THE purpose of this paper is twofold: to examine the parties in the Civil War in Lancashire, concentrating on the allegiances of the nobility, gentry, townsmen and peasant farmers; and to discuss the main issues in the war — the social, the local and the religious issues.

Seventeenth century observers believed that there were social differences between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians during the Civil War. The Reverend Richard Baxter, a Puritan clergyman, noted that ‘a great part of the Lords forsook the Parliament’ and that, outside the Home Counties and East Anglia, ‘a very great part of the Knights and Gentlemen . . . adhered to the king’. Parliament’s support, he said, came from ‘the smaller part (as some thought) of the Gentry in most of the Counties, and the greatest part of the Tradesmen and Free-holders and the middle sort of Men’.

Edward Chamberlayne, writing after the Restoration, named as Parliamentarians ‘some of the . . . gentry . . . most of the tradesmen and very many of the peasantry’.

How valid are these interpretations for Lancashire? Were the nobility and gentry predominantly Royalist and were the townfolk and peasantry mainly Parliamentarian? First, what about the nobility or peerage in Lancashire? They were
unanimously and vigorously Royalist. But there were only three of them: James Stanley, seventh Earl of Derby; Richard Molyneux, second Viscount of Maryborough in Ireland; and Henry Parker, thirteenth Baron Morley and Mounteagle. The Earl of Derby was the leader of the Lancashire Royalists and during the Civil War he played a most prominent part in the fighting in Lancashire and was also active at Marston Moor, in Cheshire and the Isle of Man. Richard Molyneux of Sefton was very active for King Charles I in Lancashire, taking part in the siege of Manchester in 1642, and he also fought at Edgehill, Bristol, the first battle of Newbury and Marston Moor. Henry, Lord Morley and Mounteagle, also fought outside Lancashire and helped to defend Skipton Castle for the King in 1645.

What about the Lancashire gentry, those consistently described as baronets, knights, esquires or gentlemen in official documents? Were they predominantly Royalist or Parliamentarian? They were neither. They were probably mainly neutral. There were 774 gentry families in Lancashire on the eve of the Civil War and we are ignorant of the possible Civil War allegiances and sympathies of 482 of them, that is about two-thirds. Some of them may well have been Royalists or Parliamentarians whose allegiances are undocumented but I strongly suspect that the bulk of them, like the bulk of the common people, remained neutral during the Civil War. John Seacome, an historian of the Stanleys, said that ‘many gentlemen in the north . . . remained neuter’, and he seems to have had Lancashire in mind. One hundred of these 482 families were Roman Catholic and, as Dr K.J. Lindley has said, may have been alienated from Charles I because of recusancy fines coming on top of other impositions like ship money and distraint of knighthood. But why the other 382 non-Catholic families were possible ‘neuters’ is a mystery. Was it because of strong local feelings, because they had too little interest in national problems? Was it because they thought that civil war would threaten the social hierarchy? Or was it just because of apathy, escapism, laziness or cowardice? We do not know. But the large number of possible neutral gentry in Lancashire would seem to endorse the view of Dr R. Hutton that the bulk of the local community was indifferent to the conflict.

Moreover, neutralist tendencies were strong even among those who did take sides in the Civil War. Many on both sides tried to remain neutral for as long as possible. For example, there was apparently much neutralism in the Liverpool area.
until the arrival of Prince Rupert in 1644. Then 'the country thereabout who formerly lurked as neuters do now show themselves in arms for the Earl of Derby.' It was perhaps then that Roger Breres of Walton, John Lathom of Huyton, James Pemberton of Whiston and Thomas Wolfall of Wolfall became Royalists. In Leyland hundred some of the gentry — Peter Catterall of Crook, Robert Mawdesley of Mawdesley and Thomas Wilson of Tunley — did not openly declare themselves for Parliament until as late as 1646, by which time the main Royalist garrison in the region, Lathom House, had fallen to the Parliamentary forces.

Pacifist as well as neutralist tendencies were also strong among the combatants. Dr Hutton has recently argued that 'the war in Lancashire was a limited entity, restricted ... by the reluctance of the county gentry, including the minority of partisans, to destroy their community'. Hutton mentions some local demilitarisation pacts. For example, in 1644 the Royalist gentry at Lathom House concluded a treaty with the local Parliamentarians. If the latter did not disturb them in gathering supplies, they agreed not to raid. Both sides were trying to prevent further warfare.

However, despite the great number of possible neutral gentry, despite the neutralist and pacifist tendencies even among the combatants, it remains true that there was a civil war in Lancashire, that large numbers of the gentry took a leading part in it, and that it is possible to divide these gentry into two parties: the Royalists and the Parliamentarians.

