1123. How long it took for that to become the norm we do not know, although the trend was certainly towards greater strictness. It is fair to say that by 1150 celibacy had become the expected standard, although concubinage continued and was not finally eliminated until clerical marriage was made legal again in 1549.[122]

A marriage once contracted was for life, because the medieval Church did not recognise divorce. In the absence of divorce, there were only two options – separation and annulment. Separation kept the marriage in existence but dispensed the couple from cohabitation. Separation was open to abuse and could encourage concubinage which was in effect a second

[119] F.L. Cross & E.L. Livingstone. pp.889-90
[120] G. Bray. p.99.
[121] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 986
[122] G. Bray. p.64.

marriage but was not recognised as such. This could cause serious problems when a man died, because his concubine and her children had no right of inheritance, which went to the legitimate spouse, even though by then she might have been long gone. The process of annulment, a declaration that the marriage had never existed, had the problem that any children born of it were declared illegitimate. The Protestant Churches no longer provide for separation or annulment (unlike the Roman Catholic Church). The Church of England has never officially recognised divorce and is still reluctant to remarry divorced people whose former spouse is still living. Other Churches are more lenient.

Ordination

The formal rite by which clergy take office in the church is called ordination or holy orders. Only Roman Catholics and Anglicans refer to the rite as a sacrament and refer to the ordained as priests. Catholics have three main ranks or levels of ordained ministry, namely deacons, priests and bishops. The earliest reference to the rite is the early 3rd century and was widespread by the end of the Roman period in England. During this time, Christian clergy were normally married, in contrast to monks who lived together in communities and remained celibate. By the 5th century, with the collapse of the western half of the Roman Empire, monks were often ordained as priests and were sent out as missionaries to convert the barbarians of central and northern Europe.[123] Since monks were celibate, celibacy came to be associated with priesthood, and priests who were not monks were encouraged to refrain from sexual activity with their wives. Although celibacy was gradually becoming a norm in the Western church, it did not become an ecclesiastical rite until the 12th century when the Church gained full control over marriage. Henceforth, only celibates would be ordained and priests who went through a wedding ceremony were not regarded as validly married.

During the Middle Ages, the training period of the priesthood identified certain powers and duties conferred by ordination. Priests were perceived as having the power to offer the sacrifice of the Mass and in doing so change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, under the doctrine of transubstantiation. The priests also had the power to absolve the sins of penitents in confession and use the sacrament of extreme unction to help the sick. Bishops could confirm the laity and ordain priests.

The Protestant Reformation rejected the Roman Catholic concept of priesthood and the medieval understanding of priest's power. Martin Luther advocated a 'priesthood of all believers' and doubted that ordination conferred any special powers. Protestant churches today, except Anglicans, do not speak of their ministers as priests, although many continue to have a formal rite of ordination. The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the importance of priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, but did not change the rule of priestly celibacy nor admit women to ordination.

[123] J. Bowden. p. 1070.

Extreme Unction (Anointing of the Sick)

In the Catholic tradition, the process of anointing with oil, known as unction, is used both at Baptism and Confirmation. However, the word is commonly applied to the Sacrament of Extreme Unction which was normally administered only when the patient was *in extremis*, or on their death beds. The parish priest was to visit the dying, hear their confession, and anoint them with holy oil. As death drew close, the priest prayed with long litanies besides the sick person's bed, and when the time came, conducted the burial service.

The origin of the tradition has been traced to the letter of James (5: 14-15) which recommends that the church elders anoint and pray over the sick. Jesus himself cured the sick and enjoined his disciples to do likewise. There is ample evidence that laying hands on the infirm and praying over them for healing was a practice in early Christianity. In the first seven centuries, recovery from illness was commonly expected as a result of unction. However, in the early Middle Ages, the rite became so closely connected with repentance and the whole penitential system that it was commonly postponed until death was approaching, and in practice bodily recovery was not ordinarily looked for. The sacrament was quite complicated in practice; prayers were asked for healing, but it had to be performed in a church, and some versions called for the attendance of three or more priests. Most people never sought this anointing, and those that did were often close to dying. By the 12th century, the rite had been simplified so that it could be administered by a single priest. The parish priest would visit the dying, hear their confession, and anoint them with holy oil. As death drew close, the priest prayed with long litanies besides the sick person's bed. Since this was the last anointing before death, it came to be known as extreme unction.

The Second Vatican Council undertook historical research and recommended the title 'Anointing of the Sick' and this was adopted in 1972. The Roman Catholic Church revised the sacrament and changed its name to the anointing of the sick. The oil was to be administered not just to the dying but to anyone who was seriously sick, even the aged who were chronically ill. The revised rite also allowed for communal anointing which could be performed in a church or a nursing home, and this has become the common form of the sacrament today.

The Apostles' Creed

Faith was usually presented in the form of a creed, a concise, formal and authorized statement of important points of Christian doctrine.[124] The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed were examples of statements of orthodoxy, short enough to be learnt by heart, which spread rapidly from the 4th century onwards. The Nicene Creed was not included in the Roman Mass until 1014.

[124] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 358.

The Apostles Creed also dates from the 4th century and by the early Middle Ages it was everywhere used at baptism. In the 20th century it has been increasingly treated in discussion about Church unity as a binding formulary of faith:[125]

I believe in God,

the Father almighty

Creator of heaven and earth,

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilot,

was crucified, died and was buried;

he descended into hell;

on the third day he rose again from the death;

he ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of God

the Father almighty;

from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Holy Catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and life everlasting. Amen.

[125] Ibid p. 75.

The Mass

The priest would normally say Mass everyday: on a wall outside the church there would be a "mass-dial" into which a peg would be inserted and the resulting shadow would indicate the time of the next Mass. The nobility and gentry heard Mass in their private churches or chapels. There were various unofficial manuals for the use of ordinary parishioners, generally in verse, like the 'Lay-Folks' Mass-Book'. [126] This had originally been written in old French, when that was the language of the gentry, but had been translated into English. The book explained the course of the service and supplied English prayers at certain parts. It also explained how people should behave. Men ought, the manuals said, to come into church quietly and kneel down, and "holden no parliament" with their neighbours. They should stand up at the gospel out of reverence, even if they didn't understand it, and not walk about the church or churchyard during the sermon. This was followed by the bidding prayers when the priest asked for the prayers of the congregation for all the Church, for archbishops and bishops, especially of that diocese, and for himself and the clerks that served the church.

The Mass was the act of worship which the parishioners were obliged to attend on Sundays and Holy Days. The central part of the Mass was the **Eucharist,** the conversion of the whole substance of the bread and wine into the whole substance of the Body and Blood of Christ, with only the appearances of the bread and wine remaining. This effectively raised the prestige of the priest who alone was able to celebrate it, providing a ritual which was important both to the Church and the community. The Eucharist was treated as a holy object, even the crumbs of which had to be recovered and protected from mice, vermin and dirt. The elevation of the Host or communion wafer so that it would be visible to the congregation, became the apex of the service. Bells could be rung, candles lit and incense burned to add to the importance of the moment.

The larger churches might have more than one daily Mass. The parish church at **Doncaster** in medieval times, for example, in addition to daily sung matins, Mass, and evensong had six "low" Masses provided by chantry chaplains from five in the morning each day, for the inhabitants of the town and for strangers passing through.[127] But even a small parish church had daily "low" Masses.

The participation of the laity in the Mass

Protestant reformers were critical of the lack of opportunity in medieval times for the laity to fully participate in the service of the Mass. The obscurity of Latin language used throughout the Mass, the priest's control over proceedings primarily at the High Altar with his back to the congregation, led to concerns that the laity were not able to participate fully in what was

[126] M. Deanesly. pp. 204-5
[127] E. Duffy. p. 99.

happening. The fact that in medieval churches the high altar was often physically distanced even from the nearest members of the congregation and partially obscured from the nave by a Rood-screen, also lent support to this notion of non-participation. Parishioners would have been well out of earshot of anything said, as opposed to sung, at the altar.[128] Moreover, during Lent, a huge veil was suspended in the sanctuary area, completely obscuring the Mass from the congregation.

The laity had more opportunity to see and hear a Mass at one of the side altars and many attended a "low" Mass on weekdays. These were shorter ceremonies without the elaborate rituals of the Sunday Mass and allowed the congregation to get very close indeed to the altar. Even small parish churches would have a number of side altars or chantry chapels for the celebration of Masses for guilds or honouring deceased patrons. The laity controlled, often owned these altars. They could often hire and fire the chantry priests and looked after these altars, provided coverings, images and candles and so on.[129]

Communion

In medieval times, the laity were only obliged to take communion once a year, on Easter Sunday. In most parishes everyone went to confession in Holy Week and received communion before or after High Mass on Easter Day, an act usually accompanied by a statutory offering to the priest. [130] Frequent communion was the prerogative of the few. Lady Margaret Beaufort received communion only monthly and even so was considered something of a prodigy.[131] Receiving communion at Easter was called "taking one's rights", an indication that to take communion was to claim one's place in the adult community.[132]

The devotion to the sacrament of communion received an additional boost with the creation of the feast of Corpus Christi. It is thought to have originated in Belgium where a group of women known as beguines, living together as a semi-enclosed order, introduced the idea. It was eventually elevated by Pope John XX11 to be a feast of universal usage in 1334. The feast day became marked by the preaching of special sermons, by the creation of special guilds, and by the performance of mystery and miracle plays.

Preaching

The parish priest was encouraged to preach but it seems only rarely to have been within his competence. Bishop Grosseteste, whose diocese of Lincoln included the parish of **Bawtry,** in the 13th century found many priests unable to preach, and required that they should ask a neighbouring cleric to explain the meaning of the Sunday gospel to him, so that he might

[128] E. Duffy. p. 111.
[129] E. Duffy. p.116.
[130] E. Duffy. p. 93.
[131] E. Duffy pp.93-4.
[132] E. Duffy. p. 94.

explain this in English to his congregation. But as clerical education improved, Sunday sermons became more common in parish churches by the end of the 14th century.[133]

Popular preaching by the Franciscan and Dominican friars in the 12th century may have spurred on parish priests to copy their example. The laity seem to have been enthusiastic sermon-goers, and in some large towns, there were highly reputed preachers who drew large congregations. It is difficult to be sure just how widespread Sunday preaching was; over two hundred pre-Reformation pulpits survive in England, most of them from the fifteenth century. This suggests a growth in the perceived importance of preaching in parochial life.[134] But it should be recognized that the pulpit had a variety of uses and inscriptions and paintings on some pulpits suggest that they were used as platforms for teaching, not for prayer.

Tithes

The parishioners had to support the parish priest in his everyday needs. Some priests held more than one benefice or living and were reasonably well off, but the majority were probably not much better off than most of their flock. Normally the parish priest held some land, the glebe, which he might farm, an occupation which brought him closer to the peasants whom he served. His principal source of income was the tithe, levied on every conceivable product, vegetables, corn, hay, and animals. The Church was most insistent that tithes should be paid down to the last penny, a requirement which caused conflict between the priest and his flock and constant litigation.[135] The parish priest could excommunicate a parishioner for non-payment of tithe, and the secular courts would enforce the obligation.[136]

The priest had other sources of income which might be levied on his parishioners. The parishioners were expected to donate gifts of money or in kind at the great Church festivals. The clergy received eggs at Easter, cheese at Whitsun, and chickens at Christmas. The priest was also entitled to collect mortuary, the second- best animal or vessel (the lord had the best) when a man died, a donation based on the theory the dead man would probably have failed in his lifetime to pay his tithes in full. Since it was also the Church which supervised the making of wills, clerks because of their literacy often acting as testators, lay persons were in general generous in their bequests to the Church.[137]

It was the duty of the parish priest to relieve the poor and strangers, as far as he could himself, though his income was usually too small to permit of much almsgiving. But as there was no state system for poor relief, it was his duty to exhort his parishioners to care for the poor and to exhort the dying to leave alms for this purpose. All manuals for the priests and laymen stressed the importance of the seven works of mercy, and these often featured in medieval

[133] M. Deanesly. p. 204
[134] E. Duffy p. 57
[135] V. Green. p. 111.
[136] M. Deansley. A History of the Medieval Church 590-1500. Methuen. London. 1959. p. 207.
[137] V. Green. p. 112.

sermons.[138] The seven works of mercy included: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, harbouring the houseless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, visiting prisoners, and burying the dead. Other important parts of the priest's social work included acting as a mediator for parishioners who had quarrelled. He sometimes acted as chaplain to a parish guild which was partly devotional in character and partly a welfare organisation or friendly society providing for burials.

Poor standards of the clergy

Reformers also accused the bishops and clergy of corruption and neglect of their pastoral duties. Many of the bishops and higher clergy had become members of the landowning elite and were largely immersed in secular duties for the Crown and some were immensely rich, quite often leaving their religious duties to be performed by subordinates, or not at all. Again, the 9,000 or so parish clergymen were also a ready target for criticism. Absenteeism – the failure of some to live within the parish and administer to its spiritual needs – was certainly common – but probably less than has often been assumed.[139] Some clergy had two or more benefices and might thereby neglect their duties in some parishes. Again, the clergy were frequently charged with being illiterate or incompetent, the so-called "dumb dogs" as the Puritans called them. The charge may be overstated, though the level of preaching was often poor. The situation would improve as more Protestant ministers graduated from the universities.

Celibacy of the clergy

In the early years of the Church, a legal position was adopted at the Council of Elvira (306) by which all the higher clergy must be celibate.[140] However, the position of parish priests was less clear; many were married and fully integrated into their local village community.[141] Throughout the Middle Ages there were repeated efforts to enforce celibacy on those in Holy orders and the Second Lateran Council of 1139 made the marriage of clerics not only unlawful but invalid.[142] How long it took for celibacy to become the accepted practice is not known but it seems that there was a trend towards greater strictness of enforcement during the Middle Ages. By the late 13th century, married clergy were the exception, though many of them continued to have mistresses.[143] In the Church of England, the obligation to celibacy of the clergy was formally abolished in 1549.

[138] M. Deansley. p. 204
[139] K. Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth 1 to Elizabeth 11* (1996) p. 6.

[140] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p.259.
[141] G. Bray. p. 64.
[142] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 259.
[143] K. Morgan (ed). p.177.

8. The Ecclesiastical Year

It is not difficult to understand the importance of the liturgical calendar for medieval people.[144] There was no alternative. Secular reckoning of time - legal deeds, anniversaries, birthdays - were reckoned by the religious festivals on which they occurred. Some observances in the liturgical year affected everyone. For instance, no one was allowed to marry during Advent and Lent. Some feast days were local traditions and others had regional variations.

Main feast and fasting days

The Catholic Church designated a very large number of feast and fast days as 'Holy Days of Obligation'. On such days the laity and the clergy were forbidden to work and obliged to attend Mass. The Church of England abolished many of these under the Royal Injunctions of 1536, but there were still a large number of Holy Days, including all Sundays.

Michaelmas (29th September)

The feast of St Michael the Archangel. Michaelmas marked the beginning of the agricultural year when the fields lay bare after the harvest, with the cattle on the stubble and the corn being winnowed and threshed in the barns. The bailiff or reeve of the manor would be drawing up the accounts for the year. The name Michaelmas comes from a shortening of 'Michael's Mass' is also known as the Feast of St Michael and All Angels. In the Middle Ages it was celebrated as a Holy Day of Obligation, but this tradition was abolished in the 18th century. Because it falls near the equinox, the day is associated with the beginning of autumn and the shortening of days. A traditional meal of the day included goose, fattened on the stubble fields.

All Saints (1st November)

All Saints' Day, also known as All Hallows' Day, was a feast day celebrated in honour of all the saints, whether they were known or unknown. From the 4th century, feasts commemorating all Christian martyrs were held in various places. The commemoration of All Saints on the 1st November was introduced by Pope Gregory 1V in the 9th century; an important feast of the pre-reformation church.

All Soul's Day (2nd November)

Also called the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, is a day of prayer and remembrance. Prayers were offered for the souls in purgatory, accompanied by the

[144] E. Duffy. p. 41

continuous tolling of the church bells. This was also the time for work on ditches and boundaries. It was an important feast of the pre-reformation church.

Martinmas (11th November).

This is the feast day of St Martin of Tours and an important festival in many parts of Europe. It marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter. The cattle would be brought in for shelter or slaughter. Martin of Tours (died 397) was a Roman soldier who was baptized as an adult. There is a legend whereby he cut his cloak in half with his sword to give half to a beggar who was dressed only in rags in the depth of winter.

Advent (end of November - 25th December)

The name Advent takes its name from the Latin adventus or 'coming' and dates from the 5th or 6th centuries, and covers the forty days leading to Christmas. In the early Church it was seen as a period of fasting, but the fasting element gradually disappeared and the season came to be seen as a period of preparation for Christmas. No one was allowed to marry during Advent.

St Nicholas (6th December) The Boy-Bishop tradition

There were a number of Christian feast-days, of more obscure origins, which introduced a light-heartedness into daily life. The boy-bishop ceremonies, found in some communities, offered a kind of parody of the 'world turned upside down'. The origins of this curious custom of the temporary substitution of a boy into the role of an adult ecclesiastical authority (a bishop) are obscure. Perhaps, in part it was an effort of the Church to recall Jesus' references to the significance of children in the gospels. It may have built upon the pagan Roman feast of Saturnalia in December with its topsy-turvy aspect of relaxing social and moral restraints.[145] Another part of the tradition is the association with St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra (in modern Turkey), who became patron saint of children and whose feast-day is the 6th December. The unsavoury story that tied Nicholas to children related that in a time of famine an innkeeper, short of a store of food, killed three children, pickled their flesh and stored it in a barrel. Bishop Nicholas later passes by and restores the three boys to life. In medieval iconography, St Nicholas is often portrayed with a cask by his side from which three boys are climbing.[146]

Under the tradition, a choirboy was chosen to act as bishop and to lead processions around the community, collecting money for church and parish funds, and to lead some religious

[145] C. Reeves. p. 172.

[146] C. Reeves. p. 172 St Nicholas was the patron saint of children, sailors and merchants, and the boy-bishop custom was also associated with the feasts of St Katherine, St Clement, and the Holy Innocents.

services. The boy would continue in 'office' until the feast of the Holy Innocents on the 28th December. In medieval times, it was a widespread custom in many English cathedrals, monasteries, schools and country parishes. The intention seemingly was to express in dramatic form the reverence for childhood shown in the gospels. The whole carnival of boy-bishops was splendid entertainment, sometimes overly irreverent and unruly, but it suited its era by allowing protest against an authority structure integral to the existing social order.[147] The practice was abolished by Henry V111, restored by Mary Tudor, and finally abolished by Elizabeth 1. The custom returned in the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly in parishes with churches named after St Nicholas. The custom doesn't take place in **St Nicholas Church**, **Bawtry**, but the practice has been resurrected at St Nicholas Church, Tuxford, north Nottinghamshire.

Christmas (25th December to 6th January)

The period of the Christian year that called for extended celebration was that of Christmas. At the time when Christianity came into existence, the winter solstice was marked at the 25th December. It was the occasion when the sun appears, from the perspective of northern Europe to stand low and still on the southern horizon before rising with the passing days in anticipation of spring.[148] Mithraism, a religion popular among soldiers in the Roman world, incorporated the 'Unconquered Sun' into its belief system and celebrated the feast day of the sun on the 25th December. As Christianity developed, there was an urgent desire to celebrate God becoming man, but none of the Christian gospels or any other writer had given a date for the birth of Jesus. The urge to celebrate Jesus' birth, the winter solstice, and the ancient midwinter rites reflecting a yearning for the return of spring, combined by the fourth century to fix the feast of the nativity to the 25th December. By the late medieval period, the Nativity was an established part of the Christian festival calendar.

An important part of the Christmas celebrations was the banquet, which necessarily varied in sumptuousness with the resources of the celebrants.[149] A typical menu might include soups, stews, birds and fish, breads and puddings, but the common element was the Yule boar, an animal for those who could afford it or a pie shaped like a boar for humbler tables. Churches and houses were decorated with ivy, mistletoe, holly or anything green, which remained up until Candlemas eve. Gifts were exchanged at New Year. Margaret Paston on Christmas Eve 1459 inquired how her Norfolk neighbour, Lady Morley, had conducted her household just after she had been widowed: "…. there was no disguisings [acting], nor harping, luting or singing, nor any lewd sports, but just playing at the tables [backgammon] and chess and cards. Such sports she gave her folk leave to play and no other."[150] The 'lewd sport' is possibly a reference to the carol-dance. The leader of the dance sang a verse of the carol, and a ring of

[147] C. Reeves. p. 173.
[148] C. Reeves. p. 168
[149] C. Reeves. p. 169
[150] As quoted in C. Reeves. p. 169

dancers responded with the chorus. Further music for the celebration of Christmas was provided by Latin hymns of the Church.

Christmas was very much a time for eating and revelry, and the drinking of one's neighbour's health with 'wassail'. In some villages by the 15th century, groups called Hogglers or Hogners, wearing disguises, collected money for the poor or church funds.

Epiphany (6th January)

The Epiphany marked the end of the Christmas season, and celebrated the visit of the wise men, the Magi, who came to see the infant Christ at Bethlehem in Judaea. The Monday after the Epiphany was called Plough Monday as it was then that ploughing began. A plough might be brought into church for a blessing, a ceremony first mentioned in 1413. In some villages the plough ceremonies were fertility rites, when the young men of the village harnessed themselves to a plough which they dragged around the village, ploughing up the ground before the door of any household which refused to pay a token.

Candlemas (2nd February)

The feast of the Purification, marked the beginning of spring with a procession of lighted candles to ward off the Devil and his works.

Annunciation (Lady Day) (25th March)

Used as the starting point of the year from the 12th century to 1752, although January 1st was always regarded as New Year's Day, following the Roman tradition. It occurs as a Red - Letter Day in the Book of Common Prayer

Easter season (with movable dates February to April)

Dating Easter

The date of Easter is determined by the Paschal Full Moon, its extreme limits being 21st March and 25th April. In the early Church, the two principal methods of computation were those of Alexandria and Rome. In Britain, the Celtic Churches had their own method of computation which led to a long quarrel after the arrival of the Roman missionaries who used the Roman method. As late as 651 Queen Eanfleda, who followed the Roman rule, was keeping Palm Sunday and fasting on the same day that her husband, Oswy, King of Northumbria, was celebrating Easter.[151] The Roman custom was accepted for Northumbria by the Synod of Whitby (664) and imposed on the whole of England by Archbishop Theodore in 669.

[151] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 1038.

Shrove Tuesday

This was a day for parishioners not only to undertake confession, but also to participate in sports, notably football and cockfighting.

Ash Wednesday

The first day in Lent. Ash Wednesday began the forty- day period of Lent when parishioners were required to fast and abstain from meat. In medieval times, Lent was a time of public penance in which those who had committed grave sins would be dressed in sackcloth and be sprinkled with ashes. Importantly also, they were not allowed to marry during this time. In the church, altars would be stripped down and ornaments removed. The Rood and other crosses would be veiled. Outside, the spring-sown corn would be germinating in the sodden fields. The Book of Common Prayer (1549) ordered the observance of Lent and prescribed a communion service for this day.

Palm Sunday

This marked the beginning of Holy Week as branches of yew and willow, fashioned into crosses, were carried in a procession of clergy and people around the church. The long account of the last days in the life of Jesus, from Matthew's gospel, would be read out during Mass.

Maundy Thursday

The ceremony of the priest washing the feet of a number of parishioners was introduced in medieval times. This is a commemoration of Christ's action at the Last Supper.

Good Friday

A special service would be held where an account of the passion in John's gospel would be read, and the cross processed around the church. It would then be placed in the Easter sepulchre, a niche set in the chancel wall to depict Christ's entry into a tomb for three days.

Easter Sunday

In the medieval church, Easter was preceded on the Saturday evening by a vigil Mass, 'The Festival of Light' in which there is a blessing of new fire and the lighting of the paschal candle, the blessing of the font, and the baptism of new Christians. The paschal candle is a large three-foot candle, which is pierced with five studs representing the five wounds of Christ and is mounted on a stand so as to be visible to the congregation. On Easter Sunday, the Easter sepulchre is opened and festivities begun. These might incorporate the Hocktide revels of the villagers continuing on Monday and Tuesday. Here the practice of reversing roles, with

women ‘capturing’ and ‘ransoming’ men, ritualized the urges of spring and raising money for church funds.[152]

Post-Easter festivals

Ascension Day

The festival celebrating the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven and is traditionally dated as the fortieth day after Easter (5th Thursday after Easter). The Ascension was initially celebrated at Pentecost but a separate festival arose during the fourth century.

Pentecost (Whit-Sunday)

This commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles as related in the Acts of the Apostles. The feast is first mentioned in the second century and is set at 50 days after Easter (7th Sunday after Easter).

Trinity Sunday

A feast of the Holy Trinity was inaugurated in the early tenth century and proved very popular. It celebrates the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the three persons of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The feast is held on the first Sunday after Pentecost.

May Day

May Day marked the beginning of the three months of summer with secular celebrations of the crowning of a king and queen of the May, the decoration of a maypole, and ‘May Games’ or ‘Robin Hood’ games of licensed disorder.[153] Morris dancing is thought to have been performed from 1450.

Rogationtide (25th April)

The Christian Rogation Day ceremony (25 April) is thought to have replaced a pagan Roman procession known as Robigalia, at which a dog was sacrificed to propitiate Robigus, the deity of agricultural disease.[154] The ceremony is thought to have arrived in Britain in the 7th century. The oldest description in the Sarum text (1173-1220) shows processions in which people carry banners representing various biblical characters. At the head of the procession was a dragon, representing Pontius Pilate, which would be followed by a lion, representing Christ. After this would be images of saints carried by the rest of the congregation. Instructional texts from the 13th and 15th centuries show that the dragon was eventually moved to the rear of the procession, with the lion taking the place at the front. Illustrations from the early 16th century

[152] G. Harriss. p. 250.
[153] G. Harriss. p. 250-1
[154] Rogation Days. Retrieved from Wikipedia 25 January 2025.

show that the arrangements were changed again, this time also showing bearers of reliquaries and incense. The word rogation comes from the Latin verb rogare, meaning "to ask" or to pray to God. The major Rogation Day was the 25th April; the minor rogations were held on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday preceding Ascension Thursday. Farmers often had their crops blessed by a priest at this time. A common feature of Rogation days was the ceremony of 'beating the bounds' in which a procession of parishioners, led by the priest, churchwardens and choirboys, would walk around the boundary of their parish and pray for its protection in the forthcoming year.

The Rogationtide processions were an important focus of parish identity and everyone was expected to turn out for them, and the parish notables were expected to provide food and drink for their poorer neighbours.[155] Church banners were carried around the boundaries of the parish and at intervals would pause by large wayside crosses where a portion of the gospel would be read which it was hoped would bring cleansing and fertility to the fields. This aspect of the ritual struck the reformers as being particularly superstitious. The outdoor Rogation processions were suppressed in England in 1547 but returned under the Royal Injunctions of 1559 under Elizabeth 1. The observance is not mentioned in the earlier issues of the Book of Common Prayer, but in the 1662 version the three minor Rogations were ordered to be observed as 'Days of Fasting and Abstinence'.[156]

Corpus Christi (Thursday after Trinity Sunday)

The Corpus Christi festival, celebrated from 1318 onwards, had an important place in the liturgical year. This provided an opportunity to take part in processions around the town; the order of precedence was very often determined in relation to the authority structure of the town.[157] With haymaking and sheep-shearing finished, there was time for summer games, days of high spirits and of church ales, popular in the 15th century as a way of fund-raising. The celebration of the feast was suppressed during the Reformation for theological reasons, because it celebrated the doctrine of transubstantiation.

St John the Baptist (24th June)

This was a feast day marking mid-summer and usually involved bonfires of bones and wood to ward off the ill-humours of the coming autumn when plague was rife.[158]

Lammas (1st August)

This was when a loaf mass, made from new wheat, initiated the corn harvest. This was the beginning of autumn, and for the next five or six weeks there were prayers for fine weather

[155] E. Duffy. p. 279.
[156] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 1193.
[157] E. Duffy. p. 11
[158] G. Harriss. p. 251

until the harvest was safely gathered. With the last cartload there would be the traditional singing and wakes.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15th August)

This important feast day of the Catholic Church was removed from the Book of Common Prayer (1549) and not restored in those of 1552 and 1559.

Festivals in the Medieval Church: A summary

The festive calendar of the Church was thus interwoven with the natural cycle of the seasons and penetrated by the folklore and rituals of traditional peasant mythology.[159] The Black Death and other plagues had caused a great loss of manpower in the medieval period. Labourers were able to command high wages, which enabled them to meet their needs with a more limited amount of work. A leisure culture began to emerge among the lower orders.[160] Poaching and illegal stalking with dogs were on the increase, as were communal games such as football, handball, and tennis on Sundays and Holy Days.

Fasting days

Everyone must fast during the forty days of Lent, abstaining not only from meat but also from other animal products, "whitemeats" such as eggs and cheese. In addition to Lent, fasting was obligatory on the 'ember' days, that is Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays after the feast of St Lucy (13 December), Ash Wednesday, Whit Sunday, and Holy Cross Day (14 September). There was also an obligation to fast on the vigils of the feasts of the twelve Apostles (excepting those of St Philip and St James and St John), the vigils of Christmas Day, Whit Sunday, the Assumption of Our Lady (15 August), the Nativity of St John the Baptist (24 June), the feast of St Lawrence (10 August) and the feast of All Saints (1 November). There were therefore almost seventy days in the year when adults were obliged to fast, the bulk of them in the spring for the great feast of Lent. In practice, some clerics (especially in monasteries) applied lax interpretations of these rules and became an easy target for the reformers.

Feast days

As important as fast days were, feast days on which total or partial abstention from servile work was required and the laity as well as the clergy were expected to attend Sunday Mass. In England and Wales, there were other 'Days of Obligation'; the Epiphany (6 Jan), Ascension Day, Corpus Christi, St Peter and St Paul (29 June), the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15 Aug), All Saints (1 Nov) and Christmas Day (25 Dec). There were also between forty and fifty local and national days, with variations from region to region. The observance of holy days became a highly contested issue since holy days were holidays. Workers sought to secure

[159] G. Harriss. p. 251.
[160] G. Harriss. p. 251.

days from toil while landowners and employers were concerned as to who should bear the expense of the loss of a day's work. Some festivals were patently pagan in origin. Some days, like St Agnes's Eve, were less noted for their religious observances than for the rituals by which young women sought to discover the identity of their future sweethearts.[161]

There was a trend throughout the Middle Ages to try to limit the number of holidays. There was widespread resentment after the break with Rome when, in 1536, the Crown abolished most of the local and national feast days.

Festivals in Long Melford

Roger Martyn, a yeoman farmer, died in 1615 aged eighty-eight, having lived through the changes brought about by the Reformation. He looks back with fondness on the festivals in Long Melford church in the pre-Reformation period:

> "On Palm Sunday there was a parish procession around the churchyard, with the consecrated host, a communion wafer, carried under a canopy borne by four yeomen of the village: church bells were rung, the choir sang, and as the procession returned to the church porch flowers and holy bread were strewn over the choirboys. On Maundy Thursday candles were set in a painted frame before the Easter sepulchre, where the sacrament was reserved. On Good Friday the priest sang the Passion service from the rood-loft, standing next to the rood which had been veiled through Lent. On St Mark's Day and at Corpus Christi there were processions round the green with the consecrated sacrament, bell-ringing, and singing. The choir was rewarded for its efforts with dinner at Melford Hall three times a year. In Rogation week there were great celebrations, as well as three days of beating the bounds of the parish and prayer 'for rain or fair weather, as the time required'. There was ale and a parish dinner on Rogation Monday; a breakfast of cheese at the Rectory and later ale at the Manor House chapel on the Tuesday; and ale at Melford Hall on the Wednesday.
>
> On the eve of St James's day there was a village bonfire, with a tub of ale and bread for the poor. There were bonfires and ale in front of Martyn's house on Midsummer Eve and on the eve of Saints Peter and Paul; for the St Thomas eve bonfire, the family provided mutton pie and peascods, as well as the usual bread and ale, 'and with all these bonfires, some of the friends and more civil poor neighbours were called in' to dine by candlelight with Roger's grandfather, as a taper burned before an image of St John the Baptist in the hall."[162]

[161] E. Duffy. p.13.
[162] As quoted in C. Haigh. English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors. Clarendon Press. Oxford. 1995. p. 2.

9. Personal Piety in Medieval England: Pilgrimages, veneration of the saints, shrines, and the Book of Hours.

The medieval Church strained to respond to the increasing demand for assurance that life is worth living, that death is not the end and that imperfect people can still hope for eternal life in heaven.[163] The Church responded as best it could but its only answer was for people to work hard at acts of piety and go on doing more of the same. Tens of thousands of English pilgrims, from kings to peasants, set off to the shrines of saints and sites of miracles in medieval times.[164]

Pilgrimages

The dominant image of medieval pilgrimage is that of a diverse group of pilgrims in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, written around the 1390s. Chaucer fashioned a narrative framework for the stories he wanted to tell and a group of pilgrims he depicted telling the stories. The idea of pilgrimage dates back to the early days of the Church, but reached its climax in medieval times, attracting kings and nobles, churchmen of all ranks and men and women of all classes, and perhaps a few peasants who could afford to go further than their local shrine. Pilgrimage is based on the identification of a particular place as holy and the belief that a journey to such a place brings with it a reward, whether this be physical healing or spiritual benefit. Evidence suggests that pilgrimages were often over very short distances to a local shrine, and might only be short in duration. The long-haul pilgrimage to an overseas shrine was the exception rather than the norm and was regarded as a correspondingly momentous and prestigious undertaking.

From the 8th century, the practice of imposing a pilgrimage instead of a local public penance added to the number of pilgrims so that throughout medieval times they were organised on a grand scale and provided for by special ecclesiastical and civil legislation. Pilgrimage was seen as a form of penance, a way of purging the 'soul' from sin.[165] In part because of the hardship involved in all travel, pilgrimage came to be regarded as a form of self-denial available to persons who had not embraced the practice of monasticism. Further conditions might be attached to it, or voluntarily embraced by the pilgrim: that it should be performed barefooted, in fetters, or under certain dietary restrictions, all of which enhanced its penitential character. The use of pilgrimage as penance did not always meet with universal approval. There were obvious hazards in sending disaffected monks or persons guilty of crimes of violence off on long journeys where they were effectively liberated from the supervision of anyone who knew them.[166] Very short local pilgrimages might be imposed for

[163] G. Bray. p. 175
[164] D. Webb. Pilgrimage in Medieval England. Hambledon. London. 2000.
[165] D. Webb. p. xiv.
[166] D. Webb. p. xv.

relatively trivial offences: the penitent might be merely required to come to the local cathedral bearing a candle and stand before the high altar while Mass was said. This was a public humiliation as much as the journey which might or might not be called a 'pilgrimage'.

In medieval times, people might visit the Holy Land, reached after a long and distinctly uncomfortable journey, usually starting at Venice. The pilgrims might bath in the River Jordan, visit Emmaus where Jesus had been recognised by his disciples in the breaking of the bread, and Arimathea where Joseph was born. The shrine of St James at Santiago de Compostella in north-west Spain was also a very popular destination. In Europe, Rome was an obvious centre of pilgrimage and was marked out for visiting in jubilee or holy years. In 1470, Pope Paul 11 proclaimed that the jubilee was to be celebrated every twenty-five years. In the Roman Catholic Church, the tradition of holding a jubilee or 'Holy Year' in which a special indulgence is granted to Catholics who visit Rome and fulfill certain conditions.

In Britain, the major shrines were St Thomas at Canterbury, St Winifred at Holywell, north Wales, St Cuthbert at Durham and the Blessed Virgin Mary at Walsingham. There were many hundreds of local shrines, some of which like St Winifred's shrine were seen as providing cures. In medieval times, there were limits to the distance a sick or injured person could be conveyed. However, it was possible for a friend or kinsman to make a pilgrimage on behalf of a sufferer, and it seems that there was an increasing tendency in the later Middle Ages to make pilgrimages by way of thanksgiving after a cure had been received.[167] The shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk began to attract pilgrims (including royalty) in the thirteenth century and was probably the most popular in England on the eve of the Reformation.

Books of Hours

Almost 800 manuscript Books of Hours survive from medieval times. These books, hand written in Latin and superbly illustrated, were devotional books used by well-to-do lay people in the late Middle Ages.[168] With the invention of printing, the Book of Hours, once the prerogative of the rich, became affordable by many people aspiring to respectability. Thousands of these printed versions have survived and the scribbled comments in the margins provide valuable clues as to the beliefs and devotional thoughts of medieval people, not least the innermost thoughts of women who bought a large proportion of the books. Eamon Duffy examines surviving copies of the prayer books which were used for private devotions, in which people commonly left traces of their lives in various jottings and scribbles.

The Special Place of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Although medieval paintings and sculpture came to depict an increasingly humane Christ, he was the Son of God who like the king seemed to the medieval petitioner more a judge – and

[167] D. Webb in J. Bowden (ed) Christianity: The Complete Guide. Continuum. London. p.943.
[168] E. Duffy. Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers. 2011

a wrathful one at that – than a loving father; his love and mercy were conditional.[169] Where then could the suppliant turn for mercy and reassurance? The Virgin Mary was thought to be more solicitous of the needs of men and women, and more sympathetic to human frailty than God could be. There were numerous stories told of the miracles of mercy that she had performed. Most churches set aside a space or chapel dedicated to her.

Four major festivals devoted to Our Lady were introduced in the seventh century and continued throughout the Middle Ages. The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (8th September) is now the Feast of the Immaculate Conception; The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary (2nd February) was also known as Candlemas when a procession with candles was held; The Annunciation (25th March); and the Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven (15th August).

In the 6th century, the corporal Assumption of Mary into Heaven became widely observed as a feast day and seems to have spread without arousing opposition in the pre-Reformation period. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, on the other hand, was a matter of fierce dispute throughout the Middle Ages. Her perpetual virginity was first asserted in the apocryphal Book of James and was accepted by the Fathers of the Church from the 5th century onwards.[170] The doctrine was defended by the Franciscans and later by the Jesuits against the Dominicans. It was later defined for Roman Catholics in 1854.

Devotions to Mary proliferated in late medieval England as elsewhere in Christian Europe, and indeed Englishmen were encouraged to think of their country as being in a special way "Mary's Dowry", a notion propagated, for example, by the custodians of the shrine at Walsingham.[171] The cult of Mary came second only to Christ himself, and towered above that of all other saints..[172] **Our Lady of Doncaster** is a Marian shrine located in Doncaster, South Yorkshire.[173] The original statue in the Carmelite friary was destroyed during the English Reformation. A modern shrine was erected in St Peter in Chains Roman Catholic Church, Doncaster in 1973 (see Gazetteer).

The Saints

The saints were another avenue by which the faithful could seek help from heaven. The Church was keen to maintain a tradition of devotion to the saints. In an attempt to regulate the process, Pope Alexander 111 had reserved the right of canonization to the Pope, requiring evidence of the would-be saint's moral worth, supported by the miracles he or she had performed before or after death. In medieval times, over 50 days of the year apart from Sundays were dedicated to the saints on which all except the most essential agricultural work

[169] V. Green. pp. 116-7
[170] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. pp.882-4
[171] E. Duffy. p. 256.
[172] E. Duffy. p. 257.
[173] Our Lady of Doncaster. Retrieved from Wikipedia. 27 January 2025.

was forbidden. Pressure from senior clergy to maintain these traditions was met with enthusiasm from the people. As we will see later, Puritan reformers, particularly in the merchant class, saw inefficiencies arising from the loss of working time, and would question the need for such a heavy devotion to the saints.

Specific saints were identified as patrons for churches or guilds within churches. The saint could be invoked for specific work activities or health disorders. Some examples include St Nicholas, patron of seafarers (and grocers), St Crispin of shoemakers, St Christopher of travelers, St Julian of innkeepers. Those invoked for specific health disorders: St Blaise from throat infections, St Genevieve from fever, St Aidan from plague, and St Vitus from epilepsy and dancing mania.[174]

The relics of the saints established their credentials. Throughout the Middle Ages there was an extensive and profitable trade in relics as king, churchmen and churches competed for them.[175] Abbot Angilbert enumerating the relics housed in his monastery in 801 listed a piece of wood of the True Cross, a strip of Jesus's vestment, water from the River Jordan, a piece of the stone on which Jesus sat, hair from St Peter's beard and samples of the Virgin's milk, hair and clothes.[176] There was intense competition, for example, among churches claiming to have relics of St Thomas Beckett, thereby hoping to encourage pilgrims to visit. The Lateran Council of 1215 ordered that a relic should only be exposed in a reliquary and tried to do away with the trade in relics altogether. But there was no stopping the cult of the saints. The guardians of reliquaries or shrines found them profitable and brought prestige to the church, though the costs of hospitality sometimes weighed against the profits, and to the pilgrims they afforded hope and consolation.

Saints as legends

The practice of venerating the saints has long been a regular feature in Catholic devotion. Its justification rests on the beliefs that the saints are both close to God (because of their holiness) and accessible to man (whose nature they share), and in the efficacy of intercessory prayer.[177] Stories of the saints and their martyrdoms have passed down through the centuries. Most of the stories are legends and the saints are no longer recognised by the Roman Catholic Church. However, they are still objects of popular devotion. Here are a few:

Catherine: Died in Alexandria c.310. Engaged in debate with pagan philosophers many of whom she converted. She was ordered to be broken on a wheel, but when she touched it, it fell apart. She was beheaded.

[174] V. Green. p. 118.
[175] V. Green. p. 118-9
[176] V. Green. p. 118
[177] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p.1227.

Cecilia: Died in Rome c.117. A Roman noblewoman who converted her husband and his brother. They developed a ministry of giving burial to martyred Christians. They were martyred and she was in turn martyred for burying them. Patron saint of music.

Christopher: Martyred c.251. A powerfully built man who travelled the world in search of adventure. He spent some time carrying travellers across a dangerous river. One day he carried a small child across, but as they went, the child grew heavier and heavier. On the other side the child explained that he was the Christ, bearing the sins of the world, and he baptised Christopher. Patron saint of travellers.

George: Beheaded c.304 in Lydda, Palestine. Killed a fierce dragon in Libya which was being offered maidens, and even a princess, for food by terrified locals. Chivalrous to women and generous to the poor.

Lawrence: Died 258. Archdeacon of Rome at a time of persecution. When ordered to appear for execution bringing the treasures of his church, he brought along the crippled, blind and sick. He was roasted to death on a gridiron.

Lucy: Lived in Syracuse c.283-304. A devout Christian, she refused an arranged marriage with a pagan who denounced her to the authorities. Her eyes were torn out under torture and she was stabbed to death.

Nicholas: Died c.346. Bishop of Myra, he was protector of the poor and wronged. He gave three bags of gold to a poor man about to sell his daughters into prostitution. He also raised to life three boys who had been murdered and pickled in a barrel of brine. He became Santa Claus. Patron saint of pawnbrokers.

Sebastian: Died c.288. A senior Roman officer, he visited Christians in prison at a time of persecution. Suspected of being a Christian himself, he was tied to a tree and riddled with arrows. He survived but was beaten to death.

Ursula: Travelled around Europe with a number of virgins, all of whom were tortured to death in an attempt to persuade them to renounce Christianity. She founded the Ursuline Order, providing for the education of young Catholic girls.

Vitus: Died c.303. Son of a pagan senator in Sicily, who became a Christian at the age of twelve and was constantly persecuted. He was thrown to the lions but they would not touch him so was boiled in oil along with a rooster, as part of the ritual against sorcery. In the 16th century Germans believed that they could gain a year's good health by dancing in front of his statue.

Purgatory and Indulgences

Life expectancy had never been great in medieval times, but after the Black Death popular awareness of mortality increased dramatically. One result of this was the growing interest in the doctrine of purgatory, which had first received official status at the Second Council of

Lyons in 1272-4.[178] The origin of the concept lay in the ecclesiastical penance imposed on the penitent by confessors in the early Middle Ages, which was often prolonged and severe, involving arduous and dangerous pilgrimages or lengthy fasting. Such penances often exposed the penitent to public shame, and were found to be off-putting. Over time, a more compassionate approach led to emergence of the system by which a comparatively mild penance, involving prayer, fasting, or alms-giving was imposed by the priest in confession. The unfulfilled balance of the penitent's debt of penance was to be dealt with after death by the soul in Purgatory.

Purgatory, then, was the state of those who die in God's friendship, assured of their eternal salvation, but still have need of purification to enter the happiness of heaven.[179] The notion of indulgences or pardons, which became very important in the late Middle Ages, was believed to be applicable to souls in Purgatory, to shorten their time in that state. The indulgence could only be gained by a Christian in a state of grace, that is one who had truly repented, sincerely confessed, and had been duly absolved of all grave sins. A pardon was awarded for the performance of specific pious acts, such as a pilgrimage or the recitation of particular devotions carrying an indulgence.[180] The standard grant of an indulgence was forty days. On rare occasions, a plenary or total indulgence might be awarded by the Pope. For example, an indulgence of 300 days was secured from Pope Sixtus 1V by Edward 1V's queen, Elizabeth, for all who used a particular devotion in honour of the Virgin Mary three times a day at the Ave or Angelus bell.[181]

The practical implications of the notion of indulgences were enormous, because the Church claimed authority to remit time spent in Purgatory for those who had performed adequate penance in this life. Initially, this was fairly unimportant, and an indulgence, as time off from Purgatory, was given for a maximum of forty days, which was nothing when compared to the thousands (or even millions) of years some people might have to spend there. But after the Black Death there was a massive change. Popular demand for the assurance of eventual salvation, coupled with the realization that virtually nobody is good enough to get to heaven when he or she dies, led to what can only be called a vast inflation of indulgences.[182] Oddly enough, this inflation was accompanied by a lowering of standards. Whereas in the early Middle Ages, the penitent might have to work quite hard for a forty-day pardon, by the fifteenth century remissions were being granted for comparatively little – a few prayers said in front of a sacred image was enough to earn 30,000 years of remission. The absurdity of this

[178] G. Bray. p. 174.
[179] A modern definition of purgatory may be found in the 'Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2005). Retrieved online 15 February 2025.
[180] E. Duffy. p.288
[181] E. Duffy. p. 288.
[182] G. Bray. p. 174.

is clear enough and it is no longer surprising that the Reformation began as an attack on this particular teaching.[183]

The concept of Purgatory had been given an important place in the medieval church's teaching, providing the rationale not only for indulgences but also in the medieval cult of intercession for the dead.[184] The whole structure of Masses for the dead, the setting aside of areas of churches as Chantry Chapels, often endowed by the wealthy families to continue the saying or chanting of prayers, were based on the belief this would hasten the soul's passage through Purgatory. Candles were lit before the images of saints and pilgrimages to the shrines of saints were a common feature of English church life. Inevitably, there was widespread interest in the gaining of indulgences, and there is abundant evidence that they were eagerly sought by every class of English society in the later Middle Ages. The well-to-do purchased letters or pardons by contributing to charitable causes, or by associating themselves with a particular religious order or guild. Indulgences were considered an indispensable incentive in fund-raising activities such as the building or restoring of churches and religious houses. The indulgence might also be attached to secular causes such as the repair of bridges and roads. Perhaps the most macabre testimony to the demand for indulgences was the custom of granting forty days' indulgence to anyone who brought a faggot to the burning of a heretic.

