

Henry Newcome and his Circle: Presbyterianism in South-East Cheshire in the 1650s

Catherine Nunn

In his autobiography, the Presbyterian divine Henry Newcome remembered the 1650s thus:

O what days were these! what glorious days of the son of Man! Are we wiser or worse, or what is it, that we desire not after the same comforts now?¹

Between 1640 and 1660, against the background of the civil wars, the execution of the king, the declaration of England as a republic, and the establishment of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, the Church of England experienced an attempt to complete a godly reformation, not only of liturgy and discipline but also of society and manners. In December 1640 the puritan City of London and several English counties petitioned parliament to reform the government of the Church 'root and branch'. Although Cheshire was one such county, it is unclear how widely the petition was circulated, or who its signatories were.² In February 1641, and again in December of the same year, petitions from the Cheshire parishes responded in favour of episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer.³ Between 1641 and 1643 the Long Parliament

¹ *The autobiography of Henry Newcome*, ed. R. Parkinson, C.S. old series, XXVI, XXVII (1852), p. 34. This article is a version of papers read to this Society and to the Centre for Local History at the University of Keele, which subsequently developed into my M.Phil. thesis. My thanks are due to all those people who have helped me in so many ways, especially the librarian and staff at Chetham's Library, Manchester. I owe much to the continuing encouragement of Ann Hughes and Colin Phillips.

² J. Maltby, *Prayer Book and people in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 226.

³ Maltby, *Prayer Book and people*, pp. 239, 242.

conducted numerous debates concerning Church government. These culminated in the setting up of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, which met for the first time in July 1643. Its purpose was to consider the Thirty-Nine Articles with a view to revision and correction of doctrine. In August 1643 the Solemn League and Covenant was adopted by parliament and ordered to be administered by parish ministers to all males over the age of eighteen. The parish register of Gawsworth confirms that at least one Cheshire parish conformed to this ordinance when, on 24 November 1644, the minister and 120 men of the townships of Gawsworth and North Rode took the oath. The purpose of the Covenant was the preservation of the reformed Church of Scotland and a reformation of the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church in England, Wales, and Ireland. It sought the final eradication of Catholic practice and the abolition of episcopacy. It also undertook the protection of the kingdom and the person of the king, a matter which sorely tried the consciences of Presbyterian clergy in later years.⁴ Despite conformist opposition, in 1645 the Book of Common Prayer was abolished and the Directory for Public Worship introduced in its place, and the Thirty-Nine Articles were replaced by the Confession of Faith. In June 1646 parliament ordered the setting up of a Presbyterian system of Church government in the parishes.

Although the parish as a basic unit of Church government remained in place, those clergy who failed to take the Solemn League and Covenant, or whose qualifications or life-style did not satisfy local committees, were removed. The aims of these policies were not only to complete the Protestant reformation of the English Church and the elimination of superstitious belief. The reformers held that, through education and resistance to behaviour such as drunkenness, swearing, and personal immorality, a godly and improved society might be established. They believed that by encouraging notions of responsibility, not only in oneself but also towards neighbours, both the lives of individuals and also that of the wider community as a whole would benefit morally and materially. This article explores the impact which these policies had on parish

⁴ *Acts and ordinances of the Interregnum*, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (3 vols, London, 1891), I, pp. 376–8; *Transcript registers of the parish church of Gawsworth*, ed. R. Dickenson (London, 1955), pp. 271–2; *The constitutional documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625–1660*, ed. S. R. Gardiner (3rd edn, 1962), p. 269.

life in south-east Cheshire and particularly the influence of the Presbyterian clergy who replaced men ejected from their livings under the new order. In particular, it concentrates on the activities of a circle of Presbyterian clergy introduced into the parishes of eastern Cheshire, and their attempts to implement the policies of reform. First, however, it is necessary to consider the nature of Presbyterian parish government within which the clergy could expect to work.

The Presbyterian form of Church government which replaced episcopacy in 1646 was modelled on the Scottish system in which all ministers held equal rank. At parish level, suitable lay members of the congregation were appointed as elders to run parish matters and to elect candidates as parish ministers. The parishes in their turn reported to the classis. This was a meeting, usually held monthly, where ministers and appointed lay elders from groups of parishes discussed matters of discipline and recommendations for ordination. The classis also supervised the examination and ordination of suitable candidates for the ministry. Classis members reported at regular intervals to a provincial assembly, whose decisions, as well as those of the classis, were intended to be binding on the parishes. In England there was never a national assembly set up on Scottish lines. Although, in theory, Presbyterianism was intended to be compulsory and binding, in England implementation was piecemeal and never achieved the firm structure of the Scottish model. Of the English counties, only fifteen attempted to implement Presbyterianism, and of those only seven appear to have introduced a formal system.⁵

In July 1648, at Northwich, fifty-nine of Cheshire's clergy signed the Cheshire Attestation which supported the concept of Presbyterian government of the Church.⁶ However, no formal classical system was convened in the county, in contrast to neighbouring Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Shropshire.⁷ In 1653 a voluntary system was set up in Cheshire at a meeting at Knutsford on 20 October. It was a loose agreement whereby ministers had no power of inspection over one another's parishes. Matters such as the appointment of elders, or the

⁵ W. A. Shaw, *A history of the English Church during the Civil War and under the Commonwealth, 1640-1660* (2 vols, London, 1890), II, pp. 365-456.

⁶ A. G. Matthews, *Calamy revised* (Oxford, 1934), p. 553.

⁷ Shaw, *English Church*, pp. 373-4, 393-9.

suspension of the sacrament as a disciplinary measure, were subject to the discretion of the individual minister.⁸

The newly appointed clergy did not, however, see themselves as being restrained either by county or parish boundaries. Their aim was a missionary one, to spread the word in as wide a theatre as possible. They did not minister only to their immediate parishioners but also to the parishioners of their friends and acquaintances. Consequently they were to be found preaching and ministering wheresoever they were asked. This is illustrated by John Machin, from 1654 joint minister of Astbury in south-east Cheshire, of whom it was recorded that he

frequently expressed in his most earnest prayers unto God for the enlarging of his kingdome, in families, towns and counties; which he would name with the greatest affection both in his prayers and letters, crying out, 'O that whole Staffordshire and Cheshire might be saved!'⁹

Machin was to be a significant influence on a group of young, enthusiastic men who sought to implement the ideal of a godly, Presbyterian form of Church government and improvement of society.

Before considering such topics it might be useful to consider, briefly, sources for local parish history at this period. Parish and probate records for both clergy and laity are invaluable. The abolition of the Church courts and changes of clergy, however, mean that wills and inventories are few and far between. Although many parish registers continued to be kept conscientiously, some reflect the disturbance of ejections and the introduction of replacement clergy. On the other hand, local records such as the Congleton town order books give an insight into town finance and administration and a degree of continuity, despite upheaval and uncertainty.