How many of the Lancashire gentry at some time or other between 1642 and 1648 served either the King or Parliament in a military or civil capacity? Whether we divide the combatants on a family or an individual basis, it would appear that the Royalists greatly outnumbered the Parliamentarians. One hundred and seventy-seven gentry families were Royalist and only ninety-one were Parliamentarian. Two hundred and seventy-two individual gentlemen supported the King and just 138 aided Parliament. Families who changed sides or were divided in their allegiance were very few — a mere twenty-four — and so need not detain us. Individual sidechangers numbered just nine and they too can be ignored.

A study of Map 1 enables us to draw four main conclusions. First, the Royalist gentry vastly outnumbered the Parliamentarian gentry in every hundred of Lancashire, except Salford, and there the Roundhead majority was very slight, with thirty-one families supporting Parliament and twenty-six
the King.

Second, political divisions in Lancashire roughly coincided with religious divisions. The Parliamentarian gentry were strongest in Salford hundred, the most puritanical part of Lancashire. Many of the Parliamentarians lived in or near Manchester — ‘a Goshen, a place of light’ — and Bolton — ‘the Geneva of Lancashire’ — and were consequently open to Puritan influences. Altogether 87 per cent of Parliamentarian families in Salford hundred were Puritan. The Royalist gentry, on the other hand, were strongest in the western hundreds, the most pro-Catholic parts of Lancashire. In Leyland hundred 61 per cent, in West Derby hundred 80 per cent and in Amounderness 89 per cent of Royalist gentry families included one or more participating members who were Papist, and these are rather conservative estimates.

Third, political divisions roughly coincided with agricultural divisions, with the Parliamentarian gentry strongest in the pastoral, upland regions and the Royalists in the more arable, lowland areas. Some historians have argued that pastoral regions tended to be more politically and religiously radical than arable districts. Such historians were of course referring mainly to the peasantry, but in some parts of Lancashire the gentry were also more radical in pastoral regions. In Blackburn hundred, for example, the Parliamentary gentry were to be found entirely in the pastoral east and the Royalist gentry mainly in the more arable west, especially in the rich Ribble valley. In Lonsdale two-thirds of the Parliamentarian gentry lived in the more pastoral northern part of the hundred, while the majority of the Cavaliers dwelt in the slightly more arable southern part.

Fourth, many of the Royalist gentry lived in close proximity to the Lancashire peers, while most Parliamentary gentry dwelt at safe distances away from them. The Royalist gentry must have been influenced by the Royalist nobility, for in Lancashire the nobles were much stronger than they were in most other English counties. The immense power of the seventh Earl of Derby was acknowledged by contemporaries. Edward Robinson of Euxton, a Lancashire Parliamentary officer, said that the Stanley family was ‘esteemed by most about them with little lesse respect than kings’. The Royalist Earl of Clarendon believed that the Earl of Derby had ‘a greater influence’ and ‘a more absolute command over the people’ in Lancashire and Cheshire ‘than any subject in England had in any other quarter of the kingdom’. Clarendon and Robinson exaggerated, but it is difficult to
Map 1: Royalist and Parliamentarian Gentry Families of Lancashire
believe that the influence of the Earl of Derby was not at least a partial explanation for the large number of Royalist gentry in south-west Lancashire, for it was there that he held over half his Lancashire estates, including Lathom, the Royalist headquarters in north-west England. But the Stanleys were not the only influential noble family in south-west Lancashire. The Molyneuxes of Sefton had considerable property and power in the region, and a number of the neighbouring Royalist gentry had been previously in their service, such as Fazakerley of Fazakerley, Fazakerley of Kirkby, Hulme of Maghull, Mercer of West Derby and Molyneux of the Wood. Some of them indeed, like Captain William Fazakerley of Kirkby and Cornet Edmund Molyneux of the Wood, joined the regiment which Viscount Molyneux raised for the king at the beginning of the war. Finally, it can hardly have been a coincidence that in south Lonsdale several Royalist gentry lived near Hornby Castle, the home of the Cavalier nobleman, Henry, Lord Morley and Mounteagle.

So much for the numbers and distribution of the Royalist and Parliamentarian gentry. But we should not attach excessive importance to the numerical superiority of the Royalist over the Parliamentarian gentry. Royalist supremacy was to some extent more apparent than real. The Parliamentarian gentry were in a strong position for most of the Civil War, for four main reasons. First, many more Cavaliers than Parliamentarian gentry fought outside Lancashire and the local Royalist forces were thus short of officers and men. Second, the Parliamentarians were fairly united throughout the Civil War years from 1642 to 1648. During the first Civil War (1642–1646) there is no evidence of any contest between a win-the-war group and a compromise-peace group. During the second Civil War (1648) in Lancashire not a single Parliamentarian gentleman seems to have deserted his cause to join the King’s forces, whereas in some counties, like Kent and Westmorland, many former Parliamentarians supported Charles I. Third, the Parliamentarians had a far greater number of active gentry supporters than had the Royalists. Seventy-nine Parliamentarians were civilian officials as against thirty-six Royalists, and many of these thirty-six were officials only in name. Eighty-four Parliamentarian gentlemen were soldiers, and most of them fairly active too. The Royalists had 178 gentlemen-soldiers, but a number of these alleged that they had been ‘enforced’ or ‘commanded’ to bear arms against their will. Altogether at least sixty-four Royalists were passive supporters of their cause as against
Map 2: Lancashire Hundreds, Towns and Nobles’ Seats in 1642
only eight Parliamentarians. Fourth, the Parliamentarians appear to have had greater support than the Royalists had among the common people.