Heresy and dissent

A heresy is a belief or set of beliefs which conflict with the 'orthodox' Christian faith. Heretics were condemned, expelled from the Church, persecuted, and sometimes killed. It should be remembered that many heretics did not deliberately reject 'true' teaching but formed part of the process of establishing that teaching. They offered alternative views which in due course the Church felt went too far.[185] The medieval Church tended to take a strong line against heresy or dissent within its own ranks. St Augustine of Hippo (354-430), one of the 'Doctors of the Church' argued for corporal punishment for heretics and schismatics and this became the normal procedure in the Middle Ages when the heretic was considered a revolutionary endangering the foundations of society. For example, Unitarians were executed for their denial of the Trinity. Anabaptists were executed for their rejection of state authority and infant baptism. The regular penalty in the Middle Ages was death.[186]

The end of an era

The medieval Church was straining to respond to the increasing demand for assurance that life is worth living, that death is not the end and that imperfect people can still hope for

[183] G. Bray pp. 174-5
[184] K. Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth 1 to Elizabeth 11* (1996) pp.3-4

[185] J. Rebecca Lyman in J. Bowden (ed) p. 520.
[186] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 1383.

eternal life in heaven.[187] The Church responded as best it could but its only answer was for people to work hard at acts of piety and go on doing more of the same. But change was in the air. Roger Martyn's picture of religious life in pre-Reformation Long Melford, as we have seen, was perhaps an idealized version, drawn from his childhood[188] He died in 1615, aged eighty-eight, and the detail he provides of the interior of the church and its festivals had almost gone. The delightful church remained, but it was almost unrecognizable inside: no rood, altars, nor images; no gilded stars (in the roof), no organ, and probably no choir. There were no guilds, no processions, or celebrations, or festivals, and although the bounds had to be beaten at Rogationtide the entertainments had probably been dropped. Martyn had kept some relics – a crucifix, the organ and a bell – in the hope that they might be returned to the church at some future date. But traditional Catholicism had been driven from the churches to be replaced by the new Protestantism.

10. The English Reformation and the founding of the Church of England

Henry V111's religious policy

The English Reformation had its origins in Henry V111's inability to produce a son with his wife, Katherine of Aragon; they had a daughter, Mary, but the King was determined to have a male heir. He wanted Pope Clement V11 to annul his marriage which would enable him to marry the much younger Anne Boleyn. The Pope refused the request, not least because Katherine was the aunt of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, an important figure in the defence of the Catholic Church. Henry, after a long and fruitless battle to convince the Pope that his marriage to his brother's widow should be annulled, decided to marry Anne anyway in 1533. Pope Clement declared that the marriage to Anne Boleyn was invalid. Henry responded by declaring that from now on the church in England would be under his control.

The unity of Western Christendom was shattered by the Reformation, led by Martin Luther, John Calvin and others in the 1520s and 1530s. The Reformation would challenge traditional beliefs which had been held for centuries. The English Church would eventually adopt some of the European reformist ideas but only after a period of uncertainty with many changes of direction. Henry V111 became the 'Supreme Head' of the English Church when he detached it from Rome, but left in place Catholic doctrinal and liturgical matters. The reign of his son, Edward V1 (1547-1553), saw the introduction of some Protestant beliefs in the Book of Common Prayer and the Forty-Two Articles of Religion, and the persecution of Catholics. The reign of Mary 1 (1553-1558) restored the Catholic faith, accompanied by the persecution of

[187] G. Bray. p. 175
[188] C. Haigh. p. 2-3.

Protestants of all persuasions. The long reign of Elizabeth 1 (1558-1603) saw the enactment of the 'Elizabethan Settlement' which introduced a *via media*, a compromise solution incorporating elements of Protestantism and Catholicism into the Church of England (Anglican) faith. The doctrines and rituals of the Church of England would be enforced by legislation and 'injunctions' requiring the clergy to conform to the new church laws and the laity to undertake compulsory attendance at their local parish church. The evolution of this new system from the older Catholic faith is considered in more detail below.

The fall of Cardinal Wolsey (1530)

Unable to secure the Papal dispensation for a divorce for Henry V111 from Katherine of Aragon, he was blamed by Anne Boleyn and, through her, incurred the King's displeasure. Wolsey left the Court in 1530, spending some three months at **Scrooby, Nottinghamshire,** on his slow, lingering journey northwards away from London. Scrooby Palace was one of a number of residencies used by the Archbishop of York on his visitation to that part of his Archdiocese. It was while he was at Scrooby that Wolsey learnt that many of his cherished plans had come to nothing. In the 1520s, Wolsey had dissolved 29 small religious houses and had taken over their property to fund a grammar school in Ipswich and a new college at Oxford. There was nothing very remarkable in this; bishops had occasionally taken action to suppress individual religious bodies. All of the houses dissolved by Wolsey were decayed in the sense that they had ceased to be viable in terms of the original foundation charters because of a decline in the number of monks or nuns they contained. However, the paperwork was not completed by the time of Wolsey's fall in 1529. The King dissolved his school at Ipswich, seizing all of its lands and possessions and that at Oxford, substituting the name Christ Church in place of Cardinal College, Wolsey's creation.[189] Wolsey wrote: "I am put away from my sleep and meat for such advertisements as I have had of the dissolution of my colleges." Wolsey was to devote his time to acts of charity to people in the area. After leaving Scrooby, Wolsey moved to Cawood in north Yorkshire where he was arrested on a charge of high treason in November 1530 and ordered to return to London. He died at Leicester on his journey south, thereby perhaps avoiding a gruesome execution.

The rise of Thomas Cromwell as Henry V111's chief adviser on religious affairs.

Thomas Wolsey used Cromwell as his legal assistant and helped him secure a place in the House of Commons. In 1524, Wolsey used Cromwell's legal services to secure the suppression of a number of small monasteries in order to provide for the endowment of his two proposed colleges at Ipswich and Oxford.[190] On Wolsey's disgrace in 1529, Cromwell entered the King's service and became a strong advocate of Protestantism and the royal supremacy in Church and State. His rise was rapid and in 1535 he became Vicar General and the King's chief adviser in all ecclesiastical affairs. Cromwell was of "low birth" and this rapid rise was strongly resented by nobles at Court, especially the Duke of Norfolk who possibly thought Cromwell's closeness to Henry had been at his expense. Cromwell handled the Dissolution of the Monasteries between 1536 and 1539. He also issued the Injunctions, ordering that a Bible

[189] Paper given by R. Mellors reprinted in the Transactions of the Thoroton Society, Excursion, 1905, pp.4-5.
[190] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 361.

should be kept in every church, that the clergy should perform certain clearly defined duties, and that a register of births, marriages and deaths in each parish should be kept. In foreign policy, he tried to bring about an alliance between England and the Protestant princes of Germany and with this in view arranged a marriage between Henry V111 and Anne of Cleves. The king's disgust at the marriage and the fact that he had no further use for Cromwell made him more receptive to complaints and allegations about Cromwell made by Norfolk and others. These were the causes of his undoing; for although Cromwell had only recently been created Earl of Essex (7th April, 1540) and had received landed estates confiscated from the monasteries, he was arrested, sentenced for treason, and beheaded on the 28th July 1540.[191]

Henry V111's Reformation

The break with Rome was undertaken by a series of legislative enactments and royal injunctions. The Act in Restraint of Appeals (1533) rejected appeals to Rome in matrimonial, testamentary and other lawsuits. This was to prevent Henry's divorce from Katherine of Aragon being taken to Rome by way of appeal.[192] The important Act of Supremacy (1534**)** confirmed Henry V111 and his successors to the title of 'the only Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England' and ended all papal jurisdiction in England. The King had the authority to reform all errors, heresies and abuses in the Church.[193] Through the Act, Henry was able to control the administration of the Church of England, define its doctrine, and regulate its ritual. These powers were strengthened by further legislation including the Act for the Submission of the Clergy (1534**)** which prevented any appeals by the clergy to Rome.[194] This was reinforced in another stage in the progressive strengthening of Henry's position in the Act against Papal Authority (1536**)**.[195] Again, to stifle opposition, the Treason Act (1534) was extended to include verbal attacks on the monarch. This included "slanderously or maliciously to publish and pronounce, by express writing or words, that the King our sovereign Lord is a heretic, schismatic, tyrant, infidel, or usurper".[196] Finally, the Statute of Proclamations (1539) authorised that all proclamations made by the king shall be obeyed. The Act conferred considerable power to the King and has been described as marking 'the highest point of legal authority ever reached by the Crown'.[197]

The Act of Supremacy announced the position of the King as 'Supreme Head' of the Church in the effusive and flowery language of the Tudor period:

> "Albeit the King's Majesty justly and rightly is and ought to be the supreme head of the Church of England, and so is recognised by the clergy of this realm in their convocation, yet nevertheless, for the corroboration and confirmation thereof, and

[191] Hilary Mantel's trilogy, Wolf Hall, focusses on Thomas Cromwell's rise and fall from power. The BBC has produced an acclaimed drama based on the books, starring Mark Rylance.
[192] 'An Act that the Appeals in such cases as have been used to be pursued to the See of Rome shall not be henceforth had nor used but within this Realm'. (Statute 24 Henry V111, c,12.) The preamble asserted Henry's claim to 'imperial' authority without earthly superior. [Tanner pp.40-46]
[193] 'An Act concerning the King's Highness to be Supreme Head of the Church of England and have authority to reform and redress all errors, heresies, and abuses in the same.' (Statute 26 Henry V111, c.1). [Tanner pp. 46-48]
[194] 'An Act for the Submission of the Clergy to the King's Majesty'. (Statute 25 Henry V111, c.19) [Tanner pp 22-24].
[195] 'An Act extinguishing the authority of the Bishop of Rome.' (Statute 28 Henry V111, c.10) [Tanner pp 48-50]
[196] 'An Act whereby divers offences be made high treason, and taking away all Sanctuaries for all manner of high treasons.' (Statute 26 Henry V111, c.13) [Tanner pp 388-9].
[197] 'An Act that Proclamations made by the King shall be obeyed.' (Statute 31 Henry V111, c.8) [Tanner pp 532-5]

> for the increase of virtue in Christ's religion within this realm of England, and to repress and extirpate all errors, heresies, and other enormities and abuses heretofore used in the same, be it enacted, by authority of this present Parliament, that the King, our sovereign lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted, and reputed the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England…" [198]

Henry importantly also sought to strengthen his own financial position with the Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries (1536) and the Dissolution of the Greater Monasteries (1539). [199] The purchasers of the land seem mostly to have been the leaseholders of the property from the monks, or local landowners, often of gentry status, who wanted to consolidate their estates. There were very few new men or outsiders, so that the general pattern of landownership was not too radically altered. However, an important result was that an influential class of English society was thereby further committed to the support of the King's ecclesiastical policy.

Henry endorsed some cautious moves towards Protestantism through a series of injunctions on ecclesiastical affairs issued by royal proclamations'.[200] In the 1536 Injunctions, the clergy were required 'to observe the anti-papal laws and the abrogation of certain holy days and ceremonies, not to extol images, relics, or miracles, to discourage pilgrimages, and to teach their people the Paternoster, the articles of faith, and the Ten Commandments in English. The clergy were also ordered to teach and administer the Sacraments more regularly and not to frequent taverns. A fortieth part of their income was to go to the poor and a fifth part to the repair of their own churches and parsonages.' Under the 1538 Injunctions, an official English Bible was issued in 1539 and ordered to be placed in every parish church.

Though there were some moves towards Protestantism, the Statute of Six Articles (1539**)** sought to reaffirm a number of Catholic doctrines.[201] Popularly known as 'the Whip with Six Strings', the Articles were an attempt to prevent the spread of Protestant doctrines but in operation, the Act turned out to be less severe than its critics feared, as its requirements were widely ignored even by those holding high ecclesiastical office.[202] Towards the end of his reign, Henry came to think that the unrestricted reading of Scripture was dangerous. In 1543, an **'**Act for the Advancement of True Religion' condemned all 'false and untrue' translations of the Bible, including that of Tyndale, and the reading of the Bible in the official version was restricted to the upper classes. Labourers and all women below the rank of gentlewoman were forbidden from reading the scriptures.[203]

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[198] Extract in Tanner p.47.

[199] Statute 27 Henry V111, c.28 and Statute 31 Henry V111 c.13 [Tanner pp 58-68]

[200] F. L. Cross (ed), The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (1958) p. 691.

[201] 'An Act abolishing diversity in Opinions.' (Statute 31 Henry V111, c.14) by (1) maintaining the doctrine of 'transubstantiation', (2) providing communion in one kind, (3) enforced clerical celibacy, (4) upheld monastic vows, (5) defended private Masses and (6) continued the practice of auricular confession (hearing by a priest). [Tanner pp 95-8]

[202] F.L. Cross (ed), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1958) p. 1262.

[203] Statute 35 Henry V111, c.5

The Dissolution of the Monasteries

The wealth of the English monasteries, a certain moral laxity, and what many regarded as their undue stress on the contemplative aspect of the religious life, had made them in the later Middle Ages an object of criticism.[204] The wealth of the monasteries was enormous. They possessed most of the Church's riches estimated as including about one-third of the country's landed properties.[205] Monasteries had acquired this wealth over many centuries, mostly through hundreds of bequests through property owners, large and small, in the hope that their generosity would lessen the time their souls would spend in purgatory. Many people lived close to a monastery or to one of its outlying estates, and would be aware of its activities. Some indeed would work on the monastery's estates. Monasteries were deeply embedded in their local communities.

It has been argued in defence of the monasteries that they never really recovered from the shock of the Black Death.[206] This not only affected the numbers, but also discipline, tradition, and learning. But serious as the blow was, the decline went on steadily after the effects of the plague should have worn off, and the houses could only be kept going by reducing the number of their inmates. Losses which in earlier years would have been overcome by the abundant vitality of monasticism, proved fatal to a movement which had already spent itself out.

As Vicar General, Thomas Cromwell was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Church. He undertook for most religious houses to be visited by his representatives. Traditionally, such visitations had been conducted under the authority of the bishop in whose diocese the house lay. In the case of a number of Monastic Orders, houses had been exempted from such control by papal dispensation; the visitations had been carried out under the authority of the head of the Order to which the house belonged. Cromwell's programme of visitations was only partial and did not include many of the smaller monasteries. It was interrupted by a second and even more ambitious undertaking, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus.* This was an attempt to make a record of all the property owned by the Church in England – a colossal undertaking given the lack of civil servants and the primitive state of estate management at the time. The visits were carried out by groups of unpaid commissioners, mainly local gentry, who visited all the monasteries in the county and, by asking questions and examining account books, built up a picture of the property own by the monasteries.[207]

However, in 1535, it was a series of visitations carried out by two of Cromwell's trusted inspectors, Thomas Legh and Richard Layton, that proved to be of crucial significance at the time. They were provided with a list of questions to ask at each house and sets of instructions (injunctions) to issue to the monks and nuns. They were ordered to make as full a record as possible of all the shortcomings in the lives of members of the religious houses. The short amount of time (often only a few hours), the huge quantities of information collected and the many complaints about their bullying tactics, suggests that they were anything but gentle in

[204] F.L. Cross & E. A. Livingstone. p. 411.
[205] K. Randell. Henry V111 and the Reformation in England. 2001. p. 64
[206] J.R. Tanner. p. 57.
[207] K. Randell. p. 66.

their work.[208] J.R. Tanner suggests that these 'visitors' were men of doubtful character; all the evidence they collected was in fact worthless.[209] However, they provided Thomas Cromwell with just the sort of information he wanted to begin the process of dissolution.

The Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries (1536). [210]

The 1536 Act ordered the suppression of all religious houses with an annual income of less than £200 (as assessed in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus)* and that their property should pass to the Crown. The Act provided for the heads of the houses to be granted a pension and for other members to be offered the option of transferring to a larger house or ceasing to be 'religious' by going out into the world without being bound by the vows of poverty and obedience that they had taken, although they were expected to continue to honour their vow of chastity and therefore would be unable to marry.[211] About 300 houses fell within the category specified in the Act, but not all of them were immediately dissolved. The King had the power under the Act to grant exemptions and did so in 67 cases. Those houses which were granted an exemption were forced to pay heavily – often more than a year's income – for the privilege.[212]

Opposition to the Dissolution of the Monasteries: The Pilgrimage of Grace (October 1536 - February 1537)

Within a short time of the Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries, a series of risings began in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and other counties in the north of England against Henry V111's religious policies, with his suppression of some ancient religious practices, including specific holy days. In Lincolnshire, the insurrection began in Louth and seems to have been triggered by the dissolution of the smaller monasteries and reaction to rumours that a general confiscation of church property was being contemplated. The rebels demanded the restoration of the monasteries, the removal of 'heretical bishops' like Cranmer and Latimer and the punishment of wicked ministers like Thomas Cromwell.[213] The insurgents professed their complete loyalty to the king and sent two deputies to present their case. The king, after some days of intense anxiety during which he had intended to take the field himself, was relieved to find that the insurgents had offered signs of submission in a message sent them by the Earl of Shrewsbury. The Earl was waiting with a royalist army near Scrooby and Bawtry, on the borders of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire.[214] It was at Bawtry on the 21st October, 1536, that the Earl of Shrewsbury had discussions with his leading generals as to what to do about this Catholic uprising. It was decided to send Thomas Myller, Lancaster Herald, "with a proclamation, to be read amongst the Traitors and rebellious persons assembled at Pomfret (Pontefract Castle) contrary to the King's laws."[215]

[208] Ibid pp. 66-7
[209] J.R. Tanner. p. 58.
[210] Statute 27 Henry V111, c.28 and Statute 31 Henry V111 c.13 [Tanner pp 58-68]
[211] K. Randell. p. 67.
[212] Ibid p. 67
[213] J. Gairdner. The English Church in the sixteenth century. MacMillan & Co. 1924. p.179.
[214] A detailed account may be found in G. Moorhouse. The Pilgrimage of Grace: The rebellion that shook Henry V111's throne. Penguin. 2002.
[215] R. Mellor. Transactions of the Thoroton Society. Excursion. 1905. p.5.

Before Lincolnshire was entirely pacified, Yorkshire was up in arms and the insurrection soon spread over all the north of England. The rising in Yorkshire, which was the most serious, was called by the participants 'this pilgrimage of grace for the commonwealth'. The rebels marched under banners with depictions of the five wounds of Christ and were led by Robert Aske, a Lincolnshire attorney. The rising seems not to have been aimed at Henry V111 personally but at his advisers including Thomas Cromwell who had introduced ecclesiastical reforms. Robert Aske, rather against his will, was raised by popular acclaim to the leadership of the insurrection. The object of the revolt was set out in a proclamation issued by Aske:

> "Evil-disposed persons being of the king's council, have incensed his grace with many new inventions, contrary to the faith of God, the honour of the king, and the weal of the realm. They intend to destroy the Church of England and her ministers; they have robbed and spoiled, and intend to rob and spoil the whole body of this realm. We have now taken this pilgrimage for the preservation of Christ's church, of the realm, and of the king."[216]

The Yorkshire revolt spread with extraordinary rapidity. Many of the heads of the principal northern families took part, and a force of some 30,000 men, well -armed and equipped, easily took possession of York. One of Aske's first tasks on entering the city was to fix a proclamation on the doors of the Minster, inviting all monks and nuns dispossessed from their houses to report themselves with a view to their immediate restoration to their monasteries.

Although the Yorkshire rebels professed loyalty to the king and only insisted on the repeal of recent church laws and the removal of the Monarch's chief advisers, Henry was greatly alarmed and entered protracted negotiations with them, offering general pardons in an attempt to split the gentry from commoners. Meantime, he also dispatched a royalist force under the command of the Duke of Norfolk to march northwards (and join the Earl of Shrewsbury) in the **Bawtry** area. On reaching the area, Norfolk found that the rebel forces were now in Doncaster, 12 miles away. The royalist forces were vastly outnumbered and Norfolk was obliged, very unwillingly, to make a truce with them, promising a general pardon to induce them to disband.[217]

There seems to have been no definite plan of action on the part of the rebels and Robert Aske may have lacked the necessary leadership skills. Aske met with the King in London and was promised a parliament to consider ecclesiastical issues and a free pardon for himself. The negotiations were protracted and the army of the Pilgrimage of Grace gradually melted away, while the forces of the king grew stronger every day. It is unlikely that the King's intentions were at any stage honourable; unrest continued and a further outbreak of disorder early in 1537 afforded a pretext for government action.[218] At Henry's order, over 200 rebels were hanged in the north as a 'fearsome spectacle' to others. Henry was determined that all the prisoners should be executed in their own counties. Aske himself was charged with treason

[216] As quoted in H.D.M. Spence. The Church of England. Vol.3. p. 116.
[217] James Gairdner, A History of the English Church in the Sixteenth Century. Macmillan & Co. London. 1924. p. 180
[218] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone (eds). The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. O.U.P. London. 1974. p. 1091.

and hanged in chains within the city of York. He had begged the King that he might be hanged until he was dead before being disembowelled. Henry granted this favour.[219]

Dissolution of the Larger Monasteries (1538-40)

Most monasteries were careful to remain aloof from the Pilgrimage of Grace, but a number were pressurised by the rebels to provide active support. Once order was restored, Henry V111 set about using a punishment which was thought at the time to be of dubious legality. The head of each house involved was declared a traitor in an act of attainder passed by Parliament (there was no trial) and was sentenced to be publicly executed, normally at his own monastery. The possessions of the house were treated as if they belonged to the abbot or prior and were transferred to the king as was the case with all traitors.

The Dissolution of the Larger Monasteries was more of a piecemeal process. To avoid the appearance of confiscation, Cromwell sent out pairs of his most trusted servants with commissions to receive the property of individual houses as free gifts to the king. The commissioners were instructed to spend little time with heads of houses and their communities who seemed prepared to resist strongly. They were merely to report the situation, having created as much fear and discord as possible. Many of the heads of houses who initially resisted the 'invitation' proved willing to resign their positions when instructed to do so in their monarch's name. They were then speedily replaced by men and women who were known to be more amenable, with the obvious end result.[220]

Despite the overwhelming success of Cromwell's commissioners, there was a handful of heads of houses who, with the support of their communities, were not prepared to be frightened into compliance. Those executed included the Abbots of Colchester, Reading and Glastonbury, among the richest monasteries in the country. As we shall see in the Gazetteer, the Carthusian monks at **Beauvale Priory** in Nottinghamshire were also executed (See Gazetteer). The Dissolution process met with very little resistance, apart from the Pilgrimage of Grace where the rebellion ended was ended in a brutal and highly unscrupulous manner. Cromwell was careful to keep to the letter of the law and thereby minimise the social consequences. The monks received pensions, and a considerable number of the clergy obtained employment as curates or parish priests. The lay brothers received nothing. The losses to charity, art, and education were considerable. Monastic buildings perished through destruction and decay.

Some of the spoils went to the setting up of six new dioceses – Bristol, Chester, Gloucester, Oxford, Peterborough and Westminster. Where part of the monastic church was shared with the local parish this part (usually the nave) continued in use. (For example, see **Blyth Priory and Worksop Priory** in the Gazetteer).

In total, about 850 monasteries in less than five years were taken from the clergy and either destroyed or sold off to the local gentry. The purchasers of the land seem mostly to have been

[219] C.R.N. Routh. Who's Who in Tudor England. Shepheard- Walwyn. London. 1990. p. 107.
[220] K. Randell. p. 69.

the leaseholders of the property from the monks, or local landowners, often of gentry status, who wanted to consolidate their estates. There were very few new men or outsiders, so that the general pattern of landownership was not too radically altered. However, an important result was that an influential class of English society was thereby further committed to the support of the King's ecclesiastical policy.

The Church Settlement of Edward V1

Edward, the son of Henry V111 and Jane Seymour, was nine years old when he succeeded his father in 1547. Edward was of little account politically, and the country was ruled at first by his uncle, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, and later by the Earl of Northumberland. Under Somerset's Protectorate, the process of religious doctrinal change was carried out gradually and with caution, but matters were speeded up under the Earl of Warwick (the Duke of Northumberland). The Injunctions of 1547 built upon Henry's policies by requiring regular sermons in all parish churches against superstition and the Pope's authority, and in favour of the royal supremacy.[221] The Injunctions discouraged a superstitious use of images and ceremonies and ordered the clergy to 'take away ...and destroy all shrines, candlesticks, pictures, and all other monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition'.[222] The Injunctions also encouraged the study of the Scriptures and the use of the 'vulgar tongue" in the services of the Church. Another injunction required churchwardens to provide a 'comely and honest pulpit' for the preaching of God's word, in every church. The Injunctions did not interfere with the use of the confessional as a habitual practice; the terminology of the old order, 'high mass', 'matins, and 'evensong' were still employed, and prayers for the dead expressly retained.

The Church of England was being gradually moved in a Protestant or Calvinist direction through a series of important statutes. Of central importance was the Act for the Dissolution of the Chantries (1547); there were some 4,000 chapels or small foundations endowing a priest or priests to say masses for ever for the repose of the founder's soul.[223] The properties and income from the Chantries were acquired by the King.

The Chantry Chapel of St. Mary Magdalene in Bawtry (see Gazetteer) was not immediately dissolved in Edward V1's reign under the provisions of the Chantry Act of 1547 but was the subject of a complicated law case before the Chapel was acquired by Elizabeth 1. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s in Henry V111's reign, attention was drawn in Edward V1's reign to the anomalies provided by the existence of hospitals, religious guilds and chantry chapels. The Chantries Act of 1547 also confiscated that part of the funds of guilds and corporations assigned to 'superstitious' objects; the funds were now converted into a rent-charge payable to the Crown. These religious guilds had proliferated in medieval times based on the widespread fear of sudden death, especially in the wake of the Black Death.

[221] F.L. Cross (ed) The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (1958) p.691
[222] Injunctions of 1547 in Tanner pp. 101-2.
[223] 'Act whereby certain Chantries, Colleges, Free Chapels, and the possession of the same, be given to the King's Majesty' (Statute 1 Edward V1, c.14) [Tanner pp103-7]

Moves towards Protestantism

The First Act of Uniformity (1549) introduced a revolution in national worship.[224] This imposed a uniformity of service in English throughout the realm. It also introduced Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer which also created a liturgy in English. Severe penalties were introduced to enforce the new liturgy. Clergymen who held benefices who did not comply were punishable for a first offence with forfeiture of a year's income and six month's imprisonment, for a second offence with deprivation of office and a year's imprisonment, and for a third offence with life imprisonment. Similar penalties were imposed for speaking against the Book of Common Prayer.

A number of measures introduced by the Earl of Warwick, who brought the young King to the forefront of government, speeded up the pace of the Reformation. Henry's Act of Six Articles which had represented a shift back towards Catholicism was repealed. In 1549, an Act legalising the marriage of clergy was passed.[225] The preamble of the Act recognised the desirability of celibacy for the clergy but admits its difficulty. All laws prohibiting the marriage of ecclesiastical persons were therefore declared void. Another important change was the Act against all superstitious books and images (1550), which was a consequence of the First Act of Uniformity.[226] As the use of the new Prayer Book was established by law, the older service books were deemed unnecessary and were given up to be destroyed. The opportunity was taken to continue the crusade against superstitious images in churches. Another initiative was that of Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London, who issued an Injunction concerning the Altar (1550).[227] Ridley called upon curates, churchwardens and others to replace the altar with 'an honest table decently covered, in such a place of the choir or chancel as shall be thought most meet by their discretion and agreement… and to take down and abolish all other by-altars or tables…' The policy of Ridley which applied to his diocese was finally adopted throughout the whole kingdom.

The Second Act of Uniformity (1552) ordered the use of the Second Book of Common Prayer of Edward V1 and drew upon radical Continental Protestant ideas.[228] The Preface to the Book of Common Prayer emphasized the importance of the use of the English language:

> "Whereas St Paul would have such language spoken to the people in the church, as they might understand, and have profit by hearing the same; the service in this Church of England (these many years) hath been read in Latin to the people, which they understood not; so, they have heard with their ears only; and their hearts, spirit, and mind, have not been edified thereby."[229]

[224] 'Act for the Uniformity of Service and Administration of the Sacraments throughout the Realm' (Statute 2 & 3 Edward V1, c.1) [Tanner pp 107-112]
[225] 'An Act taking away divers laws against the marriage of priests'. (Statute 2 & 3 Edward, V1, c.21). [Tanner p.112].
[226] 'An Act for the abolishing and putting away of divers Books and Images'. (3 & 4 Edward V1, c.10) [Tanner pp. 113-115]
[227] Tanner pp115-6.
[228] 'An Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments'' (5 & 6 Edward V1, c.1) [Tanner pp116-120].
[229] Extract in Tanner, p.117

The Act introduced a number of important revisions including penalties for absence from church on Sundays and Holy Days made punishable by ecclesiastical censures. According to the church canons, in theory, absence from attendance by lay people at any other form of service was also subject to imprisonment. In practice, much depended on interpretation of the laws by the local bishop or archdeacon. According to R. Marchant in his analysis of court cases in the York Diocese, little attention was placed to the regularity of attendance by ordinary farm labourers. Even prominent citizens were usually only fined and only the most-persistent non-attenders were imprisoned. The situation was to change after the issue of the 1604 canons.

Significant changes were introduced in the form of the church services; the doctrine of the 'Real Presence' of Christ at the Mass was changed to a communion of simple remembrance. The Act also introduced changes to the wearing of clerical vestments at the Communion Service.

The Church Settlement of Mary 1

Edward died in 1553, aged 16, after a long illness, to be succeeded by Mary, daughter of Henry V111 and Catherine of Aragon. Mary set about restoring the Mass and other Catholic rituals, and relinquished the title of Supreme Head of Church. At first, Mary showed leniency to her Protestant opponents though proscribing their religion. In 1554, she successfully quelled Thomas Wyatt's plot and resolved to rule with greater sternness.

The short reign of Mary saw the repeal of the legislation of Edward V1 and an attempt to undo the work of Henry V111 by seeking a reconciliation to Rome. The central legislation was Mary's First Statute of Repeal (1553)**.**[230] The Act was to be enforced by the Injunctions of 1554 which required the bishops to restore the old order within their own jurisdictions. They were to 'have a vigilant eye and use special diligence and foresight' to see that heretics are not admitted to benefices; they were 'diligently' to 'travail for the repressing of heresies and notable crimes, especially in the clergy' and 'for the condemning and repressing of corrupt and naughty opinions, unlawful books, ballads, and other pernicious and hurtful devices, engendering hatred among the people and discord among the same'; and they were to punish and remove 'schoolmasters, preachers, and teachers' who set forth 'any evil or corrupt doctrine'. Married priests were to be deprived 'with all celerity and speed'; Latin processions were to be revived; such holy days and fasting days were to be kept as in 'the latter time of King Henry V111'; and 'laudable and honest ceremonies' are to be revived.[231]

The marriage of Mary to Philip 11 of Spain in 1555, saw the reconciliation of England and Rome and the restoration of papal jurisdiction. A mass exodus of prominent Protestants to Germany followed. At the same time the Act reviving the Heresy Laws (1554) began the

[230] 'An Act for the repeal of certain Statutes made in the time of the Reign of King Edward the Sixth' (Statute 1 Mary,1, st.1.)' [Tanner pp121-2].
[231] Tanner p.122; F.L. Cross (ed) '*The Oxford Dictionary of the Church'* (1958) p. 691

process of persecuting heretics and those opposed to her rule.[232] In total, at least 274 persons were burnt at the stake in a fierce bout of religious cruelty. The burnings discredited the church she loved and brought about hatred for the Catholic cause. The persecution and Mary's inability to have children lost her the support of the nation. Among the victims of the persecution were Lady Jane Grey and her husband; and Princess Elizabeth, who had possibly been implicated, was committed to the Tower though no evidence had been found against her.

Mary's Second Statute of Repeal (1555) is best regarded as embodying the terms of the bargain with Rome.[233] The Act made a clean sweep of all the Acts against Rome since 1528, with an important exception – it did not repeal the Dissolution of the Monasteries Acts. Instead, a considerable part of the Act is devoted to securing the rights of the holders of the former monastic lands. This was the price Mary had to pay to the English nobility for the reconciliation with Rome.

The Church Settlement of Elizabeth 1

Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry V111 and Anne Boleyn. In 1536, when she was three years old, her mother was executed and she and her half-sister Mary were declared illegitimate when Henry V111 married Jane Seymour. During the reign of Mary (1553-8) she conformed outwardly to Catholicism. She was imprisoned after the plot of Thomas Wyatt was discovered in 1554 but succeeded in clearing herself of suspicion and was re-admitted to court at the end of the year. On her accession in 1558 at the age of twenty-five, Elizabeth sought to deal with the religious question. She seems to have had no strong religious convictions and sought to find a compromise solution based on political expediency. She believed that the country as a whole was still predominantly Catholic, but there was also a strong group of Calvinist reformers pressuring for change. She distrusted both Catholics and Calvinists; the former because they denied her legitimacy, the latter because they wanted to abolish episcopacy (government of the church by bishops) which she thought essential for the preservation of monarchy. Elizabeth's religious 'Settlement' established the Church of England (Anglican Church) in a form which broadly exists today. The Settlement was founded on two important statutes, the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity.

The Act of Supremacy (1559)[234]

The Act of Supremacy repealed Mary's Second Statute of Repeal and so brought into force again the statutes of Henry V111 and restored the Henrician relationship to Rome. It was regarded as doubtful at the time if the title of Supreme Head of the Church could be properly borne by a woman, and Elizabeth seems to have been content with the substance of Supremacy as 'Supreme Governor of this realm… as well in all spiritual or ecclesiastical things

[232] 'An Act for the renewing of three Statutes made for the punishment of Heresies'. (Statute 1&2 Philip & Mary, c.6.) [Tanner pp.124-5].
[233] An Act repealing all Statutes, Articles, and Provisions made against the See Apostolic of Rome since the 20th year of King Henry the Eighth, and also for the establishment of all Spiritual and Ecclesiastical Possessions and Hereditaments conveyed to the laity.' (Statute 2 &3 Philip & Mary, c.7.) [Tanner pp 125-129].
[234] An Act restoring to the Crown the ancient jurisdiction over the State Ecclesiastical and Spiritual and abolishing all foreign power repugnant to the same (Statute 1 Elizabeth,1, c.1) [Tanner, pp130-135].

or causes temporal'.[235] The Act required the clergy to take the Oath of Supremacy which was to be administered with heavy penalties for nonconformity. For a first offence, the offender would suffer the forfeiture of goods, or if these were not worth £20, one year's imprisonment, the benefices and promotions of ecclesiastics becoming void. For the second offence, the penalties of praemunire which involve loss of goods and imprisonment. The third offence was deemed high treason (i.e. the death penalty). The Oath of Supremacy could be administered to all ecclesiastics and public office holders such as judges and mayors, together with anyone taking holy orders or degrees at universities. Those who refused the oath were to be deprived of their office and disabled from holding office for life — clearly severe pressures on Tudor office holders for whom failure to conform could mean loss of livelihood and of reputation.

The Act of Uniformity (1559) [236]

The Act of Uniformity moved beyond the position of Henry V111 and incorporated the reforms of Edward V1 and some of the reform proposals coming out of Continental Europe. It authorised one form of public worship – that contained in Edward V1's Second Prayer Book, now cautiously modified so as to minimise opposition. The First Prayer Book had affirmed the doctrine of the Real Presence, while the Second Prayer Book had denied it in favour of a communion of simple remembrance of Christ in the Eucharist.

The Act of Uniformity distinguished between key figures who were required to commit themselves fully, and the general public who were merely required to conform outwardly. The beneficed clergy who refused to use the new Book of Common Prayer or who used any other form of service could be punished for the first offence with the loss of a year's income and six months' imprisonment; for a second offence with prison for a year and the loss of all benefices; and for a third offence with life imprisonment. Unbeneficed clergy could receive a year's imprisonment for the first offence and life imprisonment for a second offence. The Act also made it compulsory for the laity to attend official Church of England services, with a fine of 12 pence for each missed Sunday and holy day. Some of the wealthier Catholic Recusants were prepared to pay the fines rather than attend Church of England services. Persistent offenders might face excommunication, a very serious punishment which meant that the person could not receive a Christian burial and might find himself/herself in trouble with the Court of High Commission. Whilst these penalties were mild compared to the burning of heretics in Mary's time and compared with the harsher regime in the later years of Elizabeth's reign, they were nevertheless severe and affected a wide range of groups in society. Though the penalties were not systematically and universally imposed, their mere presence on the statute book was a powerful inducement to conform.

The Elizabeth Settlement also saw most of the Chantry Chapels which were separate from parish churches either destroyed or sold off to local landowners. It is not clear why St Mary

[235] Tanner, p.130.
[236] An Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Divine Service in the Church, and the Administration of the Sacraments (Statute 1, Elizabeth, 1, c.2)

Magdalene Chapel in **Bawtry** survived the wholesale removal of such foundations – possibly because it was a hospital and the Archbishop of York had the right to appoint the master. The chapel retained its lands and the annuity formerly paid by the canons was now paid by the Crown. The order of service was amended and Protestant clergy appointed as masters, culminating in 1584 with James Brewster being appointed by Archbishop Sandys.[237] James was the brother of **William Brewster**. On the site, there were one or two people living in almshouses, the chapel and the master's house. In his detailed investigation of the Pilgrim Fathers in this area, Joseph Hunter comments on how "notorious" the legal position of the Bawtry hospital was and how it had contrived to survive when so many other monastic foundations had been suppressed. These were technically called '*concealed lands'* as if furtively kept out of the notice of the Crown.

Consolidating the Settlement: The Queen's Injunctions of 1559

The Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity were quickly followed by a series of Injunctions which provide explanations of key clauses as well as detail as to how the Church of England was to operate. The Injunctions were substantially a re-enactment of those of 1547, with the extreme anti-Romanism somewhat toned down. Among the injunctions the marriage of priests, although lawful, was discouraged, in view of the 'lack of discreet and sober behaviour in many ministers of the Church, both in choosing of their wives and indiscreet living with them'. To remedy this, it was provided that 'no manner of priest or deacon shall hereafter take to his wife any manner of woman without the advice and allowance first had upon good examination by the bishop of the same diocese and by two justices of the peace of the same shire'. Another injunction related to the dress of the clergy which required 'such seemly habits, garments, and such square caps as were most commonly and orderly received… in the reign of Edward V1'. This was to give rise to the 'Vestiarian Controversy' whereby some Protestant reformers objected to vestments such as the surplice which they saw as the continuing use of 'catholic' vestments. In another injunction, due reverence by kneeling or bowing the head at the name of Jesus was to continue. Again, some Protestant reformers would take exception to the continuation of a catholic tradition. Finally, in an appendix to the Injunctions, in a 'spirit of compromise', some thoughts were given to the altar. The injunction provided 'that the holy table in every church be decently made, and set in place where the altar stood, and there commonly covered… and so to stand, saving when the communion of the Sacrament is to be distributed; at which time the same shall be so placed in good sort within the chancel as whereby the minister may be more conveniently heard of the communicants in his prayer and ministration… And after the communion done, from time to time the same holy table to be placed where it stood before.'[238]

Elizabeth's 'via media'

Elizabeth's Anglicanism was emphatically a compromise, a 'via media', and the Church she ruled was forced by her into a similar position. Her personal views seem to suggest she would have welcomed the Church remaining as her father (Henry V111) had left it; a semi-reformed

[237] J. Hunter. Collections p. 79 ff.
[238] Tanner pp140-1; F.L. Cross (ed) *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1958) p.691

institution with a partial Roman Catholic ritual and doctrine.[239] Her tastes seem to have been towards showy ceremonial – priestly vestments, rood-screens and crucifixes, high altars and candles, and she insisted on these features in her private chapel. The Queen herself, despite outward friendliness to Protestantism, had no vested interest in the movement, nor was she in favour – rather the reverse – of the prevailing Calvinism of the time.[240] Elizabeth recognised that she was being pushed in the direction of extreme Protestantism (Presbyterianism or Congregationalism) and appeared determined to provide a compromise settlement in order to maximize support behind the proposal. Certainly, throughout her reign, what is evident is the quite extraordinary tenacity with which the Queen resisted attempts to make the Church more 'Protestant'.

Changing hearts and minds

Although there were many factions and divisions of opinion within the Church of England, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, at least in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, were not heresy-hunters. In order to keep a Church as widely supported as possible, the authorities were prepared to permit a diversity of theological views. Elizabeth 1 is quoted as saying: "I did not seek to make windows into Puritan souls any more than I did into Catholic souls". Whatever they believed, they must conform outwardly with official policy and not challenge the law of the land. Those who held 'Puritanical' views would not necessarily find themselves in trouble if they confined themselves to academic discussions but they could expect little toleration if they acted, or incited others to actions which threatened the Established Church. It was their actions rather than their beliefs which would get the Puritans into trouble.

The Queen might be satisfied with outward conformity, but to her Bishops the problem presented itself in exactly the opposite form. If Protestantism was to achieve a foothold in the country, they believed, it would be necessary to alter the religious outlook of the nation. The accomplishment of this task proved slow, owing to the indifference of the Queen and the perceived difficulty of changing hearts and minds. The task of imposing the Act of Uniformity on the nation seem to require the introduction on increasingly repressive measures over the whole of Elizabeth's reign. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, the Church of England was for the majority of people the only form of religion of which they had first-hand experience. Catholic priests worked under great difficulty to say Mass in secret, but they could only reach a small section of the population. Puritan preachers seeking to reform the newly Established Church from within, also had to act cautiously and avoid questioning monarchical or state authority. The majority of Englishmen attended the parish church on Sundays and holy days and probably never saw a Catholic priest or heard a Puritan sermon. They were baptised in the Church of England, married according to its rites and came to it for the last time for its burial service. As long as they conformed outwardly and did not openly speak against its teachings,

[239] A.H. Drysdale, History of the Presbyterians in England (1889) p.90.
[240] J.B. Black, *The Oxford History of England: The Reign of Elizabeth* (1959 2nd ed) p.7.

they were left alone. There seems to have been comparatively little heresy-hunting as far as the ordinary people were concerned. The majority of citizens, looking for a quiet life, did not find the official religion too demanding or too repressive; the minority of population, comprising the highly vociferous Puritans and Separatists, on the other hand, became increasingly unhappy with what they saw as an 'unreformed' Church.

The important role of the parish church

Christopher Hill reminds us of the important role of the parish church in the everyday life of citizens. In the 16th and 17th centuries it had a monopoly of thought-control and opinion-forming.[241] It controlled education, censored books. Until 1641, the publication of home news was prohibited; privately circulated newsletters were available to the rich but were beyond the means of the poor. For the illiterate or semi-literate mass of the population in their village churches, the pulpit was the only place where news from far off London could be heard. Sermons were for the majority of the public their main source of political information and political ideas. Above all, people came to church for news of the outside world. Given the importance of the Church in opinion forming, the Crown was always mindful of the need to control this powerful body. As a result of the Reformation, the holding of the advowson (the nomination of ministers to their posts) had increasingly passed into the hands of well-to-do laymen, usually the local gentry. But nearly all clergymen, once presented, were subject to the authority of bishops; and bishops appointed by the Crown rarely forgot to whom their allegiance was owed. As will be seen, the Crown or government of the day, often working through the bishops, was able through orders or injunctions to direct the clergy as to their general conduct or the views they expressed from the pulpit.

The Elizabethan Settlement: The Thirty-Nine Articles

The Thirty-Nine Articles, published in 1571, are not a statement of Christian doctrine in the form of a creed; rather they are short summaries of the Anglican view of certain controversies such as Transubstantiation, Predestination and so on. Subscription to the Articles has never been required of any but the clergy and, until the 19th century, members of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Since 1865 the clergy have been required only to affirm that the doctrine of the Church of England as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer and the Articles is agreeable to the Word of God, and to undertake not to teach in contradiction of them, instead of giving a more particular subscription as before.[242]

The settlement may have been a patchwork of compromises but the Church of England took root and began to earn the respect of wide sections of society. Elizabeth seems to have quickly acquired the consent of the ruling class, the nobility and gentry without whom Tudor England could not be governed. As far as the ordinary parish clergy, it was likely that they would not

[241] C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (1969) p.33.
[242] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 1368.

give a great deal of trouble. If a clergyman refused to 'subscribe' to the policies laid down by the ecclesiastical authorities, he faced losing his 'benefice'. Of the 9,000 benefices or livings in the Church, the actual number of ordained clergymen at the beginning of the reign was probably about 7,000. The probability of them giving up their livings was very small – possibly only about 200 had done so.[243]

The Catholic Response

In the early decades of Elizabeth's reign, English Catholics were relatively quiet whilst they awaited guidance from their leaders. Matters were to change after 1570, when Pope Pius V issued the Bull of Excommunication ('Regnans in Excelsis') against Elizabeth, which declared Elizabeth to be a heretic and to have incurred the sentence of excommunication. The Bull was issued after a formal trial of the Queen at Rome, where a number of English exiles had been summoned to testify to her heretical views. The Bull which 'rendered treason a necessary part of the religious duties of every English Romanist', effectively excommunicating Elizabeth and releasing her subjects from their allegiance and orders them to disobey her laws.

It was a declaration of war against the Queen and the English state. Elizabeth's response was inevitable: those who obeyed the Pope were traitors to her and would suffer the consequences. After 1570, many Catholic priests, trained at Douai and other places, were smuggled back into England in order to propagate the faith in secret. They were hidden in a network of houses. Many were eventually caught and received the death penalty.

Recusancy – the refusal of Catholics to attend Church of England services

Recusancy, or the refusal of Catholics to attend Church of England services, received a powerful impetus with the arrival of Jesuits and other priests from the Continent, especially during the years around 1580. The penalties imposed on nonattendance might include a twelve -pence fine, banishment from the kingdom, life imprisonment, forfeiture of estates and goods, and finally the death penalty.[244] The actual enforcement of policies varied over the years but by the 18th century, judges and juries became increasingly unwilling to exact the full penalties.[245]

Plots to replace Elizabeth with Mary Queen of Scots

The position of Catholics in the nation was often affected as much by politics as by religion. For some years, Mary Stuart (better known as Mary Queen of Scots), Elizabeth's cousin, had been held in England under house arrest for fear that she might be a rallying point for dissenting Catholic groups. Despair at ever being released had led Mary to dabble in the various plots – Ridolfi (1572), Throckmorton (1584), Parry (1585) and Babington (1586). Mary was frequently moved by the authorities from one stronghold to another so as to lessen her value to the plotters and was imprisoned briefly at Worksop Manor, Nottinghamshire, in

[243] P. McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth 1* (1967) pp.7-8; some historians have put the figure as high as 800.
[244] The penalties were imposed by the Acts of Uniformity of 1549, 1552 and 1559 and further reinforced by statutes in 1581 and 1586-7 and further penalties continued to be added until the 18th century.
[245] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. pp. 1163-4.