The primary source for this study is the autobiography of Henry Newcome, briefly referred to above. Newcome was minister to the parish of Gawsworth from 1650 to 1657. He was born in September 1627 in Caldecote, a village between Huntingdon and Cambridge, the fourth son of Stephen Newcome, the vicar of Caldecote, and his

⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 46; *Life of Adam Martindale*, ed. R. Parkinson, C.S. old series, IV (1845), p. 112.

⁹ [H. Newcome], *A faithful narrative of the life and death of that holy and laborious preacher Mr. John Machin* (London, 1671), p. 15.

wife Rose. He was educated at the free school at Congleton in south Cheshire where his eldest brother was schoolmaster. Following the deaths of their parents, the brothers returned to Caldecote and Newcome completed his education at St John's College, Cambridge.¹⁰ In 1647 he was invited to return to Congleton as schoolmaster, the post formerly held by his brother. Although only twenty years old, he began to preach locally and attracted the attention of John Ley, minister at Astbury and member of the Westminster Assembly. Ley encouraged his protégé to take orders and, as a nominated minister, ordained Newcome by Presbyterian convention, at Sandbach in July 1649.¹¹ Through the patronage of his wife's kinsman, Colonel Henry Mainwaring of Kermincham, he was appointed minister to the parish of Gawsworth in April 1650.¹²

Newcome began writing his autobiography in 1663 or 1664, after he was ejected, based on diaries that he kept from 1646 until his death, of which only one volume appears to have survived.¹³ Newcome recorded his birth, early life and education, and his career and experiences, first as a Presbyterian minister and subsequently as a reluctant nonconformist after 1662. He wrote of his friendships with other ministers and the methods they employed to disseminate their message. He described preaching tours and private days of devotion, as well as the conduct of parish life. It should be noted, however, that the well-known version of the autobiography published in 1852 by the Chetham Society is a heavily abridged version of the original manuscript. Transcription and reintroduction of passages omitted from the printed version for the years 1649–57, when Newcome was at Gawsworth, reveals an abridgement of approximately 40 per cent.¹⁴ This, we must suppose, is reflected throughout the original manuscript. Indeed, a preliminary study shows that much of interest to the student of seventeenth-century puritanism and nonconformity in the North-West is omitted from the Chetham Society volumes. This was a deliberate policy. Canon Richard Parkinson of Manchester, who edited the autobiography, wrote in his introduction that

¹⁰ *Autobiography*, pp. 4–7.

¹¹ *Autobiography*, pp. 11–18.

¹² *Autobiography*, p. 18.

¹³ *Autobiography*, p. 156.

¹⁴ C. M. Nunn, 'The ministry of Henry Newcome: Presbyterianism in south-east Cheshire, 1648–1662' (unpublished M.Phil. thesis, Manchester Univ., 1998), pp. 28–37.

by removing the antiquated spelling, abridging the moral reflections, which however excellent are somewhat monotonous . . . two volumes might be formed out of the Abstract [manuscript autobiography] which would be found of very great interest to the popular reader.¹⁵

Henry Newcome was a product of his time, society, and ideology. He saw the hand of God in all things. Although, as Canon Parkinson understandably concluded, much of the material abridged is very introverted in tone, Newcome's skills as a narrator illustrate the account of the lives and concerns of the people with whom he associated, and gives a picture of puritan life which often belies the dour stereotype satirized by the seventeenth-century writer Samuel Butler.¹⁶ The reintroduction of abridged passages considerably augments the picture. The abridgement had the effect of telescoping incidents which took place over a period of time, and some incidents completely disappeared. For example, the serious illness and near death of Newcome's eldest son in February 1653 was reduced to a clinical passage of ten lines from a much longer passage which covers thirty-eight lines of manuscript.¹⁷ The full text reveals Newcome's fears for the life of a beloved child. He remonstrated with himself for not having sympathized more with parents who had lost children, and he promised God that, should the child be spared, he would strive to do better in the future.¹⁸ Throughout the published version the introspection of the subject is ignored. The full manuscript reveals a somewhat more sensitive character than the published version suggests.

Published lives of the clergy give us an insight into what the ideal of a godly minister should be and how he should comport himself. In 1665 Newcome and Thomas Leadbeater, the former minister at Hinckley in Leicestershire and a native of Holmes Chapel, collaborated in preparing a biography of their friend John Machin which was published in 1671 after Machin's death. Although published anonymously, it was attributed to Newcome by Matthew Henry.¹⁹ John Machin was born at Seabridge, now a suburb of Newcastle

¹⁵ *Autobiography*, p. iv.

¹⁶ S. Butler, *Hudibras*, ed. J. Wilders (Oxford, 1967), pp. 7–8; S. Butler, *Characters*, ed. C. N. Davies (London, 1970), pp. 45–55, 230–1, 312–13.

¹⁷ *Autobiography*, p. 43.

¹⁸ Chetham's Library, MS. A3/123, pp. xliii–xliv; *Autobiography*, p. 43.

¹⁹ *Autobiography*, p. 147; Matthew Henry, *Life of Philip Henry*, ed. J. B. Williams (1825; Banner of Truth edn, Edinburgh, 1974), p. 268.

under Lyme in Staffordshire. Between 1652 and 1660 he served as joint minister of Astbury in east Cheshire. He was, as was Newcome, educated at Cambridge, although their paths do not appear to have crossed there. Such works extol the virtues of their subjects, and recount their godly lives both as ministers and as family men.

The Directory for Public Worship, which replaced the Book of Common Prayer in 1646, underlined what was expected of ministers. The Directory was more simple than the Prayer Book. It ran to a mere twenty-two pages in contrast to the lengthy 1559 Prayer Book.²⁰ The nature of the Directory was to provide a framework by which minister and congregation should devise prayer and worship. The puritan ideal was that the individual minister should conduct worship appropriate to a given situation and, consequently, the forms of service were not tied to the seasons of the Church's year, or to the feasts and saints' days of the calendar which characterized the form of worship prescribed by the Prayer Book. The Directory presupposed a high level of education in a minister, and in its turn imposed a daunting duty of care and attention to detail in planning services, sermons, and performance of duty towards parishioners.²¹ This begs the question as to how far the clergy were able to implement this ideal.