Let us now examine the allegiances of the common people in Lancashire. Clarendon seems to have singled out Lancashire, together with Cheshire, as an area where Parliamentarian support among the common people was enthusiastic and Royalist support lukewarm:

The difference in the temper of common people of both sides was so great that they who inclined to the Parliament left nothing unperformed that might advance the cause, and were incredibly vigilant and industrious to cross and hinder whatsoever might promote the King's: whereas they who wished him well thought they had performed their duty in doing so, and that they had done enough for him that they had done nothing against him.

Unfortunately we do not know whether Clarendon was right. Much more work needs to be done on the question of non-gentry allegiance. We desperately need a detailed statistical analysis of the Civil War attitudes of merchants, craftsmen, yeomen, husbandmen and labourers. Meanwhile, any generalisations made about the townsfolk and farmers of Lancashire must be extremely tentative.

First, a few words about the towns. According to the Hearth Tax returns of 1664, only 11 per cent of the Lancashire people lived in towns of over 1,000 inhabitants. In East Anglia, by contrast, 28 per cent of the people did so in the sixteenth-seventies. Map 2 shows that there were only eleven towns in Lancashire in 1642: the clothing towns of the south-east, Manchester, Salford, Bolton, Bury, Rochdale and Blackburn; the western seaports of Liverpool and Lancaster; and the inland towns of the Lancashire Plain, Warrington, Wigan and Preston. Townsmen greatly differed in wealth and status, and it is almost impossible to generalise about them. It is certainly very hard to discover their political outlook. In a recent article Roger Howell has said that it is ‘difficult to generalise’ about the political loyalties of provincial towns and has strongly warned us against assuming that they were ‘the natural recruiting ground for supporters of the parliamentary side’. Indeed, he has argued that Newcastle-upon-Tyne and other, mostly West Country, towns were politically divided and inclined to appeasement or neutralism. In Lancashire no town seems to have been neutral in the Civil War, and only one — Bury — appears to have been deeply divided. It is impossible to be absolutely certain about the allegiances of the other ten Lancashire towns because much of the evidence is
flimsy, vague or difficult to interpret. Moreover, we do well to recall the words of the late Mr Philip Styles who wrote: ‘When we say that a particular town was Royalist or Parliamentarian in the Civil War we are speaking in terms of military control rather than of opinion.’ However, bearing these caveats in mind, it can be very tentatively suggested that four of the ten towns were probably mainly Royalist, and that the other six were perhaps largely Parliamentarian.

The inland towns of Preston, Wigan and Warrington were apparently Royalist. In Preston ‘the Townes men were generally disaffected to the Parliament’, though the corporation was politically divided. Preston suffered, too, for its Royalism and was pillaged by the Parliamentary forces. Wigan was regarded as ‘the most malignant towne in all the County’ because ‘ther was not many in it that favored the Parliament’. So strongly Royalist was Wigan that during the Interregnum it was disfranchised by Oliver Cromwell, who described it as ‘a great and poor town, and very malignant’. As regards Warrington, I used to believe that it was a likely Parliamentarian town, but new evidence now makes me think that it was probably Royalist. According to a letter written by a Parliamentary supporter in 1643, many of the Warrington ‘Townsmen’ joined the Warrington garrison in attacking Bolton, that citadel of Parliamentarianism and Puritanism. The writer reckoned that in Warrington there were ‘300 townesmen in armes’ for the King. Military historians would probably agree that this was a fairly large number, since Warrington had less than 1,800 inhabitants in 1664.

As regards the seaports of Liverpool and Lancaster, they appear to have been almost Parliamentarian islands in the surrounding sea of Royalism. In Liverpool ‘the most p’e of the said towne who were able bodies did take up armes for the Parliamt’. In Lancaster the Royalists garrisoned the castle at the beginning of the Civil War, but when the Parliamentary Major Thomas Birch entered the town in 1643 ‘he found no great opposition, . . . and after the Towne joined with him and they went against the castle’. In the late sixteen-forties Parliament granted both Lancaster and Liverpool compensation for losses sustained during the Civil War. Parliament would hardly have done this had they been Royalist seaports.