1568. Mary's involvement in the Babington Plot sealed her fate. After some hesitation on the part of the authorities, Mary was executed in 1587

Revolt of the Northern Earls (1569- 1570)

Northern noblemen had increasingly become enraged with Elizabeth's religious policies. They wanted Catholicism restored because, as a result of their own Catholicism, they had lost considerable influence at Court. They also objected to Elizabeth's life style choices as she refused to marry or name an heir, leaving the future of the Kingdom in doubt. They had Mary, Elizabeth's cousin, as a possible replacement. The key figures in the plot were Thomas Percy, the Earl of Northumberland, Charles Neville, Earl of Westmorland, and Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk. Both Neville and Percy had lost positions at Court, and Howard felt he was being displaced as a result of Elizabeth favouring younger Protestant nobles. The Earls gathered some 4,500 men and stormed into Durham, destroying the English Bible and the Protestant Communion table in the Cathedral. A Catholic Mass was then celebrated – an act that was illegal in England and Wales. Most of the rebels retreated as soon as they heard of a Royalist army under the Earl of Sussex marching north. Prisoners were severely punished with over 800 rebels being executed.

Some of the local Catholic gentry, including the Morton family of **Bawtry and Harworth**, took an active role in the uprising. The Morton family were patrons of the Chantry Chapel of St Mary Magdalen at Bawtry, and were buried there. Dr Nicholas Morton of Bawtry was a preacher at Canterbury in Queen Mary's reign but then left for France. He returned to England and as a papal agent, played a considerable role in inspiring the rebellion of the northern earls in 1569. He managed to escape the aftermath. His nephew Robert Morton of Bawtry, a seminary priest, was also involved in one of the plots aimed at freeing Mary Queen of Scots. He was taken to London and executed at Tyburn in 1588. [246]

11. The Puritan Movement

The Elizabethan Settlement, then, seemed to have secured the Protestant future of the Church of England and offered a compromise solution to a difficult problem. Elizabeth and her bishops showed considerable determination to defend the idiosyncratic religious structure. However, a new generation of Protestant clergy and gentry now emerging from the universities were becoming increasingly frustrated by the unwillingness of the bishops to allow for change.[247] These would-be reformers were initially referred to by contemporaries such as Archbishop Parker in the 1550s as 'Precisians' or precise folk.[248] This term was soon outstripped in popular phraseology by the term 'Puritan' which was used as a nickname and

[246] A. Gray. p.154. See also A.C. Wood (1947) p. 161.
[247] D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700,* p.*382.*
[248] A.H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England* (1889) p.4.

as a term of abuse. It became displeasing to those to whom it was applied who tended to call themselves 'the godly'.

In the 17th century, Puritanism was essentially and primarily a religious movement.[249] Puritans argued that the Church of England had not been sufficiently purged of the theology and worship of Roman Catholicism. They believed that the Catholic Church had moved in the wrong direction after the 5th century by incorporating governmental structures, ceremonies and dogmas which were not found in the Bible. The Church of England, they argued, had made a start by repudiating Catholic beliefs but had slowed up the Reformation by retaining bishops, vestments and ritual. The Puritans proposed to return to the forms of worship which they imagined were used by the early Christians; their leading theorists such as Thomas Cartwright studied New Testament texts to try to discover how the early Christian churches were organised.

The Puritans of Elizabethan England regarded themselves as members of the Church of England; their aim was not to leave the Church but to reform it from within and fashion the Church to meet their own ideals. A much smaller group of separatists in **Bawtry and Scrooby**, as we shall see, shared many of the reform ideas of the Puritans but became increasingly frustrated at the lack of progress of the reform movement and were determined to leave the Established Church. Some of these would go into exile in Holland and an even smaller number would sail on the Mayflower to the New World.

The wide range of Puritan proposals

The whole range of Puritan objections to the style and form of the newly established Church of England did not manifest at once; it was a slow development, stimulated by conflict and nurtured by persecution.[250] In the early years of Elizabeth's reign, confrontation with the Puritans was avoided because the authorities were concentrating their attention on securing the conformity of Roman Catholic individuals and groups to the ecclesiastical rules. Initially, Protestant ministers were allowed a good deal of latitude as to how they practiced the new forms. The Book of Common Prayer was not always strictly followed. Clergy adopted variations in clerical dress; some wore the cope and surplice (traditional vestments dating from medieval times), some wore the surplice only, some wore neither. Sometimes prayers were said in the chancel, sometimes in the body of the church or from the pulpit. The communion table was sometimes placed in the chancel, sometimes in the nave or body of the church. At the communion service, some clergymen used a chalice, some a special communion cup, some an ordinary cup. Communion was variously received, kneeling, standing or sitting. In baptism, some ministers used a font, others an ordinary basin. Some Puritan ministers omitted the sign of the cross when administering the sacrament of baptism.

[249] S.E. Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (1965) p.61
[250] J.B. Black, *The Oxford History of England: The Reign of Elizabeth* (1959 2nd ed) p.191

Controversy over vestments

The 'Vestiarian Controversy' began in 1559 over what appeared to be a relatively unimportant matter, namely the vestments prescribed for the use of the clergy by the royal Injunctions. Puritans contended that the use of vestments set the minister apart from his congregation and was an important symbol of the Roman Catholic concept of priesthood. The issue appeared to be trifling, yet neither side could afford to yield; the Puritans because they had argued their case as a matter of conscience, the queen because she believed she had made a legitimate use of her prerogative for the right ordering of the church service. Neither side saw the matter as trivial and the dispute became ever more acrimonious. The Puritans wanted to abolish "the rags of popery"; they began to protest over the wearing of medieval vestments – the white surplice and the coloured chasuble or cope. The reformers argued that dress, being a 'thing indifferent', should be left to the discretion of the individual. 'Let the clergy be known', it was argued, 'by their demeanour and conversation and not by their dress'.[251]

Questioning the continuation of "superstitious practices"

Some Puritans objected to conventional features of the Baptism service.[252] They were uneasy when the priest used the sign of the cross on the infant's forehead; it reminded them of the tricks of a pagan magician. They were also unhappy at the custom by which godparents were chosen more for social than for theological reasons, while the natural parents were not featured. In medieval times infants had almost always been baptised when their mothers were still confined to bed. They also objected to midwives and other women themselves baptising infants if they were thought to be in danger of death. They believed that the infant had already been predestined by God to heaven or hell, without waiting for baptism.

Puritans might also question the central institution of the "Mass" – a service or sacrifice offered to God by a priest standing at a stone altar. Rather, they believed, the faithful should sit around a table to receive Holy Communion. Kneeling to receive the sacrament was thought to suggest the worship of the bread and wine. Again, the lighting of candles, the veneration of crucifixes and the images of saints, the use of the sign of the cross at baptism, were all thought to imply acceptance of medieval priest-craft and superstition. Similar notions were extended to weddings and funerals. It was deemed unnecessary, or undesirable, for a bride to have a ring put on her finger and for her to be blessed by a priest; marriage was a contract not a sacrament and the vital moment was the betrothal.

[251] J. B. Black, *The Oxford History of England: The Reign of Elizabeth (1959 2nd ed)* p.191
[252] D. L. Edwards, *Christian England Vol. 2 From Reformation to the 18th Century.* (1983) pp.145-148

Abolition of Christmas and other feast days

For some Puritans, there was no need to celebrate Christmas, which was not dated in the Bible. They were also concerned about 100 other feast days which interrupted work and damaged an economy which depended on hard manual work. Whilst the majority of the feast and fast days in the Church's calendar had been abolished by Henry V111's Injunctions of 1536, there were still a large number remaining which contributed to disrupting the economy. On the other hand, the Puritans were concerned to maintain the strict observance of the Sabbath, which could be justified from Biblical references and for providing much needed rest days for those in work.

The holding of a plurality of benefices

Some Puritans were concerned about pluralism whereby a cleric held a number of clerical posts, perhaps some distance apart, so that some parishes might lack regular services. Pluralism flourished not only as a means by which by which the more fortunate and influential of the clergy acquired wealth but also because single livings might well be inadequate to provide for the needs of a priest.[253] Attempts in 1563 and 1581 to supplement the livings of the poorer parishes came to nothing.[254] There were too many influential people determined to maintain the *status quo*. Certainly, there was a body of poorer clerics who had economic as well as religious reasons for wanting to reform the Church.[255] Yet some reformers recognised that seeking the end of pluralism was not necessarily the appropriate answer to a difficult problem; some benefices were so poorly paid as to be unattractive to any clergyman without independent means. An alternative to parish priests was the appointment of 'lecturers' or preachers, paid by a city corporation, and operating on a wider basis than the parish. Bishops tended to be hostile to 'lecturers' or preachers whom the Puritans favoured, but it was the contents of their lectures or sermons rather than the practice itself which produced the conflict.[256]

Improvement of the low standards of clergy education and clergy behaviour

At the beginning of the Tudor period, the standards of clerical education were pitifully low and the majority of parish priests were quite unable to preach. These so-called 'dumb dogs' were strongly criticised by the reformers. However, matters were changing with the increasing numbers of educated clergymen arriving from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

[253] C. Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church: From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (1956) Chapter X Pluralism and Non-residence pp.224ff
[254] P. McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth 1* (1967) p.23.
[255] C. Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church (1956) Chapter 1X Social and Economic Status of the Clergy* pp.199ff
[256] P. McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth 1* (1967) p.45.

There were also concerns about poor standards of conduct. "Drunkenness, gambling, brawling, tavern haunting and wenching were common enough among the clergy in Elizabethan as in earlier times."[257] Many of the parishioners might have taken such weaknesses for granted in their clergy but there was a growing body of critics, both Puritan and Catholic, who were using such information for propaganda purposes.

Importance of preaching

An important ideal of the Puritans was for every parish church to have a minister capable of delivering sermons which would provide intellectual and spiritual stimulation to their congregations. The Puritans "wanted more preaching, as much as possible, so as to carry the Gospel into all corners of the land, even the darkest, and to raise the educational and disciplinary level of all members of all congregations. Since salvation came through the Word, it could not be preached too much". [258] Elizabeth's Government and the Church hierarchy saw things differently; they were deeply concerned about the explosive possibilities of unlimited preaching leading to anarchy. Elizabeth disapproved on principle of too much preaching and ridiculed the idea of putting a preaching minister in every parish; three or four to a county was quite enough. Much safer she thought to have "honest, sober and wise men, and such as can read the Scriptures and Homilies well unto the people".

Direct government control of preachers in fact goes back to long before the Reformation to the medieval custom of licensing preachers and schoolmasters.[259] This was revived under Edward V1 and continued under Elizabeth; only those officially licensed were allowed to preach. In March 1565, licences to preachers were called in and reissued only to those ministers who had been "diligently examined for their conformity in unity of doctrine established by public authority". Every minister on admission to a living had to make a protestation: "I shall not preach, or publicly interpret, but only read that which is appointed by public authority, without the special licence of the bishop under his seal ". These requirements to be properly licensed and increasingly repressive measures brought in later decades were aimed at preventing preaching by ministers who had been deprived of office or by persons whose ordination lacked the approval of public authority. Even the laity was the subject of attempts to control "rash talkers of Scripture". The Injunctions of 1559 required that: "No man shall talk or reason of the holy Scriptures rashly or contentiously, nor maintain any false doctrine or error, but shall commune of the same, when occasion is given, reverently, humbly and in fear of God".

The Queen herself was ready to exercise control over what was being said in the pulpits. In 1579, the Privy Council, alarmed by John Stubbe's criticism of the Queen's proposed marriage to the Duke of Anjou in *The Gaping Gulph*, instructed the Archbishop of Canterbury to

[257] P. McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth 1* (1967) p.19.
[258] C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (1969) p*.47
[259] C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism* in Pre-Revolutionary England (1969) pp.34ff

admonish the preachers in his diocese "that in their sermons and preachings they do not intermeddle with any such matters of state, being in very deed not accident nor appertaining to their profession… but rather teach people to be thankful towards Almighty God for the great benefits both of liberty of conscience, peace and wealth which they have hitherto enjoyed by her Majesty's good means".[260] Stubbe was sentenced to have his right hand cut off for writing the pamphlet; but when the sentence was executed, he took off his hat with his *left* hand and exclaimed "Long live Queen Elizabeth".[261]

Discipline

Importantly, many Puritans - perhaps most - wanted what they called discipline to be introduced into every church. Discipline would empower church authorities to apply a range of penalties to members of the congregation for neglect of their religious duties, in effect allowing them to act as religious policemen in their parishes, placing moral and spiritual offenders under excommunication with strong pressure on them to conform.[262] Essentially, it was a demand for the outward conformity of the whole population to the moral and spiritual requirements of biblical precepts.

This was to be the Achilles' heel of Puritan popularity. As with other political, social, or religious movements, the Puritan appeal came from their ability to sling mud at the status quo. The Puritans gained popular support as long as they were criticising the lack of real education of the older clergy (the so called 'dumb dogs'), as long as they were pointing out the evils of clerical nonresidence, as long as they were targeting many aspects of the ceremonial as 'popish' and as long as they were annoying bishops under almost any pretext.[263] But when they sought to arrogate to themselves the right to order the lives of their neighbours, at that point their popularity failed them and they became regarded as self-righteous killjoys.

Plundering the Church

Christopher Hill provides considerable evidence of those who were prepared to plunder the Church and so weaken it economically.[264] "The queen herself, the nobility, the gentry, the universities, the wealthy townsmen and many of the bishops and higher clergy were ready to enrich themselves at the expense of an institution which lacked the power to defend itself". One of many examples is Edwin Sandys who as Bishop of Worcester in 1559 has been described as "a spoliator, who robbed the Church for self-enrichment, impoverishing his successors by leasing out the estates of the see to his own family and dependents. His brother,

[260] Cardwell, *Documentary Annals Vol.1* p.383; quoted in Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (1969)* pp.35-6
[261] As quoted in A.H. Drysdale, History of the Presbyterians in England (1889) p.195
[262] M. Pearse, *The Monarch History of the Church: The Age of Reason Vol.5.* (2006) p.114.
[263] M. Pearse, *The Monarch History of the Church: The Age of Reason Vol.5. (2006)* p.115.
[264] C. Hill, '*Economic Problems of the Church: From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament'* (1971) Chapter 2. The Plunder of the Church pp.14ff

wife, and servants were given profitable leases; Sandys himself pulled down episcopal buildings and chapels for their building materials and lead. When Sandys succeeded Grindal as Archbishop of York, he accused his predecessor of corruptly seizing six score of leases and patents for his kinsmen and servants before departing for Canterbury. Grindal, meanwhile, was making similar charges against his predecessor at Canterbury.

The central role of the Bible

The Puritans stressed the central role of the Bible. They preferred to study a popular version of the newly translated "Geneva" Bible which took its name from the city where a group of English exiles – William Whittingham, Antony Gilbey, and Thomas Sampson – set about producing a new translation of the Bible in English in 1560.[265] These exiles had fled from England to escape the persecution of Protestants under the reign of Queen Mary Tudor ("Bloody Mary") who had ascended the throne on the death of her father, Henry V111. This version of the Bible became extremely popular, particularly with the Puritans, much to the annoyance of the bishops of the established Church because of its caustic marginal comments, many of them explicitly anti-royalist. The word 'tyrant', for example, which is not to be found in the King James Bible, occurs over 400 times in the Geneva text.[266] It was also in a reasonably compact form, relatively inexpensive and more readily available after 1575 when a licence was issued to allow its printing in England. The Geneva Bible sometimes goes under the name "breeches" Bible because of the scene in Genesis where Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness and is translated as: *"The eyes of both were opened…and they sowed fig-tree leaves together and made themselves breeches".* (Genesis iii v.7)[267]

The Elizabethan Settlement, as we have seen, was held to be binding on everyone; all members of the state were necessarily members of the state church. Elizabeth might argue that she was not concerned to "open windows to men's souls" but that she was seeking at least outward conformity of her subjects and that this was very much in line with the practices of other 16th century rulers. The Settlement was enforced under the terms of the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity, both promulgated in 1559, and required active commitment to the Settlement on the part of the more important members of society. As long as they conformed outwardly and did not openly speak against its teachings, they were left alone. There seems to have been comparatively little heresy-hunting as far as the ordinary people were concerned. They did not find the official religion too demanding or too repressive.[268] However, as we shall see, Elizabeth began to progressively clamp down on the Puritan dissenters. She increasingly came to believe that preaching by the Puritans had led to widespread involvement of ordinary people in public discussion and disturbed them with

[265] A. Nicolson, *When God Spoke English: The Making of the King James Bible* (*2004).*
[266] A. Nicolson, When God Spoke English: The Making of the King James Bible (2004) p.58
[267] There is a rare 1603 edition of the Bible in use when Richard Clyfton was rector at Babworth, Nottinghamshire, in the safe keeping of the church.
[268] P. McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth 1* (1967) p.25

radical notions. Above all she believed that the introduction of presbyterian principles undermined belief in the hierarchy in the church and would be injurious to stable monarchy.[269] It is probable that the Queen regarded the Puritan attack with even greater irritation than the Catholic; for although the vast majority of Puritans remained within the Church, and professed to aim not at its overthrow but at its transformation, the political doctrines underlying their religious 'platform' were inimical to the whole structure of Tudor government.[270]

12. The Puritan Resistance in the Bawtry area

The opposition to the 'Elizabethan Settlement' by Puritans was undertaken by determined and resourceful individuals and small groups. Nationwide, the Puritans were strong in London including Southwark, parts of Lincolnshire including Gainsborough and Boston, parts of the south west including Bristol, and parts of the Midlands. But it is a small group, operating out of **Bawtry and Scrooby** that provided an important role in the dissenting movement (see Gazetteer). Some of these individuals formed a 'separatist' group, left for exile in Holland in 1608 and eventually sailed on the Mayflower to North America in 1620. **William Brewster** returned to his home village of Scrooby in North Nottinghamshire in the 1580s having brought back from the University of Cambridge something of the Puritan radicalism that was spreading through the colleges – especially Emmanuel, Christ's, Corpus Christi, Trinity, and Brewster's own Peterhouse. Within a ten-mile radius of Scrooby, he was able to join with a number of active and articulate dissenters. These included **Richard Clyfton** who had been dismissed as rector of nearby All Saints' Church at Babworth, Nottinghamshire, in 1604, for his outspoken nonconformist views; **John Robinson**, who returned to his native Sturton-le-Steeple, Nottinghamshire, at about the same time, after a period of involvement in radical Puritan groups in Cambridge, London, and Norwich; and **John Smyth**, also from Sturton-le-Steeple, who was to lead a Separatist group in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. William Brewster was undoubtedly in contact with other Puritan clergymen nearby who articulated similar concerns about the need to introduce further reform of the Church of England, including his brother **James Brewster** of Sutton-cum-Lound; **Richard Bernard** of Worksop; **George Turvin** of Retford; **Edward Southworth** of Clayworth, all in Nottinghamshire; and **Henry Gray** curate of Bawtry, South Yorkshire To these important figures should be added the youthful **William Bradford**, from nearby Austerfield, South Yorkshire who was to become Governor of the Plymouth Colony in New England. Some of these leading figures are considered below and in the Gazetteer.

William Brewster and Scrooby Palace

Scrooby is about a mile and a half from the small market town of **Bawtry.** It stood on the Great North Road, something of a misnomer because at that time it was little more than an

[269] M. Pearse, *The Monarch History of the Church: The Age of Reason Vol.5, p.*115
[270] J.B. Black, *The Oxford History of England: The Reign of Elizabeth*, p.188

unfenced track, muddy in winter and often almost impassable, and difficult to negotiate without a guide. Although Elizabeth 1 had ordered the clearing of undergrowth and brushwood for 100 feet on both sides of main roads, highway robbery and murder were everyday occurrences. Scrooby is also situated on the River Ryton, a tributary of the River Idle which flows eventually into the River Trent. It is mentioned in a 10th century charter in which Edgar granted the Manor of Sutton, which included the hamlet of Scrooby, to Oskytel, Archbishop of York.[271] Over the centuries, Scrooby was to remain in the hands of the Archbishop and was used by him as a place of residence when he held a visitation in the southern part of his metropolitan See.[272] These residences were used for leisure as well as ecclesiastical purposes; Scrooby in particular was a favourite centre for the pleasures of the chase being convenient for both Hatfield Chase and Sherwood Forest. The palaces were not all furnished; whatever was necessary to make the archbishop's stay as comfortable as possible was carried from residence to residence.

William Brewster Sr. was sufficiently wealthy to enable him to send his son to Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1580, when William was about fifteen years of age. We have little information about his time at Cambridge other than the fact that he entered as a 'pensioner' which meant that his father could afford to pay for his food and other expenses.[273] The Cambridge and Oxford colleges, founded as theological seminaries, were still monastic in regimen and spirit. The entire curriculum had a religious cast, for the primary function of the universities was to provide the education of clergymen.[274] However, according to more than one contemporary critic, the colleges were the "haunts of drones, the abodes of sloth and luxury, monasteries whose inmates yawn and snore…leading their lives in vanity, folly, and idleness".[275]

William Bradford offers some comments about Brewster at this time: "After he had attained some learning… knowledge of the Latin tongue and some insight into the Greek, and spent some small time at Cambridge, and there being first seasoned with the seeds of grace and virtue".[276] The comment about the seeds of grace and virtue appear to be a veiled reference to William's association with a radical group of scholars seeking religious reform. John Penry entered Peterhouse on the same day as Brewster. As the college was small, with perhaps only a hundred students, their mutual interests may well have brought them together.[277] Robert Browne, John Greenwood and Henry Barrow were all resident at Cambridge at this time. John Greenwood, Henry Barrow and John Penry were executed in 1593 as 'seditious sectaries.' Brewster was later to take Barrow's book, *'A Brief Discoverie of the False Church',* with him to

[271] H. Kirk-Smith, *William Brewster: The Father of New England (1992)* p.2; the village has been variously spelt in ancient documents as Scrobi, Scroby, Scroobie, and Scruby. The word is of Danish origin; 'Skroppa' was a Norse personal name and 'by' was a homestead or village. The original meaning then was 'Skroppa's village or 'Skroppa's homestead.
[272] H. Kirk-Smith, William Brewster (1992) p.3; the Archbishop had similar properties at York, Bishopthorpe, Ripon, Beverley, Cawood, Shireburn, Otley and Southwell.
[273] H. Kirk-Smith, *William Brewster (1992)* p.22
[274] G. Willison, *Saints and Strangers (1945)* p.17
[275] As quoted in G. Willison, *Saints and Strangers (1992)* pp.17-8
[276] Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation,* p.325
[277] G. Willison, *Saints and Strangers (1945)* p.33

the New World.[278] Two other Separatists, Francis Johnson and his brother George, were at Christ's College at this time, and were to found the 'Ancient Brethren' in Amsterdam which the Scrooby group joined for about a year when they went into exile in 1608.

How long Brewster stayed in Cambridge is uncertain and he did not take his degree, though that was not unusual for the time. He entered the service of Sir William Davison in 1583, one of Elizabeth's chief ministers at court, possibly on the recommendation of Archbishop Sandys who was Brewster Sr.'s employer and always generous to the Brewster family. William Brewster's position in Davison's service is uncertain; he was too young and without diplomatic or secretarial experience and it seems likely that he acted as a kind of general factotum. Bradford tells us that Brewster "went to the Court, and served that religious and godly gentleman Mr Davison divers' years, when he was Secretary of State; who found him so discreet and faithful, as he trusted him above all others that were about him, and only employed him in matters of greatest trust and secrecy. He esteemed him rather as a son than a servant, and for his wisdom and godliness in private he would converse with him more like a familiar than a master".[279]

Hunter speculates on the development of Brewster's Puritanism by his association with Davidson and those in Davidson's household. Davidson was eminently a Puritan himself "…one of the more reflective and philosophical, we may believe, of the party, extending his views, as Brewster did, beyond mere ceremonies, to the great principles which ought to govern men in the management of ecclesiastical affairs".[280] There was possibly another influence on Brewster of another of Davidson's assistants, George Cranmer, who had been a pupil of the eminent Protestant philosopher Richard Hooker and had assisted him with his important work *Ecclesiastical Polity*. Cranmer had also lived with Sir Edwin Sandys, who Hunter identifies as worthy of ranking among the "ecclesiastical inquirers and reformers of the time". [281]

Brewster accompanied Davison on diplomatic missions to the Netherlands and visited a number of towns and cities - an experience which was to be very useful when he later went with the Scrooby Separatist group to that country. He spent some time in Leiden where he and other attendants of Davison were quartered in a house near to the Pieterskerk (the Church of St Peter), where 22 years later he was to bring his Scrooby group.[282]

[278] H. Kirk-Smith, *William Brewster* (1992) pp.28-9
[279] Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, p.325
[280] Hunter, *Collections,* p.61
[281] Hunter, *Collections,* pp.61-2; Hunter notes that Cranmer was killed in Ireland in 1600; he had not, like Brewster, forsaken the higher paths of public life.
[282] H. Kirk-Smith, William Brewster (1992) p.38

The execution of Mary Queen of Scots

Davison was drawn into the controversy over the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. Mary had become the centre of papist disaffection with Elizabeth. A number of plots were hatched, usually supported by the Pope, King Philip 11 of Spain, and by English Roman Catholics, to replace Elizabeth with Mary. Pressure was repeatedly put on Elizabeth by her advisers to place Mary on trial and execute her. Elizabeth steadfastly refused but eventually the Babington Plot to assassinate the Queen revealed Mary's unmistakable complicity.[283] Babington and his fellow conspirators were found guilty and hanged at Tyburn. Mary was put on trial at Fotheringhay Castle, Northamptonshire, in 1586 and found guilty. What happened next has been the subject of some debate and enquiry and differing versions of the unfolding events have emerged. A modern analysis by John Guy offers a useful insight into the web of deceit and duplicity surrounding the circumstances which led to the eventual execution of Mary. Initially, Elizabeth refused to countenance the idea of executing a monarch and, despite intense pressure from her chief adviser, Lord Burghley, held off signing a death warrant. Burghley deploying what we might term 'false news', fostered a false rumour that Spanish troops had landed in Wales, and briefed the Queen accordingly. He and Walsingham then called on the newly appointed French ambassador, Guillaume de l' Aubespine, Baron de Chateauneuf, at his house in Bishopsgate Street, and effectively blackmailed him into conspiring with them to 'discover' a fresh assassination plot which was, in reality, two years old and had amounted to very little. Elizabeth sent for Davison and asked him to bring a copy of Mary's death warrant which Burghley had drafted some weeks earlier. Elizabeth signed the warrant and ordered Davison not to let the document out of his possession or to show it to anyone before he had had it sealed by the Lord Chancellor. She next instructed Davison to order Walsingham to write a letter in his own name to Mary's custodian, Amyas Paulet, demanding that he do away with his prisoner. Paulet was to act as a private citizen and do what the Queen wanted in secret so as to hide the matter from public opprobrium. Paulet refused, calling the plan 'dishonourable and dangerous', rightly foreseeing that Elizabeth would soon be looking for scapegoats. Soon after visiting Walsingham, Davison made what he later realized was a catastrophic mistake. Although Elizabeth had ordered him not to allow the signed death warrant out of his possession or show it to anyone, he let Burghley and Leicester see it. They ordered him to have it sealed immediately. The next morning, however, Elizabeth sent Davison a message; if the warrant had not yet been sealed, he should delay the process. Davison hurried to the Privy Chamber to warn her that it had already been sealed. Elizabeth muttered something barely audible about his 'unseemly haste' and then (according to Davison) said that she wished to be 'no more troubled with the matter'. Davison, now unsure as to what to do with the warrant, handed it to Burghley, who quickly ordered the warrant to be carried out.

[283] *J. Guy, Elizabeth: The Forgotten Years (2016) pp.81ff.*

Elizabeth denied having ordered the death sentence and blamed the Privy Council and especially Davison who was held personally responsible for the speed with which the death sentence had been carried out. Davison was fined heavily and imprisoned in the Tower during the Queen's pleasure. Davison's health broke down but William Brewster remained with his master for some time and helped him through his difficult period in prison. Davison was eventually released in 1589. The fall of Davison from high office would undoubtedly have had an impact on Brewster, probably occasioning much uneasiness and uncertainty as it put a stop to Brewster's advancement in his chosen career.[284] How much he knew of the circumstances behind Davison's dismissal is impossible to say. Again, how much his perception of monarchical government in church and state was affected by these events, can only be a matter of speculation. It seems likely that he would not be left as a fervent admirer of the Queen.

William Brewster returned to Scrooby where he took over two important positions from his father; he became Master of the Queen's Posts and responsible for the safe passage of the royal messengers in his area and also Bailiff to the Archbishop of York tasked with collecting rents on the Archbishop's estate and looking after the Archbishop's Palace. As postmaster, Brewster was responsible for the safety and prompt dispatch of the Queen's post from Scrooby to Tuxford in the south and from Scrooby to Doncaster to the north.[285] The office of postmaster was a coveted position in those days and provided Brewster with an important source of income. His other position as bailiff to the Archbishop of York gave him the task of collecting rents from tenant farmers on the Archbishop's estates. Importantly, he resided in the Palace and was responsible for its maintenance and general level of comfort when the Archbishop visited.

Leland, who visited the place in 1541 to identify suitable properties for his master, Henry V111, to purchase, offers the following description: "In the mean townlet of Scrooby I marked two things – the parish church not big but very well-builded; the second was a great manor house, standing within a moat, and belonging to the Archbishop of York; builded in two courts, whereof the first is very ample and all builded of timber, saving the front of the house that is of brick… The inner court building, as far as I marked, was of timber building."[286] The Palace was constructed mainly of wood and consequently needed constant attention.[287] The Palace was a substantial building of 40 rooms; a flight of stone steps led to the great baronial hall where the archbishops, like the lords of the realm they were in fact, held court in princely fashion on their comparatively rare visits to this poor and distant part of their diocese. Other facilities included a chapel and would have had the usual range of service buildings for so

[284] Hunter, *Collections,* p.62
[285] H. Kirk-Smith, *William Brewster (1992)* p.51; the main duties of the position were to provide three good post horses for the Queen's messengers, who were not allowed to hire them from anyone else.
[286] Leland, *Itinerary,* vol.1. p.36. Quoted in Hunter, *Collections,* p.20.
[287] H. Kirk-Smith, *William Brewster*, (1992) p.6

important a building – a brewhouse, a bakehouse, a forge, stables, kennels, dovecote – all within the moated area.

Successive Archbishops had failed to undertake the necessary maintenance work; the result was that by the 1550s many of the buildings had fallen into a state of disrepair. Archbishop Heath in 1555 ordered that the buildings in the worst condition should be pulled down; accordingly, the gate house, the hall, the great chamber to the north of the outer court and a number of other buildings were all destroyed. However, the palace remained a substantial property with the Archbishop reserving accommodation for himself and his retinue.

Over the centuries, royal visitors were not unknown; Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry V11, stayed there on her way to marriage with the King of Scotland in June 1503. Henry V111 stayed there for one night during his northern progress in 1541. As we have seen, Wolsey also stayed there for several months after his fall from office as Lord Chancellor, when he failed to persuade the Pope to annul the marriage between Henry and Catherine of Aragon.

Opposition to the Elizabethan Settlement by William Brewster

William Brewster, clearly an active Puritan, was reported in 1598 to the archdeacon's court for the offence of "sermon gadding" the Puritan practice of forsaking their local parish church to hear a better preacher elsewhere. He was also accused, with others, of "publicly repeating" sermons, a practice frowned upon by conservative clergymen. In court, Brewster provided a skillful answer to the charges:

> "… as touching the repeating of sermons, he with others do note the sermons delivered by the preacher and in the afternoon they that have noted do confer with one another what they have noted and otherwise they have no repetition, and to the rest of the presentment he sayeth that the two towns of Bawtry and Scrooby do maintain one preacher between them who preaches one Sunday at the one town, and at the other town on the next Sunday by a continual course, so that if their preacher preach at Bawtry he with the other (sic) of the parish go thither to hear him, and otherwise he doth not absent himself from his parish church on the Sabbath day." [288]

Brewster was presented to court with Anthony and Edward Bentam who agreed with Brewster's views and all three were dismissed with a verbal warning. No further action was taken.[289] The relative immunity of Brewster from ecclesiastical interference was no doubt partly explained by the fact that he was an archiepiscopal employee but also because the vicar of the neighbouring parish (Sutton-cum-Lound) was his brother James.

[288] R. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts (1960)* p.142; for a longer version of the trial of Brewster and his defence against it see Transaction of Thoroton Society Vol 30. p.13.
[289] R. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts (1960)* pp.141-4; The presentment was made possible because Bawtry and Scrooby were included in separate ecclesiastical parishes and therefore legally the parishioners could not go to each other's churches.

The division between Brewster's group and the rest of the Scrooby parishioners soon appeared and tensions between the groups became increasingly apparent. The Puritan curate at Scrooby was Thomas Hancock, who brought an action against one of his parishioners, William Throope, for defamation. Among the alleged slanders was the statement by Throope that one of his horses could preach as well as the curate and this charge he had to admit. As a consequence, judgement was given against him, and his relations and those of his fellow 'jesters', with the Puritans were not improved. The antagonism of the non-Puritan section of the congregation appeared to be on-going; Throope was one of the churchwardens who presented Brewster in 1598. The curate of Scrooby, Thomas Hancock, was presented to the Archdeacon's court on a number of occasions. In 1591, he was presented for not wearing the surplice, and, as he admitted that the chapel possessed one, he was ordered to wear it (17 May). On the 17 November, he was excommunicated for refusing to obey the order and this quickly secured his compliance (15 December). In 1592, Hancock was presented by the churchwardens of Scrooby for conducting a marriage ceremony between Robert Southworth (then Curate of Headon) to Jane Wasteness, without banns or licence in Scrooby chapel. Southworth and his wife were eventually found guilty and declared to be excommunicated, though later pardoned. Hancock later became Vicar of Elkesley and succeeded Southworth at Headon when the latter was deprived.

William Bradford, Austerfield and Bawtry

Bradford was born at Austerfield, South Yorkshire, a small village just a few miles from Bawtry. The well-preserved church registers enabled Joseph Hunter to conduct a detailed investigation of the early life of William Bradford and his family.[290] He was born in 1589 to a family of farmers who were tenants of the Crown in the royal manor of Austerfield. In 1584, his father William had married Alice Hanson, also of Austerfield, and their first child was William, the future Pilgrim. When the boy was less than a year old, his father died, and two years later his mother married an Austerfield man called Robert Briggs.[291] When his mother Alice died in 1597, William was cared for by John Hanson, his grandfather on his mother's side. When in turn Hanson died in 1602, the 12-year-old boy went to live with his uncles, Robert and Thomas Bradford.[292] We have no knowledge of the emotional impact, if any, of these bereavements on William.

Bradford's family was of some social standing in Austerfield. Hunter summarised his family history; his two grandfathers –William Bradford and John Hanson – living around 1575, were the only two persons in the village taxed on the assessable value of their land. This shows at once the general poverty of the place and that the Bradfords stood in some degree of elevation above their neighbours, except the local clergyman who was not subject to the

[290] Hunter, *Collections,* p.101; A baptismal entry at Austerfield reads: 1589, March 19th William, the son of William Bradfourth [1589= 1590 by modern dating].
[291] N. Bunker, *Making Haste from Babylon (2010) p.*116
[292] Hunter, *Collections,* p.102; William's grandfather, William Bradford, died in 1596.

tax.[293] Hunter has also examined the will of Robert Bradford, one of William's uncles, who describes himself as "yeoman", who formed a class below gentry and who lived for the most part on their own lands. William was given grounding in husbandry on his uncle's farm, but he was said to have been a weak and sickly boy whose constitution indisposed him to farming. He may have preferred study to farming and it is evident from his later writings that he was intelligent and able to write in a coherent way. It is possible, indeed likely, that he received tuition from his friend William Brewster at Scrooby.

According to Cotton Mather, after an illness at the age of twelve, William Bradford began to read the scriptures.[294] Mather goes on to describe Austerfield "…where the people were unacquainted with the Bible…a most ignorant and licentious people, and like unto their priest."[295] Hunter suggests that no one can either confirm or refute the very unfavourable representation Mather gives of it, but that Robert Bradford's will is not without traces of both piety and charity.[296] He also argues that the minister, Henry Fletcher, appears to have been constantly resident on this poorly-endowed benefice from 1591, when he married Elizabeth Elvick, to 1624 when he was buried in Austerfield churchyard. Hunter agrees with Mather that Bradford was unlikely to have been inspired by Henry Fletcher's preaching and he is known to have walked the six miles or so to listen to the charismatic preacher Richard Clyfton, Rector of All Saints' Church, Babworth near Retford. Hunter records that Bradford met up with various people, including Brewster, and he imagines them strengthening one another in their admiration of Clyfton's preaching as they walked across the meadows to Babworth.[297] Hunter also speculates that Bradford as a young man of about 14 years old, would have been angered by Clyfton's dismissal as minister in 1604 and may well have resolved at this time to leave the church which had driven out one of its best ministers.[298] He might well have come to see that no other way was open to him other than to abandon the Established Church. In doing so, he had to oppose the wishes of his family and set himself against the derision of the "clowns of Austerfield" and joined the Scrooby church.[299] This seems to have happened when he was between fifteen to eighteen years old.

Bradford did not go to university but he undoubtedly received instruction and guidance from Richard Clyfton and William Brewster, who had developed their nonconformist beliefs at Cambridge University. Bradford's family seems to have been unhappy at his religious fervour. As an only child with what Mather calls a "comfortable inheritance" the young William might be expected to stay close to his extended family and help finances by eventually marrying a

[293] Hunter, *Collections,* p.102
[294] Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*: *The Great Works of Christ in America: The Ecclesiastical History of New England (1702)* [Reprinted 1979] Vol. 1. pp. 108-114. Mather's information seems to have come from the writings of Bradford himself, now lost.
[295] Mather, *The Great Works of Christ,* p.109
[296] Hunter, *Collections* p.112
[297] Hunter, *Collections,* p.113
[298] Hunter, *Collections,* p.113-4
[299] Hunter, *Collections,* p.114

cousin, one of uncle Robert's three teenage daughters.[300] As Bunker suggests: "If a landowning youth like William Bradford displayed too much independence, bucking the constraints of kinfolk and community, and especially if he spoke the language of piety, the conflict was likely to be all the more unpleasant. At Austerfield the surviving records suggest that people lived on rye bread, pea soup, weak beer, and in wintertime a little pork and bacon. Being told by a privileged Puritan that they were ungodly was doubtless more than they could tolerate".[301]

Richard Clyfton becomes pastor to the Puritans

A powerful figure among the Puritans in the area, according to Hunter's researches, was Richard Clyfton (sometimes spelt Clifton) who had been appointed as vicar of Marnham in Nottinghamshire in 1585. He then moved to the rectory of Babworth, Nottinghamshire, a small village about seven miles from Scrooby, in July 1586.[302] Clyfton was born at Normanton near Derby in 1553, son of a Thomas Clyfton and the eldest of a large family. The family were wealthy enough to send him to Cambridge University and, like so many undergraduates of his generation, he soon absorbed the ideas of the nonconformist lecturers such as Cartwright. He expounded their ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

Soon after arriving at Babworth in 1586, Clyfton married Anne Stuffen of nearby Warsop with whom he had six children. Three daughters died in infancy or childhood, but three sons (Zarchary, Timothy, and Eleazer) are believed to have accompanied their parents into exile and to have lived near Amsterdam.[303] William Bradford wrote of him as "… a grave and reverend preacher, who by his fervour and diligence has done much good, and under God had been the means of conversion of many".[304] Clyfton became noted for his clarity of style; he would explain the gospel message in easy language so that his parishioners, many of whom were illiterate, were able to understand his teachings. At a time when citizens were required by law to attend their local parish church, Clyfton's services became well-known and he began to attract numbers from neighbouring villages, including **William Brewster** and his wife Mary, and son Jonathan, who rode or walked form Scrooby. They were soon joined by William Bradford, who was a young boy at the time. "Sermon gadding" or attendance at a church other than the parish church where one lived could bring the person to the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities. The authorities often chose to ignore such nonconformist behaviour but from 1605 onwards they began on a more regular basis to clamp down and inflicted quite considerable financial penalties.

[300] N. Bunker, *Making Haste from Babylon (2010) p.*117
[301] N. Bunker, *Making Haste from Babylon (2010) p.*119
[302] Hunter, *Collections,* p.42; Hunter says that his research is based on public ecclesiastical records and also on private records of the Clifton family, published as *Notes and Queries* vol. vii, p. 351.
[303] Hunter, *Collections,* pp.46-7
[304] Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation,* pp.9-10

From church records, Hunter is able to fix the date of his departure to Holland to August, 1608. [305] His wife Ann died at Amsterdam, 3 September 1613, and was buried in the South Church. Richard died at Amsterdam, 20 May, 1616, and was also buried in the South Church.

John Robinson: teacher to the Scrooby Puritans

Robinson was a remarkable man; he left the impress of his thoughts upon much of the religious life of America and England.[306] He became teacher of the Scrooby Puritans and accompanied them into exile in Holland, both in Amsterdam and Leiden. He preached a farewell sermon to the Pilgrims departing for America, intending, it is believed, to go there himself, though he never actually took that step.[307]

Our knowledge of his early life is somewhat limited; Joseph Hunter conjectures that he was born at Gainsborough, though later historians such as Burgess have identified his place of birth as Sturton (later called Sturton-le-Steeple), Nottinghamshire.[308] He was born about 1576, the parish registers for Sturton are not extant for that time. His father, John Robinson, was a local farmer and seen as a man of probity and dependable character, and held in good esteem by his neighbours and fellow parishioners.[309] It is not known what school John Robinson attended; there were schools at Retford, Gainsborough and Lincoln of some standing where preparation for university and a grounding in Latin might be obtained.[310] He was admitted as a 'sizar' at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in 1592, and followed a career path similar to that of John Smyth, who was a few years ahead of him.[311] Sizars were promising boys with little family money who were permitted to enter the university if they could pay their way by doing chores for richer students.[312] Robinson's tutor was Thomas Jegon, a younger brother of John Jegon, the Master of the college. The tutor exercised oversight over the sizar and directed his education, while the sizar waited on him at table, attended to his lodgings, cleaned his boots, accompanied him on request when he went out into the countryside, or ran errands for the college into the town.[313]

College life was well regulated. Morning chapel was at five a.m. and lectures began at six. His knowledge of grammar would be tested and he would be introduced to logic and rhetoric. Instruction was given in Latin. He appears to have made a special study of the Bible and sought to look at the original Hebrew text and in the course of time gained a considerable knowledge of New Testament Greek. Two regular meals were taken, though these were supplemented

[305] Hunter, *Collections,* p.45
[306] W. Burgess, *John Robinson: Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers: A Study of his Life and Times (1920).* Burgess offers a detailed biography of Robinson with useful extracts from *'The Works of John Robinson'* originally published in three volumes.
[307] Hunter, *Collections,* pp.90ff.
[308] W. Burgess*, John Robinson* (1920) p.6
[309] W. Burgess, *John Robinson* (1920) p.13
[310] W. Burgess, *John Robinson (1920)* p.28-9
[311] W. Burgess, *John Robinson (1920)* p.29; It is thought that Robinson owed his place on the recommendation of the Manners family, the Earls of Rutland, whose sons were at Cambridge.
[312] N. Bunker, *Making Haste from Babylon (2010)* p.171
[313] W. Burgess, *John Robinson* (1920) pp.34ff

by “bevers” in the early morning and other snacks. After the morning lectures, dinner was served at 10 a.m. the sizars taking their food, after waiting on the fellows, tutors and pensioners. After dinner came formal disputations on set subjects in which the students would play the part of listeners while discussions would be led by “sophisters”. Alternatively, the afternoon might be devoted to further lectures on rhetoric, geography and philosophy, or it might be a free afternoon, on which the sizar might attend his tutor at a game of quoits or field out for him at tennis. The students met again in chapel for Evensong, followed by the evening meal at 5 p.m. When that was over, the sizar would withdraw to undertake academic work set by the tutor and spend some time with his fellow sizars. Bedtime would be nine in winter and ten o’clock in summer.

Robinson appears to have worked hard and within four years had achieved the rank of scholar. He was admitted as one of eleven fellows to the college in 1598, remaining there for seven years. By itself, a Fellowship did not count for much financially; fellows had their own rooms, food and drink, but their pay was small and if they wished to marry, they had to resign. Major changes at Corpus Christi were coming to a head; the Master, John Jegon was appointed Dean of Norwich in July 1601 and towards the end of 1602 was appointed Bishop of Norwich. Jegon appointed a number of college fellows, including John Robinson, to positions within his diocese. Robinson resigned his fellowship in February 1604 and married Bridget White of Sturton. Bridget’s family had moved to **Beauvale** in Nottinghamshire, where they had acquired property formerly owned by the Carthusian Priory which had been dissolved in 1540.[314] (See Gazetteer)

Robinson was appointed to a post at Norwich as curate to the minister of St Andrew’s Church, Thomas Newhouse, formerly fellow in Robinson’s college. The parish was strongly Puritan; the people of the parish had bought the advowson of the church to secure the right of presenting a man of their choice, subject to the bishop’s final approval. It seems quite possible that Newhouse, from his personal knowledge of Robinson, invited him to come to Norwich.[315] Little is known of Robinson’s period at Norwich, though he mentions his children and to all appearances seems to have begun a useful and respectable career as a parish minister.

Matters were to change with the proclamation issued in July 1604 requiring all ministers to conform to the new Book of Canons before the end of November. The bishops now seemed less ready to overlook neglect and defiance of the regulations and John Jegon, the Bishop of Norwich, also sought to bring the dissenting clergy in his diocese into line. We do not know the details of Robinson’s refusal to obey his Bishop, only that he was suspended from the exercise of his ministry. He seems to have gathered friends around him for private prayer and conference only to find that these were promptly excommunicated. It is possible about this

[314] W. Burgess, *John Robinson (1920)* p.47; The entry in the parish Register names “Mr. John Robinson and Mistress Bridget White”. Both the “Mr.” and “Mistress” are distinctive in the entry and indicate that the parties are of some esteem – entries of ordinary parishioners give just first name and surname.
[315] W. Burgess, *John Robinson (1920)* p.60

time that Robinson sought appointment to the mastership of one of Norwich's hospitals; he did not secure it. [316]

Burgess believes that Robinson and his wife returned home to take their children to the grandparents at Sturton-le-Steeple whilst contemplating his future. In the immediate neighbourhood, there were those who faced similar problems: Richard Clyfton at Babworth who had also failed to observe the required ceremonies; John Smyth at Gainsborough who had been acting as minister in the absence of the local vicar; Richard Bernard at Worksop concerned about the lawfulness of certain ceremonies; and William Brewster who was organising house meetings. It would seem that geographically it was more convenient for Robinson to join in with the Scrooby group than go on Gainsborough. There seems to have been less need for Robinson's help at Gainsborough where Smyth was in full charge. Moreover, there were emerging differences between the two men on the necessity to separate from the Anglican Church; Smyth was reluctant to continue links with any members of a Church which he now deemed to be false in its constitution. Robinson, though he would not participate in the public worship of such a Church, was ready to join in private prayer and conference with any sincere member of it. Burgess believes that it is quite likely Robinson held private religious meetings in Sturton, attended by several relations of his wife including John Carver who had married Katherine White, Bridget's sister.

Both John Smyth and John Robinson renounced their "orders" as priests of the Church of England and this created some stir in the locality, especially in clerical circles, though they did not attract more of the local clergy into the movement. The Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Lincoln would know that if these meetings for worship outside the Established Church were overlooked, especially if led by men who had deliberately renounced their orders, their own authority would be undermined. Robinson was also reported for giving a sermon at Retford without a license. About 1607 Robinson joined the 'gathered church' at Scrooby Palace and eventually went with them to the Netherlands.