From the *Autobiography* and other sources it has been possible to build a picture of the clerical circles in which Henry Newcome moved. Within three weeks of taking up his appointment at Gawsorth, Newcome met John Machin for the first time. Machin was to become the hub of a network of enthusiastic men, bent on pursuing their aims. Machin, who was already known to Newcome by repute, had been inspired by puritan preaching at Cambridge.²² In May 1650 Newcome invited him to take a service at Gawsorth on the occasion of Newcome's performing a similar favour for his brother cleric, Nicholas Stevenson, at Alderley. Newcome saw this as a propitious meeting. He recorded:

At night Mr. Machin repeated his sermon, and desired me to repeat mine, and I did. He staid with us till Tuesday, and I went with him on the way, and pretious intimacy we were gotten into before we parted. This was the

²⁰ *Liturgies of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. W. Keating Clay (Parker Society, Cambridge, 1847), pp. 23–245.

²¹ *Acts and ordinances*, I, pp. 582–607.

²² Newcome, *Life of Machin*, p. 10; Nunn, 'Ministry of Henry Newcome', pp. 40–3.

beginning of my acquaintance with that pretious servant of the Lord, which afterwards grew to the height of friendship and familiarity, and we were after joined in many a public service together to our great comfort.²³

This passage expresses the essence of the relationships formed within a close circle of Presbyterian clergy, on which Machin's influence was crucial. The friends developed the habit of holding private days at Machin's home at Seabridge when they would discuss and pray for the propagation of the Gospel and the good of society, their friends, families, and parishes.²⁴ They preached sermons to each other and discussed their content. In this fashion they gave mutual support and also marked themselves out as a distinct group. Both clergy and laity held and attended private days. Newcome records many occasions such as the day held by his parishioner Roger Hough at Alderley and one hosted by Captain Burslam in Newcastle under Lyme, as well as others throughout south Cheshire and north Staffordshire. These networks provided a forum for discussion regarding matters of faith and crises of conscience, and on occasion provided practical and actual support in financial crises. Newcome greatly valued private days. He considered that the quiet contemplation which they encouraged was a conduit by which God could work on the soul of the individual.²⁵ The abolition of episcopacy and the piecemeal implementation of Presbyterianism meant that in many areas there was no formal structure within which to work. Occasions such as private days helped to achieve cohesion of purpose and support in the absence of such a structure.

Throughout his time at Gawsworth, Newcome actively sought out other ministers and members of the godly community with whom he could discuss doctrine and seek advice. Shortly after the meeting with Machin, Newcome made the acquaintance of Thomas Leadbeater, collaborator later on Machin's biography, and a companion of the private days at Seabridge. Leadbeater was ordained by the Wirksworth classis in June 1653.²⁶ Newcome also regularly visited or corresponded with the father and son Thomas and Samuel Langley, ministers of Middlewich and Swettenham respectively, as well as the

²³ *Autobiography*, p. 19.

²⁴ Chetham's Library, MS. A3/123, addendum, p. 11; *Autobiography*, p. 296.

²⁵ Chetham's Library, MS. A3/123, pp. xxvii–xxviii; *Autobiography*, pp. 24, 28–9.

²⁶ *Autobiography*, p. 23; *Minute book of the Wirksworth classis, 1651–1658*, ed. J. Charles Cox [*Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 1880], II, p. 171.

two men named Randle Sillito: one of Tean, later parish clerk within the borough of Newcastle under Lyme; the other being minister of Church Lawton, on the border of Cheshire and Staffordshire.²⁷ At about the same time he made the acquaintance of Richard Steele of Northwich, minister of Hanmer in Flintshire. Many of the friendships made at this time became life-long, surviving the trauma of 1662, when some were ejected from their livings and others conformed. Newcome summed up the influence of these friendships thus:

I was sometimes much affected with the consideration of the excellencies of some men I was acquainted with; and how they were examples for me, and how desirable it were if I could attain to any degree of their graces. Mr. Angier's solemnness, Mr. Hollinworth's humility, Mr. Gee's mortifiedness, Mr. Machin's heavenliness, Mr. Langley's discretion, Mr. Hough's Spiritual Diligence, Mr. Steele's kindness.²⁸

Where friendships became particularly close, Newcome slipped from referring to his colleagues as 'Mr' and chose instead the more familiar 'brother'. In later years he recalled the early 1650s as being grace and favour days. Of 1651 he wrote:

This was a g[rea]t soule yeare; a time of g[rea]t breaking forth of children. The churches had rest and real good Christians were multiplyed. Good ministers began now to be settled in the countrey up and down; and at their first coming God was pleased to work on many soules; and a g[rea]t power of the spirit of God was accompanying his word at this time. And many were called forth to his work in earnest, w[h]o were our dear fellow-labourers and companions in the work of the Gospell.²⁹

Preaching was the most favoured method of disseminating the message to the laity. The clergy were often away from their parishes for days at a time, travelling around the countryside, stopping in friends' parishes and preaching to their congregations. One such tour in 1654 Newcome described in some detail. On Saturday 10 June he left Gawsorth with John Brooke of Chelford. Brooke was a layman, of yeoman status, who in later years was an active nonconformist. He was also John Machin's brother-in-law, being married to Mary, one of Machin's three sisters. Newcome and Brooke journeyed to Hanmer in Flintshire to visit Richard Steele.

²⁷ *Autobiography*, pp. 23–4, 27, 34, 49, 57; T. Pape, *Newcastle-under-Lyme in Tudor and early-Stuart times* (Manchester, 1938), p. 321.

²⁸ *Autobiography*, pp. 48–9.

²⁹ Chetham's Library, MS. A3/123, p. xxx; *Autobiography*, p. 31.

On Sunday Newcome preached to the congregation twice. They rested on Monday, but on Tuesday Newcome and Steele preached at Whixall. On Wednesday he preached at Ellesmere with Thomas Porter, the minister there. On Thursday they travelled to Shrewsbury where Newcome preached the lecture. They returned to Gawsworth on Friday, in Newcome's words, 'overcharged with the labour'.³⁰

The stress on preaching was a feature of Presbyterian ministry. Between John Machin's ordination in 1649 and his appointment to Astbury in 1654 he had no fixed preferment other than a fortnightly lecture in Ashbourne, Derbyshire. He used his spare time in preaching in the area described by Newcome as 'the morelands and dark corners of Staffordshire, where the power of the Gospel had scarce ever come before'.³¹ In early 1653 Machin inherited the Seabridge estate upon the death of his father and, with some of the income from the estate, he inaugurated a double lecture circuit in the towns of Staffordshire which he financed until 1659. Henry Newcome and Richard Steele among others were regular preachers.³²

Although ministers were often away from their parishes, their parishioners were not necessarily neglected. Newcome recorded how on occasions he would 'supply' for a brother minister. The laity, in their turn, heard the sermons of visiting preachers, adding variety to the services. Likewise, they not only attended sermons in their home parish but also travelled to other churches to hear different preachers. When Newcome was invited to Alderley on the occasion of his first meeting with Machin, a number of his parishioners accompanied him.³³ Thomas Mainwaring of Baddiley, one of Cheshire's justices of the peace, recorded in his diary for 3 July 1653 that he went to Astbury in the morning to hear Henry Newcome preach, and in the afternoon travelled to Swettenham to hear Samuel Langley. He was in the habit of travelling to churches throughout south and east Cheshire to hear different ministers, often attending two in one day.³⁴

A further occupation of the clergy was to attend an 'exercise' in the surrounding towns. The exercise was a scheme, originally set up

³⁰ *Autobiography*, p. 48.