Of the six clothing towns in south-east Lancashire — Blackburn, Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Rochdale and Salford — only the latter was Royalist. Salford may have supported the King because of its local rivalry with neighbouring
Manchester, because of its long administrative and judicial conflict with that town. Bury was, as previously stated, very divided. Blackburn and Rochdale appear to have been Parliamentarian, though the evidence for this is rather slight. Bolton was undoubtedly a Puritan and Parliamentarian stronghold. It was referred to as ‘the Geneva of Lancashire’, and a very large number of the inhabitants appear to have been killed during the famous siege by Prince Rupert in 1644. Finally, Manchester was singled out by the Royalist Clarendon as a Parliamentarian bastion:

The town of Manchester had from the beginning (out of that factious humour which possessed most corporations and the pride of their wealth) opposed to the king and declared magisterially for the Parliament.  

A Parliamentarian observer, John Vicars, praised:

the honest hearted and courageous Manchesterians [who] are the principal men in the Kingdom, next to the most famous and renowned city of London, that fight most prosperously for God and true religion.  

Not all the Mancunians were Parliamentarians, of course. Many of the ‘chiefe men’ at Manchester favoured the King’s champion, Lord Strange, the future seventh Earl of Derby. So too perhaps did many of the lower orders, unflatteringly referred to as ‘the Rascalitie’. It is indeed all too easy to exaggerate the support that Manchester gave to the Parliamentary cause and, as Professor Manning reminds us, the defence of the place against Lord Strange in 1642 depended more on the local gentry and their tenants than on the townsmen. However, these facts merely qualify our main argument and certainly do not entitle us to call Manchester a Royalist town.  

So much for the allegiances of the townsmen. What about those of the peasant farmers, the yeomen and husbandmen? Unfortunately we know even less about them than we do about the townsfolk. The peasants — perhaps even the peasant-textile weavers of south-east Lancashire — got most of their income from agriculture and were mainly tenant farmers. Being dependent on their landlords, they must have had little choice about which side, if any, they took in the Civil War. There are several examples of both Royalist and Parliamentarian gentry in Lancashire receiving the obedient military support of their tenantry. Nevertheless, the peasantry were not all docile and many of them, especially the yeomen, expressed clear political preferences. At any rate Lancashire peasant farmers were to be found supporting both
Royalists and Parliamentarians, but the question is, in what proportions?

A superficial reading of the source material might lead us to suppose that the Lancashire farmers had strong Royalist leanings during the Civil War. In the Royalist Composition Papers eighty-nine yeomen and seventy husbandmen are named as having supported the King. In a list of just over 1,000 suspected Lancashire Royalists drawn up by Major-General Charles Worsley in 1655 208 yeomen and 343 husbandmen are recorded. Even allowing for underestimates, these figures of peasant support for Royalism are not impressive, especially as there must have been, at the very least, 8,000 peasant families in Lancashire in 1642. Indeed, it can be calculated that probably barely 7 per cent of the peasant population of Lancashire was Royalist as compared with 23 per cent of the gentry.

The surviving Protestation returns also suggest that the peasantry were less politically and, more arguably, less religiously conservative than the gentry. Early in 1642 Parliament tried to obtain nationwide support by calling upon the people to sign the Protestation to ‘maintain the religion established against Popish innovations and to protect the freedom of Parliament’. In the Leyland hundred of Lancashire the yeoman appear to have been much more willing than the gentry to comply. Thus in Euxton township thirteen of the fifteen yeomen signed the Protestation, but the two gentlemen of the neighbourhood refused. In Chorley parish all nine yeomen took the Protestation, but five of the eight local gentlemen did not. The poorer farmers, the husbandmen, appear to have been even more radical than the yeomen. For example, in Croston township six yeomen signed and six refused the Protestation, but forty of the forty-six husbandmen took it.

We have no figures at all concerning how many Lancashire peasants supported Parliament during the Civil War, but narrative sources suggest that they may have been numerous. The Reverend Adam Martindale, a Puritan divine, recorded that ‘many yeomen’s sonnes’ in Lancashire fled to the Parliamentarian garrison at Bolton to escape being forced to serve in the Earl of Derby’s Royalist regiments, ‘and tooke up armes there’ for the Parliament. ‘The young youths, farmers sons’ around Chowbent, near Atherton, fought vigorously against the Earl of Derby’s forces. The ‘club men in Middleton, Ouldham and Rachdall’ came to the aid of Bolton when it was besieged by the Royalists. The term ‘club men’
almost certainly refers to the peasantry. A number of tenants supported Parliament against their Royalist landlords and most of them must have been peasants. These included the Earl of Derby’s tenants in West Derby and Wavertree, some of his tenants around Lathom, and sixty of them in Bury and Pilkington who not only refused to render him military service but ‘joined with the well affected in and about Manchester, serving the Parliament faithfully’. Some of those who rose for Parliament were tenants of the Crown, like the ‘sturdy churls in the two forests of Pendle and Rossendale’.