Hunter is a great admirer of Robinson's writings, his original thinking and far-sightedness.[317] Hunter concludes that added to the zeal of Brewster and other members of the group, Robinson brought a degree of moderation and prudence, and perhaps of hesitancy.[318] Hunter also quotes the views of Edward Winslow, who joined the Scrooby group at Leiden: "I confess, he [Robinson] was more rigid in his course and way at first than toward his latter end; for his study was peace and union as far as might agree with faith and good conscience".[319]

[316] W. Burgess, John Robinson (1920) p.63; It was a scandal of the time that these ancient charitable bodies were often perverted from their intended uses and the offices connected with them put into the hands of place hunters or of those who made traffic of them.
[317] Hunter, *Collections,* pp.90-1
[318] Hunter, *Collections,* p.99
[319] Hunter, *Collections,* p.98

Little interference with nonconformists in the Bawtry area

For most of Elizabeth's reign, nonconformists in the Bawtry area could function without undue interference. To some extent, nonconformity was shielded in the 1570s and 1580s by a succession of Archbishops of York, notably Edmund Grindal and Edwin Sandys, who themselves subscribed to Puritan principles.[320] This was particularly the case in the area around Bawtry and Scrooby, under John Louth, the archdeacon of Nottingham whose jurisdiction covered this area. Indeed, the archdeacon took little interest in rooting out dissenters, unless Catholics were involved. In 1587, he carried out an inspection of some fifty parishes; nearly half replied with two words, "Omnia bene" (all is well). He probed no further though some of those parishes had Puritan ministers known to have flouted the rules of worship.[321]

William Denman, a graduate and fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, was also an important advocate of radical Protestantism in Retford and a good example of how the dissenters were often strengthened by a range of interconnected family or personal ties.[322] Denman active support of the Puritan cause was underlined by the marriage of his nephew, John, to the sister of the leading Puritan thinker, Walter Travers, perhaps the most prominent critic of the Elizabethan church settlement. Denman's connections to the top -flight thinkers of his day were supplemented by his position at the very apex of the social pyramid of the town. As nephew and heir of the influential and highly respected Sir John Hercy, succeeding him as lord of the manor of West Retford in 1572, Denman possessed considerable practical and moral authority in the community. It would not be difficult to conceive of a brotherhood of 'godly' ministers around Retford, comprising such men as Richard Clyfton at Babworth, Francis Denman at West Retford, George Turvin at East Retford and Nicholas Watkins at Clarborough.

Matters began to change in the North Midlands in the 1590s when rules against nonconformity were tightened. The new Archbishop of York, John Piers, and the Archdeacon of Nottingham, John King, began to try to establish a greater degree of conformity with national policy. Even then the penalties meted out were mild. Proceedings were taken out against the churchwardens of Clayworth (2 December) and Headon (16 December, 1590) because they had not presented deficiencies to the archbishop's Visitor. As Robert Southworth, later a Separatist, was Curate of Headon at that time, there may have been concerns about his nonconformity.[323] These churchwardens admitted their guilt and were dismissed with admonition on payment of costs. In the same year, the Visitations by the Archdeacon succeeded in unearthing various nonconforming clergymen. The majority of

[320] D. Marcombe, *English Small-Town Life: Retford 1520-1642 (1993)* p.179
[321] 'Visitation Book of Archdeacon Lowth', 1587. AN/PB 292/1 Archdeaconry Records, University of Nottingham. As quoted in N. Bunker, Making Haste from Babylon (2010) p. 135
[322] D. Marcombe, *English Small-Town Life* (1993) pp.179ff
[323] R. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts (1960)* pp.138-140

these conformed after their first appearance in court. But there were a few young Puritan clergymen who resisted all attempts to make them conform. These were Brian Barton, Rector of South Collingham; Thomas Toller, Vicar of Hayton until 1598 and who then became Vicar of Sheffield; Robert Southworth successively Curate and Vicar of Headon and a Separatist; Richard Clyfton, Rector of Babworth who was later to be deprived of this office; and Thomas Hancock, sometime Curate of Scrooby. These were to appear on a number of occasions before the courts where the Officials seemed to have wearied of the struggle to make them conform and after 1596 most of them were only infrequently presented. Richard Clyfton was brought before the church court in 1593 accused of failing to wear the surplice and failing to use the sign of the cross at baptisms. He admitted both offences and was let off with a mild rebuke. Robert Southworth was frequently before the courts (1593, 1595, 1601 and 1602) for nonconformity and was simply dismissed with an admonition which he did not obey. Toller, who eventually subscribed and remained in the Church of England, was a perpetual source of trouble until he left the archdeaconry and moved to Sheffield, attracting its attention much more than Clyfton or Southworth.

13. Tightening of the regulations – the Southwark martyrs

Throughout the 1580s and the early 1590s, there were pockets of radical Puritans in East Anglia, London, Southwark, and elsewhere. Two writers and activists, Henry Barrow and John Greenwood in Southwark, were to have important roles in the further development of more radical and separatist thinking. Both were at Cambridge University at the same time as **William Brewster** and it is thought that they would have known each other because they shared similar religious interests.

John Greenwood

He was a sizar at Corpus Christi College in 1577-8, graduating in 1580-1. Some years later, having been deprived of a benefice in Norfolk, he accepted a chaplaincy in the household of Lord Rich, brother-in-law of the Earl of Essex, at Rochford Hall in Essex.[324] From Essex, Greenwood moved to London, where he was apprehended in 1586 whilst reading the Scriptures in a small company at Henry Martin's house, in the parish of St Andrew-in-the-Wardrobe, St Paul's Churchyard in London. He was committed first to the Clink, in Southwark, and later to the Fleet prison – where, without trial, he was confined for a period of about six years. There seems to have been two periods, about July 1588 and again in 1592 when he was allowed to live out of prison on bail. On those occasions, he lived among the London

[324] A. MacKennal, *Congregational Martyrs and Exiles: The Story of the English Separatists (1893)* p.59

Puritans and was chosen to be their doctor or teacher. In December 1592, he was again apprehended and committed by Archbishop Whitgift to the Fleet prison.

Henry Barrow

Henry Barrow came from a landowning family with property in four counties. Barrow's father was a stern JP with Puritan affiliation. Though he was a younger son, Henry Barrow had 500 acres of his own, yielding rents worth five times the income of the average vicar. Barrow graduated from Clare College, Cambridge in 1569-70. He studied law in London and was made a member of Gray's Inn in 1576.[325] The records are unclear as to whether Barrow and Greenwood first met in London or Norfolk or how often they met.[326] Under Greenwood's influence Barrow became a radical Puritan; it was his friendship with Greenwood which was to lead to Barrow's imprisonment. Hearing that Greenwood was in the Clink, Barrow went to visit him. It is probable that he suspected no personal danger. However, his character and reputation were too well known and the keeper of the prison promptly locked him up without a warrant. Barrow was taken by boat to Lambeth Palace. Archbishop Whitgift had Barrow brought before him for questioning – Barrow for his part argued the proceedings were illegal. Barrow was to remain in prison for five months before going on trial before the Ecclesiastical Commission.

For the next five years, Barrow was in confinement; Greenwood appears to have had a few months' liberty, but apart from this he was Barrow's fellow-prisoner. The amazing thing about this period is the quantity and quality of literature the two men succeeded in producing. Their works included *A True Description of the Visible Congregation of the Saints under the Gospel (1589),* and *A Brief Discoverie of the False Church (1590).* They wrote on paper which had been brought in secretly by friends such as Robert Stokes and Greenwood's wife, and the written documents were then smuggled out. This clandestine activity had to be kept away from the prying eyes of the prison warders. The written documents were then taken to the Netherlands for printing and then warily returned back to England. It was an amazing exercise of enterprise and has given us today a record of the examinations of the prisoners at their 'conferences' with the ecclesiastical authorities, together with statements of their doctrines and beliefs. The conferences saw entrenched attitudes on both sides. Barrow and Greenwood were resolute, unmoveable, uncompromising, and often disrespectful. The accusers included Dr Lancelot Andrews, then vicar of St Giles, and later Bishop of Winchester. Andrews remarked to Barrow: "For close imprisonment you are most happy. The solitary and contemplative life I hold the most blessed life; it is the life I would choose". This seems strangely unfeeling and seems to open up the question of how much Andrews was aware of

[325] A. MacKennal, *Congregational Martyrs and Exiles: The Story of the English Separatists (1893)* pp.60-1
[326] C. Silvester Horne, *A Popular History of the Free Churches (1903) p.* 42

conditions within the prison and the extent to which Barrow was suffering from his imprisonment.

The formal trial began on the 11th March, 1593, and Barrow and Greenwood admitted their responsibility for certain printed pamphlets. They were accused of being "seditious sectaries" and traitors, bent on destroying the Monarchy and the Church. They were convicted and condemned but the execution was delayed on three separate occasions. Three stays of execution were granted, one by the Queen herself before they were hanged at Tyburn on the 6th April 1593.

Impact of the death of the Southwark martyrs on William Brewster

Henry Barrow and John Greenwood were to have important roles in the further development of more radical and separatist thinking, particularly with the Scrooby group. Barrow and Greenwood were at Cambridge University at the same time as William Brewster and it is thought that they would have known each other because they shared similar religious interests. Brewster would have had news of the executions and perhaps had to exercise more caution in any public statements and try to avoid the attentions of Elizabeth's spy network. Brewster would later take a copy of Barrow's book to the New World

The Act to retain the Queen's subjects in obedience (1593)

There were no more executions after the hanging of Barrow and Greenwood. The resentment of the House of Commons at the severe persecuting practices of the bishops and the stir of indignation in the London populace, warned the prelates that they were going too far.[327] The ecclesiastical authorities had experienced considerable difficulties prosecuting the nonconformists in the Courts and set about strengthening their powers through legislation. The Act Against Seditious Sectaries, as it was popularly known, was targeted against "the wicked and dangerous practices of seditious sectaries and disloyal people". The Act provided the penalty of imprisonment for all persons over the age of 16 for refusing to come to church, or persuading others to deny her Majesty's authority in ecclesiastical matters, or dissuading people from coming to church, or being found present at any conventicle or meeting. Those who refused to conform would be committed to prison until they conformed and, if they refused to conform, they would be sent into permanent banishment. Anyone who helped a person who obstinately refused to come to church was liable to a fine of £10 a month. Those required to abjure the realm lost all their goods and chattels and the use of their lands during their lifetime.

The 1593 Act gave Puritans and Separatists the option of accepting exile if they would not conform. Members of the Southwark group would soon start to take advantage of the legislation and seek exile in Amsterdam. An important figure in London was Francis Johnson,

[327] A. MacKennal, *Congregational Martyrs and Exiles: The Story of the English Separatists (1893)* p.102

a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, and a popular preacher in the university, who had got into trouble in 1588 for expounding the views of Thomas Cartwright. He was expelled from his position at the University and imprisoned for his Puritan views. He was set free in order to make a public recantation; but his recantation not being thought satisfactory, he was expelled by the University and again imprisoned. Sixty-eight members of the University petitioned in his favour and he was allowed to go to Middelburg where he became pastor of a Puritan church in 1591. Whilst there, to demonstrate his opposition to Separatism, he publicly burned books written by Barrow and Greenwood whilst they were in prison. However, he decided to read the books and was struck with the ideas expressed. He returned to London in 1592 and went to talk to Barrow in the Fleet. He joined the small separatist group in London and was chosen pastor, with Greenwood as teacher. He later commissioned the printing in Holland of a new edition of Barrow's book, which he issued at his own cost.[328]

Francis Johnson did not escape the attention of the authorities for long and he and his brother George were imprisoned with 70 other Separatists. Francis was released in 1597 on condition he helped form a settlement on the island of Ramea in the Gulf of St Lawrence. The settlement proved unsustainable and the group returned to England, eventually making their way to Amsterdam where Francis became pastor to a group of English exiles and founded the group known as the 'Ancient Brethren'. The church flourished and at the end of the century it had nearly 300 members but ran into internal problems with a dispute between Francis and his brother.

There were other groups following the teaching and practice of Barrow and Greenwood who kept a low profile during the 1590s, some of whom went into exile. An important individual was Henry Jacob who ultimately suggested a compromise with the full separatist tradition. Jacob was an Oxford graduate and a Puritan who played a major part in organising the Millenary Petition (see below) in the early years of James I's reign. Jacob believed that a 'gathered' church need not relinquish links with parish churches. He argued that by organising a congregation outside the established church and yet continuing to communicate with the Established Church was a means of exercising conformity. He went to Middleburgh, Holland, where he became pastor to a group of English exiles. In 1616, he returned to London where he reorganized the separatist community in Southwark.

The last years of Elizabeth's reign

During the final years of Elizabeth's reign, the ecclesiastical authorities led by Whitgift and Bancroft had been vigorous in their pursuit of religious nonconformity. One cannot exaggerate just how seriously contemporaries considered the threat which refusal to accept the legally established Church posed to the state.[329] When the head of state, the monarch,

[328] A. MacKennal, *Congregational Martyrs and Exiles: The Story of the English Separatists (1893)* p.99
[329] B. Coward, The Stuart Age (1994) pp127ff

was also head of the Church, religious nonconformity was not only heresy, it was treason. By 1603, despite the efforts of Archbishop Whitgift since 1583 to enforce religious orthodoxy, there were many of the new king's subjects who were far from happy with the Church to which they were forced to belong. Those Puritans who had advocated radical reform of the Church had been severely punished; it is not surprising therefore those in the forefront of public opinion in 1603 held fairly moderate reforming ideas. Those with more radical views were probably too prudent to show themselves to the authorities.

14. Accession of James 1

King James 1, son of Mary, Queen of Scots, travelled through the area on his way from Scotland to London to be crowned King in 1603. At **Bawtry**, "Mr Askoth, the High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire, received him, being gallantly appointed both with horse and man: and so he conducted his Majesty on, till he came within a mile of **Blyth,** where his Highness lighted, and sat down on a bank side to eat and drink." He travelled on to Worksop where he was met in the park by a number of huntsmen, who welcomed him and with them "he hunted a good space".[330]

Initially, James showed a willingness to listen to the Puritans and was fairly well disposed towards them. As Barry Coward suggests, it is difficult to determine the exact nature of anyone's personal faith, let alone of people long dead.[331] Outwardly, James was a Calvinist, a firm believer in predestination, as were most of his subjects. On his journey to London from Scotland in 1603, he was presented with the Millenary Petition, so-called because it was reportedly signed by a thousand clergymen.[332] Whilst some of the proposals were open to a radical interpretation, there were few reforms that posed a fundamental threat to the doctrines or the organisation of the Church. Their requests were moderate: modifications in church services including the abolition of the sign of the cross in baptism, the use of the ring in the marriage ceremony, and so forth; the freedom of ministers not to wear church vestments; proposals in favour of an educated, preaching clergy; and the reform of church courts and church discipline, and restraint in the use of the *ex officio* oath in Court of the High Commission. This was a procedure by which the person being examined was required to answer questions truthfully before he knew what the questions were. Lord Burghley was disturbed at these detailed enquiries into the views of Puritans and wrote to Archbishop Whitgift suggesting that the procedure for asking so many questions was 'rather a device to

[330] R. Mellors. pp 153-4.
[331] B. Coward, The Stuart Age (1994) p.130
[332] P. McGrath, Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth 1 (1967) p.342 The Petition was not in fact signed by hundreds of ministers who were alleged to have supported it and we do not know how many read it and gave it their blessing.

seek for offenders than to reform any' and that he thought the Spanish Inquisition 'use not so many questions to comprehend and trap their preys'. [333]

The Millenary Petition

The Millenary Petition made a number of proposals about clerical livings: the holding of more than one benefice should be ended, clergy should be resident in their parishes, and no one should be excommunicated without the consent of his pastor. There was no hint in the Petition of any dissatisfaction with the royal supremacy. On the contrary, they stressed their subservience to the monarch and professed their view that God had "appointed Your Highness to heal these diseases" and that James would do "that which we are persuaded shall be acceptable to God".[334]

The Millenary Petition was a cautious document; it made only relatively moderate demands for reform. No doubt the Puritans were well aware that James relished theological discussion and the need at the outset of his reign to define the direction which the Church of England should be moving. They were delighted when James announced his intention of calling a conference of bishops and Puritan representatives, under his chairmanship, at which the points raised in the Millenary Petition would be examined.

The Hampton Court Conference January 1604

James had intended to hold the conference on religious matters in November 1603, but an outbreak of plague forced him to postpone it until after Christmas. The more radical Puritans began to agitate for further reforms even before the conference met. The very active Henry Jacob and Stephen Egerton put out a proposal entitled *Advice tending to Reformation.*[335] The *Advice* suggested the drafting of petitions insisting on the need for reforms though not specifically asking for the abolition of bishops. They wanted to see a diligent enquiry into the state of the ministry.[336] At a meeting in London in July 1603, Jacob and Egerton wanted to incorporate a demand for Presbyterianism to go forward to the conference; more moderate Puritans reserved the right to leave out this straightforward demand for Presbyterianism and to substitute instead a list of specific grievances.[337]

The Conference achieved next to nothing in the way of reform though it incidentally accomplished two things of considerable importance.[338] Firstly, at the suggestion of the Puritan delegates, a new translation of the Bible was authorised, leading to the King James Version, seven years later. This was a literary masterpiece which was to colour the thought

[333] As quoted in P. McGrath. p. 216
[334] J.R. Tanner, *Constitutional Documents of the Reign of James 1* (1930) p.56ff; quoted in Lockyer, *The Early Stuarts: A Political History of England 1603-1642 (1999)* p.53

[335] M.M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism,* p.322; quoted in P. McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth 1,* pp.343-4
[336] R.G. Usher, *The Reconstruction of the English Church.* Vol.1. pp.294-5
[337] P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* pp.454-5; P. McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth 1,* p.344
[338] G. Willison, *Saints and Strangers* (1945) p.48

and speech of the English-speaking world for more than three centuries. Secondly, hope of reforming the church from within was now dead. A rigid pattern had been set which James might well have thought that was in effect a 'settlement' of religion along the lines of the religious settlements made by his royal predecessors. In fact, when Parliament met in March 1604, many of its Puritan members continued to demand further reforms much to James' annoyance.[339] This occasioned his proclamation in July 1604 warning against the "troublesome spirits of some persons who never receive contentment in civil or ecclesiastical matters". In September 1604, James gave his support to new ecclesiastical canons passed by the church authorities. To the dismay of the reformers, the canons upheld many of the current orthodox doctrines and liturgies of the Church, as well as practices such as the use of vestments, the use of the sign of the cross, and so forth. James continued to be pestered with more Puritan demands; during a long hunting holiday in Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire he was faced with a number of petitions demanding Church reform.

The 1604 Canons

James' response was the appointment of Richard Bancroft as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1604 and providing support for Bancroft's campaign to continue to enforce uniformity. Under the 46th Canon of 1604, any minister who was not himself licensed to preach must procure the services of a licensed preacher once a month and pay for it himself if his benefice could stand the charge. On other Sundays, or if he occupied a poor living, as most vicars in market towns did, he had to fall back on the Book of Homilies.[340] Other canons required the use of the Book of Common Prayer, full and unreserved acceptance of the Thirty-nine Articles, suppression of all private religious meetings, and obligatory communion in the Anglican church at least three times a year. Bancroft ordered that all beneficed clergy who refused to conform to the 1604 Canons be expelled from their livings. Within a year, more than 300 clergymen were deprived of office for their obvious reluctance or flat refusal to obey these decrees. One such clergyman was **Richard Clyfton** who became pastor to the Scrooby Separatists and went into exile in Holland with them.

By the spring of 1605, petitions of complaint flooded in from Northamptonshire, Essex, London, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Lancashire.[341] In the event, probably not more than 90 ministers (less than 1 per cent of the total beneficed clergy) were deprived by Bancroft. Though James had launched a drive for conformity, he was not implacably opposed to some elements of reform. Unlike Elizabeth, who had steadfastly refused to budge from the 'settlement' of 1559, James was to allow some moderate reform beyond his 'settlement' of 1604. For example, whereas Elizabeth refused to allow 'prophesyings' —

[339] B. Coward, The Stuart Age (1994) pp131ff
[340] C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism, p*.35; in 1606, there was yet another relicensing of preachers.
[341] B. Coward, The Stuart Age (1994) p.132

meetings of clerics and laymen to discuss Sermons, James encouraged 'exercises' as a means of educating parish clergy and some of their congregations.

Importantly, however, there were other separatist groups or sects in various parts of England. There is evidence of widespread and endemic Separatism in Kent and other areas well before the Civil War (1642-1649).[342] It is known, or it can be inferred, that there were alternative churches in places such as Norwich, Yarmouth and Colchester. They appear to have followed the teachings of Henry Barrow and may have been around since the early 1590s. But there were other groups following the teaching and practice of Henry Jacob who offered a compromise with the full Separatist tradition. Jacob was an Oxford graduate and a Puritan who played a major part in organising the Millenary Petition in the early years of James I's reign. Jacob believed that a 'gathered' church need not relinquish links with parish churches. He argued that by organising a congregation outside the established church and yet continuing to communicate with the established church he was practising a form of occasional conformity.[343] Church government must be exercised with the people's free consent. Membership was voluntary, whereas in the territorial parish church it was involuntary. The church founded by Jacob in London in 1616 was highly successful and served as recruiting agency and training school for some of the most important sectarian leaders of the next generation.

James 1 also lent his weight to the new regulations in his often-quoted statement that "… they will conform or I will harry them out of the Kingdom". Local informers and government spies travelling the Great North Road soon got to hear about the meetings in Scrooby Palace and brought these to the notice of the Bishop of Lincoln and Archbishop Hutton of York. Knowing that these meetings were conducted by men who were deliberately defying ecclesiastical authority, they could hardly be overlooked if church discipline was to be maintained among the clergy. Archbishop Hutton had previously adopted a laissez-faire approach, being generally tolerant of small groups of separatists. At the end of 1604, Archbishop Hutton wrote to William Cecil, James's chief adviser seeking leniency for Puritans on the grounds that they were important allies against threats posed by Roman Catholics.[344] Unwisely, in passing he criticised the king's deer hunting for the damage caused to poor men's crops. The letter appears to have circulated widely and reached the attention of the King who had received one annoying petition after another from squires defending the Puritan clergy. Losing patience, James ordered Hutton to enforce the law against Catholic and Puritan alike. Inevitably, Hutton felt obliged to placate the king and ended the years of official complacency over the Scrooby Separatists. Action was taken in the Archbishop's Chancery Court, whose meetings after March 1605 dramatically increased to deal with the nonconformists.

[342] K. Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth 1 to Elizabeth 11 Vol.1 (1996) p.*112
[343] K. Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth 1 to Elizabeth 11 Vol.1 (1996) p.*113
[344] J. Raine (ed) *The Correspondence of Dr Matthew Hutton, Archbishop of York (London 1843) pp171-5 and 247-8; as quoted in N.* Bunker, Making Haste from Babylon (2010) p.169

15. Pursuit of dissenting clergy and laity in the Bawtry area

The pursuit of the clergy

The 1604 Canons marked a new determination on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities to clamp down on dissent. Four Puritan clerics in the Bawtry area, **Richard Clyfton**, **Robert Southworth, Henry Gray and Richard Bernard** refused to conform and were deprived of their pastoral duties and removed from their livings. As we have seen, Richard Clyfton, rector of All Saints Church at Babworth (Nottinghamshire) had been summoned before the ecclesiastical courts in 1591 and 1593 for not wearing the surplice, for not announcing holy days, and for refusing to use the cross in baptism. On each occasion, he had been let off with a verbal warning. In March 1605, he was cited for nonconformity and deprived of his living. When Richard Clyfton was deprived of his living, he and his family were generously received into Brewster's home at Scrooby where Clyfton became the pastor of the Scrooby group. In March 1607, Clyfton was summoned before the church court as the '**pretend minister or curate of Bawtry'**, but he did not respond and was excommunicated. He preached in early 1608 at Sutton-cum-Lound (James Brewster's church) before emigrating with the Scrooby group to Amsterdam.

Other Puritan clergymen suffered various punishments for nonconformity under the clamp down. Robert Southworth, vicar of Headon and curate of Grove (both in Nottinghamshire), was cited on numerous occasions in 1590s for not wearing the surplice and not following the Book of Common Prayer. Southworth was deprived of his position at Headon in 1605 and was invited by Brewster to Scrooby where he acted as unlicensed curate.[345] Two years later he was cited to appear before the Chancery Court of York, but refused to attend and was excommunicated, in his absence, later in the year.[346] Henry Gray had been curate at **Bawtry** since 1604 and was cited and deprived in April 1605. He was excommunicated after acting as unlicensed curate at Headon in place of Southworth, but eventually submitted and became a conforming Puritan. Richard Bernard was deprived of his position as vicar at the large parish of Worksop in March 1605 but was eventually persuaded to conform though he still refused to use the sign of the cross in baptism. He was again summoned before the courts in 1608 and 1611. Bernard moved to Batcombe in Somerset where he wrote a series of books against Separatism, which put him into direct conflict with John Robinson.

Two other Separatists, John Smyth and John Robinson, both born at Sturton (now known as Sturton-Le-Steeple) and educated at Cambridge, moved back into the area where they were also to get into trouble with the church authorities at this time. Smyth moved from Lincoln, where he had been dismissed as City Lecturer in 1602 after falling out with the City Authorities. and was reported to the authorities for unlicensed preaching in Gainsborough in

[345] H. Kirk-Smith, *William Brewster (1992)* p.80
[346] R. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts* (1960) p.312

1604. John Robinson had been assistant pastor of St Andrew's Church in Norwich until he was deprived in 1604. Robinson spent a number of years preaching to groups of Separatists in the area, dodging the ecclesiastical authorities before becoming a leader of the Scrooby group and moving with them to the Netherlands.

In 1606, Hutton died and was succeeded by Tobias Matthew, famous for his courtesy and his lack of interest in church administration and more interested in preaching than anything else. He came to **Bawtry** and preached a lengthy sermon warning of the dangers of nonconformity. However, Matthew was under pressure from the higher secular and ecclesiastical authorities to curb the Separatist group. He offered the Separatists three alternatives - subscription to the rule of the church, imprisonment or exile. As Nicolson suggests, to the modern reader living in a liberal age, these terms seem monstrous, but which in the 17th century were a model of reasonable government.[347] Only a generation before in the 1580s and 1590s, Separatists in London – Henry Barrow, John Harrison and John Penry, had been hanged for holding nonconformist views. The Scrooby group knew that they would probably not face the death penalty but they were put under increasing pressure by the authorities to conform.

The Canons of 1604 and the consequent ejections of the clergy gave Puritans of all shades of opinion much food for thought.[348] In 1606, a Conference was held in the home of a lay supporter, Isabel Wray, wife of Sir William Bowes of Coventry. To the conference came many of the local Puritans such as John Dod and Arthur Hildersham, together with Richard Bernard, John Smyth and Thomas Helwys from Gainsborough and North Nottinghamshire. The main aim of the meeting was to try to determine a common policy to meet the new situation. John Smyth led an extreme section of those present, arguing that as the Church of England had finally refused reformation according to biblical requirements, it was no longer a true church and that all Christians must separate themselves from her. Bernard seemed to have agreed with Smyth but it was clear that an overwhelming majority rejected this view. Smyth returned to his group in Gainsborough and bound them together in a covenant outside the Established Church. He renounced his Anglican orders and was elected Pastor and ordained by his Church at Gainsborough. He and his group were soon to emigrate to Amsterdam, it is thought, in 1606 or 1607. Robinson, as we have seen, helped organise a covenanted church at Scrooby. But the Separatists had failed to convince the main body of Puritans and they remained a small minority. After the conference, the Separatists must have spent much time travelling the country seeking whatever lay support they could muster to redress the lack of clerical support. They created scattered groups of supporters, or in some places only individuals or their families, some of whom were to emigrate with their leaders.

[347] A. Nicolson, *When God Spoke English (2004)* p.177
[348] R. Marchant, The Puritans and the Church Courts (1960) pp.151ff

Pursuit of the laity

in the years 1605 and 1606, the deprived ministers were gradually building up their groups of supporters. Little notice was taken of their activities by the church courts and the Separatists seem to have been granted the use of church pulpits until 1607 to proclaim their message. But some of their followers were cited before the courts for relatively minor infringements of the law. In June 1605, a leading figure John Denman and his wife, of East Retford, admitted before the court to being absent from their parish church to hear John Robinson, preach a Whitsunday sermon at Sturton. Nine other persons from East Retford, Clarborough and Ordsall also admitted to being at the same sermon. They were each fined twelve pence, the legal fine for absence from church for one Sunday. All the fines were paid. The Whitsunday service had been widely advertised so as to attract interest throughout the area, but the disadvantage was church officials also received the information. It certainly did not stop ejected ministers like Robinson preaching in a district, but it may have made them more circumspect.

In an effort to prevent the separatists from preaching in Anglican churches, the authorities began to clamp down on churchwardens as well as clergy. The churchwardens of Basford, Stourton, Elkesley, Greasley, Sutton-in-Ashfield, South Leverton and Treswell, were all in their turn presented at the Archdeacon's Court for allowing separatist preachers to use their pulpits. In all the cases, the churchwardens were taken to the church court, but dismissed with an admonition. The occurrence of this kind of court case at this time, and at no other time in the court's history, shows that from the beginning of 1607 until after the Separatists had gone into exile abroad, an attempt had been made to deprive them of the pulpits of the Church which they had repudiated. Yet early in 1608, Robinson was still being allowed to preach, demonstrating that the church court's writ was not universally obeyed. Perhaps even more significantly, the separatists had a measure of support from among the clergy and laity who were not prepared to follow them into separation.

In the course of pursuing the laity, one or two significant figures were brought before the church courts in the period 1604-1608. Gervase Neville was a landowner of some standing in Nottinghamshire, with land and property in Ragnell, Dunham, South Leverton and other areas.[349] He lived at Scrooby and was probably a member of the conventicle.[350] He was brought before the Ecclesiastical Court at York, on 10 November, 1607, on the charge of being "…one of the sect of Barrowists or Brownists, holding and maintaining erroneous opinions, and doctrine repugnant to the Holy Scriptures and Word of God, for which his disobedience and schismatical obstinacy…" and his conviction resulted in a term of imprisonment at York

[349] W. Burgess, *John Robinson (1920)* p.72; His grandfather, George Neville, was High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire in 1581.
[350] W. Burgess, *John Robinson (1920)* p.75; Burgess does not think Neville had any permanent connection with the Scrooby parish but had taken up temporary residence there to be closer to his Separatist friends.

Castle.[351] This is thought have been between four to six months. Neville would know that if he did not conform in three months after conviction, he would have to abjure the realm. On his release from York Castle, he must have made his way almost at once to Holland and attached himself to the Gainsborough group led by John Smyth, Hugh Bromhead and Thomas Helwys.

William Brewster resigned his office as Postmaster at Scrooby on 30 September 1607, probably clearing the way for a move into exile. Two months later, on 1 December 1607, Brewster and Richard Jackson, also of Scrooby, were summoned to appear before the Court of High Commission on the grounds that they were 'Barrowist' or disobedient in matters of religion. They did not appear and the commissioners imposed a fine of £20 for each in their absence. Sometime during the next fortnight, the 'pursuivant' charged with finding the culprits went to Scrooby but certified to the court that he could neither find them or learn where they were.[352] They must have covered their tracks well for if there had been any gossip about where they had gone, Throope and his cronies would have been only too glad to pass it on. In April 1608, William Brewster, Robert Jackson and Robert Rochester, were cited to appear before the Archbishop's Commissioners meeting at Southwell. They were still in hiding and were each fined £20 in their absence.[353]

Was persecution the reason for the flight into exile?

William Bradford's view, as we have seen, was that "they could not continue in any peaceable condition, but were hunted and persecuted on every side."[354] In contrast, Marchant suggests that persecution in itself was not the fundamental reason for the flight to Holland.[355] Marchant concludes from his study of the church courts in the Diocese of York that under Archbishop Matthew's office, any clergyman who conscientiously refused to conform to the Book of Common Prayer was at liberty to follow his conscience. In the Archdeaconry of Nottingham at least, this liberty had existed before the 1604 Canons, and their enactment did not alter the situation. The decision to separate in 1606 was due neither to the actual enforcement of conformity, nor to the persecution of non-subscribers and their followers, despite William Bradford's insinuations to the contrary. The more basic reason, Marchant suggests, was the very survival of the Separatist Church itself; Brewster, Helwys and other Separatist leaders increasingly realized that they had either to disband their group or go into exile. Archbishop Tobias Matthew, with the whole authority of the Law and of the Church Courts, was determined to destroy it. Other prosecutions were the attempt on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities to stamp out Separatist thought and to win the support of clergy and

[351] W. Burgess, *John Robinson* (1920) pp.75-6; The court was the Court of the Ecclesiastical Commission for the Northern Province at York, with the Archbishop of York as chief member.
[352] R. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts (1960)* p.161
[353] Hunter, *Collections*, p.131; W. Burgess, *John Robinson (1920) pp79-80 notes* that the fines for each were eventually paid as these were recorded in the Exchequer books.
[354] Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p.10
[355] R. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts (1960) pp.*164ff

laity to the Established Church. To the modern mind, it seems a very heavy-handed approach to securing conformity. But in its own age, the story of the group that became the Pilgrim Fathers is surprising for the relative immunity they enjoyed for so long. The methods used by High Commission for enforcing conformity – subscription to the Law, imprisonment, or exile – were the accepted methods generally in use; no Separatist objected to Roman Catholics being coerced by it into conformity.

Concern to stay together as a group

Like other separatist groups, the Scrooby congregation were seeking to re-create what they believed had been the simple life of the early Christians and despaired of the Church of England ever returning to that authentic spiritual state.[356] They wanted to limit membership in their conventicles to those who formally professed the doctrines of reformed Christianity, lived blameless lives and submitted to the congregation's discipline. They shared much with the larger Puritan reform movement within the Church of England but wanted to go further and claim that their own small, independent congregation was the correct model of Christian organization. The demands on their members was straightforward – only a profession of faith, commitment to the covenant that bound the group together and behaviour appropriate for professing Christians. In seeking exile, the group made every effort to stay together. Bradford recorded with pride how the group "knit together as a body in a most strict and sacred bond and covenant… tied to all care of each other's good and of the whole, by everyone and so mutually". [357]

Thoughts about exile

The decision of the Scrooby separatists to flee into exile in the autumn of 1607 cannot have been an easy one. Bradford records the dilemmas they faced:

> "But to go to a country they knew not but by hearsay, where they must learn a new language and get their livings they knew not how, it be a dear place and subject to the miseries of war, it was by many thought an adventure almost desperate; a case intolerable and a misery worse than death. Especially seeing they were not acquainted with trades nor traffic (by which that country doth subsist) but had only been used to a plain country life and the innocent trade of husbandry. But these things did not dismay them, though they did sometimes trouble them."[358]

It meant leaving their homes and property, their friends and neighbours to go to a new country (Holland) recently ravaged by war, whose language they could not speak and where they could well face poverty and deprivation while learning new trades. They may have sought advice from Richard Johnson's group from Southwark who had fled a decade ago and

[356] B. Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of North America (2013) p.*322
[357] Bradford, ref
[358] Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p.11

were now known as the 'Ancient Brethren' living in Amsterdam. They would also be aware that John Smyth had successfully led his Gainsborough group into exile just a few months previously. We have no documentary evidence about exactly when and how this group fled abroad.

An important obstacle remained; it was illegal for people to leave the country, to carry money out of the country, or to export goods without written authority. Bradford explains the difficulty they faced: "for though they could not stay, yet were they not suffered to go; but the ports and havens were shut against them, so as they were fain to seek secret means of conveyance, and to bribe and fee the mariners, and give extraordinary rates for their passage."[359]

The strength of Catholicism in the Bawtry area

What is surprising is that the Separatist movement actually flourished in this area for it had a strongly Roman Catholic background.[360] It was from Yorkshire that the Pilgrimage of Grace set out to challenge Henry VIII's religious policy in 1536, when Robert Aske and the Abbots of Furness, Jervaulx, Hexham and many other insurgents were all executed for their part in the uprising.[361] Hunter records the unusually large number of religious houses that surrounded the area before the Dissolution of the Monasteries.[362] These included the Franciscans and Carmelites at Doncaster, Cistercians at Rufford, the Gilbertines at Mattersey, the Carthusians in the Isle of Axholme, the Benedictines at Blyth, Benedictine nuns at Wallingwells, the Augustinians at Tickhill and Worksop and the main house of the Premonstratensians at Welbeck. A little further away was the House of St Mary of the Rock, better known as Roche Abbey, which belonged to the Cistercians. Perhaps of greater significance, many of the principal families in the area who might be expected take the lead on social, religious and secular matters, were Catholics. These included the Molineuxes and Markhams, the Mortons and the Cliftons. Two members of the aristocracy, Mary Cavendish, Countess of Shrewsbury, who lived at Rufford, and her sister, Frances Lady Pierrepont, at Thoresby, were both Roman Catholics.[363] What is surprising, therefore, is that in the archiepiscopal visitation of 1603, there were only 64 recusants or Roman Catholics (34 men and 30 women) reported in the 147 parishes in the County of Nottingham.[364] A probable explanation might be, in part, a readiness Catholics to accept conformity to the Anglican Church so as to escape reprisals.

[359] Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, p.11. Morison comments (fn.1) that in England, as in other European nations at that time, a license was required to go abroad, and such licenses were commonly refused to Roman Catholics and dissenters.
[360] H. Kirk-Smith, *William Brewster (1992)* p.64
[361] A. Fletcher, Tudor Rebellions (1983 3rd ed) pp17-39.
[362] Hunter, *Collections*, pp.24-6
[363] Hunter, *Collections,* p.25
[364] A.C. Wood *Transactions of the Thoroton Society* Vol XLV1. quoted in Kirk-Smith, William Brewster pp.64-5 [find original ref and title of article].

Explaining the paradox

Clearly, there is a paradox; the area was strongly Catholic yet also showed strong Puritan connections. Historians have offered a variety of explanations to try to account for this. Hunter suggests that the presence of so much Catholic zeal, particularly amongst the landed gentry, might have helped sharpen Protestant/ Puritan religious sentiments. Hunter argues that the strong Puritan feeling could be attributed chiefly to the apparently accidental circumstance of the residence in the **Bawtry** area of "several clergymen whose private studies had led them to take extreme views, and who, by a zealous, and perhaps eloquent style of address, had acquired a great influence over the many around them".[365] This influence, he argues, was to became ever stronger as a result of the severe measures which the church authorities saw to arrest what they believed was an impending schism. He suggests that religious persecution usually defeats its own purpose; and it is hard to convince ordinary people that the mouth of the minister ought to be closed.[366] Kirk-Smith agrees that the national harassment of the Puritans might also raise a certain amount of sympathy on their behalf but suggests that the sincerity and theological radicalism of Puritan and Separatist ministers had an appeal all of their own. Kirk-Smith further develops an argument that, in part, religious nonconformity might be seen more as a class-struggle; that it could be a social and economic reaction among labouring classes against the previous domination of affairs by the local landed gentry. The consequence of which was that they sympathized with the more egalitarian philosophy implicit in Puritanism which was finding its way into many parishes.[367]

16. Protestantism offers different models of church government

The Puritans, as we have seen, were the more extreme English Protestants who were dissatisfied with the Elizabethan Settlement, and sought a further purification of the Church of England of its Catholic rituals, vestments and ceremonies. Although they were small in number, they were extremely influential, enjoying support from some of the nobility and gentry and especially among the mercantile classes. From the 1570s, extreme Puritan writers such as Thomas Cartwright, John Field and Walter Travers began to attack the hierarchical structure of the Church and advocated a Presbyterian model. By 1600, some Puritans such as

[365] Hunter, *Collections,* p.28; (fn15) Hunter argues that the market town of Worksop, a short distance from Scrooby, had been visited in the early days of the Reformation by a Dutchman named Van Baller who had preached the doctrines of Luther, in the Priory church or under the shadow of its walls.
[366] Hunter, Collections, pp.28-9
[367] H. Kirk-Smith, William Brewster *(1992)* pp.64-5

Henry Barrow and Robert Brown had come to advocate a Congregational form. A short account of these alternative forms of Church government is appropriate.

Presbyterians

This early reform group advocated a return back to the earliest organization of the Christian Churches in Palestine, whereby the form of government is a hierarchy of churches.[368] The lowest level is the local church, administered by the minister and elders (presbyters); the next level, the 'classis' consists of ministers and representative elders of the churches within a prescribed area; 'synods' consisting of members of several presbyteries within a large area; and the 'general assembly' which is the supreme legislative and administrative court consisting of ministers and elders, usually in equal numbers, commissioned by the presbyteries. These courts are representative bodies based ultimately on popular election. There are differing views concerning the status of the elders, some being preachers or teachers, some being responsible for discipline.

Congregationalists

These advocated a form of church government resting on the independence and autonomy of each local church. They profess to represent the principle of democracy in church government.[369] The Congregationalists were also called the **Independents** as stressing that they upheld the independence or autonomy of each congregation, and this term was in general use until the end of the 18th century. Historically, the idea of the 'gathered Church' goes back to the Puritans of the Tudor period. Reformers such as Robert Browne and Henry Barrow advocated a return to church organization based on individual congregations. Robert Browne wrote a short book in 1582 entitled '*A Treatise of Reformation without tarrying for any'* in which he maintained that 'the Kingdom of God was not begun by whole parishes, but rather of the worthiest, were they never so few.' [370] Browne argued for 'gathered churches', bound together under covenant and independent of the state with the right to govern themselves.

Separatist groups, as we have seen, were driven out of **Scrooby,** Nottinghamshire, and **Austerfield** and **Bawtry** in South Yorkshire to Holland and North America. These groups, who became known to later generations as the Pilgrim Fathers, established Congregational churches in New England.

[369] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p.332.
[370] F.L Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 333.

Congregationalism in England became a union in 1832 and a Church in 1966. It then became a major component of the **United Reformed Church.** The World Alliance of Reformed Churches unites Presbyterians and Congregationalists.

Baptists

More distinctive than either the Presbyterians or the Congregationalists were the Baptists, one of the largest of the Protestant and Free Church communions. Their origins can be traced to the actions of **John Smyth** who instituted the baptism of adults within the fellowship of a 'gathered Church'. Smyth was an inspirational preacher in **Gainsborough,** Lincolnshire, who led a group of dissenters and eventually fled to the Netherlands in 1606 or 1607. The Gainsborough separatists attracted the interest of the **Scrooby congregation** before they too followed into exile in 1608.

In the Netherlands, John Smyth rejected infant baptism and set out the arguments for a believer's baptism. He baptised himself by affusion before baptising Thomas Helwys and the rest of his followers, thereby founding the first English Baptist church.[371] John Smyth was in friendly touch with a group of Dutch Anabaptists, the Mennonites, the followers of Menno Simons (1496 – 1561), from whom they take their name. In February 1610, John Smyth and 31 of his group decided to join the Mennonites. However, Thomas Helwys and the rest of the group decided in 16 12 to return to England and established the first Baptist congregation on English soil at Spitalfields. He was soon imprisoned in Newgate Prison where he died some time before April 1616. The successors of Helwys and his group became known as General Baptists because they believed in general redemption, that Christ had died for all and no one was beyond the reach of God's saving grace. By 1620, there were General Baptist churches in Gainsborough and other parts of Lincolnshire, and in London and elsewhere.

The Baptists did not come to public attention until about 1640 when the breakdown of ecclesiastical order allowed independent groups like theirs to flourish.[372] By then their movement had two wings that did not have much in common with each other apart from the rejection of infant baptism. The General Baptists, followers of Thomas Helwys, was Arminian in belief, in contrast to the Particular Baptists whose theology was Calvinistic. The two groups joined together in 1891.

[371] J. Brooke, J. Patterson and J.B. Hudson. A brief Baptist Church history.
[372] G. Bray. p.342-3

17. The rise of sectarian groups during the English Civil War

Prelude to the Civil War: 1625 - 1640

In the years before the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642, there were few indications of the magnitude and violence that the struggle against the monarchy and the Church hierarchy would bring. The flight of the Scrooby congregation to Holland was of course an event of outstanding historic significance though it scarcely caused a ripple at the time. [373] Numerically, the exodus of Clyfton, Brewster and Robinson with their supporters was a small matter – perhaps only a hundred or so persons were involved – but it appears to have eliminated all traces of separatism in the **Bawtry** area.[374] Rather than seek voluntary exile in another country, most clerics like Richard Bernard, the puritan vicar of Worksop, still remained inside the Church of England. The 1604 canons stressing the 'high church' rituals laid down by Archbishop Laud, continued to be applied throughout the 1630s. The archdeacon's court continued to insist on rails being provided to fence in the altars; communion was to be received kneeling at these rails; the congregation must stand at the reading of the creed and gospel, bow at the name of Jesus, and the men to remove their hats during services. All this was an offence to the intensely protestant spirit of the time and did much to arouse feeling against Laud and his system.[375]

King Charles 1 (1625 -1649) soon abandoned the cautious policy of his father (James 1) with regard to the Church. He was a believer in the divine right of kings and saw no reason why he should explain himself to anyone, least of all his subjects.[376] He regarded his ministers and bishops as tools of his policies, and when they were no longer useful, he discarded them without pity or regret. He had no idea that promises ought to be kept and he could be regarded as untrustworthy because he believed that whatever he did was justified by his status before God. What Charles wanted above all was beautiful and dignified worship as laid down by the Book of Common Prayer and the 1604 Canons. In 1628, he issued a Declaration in which he insisted that the Thirty-nine Articles of 1571 were the true and sufficient doctrine of the Church of England and forbade all theological discussion that went beyond them.[377] This was followed by a reaction in the House of Commons in February 1629 where there was strong criticism of the King's policies. Charles 1's response was swift and brutal. Within a month he shut down both Parliament and Church Convocations and embarked on his period of 'personal rule' that would last until 1640.

One immediate consequence of Charles 1's crackdown was that a number of prominent Puritans began to think seriously about leaving the country. One of these was John Cotton,

[373] A.C. Wood. p. 168.
[374] A.C. Wood. p. 170
[375] A.C. Wood. p. 170.
[376] G. Bray. p. 304.
[377] G. Bray. p. 306.

who in 1612 became rector of St Botolph's Church in Boston, Lincolnshire. He was an eminent and much sought-after preacher. After 1629, life became gradually more difficult for him because of his pronounced Puritan views and he finally decided to leave for New England and settled in Boston, Massachusetts. He was part of the 'Great Puritan Migration 'in the 1630s when many thousands of Puritans moved from Eastern England to the New World.