³¹ Newcome, *Life of Machin*, p. 21.

³² Newcome, *Life of Machin*, p. 33; *Autobiography*, p. 44.

³³ *Autobiography*, p. 20.

³⁴ C.C.A.L.S., DDX 384 [diary of Thomas Mainwaring], p. 140.

in the 1580s as an educational method among puritans, to regulate the doctrinal standards of clergy and schoolmasters alike. These meetings appear to have been held spasmodically throughout the early seventeenth century in Chester, Macclesfield, Nantwich, and Northwich. By the 1640s and 1650s they were a regular feature of clerical life. In east Cheshire exercises were held in Wilmslow, Knutsford, and Congleton in addition to the original towns.³⁵ The Congleton borough accounts record regular payments to innkeepers for an exercise dinner. Some clergy must have travelled fair distances to attend, as overnight expenses were sometimes paid.³⁶ It is clear that these were not only opportunities for preaching and discussion, but also social occasions as well. When Henry Newcome preached at the Wilmslow exercise in January 1651, his wife accompanied him.³⁷ Likewise, in December 1655 Francis Moseley, then minister at Bunbury, married Katherine Davenport of Marton at Congleton. It was on an exercise day, an occasion to meet and socialize.³⁸ Adam Martindale, the minister of Rostherne in north-east Cheshire, recorded how, in addition to his parish duties, he took part in one exercise in Staffordshire, two in Lancashire, and four in Cheshire, as well as the Chester lecture and what he called the running exercise in east Cheshire.³⁹

It is clear, therefore, that these men had set themselves a full-time task. They were travelling on preaching tours and attending the exercise meetings in surrounding towns, as well as performing their parish duties of baptizing children, burying the dead, and (until civil marriage was introduced in 1653) conducting marriages. What, then, was the reception which these godly, zealous, enthusiastic men received from their audiences, and how far were they able to implement their ideals? Newcome's account of Gawsworth gives us an example which serves as a model for Presbyterian parish life.

In contrast to other east Cheshire parishes Gawsworth is small. Originally a chapelry of Prestbury, it probably gained parochial status in the thirteenth century.⁴⁰ Newcome's identifiable parish-

³⁵ R. C. Richardson, *Puritanism in north-west England* (Manchester, 1972), pp. 65–9.

³⁶ Congleton Town Hall, Congleton borough account books, 1638–71, unpaginated.

³⁷ Chetham's Library, MS. A3/123, p. xxii; *Autobiography*, p. 24.

³⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 297.

³⁹ *Life of Adam Martindale*, p. 104.

⁴⁰ *V.C.H. Cheshire*, I, p. 265.

ioners were of yeoman or husbandman status and were involved in mixed farming. They owned a few head of cattle, small flocks of sheep, some pigs and poultry, as well as growing oats, barley, and wheat.⁴¹ The paucity of records for his poorer parishioners makes it difficult to establish how well they fared. Newcome's first reception at Gawsworth was not encouraging. He and his patron, Colonel Henry Mainwaring, presented themselves at the church in February 1650 for Newcome to give his first sermon. They found themselves locked out and Newcome's appointment opposed by the parishioners. Rather than take up the appointment by force, Newcome was prepared to let it drop, but the parishioners apparently had a change of heart and ten days later representatives from the parish visited him at Kermincham, where he was living, and consented to his appointment.⁴² There had been a clash of personalities between Newcome's predecessor, Thomas Brook, and his erstwhile parishioners and this seems to have attached itself to Newcome. However, he quickly appears to have gained their respect. He tells us:

Old John Swaine, a surly natured man when crossed, that most opposed me after I came was so far reconciled to me that he was the first man that paid his Easter tithings, and gave me at harvest the leading of the first load of his tithes, and was friendly to me all the time I was there.⁴³

Newcome appears to have carried out his duties as a parish minister conscientiously. The parish register for Gawsworth implies that he continued to baptize and bury. He married people until 1653 and thereafter recorded in the register the civil marriages performed by the justice of the peace.⁴⁴ There does not seem to have been any diminution, in comparison with the 1640s or the 1660s, of people presenting their children and themselves for baptism and marriage.⁴⁵ It is clear, despite the upheavals of the 1640s and 1650s and the changes of clergy occasioned by sequestrations and ejections, that parishioners were continuing to find clergy to baptize their children and bury their dead. This picture is reflected in the registers of surrounding parishes, which are similarly well kept throughout most

⁴¹ C.C.A.L.S., WS 1683 John Swaine; WS 1679 Edward Reddish; WS 1662 Robert Wood [wills and inventories]; P.R.O., PROB 11/226, James Sanderson 1653; PROB 11/278, John Baxter 1657; PROB 11/298, Roger Smallwood 1660 [wills].

⁴² *Autobiography*, p. 18.

⁴³ *Autobiography*, p. 18.

⁴⁴ *Registers of Gawsworth*, pp. 26–8, 122–5, 193–6.

⁴⁵ Nunn, 'Ministry of Henry Newcome', p. 161.

of the period and indicate a high level of conscientiousness, the exception being Astbury, where no records for the Commonwealth and Protectorate have survived.

The clergy appear to have celebrated the sacrament of Communion fairly regularly. It is the nature of Newcome's autobiography that he does not mention each occasion on which a particular activity took place, but in 1653 he recorded that a sacrament had been held at Gawsworth, 'as we had many before and after'. He certainly mentioned the celebration of Communion on at least three occasions each year, the first being six weeks after his move to Gawsworth. Newcome prepared himself and his congregation for the celebration, taking several days to ascertain their worthiness. He applied the same rules to himself as to his parishioners with a stringency which led him to suffer one of his periodic fits of introspection and soul-searching. He greatly feared not being sufficiently worthy to receive God's mercy and promised to strive to do better.⁴⁶

His friends were equally painstaking in preparation. John Machin celebrated the sacrament at Astbury every month or six weeks between 1656 and 1660, also taking care to prepare the congregation by spending the Friday before the sacrament in public prayers and preaching, and the day after, in his own or a neighbour's house, in thanksgiving for deliverance from sickness or trouble among the communicants.⁴⁷ In Newcome's narrative there is no suggestion that the sacrament was being withheld, although he records how Thomas Brook, his predecessor at Gawsworth, 'had utterley waived it'.⁴⁸ There is, however, a suggestion that the practice was discontinued in Wilmslow throughout the incumbency of John Brereton, who served the parish from his appointment by the Committee for Plundered Ministers in 1645 until he was ejected in 1660.⁴⁹ Whether the threat of denial of the sacrament as a sanction against the unrepentant was actually carried out on a regular basis (the practice of puritan clergy in earlier years of the century) is also not clear.⁵⁰ Adam Martindale at Rostherne certainly did so on one

⁴⁶ Chetham's Library, MS. A3/123, p. xlv; *Autobiography*, pp. 20, 44.