To sum up so far, it does look as though there were social differences between the parties in Lancashire, though we must beware of exaggeration. If we exclude the possibly large neutral population, it would seem that the Royalists were supported by all three peers, by a clear majority of the gentry, probably by a large minority of the towns and possibly by a minority of the peasantry. By contrast, the Parliamentarians were sustained by no peers, by a minority of the gentry, probably by a small majority of the towns and possibly by a majority of the peasantry. Does this therefore mean that the Civil War in Lancashire was a class conflict? No. There were class differences but not class antagonisms between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians; or if there were class antagonisms and social issues, they were of limited importance.

II

Historians have mentioned two main social issues in the Civil War in Lancashire: popular hostility to the seventh Earl of Derby and agrarian discontent. What about popular hatred of the Earl of Derby? The following remarks of Clarendon suggest that it was most intense. The earl’s ‘ancient power’ in Lancashire ‘depended more upon the fear than love of the people’. ‘He knew not how to treat his inferiors’ so that he incurred the hatred of ‘persons of inferior quality . . . that they pursued him to death’. Many engaged ‘themselves against the King that they might not be subject to that lord’s commands’. However, Clarendon must be viewed with some scepticism. His bias against the Stanleys is well known and he may have been reflecting the opinion of an unfriendly Court. Furthermore, Clarendon did not always know what he was talking about. He was very much a southerner and sometimes a little uncertain in his evidence about the north of England. In fact local records repeatedly testify to the popularity of the seventh Earl of Derby. The
Parliamentarian Edward Robinson of Euxton admitted that Lord Strange was well loved in his country, perhaps because he was noted for his 'great Hospitalitie' which brought him 'much love and more applause'. The earl also obtained much willing support during the Civil War, saying:

I was happie in the Beginnig of this Warre, to have the general Applause of my Neighbours, as one they would like to follow as they did my Ancestors before me.

The 'countrie people' of the Kirkham area were certainly keen to follow him into battle and 'came with great cheerfulnesse unto' him.

If the Earl of Derby was so popular, why did many of his tenants in Lathom, West Derby, Wavertree, Bury and Pilkington support Parliament during the Civil War? Was it because he was a harsh landlord? Was it because of agrarian discontent? It is doubtful. Let us examine the manors in turn. First Lathom. There is no evidence that the earl ill-treated his tenants here. In West Derby and Wavertree the tenants 'suffered great losses' when the earl 'endeavoured to break their customs and raise their fines for his own advantage'. But it is not clear whether the earl oppressed them before or after the Civil War. As for the tenants of Bury and Pilkington, they may have supported Parliament because of their religious beliefs, for some were Presbyterian elders just after the Civil War. But it was not because the earl had exploited them. This he only seems to have done when the war was over. In a petition (of 1653?) to the House of Commons the tenants lamented that 'some of their leases' were 'much weakened by reason (of) serving the Parlaiamt faithfullly'. The Earl of Derby was not of course the only Lancashire Royalist landlord who victimised his Roundhead tenants after the Civil War. In 1654 some unidentified Parliamentary tenants in Lancashire and Cheshire complained to the Protector Oliver Cromwell that their Papist and Cavalier landlords had evicted some of them and threatened to 'turn out the rest' on account of their 'service done to the Parlaiamt'. Thus the evidence seems to suggest that in Lancashire the exploitation of the tenantry was the result rather than the cause of their Parliamentaryism. An important exception to this argument concerns the crown tenants in Blackburn hundred who almost certainly supported Parliament because of their long struggle with their royal landlords, James I and Charles I, to obtain security of tenure.

Many Lonsdale tenants were also victims of landlord
oppression, but, unlike the ‘Blackburnshire’ tenants, they do not seem to have supported Parliament. One cannot necessarily equate — as I once did — the exploited Lonsdale tenants with the Lonsdale ‘countrymen’ who, we know, were Parliamentarian. We are in fact completely ignorant of the Civil War allegiances of the exploited Lonsdale tenants, except those of Yealand — and they were Royalist. The Yealand tenants had one of the harshest landlords in Lancashire — Sir George Middleton of Leighton — and yet it was said that they ‘were in actual armes against Parliamt . . . under . . . Midleton’s command’ or ‘gave monyes to buy armes’. The Yealand tenants may have supported their landlord under duress, but the point is that their agrarian discontent before the Civil War did not lead them to support Parliament during it.