Church courts were very active during this period and were an obvious irritant in many people's lives as they could be denounced by their neighbours for trivial reasons such as wearing a hat during the church service, interrupting the reading of scripture, and the like. A. more serious case arose in 1637 when three men, Henry Burton, John Bastwick and William Prynne were summoned before the Star Chamber, charged with having defamed both the King and the Church.[378] All three had been in trouble before and were vociferous critics of royal policy. Had they been quietly fined and sent on their way, probably nothing more would have been heard of them. But the judges of the Star Chamber wanted to make an example of them so as to deter others and decreed that they should all have their ears cut off. Mutilation was obviously preferable to execution and in that sense, they had been treated leniently. However, Burton was a respected theologian, Bastwick a trained physician and Prynne a notable lawyer. Cropping ears was the sort of punishment meted out to peasants, not to respectable gentlemen like them. The reputation of the Star Chamber, and with it the authority of the bishops who sat in it and ultimately of the King who sanctioned it, was deeply compromised. It was the beginning of the end for his personal rule.[379]

The world turned upside down[380]

By 1642, the government in London had broken down. King Charles fled the city and Parliament took control, effectively declaring war on the Crown. That was easier said than done. To the extent that England had an army, it was mostly in the hands of the nobility, who generally supported the King. Parliament, by contrast, was supported by lawyers and merchants who had never been part of the merchant class and had no experience of warfare. It seemed that it would be a matter of time before the King would rally his troops, return to the capital and put Parliament in its place. Parliament would quickly look to support from the Scots, and the price for this support was to secure a presbyterian form of church government back in Scotland. [381] The English Parliament was also engaged in forming an army of its own – the New Model Army - which was largely the work of Oliver Cromwell. Oliver Cromwell had entered Parliament in 1628 (before it was shut down by the King, and a few years later had had an intense religious conversion. For the rest of his life, his faith guided everything he did,

[378] G. Bray. p. 310.
[379] G. Bray. p. 311
[380] The title of Christopher Hill's seminal work – The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution. Penguin Books. London. 1974
[381] G. Bray. p.323

and that faith was essentially, although not narrowly, Puritan. [382] Cromwell got on with individuals from many sectors of society, including the Quaker George Fox with whom he frequently dined and discussed theology. The toleration Oliver Cromwell showed to the dissenters increased the fear of Puritans that apocalyptic chaos was on the way.

The Westminster Assembly (1643)

Religion was not the only cause of the English Civil War but it was a major ingredient and resolving the problems it raised was one of the most urgent priorities facing Parliament. [383] Parliament did not wait until hostilities were over but launched a synod to begin the process of ecclesiastical reform. Some 150 members were appointed with a wide diversity of views, including representatives from the Anglican communion, Presbyterians, and Independents (Congregationalists). After a lengthy debate lasting 27 months, the Assembly produced the **Westminster Confession,** which eventually became established as the definitive statement of the Presbyterian view and was to have deep influence on Protestant thought and practice. The 'Confession of Faith 'was completed on the 4th December 1646 and, after some revision, was approved by Parliament on the 20th June, 1648.

The rise of Sectarian groups

The English Civil War produced a ferment of religious thought and practice which has been examined in Christopher Hill's, 'The World Turned Upside Down'. [384] In the complex situation of the time, the breakdown of ecclesiastical order allowed all kinds of groups, small at the time, to prosper and survive for many centuries later. These included the Baptists, Quakers, and Congregationalists. The Baptists were particularly prominent; they rejected pacificism and were quite happy to join the New Model Army, which they saw as God's instrument for cleansing the land of Catholicism and tyranny.[385] Their belief in church government was for a voluntary association of equals who were united in their hostility to what they saw as the laxity and ungodliness of the established Church. However, they agreed with the Puritans that it could be transformed and turned into a godly institution. They wanted religious toleration, but not when it meant putting up with people whose behaviour they found offensive.[386]

Both the Baptists and Quakers were to survive the chaos of the civil war and establish themselves within the mainstream of British Protestantism. But there were other sects like the Seekers and Fifth Monarchists which have long since disappeared. The Seekers, for example, believed that they should sit still and wait for the Lord to come and reveal himself to them, a belief that became central to the Quakers. They were convinced that the true church had disappeared in the course of time and that the rituals of the Church of England

[382] G. Bray. p. 324.
[383] G. Bray. p.329
[384] C. Hill. The World Turned Upside Down: Radical ideas during the English Revolution. Penguin Books. London. 1974
[385] G. Bray. p. 343.
[386] G. Bray. p. 345.

were invalid.[387] The Fifth Monarchists based their beliefs on the prophecy of Daniel that there would be four great monarchies in the world before they were all swept away by the everlasting kingdom that would descend from heaven.[388] This was the fifth monarchy and those who saw it as their duty to usher it in were called Fifth Monarchists. They were opposed to Cromwell's Commonwealth because they saw it as a compromise that was holding up the introduction of the Millennium. When Cromwell finally staged a military coup in April 1653 and dismissed Parliament, the Fifth Monarchists were delighted. Cromwell appointed an assembly of his own, known later as the 'Barebones Parliament' and it looked for a time as though it would implement the Fifth Monarchy. But attempts to abolish tithes and overthrow the existing order frightened the propertied classes, who were soon in revolt. In the end, Cromwell was forced to accept the Assembly's enforced 'resignation' and rule as dictator or 'Lord Protector'. The Fifth Monarchists, dismayed by events, faded into obscurity.

Nonconformism and the rise of religious toleration

In the 17th century, as we have seen, the term nonconformist applied to those who, while at first agreeing to the doctrines of the Established Church of England, refused to conform to its discipline and practice, especially in matters of ceremony.[389] The word is now applied generally to all dissenters, especially those of Protestant sympathies. In the period soon after the end of Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate, there was some effort to secure uniformity in religious worship. After the Restoration of the Monarchy, there was some freedom of worship to dissenters under certain prescribed conditions. Certain important statutes introduced these measures:

The Act of Uniformity (1662)

The Act built upon or amended earlier legislation passed under Elizabeth 1 in 1559. All clergymen were required publicly to assent to the Book of Common Prayer (1662). All clergymen and schoolmasters were required to make a declaration of the illegality of taking up arms against the King. Some 2,000 Presbyterian ministers who refused to conform were ejected from their livings. The Act remains on the Statute Book though it has been subject to later modifications.[390] In effect, the Act made nonconformists of Presbyterians and Congregationalists (Independents) though the Act of Toleration 1689 restored to them at least the right to exist. [391]

[387] G. Bray. p. 346.
[388] G. Bray. p. 351.
[389] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 979.
[390] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p.1408. The Act was subsequently amended in 1872 and 1974.
[391] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 333.

The Five Mile Act (1665)

This specifically dealt with those clergymen who had refused to conform to the Act of Uniformity (1662). It prohibited nonconformist clergymen from preaching, teaching or coming within five miles of a city, town or parish where they had previously officiated, unless they had taken the non-resistance oath, declaring that they would not 'at any time endeavour any alteration of Government either in Church or State'.[392] This Act gave the informer legal status by empowering the Justices of the Peace to commit offenders upon the sworn testimony of a third party. Its effects were severely felt by dissenters, as their congregations were chiefly situated in the towns, but indirectly it contributed to the spread of nonconformity in the countryside.

The Act of Toleration (1689)

This Act granted freedom of worship to dissenters on certain prescribed conditions.[393] Its real purpose was to unite all Protestants under King William 111 against the deposed Roman Catholic James 11. It exempted dissenters from the existing penalties, provided they took the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. However, dissenters continued to be barred from civil office until 1829. Roman Catholics and disbelievers in the Trinity did not benefit under the Act.

18. Religious organizations from the 18th century to the present day

The Society of Friends (Quakers)

The Quakers were to survive the chaos of the civil war and establish themselves within the mainstream of British Protestantism, though they have retained their distinctive rituals. **George Fox (1624- 91),** founder of the Society was born at Fenny Drayton in Leicestershire, where his father was a weaver. In 1643, he felt a call to give up all ties of family and friendship and spent the next few years travelling in search of enlightenment. In 1646, after long internal struggles, he abandoned attendance at church and in 1647 he began to preach, teaching that truth is to be found in the inner voice of God speaking to the soul. He was frequently imprisoned, but his magnetic personality and moral earnestness attracted followers.

There is an account of an early Quaker group at **Blyth,** meeting at John Seaton's house, who were persecuted by the magistrates for holding illegal meetings[394]. Seaton, who was the village carrier, lost all his household goods, his animals and building materials. Seaton was

[392] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 516.
[393] F.L Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 1384.
[394] A. Gray (2016) p. 35.

then fined £26 by Justice Thoroton for attending a meeting when he was in fact sixty miles away, and then this was overturned by a jury on appeal. The Justice was so angry he threatened to hang all the jury and told them they were worse than highwaymen. Ordinary people were unhappy about this persecution of 'godly folk' and even the constable of Blyth was fined for refusing to collect the money owed.

The Quakers worshipped without a set liturgy and without an appointed minister, believing that God would use any one of the worshippers, man or women, as minister. The early Quakers were genuine enthusiasts, the term itself originally a derogatory nickname, deriving from the trembling and shaking which was often a feature of their meetings. One description of a meeting at Cranbrook talks of Quakers standing in silence quaking and trembling for two hours. [395] Hence the movement provided an outlet for extravagant and ecstatic religious display which had been an element during the foundation of other early radical churches especially those of the Baptists, but which had become increasingly frowned upon as these churches hardened into a more disciplined formalism. Above all, the Quaker doctrine of salvation which was deemed to be available to everyone and the initiative for gaining it was perceived to be within the power of every individual. Importantly also, the equality accorded to women in the movement was unparalleled in any of the churches at the time, and women were to play a large part in the development of the movement.

The Quakers were extremely successful in gathering recruits – it is suggested that there were as many as 60,000 in 1660 and they also succeeded in provoking fierce hostility.[396] There are many reasons for this. They advocated the disestablishment of the Church and the abolition of tithes. Within the army, their refusal to recognise the authority of their superiors or acknowledge the concept of rank was seen as a serious threat to discipline. In 1657 Colonel Daniel wrote to General Monck on the issue:

> "My Lord, the whole world is governed by superiority and distance in relations and, when that's taken away, unavoidably anarchy is ushered in…. when I think of the Levelling design that had like to have torn the army to pieces, it makes me more bold to give my opinion that these things have to be curbed in time."[397]

The Quaker stance against 'hat honour' and flattery of speech or manner to social superiors led to persecution under Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth, and intensified after the Restoration of Monarchy (1660). About 15,000 Friends suffered legal sentences until the Toleration Act (1689) ended widespread persecution; over 450 are known to have died in prison. [398]

[395] R.J. Acheson. Radical Puritans in England 1550-1660. Longmans. London. p. 70.
[396] R.J. Acheson. p. 70-1.
[397] T. Birch. A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, 1742. Quoted in R. J. Acheson. pp. 70-71.
[398] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 538.

Until the middle of the 19th century, Quakers, as with other nonconformists, were excluded from the Universities. They looked to express their religious convictions in other ways, in commerce and industry, where many became bankers. Over the centuries, the Society has undergone some organizational changes. The 'Inner Light' remains central to their liturgy, together with a rejection of the Sacraments and all set forms of worship. They do, however, firmly believe in a spiritual baptism and a spiritual communion. Though there is no formal ministry, the Society recognizes certain officers with certain duties, including 'elders' responsible for the conduct of meetings for worship, and 'overseers' responsible for the pastoral care of the congregation. The Society is devoted to social and educational work and especially to international relief work and this has earned them widespread respect.

Meeting Houses

The Society has established meeting houses in many towns and cities throughout the country. These form a distinctive type of building and can hardly be classed as chapels. The simplicity of a Quaker meeting is such that all that is required is a room to meet in, the simpler and plainer the better. Indeed, John Betjeman called the Quakers "the Cistercians of nonconformist builders".[399] Another distinctive feature is their burial grounds where there is usually a plain headstone with no ornament and usually only a name and date. Sometimes the burial ground is attached to the meeting house. In the Bawtry area, there are meeting houses at Gainsborough, Blyth, Warmsworth and elsewhere. At **Gainsborough,** the meeting house was built in 1704 and still exists. There is a small burial ground to the rear of the property which provides a quiet oasis in the town's centre.

Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism is a worldwide, interdenominational movement within Protestant Christianity that focuses on evangelism, or the preaching and spreading of the Christian gospel.[400] The roots of the movement can be traced to Martin Luther's 1517 Ninety-Five Theses, which emphasized the authority of Scripture and the preaching of the gospel over church tradition. The modern evangelical movement is generally thought to have started around 1738 and was strongly influenced by ideas and beliefs circulating about that time including Puritanism, Quakerism and Pietism. Pietists advocated a religion which advocated high moral standards both for clergy and lay people. Evangelicalism gained important momentum during the 'Great Awakening' with John Wesley and other Methodist leaders playing central roles

Evangelicals embrace a form of Christianity which had little time for formal religion. Their willingness to train lay leaders and experiment with new forms of worship for the unlearned aroused the suspicion of many bishops and others in authority. Over time, Evangelicals would

[399] As quoted in E.S. Wood. Historical Britain. p. 338
[400] Evangelicalism. Retrieved from Wikipedia. 11/7/ 2025

establish themselves in the state and dissenting churches but they have always remained outsiders. To this day their spiritual experience is more important to them than their denominational affiliation (if they have one), with the result that they neither fully trust nor are fully trusted by those in the institutional churches who are of a different spiritual outlook.[401]

In terms of their beliefs, Evangelicals are thoroughly orthodox in their theology, regarding the Bible as the written word of God and embracing the creeds of the ancient church, along with the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion or the Westminster Confession of Faith. [402] The Evangelical Revival in the 18th century burst the ancient parish boundaries and led to widespread open-air preaching that the local clergy could not control. The Evangelicals formed prayer cells that developed their own dynamic. As they began to construct their own chapels, the state authorities insisted that they should be registered as dissenting places of worship. As a result, there was an explosion of 'dissent' that can be measured by the licensing of 54,804 chapels in England under the provisions of the Toleration Act (1688).[403]

By the early 19th century, there was a general change in attitude towards Dissenters. Some Evangelicals joined Baptist and Congregationalist churches, bringing those denominations back to life, but many more became Methodists. Evangelicals of all kinds worked together in organizations like the Bible Society and Dissenters among them were not feared by the Establishment in the way their seventeenth century predecessors had been.[404] Evangelicals took a leading part in missionary work and social reform such as the abolition of slavery, and the inception of factory laws.[405]

In 1846, an interdenominational body known as the Evangelical Alliance was formed to promote certain fundamental beliefs: the overall authority of the Bible, the obligation of entrants to receive Baptism and the Eucharist, and a general belief in the work of the Holy Spirit. The programme received support in varying degrees from almost the whole of the Protestant world; though the keen controversy on the issue of slavery at its first meeting delayed the institution of a branch in the U.S.A. until 1867. Much work was done by the Alliance in the 19th century for support for oppressed religious minorities in Europe.[406]

As of 2016, an estimates 619 million people identified as evangelical Christians worldwide, accounting for roughly one in four Christians.[407] In the United States, evangelicals comprise about a quarter of the population and are the largest religious group. Evangelicalism is a trans-denominational movement found across many Protestant denominations, including

[401] G. Bray. p.431.
[402] G. Bray. p.431-2
[403] G. Bray. p.459.
[404] G. Bray. p.464.
[405] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 486.
[406] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 485
[407] Evangelicalism. Retrieved from Wikipedia. 11/7/ 2025

Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, Baptism, Methodism, Quakers and others. Some evangelicals operate within the above denominations. However, the most common form of church government is the congregation, within which the leadership figures are pastor, elder, deacon, evangelist and worship leader. The ministry of bishop with a function of supervision of churches on a regional or national scale is used everywhere, even if the titles of president of the council or general overseer are used for this function. Some evangelical denominations officially authorize the ordination of women.

Places of worship are usually called churches; some large churches call their building a "campus". The building is usually plain with only a Latin cross as the symbol of its function. Evangelicals do not usually have religious material representations such as statutes, icons, or paintings in their places of worship. Their services take place in theatres, schools or multipurpose buildings, rented for Sunday only. **Bawtry Community Church** meets in the Town Hall. Evangelical churches have been involved in the establishment of primary and secondary schools as well as bible colleges. The main Christian feasts celebrated are Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

In the 21st century there are an estimated 2 million Evangelicals in the United Kingdom.[408] According to research undertaken by the Evangelical Alliance in 2013, 87 percent of UK evangelicals attend Sunday morning church services and 63 percent attend weekly or fortnightly small groups. An earlier survey in 2012 found that 92 percent of Evangelicals agree that it is a Christian's duty to help those in poverty, 42 percent attend a church that supports or runs a foodbank, 63 percent believe in giving tithes and so give 10 percent of their income to the Church, Christian organizations and various charities. 83 percent of UK evangelicals believe that the Bible has supreme authority in guiding their beliefs, views and behaviour and 52 percent read or listen to the Bible daily.

Methodism

Early developments: John and Charles Wesley

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Movement was the fifteenth child of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, rector of Epworth, Lincolnshire, and his wife Susannah. He was educated at Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford, where he was a member of a group of devout and scholarly Christians who became known as the 'Holy Club', and included his brother Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. The Wesley brothers were both ordained as ministers in the Church of England and for a time John acted as curate to his father. In 1735 he and his brother Charles set out on a missionary journey to Georgia, United States, under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the gospel in foreign parts (S.P.G) but his preaching (especially against the slave trade and gin) and inexperience alienated the colonists and he soon returned home (1737). He had the experience of conversion on 24 May 1738 at a meeting in Aldersgate

[408] Ibid

Street, London. Henceforth, his professed objective was 'to promote as far as I am able vital practical religion and by the grace of God to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men' and the rest of his life was spent in evangelising work.[409]

The Wesley brothers, finding churches closed to them, began preaching in the open-air, in graveyards, by market or church crosses, and so on. John's annual journeys covered some 8,000 miles on horseback; he wrote thousands of letters and preached innumerable sermons. Despite the hostility of many Churchmen, he was nearly always greeted with enthusiasm by ordinary people. In 1744 he held a conference of lay preachers which later became an annual event and important part of the governance structure. By the time of his death, there were 294 preachers and 71,668 members in Great Britain, 19 missionaries and 5,300 members on mission stations and 198 preachers and 42,265 members in America. Charles Wesley was a most gifted and indefatigable writer of hymns (over 5,500 in all) and understood their immense importance for missionary, devotional and instructional purposes.

John Wesley visited **Bawtry** many times, passing to and from his home at nearby Epworth. On one occasion, those who were meant to escort him over the waterlogged fields by the River Idle had left without him. Fearing to be swept away in the floodwaters, he was eventually able to get help at 'Idlestop' near Misson, and was guided home to Epworth.[410]

In 1784, John Wesley set out a governance model; the Conference had the power to appoint preachers to the various 'Preaching Houses' (later chapels), the ownership of which was vested in boards of trustees.[411]

Separations within Methodism

After John Wesley's death in 1791, the relationship between the Methodist Movement and the Church of England became a matter of argument and dispute. A 'Plan of Pacification' was adopted by the Methodist Conference of 1795 which led to the administration of the sacraments (including Baptism and Holy Communion) in all Methodist chapels and the admission of a preacher to 'full connexion with the Conference' conferred ministerial rights without any form of ordination.

Methodist New Connexion (1797)

This was the first of the Methodist secessions some six years after John Wesley's death. This was a small group, led by Alexander Kilham, which broke away from the main body in 1797. Kilham had been ordained a minister in the Methodist Church in 1792 and strongly supported the complete separation of the Movement from the Church of England, contending that Methodists should have the right to receive Communion from their own preachers. He also wanted lay members of the Church to be given a much greater part in its government. Kilham died in 1798 and was succeeded by William Thom. Despite the early loss of its first leader and poor financial structure, the New Connexion grew rapidly. It differed from the main Wesleyan

[409] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p.1467.
[410] A. Gray. (2016). p 32.
[411] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 908

Methodism solely in the matter of Church government, and made neither doctrinal nor liturgical changes.

Independent Methodists (1805)

Another small group in the north of England broke away from the main Methodist body in 1805 and became known as the Independent Methodists by 1810. [This is perhaps another name for the Congregationalists who believed in the independence or autonomy of each local congregation]

The Primitive Methodists (1811)

The Primitive Methodists had connections with, but for the most part outside, the Wesleyan Methodist Church. This was a group led by Hugh Bourne who had begun an important evangelical movement near Mow Cop, Staffordshire, but outside the official Methodist structure.[412] The group was influenced by an American Methodist, Lorenzo Dow, who had introduced the idea of Camp Meetings, day-long meetings held in the open air. The practice was rejected by the Wesley Conference and Hugh Bourne was expelled. Notable features of the Primitive Methodist group was its connection with the Society of Friends (Quakers) and its use of women as preachers, especially in its early years.

In Bawtry, a Primitive Methodist chapel was founded in 1862. The building, which is now the Phoenix Theatre, still has the original date stone. The site was purchased from R.M. Milnes M.P. on 8 August 1862. The members and friends met at the station and at the preaching room in Bawtry at 2 pm and processed through the streets to the site of the contemplated building. George Naylor (local Wesleyan preacher) laid the foundation stone. The group then went to the Independent chapel [on Church Street] and listened to a sermon delivered by the Rev. W. Harland and addresses by the Revs. T. Campey, W. Harland, W. Wesson (Independent), H. Knowles, J.G. Smith and Mr. G. Bex.[413] The building cost from £170 to £180, raised by donations, collections and so on (See Gazetteer).

The Bible Christians (1815)

This was formed in 1815 by William O'Bryan who undertook evangelising work in Devon and Cornwall where he and his associates found many people in almost complete ignorance of the Gospel. These 'Bryanites', as they came to be known, spread rapidly despite considerable opposition and persecution. The movement sent missionaries to other parts of the world, including Canada, the United States and Australia. For several years O'Bryan, as the founder of the movement, was accepted as the natural head of the Society and president of its annual Conference. His assumption of autocratic control of the property and affairs of his Churches gradually led to disputes which were eventually settled. O'Bryan however was dissatisfied and went to America in 1831. He was later reconciled to the Conference, though he never rejoined it.

[412] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 909.
[413] Primitive Methodist magazine 1862 p. 754. Quoted by Christopher Hill and accessed online 18 March 2024.

United Methodist Free Churches

This consisted of a number of very small organisations which eventually came together in the latter part of the nineteenth century. These included the **Protestant Methodists**, formed in 1827, who had long standing discontentment with the government of the Methodist Church. They were particularly concerned at the power held by the annual Conference of ministers and argued for a greater role for the laity in the government of their Church. An important leader was Jabez Bunting who asserted at the Conference: "Methodism knows nothing of democracy; Methodism hates democracy as it hates sin."[414] The immediate occasion of their secession was perhaps more trifling – the erection of an organ at Brunswick Chapel, Leeds. After much dissension, the Protestant Methodists were founded at Leeds, with a few associated societies, mostly in Yorkshire.

Another group, the **Wesleyan Methodist Association**, was formed in 1835 over a dispute about the founding of a Theological Institution. The principal ground of the offence was that the Conference had acted contrary to its constitution and had not consulted the laity about a matter of such importance. The expelled members formed the Wesleyan Methodist Association and were joined in 1836 by the Protestant Methodists. Further developments were brought to a head in 1849. For some years, anonymous leaflets, known as Fly Sheets, had been circulating which contained accusations of favouritism, narrowness, and mismanagement of finances. Vigorous and, as some thought, unjust processes were taken to discover their authors, and at the Conference of 1849, three ministers were expelled for refusing to answer questions. Some 80,000 members left the Wesleyan Church and eventually formed a separate body, the **Wesleyan Reformers**. In 1857, the Wesleyan Methodist Association and the Wesleyan Reformers united taking the name 'United Methodist Free Church.

The Amalgamation of Methodist organisations

The twentieth century saw a number of successful attempts to bring a common purpose to the disparate bodies practising some form of Methodism. In every case, the reasons for the divisions had not been doctrinal but constitutional or governance questions.

United Methodist Church (1907)

In 1907, the Methodist New Connexion united with the Bible Christians and the United Methodists Free Churches to form a union called the United Methodist Church.

Methodist Church of Great Britain (1932)

The United Methodist Church, the union formed in 1907, was reunited in 1932 with the original Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Primitive Methodist Church to form the Methodist Church of Great Britain, as it now exists. The resulting organisational structure is presbyterian. The supreme authority is Conference, the legal successor of the body originally

[414] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 1410

constituted by Wesley, and now regulated in Statute law by the Methodist Church Union Act (1929) and the Methodist Church Act (1976). The Conference consists of 288 ministers and 288 laymen, elected by District Synods.

Anglicanism

The term applies to the system of doctrine and practice upheld by those Christians who are in religious communion with the see of Canterbury.[415] The original formulation of Anglican principles dates to the Elizabethan Settlement (1559) when the *via media* between the opposing factions of Rome and the Protestant Continental reformers became a political necessity and Anglicanism came into existence. The doctrines and rituals of Anglicanism, including the Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer, have continued through to the present day.

During the English Civil War, the Anglican Faith was to have a difficult time.[416] Parliament, to secure the help of the Scots, signed the Solemn League and Covenant which involved the adoption of a Presbyterian form of church government in England. Archbishop Laud was impeached for high treason and executed on Tower Hill on 10th January 1645. The use of the Book of Common Prayer was made a penal offence. On the 30th January 1649, Charles was executed outside his Palace of Whitehall.

The Civil War brought destruction to some cathedrals, whether by military action as in Lichfield or bigoted iconoclasm as in Ely.[417] Churches in defended towns like Newark quite often suffered because their towers were manned by gunners and snipers, or because they became the last refuge of a beleaguered garrison. It is always worth checking whether the smashing of medieval glass and statuary which folk memory chalks up to 'Cromwell's soldiers" can justly be blamed on them.[418] Often it turns out to have taken place in the first wave of the Reformation nearly a century earlier, when Thomas Cromwell and his agents destroyed many monastic buildings while selling off land to local landowners. Most of the deliberate destruction that did occur during the Civil War had the authority of a parliamentary ordinance of August 1643 which commanded the general demolition of altars and defacement of paintings and images. This is not to excuse the vandalism of Parliamentary troops who had been taught to regard cathedrals as centres of idolatry and did considerable damage to twelve of them, including Westminster Abbey. But parish churches suffered much less by them; of the 9,000 in England and Wales they are known to have despoiled less than thirty.[419]

We may be thankful that the cautious people of Fairford removed and buried their fifteenth-century-stained glass until the danger was past, and that Cromwell himself restrained one of

[415] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 57.
[416] P.E. More & F.L. Cross. Anglicanism. SPCK. London. 1935. 'The Spirit of Anglicanism' p.li.
[417] A. Woolrych. Britain in Revolution 1625-1660. Oxford University Press. 2002. p. 339.
[418] A. Woolrych. p. 339.
[419] Gentles. New Model Army pp. 109-110. Quoted in A. Woolrych. p.339.

his generals, who wanted to pull down the West Tower of Ely and use it to build houses for his soldiers.[420] Similarly, the parishioners of All Saints Church, **Babworth**, Nottinghamshire, hid a silver chalice, thought to have been used by Richard Clyfton before he fled into exile, under the floor of the church until it was recovered later.

During the Commonwealth period, the Anglican Faith was suppressed by force of law. The bishops had been driven abroad or had sought refuge in remote country parishes. The clergy were deprived, churches were despoiled and desecrated, and the use of the Prayer Book became a crime. In 1657 a congregation which had assembled in London for the observance of Christmas was arrested and imprisoned by Cromwell's soldiers. Parishes lapsed into a state of complete anarchy.

With the Restoration of the Monarchy, the exiled supporters of Anglicanism flocked back and steps were taken to place the English Church on a firm footing. A gathering of learned theologians, often known collectively as the 'Caroline Divines' came together in conference in 1661 to preserve the Anglican tradition. The revised Prayer Book of 1662 secured the Anglican tradition against Puritanism. The kneeling at Communion, the use of vestments, the Cross at Baptism, the Ring at marriage, Absolution for the Sick – all these things to which the Puritans had objected were not only retained in the new Book, but were also enforced by Parliament. The clergy had to adopt the new services and acknowledge the irregularity of their former conduct.

Roman Catholicism[421]

Although the Elizabethan Church Settlement seems to have acceptable to the great majority of the nation, it failed to satisfy either the staunch supporters of the old catholic faith on one wing, or the Puritans, as we have seen, on the other wing. Catholics had taken part in the various rebellions against the Tudor government, notably the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Northern Earls Rebellion, and were viewed with great suspicion. The Catholic King Philip 11 of Spain was convinced that Elizabeth 1 was aiding the Dutch rebels who were trying to free the Netherlands from his rule. Elizabeth's execution of Mary, Queen of Scots in 1587 provided an excellent excuse for him to intervene in English affairs and eliminate that source of hostility to his and the Catholic cause. The Spanish Armada might have altered the balance of power, but it was not to be as the mighty fleet was scattered by bad weather and the English fleet. Elizabeth was saved by the 'Protestant wind' as it came to be known.

[420] P.E. More & F.L. Cross. p. lxxi.
[421] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 1194. Since the Reformation, the term Roman Catholic has been used to denote the faith and practice of Christians who are in communion with the Pope. Some of the Anglican tradition refer to themselves as 'Anglo-Catholics'.

In 1605, a Catholic conspirator by the name of Guy Fawkes tried to blow up Parliament, but the plot was discovered just in time and the conspirators executed. English Catholicism did not disappear, but it became a marginal force and ceased to have any serious impact on English society. When the Civil War broke out in the 1640s and a large number of sects appeared to contest the religious battleground, the English Catholics were nowhere to be seen. Catholics kept a low profile and were no longer a significant force in ecclesiastical or secular affairs. Not until the middle of the 19th century would Roman Catholicism reappear as a significant force in English society and by then the conditions in which it would assert its presence were very different from what they had been 250 years earlier. [422]

In the area around **Bawtry** and north Nottinghamshire a few pockets of Catholics remained, preserved mainly through the influence of a landed family, like the Markhams at Ollerton, the Molyneux's at West Markham and the Mortons at Bawtry and Harworth. [423] The Morton family, as we have seen, was involved in the rebellion of the northern earls in 1569. Well-known women who favoured Catholicism, included Mary Cavendish, Countess of Shrewsbury and her sister Frances, Lady Pierrepont. However, the number of those who preserved their loyalty to the old church was insignificant.[424]

The Jesuit priests, who came over from France to provide secret Masses to those of the old faith, could expect no mercy when caught. The treatment meted out to the smaller fry, however, was not unduly harsh. In a letter to the commissioners for recusancy in Nottinghamshire in 1592, the Privy Council ordered them to pick out the principal recusants among those recently certified and to commit them to the charge of some fit person of good disposition in religion who was to be responsible for their security, diet and bedding. [425] Subjected to repeated presentment by the church wardens, to the recusancy fees, and to occasional "round ups" (like the one in 1592), the lot of the ordinary English catholic was one of suspicion and harassment, interspersed with happier moments of precarious peace or obscurity.

Catholic Relief Acts

By the end of the 18th century, Catholics were beginning to be accepted as part of mainstream society and less of a threat to the Established Church of England. Rights were gradually restored to them over a period of time by a series of statutes. In 1778, Catholics were allowed to own landed property on taking an oath not involving a denial of their religion.[426] Priests ceased to be subject to prosecution at the denunciation of a common informer and life-long imprisonment for keeping a Catholic school was abolished. In 1791, those who took the

[422] G. Bray. p. 261.
[423] A.C. Wood. p.161
[424] A.C. Wood. p.161.
[425] Acts of the Privy Council, 1592. p. 202. As quoted in A.C. Wood. p. 162
[426] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 256.

prescribed oath were freed from the Statutes of Recusancy and the Oath of Supremacy; Catholic worship and schools were tolerated and certain posts in the legal and military professions were opened up to Roman Catholics. In 1829, an important step under the Catholic Relief Act removed most of the remaining disabilities and Catholics were admitted to most public offices. Most of the remaining disabilities were removed by an Act of 1926. Among those still retained is the law which restrains the King or Queen of England from being a Roman Catholic. The same applies to the offices of Regent, Lord Chancellor and the Keeper of the Great Seal. The disability of priests sitting in the House of Commons is shared with the clergy of the Church of England (but not with ministers of the Free Churches).

First Vatican Council (1869-70)

This was held at Rome and attended by 700 bishops, dealt with a wide range of issues including faith, dogma, ecclesiastical discipline and canon law. The highly controversial question of Papal Infallibility attracted considerable attention and debate. The Council's definition on Papal Infallibility affirmed that his definitions are 'irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church', but it restricts this Infallibility only to those occasions 'when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church. [427] The decision of the Council was accepted everywhere, with serious opposition only in Germany and Austria.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-5)

The proposal to hold this was apparently entirely due to Pope John XX111. Pope John died soon after the beginning of the Council but it was continued by Pope Paul V1. The most radical reforms came from the Post-Conciliar Commissions set up to extend and develop the proposals of the Council. These included the publication of a new Missal in 1970 to accompany a re-ordering of the Mass, the use of vernacular language for all services, and reform of Canon Law.

The organization of the Church remains a hierarchy of bishops and priests with the Pope at its head. This structure has been built up over a long history and rests on its claims on the powers entrusted by Christ to his Apostles in general and St Peter in particular; as whose successors the Popes are traditionally regarded. The centre of the Catholic liturgy is the Mass, which is regarded as an extension of the Incarnation and a bloodless re-presentation of the sacrifice and death of Christ on Calvary.[428] Following the Second Vatican Council, emphasis has been placed on the frequency of the taking of Communion, which has been made easier by the drastic reduction of the period of fasting before receiving the sacrament. Attendance at Mass continues to be compulsory on all Sundays and Feasts of Obligation. The reformed

[427] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. pp. 1427-8.
[428] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p.1195.

liturgy has laid stress on the centrality of Sunday worship and reduced the importance of saints' days. At the same time, devotion to the saints has been fostered by the large number of canonizations in modern times, such as those of St Teresa of Lisieux and the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales. Other devotions are left to the free choice of individuals and other services such as Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, and Stations of the Cross have come to play a less prominent role in Roman Catholic life than formerly. Importantly also, there has been a more liberal attitude towards Christians of other denominations.

Catholic Church buildings

The medieval parish churches, cathedrals and abbeys were taken over by the newly established Church of England at the Reformation and for the most part were simplified in accordance with new attitudes. Following the Catholic Relief Act (1829), most of the disabilities were removed, and so Roman Catholics had to begin afresh with church building. The churches were mostly rather undistinguished architecturally. [429] Some of the larger ones are different from Anglican churches because of the greater elaboration, with chapels, shrines, processional aisles, and other features. A few cathedrals stand out, such as St Barnabas in Nottingham, designed by Pugin. There are no Roman Catholic places of worship in Bawtry. One of the earliest catholic churches close to Bawtry, built in 1870, is St Helen's at Oldcotes, and Bawtry residents do tend to go there (see Gazetteer).

Nonconformist Chapels

Nonconformity, as we have seen, has played an important role in English religious life since the 16th century and for most of the 19th century was the dominant religious outlook.[430] The nonconformists – the Baptists, Methodists and other smaller groups – had to establish themselves in the face of long opposition and they emerged as a real social force. All this found expression in the architecture of their churches which ranged from very simple to the highly sophisticated. It was rarely without individuality. The essential elements of a nonconformist chapel are simple, indeed minimal, and the structural features and furnishings might emerge chronological. Initially, all that is required is a "barn-like" structure, with windows on three sides and a pulpit in the middle of the fourth.[431] In front of the pulpit is a plain communion table, later there might be a lectern. There is a font somewhere in the building, perhaps in a Baptist chapel, a baptismal tank or pool. An organ might be built behind the pulpit in the bigger chapels. By the 1770s there were often galleries round three sides. There were fixed pews, not chairs, and no central aisle, and no altar, chancel or room for processions. The chapel was a 'preaching house'.

[429] E.S. Wood. p.344.
[430] E.S Wood p. 335
[431] E.S. Wood p.337

Until the legal and social position of nonconformity was secure, chapels were either in inconspicuous positions or were modest and unassuming positions on the edge of villages or in the back streets of towns. Available funds may also have something to do with this. But by the late 18th century a village chapel could be a prominent feature of the village. In towns, chapels are only central and prominent in the newer industrial towns. In the older towns, the medieval parish church took the central or focal point unquestioned.[432]

19. Conclusions

The changing manner of worship

Medieval Catholicism was a religion of ritualism and sacramentalism. The seven sacraments were the means of acquiring grace or salvation and the priest or bishop gave prominence to the administration of these sacraments. There were a host of rituals to help the laity seek salvation – the Mass and various church services, the intercession of saints and so forth. The layout of the church, the vestments of the priests, the form of the service were important reflections of the theology. Importance was given to the Eucharist (Holy Communion) at Mass. Near the entrance to the church was the baptismal font, symbol of Christian initiation, at which babies were baptised. The confessional marked the place where each Christian confessed his or her sins, and was given a penance to perform. The stone altar, on which the Eucharist service was conducted, was centrally placed at the east end of the church. Upon it were arranged the tabernacle (where the communion hosts were placed), a cross and candles, an ornate chalice (cup for wine) and pyx (plate for the bread) and the Missal (Mass service book). The altar was in an area called the sanctuary, a holy place set apart and separated from the rest of the church by the Rood screen (bearing statues of Christ on the cross, the Virgin Mary and St John). Within the sanctuary only the priest mounted the steps to the altar to celebrate the Mass. He was attended by an acolyte. Around the main body of the church, the stations of the cross and the stained -glass windows reminded the laity of events in Church history. Statues of the saints and of the Virgin Mary encouraged prayers of the laity. In chantry chapels or side altars, priest said Masses to intercede for the dead. In modern Catholic churches, the rood screens have largely disappeared. A wooden table has been placed in front of the altar, enabling the priest to face the congregation. Since Vatican 2, the service is now held in the vernacular language (English). Having come comparatively late to the use of the vernacular in worship, the Roman Catholic Church has embraced with enthusiasm this and other ways of widening the understanding and appeal of Christian worship.[433]

Protestant churches following the Lutheran tradition retained many of the Catholic practices which were not regarded specifically as abuses. Latin masses continued to be said on Holy Days and a considerable number of these were retained. The form of the communion was not

[432] E.S. Wood. p.338
[433] Hastings. p. 766.

substantially altered; Luther retained the doctrine of consubstantiation and a belief in the real presence of Christ in the communion of bread and wine. Preachers heard parishioners' confession before communion although no penances were imposed. Disputes continued over whether the host should be elevated for adoration; whether the sign of the cross should be used in prayer, at baptism, and so on. Church interiors were not greatly changed. High Altars, crucifixes, organs, stained glass windows, and even special Mass vestments remained. However, the pulpit was now placed in a more prominent position – reflecting the importance of preaching the Word of God.

In those Protestant churches following the Calvinist tradition, the changes in the furnishing of churches, the form of services and other rituals were more profound. For the most part, the old churches, once used for Catholic worship were adapted to Protestant worship by being stripped of all statuary and embellishment. Stained glass windows, pictures and paintings, symbolic furnishings, rood screens – all disappeared. The altar became a table, around which the congregation gathered for the communion of bread and wine. The priesthood disappeared and was replaced by a ministry which acted to inform the laity of God's Word and not to mediate between God and Man. The minister, unlike the priest in his symbolic vestments, was plainly clothed. The pulpit now took pride of place.

The Church of England went further than the Lutherans in ending Catholic practices. The litany became vernacular. Altars, crucifixes, statues, religious pictures, holy sepulchres, stained glass, organs, beating of the bounds and other festivals and processions, all disappeared relatively quickly. The Book of Common prayer replaced the Catholic Missal. The altar was replaced by a table. Wall tablets showing the text of the Ten Commandments and other Scriptural texts replaced the ornate reredos (behind the High Altar). Some Protestants rejected the idea of priesthood, adopting instead that of a ministry. The laity and the ministry all took both bread and wine during communion. The physical separation between priest and congregation was also reduced as rood screens were dismantled and the communion table brought closer to the nave.

The changing role of the Sacraments after the Reformation

In most Christian churches, certain important rituals are referred to as sacraments. As we have seen, the seven sacraments were baptism, confirmation, penance, eucharist, ordination, matrimony, and extreme unction. Unlike other ceremonies these seven were understood to produce spiritual effects. In Roman Catholic theology, stress was placed on the Sacraments as maintaining and deepening the relationship of the individual recipient with the Church. Changes would come after the Reformation. Among Protestant Churches, the Quakers and the Salvation Army are the only two large bodies which make no use of Sacraments. In Protestantism generally, the greatest importance is usually attached to Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism

Protestant reformers in the 16th century questioned medieval teaching on baptism, which was understood by Catholics as necessary for salvation. Martin Luther accepted infant

baptism but argued that the grace which was received was dormant until the recipient was old enough to understand the nature of that grace. John Calvin regarded baptism as a sign of salvation but not a cause of salvation, since God's elect were predestined for glory irrespective of any ritual.[434] The Anabaptists of the 15th and 16th centuries rejected infant baptism since only adult baptisms are recorded in the Bible, and insisted that people baptised as children should be baptised again after professing their faith in Christianity. A similar line of argument was used by **John Smyth**, a Puritan reformer in Gainsborough, in the early 1600s, who baptised himself as an adult and came to be known as a Se-Baptist, or self- Baptist. Smyth was a very charismatic figure and was strongly influential over a Separatist group in the **Bawtry** area, including some individuals such as William Bradford and William Brewster who went to America as Pilgrim Fathers.

The various Christian denominations generally accept baptism as a ritual of initiation as prescribed in the New Testament, but there are differences in practice and theology. Roman Catholics continue to baptise children of church members and they regard it as a ritual that leads to salvation. Anglicans and mainline Protestants have retained infant baptism but they are not in agreement about the spiritual effectiveness of the ritual. Nevertheless, most of these churches regard each other's baptisms as valid and do not rebaptise converts. Baptists and Evangelicals deny any effectiveness to infant baptism and insist that converts from other groups be baptised as adults.

Confirmation

It was perhaps inevitable that the sacrament of confirmation was rejected by the Protestant reformers. There was no place in the scriptures where Jesus had clearly instituted the sacrament. The New Testament described the apostles laying on hands to impart the Holy Spirit, but the medieval rite was an anointing with oil. The reformers talked about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit had already been received in baptism. Baptism, they argued, was obviously needed for salvation, but no such necessity could be claimed for Confirmation.

The Catholic Counter-Reformation, led by the Catholic bishops at the Council of Trent (1545 - 63), rejected the Protestant view and retained Confirmation as one of its seven sacraments. Catholics in different parts of the world are confirmed in childhood or adolescents according to local custom. Catholics regard the sacrament as having a permanent spiritual effect so they allow participation in the sacrament only once in a lifetime. However, they also allow the reconfirmation of previously confirmed individuals who have left the Church and later seek readmission.

Anglicans have retained confirmation as a minor sacrament, performed usually when adolescents formally accept membership of the Church into which they were baptised as infants. However, adults who were confirmed earlier in their lives, can take the sacrament again if they desire to make a public affirmation of their commitment. Methodists,

[434] J. Bowden. Christianity: The Complete Guide (2005). p. 1063.

Presbyterians and other Protestant denominations have ritual affirmations of baptism for adolescents and adults but practices vary widely.

Penance or Reconciliation

Martin Luther was the first of the Protestant reformers to attack indulgences and other abuses in the penitential system and eventually all Protestants rejected the view that penance was a sacrament initiated by Christ. The Anglican Church retained it as a minor sacrament that could be used for spiritual growth. The Roman Catholic Church in the mid-16th century, eliminated the sale of indulgences but continued to maintain that private confession was a sacramental practice founded by Christ himself.

Following the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, the Roman Catholic Church introduced sweeping changes to its sacramental rites. The name penance was changed to reconciliation and three approaches to the sacrament were introduced: a more open form of private confession, a penitential service with an opportunity for private confession, and a form for use in emergencies in which there was no time for private confession. The Roman Catholic laity began using the sacrament less to confess lists of sins and more to receive moral guidance and assurance of God's forgiveness.

Eucharist or Holy Communion

Protestant reformers such as Martin Luther rejected the doctrine of Transubstantiation that the substance of bread and wine consecrated at the eucharist became the body and blood of Christ, though their appearance remains the same. Martin Luther spoke of the 'real presence', arguing that Christ's words 'this is my body' by no means implies transubstantiation but simply a 'sacramental union', that there is a 'real presence' of Christ. The Anglican tradition, too, has been to affirm that Christ is really, as opposed to symbolically, present in the eucharistic bread and wine, without formulating any doctrines about the nature of these elements.[435] The Roman Catholic tradition, re-affirmed by the Council of Trent and subsequent statements, continues with the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Ordination

The Protestant Reformation rejected the Roman Catholic concept of priesthood and the medieval understanding of priests' power.[436] Martin Luther advocated a 'priesthood of all believers' and doubted that ordination conferred any special powers. Protestant churches today, except Anglicans, do not speak of their ministers as priests, although many continue to have a formal rite of ordination. The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the importance of priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, but did not change the rule of priestly celibacy nor admit women to ordination.

[435] J. Bowden. p. 1068.
[436] J. Bowden. p.1070

Matrimony

Protestant reformers in the 16th century regarded marriage as sacred, but sacraments were supposed to be instituted by Christ and marriage had obviously existed prior to Christ's coming.[437] At the Council of Trent (1545- 1563), the Catholic bishops argued that Christ had raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament and that marriage had always been a sacrament in the church. In addition, the bishops declared that marriages that were not contracted in the presence of a priest and two witnesses were invalid, in effect making all Protestant marriages sinful unions. The Roman Catholic Church also taught that marriage is indissoluble so that divorce was impossible. If Roman Catholics disobeyed their church's laws and obtained a civil divorce, the church still regarded them as married to each other. The only possibility of separation and remarriage was through annulment, a declaration by a church court or process that the marriage had never existed because something needed for validity at the time of the marriage had been lacking. There were few grounds for such a declaration and so annulments were rare. The bishops at the Second Vatican Council (1962-5) acknowledged that the purpose of marriage in the modern world was not only for the procreation of children but also for the companionship between spouses. This has been interpreted as an expansion of the grounds for annulment to include psychological factors and the number of annulments granted in the church rose significantly.

The Protestant Churches no longer provide for separation or annulment (unlike the Roman Catholic Church). The Church of England has never officially recognised divorce and is still reluctant to remarry divorced people whose former spouse is still living. Protestant churches tend to believe that divorce is undesirable, but having few if any church laws about marriage, their approach to marriage and marital problems is almost exclusively pastoral.[438]

Extreme Unction (Sacrament of the Sick)

In medieval times, the sacrament was quite complicated to perform; prayers were asked for healing, but it had to be performed in a church, and some versions called for the attendance of three or more priests. Most people never sought this anointing, and those that did were often close to dying. By the 12th century, the rite had been simplified so that it could be administered by a single priest. The parish priest would visit the dying, hear their confession, and anoint them with holy oil. As death drew close, the priest prayed with long litanies besides the sick person's bed. Since this was the last anointing before death, it came to be known as extreme unction.

The Second Vatican Council undertook historical research and recommended the title 'Anointing of the Sick' and this was adopted in 1972. The Roman Catholic Church revised the sacrament and changed its name to the anointing of the sick. The oil was to be administered not just to the dying but to anyone who was seriously sick, even the aged who were

[437] J. Bowden. p.1069
[438] J. Bowden. p.1070.

chronically ill. The revised rite also allowed for communal anointing which could be performed in a church or a nursing home, and this has become the common form of the sacrament today.

Changing approach to religion

In medieval and Tudor times, religion was of central importance in ordinary people's lives. They really worried about whether they would go to Heaven or Hell and how long they would have to stay in Purgatory. This helps to explain the enormous trade in indulgences, the veneration given to icons and holy relics, and the significance given to pilgrimages. It must have been a profound shock when the Tudor governments started to sweep all this away. They really worried for their souls.