⁴⁷ Newcome, *Life of Machin*, p. 42.

⁴⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 20.

⁴⁹ Maltby, *Prayer Book and people*, p. 214; *Minutes of the Committee for Plundered Ministers, 1643-1660*, ed. W. A. Shaw, C.S. old series, XXVIII (1893), p. 147.

⁵⁰ Maltby, *Prayer Book and people*, pp. 48-52; Richardson, *Puritanism in north-west England*, pp. 48-9.

occasion, thereby alienating a parishioner so far as to drive him to join the Quakers.⁵¹ Newcome does not mention using such a sanction, although he certainly found occasions on which to reprove sinful behaviour. This is in contrast with the situation in Lancashire, where the formally convened classes more strictly policed the behaviour of clergy and laity alike.⁵²

It is difficult to establish how well church services were conducted or how popular they were. Sometimes the churches were certainly full. In June 1652 Randle Sillito of Church Lawton wrote to Henry Newcome to tell of a tragedy that had occurred which was reported nationally in the newsbook *Mercurius Politicus*. On the previous Sunday, the church being full, a number of the congregation had to stand in the bell tower. There was a thunderstorm, the tower was struck by lightning, and fifteen were killed. While of course it was easier to fill small churches such as Lawton or Gawsorth than the larger buildings at Prestbury or Astbury, it is an indication that services were well attended.⁵³

Although the Presbyterian clergy could exert some authority over their more humble parishioners, their relationship with local gentry depended very much on political orientation and opinion. In his early days at Gawsorth Newcome had received some significant encouragement from the widowed Lady Felicia Fitton at Gawsorth Hall. She was the daughter of Ralph Sneyd of Keele and the widow of the last Sir Edward Fitton who had died of wounds following the siege of Bristol in 1642, both men having been supporters of the king.⁵⁴ Following the breakdown in the relationship between the parish and his predecessor, Newcome appealed to Lady Fitton to set up family prayers at the hall as an example to the parish. She appears to have been quite happy to do this, and for the next year or so, and until he became more preoccupied with public preaching, Newcome attended the hall most days to conduct prayers. An easy-going relationship appears to have grown up, to the extent that when Elizabeth Newcome went into labour with her

⁵¹ *Life of Adam Martindale*, p. 114.

⁵² *Minutes of the Bury Presbyterian classis, 1647–1657*, ed. W. A. Shaw, C.S. new series, XX, XXIII, XXIV (1890), p. 141; *Minutes of the Manchester classis*, ed. W. A. Shaw, C.S. new series, XXXVI, XLI (1890, 1898), pp. 25, 31–2.

⁵³ *Autobiography*, pp. 40, 310; *The English Revolution: newsbooks*, ed. R. Jeffs and others (19 vols, London, 1971–2), V, p. 1696.

⁵⁴ R. Richards, *The manor of Gawsorth* (London, 1957), p. 45; J. P. Earwaker, *East Cheshire* (2 vols, London, 1877–80), II, p. 561.

second child in May 1650, it was Lady Fitton who was called on to help her.⁵⁵ When John Machin visited Newcome at Gawsorth he also called on Lady Fitton. The proximity of his parental home at Seabridge to Keele, he believed, imposed a duty of neighbourliness.⁵⁶

This state of affairs changed, however, when visitors to the hall began to ridicule the puritan way of life. Newcome records that 'some at Brereton told her [Lady Fitton] that she would turn Round-Head shortly, for they heard she writ sermons. Upon this she left that usage, and was afraid to be accounted religious.'⁵⁷ On another occasion, visitors to the hall objected to the length of time that Newcome spent discussing a sermon. One guest, apparently dissuaded from calling for ale by the presence of the clergy, was heard to murmur: 'Will they never have done? What can they find to talk of all this while?' As Newcome left he heard the retort 'now he is gone, fetch the ale'. Newcome was not, however, discouraged by this opposition. That his presence had restrained profane behaviour, he believed, was evidence of his influence.⁵⁸

Probably at some date at the latter end of 1651, Lady Fitton married for a second time. Her new husband was Sir Charles Adderley of Lea Marston in Warwickshire. He had been an esquire to Charles I, and served Charles II in the same capacity after the Restoration.⁵⁹ Adderley was impressed neither by Newcome nor by his Presbyterianism, and the relationship with the Newcomes deteriorated. When in 1653, following the inauguration of the Voluntary Association, Newcome organized the election of parish elders, Adderley was most displeased. Adderley later failed to attend a celebration of the sacrament, as he had promised, and Newcome was concerned that he might have alienated an influential parishioner.⁶⁰ However, when Lady Adderley went into protracted labour in January 1655, it was to Henry Newcome and John Machin that the hall sent for prayers and comfort during the next few days and her death in childbirth.⁶¹

⁵⁵ *Autobiography*, p. 20; Manchester Central Library Archives, MS. 922.3/N21 [diary of Henry Newcome junior, 1696-1713], part 1, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Autobiography*, p. 20.

⁵⁷ *Autobiography*, p. 32.

⁵⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 21.

⁵⁹ *V.C.H. Warws.* IV, p. 116; Richards, *Manor of Gawsorth*, p. 45.

⁶⁰ *Autobiography*, pp. 46, 48; Chetham's Library, MS. A3/123, p. li.

⁶¹ *Autobiography*, pp. 52-3.

Despite some discouragement, Newcome's friends were scrupulous in their attention to the duty of educating their parishioners in scripture. Appropriate texts for sermons were always chosen with care. During a particularly wet August and September in 1652, when the harvest was threatened, Newcome preached on 1 Sam. xii, verse 17, which runs:

Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king.