If social and agrarian issues were not of paramount importance in the Civil War in Lancashire, what about local issues? Until recently it has been fashionable to interpret the English Civil War in terms of ‘localism’. Professor Ivan Roots has succinctly defined this as ‘a priority given to the apparent needs of a community smaller and more intimate than the state or nation’. Hence ‘in Dorset, Somerset and Lancashire, it was local rather than national politics that men revelled in’, and ‘Rebellions, including the Great Rebellion itself, were emphatically local movements’. There is indeed a prima facie case for emphasising the parochialism and localism of our seventeenth century ancestors. Local feelings and local loyalties were bound to be strong among all social groups in an age when transport facilities and communications were poor and when a journey from Manchester to London might take anything up to a week.

However, in Lancashire local issues only seem to have been of moderate importance. There are certainly some good examples of localism. For instance, the Town Book of Liverpool during the Civil War shows that the townsmen were far more preoccupied with the interests of the borough than with those of the nation. Indeed, the Liverpudlians probably supported Parliament against the Royalist Molyneuxes of Sefton, not because of any Puritan feelings, not because of a wish to defend the liberty of the subject and the privileges of Parliament, but because of a desire to gain control of the town windmill and ferry boats. As well as inter-community quarrels, personal rivalries were sometimes important in deciding allegiance. Two examples will suffice. Sir Thomas Stanley of Bickerstaffe may have supported Parliament...
mainly because of a property dispute in 1640 with his kinsman, Lord Strange, the future Lancashire Royalist leader. Sir Thomas certainly does not seem to have been a man of great political and religious principles. The ‘insolent’ Alexander Rigby of Goosnargh, another leading Lancashire Parliamentarian, did have strong political and religious convictions. He led the attack on Lathom House in 1644 and was later described as ‘a great Independent’. But Rigby also apparently had a personal grudge against the same Lancashire Royalist leader.

Let us not, however, exaggerate the importance of personal animosities and local disputes in deciding political allegiances. The Civil War in Lancashire was not just the result of ‘little local difficulties’ and petty personal squabbles, important though these sometimes were. There are several cases where personal quarrels were overridden and the protagonists sank their differences in the larger issue. During the sixteen-thirties Thomas Gerard of Ince fought a protracted lawsuit in the Court of Duchy Chamber against John Culcheth of Culcheth and Abraham Langton of Lowe concerning his waste lands in Ince. Yet these three Catholic gentlemen all fought for the King during the Civil War. Local and personal issues were also subordinated to national ones during the siege of Manchester in 1642. A contemporary Parliamentarian said that ‘private and particular interests are wrapped up in the Publique, not so much publique in private’. He went on to say that ‘the remembrance of Parliamentary engagement, and an honourable esteem of the Publique Faith did no little availe’. Lancashire Parliamentarians were therefore much concerned with national politics. So also were Lancashire Royalists. This is partly suggested by the fact that 40, or probably even 50, per cent of the Royalist gentry soldiers fought at some time or other outside Lancashire. Civil War historians have often stressed that localism was shown by a reluctance to fight outside one’s own county. But Lancashire Royalists were to be found fighting not merely in their native county and in the neighbouring shires of Westmorland, Yorkshire and Cheshire, but also in faraway places like Bristol, Cornwall and Ireland. Several of the Royalist gentry fought outside Lancashire in some of the more famous Civil War battles like Edgehill, first and second Newbury and Marston Moor. The non-local outlook of Lancashire Royalists is further shown by the fact that some of them joined non-Lancashire regiments, like Sir John Beaumont’s Midland regiment.

Localism and local issues in Lancashire, then, do not
appear to have been of outstanding importance. So what was the most important single issue in the Civil War in Lancashire? It would appear to have been religion. However, this factor should not be overstressed. Many Lancastrians were apparently indifferent to religion during the early seventeenth century, and in some parts of the county there was a fair amount of paganism, irreligion and doctrinal ignorance, not to mention witchcraft. Yet it is well known that Lancashire also contained many who had deep religious convictions, that it had more Catholics than any other English county, and that it had a vigorous Puritan element, especially in Salford hundred. How many Lancastrians were believing, let alone practising, Anglicans is unknown. But Roman Catholicism was embraced by at least 28 per cent of gentry heads of families; indeed, if we exclude the heavily Protestant area around Manchester from calculations, the figure rises to 36 per cent. Many of the peasantry in the western parts of the county were also Catholic. Puritanism — aptly called the religion of 'the hotter sort of protestants' — was apparently strongest among the 'middle sort', and less than 15 per cent of gentry heads of families supported it.

The fact that Puritans and Catholics were a minority of the gentry, and possibly of the whole population, does not undermine the belief of the late Dr Tupling that 'the chief cause of the division in Lancashire was the religious question, and especially the mutual hostility of the Puritans and the Roman Catholics'. The Civil War in Lancashire was a war between two minorities, but the majority of these minorities apparently held religious convictions to a greater or lesser degree. At least 116 (65 per cent) of the 177 Royalist gentry families were Catholic and sixty-seven (73 per cent) of the ninety-one Parliamentarian gentry families were Puritan.