Gazetteer

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Austerfield

St Helena's Church

Address: High Street, Austerfield, South Yorkshire. DN10 6QY.

This attractive early Norman church is dedicated to St Helena, a traditionally popular saint in Yorkshire. She was the mother of the Emperor Constantine who did much to encourage the spread of Christianity throughout Europe in the fourth century. Legend has it that St Helena found the True Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified and is credited with the building of the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem. She died about 328 A.D. and her feast day is the 18th August.

Austerfield is recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) as Oustrefeld (Eastfield) and was part of the manor of Hexthorpe held by Earl Tosti. St Helena's Church is the most significant historic building in the village and is dated by the Rev. John Raine to 1180 AD and the reign of Henry 11.[439] There was probably an earlier wooden building on the site, but the present church was built on the orders of the local magnate, John de Busli, as a 'Chapel for the people of Austerfield'. John was a descendant of Roger de Busli, who came over with William the Conqueror and was rewarded with vast land holdings in Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. He was the most important Norman magnate in the area, building the motte and bailey castle at Tickhill as his central base and financing the Benedictine monks from Rouen to build a priory at Blyth in Nottinghamshire. The chapel at Austerfield was originally a chapel-of-ease to Blyth Priory, in others words as a place of worship for the local people of Austerfield so that they did not need to travel to Blyth for church services.

Nonconformity and the Pilgrim Father's connection

Little is known about the church of St Helena in the 14th and 15th centuries or if it was much affected by the English Reformation. But in the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1, William Bradford, who became one of the Pilgrim Fathers and later governor of New Plymouth in America, was born here in 1589. He was the third child and only son of William Bradford, a yeoman farmer who was a tenant of the Crown. His childhood was particularly difficult; his father died when he was only a year old and two years later his mother remarried. When his mother died in 1597, he was cared for by John Hansen, his grandfather on his mother's side. When in turn Hansen died in 1602, the twelve-year old boy went to live with his uncles, Robert and Thomas Bradford, and was given grounding in husbandry on his uncles' farm. After a period of illness, he began reading the scriptures, particularly the Geneva version of the Bible.

[439] Rev. J. Raine. The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Blyth. (1860). p.177.

The church itself seems to have fallen into disrepair and its minister described as careless and inattentive to his duties. Possibly this lack of religious fervour may have helped push young William Bradford into seeking a more radical branch of the faith. Initially he travelled the short distance to St Nicholas' Church in Bawtry and he was later undertaking a journey of ten miles each way to hear Richard Clyfton preach at All Saints' Church, Babworth, Nottinghamshire, despite "sermon gadding" attracting financial penalties. He joined William Brewster's separatist group at Scrooby Manor, about three miles away, and went with them into exile in Holland and travelled on the *Mayflower* to the New World. He later became Governor of the New Plymouth Colony and wrote a book 'Of Plymouth Plantation', which offered a chronicle of the trials and tribulations of the Pilgrim Fathers in their early years in America.

Visiting St Helena's Church

The church is built of rubble and dressed magnesian limestone brought from a stone quarry near Roche Abbey in South Yorkshire. At the west end of the church is a Norman two-bell turret or bellcote, which was restored in Victorian times.[440] On a corner buttress close to the porch is a **mass dial.** This is in the form of a small hole with lines scratched into the stone above it and is an early form of sun dial used to tell the congregation and passing travellers the time of the next service. The priest would place a small stick in the hole and when the sun shone the shadow of the stick onto one of the lines, the next service would start.

The church is entered through the brick **south porch** which was added in 1835 as part of the restoration work undertaken under the direction of the Rev John Raine. Within the porch is the extraordinary Norman **tympanum** (lintel stone) over the doorway which depicts a serpent-like dragon with a horse-head and a tail shaped like an arrow. There is no clear evidence as to the purpose behind this apparently pagan symbol. Research by the Rev Edward Dunnicliffe suggests that it is 8th century and might be related to the Synod of Austerfield. The **nave** has a strong Norman feel; the pillars are rounded and short and there is a 12th century round arch separating the **nave** and **chancel.** A well preserved **three-bay arcade** separates the nave and the north aisle. The north aisle was constructed in the 13th century, and collapsed in the next. The arcade pillars were walled in and replastered so as to form the outside wall of the church. The two small **lancet windows** in the west end of the church are 13th century. The stained glass is later and has figures depicting St Helena and St Paulinus. The latter was an Italian missionary who converted Northumbria to Christianity and became the first Bishop of York and later Archbishop of Rochester.

The stone **font** just inside the entrance to the church is believed to be the original. The Rev A.E. Meredith suggests that when alterations were being made to the church in 1834, the font was removed and given to the Clerk, John Milner, who had a small farmstead in the village.[441]

[440] D. Hey. The Making of South Yorkshire. (1979) p.87
[441] Rev. A.E. Meredith. Austerfield font. Transactions of the Thoroton Society. 1917.

For some years, Milner used the font as a trough in his farmyard until it was eventually recovered and returned to the church where it lay on the floor of the porch as a neglected relic. In 1898 it was fully restored to its proper use; it now stands on a 19th century stone pedestal.

The neglect and disrepair of the church continued over many years. Certainly in 1834 when the Reverend John Raine became vicar of Blyth, Bawtry and Austerfield, he described the church as being in a bad condition, with the pews out of repair and the wooden floor completely perished.[442] Raine restored portions of the church, including adding a new gallery and pews. The village of Austerfield was growing throughout the 19th century, from 242 inhabitants to 389 in 1861.[443] The growth may have led to the decision on 31st July 1858 to separate both Bawtry and Austerfield from Blyth to create a separate parish called the Perpetual Curacy of Bawtry and Austerfield. Raine states that he did not support the split, believing it to be unsound economically and place too much hardship on the parishes.[444]

The church has been altered and restored on a number of occasions. The north aisle, which had fallen down and was covered over in the 14th century, was reconstructed with generous donations from the General Society of Mayflower Descendents in the United States, dedicated to the memory of William Bradford. During the restoration work in 1898, the **Sheela-Na-Gig** figure on one of the capitals was now revealed. This is an exaggerated and lewd carving of a female figure sometimes found in medieval churches, again with no definitive meaning. There are said to be only 16 such carvings in England.[445] The Austerfield figure, though damaged, has survived largely intact, perhaps because it had been encased in brickwork for many centuries. Also in the north aisle is a modern Pilgrim memorial window which is a triptych depicting William Bradford, the Mayflower and the signing of the Mayflower Compact. This was installed in 1992. The stained-glass window on the south wall depicts the three dioceses to which Austerfield was part of over the centuries. They are represented by their patron saints. The church was first in the York Diocese (St Peter), then Lincoln (St Hugh) and at present Southwell (St Mary).

[442] J.D. Raine. pp.180-1.
[443] Southwell and Nottingham Church History Project. Retrieved online. 10th May 2025.
[444] J.D. Raine. p. 182.
[445] The Sheela Na Gig Project. Retrieved online. 16/05/2014.

Babworth

All Saints' Church.

Address: Bridle Path, Babworth, Nottinghamshire. DN22 7BP.

Nothing obvious remains of the original building of 1290; the present building mostly dates from the 15th and 16th centuries. The church was partly restored in 1859-62 when stained-glass windows were installed by the important Victorian artist, Charles E. Kempe (1837- 1907). Kempe's device of wheatsheaves can often be seen on his early windows. The chancel contains furniture by Robert (Mousey) Thompson; items of furniture bear his famous carved mouse trademark. Thompson was part of the Arts and Crafts movement of the 1920s.

The font is a memorial to the Bridgeman-Simpson family and the pews also date from the Victorian period.

The church is in an idyllic woodland setting of chestnuts, sycamores, yews and cedars at the end of a narrow, tree-lined track. The view beyond the church is of Babworth Hall, set in a garden and parkland, designed by the landscape architect Humphry Repton in 1790.

Nonconformity and the Pilgrim Fathers' connection

Babworth can be regarded as the "spiritual home" of the *Mayflower* Pilgrims because **Richard Clyfton,** the Puritan minister at All Saints' Church here from 1586 to 1605 was an important figure in the nonconformist movement in the area. His sermons became well-known and attracted interest from people in neighbouring villages, including William Brewster, his wife Mary and son Jonathan, from Scrooby, Nottinghamshire and the young William Bradford of Austerfield, South Yorkshire. Under the terms of the Elizabethan Church Settlement, citizens were required by law to attend their local parish church. Attending other churches or "sermon gadding" was frowned upon by the church authorities and could incur a substantial fine.

Clyfton was deprived of his position in 1605 after being taken to the Church courts for refusing to sign the Act of Conformity. He had previously appeared before the courts in 1591 and 1593 for not wearing the correct vestments, not announcing holy days, and refusing to use the sign of the cross in baptism

Visiting All Saints' Church

Inside the south porch is a plaque marking the visit in 1955 by 150 *Mayflower* descendants and the sailing of the *Mayflower* 11 in that year. The font cover is made from an old Devon cider vat which was also cut up to make the wooden pins which fastened the timbers of the *Mayflower* 11.

All Saints' Church contains many items of interest concerning the Pilgrim Fathers, including a rare 1603 edition of the Geneva Bible, sometimes referred to as the "Breeches Bible". In this

version of the Bible, Genesis Chapter III Verse 7 reads: "Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig tree leaves together, and made themselves breeches." In the King James Version of 1611, "breeches" was changed to "aprons". This copy, believed to have been in use when Richard Clyfton was rector here, is locked away for safekeeping but is occasionally on public display. Also, in safekeeping is an Elizabethan silver chalice of the 1580s, believed to have been used by Richard Clyfton for communion services. This was discovered in a vault under the north aisle of the church, perhaps hidden there to save it from being stolen or melted down at the time of the English Civil War in the 1640s.

Other Pilgrim Fathers' memorabilia include a detailed scale model of the *Mayflower* constructed by a prisoner from the nearby Ranby Prison using 14,000 matchsticks, and a painting depicting the arrival of the Pilgrim Fathers in America, painted on an old blackboard by another inmate from the prison. The figures are wearing bright clothes for the separatists did not believe in the severe black clothing of the Puritans.

The former rectory, renamed Haygarth House

The house was extensively extended and rebuilt in Victorian times when the Rev. W. Bridgman-Simpson (Rector at Babworth 1838-1895) a younger son of the Hon. John Bridgman-Simpson, was required in the manner of the times to provide a house suitable for his bride, the daughter of Earl Fitzwilliam, on their marriage. By the 1930s, it was too large and expensive to maintain and no rector of Babworth could afford to live there. It is now owned by a private company and used as a Conference Centre and hotel.

Bawtry

St Nicholas' Church

Address: Church Street, Bawtry, Doncaster. DN10 6NJ.

Bawtry is situated on the banks of the River Idle in South Yorkshire, just north of the border with Nottinghamshire and 9 miles southeast of Doncaster. The name Bawtry probably means 'tree rounded like a ball' from the Old English 'ball + treow'. It was recorded as Baltry in 1199. For many centuries Bawtry was a flourishing inland port with a variety of goods being loaded and unloaded at a wharf on the River Idle for shipping onwards to the River Trent and the Humber estuary. A small settlement developed the wharf in the Danelaw era and it is thought a church was first erected in this period.

History

Following the Norman Conquest in 1066, most of the land around Bawtry, Tickhill and Blyth was given to Roger de Busli (Builli) by King William. In 1088, Roger founded the Priory of Blyth,

which was given to the Benedictine Order.[446] The Priory Church of St Mary and St. Martin at Blyth, acted as the parish church not only for Blyth, but also for the adjoining areas of Bawtry and Austerfield. One hundred years later, during the reign of Henry 11, a descendant of Busli family, John de Busli, authorised the building of 'chapels of ease' in Bawtry and Austerfield for local residents to save them the three- mile journey to Blyth. A priest was appointed from Blyth Priory to serve both chapels. The priory's patronage of the church dominated its medieval history.[447] Relations between the monks and the locals of Bawtry were not always friendly. In 1278 a dispute occurred over the liability for repairs that were needed by the church, with both the monks and the locals arguing that the other should pay for them. The argument was eventually settled by an official of the Archdeacon of Nottingham. The locals were made liable for repairs but the monks provided a one-time only gift of two marks (which was slightly less than one pound and fifty pence) to assist on this particular occasion.

In medieval times, Bawtry developed as an inland port with goods such as wool from the West Riding, iron from Rotherham and Sheffield, lead from Derbyshire and timber from Sherwood come into the town by wagon and pack horse to be loaded into small boats from the wharf close to the church. The settlement grew when a charter was granted by King John in 1213 to Robert de Vipont, lord of the Manor, allowing an annual four-day fair to be held. A weekly market fair was first recorded in 1247.

In Archbishop Richard Scrope's time, a considerable number of ordinations of priests were held in St Nicholas Chapel, Bawtry.[448] For example, on the 18th December 1400 there were ordinations of 25 priests, 21 deacons, and 25 subdeacons. The reason for this is not entirely clear, though it may have involved clergy from both Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire making Bawtry an ideal place.

The church, dedicated to St Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors, would have welcomed sailors coming to pray for a safe return after travelling via the Rivers Idle and Trent to Hull and Europe. Throughout medieval times Bawtry was a growing port on the River Idle, with the church itself built on slightly higher ground above the wharf. The choice of saint was clearly a deliberate attempt to encourage the growing merchants trade and encourage it to prosper.

The Reformation

During the English Reformation, the monastic orders were heavily targeted. Blyth was no exception and the priory was dissolved in 1536 and many of the buildings destroyed. However, the church itself continued as the parish church of St Mary and St Martin and Bawtry remained as a chapel attached to the church.

[446] A. D. Mills. Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names
[447] Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project. Retrieved online. 14/10/2016.
[448] Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project. Retrieved online 14/10/2016.

Nonconformity and Pilgrim Fathers connection

William Brewster of Scrooby, clearly an active nonconformist, was reported in 1598 to the archdeacon's court for the offence of "sermon gadding" the Puritan practice of forsaking their local parish church to hear a better preacher elsewhere, either at another church or possibly at a church or market cross. The cross at **Bawtry**, for example, would once have been an actual cross rather than just the obelisk which exists today.

He was also accused, with others, of "publicly repeating" sermons, a practice frowned upon by the church authorities. In court, Brewster provided a skillful answer to the charges:

> "… as touching the repeating of sermons, he with others do note the sermons delivered by the preacher and in the afternoon they that have noted do confer with one another what they have noted and otherwise they have no repetition, and to the rest of the presentment he sayeth that the two towns of Bawtry and Scrooby do maintain one preacher between them who preaches one Sunday at the one town, and at the other town on the next Sunday by a continual course, so that if their preacher preach at Bawtry he with the other (sic) of the parish go thither to hear him, and otherwise he doth not absent himself from his parish church on the Sabbath day." [449]

Brewster was presented to court with Anthony and Edward Bentam who agreed with Brewster's views and all three were dismissed with a verbal warning. No further action was taken.[450] The relative immunity of Brewster from ecclesiastical interference was no doubt partly explained by the fact that he was an archiepiscopal employee but also because the vicar of the neighbouring parish (Sutton-cum-Lound) was his brother James.

William Brewster held the advowson of Bawtry, that is the right to nominate a person to the position of vicar or curate of St Nicholas Church for the approval of the Archbishop of York. Brewster would use this position of influence to recommend several of his Puritan colleagues to the Bawtry 'living'.

The 1604 Canons marked a new determination on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities to clamp down on dissent. Two Puritan clerics with strong connections to Bawtry, **Henry Gray** and **Richard Clyfton,** refused to conform and were deprived of their pastoral duties and removed from their livings. **William Brewster** had appointed **Henry Gray** as curate at Bawtry in 1604. Gray was cited and deprived of the Bawtry living in April 1605. He was later excommunicated after acting as unlicensed curate at Headon, but eventually submitted and became a conforming minister. As we have seen, **Richard Clyfton**, rector of All Saints Church at Babworth (Nottinghamshire) had been summoned before the ecclesiastical courts in 1591

[449] R. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts (1960)* p.142; for a longer version of the trial of Brewster. See Transaction of Thoroton Society Vol 30. p.13.
[450] R. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts (1960)* pp.141-4; The presentment was made possible because Bawtry and Scrooby were included in separate ecclesiastical parishes and therefore legally the parishioners could not go to each other's churches.

and 1593 for not wearing the surplice, for not announcing holy days, and for refusing to use the cross in baptism. On each occasion, he had been let off with a verbal warning. In March 1605, he was cited for nonconformity and deprived of his living. When Richard Clyfton was deprived of his living, he and his family were generously received into Brewster's home at Scrooby where Clyfton became the pastor of the Scrooby group. In March 1607, Clyfton was summoned as the '**pretend minister or curate of Bawtry'**, but he did not respond and was excommunicated. He preached in early 1608 at Sutton-cum-Lound (James Brewster's church) before emigrating with the Scrooby group to Amsterdam.

Post Reformation

In the 17th century, St Nicholas Church continued to serve the local community in an uneventful fashion and we only have snapshots of the events. In 1676 a religious census showed that there were 220 persons in Bawtry of an age to receive Communion. Of these 17 were 'papal dissenters' (Roman Catholics) – although the Reformation was over a century in the past the issue was still a serious concern. Just twelve years later, James 11 was overthrown in the Glorious Revolution, primarily due to concerns over his own belief as a Roman Catholic. After the Revolution, all clergymen were forced to swear an Oath of Allegiance to the new monarchs, William and Mary. Although there were many clergymen who refused and were stripped of their office, Bawtry's curate was not one of them.

In 1691 Barbara Lister, the widow of Thomas Lister, bequeathed £200 to set up a fund for the curate of Bawtry and Austerfield as long as he was appointed with the consent of her or her heirs, and if not, it would go to the poor of Bawtry. By the 19th century the fund was paying out £9 per annum. Given that the curates were meant to be appointed by the vicars of Blyth this could have been viewed as stepping on their authority somewhat, but there is no indication they contested the matter, and it is possible they were quite happy to have someone else helping to financially support the curate at Bawtry.[451]

The church building consists of an aisled three-bay nave, two-bay chancel with a south chapel, north organ chamber, and vestry.[452] The West Tower has battlements, eight pinnacles and bells and a clock. It is built primarily of ashlar magnesian limestone, with modern doors giving access to the nave. In the north aisle is a blocked door of c.1200, a similar date to the north arcade which has round piers and octagonal capitals. The south arcade is Perpendicular in style with octagonal piers and capitals. There is a clerestory through nave and chancel. The church has numerous late 18th and early 19th wall monuments above the arcades. As well as a wooden chancel screen there is a late 18th century wrought-iron screen to the south chapel. Also, a painted coat of arms, dated 1685. An organ by Conacher & Brown was installed in 1857. The east window is by the important Victorian artist, C.E. Kempe, c.1902.

[451] Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project. Retrieved online 14/10/2016.
[452] Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project. Retrieved online. 14/10/2016.

In the centuries following the Reformation, St Nicholas Church increasingly needed urgent repairs. The church tower had mostly collapsed in 1670 and from 1712 a new tower was constructed using some of the older materials. In the parish church books there is a record of a petition from the people of Bawtry to Lord Castleton in 1712 asking for stone to rebuild the tower. An extract from the petition states:

> "And your Lordship being the owner of the late ruinous Abbey called Roach Abbey, and we being well informed that your Lordship hath formerly very nobly and generously given part of the stone of the said Abbey to the towns of East Retford and Babworth and others in their neighbourhood towards the repair of their Churches and Steeples…."[453]

Much of £350 needed for the repairs was raised by Samuel Dawson, the owner of the fine house on Bawtry's Market Hill which used to be known as The Town House but is now The Pantry. By the end of the century, a small farm and other land in Scaftworth, totaling about 12 acres, were listed as belonging to Bawtry chapel, and at the time had been leased to the Duke of Newcastle, the owner of Clumber Hall as well as much other land across Nottinghamshire.

In the early 19th century, the church was seeing little use because of its state of dilapidation, with most of the population attending church at Harworth, about three miles away. The vicar of Blyth, the Rev. John Raine, attempted to restore the Bawtry chapel to some of its former glory. In 1839 he had the old pews removed and replaced which, together with restoration work on the church structure, cost £900. In 1857 a new organ was installed in the church, a common addition to churches in the Victorian era. Raine argued that building a new church completely might have been a better investment as he considered the churchyard and cemetery to be too small, the church not very handsome and the ground it was built on worryingly saturated with water, undermining the foundations.[454] Despite Raine's strongly expressed opinions, the church was not rebuilt.

An important change took place in 1858 when Bawtry and Austerfield were separated off from Blyth and a new parish was created called Bawtry-with-Austerfield, with St Nicholas as the primary parish church. Like Blyth, the parish was placed in the patronage of Trinity College, Cambridge, and its first parish vicar was the Rev Augustus Dobree Carey, a fellow of the college.[455] The new church was endowed with rental income of £300 per annum from properties and land previously belonging to the vicarage of Blyth, minus a property tax deduction. When the vicar's position was taken up by a fellow from Trinity College, the college would provide an annual grant of £200. Though substantial, the Rev John Raine of Blyth believed the amount to be insufficient and that it would have been better to keep Bawtry attached to Blyth rather than create another small parish which needed external support.[456]

[453] As quoted in. R. Mellors. In and About Nottinghamshire (1908). p. 92.
[454] J. Raine. The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Blyth. 1860. pp. 174 ff.
[455] Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project. History section p. 5
[456] J. Raine. p. 182.

However, the decision to split the churches had been taken by the Archbishop of York and Trinity College.

Further changes took place in the 20th century. Restoration work was undertaken in 1901 as well as some modernisation and improvement.[457] In 1909 a new screen for the chancel and a stained- glass window for the south aisle were given to the church by the family of the late L.T. Baines, who had resided at Bawtry Hall. An administrative change also took place at this time when the Bishop of Southwell created the new rural deanery of Bawtry and Bassetlaw with St Nicholas church as the centre of the deanery. Since then, the vicars of Bawtry-with-Austerfield have also been the rural deans as well. In 1920, the patronage of the church was purchased from Trinity College by local residents Major Peake and Mrs Peake, who paid £2,000 for the patronage, which they then gifted to the Bishop of Southwell, who has remained the patron of the church since then.

Visiting St Nicholas' Church

The church building consists of an aisled three-bay nave, two-bay chancel with a south chapel, north organ chamber, and vestry.[458] The West Tower has battlements, eight pinnacles and bells and a clock. It is built primarily of ashlar magnesian limestone, with modern doors giving access to the nave.

Nave

The columns on the north side are round. The columns to the south side are hexagonal indicating they are of a later date, probably 15th century. There are numerous late 18th and early 19th wall monuments. The Royal Coat of Arms above the south door is dated 1685. After Henry V111 became Supreme Head of the Church of England in 1534, Royal Coats of Arms of the king or queen of the day were hung in churches.
The original building was a small chapel of ease and was probably only half the width of the present building and much shorter in length.

Chancel Screen

On the top of the wooden chancel screen are a number of shields displaying the instruments of the passion. The central shield displays the symbol 'IHC' which are the first three letters of Jesus in Greek which is often found in churches.

The Font

The stone font, made with stone from Roche Abbey, is 17th century and close to the tower.

The Chancel or Sanctuary

The altar table is at the far end of the chancel, under the East Window. The cross on the altar depicts Jesus with his arms outstretched. There are symbols of the four Evangelists: the winged man representing St Matthew, the lion symbolising St Mark, the ox representing St Luke and the eagle representing St John. There is an impressive wooden chair which dates

[457] Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project. History section pp 5-6.
[458] Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project. Retrieved online. 14/10/2016.

from 1595; it is finely carved with faces and winged lions as arm rests. Gravestones of the Lister family are to be found close to the altar and in the Lady Chapel and date to the 1600s. On a wall is a piscina, a shallow stone basin which was used to wash the communion vessels during services.

The East Window

The stone work of the east window is 13th century and was probably re-used from the original church. The stained glass is by the important Victorian artist, C.E. Kempe, c.1902. It is regarded as one of the finest examples of late Victorian stained glass in the area. It depicts the Crucifixion with St Nicholas (the bishop) on the left and St Helena (the Queen) on the right.

The Lady Chapel

The chapel was added in the 16th century. The red and gold altar table commemorates those who died in world wars. There are figures of St George, St Michael and of soldiers by the Cross. The wrought iron gate into the chapel is 18th century. The large chest is 17th century and would have had three keys - one for the clergy and the other two for churchwardens. The church silver would have been stored there.

The Hospital Chapel of St Mary Magdalene, Bawtry (now the Masonic Hall)

Blyth Priory, as we have seen, covered a large territorial area in which the parish boundaries extended over two counties. The subordinate chapels of Bawtry and Austerfield were in the West Riding of Yorkshire and were given to Blyth Priory in the reign of Henry 11. The site of the old hospital usually known as St Mary Magdalene Bawtry was in reality in the Nottinghamshire parish of Harworth, and is merely contiguous to the adjacent Yorkshire township of Bawtry. Today the site is close to a side entrance of Bawtry Hall on Tickhill Road and is used as a Masonic Lodge.

There is much uncertainty about this early foundation, dedicated to St Mary Magdalene, but there are remains of Norman work still to be found in the chapel.[459] The hospital was for the sustenance of poor and sick persons and was under the rule of a master or warden. If it ever was in the patronage of the monastery at Rouen, as might be supposed to follow from the Blyth priory connection, that arrangement soon came to an end at an early date, for the Archbishops of York held the patronage at least as early as the reign of Edward 1. The foundation was extended in 1390 by Robert Morton, a wealthy local landowner who lived in Bawtry, and gave a large donation so that the foundation was as founded anew.[460] The circumstances of the foundation were these: the canons of St Oswald's or Nostel Priory near Pontefract, had fallen into great financial difficulties under Adam de Bilton, an improvident Prior, and had borrowed money on annuities. Morton advanced the then enormous sum of £240 by Morton in return for the canons paying eight marks a year to the hospital's chaplain

[459] W. Page. A History of the County of Nottingham: Vol 2 (1910) p. 162.
[460] H. Moffat. Robert de Morton. Tickhill & District Local History Society. History Profile Paper 2. p. 8.

and his successors to celebrate mass in the chapel and pray for Robert and Joan his wife during life, and for their souls after death, and for the souls of their parents, ancestors, and benefactors.[461] The chapel became the burial place for the Morton family.

Dissolution of the Chantries

The hospital was not immediately dissolved in Edward V1's reign under the provisions of the Chantry Act of 1547 but was the subject of a complicated law case before the Chapel was acquired by Elizabeth 1. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s in Henry V111's reign, attention was drawn in Edward V1's reign to the anomalies provided by the existence of hospitals, religious guilds and chantry chapels. The Chantries Act of 1547 also confiscated that part of the funds of guilds and corporations assigned to 'superstitious' objects; the funds were now converted into a rent-charge payable to the Crown. These religious guilds had proliferated in medieval times based on the widespread fear of sudden death, especially in the wake of the Black Death.

The reign of Elizabeth 1 saw most of the Chantry Chapels of this kind either destroyed or sold off to local landowners. It is not entirely clear why St Mary Magdalene Chapel in Bawtry survived the wholesale removal of such foundations. Most hospitals were largely left alone. Another line of argument suggests that the chapel was protected because the Archbishop of York had the right to appoint the master. The chapel retained its lands and the annuity formerly paid by the canons was now paid by the Crown. The order of service was amended and Protestant clergy appointed as masters, culminating in 1584 with James Brewster being appointed by Archbishop Sandys.[462] James was the brother of **William Brewster**. On the site, there were one or two people living in almshouses, the chapel and the master's house. In his detailed investigation of the Pilgrim Fathers in this area, Joseph Hunter comments on how "notorious" the legal position of the Bawtry hospital was and how it had contrived to survive when so many other monastic foundations had been suppressed. These were technically called '*concealed lands'* as if furtively kept out of the notice of the Crown.

In the reign of Elizabeth 1, a thorough-going inquiry was set up to examine possible cases of abuse. Commissioners were sent to all parts of the kingdom; eventually the Bawtry chapel was reported as a concealment, the foundation was overturned and the whole property seized by the Crown. This was an end to James Brewster's duties and office and he left Bawtry and went to reside at Chelmsford, Essex. However, the Hospital and its lands were no sooner in the hands of the Queen, then they were granted out again as a private possession to Brewster and other persons, with Archbishop Sandys making no opposition to the decision. Sandys died in 1588, four years after Brewster's appointment.

[461] J. Hunter. Collections p. 78.
[462] J. Hunter. Collections p. 79 ff.

Archbishop Sandys was succeeded by John Piers who took a very different view of the situation and was determined to depose Brewster. The matter was obstinately contested through a whole series of court cases before the final judgment in 1596 which was against Brewster and his friends. Hunter suggests that both William Brewster and William Bradford would have known all about these events, and expresses surprise at the omission of any detail about the matter in their writings.[463]

Apart from the chapel, the original complex of the hospital buildings included two almshouses, an infirmary, chaplain's house and service buildings such as stables, barns and a dovecot.[464] The chapel fell into disrepair in the late 17th Century through the inaction of non-resident masters. The almshouses, were rebuilt in the 17th Century but then demolished in 1930. When Rev John Raine became vicar of Blyth he visited the chapel in 1834 and found it was being used as a carpenter's shop. Soon afterwards it was restored by Henry Greaves of Hesley Hall at his own cost. The niche at the east end of the building which originally would have contained an image of St Mary Magdalene, and some windows, appear to have been incorporated from the earlier building.

The stone heads on either side of the niche canopy, shown below, probably represented Robert de Morton on the left and his wife Joan de Morton on the right, who is wearing a cylinder caul headdress typical of that worn by upper class women in the later 14th Century.[465]

Excavations of the graveyard to the south and east of the chapel showed no sign of leprosy in the remains, but the residents including children, no doubt suffered from a range of illnesses and accidents.

The building was taken over by the Freemasons in 1930. The origins of the Freemasons probably go back to the 12th century when English masons established a religious fraternity under the protection of St John the Baptist to guard the secrets of their craft.[466] In the later Middle Ages, the brotherhood came to be concerned almost exclusively with the moral and religious education of its members. It was abolished in the reign of Edward V1 in 1547, but later reorganized for social and education purposes. In the 18th century, Freemasonry became strongly linked with Deism, a belief in a Supreme Being but a wide-ranging set of beliefs distinguishable by four classes of Deists. [467] For the first, God is only the creator, with no further interest in the world. The second group admit a Divine Providence, but only in the material, not in the moral and spiritual, order. The third group believe in certain moral attributes of God but not in a future life. The fourth group accept all the truths of natural religion, including a belief in a life to come, but reject revelation.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, masonic lodges in France, Italy and other Latin countries were openly hostile to the Church and to religion in general. In England and Germany, the Lodges professed an undoctrinal Christianity. The Catholic Church has repeatedly condemned

[463] J. Hunter. Collections p. 86.
[464] H. Moffat. Robert de Morton. Tickhill & District Local History Society. History Profile Paper 2. p. 9.
[465] H. Moffat. op. cit. p. 9.
[466] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. pp. 536-7
[467] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. pp. 388-9.

Freemasonry and prohibited membership for Catholics under pain of excommunication. In Great Britain and the U.S.A, Freemasonry, though undogmatic, demands belief in God from its members and is not hostile to religion as such. It is concerned chiefly with philanthropic and social activities.

Methodist Churches in Bawtry

Early developments: John and Charles Wesley

John Wesley visited Bawtry many times, passing to and from his home at nearby Epworth. On one occasion, those who were meant to escort him over the waterlogged fields by the River Idle had left without him. Fearing to be swept away in the floodwaters, he was eventually able to get help at 'Idlestop' near Misson, and was guided home to Epworth.[468]

In 1784, John Wesley set out a governance model; the Conference had the power to appoint preachers to the various 'Preaching Houses' (later chapels), the ownership of which was vested in boards of trustees.[469]

Separations within Methodism

After John Wesley's death in 1791, the relationship between the Methodist Movement and the Church of England became a matter of argument and dispute. A 'Plan of Pacification' was adopted by the Methodist Conference of 1795 which led to the administration of the sacraments (including Baptism and Holy Communion) in all Methodist chapels and the admission of a preacher to 'full connexion with the Conference' conferred ministerial rights without any form of ordination.

Methodist New Connexion (1797)

This was the first of the Methodist secessions some six years after John Wesley's death. This was a small group, led by Alexander Kilham, which broke away from the main body in 1797. Kilham had been ordained a minister in the Methodist Church in 1792 and strongly supported the complete separation of the Movement from the Church of England, contending that Methodists should have the right to receive Communion from their own preachers. He also wanted lay members of the Church to be given a much greater part in its government. Kilham died in 1798 and was succeeded by William Thom. Despite the early loss of its first leader and poor financial structure, the New Connexion grew rapidly. It differed from the main Wesleyan Methodism solely in the matter of Church government, and made neither doctrinal nor liturgical changes.

[468] A. Gray. (2016). p 32.
[469] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 908

Methodist Chapels in Bawtry in the 19th century

Wesleyan chapel in Church Walk

This was the earliest chapel, built in 1806 and enlarged in 1827. The building is now used as a gymnasium.

Independent Methodists

Another small group in the north of England broke away from the main Methodist body in 1805 and became known as the Independent Methodists by 1810. [This is perhaps another name for the Congregationalists who believed in the independence or autonomy of each local congregation].
In Bawtry, an Independent Methodist chapel was built in 1825 near the Gasworks on land given by James Dobson, a currier and leather-cutter of Low Street.[470]

The Primitive Methodists

The Primitive Methodists had connections with, but for the most part outside, the Wesleyan Methodist Church. This was a group led by Hugh Bourne who had begun an important evangelical movement near Mow Cop, Staffordshire, but outside the official Methodist structure.[471] The group was influenced by an American Methodist, Lorenzo Dow, who had introduced the idea of Camp Meetings, day-long meetings held in the open air. The practice was rejected by the Wesley Conference and Hugh Bourne was expelled. Notable features of the Primitive Methodists were their connection with the Society of Friends (Quakers) and the use of women as preachers, especially in its early years. The Primitive Methodists or 'Prims' wanted to get back to Methodism's original aims of outdoor evangelism and strict discipleship.[472] They tended to be strongest in the working-class communities of the Midlands and north of England.

In Bawtry, a Primitive Methodist chapel was founded on Station Road in 1862. The building, which is now the Phoenix Theatre, still has the original date stone, though the words 'Primitive Methodist Chapel 'has been removed. The site was purchased from R.M. Milnes M.P. on 8 August 1862. The members and friends met at the station and at the preaching room in Bawtry at 2 pm and processed through the streets to the site of the contemplated building. George Naylor (local Wesleyan preacher) laid the foundation stone. The group then went to the Independent chapel [on Church Street] and listened to a sermon delivered by the Rev. W. Harland and addresses by the Revs. T. Campey, W. Harland, W. Wesson (Independent), H. Knowles, J.G. Smith and Mr. G. Bex.[473] The building cost from £170 to £180, raised by donations, collections and so on.

[470] W.E.A. New Light on Old Bawtry. South Yorkshire Historian: Supplement 3. (1978) p. 3.
[471] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 909.
[472] A. Jones Ninety Years of Drama in Bawtry. Bawtry Heritage Group. 2023. p.3.
[473] Primitive Methodist magazine 1862 p. 754. Quoted by Christopher Hill and accessed online 18 March 2024.

Methodist Church of Great Britain, 1932

The United Methodist Church, the union formed in 1907, was reunited in 1932 with the original Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Primitive Methodist Church to form the Methodist Church of Great Britain, as it now exists. The union was formally declared at a Conference which met on September 20th in the Royal Albert Hall, London. It adopted a Deed of Union setting out a constitution and doctrinal standards. The resulting organisational structure is presbyterian. The supreme authority is Conference, the legal successor of the body originally constituted by Wesley, and now regulated in Statute law by the Methodist Church Union Act (1929) and the Methodist Church Act (1976). The Conference consists of 288 ministers and 288 laymen, elected by District Synods.

The chapels become redundant

As a result of the Union, all the smaller chapels in Bawtry became redundant, leaving only the Bawtry Methodist Church. The Primitive Methodist Chapel on Station Road was closed and was used mostly for storage. In the 1950s, it was used by a drama group who eventually purchased by the group and became the Phoenix Theatre. The Wesleyan Chapel on Church Lane is now a gym. The Independent Chapel on Church Road was demolished.

All that is left for worship is the Methodist Church on Station Road.

Bawtry Methodist Church

Address: 1, Dukes Terrace, Station Road, Bawtry, Doncaster. DN10 6PX

The Methodist Church, formerly the Wesleyan Methodist Church, was built in 1903. It is a two-storey red brick building, built in an Edwardian Gothic style. The first floor offers worship space and sits above the church hall.

Bawtry Community Church.

Meets in Bawtry Town Hall, Peak's Croft, Bawtry. DN10 6PU.

The Bawtry Community Church is a member of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC), a network of 638 churches in the United Kingdom. FIEC was formed in 1922 and brought together many independent churches and mission halls which had been somewhat isolated. Each 'independent' church is self-governing and has ultimate control over its own affairs.[474] FIEC is the largest corporate partner of Affinity which was previously called the British Evangelical Council.

Bawtry Evangelical Church was set up in 1989 and undertook to change its name in 2017 so as to offer greater clarity over purpose and mission. The church services on Sundays and on other occasions which are informal and focus on prayer, the singing of hymns, and preaching centred on contemporary issues and problems. There is no formal notion of a sacrifice though

[474] Retrieved from Wikipedia, 8 January, 2025.

Communion is offered. Entrants to the church are baptised by the church though this may be waived if previously baptised by another denomination. The baptism of adults is by immersion. Pastors are chosen by church members. Potential candidates are initially interviewed by a selection committee and are then introduced to church members and may be asked to preach. Church members then vote as to whether or not to invite a candidate to take up the position.

Bawtry Community Church also had an active relationship with Action Partners, an overseas missionary group, which ran Bawtry Hall as a Christian Conference Centre until it was sold in 2014. Action Partners was also involved in a Book Aid project sending Christian literature to developing world countries. The group operated a warehouse in Torworth until it was closed in 2020.

Bawtry Community Church has good relationships with other church groups over the beliefs and practices held in common.

The Hope Centre, Pinder's Court, 2, High Street, Bawtry.

Used as a Local HQ. and for Bible Study group and small group meetings

Beauvale

Blessed Trinity Priory

Address: The Priory, New Road, Moorgreen, Nottingham. NG16 2AA.

Beauvale Priory, a few miles north-west of Nottingham, is important to both Roman Catholics and Protestants. Roman Catholics have long accepted Beauvale as part of their heritage as the place from which a number of Carthusian monks, who had refused to accept the supremacy of Henry V111, were taken to London and executed as traitors. Beauvale is also important as a Protestant enclave where significant local families sought to establish their version of religion during the Reformation. This was given an important boost by the White family moving here from Sturton le Steeple in north Nottinghamshire; Bridget White married John Robinson, teacher to the Scrooby separatists and moved with him into exile in Leiden in Holland. When part of the Leiden congregation travelled on the Mayflower to America, Robinson decided to remain behind to look after the rest of the congregation. Apparently, he had every intention of going to America himself at some stage, but for various reasons this didn't work out.

History

The priory was founded by Nicholas de Cantilupe in 1343. It was built for a prior and twelve monks and was the third of nine houses of the Carthusian Order established in England.[475] The Order was founded by St Bruno of Cologne in 1084 and was open to men and women. They were perhaps the strictest of all the monastic orders; the eating of meat was forbidden, even to the sick, at a time when meat was considered especially important for health.[476] The church was the main and the most important building and central to Carthusian life. The churches of the order were usually small and plain. A solid screen would have divided the monks from the lay brothers who undertook all the manual work. There were no silver or gold vessels or ornaments in the church except for a silver chalice used for the services. Instrumental music was forbidden. The chapter-house has largely disappeared but judging from the layout of other Carthusian sites, it would probably have been to the north-east side of the church. The community would have met there, usually on Sundays, to discuss business relating to the priory and deal with matters of discipline. The cloisters occupied the central area of the site in what is now the orchard. In Carthusian tradition, the cloister was used as the monks' burial ground; they were buried in their robes without a coffin.

The monks lived in separate, self-contained cells, each with a small garden, surrounded by a high wall. In Beauvale there were 12 two-storey cells, each divided into three small rooms or areas and an upper floor used as a workshop. The rooms were sparsely furnished; a bed with a straw mattress, a table and chair, and a prie-Dieu - a bench used by the individual for kneeling at prayer. They lived for much of their time in silence and isolation, but their living quarters were quite substantial compared to other orders. Fragments of a chimney were found during excavations in 1908 so it is likely that each cell had a fireplace – something of a luxury in medieval times. There was a supply of fresh water formed by the diversion of a nearby stream. Lead piping indicated that rain water was also collected. There was a latrine for each cell and the walls of each garden were built so high that there would be no visible contact with neighbouring cells or with any other part of the priory.

The largest and best-preserved building on the site is the prior's house. Inside are two fireplaces and a void where a spiral staircase had been at one time. There is no visible trace of the community refectory but this would probably have been to the east side of the cloister where the farm cottage now stands. Communal meals would have been taken on Sundays and feast days by all the monks sitting together. The lay brothers would have also lived in cells and had their own cloister.

The gatehouse provides an imposing entrance; there are two rooms on either side of the entrance now converted into a tearoom. The guest quarters were to the west of the gate house with a porter's lodge to the east side. Guests were not encouraged and women not catered for at all. The boundary wall still stands on the east side of the property and is to a height of eight feet in places.

[475] Beauvale priory. Retrieved online. 01/11/2016
[476] D. Marcombe & J. Hamilton (eds). Sanctity and Scandal: The Medieval Religious Houses of Nottinghamshire (1998). pp. 73-6.

Daily life at the Priory

For nearly two hundred years, the Carthusian monks led their lives at the priory with little contact with the outside world. Life at Beauvale was far from comfortable and it was a struggle to survive. Account books reveal that the monks were in a state of poverty and had little to pay their debts. The founder of the Carthusian Order, St Bruno, had ruled that the charterhouses had to be self-supporting and should not rely on income from Masses and chantry chapels. It is evident that the Beauvale community had to break this ideal in order to survive. The priory also got off to a poor start. The founder, Sir Nicholas de Cantilupe died in 1356, only thirteen years after the founding of the Priory. When by 1375, his grandsons died without heirs, the Cantilupe patronage came to an end.

A life of prayer

The monks spent many hours each day alone in their cells and the remaining time in communal worship in the church. The monastic routine was arduous. The monks attended church at midnight for the office of Matins, preceded and followed by Lauds, with private prayers in their cells until 2.30 am. At 5.45 am Prime was recited in the cells followed by Conventual Mass at 7 am. They returned to their cells for an hour for meditation or manual labour until 10 am when Terse was said privately in the cells. The remaining time until noon was spent working or reading. The office of None was said alone in the cells followed by study or work until 2.30 pm when the office of Colloquium was recited privately in the cells. The office of Compline was recited in the cells before going to bed, to be ready at midnight for the cycle of prayer to begin again.

Dissolution

Following England's break from Rome, the Carthusian Order refused to accept Henry V111's supremacy over the church. Robert Lawrence, Prior of Beauvale, travelled to London in 1535 to meet with the King's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, in an attempt to stop the dissolution of his priory. Cromwell never saw Laurence, and he and two other Carthusian Priors who had made similar journeys, were imprisoned in the Tower of London as traitors. The three Carthusians and a monk from Syon Abbey were tried on the 28 April and charged with verbal treason. The jury refused to find the four guilty as they felt "they did not act maliciously". Cromwell, however, threatened the jury with violence until they returned a guilty verdict. The monks were sentenced to death (to be hanged, drawn and quartered) and taken to Tyburn for execution on the 4 May. Prior Lawrence was executed wearing his monk's habit. The rope used to hang him was thicker than normal so that he was still alive when he was butchered. The priory was finally surrendered for dissolution on the 18 July 1539. The last prior, Thomas Woodcock, appointed in December 1537, received an annual pension of £25 13s 4d. Eight monks received £5 6s 0d and two lay brothers were given £2. After some years in the king's hands, Beauvale was given to Sir William Hussey but soon passed to the Morrison family, and subsequently to other families.

Also executed were John Houghton, the previous prior of Beauvale, although he had only held that post for about six months, and Augustine Webster of Axholme. At the execution, John Houghton, being the first to be executed, addressed the crowds as follows:

> "I call upon the Lord of Heaven and earth, and I beseech you all beloved, in the dread day of judgement to testify with me, that here, about to die, I publicly declare that I refuse to comply with the wishes of our lord the King, not out of any pertinacity, malice or rebellious spirit, but solely through fear of God." [477]

Sir Thomas More saw them being led to execution from his prison window and said to his daughter (Mrs. Roper), who was with him, "Lo, dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage?".

Lawrence and the other three Carthusians were made saints by Pope Paul V1 in 1970 as some of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

Beauvale becomes a Protestant enclave and part of the Mayflower story

The priory was finally surrendered for dissolution in 1539 and most of its possessions and buildings awarded to Sir William Hussey, a Lincolnshire landowner. Hussey's daughter Neile married Richard Disney of Norton Disney, Lincolnshire, and the Beauvale property passed into the hands of the Disney family. Disney's second wife was Jane Askew, sister of the famous Protestant martyr Anne who was burnt at the stake.

This established Beauvale and its parish church at Greasley as a Protestant enclave which was strengthened by the White family from Sturton le Steeple. They became owners of the estates of the Carthusian monks, including the coal-mines with which Charles White seems to have been involved. Bridget White married John Robinson, also originally from Sturton le Steeple, in the local parish church of St Mary's, at Greasley. Later Bridget, two sisters and a brother moved to Leiden, in the Netherlands, where John Robinson became pastor to the separatist congregation. The Robinsons remained behind in Leiden with the majority of the congregation when others, including Bridget's sister, Katherine - by this time married to her second husband, John Carver a prosperous merchant from Doncaster - sailed on the *Mayflower.* He became the first Governor of the New Plymouth Colony. John Robinson and his wife both died later in Leiden.

The priory today

The buildings of the former priory are in a ruined state; the Gatehouse and the Prior's house are substantial buildings and provide a good guide to the former size of the monastery. The ruins of the former priory are in a wonderful setting which very much lives up to its name.

[477]Cause for the Canonisation of Blessed Martyrs John Houghton et al. As quoted in D. Marcombe & J. Hamilton. p. 76

They were the setting for D.H. Lawrence's historical short story '*A Fragment of Stained Glass'.* The chapter-house has largely disappeared but as at other Carthusian sites, would probably have been to the north-east of the church. The community would have met there, usually on Sundays to discuss the priory's business and deal with any matters of discipline. The cloisters occupied the central area (now the orchard). Carthusian cloisters were the monks' burial ground; they were buried in their robes without a coffin.

Roman Catholics hold a pilgrimage once a year on the site of the priory, on the nearest Sunday to the 4th May, the date of the deaths of the Carthusian monks. St Robert Lawrence was beatified in 1886 and canonised as one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales in 1970.

Blyth

St Mary and St Martin's Priory Church.

Blyth is an historic, former market town in the north of the county and of great importance in medieval times. St Mary and St Martin's Church is all that remains of the once prosperous priory. It has some important early Norman features and an extremely rare 14th century 'Doom Painting'. There are other buildings which can trace their origins to medieval times including the Angel Inn and St John's Hospital Chapel, part of a former leper hospital built to try to isolate the disease brought back by crusaders from the Holy Land.