However, on reflection, he mused that perhaps rain was not so bad, and things might be worse:

What if it do raine? Blessed by God it is not fire and brimstone, as on Sodom. It is well it is not Thunder and Raine as in the time of harvest in Israel. It is a mercy that it has not been such weather these 2 last years. Now thou wouldst be glad of corne tho it were cheap etc. It was very observable ab[ou]t this time after a fortnights ill weather; that all this rain had not done the corne so much hurt, as but 2 days of rain did the last year. God can punish much when we think but little; and he can spare much, when he seemeth loud.⁶²

This powerful passage, which does not appear in the printed version of the autobiography, illustrates the zealous nature of the policies for the reform of Church and society. In retrospect, however, Newcome recognized that excessive zeal could be counterproductive and that keeping services too long may have done more harm than good to the cause.⁶³ He also remembered that Sir Charles Adderley claimed that overzealous preaching was responsible for driving vulnerable people to suicide.⁶⁴

Although this zeal may seem excessive, we must not lose sight of the fact that Newcome was considering his actions and those of his friends with the benefit of hindsight, often ruefully reviewing youthful enthusiasm. Among his friends and colleagues in the ministry, the surviving episcopally ordained men such as Thomas Jeynson at Prestbury and Thomas Brook at Congleton were older, but many of the men ordained by the classes were only in their twenties or early thirties. In 1652, for example, when they were at the height of their zeal, Newcome and Leadbeater were twenty-five,

⁶² *Autobiography*, p. 44; Chetham's Library, MS. A3/123, p. xlviij.

⁶³ *Autobiography*, p. 25.

⁶⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 86.

John Machin was twenty-eight, Adam Martindale at Rostherne twenty-nine, and Richard Steele at Hanmer twenty-three. The volatile mixture of zeal for godly reform and youthful enthusiasm was no doubt an added irritant to an already exasperated community. It is recorded of John Machin that, following a day of preaching, he would gather the people around him and continue discussion, widening the scope of his argument. It made one of his relatives complain 'he liked his cousin Machin well, but that he made his house a chapel when he came to him'.⁶⁵ These were young men, enthusiastic for reform, lively, and (although no doubt an annoyance to their detractors and elders alike) thoughtful and conscientious, aiming to bring an educated and scrupulous Protestantism to the people of the parishes they served.

Many people, however, respected and even became mildly fond of their Presbyterian ministers. It was recorded of John Heiron, one of the preachers on Machin's preaching circuit and a friend of Newcome, that he gave suppers for those parishioners who had attended repetition of sermons at his house. These were also social occasions:

He would sometimes in the week-day invite to Supper such as came to repetition and prayer on the Lords-day, and after supper let them play and use some fit recreations, and be innocently as merry as they would, being no enemy to harmless mirth in its own proper season.⁶⁶

This seems to belie the stereotype of the dour puritan, opposed to all joy. Newcome, likewise, on occasion employed some, admittedly rather heavy-handed, humour to jolly along a depressed parishioner.⁶⁷ Some of his parishioners appear to have been genuinely sorry to lose him when he left Gawsorth. They had tried for a year previously to raise more money to increase his stipend so that he could afford to stay with them.⁶⁸

Presbyterianism was not, however, universally acceptable to people committed to reform. Throughout the debates regarding Church government in the Westminster Assembly there was significant opposition from the Independent persuasion.⁶⁹ Independents did not support the concept of a national Church but favoured a system whereby each congregation should be separate and auto-

⁶⁵ Newcome, *Life of Machin*, p. 20.

⁶⁶ Robert Porter, *The life of Mr. John Heiron* (London, 1691), p. 14.

⁶⁷ *Autobiography*, p. 49.

⁶⁸ *Autobiography*, pp. 58, 69.

⁶⁹ Shaw, *English Church, 1640-60*, I, chapter 2.

nomous. They argued that the Church, although partially reformed, was nevertheless still too close in doctrine to Catholicism. The Independent concept of a gathered church of 'saints' organized on a voluntary principle transcended the notion of parochial government, and drew members from across parish boundaries, thereby disseminating their message over a wide but undefined area.⁷⁰ There was some sympathy for this system in Cheshire which was greatly encouraged by the gentry patronage of Colonel Robert Duckenfield of Dukinfield in Stockport parish.⁷¹ Duckenfield was a colonel in the parliamentary army in Cheshire, a former governor of Chester and later of the Isle of Man. Subsequently he was one of two representatives for Cheshire in the Barebones Parliament.⁷² Duckenfield's chaplain to the garrison at Chester was Samuel Eaton. Formerly the rector of West Kirby in the 1620s and 1630s and later minister at Dukinfield chapel, Eaton favoured Independency, which he had opportunity to observe first in Holland and later when in exile in New England.⁷³

Henry Newcome feared the influence of Independency. Although he had been briefly tempted by it and admired the godliness of its adherents, he nevertheless considered a creed which encouraged separatism to be divisive.⁷⁴ He was most concerned when in 1652 Ralph Stringer, the minister at Macclesfield, invited Samuel Eaton to preach to his congregation. Although Newcome wanted to hear Eaton, who, despite differences in doctrine, had a good reputation among Presbyterians, it was Eaton's proposed co-preacher, William Barrett, who posed a problem. Barrett was a layman and an elder at Dukinfield chapel. He had the reputation, in Newcome's words, of being 'a busy pragmatist man'.⁷⁵ Newcome tried unsuccessfully to get the meeting cancelled. Barrett, a former mayor of Stockport, had been a sequestrator between 1644 and 1646 and many in the Macclesfield congregation objected to a former sequestrator preaching in their pulpit. The sermons were preached but met with some

⁷⁰ G. F. Nuttall, *Visible saints: the Congregational way, 1640-1660* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 62, 108.

⁷¹ W. Urwick, *Nonconformity in Cheshire* (London, 1864), pp. xxiv-xxv; *Life of Adam Martindale*, pp. 61-2.

⁷² R. N. Dore, *The civil wars in Cheshire* (Chester, 1966), pp. 16-18; A. Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 174, 416-17; P. Arrowsmith, *Stockport: a history* (Stockport, 1997), pp. 86-91.

⁷³ Urwick, *Nonconformity in Cheshire*, p. 15; Matthews, *Calamy revised*, p. 178.

⁷⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 26.

⁷⁵ *Autobiography*, pp. 35-6.

reservations. Newcome noted, with relief, that no conversions followed.⁷⁶

The informal nature of Church government in Cheshire permitted a degree of licence for the growth of the more radical Protestant sects and an increase in peripatetic preachers. Newcome deplored the influence of such men as the radical Fifth Monarchist Major-General Thomas Harrison of Newcastle under Lyme, whom he branded 'a most insinuating man, and a furious separatist'.⁷⁷ The feature that most disturbed Presbyterians was the notion of preaching by so-called 'gifted' men, such as William Barrett of Stockport. These were unordained people who sought the right to express and proselytize their faith in their own individual fashion. This dislike encompassed the rapidly growing success of the Quaker movement, which challenged the notion of paid ministry.⁷⁸ Newcome and his friends saw the notion of the light within as anathema and evidence of diabolic possession, a common view among anti-Quakers.⁷⁹ They took every opportunity to reason with its adherents. Both at Sea-bridge and at Astbury, John Machin was prepared to discourse with Quakers. He argued long with a dying Quaker, attempting to change his mind. The dying man's resistance to persuasion at such a time, confirmed for Machin the notion of possession.⁸⁰ The Quaker message received a sympathetic hearing in Cheshire in the 1650s. The Quaker Richard Hubberthorne, who was very successful in conversion, noted that there were many people in Congleton who had been convinced.⁸¹ The concept of unpaid, unqualified, unordained preaching was a direct challenge to the Presbyterian notion of a national Church, and one that they did not underestimate. It was this threat that led to the setting up of the Cheshire Voluntary Association in 1653.⁸²

Not only did Presbyterianism have the threat of Independency

⁷⁶ *Autobiography*, pp. 36–7; H. Heginbotham, *Stockport, ancient and modern* (2 vols, London, 1882–92), II, p. 9 n.