It is not entirely clear why so many Lancashire Catholic gentry supported Charles I in the Civil War. But they were apparently alarmed at the spread of Protestant heresies, at the amount of anti-Catholic hysteria in the county in 1641-42, and at the Long Parliament's advocacy of an extreme Protestant Church policy. So despite their irritation at Stuart oppression, the Lancashire Catholic leaders appealed to Charles I in September 1642 to have their arms restored to them, both for the defence of the King and their own families. The Anglican King was a lesser evil than the Puritan Parliament. During the Civil War at least 157 (57 per cent) of the 272 individual Royalist gentlemen were Catholic. Indeed, Catholics provided most of the more
vigorous Lancashire Royalists, and this is partly shown by the heavy casualties they suffered. At least forty-two Royalist gentlemen lost their lives in the Civil Wars, and of these thirty (71 per cent) were Catholic. Among those killed were such leading Catholics as Colonel Thomas Dalton of Thurnham at the Second Battle of Newbury, Colonel Charles Towneley of Towneley at Marston Moor, and Major-General Thomas Tyldesley of Myerscough at Wigan Lane in 1651. Tyldesley is a particularly interesting figure. He was a devout Catholic and had patronised the famous Benedictine missionary, St Ambrose Barlow, who was executed at Lancaster in 1641.

Tyldesley’s devotion to the Catholic Church was matched only by his loyalty to Charles I. It was said of Tyldesley that ‘there was not a man in all the County more zealous and fervent for the king’s part ... not the Earle of Darbie himself’. Tyldesley was certainly the animating force among the Lancashire Royalists. He raised an infantry regiment for the King in Amounderness, appointing mainly Catholic officers, and himself fought at Edgehill, Burton-on-Trent, Chester, Marston Moor, Lichfield and Appleby before his death in battle in 1651. The Catholic Thomas Tyldesley was probably the most gallant and courageous cavalier that Lancashire produced in the Civil War.

If Catholics, like Tyldesley, were the real driving force among the Royalists, Puritans were the most numerous and dedicated among the Parliamentarians. The Puritan author of *Discourse of the Warr in Lancashire*, himself a Parliamentary officer, observed that ‘of those that first put themselves in Armes [for Parliament] were men of the best affec­tion to Religion’. Almost all the leading Lancashire Parliamentarians were Puritans, and these included such gentlemen as Lieutenant-Colonel John Bradshaw of Bradshaw, rebuild­er of a Puritan chapel in 1640; Robet Hyde of Denton, active as both a county committeeman and Presbyterian elder; Major Joseph Rigby, author of *The Drunkard’s Prospective* (1655); and, above all, Major-General Ralph Assheton of Middleton. Assheton was a particularly sincere Puritan and was a patron of the Reverend Thomas Pyke, the ‘godly preachinge Minis­ter’ of Radcliffe. Assheton was educated at Sidney Sussex, Cambridge, which was Oliver Cromwell’s college and a hotbed of Puritanism. Like several other Lancashire Parliament­ary leaders, Assheton may possibly have acquired his Puritan beliefs at Cambridge. Assheton’s Puritanism was matched by his political opposition to Charles I. During the first Civil War (1642–46) he fought not only in Lancashire,
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but also at Adwalton Moor, Nantwich, Marston Moor and Chester, and in the second Civil War (1648) was commander-in-chief of the Lancashire Parliamentary forces. Puritans like Assheton formed a large proportion of the Lancashire Parliamentary gentry. Of the 138 individual Parliamentarian gentlemen, eighty-eight (63 per cent) were Puritan. Of the eighty-four who were soldiers, only forty-seven (56 per cent) were Puritan, but among the seventy-nine who were civilian officials as many as sixty-five (82 per cent) were Puritan. Twenty-nine of the Parliamentarians served both as soldiers and officials and of these all save three were Puritan (i.e. 89 per cent). In Lancashire politics and religion were closely intertwined, and numerous letters and despatches sent down from the county during the Civil War show that the local Parliamentarians regarded the conflict as essentially one against Popery.