The Benedictine Priory, founded in 1088, was the first Norman monastic building in the area and was to have an important role in the religious life of **Bawtry.** The Priory Church of St Mary and St. Martin at Blyth, founded by Roger de Busli, acted as the parish church not only for Blyth, but also the adjoining settlements of **Bawtry and Austerfield**. In 1190, John de Busli, a descendant of the original Norman magnate, authorised the building of a 'chapel of ease' in Bawtry for local residents to save them the three - mile journey each way to Blyth.
The early Norman church and priory at Blyth was built by Roger de Busli (de Builli), one of the followers of William, Duke of Normandy, who came over to challenge King Harold for the English throne. As a reward for his support, Busli was given 49 manors in Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, making him after William Peverel, the second largest landowner in the area. The priory was built of magnesium limestone, a light grey colour, from quarries near Roche Abbey. The building of the priory started, as was customary, at the chancel end and was completed with such speed that the whole building was finished by about 1100. The Benedictine Priory was staffed by monks from the mother house – the Abbey of St. Katherine at Rouen, Busli's home area in Normandy. Ecclesiastical records provide useful insights into daily monastic life in the medieval period and the relationships between the monks and the local community. The parent house would appoint the prior and have the authority to recall him; the subordinate house would also be required to pass on a portion of their income to the mother house.

Visitations

Responsibility for discipline rested with the Abbot of the mother house, though the Archbishops of York also conducted periodic visitations and reported on their findings. Blyth seems to have been a well-ordered house with reports of only minor breaches of discipline.[478] Archbishop Wickwane after a visit in 1280 urged a greater diligence in following the Rule of St. Benedict; silence was to be kept at the usual times and in the usual places; no drinking after Compline (the final prayer of the day); only the genuine sick to be accommodated in the 'farmery' (infirmary); food and drink not to be thrown away but reserved for the poor. After a visitation by Archbishop Romayne in 1286, he wrote to the prior expressing his concern that the conduct of one of the monks, Thomas Russel, was so intolerable that he should be sent back to the mother house to do penance. A year later, Wickwane sent out a set of general injunctions: the monks were to obey the prior reverently, without murmur or reluctance, and the prior was to treat them with kindly consideration; a yearly inventory of the goods of the priory was to be undertaken; and limits were to be placed on dining in the misericord, the chamber set aside for the eating of meat. In 1289 the archbishop wrote a kindly letter to the abbot of the mother house, on behalf of John Belleville, a monk of good standing at Blyth, asking that he might be allowed to return to Rouen, as he was suffering from a climate which did not agree with him. A subsequent series of letters between the archbishop and the abbot were of a different character. In April 1291, the archbishop requested the French abbot not to keep his monks for more than four or five years as the monks seem to have regarded their period there as a kind of banishment and tended to look forward with eagerness to a return to their native land. Four months later the archbishop wrote requesting that Robert de Augerville, a monk at Blyth be returned to Rouen, because of his unruly behaviour and asked that only well-behaved monks should be sent to Blyth in future. The abbot appears to have reacted by withdrawing the prior of Blyth, noted for his probity and honourable life. The dispute seems to have rumbled on for years.

The Priory became very important in medieval times owing to its strategic proximity to the major road to the north. It was permitted by its charter to collect tolls from travellers on roads through the area. The Bishop of Durham stayed at lodgings in the gatehouse in 1274, now the site of the Angel Inn. Difficulties were to arise in later centuries when England was often at war with France. King John, for example, in the thirteenth century ordered monasteries with overseas connections like Blyth, to pay a portion of their income in taxes to the English Treasury. In 1295, Edward 1 seized all the property of the so-called 'alien' monasteries to help to pay for the war. Though lands were later restored to the monasteries, they were the subject of periodic seizure. By the early fifteenth century, the great days of Blyth Priory were over.[479] England was at war with France so the Priory with its connections with Rouen was taken into the King's hands and sold off. The buildings and land were acquired by a local aristocratic family, the Cliftons who owned large tracts of land at Clifton near Nottingham and Hodsock Manor nearby.

[478] For details see Victoria County History
[479] Enid Oakes. Portrait of a village Blyth 1994.

Part of the Priory building was shared with the townspeople of Blyth. This was not always a harmonious relationship resulting in changes to the layout of the building from time to time. The narrow Norman south aisle was replaced by one twice as wide. This larger south aisle effectively became used as the main area or nave of the church for townspeople whilst the original nave was used by the monks. Sir Gervase Clifton built the Perpendicular tower, extended the South Aisle, and built the East Wall to keep the Priory and the Parish Church separated. This wall was covered by a so-called 'Doom Painting' depicting God on the Day of Judgement with visions of those going to heaven and the sinners going down to hell. Wall paintings were used extensively in medieval times to reinforce important lessons from scripture to members of congregations who could not read the Latin Bible. At the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539 the great painting was whitewashed over. It was rediscovered in 1986, remarkably preserved under four centuries of covering. It is one of the largest and most complete medieval murals in Nottinghamshire. However, the painting is in a fragmentary state and is difficult to read without the aid of guidebooks.

Dissolution

Blyth Priory was one of the lesser monasteries dissolved in 1536, and seems to have been quite small in terms of its manpower.[480] As part of the dissolution process, Blyth Priory was visited by Cromwell's special commissioners looking for excuses to close down the priory. The commissioners reported to have found four monks guilty of disgraceful offences and one of adultery. But in all the previous visitation records there appears to be only one reference to such offences, in 1315.[481] In 1536, Prior Dalton wrote to Cromwell pleading that he was too ill to come to London and present a case for the priory to remain open. He was awarded a modest pension of twenty marks. Nothing is known of the arrangements for the five other monks, nor for those receiving corrodies. Corrodies were originally rights possessed by some benefactors or religious houses or their nominees to board and lodging within the monastery. The term also came to be applied to similar allowances (mostly in kind) made by the monastery to those who had served its needs. The prevalence of corrodies was one of the causes of monastic impoverishment in the later Middle Ages.[482]

Sir Gervase Clifton, as descendant of the de Cressy family, was the feodary (holding lands and power through the feudal system) of the Priory, which adjoined his new house and park at Hodsock. It would seem that it was for this reason that he was granted a 21-year lease in 1538. The rectory and certain lands were later granted to Trinity College, Cambridge, but the Clifton family managed to have the lease renewed and eventually converted into a permanent grant. All of the monastic parts of the church were destroyed; the whole of the chancel, side chapels, crossing and transepts were pulled down at this time. The property passed through various families, including William Mellish, who built a hall, park and pleasure gardens. Blyth Hall was pulled down in 1972 to be replaced by a number of private houses.

[480] A. Cameron. Some Social Consequences of the Dissolution of the Monasteries in Nottinghamshire TTS p. 56.
[481] D. Marcombe & J. Hamilton. p.15
[482] F. L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p.350

Visiting St Mary and St Martin's Church

Inside the church, the building reflects its early Norman origins – severe, austere but quite majestic in its simple strength and. Elegance. Pevsner in his guide to the buildings of Nottinghamshire argues: "There is nothing like Blyth in Nottinghamshire to get a feeling for early Norman grimness."[483] Simon Jenkins argues that we cannot justly called this architecture grim since we have little record of its original decoration.[484] Evidence from many churches suggests that, in Norman times, the walls would have been bright and highly painted. Indeed, it is still possible to see in Blyth, fragments of white paint and counterfeit masonry joints picked out in red which suggests that the early church was plastered and painted over to cover the stones laid rather slapdash on each other. There is little decoration in the church other than simple scroll work and the occasional monster's heads. Blyth, Simon Jenkins suggests, is the kind of place to which a D.H. Lawrence hero might take a girl to terrify her with tales of damnation.[485]

South Porch
The everyday entrance to the church is provided by the 13th century south porch built in the Early English style. Inside there are wide bench seats. On the beams above the doorway is a 'green lion' and a carved smiling face.

South Aisle
The south aisle was widened in the late 13th century to form a parish church separate to the monastic part. This is essentially the nave of the parish church and is used for everyday services.

West Window
This contains stained glass by the distinguished Victorian artist, Charles Eames Kempe, whose symbol of a wheatsheaf is in the bottom left corner. The glass depicts various saints including St Mary and St Martin.

West Tower
This is Perpendicular in style and dates from the 14th century. On the west wall are diamond-shaped panels (hatchments) which are mainly of the Mellish family who owned Blyth Hall and later Hodsock Priory. Also in the tower are three gravestones with foliated crosses standing against the wall which are thought to be 13th or 14th century.

The Font
The original font was removed or destroyed during the Commonwealth and this one was placed here at the Restoration. It is late 17th century with cherub's heads of William and Mary period, as is the cover.

[483] Pevsner. 1951. p. 37.
[484] S. Jenkins. England's Thousand Best Churches. 2000. p. 516
[485] S. Jenkins. p. 516.

The Nave

This forms an important part of the original Norman church. The walls consist of three elements, the arcade on the group floor, a gallery triforium, and the clerestory above. The arcade on the ground floor consists of five bays dividing the nave from the side aisles. The pillars or columns of the arcade support plain, rounded arches typical of Norman architecture. The pillars all have slight differences and are possibly an indication of the merging Anglo-Saxon and Norman traditions of architecture. Certainly, the Normans would have employed Anglo-Saxon builders with their own techniques. The tops of the columns are decorated with scrolls and crudely carved faces, including two figures close together on the second capital on the north side which are thought to represent Roger de Busli and his wife Muriel, who may be buried under two recesses outside the north wall.

The Doom Painting

At the east end of the nave is the great wall built around 1400 to divide the monastic part of the building from the parish laity. It was painted with the 'Doom' painting which not only decorated the huge wall but also acted as a teaching aid for parishioners who could not read. The painting depicts the Day of Judgment, when the good souls go to Heaven and the sinners to Hell. After the Priory was dissolved, the painting was covered over with whitewash. It was rediscovered and cleaned up in 1985. The painting is one of the largest and most ambitious in the country. It is in a variable state of repair and is best understood from various guidebooks which explain what to look for in the rather faint and blurred images. It is possible to see the figure of Christ at the top, sitting on a rainbow with figures of angels on either side. Below are apostles with haloes. In the centre, the dead rise from coffins, naked except for the crown worn by a king. At the bottom is a group of devils pushing the damned into Hell. Other faint details include something resembling a wheelbarrow pushed by a large yellow devil (possibly Satan himself) at the bottom right.

South Aisle Screen

This is a 15th century oak screen, set across the south aisle, and providing a division to the chancel beyond. A number of paintings on the base panels of the screen are of great interest and have been Identified by J. Holland Walker.[486]

St Stephen. The early Christian martyr depicted with three stones. He was stoned to death.
St Euphemia. A saint much revered by the Greek Church as early as the 4th century. She was condemned to death by burning, but the flames were extinguished by a miraculous shower, she was transfixed by a sword.
St Edmund. King and martyr, depicted with arrows with which he was slain by the Danes about 870.
St Helena. Saint and empress, wife of Constantius Chlorus and mother of Constantine the Great. Tradition suggests that she visited Jerusalem in 326 and to have discovered the True Cross and the site of the Holy Sepulchre.
St Barbara. Protectress against tempests and sudden death. Her father, a zealous pagan, attempted to protect her against Christianity and matrimony by imprisoning her in a tower. She was converted to Christianity and was later beheaded. She bears a tower as her emblem.

[486] Church of St Mary and St Martin, Blyth. Transactions of the Thoroton Society 1901. pp. 85-91

St Ursula. Saint and martyr, especially honoured in Cologne. She was a princess of Brittany who was wooed by a British prince. She consented to marry him on condition that he became a Christian and provide her with an escort of 10,000 virgin princesses for a three- year pilgrimage to Rome. These terms were accepted, and accompanied by her entourage she sailed up the Rhine on route to Rome. At Cologne she landed and accomplished the rest of her journey overland. On her return to Cologne, she and her ladies fell into the hands of a horde of Huns by whom they were butchered.

The Chancel

The wooden panelling dates from 1656 and was made from old box pews as was the pulpit. In the north-east corner there are traces of medieval painting with mortar joints picked out in red. Against the north wall is a damaged effigy of a knight in armour, with a great shield and a square 'coal scuttle' helmet. It dates from 1240 and is thought to be of Percival Fitzwilliam.

North Aisle

High in the roof is a green man and also a 'green dragon'. There is also the monument to Edward Mellish who built Blyth Hall and who died in 1703. The figure is lying stiffly on his side and is the earliest example of this type of pose in Nottinghamshire.

Hospitals in Blyth

Blyth was also the location of two medieval hospitals operated by the monks of Blyth Priory.

The Hospital of St. John the Evangelist was founded in the reign of King John by William Cressy, Lord of Hodsock, for the residence and relief of those returning from the Crusades with leprosy.[487] Modern scholars place the hospital on the site of the modern day Spital Farm, at the south end of the town. Henry 111, in a letter dated at Newark 5th January, 1230, took under his protection the brethren of the hospital and all their possessions, bidding all his faithful subjects to defend them, and commends them to their charity, as they would have recompense from God and from him.[488] On the 21st July, an indulgence of one hundred days less in Purgatory was granted by the Archbishop of York to those who would contribute to "the creation and new construction of a certain house, or hospital, for receiving and lodging poor strangers and pregnant women within the village of Blyth." Raine argues that we may conclude that the old hospital of the de Cressys had fallen into decay in the fifteenth century, and that its original leprous inmates had disappeared.[489]

The Hospital of St Edmund, Blyth, was an ancient leper-house (places where persons suffering from leprosy were able to stay), probably just outside the northern entrance to the town, although nothing now remains. It was not endowed and was entirely dependent on alms. Only a single reference to it has been found. Henry 111, whilst staying at Blyth in January 1228, granted to the house letters of protection, whereby the king asked his bailiffs and faithful subjects, when their messengers came seeking alms for the support of the infirm, that

[487] W. Page (ed) A History of the County of Nottingham: Vol 2. 1910 pp. 164-166.
[488] J. Raine p. 148.
[489] J. Raine p.149.

they would admit them kindly and hasten to extend charity to them, so that in addition to eternal reward they might receive their king's gratitude.[490]

As we will see, after the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry V111, commissioners were appointed in 1545-6 to survey and report on chantries, free chapels, colleges and hospitals with a view to treating them the same way. It is believed that the hospital was in a very poor condition, and escaped confiscation under the actions of both Henry V111 and Edward V1. Very few hospitals were in fact suppressed.[491]

Doncaster

Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries

When Henry V111 announced the closure of the smaller monasteries, the north rose up under the banner of the "Pilgrimage of Grace" and over 30,000 pilgrims marched as far as Doncaster. Royalist forces under the Earl of Shrewsbury were assembled in the area around Bawtry and Scrooby to resist the possible march of the rebels on London. It was at Bawtry on the 21st October, 1536, that the Earl of Shrewsbury had discussions with his leading generals as to what to do about this Catholic uprising. It was decided to send Thomas Myller, Lancaster Herald, "with a proclamation, to be read amongst the Traitors and rebellious persons assembled at Pomfret (Pontefract Castle) contrary to the King's laws."[492] The Carmelite friary in Doncaster was used as a meeting place between the royalist negotiators and Robert Aske, the leader of the rebel forces. Robert Aske later went to London where he undertook negotiations personally with Henry V111. As the negotiations became more and more protracted the rebel cause lost momentum. The risings were not aimed at Henry V111 personally but against Thomas Cromwell and the dissolution of the lesser monasteries. Aske was eventually charged with treason and hanged in chains. At Henry's order over 200 rebels were hanged in the north as a 'fearful spectacle' to others. The Carmelite Prior Laurence Cook was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London from 1538 to 1540 for his support of Robert Aske. The priory was surrendered to the Crown by Edward Stubbis, the prior, and seven friars on 13 November 1538.

At the Dissolution, considerable valuable goods were confiscated and sent to the royal treasury. The valuables included 25 oz of gilt plate, 109 oz parcel gilt and 48 oz of white plate. The net profit from the sale of goods seems to have been £21 18s 4d. Various properties of the priory were let out, bringing in £10 17s 4d.

Writing in the 19th century in an article for the Yorkshire Journal of Archaeology, F.R. Fairbank noted that some small vestiges of the priory were still visible above ground.[493] Excavations had revealed a tunnel measuring 6ft 9 inches high and 4 ft wide which ran under the Priory's

[490] W. Page (ed) pp. 164-165.
[491] J. Raine. p. 150.
[492] R. Mellor. Transactions of the Thoroton Society. Excursion. 1905. p.5.
[493] As quoted in Tudor Travel Guide to Doncaster, West Yorkshire. Retrieved online. 7/7/2025.

land. This was not considered to be a drain because of its sizable dimensions, the fact that it was plastered and that there were blocked ventilation shafts along its length. Instead, it was thought to be a private passageway connecting one part of the Priory to another.

The Carmelite Friary of St Mary

The Carmelite friars (or Whitefriars as they were known because of the colour of their habit) came to Doncaster in 1346 and in 1350 moved to a site of six acres between the High Street and St Sepulchre Gate made available by Richard le Ewere and John Nightbrother of Eyan with patronage by King Richard 11 and possibly his brother, John of Gaunt. The friary became important perhaps because of its position as a stopping place on the Great North Road, on the route north from London to Scotland. The road ran straight through the middle of Doncaster and was known as High Street and Hallgate). The town was visited by royalty, including Henry V in 1399, Edward 1V in 1470, and Henry V11 in his progress north after his coronation and on the 13th June 1503, his elder daughter Margaret Tudor, on her way to Scotland to become Queen of James 1V.

Little is known of the exact appearance or layout of the Priory.[494] The entrance gate was opposite Scot Lane, where the current Georgian Mansion House now stands. However, there was a priory church in honour of St Mary, with living accommodation nearby which must have been luxurious enough to attract royal visitors over the centuries. Within the friary was the important early shrine to 'Our Lady of Doncaster'. This was the most important Marian shrine in Yorkshire and is considered to be one of the most significant in England, next to the likes of Walsingham, Canterbury and Westminster.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Doncaster

Our Lady of Doncaster was a Marian shrine located in Doncaster, South Yorkshire.[495] The shrine was visited by many pilgrims, kings and queens, nobles and gentry, and ordinary people who left devotional gifts. Anthony Lord Rivers was executed at Pontefract in 1483. Before he died, he bequeathed the hair-shirt which he always wore in penance to Our Lady of Doncaster. Others include Constance Bigod of Settrington who left her silver and gilt work girdle in 1449; Alice West of Ripon left "my best bedes", and John Twisilton left a silver gilt crown.

The original statue in the shrine in the Carmelite friary was destroyed during the English Reformation. A modern shrine was erected in St Peter in Chains Roman Catholic Church, Doncaster in 1973. The feast day of Our Lady of Doncaster is the 4th June.

[494] Tudor guide to Doncaster, West Yorkshire. Retrieved online. 7/7/2025. p. 5
[495] Wikipedia. Our Lady of Doncaster. Retrieved from Wikipedia. 27 January 2025.

The miracle of Robert Leche and his family

On the 15th July 1424, William Nicholson of Townsburgh attempted to cross the River Don on an iron-bound wagon in which Robert Leche and his wife and their two children were travelling. The wagon was overturned and Mrs. Leche was swept away by the stream. Everyone called upon Our Lady of Doncaster for help and all were saved from drowning. They went to the Priory church and gave thanks for this miracle.

Destruction of the shrine

A contemporary account of events following the Dissolution is offered by Charles Wriothesley in his 'Chronicle of England' suggests that: "It was the month of July, the images of Our Lady of Walsingham and Ipswich were brought up to London with all the jewels that hung around them, at the king's commandment, and divers other images, both in England and Wales, that were used for common pilgrimage ….. and they were burnt at Chelsea by my Lord Privy Seal."

Two other chroniclers, Hall and Speed, suggest that the actual burning did not take place until September. The fate of the image of Our Lady of Doncaster is not stated, and beyond the Archbishop's action in seizing it, we have no means of knowing what happened to the statue. A famous letter from Bishop Latimer to Thomas Cromwell mentions the image by name, referring first to the image of Our Lady of Worcester he says:

"She has been the Devil's instrument, I fear, to bring many to eternal fire; now she herself with her older sister of Walsingham, her younger sister of Ipswich, and their two sisters of Doncaster and Penrhys will make jolly muster in Smithfield. They would not be all day in burning."[496]

Catholic Emancipation

Soon after the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829), the Catholics in the area bought a plot of land on Princes Street for £400 and here a schoolroom and house were adapted to serve as a chapel.[497] This soon proved too small and a Gothic Revival church was built, opening in 1867. A new shrine to Our Lady of Doncaster was established in 1868 to a design by Theodore Phyffers of London. St Peter's served a very large parish until the opening of coal mining communities necessitated the creation of separate parishes.

St Peter-in-Chains Church
Chequer Road, Doncaster, DN1 2AA

This is a large town centre church built in 1973 which houses the Victorian shrine to Our Lady of Doncaster.[498] This is to modern designs by J.H. Langtry-Langton of Bradford and the overall plan is hexagonal, formed by two interlocking squares and an octagonal central dome rising

[496] Wikipedia. Our Lady of Doncaster. Retrieved online.26/6/2025
[497] Taking Stock: Catholic Churches of England and Wales.
[498] Taking Stock: Catholic Churches of England and Wales. Retrieved online 3/7/2025

above the nave. The Lady Chapel contains the shrine of Our Lady of Doncaster which is the statue by Theodore Phyffers (1867)

Gainsborough

History

Gainsborough derived importance from its strategic position; it is situated 15 miles (24 km) from the Roman town of Lincoln and has served as an inland port with trade down the River Trent to Hull. It was an important town of the region known as Mercia during the Anglo-Saxon period and it was in disputed territory being close to the Danish stronghold at Torksey. In 868 King Alfred married Ealswitha, daughter of Aethelred Mucill, chief of the Gaini, from whom the town gets its name. In July 1013, the Danish leader Sweyn Forkbeard and his son Canute arrived in Gainsborough with an army of conquest. Sweyn defeated Anglo-Saxon opposition and King Ethelred fled the country. Sweyn declared himself King of England and returned to Gainsborough, setting up a base at Gainsborough Castle (on the site of the Old Hall). However, Sweyn was killed five weeks later when he was thrown from his horse in Gainsborough. His son Canute established a base elsewhere.

Gainsborough is recorded in the Domesday Book (1087) as a small community of only about 80 people, of whom about 70 % were of Scandinavian origin. The manor was owned by a succession of Norman noblemen including Nele d' Aubigny (Nigel the Black), forbear of the Mowbray family who held lands in the area until the end of the 14th century. The Knights Templar were major landowners in much of Lincolnshire until they were disbanded in 1312. Temple Bruer nearby was believed to have been used for military training.

The powerful de Burgh family became lords of the manor in the 15th century. Devoted to the Yorkist cause, they saw their manor house destroyed by the Lancastrians in about 1470. However, 10 years later, their fortunes restored by the triumph of the Yorkist cause, they began building the Old Hall as a stately manor house built around three sides of a quadrangle. The building remains today as one of the best-preserved manor houses of the period in Britain with a magnificent Great Hall and a fine brick tower. In 1596, the property was sold to the Hickman family, who were Puritans. Anthony and Rose Hickman appeared to have allowed the Old Hall to be used as a meeting place for a nonconformist group. Under the Hickman family it became a factory, Congregational chapel, ballroom and auction house, each use saving it from destruction. The Old Hall was given to the nation in 1970.[499] It is now managed by English Heritage and open to the public. Anywhere but in Lincolnshire, Simon Jenkins argues, the place would be famous.

[499] S. Jenkins. p.346

All Saints' Parish Church

Address: Church Street, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. DN21 2JR.

The first recorded evidence of a church in Gainsborough is in 1180 when the rectory was granted by Roger de Talebu to the Knights Templar who were based at Willoughton near Lincoln. The medieval church fell into decay after the Civil War and in 1736 it was partly demolished to make way for a new church, which was completed in 1748. The architect was Francis Smith and was modelled upon James Gibbs's St Martin-in-the-Fields (London).[500] There is very little that the Pilgrim Fathers might recognise. The main body of the church is an impressive building in neo-classical style. The interior, Jenkins suggests, is spectacular rather than lovable. It is dominated by mighty Corinthian columns rising to the height of the roof. The church retains its box pews and chandeliers, and the galleries that were lowered in the 19th century to give them a steeper rake. In Jenkins view, the church was blighted by the Victorian "restorers". The elderly Bodley visited the church in 1903 and declared "all the windows atrocious". He duly designed his own, equally atrocious, for a side chapel. The glass should go, argues Jenkins.

Gainsborough Old Hall

Address: Parnell Street, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 2NB.

Simon Jenkins suggests that for once the hyperbole used in the guidebooks is justified: "One of the country's best preserved medieval manors".[501] The Hall was important enough to welcome royal visitors, Richard 111 in 1483 and Henry V111 in 1541. Henry stayed for four days with his fifth wife Katherine Howard who was accused of indiscretions and executed in February 1542.

It is a 15th century manor with tower, Great Hall, kitchen range, solar, and a suite of state rooms. It retains its characteristic medieval features. The Great Hall fills the centre of the H-shape. The Old Hall is an oak- framed medieval manor house, built c.1460-80, constructed of large timbers, enclosing the wattle and daub walls, and forms three sides of a quadrangle, open on the south side. On the north wall is a structure probably originally intended as a chapel. At the north-east end is a brick tower. The stone bay window is thought to have been moved here from a nearby abbey after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. One brick wing was added shortly before Henry V111 stayed in 1541. The cupola louvre on the roof is the smoke hole of the great kitchen.

The interior is well preserved. The Great Hall is a large open space with a roof of oak trusses. There was probably a central hearth – the smoke escaping through the timber-frames and a louvre in the roof. At one end are the kitchen with and the usual service rooms of pantry,

[500] Simon Jenkins. England's Thousand Best Churches (2000) pp.375-6.
[501] S. Jenkins. England's Thousand Best Houses. (2003) p. 435.

buttery and bakery with servants' quarters above, accessed by ladders. At the other end is a Tudor staircase which rises to a gallery and a solar chamber. Beyond, in the east wing, are the apartments for visiting royalty including a Great Chamber, with bedrooms on either side containing original Tudor fireplaces and furniture. There is an extensive collection of sixteenth and seventeenth century furniture of the type found in the colonies of New England.

Pilgrim Fathers and Baptist connections

There is evidence that **William Brewster, William Bradford** and **John Robinson** attended a separatist group in Gainsborough before setting up their own group in Scrooby only 12 miles away. The group is thought to have held some meetings in Gainsborough Old Hall. The Gainsborough group was formed about 1602 and was led by **John Smyth,** a graduate of Christ's College, Cambridge. He had become a fellow of his college in 1593 and remained in post for seven years. College fellows were rather poorly paid and were required to resign if they wished to marry. In 1600, Smyth left the college and was appointed by the common council of Lincoln as city preacher with the large annual salary of £43 6s 8d – eight times his university salary and included the right to graze cattle on the common land. He married soon afterwards.

At Lincoln, Smyth became embroiled in a battle within Lincoln council over how many alehouses to allow in the city, how much beer could be brewed and how much the city should spend on welfare payments.[502] Smyth gave uncompromising sermons which clearly aligned him with the Puritans; his friends on the council lost control to a group favouring the publicans' standpoint and were voted out of office. In 1602, the new council fired Smyth and in 1603 the Archbishop of Canterbury took away his licence to preach and he lost his livelihood. By 1604, Smyth was now settled at Gainsborough where he practiced medicine and established friendships among the local Puritans, including the Hickmans. It is recorded that Smyth was a guest of the Hickmans and, in the absence of the local vicar, Smyth was persuaded to preach to a separatist group at the Old Hall. Early in 1606, someone reported to the bishop that Smyth had done so without a licence. He was brought before an ecclesiastical court and convicted of being "contumacious".

Nick Bunker examining church court records, provides a detailed account of the Gainsborough nonconformist group in the early 1600s.[503] They were self-employed men, tenant farmers, tradesmen, shop keepers and so on, who had become used to independence in matters of commerce as well as in matters of religion. In August 1607, John Noble was reported to the authorities for failing to take Holy Communion for 12 months and also for his failure to remove his hat during Sunday service, a gesture often made by Puritans. Noble was one of Gainsborough's leading citizens and taxpayers. He was a draper with a shop in the middle of

[502] N. Bunker. Making Haste from Babylon: The Mayflower Pilgrims and their world. (2010)
[503] N. Bunker. (179-81)

town and business interests in London. From 1605 onwards, in alliance with two local notables, Sir Richard Williamson and an attorney Edward Aston, John Noble fought a long and angry legal battle with Sir William Hickman, the lord of the manor. Hickman was a relative newcomer from London who was charging exorbitant levies on market traders and tried to ban Noble from doing any business at all. It was Hickman who reported John Noble for nonconformity. It seems likely therefore that Hickman would have refused to allow the separatists to meet at the Old Hall whilst the dispute was in progress.

At Gainsborough John Smyth developed a strong friendship with Thomas Helwys (1570-1616. Helwys had returned to his family home at Broxtowe Hall, Bilborough near Nottingham in 1595 and had established contact with Smyth and other nonconformists in the area. Smyth and his colleague Thomas Helwys, and about forty followers moved into exile in Holland, probably in 1606-7 and joined the so-called 'Ancient Brethren' in Amsterdam, a group of English exiles, led by Francis Johnson and Henry Ainsworth. There Smyth's views became more extreme; if the Bible was the word of God, it should be presented to people in its original languages. Every translation, however good, was bound to contain errors and so should not be used. If God had spoken in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, then those were the languages in which he should be heard. Smyth also argued that, as no ecclesiastical authority could be as pure as pure as himself, he decided to baptise himself. His position became known as a Se-Baptiser or Self-Baptism. Having first baptised himself, he then baptised the rest of his congregation. He came to believe in a believer's baptism (as opposed to infant baptism), that is baptism following a mature confession of faith in Jesus Christ.

In 1610, Smyth and some of his followers decided to join the Mennonites, a group of dissenters in the Netherlands holding similar views. Helwys and the rest of the group chose to remain as a distinctive church. Smyth died from tuberculosis in 1612. Helwys later returned to England and help found the Baptist movement.

The United Reformed Church (Formerly John Robinson Memorial Church)

Address: Church Street, Gainsborough. DN21 2JR.

A group of Protestant dissenters, 'The Independents', had been meeting in a room of Gainsborough Old Hall for worship and applied to the bishop in 1776 to use a new building called 'Lady Huntingdon's Chapel' in a yard belonging to John Dean. The group soon outgrew this and a new chapel in Caskgate Street. In 1892, on the initiative of the Rev. Hugh Griffiths, leading Congregationalists in England and America agreed to raise funds for a new church as a memorial to John Robinson. The cost of the whole building was £9,000 of which £1,000 was given by Americans. The foundation stone for this building was laid in June 1896 by the then American Ambassador - T.F. Bayard. On the 5th October 1972, the church became a constituent part of the United Reformed Church (a union of Congregationalists and

Presbyterians) and was inaugurated in London after a service at Westminster Abbey. Inside is a plaque commemorating the formation of the separatist church in 1602.

Friends meeting house (Quakers)

Quakerism came to Gainsborough around 1651, following a visit by George Fox who records how he was 'abused during preaching'.[504] The Friends met regularly at Gainsborough despite persecution and imprisonment, using private houses until the Meeting House was built in 1704. There is a small burial ground to the rear of the building.

Gainsborough Methodist Church

This is a modern building opened in 1968 on the site of an earlier church. A second Methodist Church, now closed, is the Centenary built in 1910 to commemorate the Centenary of the Primitive Methodist Church. It amalgamated with the local Wesleyans in 1932 as a methodist Church.

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Church

This was established in 1866 by Thomas Arthur Young and has recently been extensively restored.

Maltby

Roche Abbey

Also known as St Mary of the Rock, the abbey was run by the Cistercian Order, founded in the region of Citeaux, in France in 1098.[505] The founding charter of Roche dated 30th August 1147, identifies two local lords, Richard de Bully, Lord of Maltby, and Richard, son of Turgis, as donors of the land in the 3 km-long valley. Their lands lay either side of the Maltby Dike, which divided the valley, and, since it was unclear on which side of the river the monks would choose to build, the charter specified that credit for the new monastery should be shared by both founders. The first community at Roche in 1147 was a colony or daughter house from the Cistercian abbey of Newminster, Northumberland. The founding party consisted of 12 monks and an abbot (a group modelled on biblical accounts of the apostles' life in common together) and about 20 lay brothers. The monks offered vocations to the lay brothers whose main responsibility consisted of demanding manual agricultural work. In general, lay brothers had little education and came from modest backgrounds and so had previously been excluded from monastic life. In Cistercian monasteries the lay brothers shared the church and cloister with the monks, a strikingly original idea at the time and one which held great appeal. While

[504] Gainsborough Town Council Official Guide. Retrieved online. 24/02/2014.
[505] P. Fergusson & S. Harrison. p.25

the monks wore white habits and were clean-shaven, the lay brothers wore brown habits and were bearded. Both monks and lay brothers took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Widespread admiration of the order's spiritual discipline and simplicity of life led benefactors to offer gifts of money, land and protection.[506] In return they received prayer and friendship, benefited from the monasteries' agricultural and cattle-raising skills, drew on the knowledge of hydraulics derived from land clearances, and capitalized on the international contacts and hospitality resulting from the order's network across England and Europe.

Dissolution

The Abbey was founded in 1147 as a monastery of the Cistercian Order.[507] At its peak, about 1175, when many of the buildings were constructed, the abbey had about 50 monks and 100 lay brothers and servants. At the Dissolution in 1538, the community had dwindled to 17 monks, 4 novices and an unknown number of servants. The community were well aware that acquiescence to the Suppression led to modest pensions whereas opposition would be branded as treason, followed by forcible ejection, arrest and death by hanging unless recantation was forthcoming.[508] The last abbot, Henry Cundal, received an annual pension of £33, and was allowed to keep his books and a quarter of the abbey's plate and was provided with 'cattle and household stuff'. He lived for another 16 years at Tickhill, not far from Roche. The other 17 monks received annual pensions of £5 each, and the novices half that amount.' Everyone received £1 towards new clothing. The servants each received half a year's wages.

The suppression of Roche was recorded by Michael Sherbrook (1535-1610), rector of the nearby parish of Wickersley.[509] The events he describes at Roche took place when he was a child and were related to him by his father and uncle. Sherbrook recalls how, right up to the time of the Suppression, people from nearby villages attend the abbey for the various services in the abbey church, but he was surprised at how quickly attitudes changed. Cromwell's commissioners arranged for the disposal by public auction of many movable items, such as floor tiles, window glass, etc. However, before these could be sold a local mob descended on the abbey and stole what it could. After ransacking the church, the mob turned its attention to all the other buildings. Some of these, such as the mill and farm buildings, were left intact as they were respected and considered useful to the local economy.

After the Suppression, the monastic estate passed through a succession of private owners down to the Earl of Scarborough, who owned Sandbeck Park, a neighbouring estate. In 1774, the 4th Earl hired the celebrated landscape gardener Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to reconstruct the monastic site by building a banqueting lodge (now the ticketing office) within a more 'natural' landscape. The earl's guests would be taken by carriage some one and a half miles to dine in newly created, highly fashionable landscape.

[506] P. Fergusson & S. Harrison. p. 27.
[507] P. Fergusson & S. Harrison. Roche Abbey. English Heritage Guidebook. 2013.
[508] Ibid. p. 32.
[509] Ibid p. 33.

After the First World War, Roche, like many privately owned monastic sites, was placed in the guardianship of the State. In the early 1920s 'Capability' Brown's Lake was drained and the original medieval water channel was discovered and returned to use. Some buried parts of the abbey were exposed and a limited reconstruction of the site undertaken. English Heritage continues to manage the site.

Mattersey

St Helen's Priory

About one mile along a farm track from Mattersey Church off the B6045, 6 miles north east of East Retford.

The priory was founded by Roger FitzRalph, son of Ranulph de Mattersey in c. 1185.[510] It was designed to house six canons of the Gilbertine Order, founded by Gilbert of Sempringham, Lincolnshire in c. 1131. It was the only completely English religious order. Unlike many other Gilbertine priories, Mattersey was not a "double-house" with male monks and female nuns; it was home to only male canons. The Order at its peak had twenty-six houses in England but none elsewhere. Gilbertine monks wore black habits and white cloaks.

The priory was dedicated to St Helen, a popular name for a saint in Yorkshire. It was situated about a mile east of the village of Mattersey, on a slight rise in flood land close to the River Idle. The road from Mattersey to Wiseton probably passed close to the priory, making it less isolated than it appears today. It was also close to the Roman road, crossing the River Trent at Littleborough. Contact with Lincoln and the Gilbertine monasteries of Lincolnshire would have been relatively easy.[511]

The priory suffered a disastrous fire in 1279 and the walls of the church show evidence of having been burnt. Very little building seems to have taken place after this traumatic event. Archaeological evidence suggests that the church and monastic buildings were never fully rebuilt. Few documents of Mattersey Priory appear to have survived: all the monastic documents kept at the main foundation at Sempringham were destroyed by fire in the 17th century. One of the few indications that the priory was involved in village life was a reference to Prior Thomas Sutton acting as godfather to Thomas Wentworth, son of Matthew Wentworth of Everton in 1487. However, such a small community, which possessed a water mill, windmill, and fishery, could hardly have led a life apart from the village.[512]

Dissolution

At the Dissolution in October 1538, the priory was surrendered by Robert Holgate, Bishop of Llandaff and Commendatory Grand Master of the Gilbertine Order.[513] The prior at Mattersey, Thomas Norman, received a pension of £12, and later became headmaster of Malton Grammar School, which had been founded by Robert Holgate in 1546. The sub-prior received

[510] W. Page (ed) Victoria County History. pp. 140-141
[511] D. Marcombe & J. Hamilton. p.70
[512] Ibid p. 71
[513] Ibid p. 71-2

a pension of £2 13s 4d. The remaining three canons received pensions of £2 each. The site with all the buildings, together with the manor of Mattersey, was granted to Anthony Nevill and his wife Mary. Nevill was related to Sir John Hercy, who was working for Cromwell. Much of the estate continued to be owned by the family until the late 19th century. It is currently managed by English Heritage.

Oldcotes

St Helen's Roman Catholic Church.

Address: Main Street, Oldcotes. S81 8JF.

Origins of the church

St Helen's Church was built at the expense of Edward Chaloner of nearby Hermeston Grange (now Hermeston Hall). Chaloner was a Catholic and a timber merchant from Liverpool. After purchasing Hermeston Grange in 1835, along with a large part of the village of Oldcotes, he built a number of buildings in the Gothic Revival style. The foundation stone was laid on 15 September 1868 and the church, seating 120, opened in 1869. The church was built of limestone with Ancaster stone facings, to the design of S J Nicholl of London. In May 1980, St Helen's became part of the newly formed Diocese of Hallam.

Exterior features

St Helen's is built in the Gothic Revival style and is Grade 11 listed. The church and the sacristy are constructed in limestone walling, with Ancaster stone facings on doorways and windows. The rectory is linked to the church by a single storey building, which contains the sacristy and a small office. The house was built at the same time as the church and is predominantly red brick. The doorway has a date AD 1870 carved on the lintel above the door. The roofs throughout are covered with clay plain tiles and the ridge tiles are decorated with three ceramic tiles in the form of crosses and a single ridge cross on the south porch. There is a decorative bell tower with a small bell. At the rear of the church is the family vault of the Riddell family, Edward Chaloner's descendants through his daughter Katherine Flora's marriage to John Gerald Riddell in 1863.

Interior features

The South Porch

This provides access to the church. On either side of the porch are wooden benches on stone supports. On the right of the inner doorway is a piscina (basin containing holy water) supported on a corbel with an arch over. The entrance to the church is a framed and boarded timber door with metal tracery work beneath a pointed arch opening.

The Nave

The walls are painted cream and there is decorative, exposed Ancaster or Cadeby stonework to the doors and window surrounds, columns, arcades and niches. On entering the nave, to the left is a small circular font with carved decoration and a hinged hardwood lid. On the walls of the nave are fourteen plaster Stations of the Cross. A marble plaque to those lost in the Great War is beneath the West Window. There is a stone olearium (to hold the holy oils) with a hardwood door in the southwest corner of the nave.

The Chancel

In front of the original stone high altar is a more modern timber altar. To the right of the high altar is a piscina in Ancaster stone. The communion rail is hardwood with open tracery work and a hinged centre section to provide access to the altar. Set within the organ surround is a marble relief of Pope Innocent X1.

The North Transept

On the side of the chancel is a short transept containing a door to a confessional box, a statue of Our Lady and the Christ child, in front of which is a votive candle stand and a prie-dieu. There is a door to the sacristy and a short passageway, behind the organ, to the Lady Chapel.

Organ Chamber and Lady Chapel

These are separated from the chancel by finely carved screens. The pipe organ, dating to the foundation of the church was renovated in 2013, following two years of fundraising. It has an ornate wooden case with decorative pipework. The altar in the Lady Chapel is marble with a carved, inlaid marble front. There is a small, double, stained-glass window, dedicated to Gertrude Mary Riddell, dated 1870. There is an enameled bronze plaque, identifying the members of the Riddell family buried in the church crypt. On the east wall there is a beautiful stained-glass window, with seven panels, containing an image of Our lady and a dedication to the Immaculate Conception, a doctrine only defined in 1854.

The Church grounds

At the front of the church, on the left of the gate, is the parish burial ground. One of the graves is the Commonwealth War Grave of Lance Corporal Patrick John Jobe. Immediately in front of the west wall of the church is a burial plot for past parish priests of St Helen's. Behind the church are extensive grounds, with a large lawn and an allotment run by members of the parish. The garden is also the site of a Roman villa, discovered during the laying of the foundations of the church. The remains have been described and catalogued by the architect and are said to include a tessellated pavement representing Theseus in the Cretan labyrinth.

The villa was covered over but it is believed the site contains more extensive remains than have been previously discovered.

Recently, St Helen's has been merged with two churches in Worksop to form one large parish called St Jude's.

There are other Catholic Churches in the area including St Peter's in Chains, Doncaster and St Joseph's, Retford.

Scrooby

St. Wilfrid's Church

Address: Low Road, Scrooby, Nottinghamshire. DN10 6AJ.

The origin of the place-name Scrooby is uncertain, and it has been various listed from Scandinavian records as 'Scrobi' in 1086, Scroby in 1225 and Scruby in 1242. Here the common element 'by' follows the personal name as 'Skropi's' farmstead.[514] The Danish invasions, as we have seen, had reduced the Christian Church in northern England to a shadow and a desire to strengthen the hold of the Church led to important land grants made by King Eadwig and his brother Edgar to Archbishop Osketel in 956 and 958. The archbishop was given vast estates in Southwell and around the north of Nottinghamshire near Scrooby, Blyth, Scaftworth and Everton.[515]

The Domesday Survey (1086) records Scrobi as part of the manor of Sutton (cum Lound), the property of the Archbishop of York. The rectors of Sutton were vicars of Scrooby throughout the medieval period. Throughout most of this period, the tendency seems to have been to appoint a curate, often non-resident, to attend to the spiritual needs of the residents of Scrooby. Scrooby was never a large community and owed its relative importance to the Archbishop of York's Palace situated in the village and used by the archbishop in his travels around the archdiocese.

An important group of religious separatists who later became known as the Pilgrim Fathers lived in Scrooby in the 17th century. William Brewster, Richard Clyfton, John Robinson and William Bradford, sought exile from persecution in Holland in 1608. Twelve years later some would travel on the 'Mayflower' and help found a colony in America.

The church is dedicated to a 7th century Archbishop of York, though a medieval one, in a document dated 1400, the church seems to have been dedicated to St James.[516] There is a mention of a church in 1177 when it was identified as a chapel of ease to Sutton in the archdiocese of York. There is no trace of that building within the present fabric, but it may be

[514] A. Poulton-Smith. Nottinghamshire Place Names. p. 118.
[515] A. C. Wood. p. 26.
[516] M. Dolby. St Wilfrid's Church Scrooby: A brief History.

assumed that it was a simple two-cell structure (chancel and nave), similar to St Helena's at Austerfield.

In 1380, the church was destroyed and rebuilt in the Early Perpendicular style and the tower and spire were added. It is built of Roche Abbey stone (from the quarry near Roche Abbey) and has embattled parapets throughout on the tops of nave, chancel, south aisle, and tower. An unusual feature is the four-sided tower with an octagonal spire on the top. This distinctive design is similar to the church towers at Laughton-en-le-Morthen and West Retford.[517] The west window and that in the tower date from the same time. The church was enlarged in the 16th century with a south aisle and porch added and the aisle lit by large rectangular windows in the Tudor style. There are three 16th century benches in the chancel, known as 'Brewster's Pews', made up of 16th century bench ends, backed by lengths of panel carved with a grapevine motif which were probably once part of a medieval rood screen.[518] One of the pews forms a divide separating the organ from the south aisle. The other church pews were sold to America in 1891. The bishop's chair nearby dates from the 19th century. and replaced a 15th century chair that was stolen in 1992.

The Archbishop's Palace

Scrooby was always of some importance in medieval times because of its location on the Great North Road and the Palace of the Archbishop of York. The Palace (or Manor House) had been given by John, Earl of Chester in 1170 to Roger, Archbishop of York and to devolve on his successors for ever.[519]Travelling monarchs would also stay on their progresses through the kingdom. They valued Scrooby for its proximity to the hunting grounds of Hatfield Chase to the north and Sherwood Forest to the south. King John stayed there in 1212.

The Palace had about forty rooms to accommodate the archbishop's retinue as well as royal parties. In June, 1503, Margaret, the eldest daughter of Henry V11 and sister of Henry V111, travelled to Scotland to become wife of James 1V, King of Scotland, stayed at Scrooby. She was accompanied by a cavalcade of three hundred distinguished persons and their retinues.[520] A royal tour such as this must have taxed a large house to its utmost capacity to find sleeping accommodation for the guests and probably the entire district had to provide help. Henry V111 and his Privy Council stayed there in 1541. The house had its own private chapel and was still imposing in Brewster's time though partly derelict. It was of half-timbered construction except for the main building on the larger courtyard, which was of brick. The great hall, where the archbishop's held court in princely fashion, was on the first floor.

[517] M. Dolby ibid.
[518] M. Dolby. A brief history of Scrooby Church. 2006.
[519] Viscountess Galway. Scrooby in the 16th century. Retrieved online 9th December 2014.
[520] R. Mellors. Nottinghamshire history – Scrooby. Retrieved online. 05/01/2014.

The manor house was largely demolished in 1636-7, though one wing survived and in the mid-18th century was converted into a farmhouse for the archbishop's tenant.[521]

The fall of Thomas Wolsey

Wolsey had been appointed Archbishop of York in 1514 and had served Henry V111's religious adviser until his fall from power in 1530. Wolsey, very reluctantly and as a defeated and dying man, and on the express orders of the King returned to his northern province which he had never visited before. He made his way via Newark and Southwell in August, 1530, arriving at Scrooby where he stayed for the whole of September, before resuming his journey to York. A month later he was arrested for treason and taken as a prisoner towards London. On the 24th November, the sad cavalcade rested at the Earl of Shrewsbury's house, Kirkby Hardwick Hall, Nottinghamshire. One more short stage to Leicester Abbey, where he died.