⁷⁷ *Autobiography*, p. 27.

⁷⁸ V.C.H. *Cheshire*, III, pp. 101–4; A. Hughes, 'Frustrations of the godly', in *Revolution and Restoration*, ed. J. Morrill (London, 1992), p. 83.

⁷⁹ *Autobiography*, p. 52; Chetham's Library, MS. A3/123, p. lvii; M. Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford, 1978), p. 195.

⁸⁰ Newcome, *Life of Machin*, p. 21.

⁸¹ W. C. Braithwaite, *The beginnings of Quakerism* (3rd edn, Cambridge, 1961), pp. 123–7; V.C.H. *Cheshire*, III, p. 104.

⁸² *Autobiography*, p. 46; *Life of Adam Martindale*, p. 112.

and sectarianism to contend with. There was also a nostalgic conservatism which longed for the old ways and familiar rituals of the traditional Church. Newcome and other godly authors tended to ignore this nostalgia, or ascribe it to ignorance, but studies have shown that there was undeniably conservative resistance.⁸³ Not all Presbyterians were as conscientious as Newcome and his friends. Their behaviour alienated their congregations and encouraged the influence of the former episcopalian clergy.⁸⁴ Newcome himself noted that some of his Presbyterian colleagues were not of the calibre that he expected.⁸⁵ Many sequestered clergy settled in the neighbourhood of their former cures and remained in touch with their erstwhile parishioners.⁸⁶ Although the Prayer Book had been abolished, some of its customs persisted. Newcome himself appointed godparents, at least for his first two children, a practice which the Directory discouraged and which had not been popular with puritans ever since the debates surrounding the Elizabethan settlement.⁸⁷ In 1654 Mary Mainwaring, the wife of Thomas Mainwaring of Baddiley, was churched following the birth of her child. This was an undeniably episcopalian custom, and one for which the Directory made no provision.⁸⁸ The Directory for Public Worship demanded that prayers should be appropriate to an occasion, but it is understandable that a form of words, ingrained on the memory from former continuous use, might seem suitable. As we have seen, older members of society could strongly resist the new, and it was for that reason that there was such stress on catechizing and teaching the young.

Around 1653 or 1654 there is a subtle shift in emphasis in Newcome's narrative and an apparent loosening of the inner group of friends who met at Seabridge in the early 1650s. Machin had married in August 1653 and was settled as joint minister at Astbury by early 1654.⁸⁹ Following his ordination,

⁸³ J. Morrill, 'The Church in England', in *Reactions to the Civil War*, ed. J. Morrill (London, 1982), pp. 91, 104; M. J. Crossley Evans, 'The Anglican and Nonconformist clergy in Cheshire and Norfolk, 1630–1672' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Bristol Univ., 1989), pp. 202–3; Maltby, *Prayer Book and people*, chapters 4–5.

⁸⁴ Crossley Evans, 'Anglican and Nonconformist clergy', p. 201.

⁸⁵ *Autobiography*, p. 47.

⁸⁶ Crossley Evans, 'Anglican and Nonconformist clergy', p. 199.

⁸⁷ *Acts and ordinances*, I, pp. 594–6; P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan puritan movement* (Oxford, 1967), p. 369.

⁸⁸ C.C.A.L.S., DDX 384, p. 165.

⁸⁹ *Autobiography*, p. 45; Newcome, *Life of Machin*, pp. 27, 29–30.

Thomas Leadbeater was appointed to the living of Hinckley in Leicestershire.⁹⁰ The friends still met whenever possible, and Newcome continued to record their visits, but he was becoming increasingly concerned with the maintenance of his growing family. In the first eight years of their marriage, Elizabeth Newcome had given birth to five children. The family was forever short of money and often in debt, a circumstance which worried them a great deal, and which some people attributed to improvidence.⁹¹ By 1656 Newcome's financial situation was so bad that he was torn between accepting a more lucrative post in either Manchester or Shrewsbury and staying at Gawsworth where he was happy. It is a measure of solidarity among the friends that when Newcome was once more in funds and able to repay some of his debts, John Machin refused repayment of moneys lent, thereby making a gift of the loan.⁹² By the time that Newcome removed to Manchester in 1657, the early heady days, when he and his friends thought that they could change the world, had passed. When Randle Sillito of Tean died in 1657, the original participants in the private days at Seabridge were dispersed. The wish for reform was, however, not dissipated. Manchester had a formally convened classis, of which Newcome became an active member by reason of his appointment as assistant minister at the parish church. He continued to preach frequently and enthusiastically, not only in Manchester, but also in the towns of south Lancashire. Although very taken up with his new post and acquaintances, he did not forget old friends in south Cheshire. He continued to keep an eye on Gawsworth until a minister acceptable to the parish was appointed in January 1658, often travelling there to ensure a continuity of service and arranging for other clergy to minister to his former congregation.⁹³ His successor, Thomas Edge, was his recommendation and, with only one serious objection, the parish appears to have been happy with the choice they made. Edge ministered to Gawsworth until he was ejected in 1662.⁹⁴

Following the collapse of the second Protectorate in 1659 and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, many Presbyterians hoped for a broad national Church which would accommodate their

⁹⁰ Matthews, *Calamy revised*, p. 319.

⁹¹ *Autobiography*, p. 58.

⁹² *Autobiography*, p. 61.

⁹³ *Minutes of Manchester classis*, p. 254; *Autobiography*, pp. 71–6.