The Pilgrimage of Grace

The Pilgrimage of Grace was a movement which disturbed the rural tranquillity of Scrooby. It was a rebellion against the ruthless methods adopted by Thomas Cromwell of suppressing the monasteries in 1536. The Earls of Rutland, Shrewsbury and Huntingdon drew up the King's forces at Scrooby to present a barrier to the rebels gathered at Doncaster ready to march on London.

The rise of a separatist group

The Separatists, as we have seen, were devout Christians who did not support some of the principles and practices of the Established Church of England such as a hierarchy of clergy and the wearing of certain clerical vestments, and so on. Unlike the Puritans who hoped to reform the Church from within, the Separatists eventually believed that they needed to reorganise themselves independently. The movement gathered momentum from the 1570s, and while there was some opposition to it in Elizabeth's reign, with the imprisonment and execution of some of its leaders. In Scrooby**, William Brewster** and other parishioners was cited before the Archdeacon's court for not attending his parish church regularly. By c1606 Brewster had established a separatist group meeting in secret at the Manor House. Brewster, like his father, was Master of the Queen's Post at Scrooby. The position was that of an officer of the Crown, responsible for the safe and speedy passage of royal messengers and official persons between Tuxford to the south and Doncaster to the north. The position was an important one and well-paid. He also held the important position of bailiff to the Archbishop of York, responsible for looking after Scrooby Manor House or Palace, one of half a dozen properties used by the archbishop and his retinue on their travels around the archdiocese. Brewster's task was to ensure that the property was fit for use when the archbishop or his royal visitors were visiting the area to enjoy the hunting at nearby Hatfield Chase and Sherwood Forest.

[521] C. Brown. A History of Nottinghamshire. Retrieved online. 20/05/2014.

The principal members of the Scrooby group were its pastor, **Richard Clyfton**, who had been rector of Babworth from 1586 to 1604, when he was forced to resign his benefice. He and his family appear to have taken up refuge with William Brewster at Scrooby Manor House. **John Robinson,** had held a position in Norwich before being deposed in 1604 and became the 'teacher' of the Scrooby group and **William Bradford** who went into exile in Holland with them, later travelling on the *Mayflower* to America, where he became Ruling Elder of the congregation at the New Plymouth Colony.

Victorian restoration of St Wilfrid's Church

After the reformation, in common with many small parish churches, the fabric of Scrooby church was allowed to deteriorate. Repairs were undertaken in 1731, 1817, and 1831. But in 1864 a thorough restoration of the tower and the rest of the church was undertaken under the guidance of C.J. Neale at a cost of £600. The font and pulpit were replaced, and the arcades and north wall were rebuilt. The small finger organ of 1847 was replaced by the larger Gray & Davidson organ, still in use. The ancient font was sold to American buyers in 1891.

The spire is a replacement, thought to date from 1817 or 1831 when the original was damaged by lightning. Parts of the original spire can be found in the graveyard wall, close to the north-west gate. The moulded battlements were formerly decorated with pinnacles, but only the bases survive. External repairs between 1990 to 1994 included the replacement of eroded stonework around windows and door, costing about £26,000.

Visiting St Wilfred's Church

The interior's fittings and furnishings are mainly Victorian, although the fabric, particularly the octagonal piers of the arcade, points to its medieval origins, as may the bases of the Victorian font and pulpit. The oak altar table is sixteenth or seventeenth century. On the north wall is the William Brewster Plaque, a reminder that Brewster and his family attended the church and lived at Scrooby Manor.

The porch - originally more decorated with battlements and pinnacles like the rest of the church - was added in the sixteenth century. Inside are the usual bench seats and the stone roof is an unusual feature. The three bells in the tower date from 1611, 1649 and 1787.

The east window surround and tracery were altered to a Perpendicular style in 1864, replacing a large rectangular Tudor style window, similar to those in the south aisle; the east end of the south aisle is raised up two steps and must have originally been a side chapel or chantry. Close to the organ are the benches, commonly known as "Brewster's Pews"**.** One has bench ends and a carved back which is certainly fifteenth century and an amalgam of old pieces. It is similar to two small benches in the aisle which have richly panelled bench ends and richly carved backs with vines and bunches of grapes. The name Brewster's Pews is likely to be apocryphal. The chancel arch is Early English Gothic in style (popular throughout the

thirteenth century), but it was rebuilt as part of the 1864 restoration and may have changed appearance during that work.

Scrooby retains features of medieval and Tudor times which the Pilgrim Fathers would recognise. The tiny River Ryton, used by the boats of the Pilgrim Fathers' families in their attempted escape into exile, still runs through the village on its way to join the River Idle and on to the River Tent and the Humber estuary. The Church of St Wilfrid's, has probably changed little externally since the seventeenth century. However, what little remains of the Archbishop of York's large and comfortable palace and is now a farm house in private hands. The former fish ponds can be traced in the nearby meadows and the moat, originally filled from the diverted River Ryton, can still be traced on the ground as a dry ditch.

A short walk around the village reveals other properties the Pilgrim Fathers might recognise, including a water mill thought to originate in medieval times. A grey stone wall around the church retains the raised burial ground along Low Street and the adjacent Church Street. Close by one entrance is the former pinfold or village pound for stray animals. Near this is the Old Vicarage, later renamed Brewster's Cottage, a half-timbered house (c.1590) which William Brewster is thought to have helped to build, of a type that was common at the time of the Pilgrim Fathers, but now there is only one left in the village.

Manor House

Scrooby Manor is privately owned and can only be viewed from Station Road. It is a medieval manor house, originally on a six-acre moated site, created by diverting the River Ryton around the property and would have been an impressive, half-timbered structure probably similar to Gainsborough Old Hall today. What can be seen of the Manor House suggests a small remnant of the once former palace. Two stone gothic window frames and a massive bricked up archway give clues as to the medieval origins. There are traces of the moat and irregularities in the field which suggest buildings of the former palace. Roof timbers of the old house were re-used in the brick barn and the dovecote.

Worksop

Priory Church of Our Lady and St Cuthbert

Address: Priorswell Road, Worksop, Nottinghamshire. S80 2JE.

Worksop Priory was built on the site of a small Norman church at the small village of Radford on the edge of Worksop. The property was endowed by Roger de Busli and by marriage passed to William de Lovetot who in 1103 gave it to the Augustinian Order to found a monastery.[522] The descendants of the de Lovetots, the Furnivals, Talbots, and Howards, rose

[522] D. Marcombe & J. Hamilton p. 17.

to become one of the most powerful family dynasties in England and the fortunes of the Priory rose with them. The Priory was always moderately well provided for; in 1291 its taxable income was £167, making it the third wealthiest monastic house in Nottinghamshire.[523]

Priory building

The original small Norman church was subsequently rebuilt for use by the canons. In about 1140 the nave was commenced at the east end and the subsequent nine bays of the aisle arcade have impressive carvings and alternate round and octagonal piers. The first master mason was almost certainly recruited from Southwell Minster which was being built at the same time.

The impressive twin towers face the street on the west side. These are also 12th century, except for their tops which are 15th century. The towers are 90 feet high. The nave was originally 358 feet long. In the 13th century the original choir was replaced by one in the Early English style and a fine Lady Chapel was built by Maude Furnival in 1240-50. Maude's husband, Sir Gerald Furnival died in Jerusalem in 1219. Later, when her elder son Thomas also died on crusade, she insisted his brother Gerald travel to the Holy land to bring back his heart for burial at Worksop.[524]

Visitations

Archbishop Wickwane visited Worksop Priory on the 26th May 1276, with the result that the following injunctions were subsequently issued:[525] The prior was not to permit the holding of private property, and to forbid all going outside the gates of the priory save for some inevitable and necessary cause. All lockers of the canons were to be opened four times a year and oftener if there was any cause, anything found therein to be applied to the common use of the monastery; the canons were not to go out alone, when there was necessity for leaving the house; idle canons lingering without cause in the farmery [infirmary] were to be treated as paupers and otherwise punished; two canons in particular, Robert de Sancto Botulfo and Peter de Retford, were to be removed from the farmery and to consort with the convent; Adam de Rotherham, the late cellarer, to stay in the cloister and do penance; the sick to be kindly treated; all sinister and unfitting speech forbidden; no canon or brother to eat and drink with any outside guest, unless the prior was present; silence to be strictly observed according to the rule; alms not to be wasted; the entertaining of costly and useless guests forbidden; William Selliman, a rebellious and quarrelsome canon and William de Grave and Henry de Marcham, two lay brothers, accused of incontinence, to be punished. These rules were to be read in chapter once a month.

[523] The Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project. Retrieved 10th May 2025
[524] D. Marcombe & J. Hamilton (eds) p.18.
[525] British History Online: The priory of Worksop. Retrieved 1st September 2013.

Gatehouse

By the early fourteenth century, the Priory and its grounds were originally surrounded by a high wall with a large Gatehouse. Permission was granted in 1314 by the Archbishop of York to fell 200 oaks for its construction. The main purpose of the building was to accommodate travellers. The ground floor is divided by an archway which would have given access to the priory grounds and on the south east corner of the building a tiny chapel and shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary was added in about 1340. It had an entrance each side so that a line of pilgrims could enter by one door, kneel and pray, and leave by the other door.

The upper floor of the building, accessed by an external stone staircase, provided free accommodation and food for travellers who were allowed to stay for up to three days. To one side of the chamber is a room for the guest master. The upper chamber became a schoolroom in 1628, an early example of an elementary school.

On the north side of the Church were the cloisters and living accommodation. This is unusual as they were normally to the south in monastic layouts. The mill and kitchens were served with water from the River Ryton. The river was dammed to provide fish ponds in an area now called Brecebridge. The farm buildings included barns and storage areas.

Dissolution

The priory was surrendered on the 15th November 1538, having been in existence for 436 years.[526] It had been visited by Cromwell's commissioners, Legh and Layton, who found four canons guilty of unnatural sin, and one desiring release from his vows. The priory had an income of £240. On surrendering the priory, the prior Thomas Stokes received a pension of £50, and the other fifteen canons received ones varying from £2 - £6. A small number of the canons sold their pensions for a cash settlement.

In November 1541, the priory and over two thousand acres of land were granted to Francis Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, in exchange for Farnham Royal in Buckinghamshire. With the manor of Farnham Royal went the honour of a glove at the coronation. This honour Francis was not willing to lose, so Henry V111 agreed it should pass to the lords of the manor of Worksop. The richly embroidered glove was for the right hand of the sovereign, and was to be placed on the hand prior to receiving the sceptre. The lands of the priory were held by the Shrewsbury family until the 17th century when they passed by marriage to the Duke of Norfolk and in 1840 were sold to the Duke of Newcastle.

After the Dissolution, the east end of the church and most of the monastic buildings were plundered for stone, lead and timber. The townspeople of Worksop were allowed to keep part of the nave (reduced from 358 feet long to 135) as their parish church and the gatehouse for use as the vicarage.

[526] D. Marcombe & J. Hamilton. p.21 -2.

The Tickhill Psalter

Worksop Priory was famous for its treasures including the marvellously illuminated manuscript. This was produced by John de Tickhill who 'wrote and gilded this book with his own hands' and was Prior from 1303 to 1314. This is one of the finest of all English medieval manuscripts. The work was never completed as John was removed from the priory in 1314 for financial irregularities, which may be related to the costly materials he used in the making of the psalter. Illustrations in the psalter also depict everyday life in medieval times, including sheep shearing, archery, stag hunting, etc.

Today it is in the safekeeping of the New York Public Library. The Psalter, or book of Psalms is richly decorated with colourful capital letters and borders.

Nonconformity and the Pilgrim Fathers connection

Richard Bernard, Puritan clergyman and important writer, was vicar at Our Lady & St Cuthbert's Church and had strong links with the nonconformist movement in the area. His home was at Epworth, a place which would later become known as the home of the Wesleys; John Wesley became the founder of 'Methodism', a nonconformist movement which developed from the mid 17th century onwards. Bernard was baptised at Epworth in 1568 and received his education at Christ's College, Cambridge. He was deprived of his position in 1605 for refusing to subscribe to the Canons of 1604 and for a short time set up a separatist group of about 100 people in Worksop in 1606. He had long discussions with other separatists in the area including **John Robinson,** teacher of the separatist group in Scrooby about the direction of Puritanism. Bernard was eventually persuaded to conform to church rules by the Archbishop of York, Tobie Matthew. Bernard defended the Church, whilst not always all the rules and was brought before the church courts in 1608 and 1611. He then moved to a position as vicar in Batcombe, Somerset where he lived from 1612 to 1641. He later wrote a series of books highly critical of the separatist cause. He wrote an influential handbook for ministers entitled '*The Faithfull Shepeard and his practice*'

Bernard's daughter Mary married Roger Williams. Both were to emigrate to New England in the 1630s. Williams spent short periods as clergyman in Boston and New Plymouth, Massachusetts, but his views proved too radical for the church authorities. He eventually achieved pre-eminence as the founder of Providence, Rhode Island, and for his views on freedom of conscience.

Victorian improvements

The Rev. George Appleton became Vicar of Worksop in 1847 and recognised the need to restore the surviving buildings and successfully restored the nave, the roof and various windows and doors. The church was extensively restored; the north and south sides were pulled down and rebuilt, the east end taken out and a Norman window of three lights put in,

above which is a circular or wheel window. The old galleries and pews were swept away and open stalls erected, the ends of which were richly carved and ornamented.

20th century changes

The altar and reredos are by Gilbert Scott and the crossing and sanctuary are mostly twentieth century completed in 1974.

Restoration work was carried out between 1970-4 when the east end was redesigned by Laurence King. Although he criticises its detailing, Pevsner says that 'the scale and simplicity of the squat tower (with thin fleche), the gable-ended choir and two-storey sacristy and vestries are right'.[527]

A short tour of the church

South Door

The church is entered by the South Door. The door is medieval with decorative iron scroll work dated from 1325-50. The loop of the scroll ends resembles iris flowers. On the stone doorway are a number of crosses cut into the stone. It is thought that these were votive marks cut by crusaders.

Fonts

There are two fonts. One is dated to 1857 with an octagonal main shaft and a panelled square bowl. The second dates to 1974.

West Window

Designed by Helen Whittaker in 2003, the window depicts St Cuthbert, his right hand raised in blessing and in his left the head of King Oswald that was buried with him for safe keeping. He has otters at his feet: this relates to the story of a monk who saw the otters restoring warmth to Cuthbert's numb feet after he had been partially immersed in the sea at night

Skull

A small glass-covered opening in the north wall contains an ancient skull with an arrowhead embedded in it. This is reputed to be that of a Sherwood Forester.

Lady Chapel

Lady Maud Furnival had the Lady Chapel built. The chapel has early English lancet windows which fortunately, unlike much of the church, escaped the damage caused at the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The chapel has oak panels with the names of those who fell in the two

[527] Southwell & Nottingham Church History project. Retrieved online. 10th May 2025.

world wars. The ruins of the Lady Chapel were restored in 1922 by architect Sir Harold Brakspear and in 1929 the chapel was re-joined to the nave. It became a memorial to the men of Worksop who died in World War 1.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary of religious terms

ABBESS. The superior of certain communities of nuns following the Benedictine or Franciscan rules. A nun must now be forty years of age and ten years as a nun before she can be elected to the office. In England abbesses attended important Church Councils on some occasions, e.g. St Hilda was present at Whitby in 664.

ABBOT. This is the title of the superior of a large religious house usually belonging to one of the Orders of monks. He is elected, normally for life, by the monks of his abbey, but in the Middle Ages lay patrons frequently exercised decisive influence over the appointment. Within three months of his election, he must receive acknowledgement of his position from the local diocesan bishop or, in certain cases, from another abbot.

ABJURATION. The act of renouncing any idea, person, or thing to which one has previously adhered. Today the term is usually restricted to the public retraction imposed on Catholics who, having knowingly or publicly defected from the faith, seek to be reconciled to the Catholic Church.

ABSOLUTION. The formal act of a priest or bishop pronouncing the forgiveness of sins to people who have undertaken confession and penance. In the early Church, absolution was given publicly to reconciled sinners after public penance. Private confession and absolution, which began as a devotional custom in some Anglo-Saxon monasteries, became the usual method of obtaining remission of sins.

ABSTINENCE. The practice of abstaining from or not eating certain types of food as distinguished from fasting which means the refusal of all, or all but a strictly limited quantity of food, irrespective of its kind. From early Christian times, abstinence from flesh-meat on certain days has been practised. Most of the contemplative orders (Carthusians, Carmelites, and so on), have practiced quite severe abstinence throughout the year. Among Roman Catholics, absence from meat on Fridays has been a long tradition.

ADVENT. The ecclesiastical season immediately before Christmas. The first day of Advent is the Sunday nearest St Andrew's Day (30th November). Four Sundays in Advent always precede Christmas Day. Historically, the first reference to Advent came in the 5th century and was formerly kept as the Lent period, but with less fasting. Fasting is no longer required, though festivities are discouraged. The season is observed as a time of preparation not only for Christmas but also for the Second Coming of Christ on the Day of Judgment

ADVOWSON. The right of appointing a clergyman to a parish office or 'benefice'. Advowsons are of two kinds: 'collative' when they are held under the jurisdiction the benefice is, normally

the bishop of the diocese; and secondly 'presentative', when the advowson is held by some other person ('patron') who presents the nominee for the position. In the latter case, the patron, who may be a clerical or lay person, an individual or a corporation, does not possess the right to put the candidate into the office. He presents the candidate to the bishop or other ecclesiastical superior to agree the induction, or who may for just cause reject the nominee. Historically, the right of Advowson is a survival of the originally more extensive control exercised by the feudal lord over churches on his estates. An Advowson is treated in English law as a right of property which can be transferred by gift or (until 1924) by sale.

AGNOSTICISM. The view that only material phenomena can be the subject of real knowledge and that all knowledge of entities such as God, Divine Being, immortality, and a supernatural world is impossible.

ANABAPTISTS. Extreme religious reformers who also advocated radical social and political ideas in the secular world. They appeared in Europe in the 16th century and were persecuted in England from the 1530s. They influenced nonconformist groups in Gainsborough and Scrooby, including Baptists led by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys.

ANCHORITE (m), ANCHORESS (f). A person who withdraws from the world to live a solitary life of silence, prayer and mortification. In the early Church, this way of life was at the will of the anchorite who was free to leave his retirement if he wished. In the later Middle Ages, rules were laid down, the bishop himself enclosing the anchorite, who was henceforth confined within the walls of his or her cell, which might be attached to the parish church.

ANGELUS. In the western Church, this particular devotion consists in the repetition three times daily (early morning, noon, and evening) of three Ave Marias and the collect (or prayer for the day) as a memorial of the Incarnation. A bell is rung three times for each Ave and nine times for the collect. The morning Angelus first appears in the 14th century, the noon Angelus is from the 15th century. The evening Angelus perhaps from the 13th century.

ARMINIANISM. A set of beliefs developed by the Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius, which emphasised free will and salvation through good works in contrast to the doctrine of predestination favoured by the Calvinists. Arminianism gained strength in the Church of England in the early 17th century, supported by Archbishop Laud and his High Church group. Their opponents viewed it with great suspicion as a return to Catholicism.

BEAD. Originally the word meant a prayer but it was later used for small spherical objects used for 'telling beads' or to help in counting the prayers. The rosary was a later development.

BEATIFICATION. In the Roman Catholic tradition, the Pope permits the public veneration of some faithful person who receives the title 'Blessed'. This is a preliminary step before canonization when the person is titled 'saint'.

BENEFICE. A term originally used for a grant of land for life as a reward for services. Under Church law it came to be used about an ecclesiastical office which prescribe certain duties.

Parochial benefices in the Church of England are of three kinds: rectories, vicarages and perpetual curacies.

BENEFIT OF CLERGY. In the Middle Ages, clergy might claim exemption from trial by secular court on being charged with a felony. The exemption was granted to all clergy, including monks and nuns. In later years, the benefit was granted for certain offences to all who could read, on the grounds that this ability was an accepted test of a cleric. Not completely abolished in England until 1827 but benefit of clergy was removed at the Reformation for many categories of offence.

BOOK OF SPORTS. This was issued by King James 1 in 1618 to legalise Morris Dancing and other sports after church services on Sundays, following attempts by Puritan magistrates to enforce observance of the Sabbath.

CALVINISM. The doctrine advanced by John Calvin an early Protestant theologian who emphasised predestination – the belief that some people ('the elect') are chosen by God for salvation whilst others are foreordained to damnation. The doctrine gained strength during Elizabeth 1's reign but was strongly challenged in the 1620s by Armenians led by Archbishop Laud.

CANONIZATION. In the Roman Catholic tradition, this is the definitive statement by the Pope, whereby a member of the faithful departed, previously beatified, is declared to have entered into eternal glory as a 'saint'. This Papal authority is generally given nowadays only after a long legal process laid down in Canon Law.

CATHOLIC. From the Greek word meaning universal, it originally applied to the one Christian Church throughout the world. When this Church was divided, the Eastern part came to be called Orthodox, and the Western part Catholic. When the Western Church became fragmented after the Reformation, some churches such as the Anglican Church refused to accept the sovereignty of the Pope, and continued to call themselves Catholic. The term Roman Catholic denotes the Church under the Pope and the term Catholic those Western Churches claiming to belong to the Catholic tradition.

CATECHISMS. A popular manual of Christian doctrine using a dialogue form of question and answer for use orally. Although the term seems to have originated in the 16th century, the Reformation saw a flood of catechisms, Protestant and Catholic.

CELIBACY OF CLERGY. Vow of perfect chastity required of all admitted to major orders in the Catholic Church from the 11th century onwards. Abolished in the Church of England in the reign of Henry V111. Revived by Mary 1. Elizabeth was known to favour celibacy of clergy.

CHAPEL OF EASE. A chapel subordinate to the mother church, for the ease of parishioners who could thereby attend services closer to home. Such chapels proved especially useful in the vast parishes in northern England where distance and natural obstacles made attendance at the mother church difficult. Many eventually arose to parochial status.

COINAGE. Pound sterling = 240 pence or pennies (d); pound = 20 shillings (s); shilling = 12 pence or pennies (d)
Groat = 4 pence or pennies (d)
Penny
Half-penny
Farthing = quarter penny.

CONGREGATIONALISM. This was a form of church government which rests on the independence and autonomy of each local church.

CONVENT. This can refer either to the buildings in which a body of religious live together, or to the religious community itself. Historically, it has been applied to the house of religious of either sex, though it now tends to be restricted to houses of nuns.

CORRODY. Originally the right possessed by some benefactors of monasteries or religious houses or their nominees to board and lodge within them. The term also came to be applied to pensions and other allowances (mostly in kind) made by the monastery to those who had served in various ways or who had given a lump sum in return for a corrody as a kind of annuity for life. Their prevalence was one of the causes of the impoverishment of monasteries in the later Middle Ages.

COUNTER-REFORMATION. Term used to describe the movement within the Roman Catholic Church to halt the spread of Protestantism and win back converts. Modern trend is to use the term Catholic Reformation which does not see the cause of Catholic reform purely in terms of a reaction to Protestant activity.

CREED. From the Latin credo meaning I believe. This is a summary of the main articles of Christian faith. The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds had their origin in the early Church.

CURATE. Historically, a clergyman who has charge of a parish was termed rector, vicar, or perpetual curate. Such a clergyman was also known as the 'incumbent'. The word curate is now used to denote an assistant who helps the incumbent.

DIOCESE. The territorial area of the Church, governed by a bishop with the assistance of lesser clergy and sometimes one or more other bishops. The diocese is usually divided into parishes which are frequently grouped into rural deaneries and archdeaconries.

EPISCOPALIANS. A movement which believed in the government of the church by bishops.

EPISTLE. In worship it has long been customary for one or two passages of Scripture to be read or sung before the Eucharist part of the Mass. This came to be known as the 'Epistle', probably because it was normally taken from the New Testament Epistles, occasionally from the Old Testament, Acts of the Apostles, or the Book of Revelations. Until the 8th century, the reading of the Epistle was undertaken by a layman or deacon and was formerly read from the ambo or the rood-screen where one existed. In modern times, a designated place in the chancel is set aside and the reading is undertaken by the deacon or by the celebrant himself.

EXCOMMUNICATION. This is a complex procedure which has varied considerably over the centuries. In general, there were two forms of excommunication applied according to the severity of the offence. The lesser excommunication barred the individual from receiving the sacraments but otherwise did not interfere with his (or more rarely her) daily life. The greater excommunication went beyond this to include public shunning – nobody was supposed to have any dealings with someone who had been subjected to it.

FEOFFEES FOR IMPROPRIATIONS. In 1625, a group of 12 puritan feoffees (lawyers, clergy and citizens mostly of London) began to buy lay impropriations (advowsons) which became vacant. This enabled them to appoint 'godly' clergy to those posts with salaries paid by the feoffees. Surplus money was used to set up Puritan lectureships. The feoffees were disbanded by Archbishop Laud in 1633.

FIFTH MONARCHISTS. A Puritan sect whose ideas were based on the prophesy in Nebuchadnezzar's dream that the 'fifth monarchy' of Christ's kingdom on earth would appear after the collapse of the other four kingdoms.

FIRST FRUITS AND TENTHS. Beneficed clergy were obliged to pay (to the Crown after the. Reformation) the first year's revenue from their benefice as specified in the Valor Ecclesiasticus or King's Books and thereafter one tenth of their income annually.

GOSPEL. The word is old English *godspel,* 'good news'. The central content of the Christian message is revealed in Christ's own preaching in the works of his Apostles; the gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. The unique authority belonging to the four Gospels was firmly established by the 2nd century. In the liturgy of the Mass, an extract of one of the gospels is read out, varying from one or two verses to a whole chapter. The Gospel always occupies the last place (i.e. after the Epistle and other readings if any) as the position of honour. In the current Catholic rite, the deacon, bearing the book, goes in procession to the appointed place, accompanied by thurifer and acolytes, and reads the Gospel of the day. From earliest times, it has been the custom for the congregation to stand at the Gospel.

GRACE. In Christian thought, grace is the supernatural assistance of God bestowed on a person with a view to his/her sanctification. While the necessity of this aid is generally admitted, the manner of it has been a subject of discussion since the early Church.

HOLY DAYS. In the Roman Catholic Church, feast days of outstanding importance which the laity as well as the clergy are obliged to observe by hearing Mass and abstaining from servile work. The list of such feasts varies from country to country, but everywhere all Sundays in the year are 'Days of Obligation". In England and Wales, in addition such days are the Epiphany (6th January), Ascension Day, Corpus Christi, Sts. Peter & Paul (29th June), the Assumption of the BVM (15th August), All Saints (1st November), and Christmas Day (25th December).

JESUITS. The Society of Jesuits is a religious order, founded in 1534 to promote the Catholic faith. They arrived in England in 1580 and became involved in political conspiracies against Elizabeth 1.

MAJOR AND MINOR ORDERS. In the medieval Catholic Church, the office holders were divided into Major Orders (bishop, priest, deacon and sub-deacon) and Minor Orders (porters, lectors (readers), exorcists, accolytes. Those in Major Orders were ordained, those in minor orders were not.

MILLENARIANISM. The belief that the second coming of Christ would herald his reign on earth for one thousand years. Although most believers awaited this coming passively, others such as the Fifth Monarchists and the Ranters strove actively to prepare for it.

MORTAL SIN. According to Catholic teaching, mortal sin is a deliberate act of turning away from God. This frustration of God's purpose is held to involve the loss of sanctifying grace and eternal damnation. A sin in order to be mortal must be committed with a clear knowledge of its guilt and with full consent of the will and must concern a 'grave matter'. It is required that where circumstances allow every mortal sin be confessed to a priest; but if confession is impossible, the desire to do so and an act of contrition are sufficient for obtaining God's pardon.

MORTIFICATION. A term used in the ecclesiastical context to describe the action of the 'killing' or 'deadening' of the flesh and its lusts through ascetic practices and more particularly through the infliction of bodily discomfort and even bodily hurt. Fasting and abstention from pleasure are among the many means of mortification.

NOVENA. In the western Church, a term applied to a period of nine days' private or public devotion by which it is hoped to obtain some special grace. The general observance of novenas dates from the 17th century. Novenas may be arranged either in circumstances of special peril or need or as a recurrent devotion and, in the Roman Catholic Church, indulgences have sometimes been attached to their observance.

PLURALISM. The practice of holding more than one 'benefice' or clergy post simultaneously was widespread in the medieval church. The Canons of 1604 prohibited the holding of benefices in plurality if they were more than 30 miles apart.

PRAEMUNIRE. The title of a number of statutes (first passed in the 14th century) which were designed to protect the rights claimed by the English crown against encroachment by the Papacy.[528] The statute of 1353 forbade with withdrawal from England of cases which should be decided by the King's courts. In 1529 Henry V111 claimed that Thomas Wolsey's activities as Papal legate infringed this statute. Elizabeth 1 used Praemunire to deal with purely civil offences and with Roman Catholic recusants. By the Criminal Law Act (1967) the statutes were repealed in total.

RECUSANCY. The term came to be used from about the 1570s onwards of Roman Catholics who refused to attend the services of the established Church of England. Until the Pope excommunicated Elizabeth 1 in the bull 'Regans in excelsis' (1570), recusancy had been rare,

[528] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone p. 1114.

since Catholics had received no clear guidance regarding their attitude to the Church of England. Recusancy received a powerful impetus with the arrival of the Jesuits and other priests from the continent. Everywhere, except Lancashire, the actual numbers of recusants were only a small percentage of the population, but they were seen as a dangerous minority. The penalties imposed on them by the various Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity were often severe, though actual enforcement waxed and waned according to political circumstances. By the 18th century, judges and juries became increasingly unwilling to exert the full penalties, which included death, banishment and life-imprisonment, though forfeiture of land and goods, double taxation, monthly fines and a host of civic disabilities remained.[529] Under the Catholic Relief Act of 1791, the crime of recusancy for not attending the services of the Church of England was finally abolished.

RETREAT. A period of days spent in mediation, with intervals of silence and other religious practices. The forty days Christ spent in the wilderness have been considered to give the ultimate authority for the practice. Retreats were introduced as a formal devotion during the counter-Reformation period and the Jesuits were the first religious order to include retreats in their rule. In the Church of England, the practice of retreat was introduced under the influence of the Oxford Movement.

ROSARY. The rosary consists of five (sometimes fifteen) sets of ten beads (called decades), each separated from the next set by a larger bead. For each of the small beads, a Hail Mary (Ave Maria) is recited, and at the larger bead the Lord's Prayer (Paternoster) is recited. The rosary, which is an aid to counting, seems to have developed gradually under Cistercian and Dominican influence.

SECTARIES. The term was used of Protestant sects which emerged during and after the English Civil War. These included Baptists, Quakers, Ranters, Seekers, and many other small groups with extreme theological ideas. They tended to be opposed to the national Church with its structure of parishes and advocated independent congregations and elected ministers.

[529] F. L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. pp. 1163-4.

Appendix 2: The architecture and furnishings of parish churches

Architectural styles

This is a simplified look at different architectural styles. Clearly these are general dates as there are changes in style which might overlap the specific time periods.

Norman

Style of architecture used in England from 1066 – 1200 and sometimes known as Romanesque. Characterised by round arches, stout columns, zigzag, and beakhead ornament.

Early English or Gothic

Flourished in England in c1200 -c1275. Characterised by pointed arches, lancet windows, dogtooth and nailhead ornament.

Decorated

The style of Gothic architecture which flourished in England from c1275 until c1360. It often featured wider arches, tracery, and elaborate carving such as ballflower ornament.

Perpendicular

A style of Gothic architecture, current from c.1340 to c.1550 and sometimes much later. Characterised by large windows with vertical mullions and horizontal transoms giving the impression of straight lines.

Classical

Architectural style, loosely based on those of ancient Greece and Rome; classical columns, round arches, and windows with keystones. Was revived for some churches in the Georgian era.

Gothic revival

The imitation of the Gothic style which became overwhelmingly popular for churches during the Victorian period.

Glossary of church fittings and furnishings

Different Christian traditions following the Reformation have given rise to different views about how the church should be furnished. In the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions, the altar occupies a central place; in many Protestant traditions, the altar has been replaced by a table, and the focal point of the building is the pulpit. Again, the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches may be rich in ornamentation, whereas churches arising out of the Reformation may insist on a simpler style.

AISLES. Commonly used for any extension to the nave of a church made by piercing its side walls with a series of arches and building an extension with a separate and lower roof for the purpose of increased accommodation.

ALTAR. The main or high altar, usually made of stone, stood at the top of a series of steps in the centre of the east end, underneath the east window. The altar was normally fixed and consecrated. The celebrant would conduct the Mass at the High Altar, with his back to the congregation. After the Reformation, in Protestant churches, the altar was replaced by a communion table made of wood and moved closer to the nave. Reforms in the Roman Catholic Church brought about by the Second Vatican Council required the celebrant to face the congregation. The High Altar is often left unused and a new altar is placed at the other end of the chancel, closer to the nave and the congregation.

ALTAR RAILS. Rails to separate the altar from the main body or nave of the church were widely introduced into churches in the early years of Elizabeth 1 when rood-screens were being removed. The Puritans disliked both rood-screens and altar rails as implying that the altar was especially sacred and ought not to be distanced from the congregation. In many cases they were successful in getting altar rails removed. Archbishop Laud in 1634 ordered the rails to be restored. The removal of the rails was again ordered in 1641 and they finally returned with the Restoration of Monarchy in 1660.

AMBONES. Close to the rood-screen were two ambones or raised platforms for the proclaiming of scripture or preaching a sermon. After the 14th century these tended to be replaced by a pulpit.

AUMBRY. A recess in the wall of the chancel in which the chalice and other vessels used in church services were kept. In Anglican churches (but not Roman Catholic churches) bread and wine consecrated at the Eucharist service for distribution to the sick are kept there.

APSE. Semi-circular or polygonal end of a church or chapel, generally at the east end behind the altar.

ARCADE. Series of arches on columns or piers usually dividing the nave from the side aisles.

BALLFLOWER. Ornamental feature of 1300s of flower of three petals enclosing a small ball.

BEAKHEAD. Ornamental feature of the Norman period, of a row of bird or beast heads in a roll molding.

BOX PEW. Typical 18th century high wooden enclosures designed to keep out draughts during the lengthy sermons of the period.

BRASSES. A figure of a person engraved on a flat brass panel, and let into a wall or floor of a church. They were much used between the 13th and 16th centuries. Many were destroyed by iconoclasts or carried off by plunderers in the Reformation period. Many still remain and give valuable information about dress, vestments etc.

CANDLES. On the altar there would be at least two candlesticks which would lighted during the celebration of the Eucharist. At Eastertide, a large Paschal candle is placed on a free-standing candlestick close to the altar. The candle is decorated with a cross, the Greek letters alpha and omega (the first and last letters of the alphabet, the beginning and the end). In the Catholic tradition, candles are lighted and placed as devotional offerings in stands in front of representations of the Virgin Mary and the saints.

CAPITALS. Heads of columns or pillars, often shaped or sculptured.

CARTOUCHE. A type of memorial tablet widely introduced into English churches in the 17th and 18th centuries. Usually made of marble, it was made to resemble a bent piece of paper or parchment for the inscription. It is often surmounted with the coat of arms of the deceased.

CATHEDRAL. A large church which is the headquarters of a diocese and the seat of a bishop or archbishop. So called because it contains the bishop's cathedra (Throne).

CHANCEL. The chancel or sanctuary is always at the east end of the church and is the space reserved for the clergy and choir. On the altar there would be a cross and two, four or six candlesticks. Over the centuries, chancels were enlarged, side aisles installed and great windows replaced the narrow slits of earlier times. Within these more spacious churches, wealthy individuals or merchant guilds endowed priests to celebrate masses at some particular side altar or in a chantry chapel specially built for the purpose, to pray for the souls of the founders and their families.[530]

CHANTRY CHAPELS. The introduction of chantry chapels into churches was an important development in medieval times. This was the place where the chantry priest would say or sing the Mass for the soul of the founder and his friends. The chapel usually took the form either of an altar erected in the space partitioned off within the church or a building close to or detached from the church. This building might have an extra storey designed for the more secular duties of the chantry priest.[531] The chantry priest, in addition to his ecclesiastical duties, often had to act as schoolmaster and librarian. The creation of a chantry chapel

[530] A.C. Wood. p.108.
[531] F.L Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 266.

required a monetary endowment for its erection and upkeep, the consent of the Crown for the transfer of lands to the ecclesiastical authorities, and a guarantee to the parish priest that the chantry priest would not interfere with his rights. Although the erection of chantries dates back to the early Middle Ages, it was only in the 14th and 15th centuries that chantries became numerous. By Henry V111's reign, the financial needs of the French war put the fate of the chantries in balance, and an Act was passed in 1545 stating that the possessions of chantries were generally misapplied and vesting them in the King for the term of his life. Although some surrendered voluntarily it seems doubtful that any chantries were suppressed before the death of Henry V111. Under Edward V1, a new Act was passed suppressing some 2,374 chantries and guild chapels. Though it was provided that the money should be used for public and charitable purposes, much of it merely went into the pockets of Edward V1's advisers.[532] One of the chief losses was educational. Chantries had frequently been educational centres and many of them later evolved into 'Edwardian' grammar schools.

CHOIR. The part of the church with stalls where the choir or clergy might sing the service.

CLERESTORY. The top storey in the side walls of a church, pierced with windows to provide extra light for the interior and thus literally a 'clear storey'.

CROSS AND CRUCIFIX. A cross bearing the figure of the crucified Christ may be found in many parts of the church. Crosses are sometimes carried in processions at services. In medieval times a large crucifix was often found on the top of the Rood Screen.

CROSSING. In a cross-shaped church, the space where the chancel, nave and transepts meet.

DOG TOOTH. Ornament of the Early English style consisting of a series of pointed stars set along a hollow molding.

EASTER SEPULCHRE. Recess in the north wall of the chancel used in the Easter celebrations.

FONT. From the earliest times, admission to full membership of the Christian community has been a solemn occasion, involving careful preparation and either full immersion in river, pool, or tank, or symbolically by aspersion, with water sprinkled from a bowl. In England, the tradition of infant baptism led to barrel-shaped fonts being built in the church, large enough to immerse infants. Later shallower vessels were used, holding enough water simply to sprinkle the infant. The practice of full immersion for adults never disappeared entirely and in recent years has returned to popularity.

GARGOYLE. Projecting spout to throw rainwater clear of the wall, usually carved in forms of monsters, animals or grotesque faces.

[532] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p.266.

GUILDS. In every parish church there could have been one or more parish guilds. A. small number might be a guild based on a specific occupation relevant to the local area. However, most were voluntary societies which gave special attention to praying for the souls in purgatory of fellow members who had died.[533] The guilds adopted the names of the saints they were formed to venerate or the Christian concept they concentrated upon: John the Baptist, All Saints, the Blessed Virgin Mary (the most popular of all), Holy Trinity, Corpus Christi, and so on. The parish guilds undertook a number of tasks: they provided charity for needy members and other poor persons, organised processions and feasts for appropriate holy days and funerals, supplied candles for religious ceremonials, and attended to the repair of their parish church. Because of the required entry fees and annual dues, the guilds tended to be more accessible to men and women (both laymen and clerics) of higher social and economic status. Nevertheless, a great many parishioners did participate in the work of the parish guilds. Guild members could derive satisfaction from charitable work: funding schools, supporting the sick and the 'deserving poor', funding hospitals, and repairing roads and bridges. They also supported social activities by taking part in festivals and promoting good fellowship among members. The parish guilds supplemented the established activities of the parish priest and were not seen as an alternative or competition to the traditional parish structure.

HATCHMENT. Large wooden panel (generally diamond shaped) painted with the heraldic arms of the deceased, carried at a funeral and afterwards hung in the church. Popular from the 17th to the 19th century.

INCISED SLAB. Memorial slab of marble or other stone, often inscribed with a representation of the deceased. Popular from the 13th to the 17th century and particularly numerous in the East Midlands.

LADY CHAPEL. Chapel with a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, 'Our Lady'.

LANCET. Slender window with a pointed arch, characteristic of Early English architecture.

LECTERN. A stand used to support the liturgical books, especially the Bible, used in the Church services. The stand was usually of metal or wood and could be moved. It was often in the form of an eagle (the device of St John the Evangelist).

MINSTER. The name, originating in Anglo-Saxon times, for a church which acted as the ecclesiastical centre and 'mother church' of the surrounding area. Some minsters also became cathedrals.

[533] C. Reeves. Pleasures and Pastimes in Medieval England. Suttons. Stroud, Gloucestershire. 1995. p. 165.

MISERICORD. A small shelf on the underside of a hinged choir stall. This enabled a person to rest on it instead of standing during long services. Misericords were often decorated with carvings of animals or figures of fun.

MONSTRANCE. An elaborate container for displaying the eucharistic host in a circular glass window. It is used in the services of Benediction or the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the Catholic tradition.

NAIL HEAD. Early English ornament consisting of small pyramids in a regularly repeated band.

NAVE. The term is generally thought to be derived from the Latin, navis, meaning ship, this being a symbol of the early church. If the church was rich enough, windows in the nave would be enlarged to create a much lighter, perhaps more welcoming aspect. Stained glass might be incorporated in the windows which described aspects of scripture or depictions of the saints. The walls were often covered with brightly coloured mural paintings with text from the bible or stories of the saints. Wall paintings were used extensively in medieval times to reinforce important lessons from scripture to members of congregations who could not read the Latin Bible. Every object in the church helped to familiarize the laity with the basic elements of the Christian faith. In the early days of the church, it was customary for worshippers to stand or kneel, and no seats were provided. By the early Middle Ages, as a concession to the infirm, stone seats were attached to the walls, or more rarely, to the piers of the nave.

ORGAN. Organs in churches go back to the 10th century. In cathedrals and large churches there might be 'great' organs with an impressive array of pipes and elaborate carvings. These may be supplemented by small organs which can be moved around to where they are needed.

PEW. By the end of the 13th century, many parish churches appear to have been equipped also with a number of fixed wooden benches. These were often known as 'pews' (probably derived from the Latin 'podium') meaning a seat raised up from the ground.[534] Such pews (and choir stalls) were sometimes elaborately carved, at the ends and on the back, with figures of saints, symbols of the Passion of Christ, or grotesque animals. The very wealthy of the parish became accustomed to having their private 'pew' where they could sit or kneel at their devotions, protected by screens or curtains from draughts and idle gazes. Over time, more 'box pews' were made available for the 'middling sort' to stake a claim. The poor might have a seat on the more basic pews at the back of church.

PISCINA. This is of medieval origin; in a few parish churches they may date back to the Norman period. The piscina is a niche in the side wall of the chancel, close to the altar for the ablutions of the priest's hands and of the chalice and paten at Mass. Sometimes two piscinas were set side by side, one perhaps being reserved for the washing of the priest's hands, the other for the cleansing of the sacred vessels. The piscina usually has a shelf to hold the cruets

[534] F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone. p. 1077.

(for the wine and water used in the Mass) and a drain connected with the earth to receive the holy water used for the ceremonies.

POPPYHEAD. Carved decoration on the end of a wooden bench, usually fleur-de-lys in shape.

PULPIT. The replacement of ambones by a pulpit was influenced by the preaching orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, who were addressing large crowds, in halls or in the open air, and needed temporary boxes that could be moved or adjusted in height as required. By around 1500, the idea of regular preaching had reached parish churches, and fixed wooden pulpits in the nave had become standard features.[535] The Reformation, with its strong emphasis on preaching, reinforced the focus on pulpits and they became a dominant feature of church interiors. This dominance was further increased by the heightening of pulpits to two or three layers, known as two-deckers or three-deckers, with separate levels for the minister to preach and pray and for the clerk to lead the congregation's responses.

RELICS. In the Christian tradition, the word relic is applied to the material remains of a saint after his death as well as to sacred objects which have been in contact with his body. The most famous relics of all are the fragments of the supposed true cross on which Jesus was crucified, discovered according to legend by Yorkshire born Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine in 326. The time of the Crusades saw a vast increase in the import of relics from the Holy Land, which increased the problem of the authenticity of relics. According to canon law (1281-9) no relics may be venerated without a written authentication by a cardinal; and the sale of genuine relics as well as the fabrication or distribution of false ones is punished by excommunication. Protestant Reformers condemned the cult of relics, but it was endorsed by the Council of Trent for the Catholic tradition.

RELIQUARY. A container for a relic. These may be caskets or boxes, richly decorated, and sometimes with a glass panel so that the contents may be seen. They are sometimes contained in stone structures, which are called shrines, dedicated to a saint or martyr.

REREDOS. A. wall or screen made of wood or stone, usually highly decorated, and positioned behind the high altar

ROOD SCREEN. From the Anglo-Saxon *rod* or cross. In medieval times, the nave and chancel were often separated by the Rood-screen. This was not a wall but a set of open frames, usually in wood, which gave views of the high altar. The lower part was solid to about waist height, with a door wide enough for the minister and choir to pass through. This lower part, the dado, was often covered with depictions of the saints or biblical scenes. Above the screen was the rood, the Saxon word for cross, with the figures of the Virgin Mary and St John on either side of the crucified Christ. The rood an object of special reverence, but many were removed during the Reformation. Many of the screens were also removed in the early years of

[535] T. Cocke in J. Bowden (ed). p.486.

Elizabeth 1, and replaced by altar rails. This became the place where the communicants could kneel to receive the Eucharistic Sacrament.

SACRING BELL. Also known as a 'Sanctus bell', this is rung at Mass to focus people's attention. The use of the bell at the elevation dates from the 12th century. The bell is commonly rung at the Sanctus and at the Elevation.

SACRISTY. A room annexed to a church or chapel for the keeping the sacred vessels and for the vesting of priests and other clerics. They are often furnished with chests, cupboards, and a table for vestments, liturgical books, a basin for the washing of hands, a prie-dieu, and a crucifix.

SANCTUARY. Area around the High Altar of the church.

SEDILIA. (Latin, 'seat'). The seats, usually three, were for the priest, deacon and sub-deacon on the side of the chancel. They were introduced in England about the middle of the 12th century and used in that part of the service at which it was customary for the ministers to sit. In medieval England they were usually stone benches built in a niche in the wall, often surmounted by arches or canopies.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS. These commemorate fourteen selected incidents in the journey of Christ to his crucifixion and are depicted by plaques on the walls of the nave or by statues in the grounds of the church. In the Catholic tradition, a procession stops at each of the stations where there is a pause for prayer and meditation. The stations are:

1. Christ is condemned to death
2. Christ receives the cross
3. His first fall
4. He meets his mother
5. Sinon of Cyrene is made to carry the cross
6. Christ's face is wiped by Veronica
7. His second fall
8. He meets the women of Jerusalem
9. His third fall
10. He is stripped of his garments
11. He is nailed to the cross
12. Christ dies on the cross
13. His body is taken down from the cross
14. His body is laid in the tomb.

STOUP. A container for holy water, usually in a niche near the entrance to the church.

TRACERY. Intersecting stone ribs, often taking complex and decorative forms and used to support the glass in the upper part of the window.

TRANSEPTS. The transverse projections or 'arms of a cross-shaped church. Some smaller churches have only one transept.

TYMPANUM. Space between the lintel of a doorway and the arch above, often highly decorated.

Appendix 3: Selected reading

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