⁹⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 76; Matthews, *Calamy revised*, p. 179.

reforms.⁹⁵ Some were even prepared to accept a form of moderate episcopacy, and throughout 1660 royal and parliamentary policy seemed to be directed towards a broad-based Church.⁹⁶ The Act for Settling Ministers of 1660 had confirmed all incumbents except those who denied infant baptism, had supported the regicides, opposed the Restoration, or were in possession of a living where the sequestered minister was still alive. However, the vision of a comprehensive Church collapsed under conservative pressure. Episcopacy returned with those bishops who still lived and reclaimed their sees. A backlash among hard-line episcopalians, who sought to wipe out the innovations of the previous twenty years, culminated in royal ordinances against conventicles and produced a wave of harassment of Quakers, Baptists, and other sectarians.⁹⁷ On 20 May 1661 Newcome heard by post that the Cavalier Parliament had voted for the burning of the Solemn League and Covenant by the public hangman, and rumours circulated that all who were not episcopally ordained were forbidden to preach.⁹⁸ It was also laid down that all should receive the sacrament by Prayer Book rite, despite the fact that legislation had not yet been enacted for the reintroduction of the Book of Common Prayer.⁹⁹ The Act of Uniformity was passed to take effect on 24 August 1662. It required acceptance of the revised Book of Common Prayer, subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, the renunciation of the Solemn League and Covenant, and episcopal ordination for all clergy. Presbyterianism was driven out of the national Church. The attempt at reform had failed.

The small group of Presbyterian clergy discussed here were enthusiastic, zealous, conscientious, and sincere. Their weakness lay in the lack of a formal structure. Lacking the fixed structure of episcopalian worship and the precise formulary of the Book of Common Prayer, where the sermon was the only spontaneous form of expression, they were unable to beat off the challenge of

⁹⁵ J. Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England* (New Haven and London, 1991), p. 31.

⁹⁶ *Calendar of the correspondence of Richard Baxter*, ed. N. H. Keeble and G. F. Nuttall (2 vols, Oxford, 1991), II, p. 7; *The autobiography of Richard Baxter*, ed. N. H. Keeble (London, 1974), pp. 143–4; Spurr, *Restoration Church*, p. 32.

⁹⁷ Spurr, *Restoration Church*, pp. 36–42; R. S. Bosher, *The making of the Restoration settlement* (London, 1951), pp. 200–1.

⁹⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 136.

⁹⁹ Spurr, *Restoration Church*, p. 39.

conservatism which sought to restore older forms, while lacking both the authority to curb sectarianism and the will to tolerate it. Following the implementation of the Act of Uniformity approximately fifty of Cheshire's clergy were ejected. Henry Newcome failed to be reappointed to Manchester in 1660. His successor at Gaws-worth, Thomas Edge, was ejected from his living for his principles, as were John Machin, Thomas Leadbeater, and Adam Martindale among others of Newcome's acquaintance.¹⁰⁰ By conscience, many of the men ordained by the classes could not accept episcopal reordination, or subscribe to all of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Henry Newcome's conscience would not let him conform merely to obtain a living. Worldly interest, he believed, would 'hinder my preferment in another world'.¹⁰¹ Presbyterians' inability to deny aspects of doctrine which they believed to be fundamental to a reformed Church meant that they found themselves forced into a reluctant nonconformity. They felt that they were being pushed towards the very sectarianism which they deplored. This sensitivity of conscience by men who professed to be loyal to the notion of an established Church was extremely exasperating to conservative episcopalians who considered Presbyterian attitudes schismatic.¹⁰²

The real legacy of these years and of the Presbyterian experiment, however, lies in the importance which they had for the early Dissenting tradition in the area. Although excluded from parish ministry, these men continued in their mission, despite legislation designed to prevent them from so doing, and they drew small audiences around them. After his ejection Thomas Brook was allowed to use the private chapel of Little Moreton Hall by its owner until Brook's death in 1664.¹⁰³ In 1661 John Machin moved to Whitley in Great Budworth parish where he preached until he was ejected in 1662. He retired to his family home at Seabridge, where he died in 1664, aged forty, the last two years of his life being overshadowed by his distress at his ejection.¹⁰⁴

Almost all the ejected Presbyterians who survived were licensed to preach under the brief Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. Thomas

¹⁰⁰ Matthews, *Calamy revised*, pp. 570–1.

¹⁰¹ *Autobiography*, p. 145; Chetham's Library, MS. A3/123, p. clxx.

¹⁰² J. Spurr, 'Schism and the Restoration Church', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, XLI (1990), p. 418.

¹⁰³ Matthews, *Calamy revised*, p. 78; Urwick, *Nonconformity in Cheshire*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁴ Matthews, *Calamy revised*, p. 332; Newcome, *Life of Machin*, pp. 55–6, 94–5.

Edge retired to Chelford and preached privately both there and in Staffordshire until his death in 1678.¹⁰⁵ Thomas Leadbeater returned to Cheshire and eventually settled with a private congregation on Wirral.¹⁰⁶ Following a spell of imprisonment, Richard Steele moved to London where, in 1672, he acted as an agent for procuring licences to preach and licences for houses to be used for that purpose for friends in Cheshire and elsewhere.¹⁰⁷ Newcome continued to preach privately until 1672, when he was licensed to preach at a barn at Cold House, a property owned by Chetham's Hospital. Following the Act of Toleration in 1689, his congregation built a chapel for him on land in Plungeons meadow (now Cross Street) in Manchester, which opened in 1695. Throughout the rest of his life he maintained contact with the friends of his youth, thereby continuing the same moral support in adversity that they had shown each other in earlier years. Henry Newcome died on 17 September 1695 and was buried in Cross Street chapel. When this area of Manchester was redeveloped in 1996, Newcome's remains, with those of his wife and daughter, were removed and reinterred in Manchester's Southern Cemetery.¹⁰⁸

Although it was never their intent, the work of men like Henry Newcome, John Machin, and their friends was the catalyst in creating the opportunity for diversity of religious expression and the foundation of Dissenting worship, which they had sought to avoid. Despite harassment, many of their former parishioners remained convinced of the message. In 1706 John Brooke, Machin's brother-in-law and Newcome's companion on the preaching tour of Shropshire in 1652, wrote his will. In it he left bequests to the ministers of the Presbyterian chapels at Chelford, Macclesfield, and Dean Row near Wilmslow. He also exhorted his family thus:

Oh that all my kindred in the flesh these and others of my name, would call to remembrance, that antient family of our name in Kermincham, from whom we are all descended, whose crown and diadem in the last age was

¹⁰⁵ Matthews, *Calamy revised*, p. 179.

¹⁰⁶ Matthews, *Calamy revised*, pp. 319–20.

¹⁰⁷ G. Lyon Turner, *Original records of early Nonconformity* (3 vols, London, 1911), III, p. 371.

¹⁰⁸ Catherine Nunn, 'Henry Newcome', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (forthcoming); Cross Street Chapel, *Calendar for July and August 1998*: I am indebted to the Revd J. A. Midgley, minister of Cross Street chapel, for this reference.

strict and serious piety, to the observacon of the world; by whose early care and famouse example we are children of the covenant; forfeit not therefore your right nor blemish your honour by an easy formall airye religion.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ C.C.A.L.S., WS 1706 John Brooke.