Various acts of vandalism during the Civil War in Lancashire also suggest that religion was a major issue. Royalist hatred of Puritan scripturalism was shown in 1642 when Cavaliers from Wigan took the bible from the Puritan chapel in Hindley, 'tore it in pieces and then stucke the leaves of it upon the post in severall places in Wigan, saying, "This is the Roundheads' Bible"'. Royalist detestation of Puritan psalm-singing was likewise evident when, after capturing Bolton in 1644, the Cavaliers 'caused' one of the Roundhead prisoners, George Sharples of Freckleton, 'to stand in the dirt to his knees Jearing upon him and put a Psalter into his hands that he might sing them a Psalme to make them sporte'. Outrageous acts were also committed by the Parliamentary soldiers. During the Civil War they expressed their hatred of Anglican ceremonial by taking the surplice from the parish church of Bury, putting it upon the back of a soldier and causing 'him to ride in the Cart . . . to be a matter of sport and laughter to the beholders'. Parliamentarian troops were also guilty of 'the pulling downe of Crosses in the High Waies, erected through Superstition as alsoe some in Market Townes — witness Preston and others — takeing out of Churches the Book of Common Praier, Surplisses, Fonts and breaking downe of Organs'. These were the objects of Roundhead fury — the Prayer Book and ceremonial — and it must have been at least partly because of their existence that the Parliamentarians took up arms.

It is also difficult to believe that religion was not a vitally important issue when one recalls the religious enthusiasm of some of the Parliamentary soldiers. A contemporary Puritan
said that during the siege of Manchester the defenders:
from first to last had prayers and singing of Psalms dayly at the street
ends, most of our Soldiery being religious honest men.126

In the Roundhead garrison in Liverpool the Puritan minister,
Adam Martindale,

enjoyed sweet communion with the religious officers of the company,
which used to meet every night at one another’s quarters, by turns, to
read scripture, to confer of good things, and to pray together.127

But piety was also to be found on the Royalist side. The leader
of the Lancashire Cavaliers, James Stanley, seventh Earl of
Derby, was a very devout Anglican. His book of Private
Devotions is clear evidence of this.128 His wife, who so bravely
defended Lathom House for the King, was even more devout.
A contemporary, who was present with her during the siege,
said that ‘her first care was the service of God’ and that she
was ‘com’only p’sent in publike prayers’ as often as ‘four
tymes a day’.129 It is easy to be cynical about her devotions
during a military siege, but even Clarendon, who was some­what hostile to the Stanleys, regarded her as ‘a lady of the
most exemplar virtue and piety of her time’.130 To such
persons as the Countess of Derby religion seems to have mattered for its own sake. Religion was taken equally seriously
by Mrs Margaret Ireland, a Catholic Royalist gentle­woman. Rather than see her son provided for according to his rank and brought up a Protestant, she preferred to ‘see him
hanged’.131

To sum up, religious issues seem to have been much more
important than social and local issues in the Civil War in
Lancashire. When we consider the sincere piety of several
Royalists and Parliamentarians, the Catholic majority among
the Cavaliers, the Puritan majority among the Roundhead
gentry, various acts of religious vandalism during the Civil
War, such as the surplice incident at Bury, and indeed the
whole tone of contemporary literature, it is difficult to resist
the conclusion that religion was of vital importance. But in
this respect was Lancashire an exception, or was it simply an
extreme case of what existed elsewhere? I leave it to the reader
to decide.

NOTES

1 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxteriana, ed. M. Sylvester, I (London,

3 Clarendon, Rebellion, II, p. 318.


10 Fifty-one of these Catholic families were definitely neutral and the other forty-nine were of unknown political allegiance. See B.G. Blackwood, ‘The Lancashire Gentry, 1625–1660: A Social and Economic Study’ (Oxford Univ. D. Phil. thesis, 1973), p. 183.


14 Blackwood, Lanc. Gentry, p. 50; also p. 68, n. 39 & 40.

15 Hutton, T.H.S.L.C., CXXIX, p. 60.

16 Ibid., pp. 53, 58–60.

17 Dr. J.S. Morrill has recently argued that it is almost impossible to classify gentry as Royalists and Parliamentarians and analyse them statistically (Morrill, N.H., xv, pp. 78–9). But, as Dr. Christopher Hill has remarked, this is almost tantamount to saying that the Civil War did not happen (Hill, ‘Parliament and People in Seventeenth Century England’, Past and Present, no. 92 (1981), p. 101). Morrill has also criticised historians for having defined Royalists and Parliamentarians by their actions and not by their intentions (N.H., xv, pp. 78–9, 83). This is a valid argument, but unfortunately it is hard to discover men’s intentions or motives when the sources are so often silent or
misleading on the subject.

18 For full details and documentation see Blackwood, *Lancs. Gentry*, chapter II.


20 *Mercurius Belgicus*, 28 May 1644, B.L., Thomason Tracts, E. 1099 (3).


25 *A List of Officers claiming to the Sixty Thousand Pounds, etc.* (London, 1663), Col. 95.

26 The influence of the Lancashire Royalist nobility should not be exaggerated. Some of the Lancashire Royalist gentry were also very powerful and influential. Good examples are the Gerards of Halsall, who raised two infantry regiments for the King at the beginning of the Civil War, and Thomas Tyldesley of Myerscough, who recruited an infantry regiment in Amounderness in 1642 (Hutton, *T.H.S.L.C.*, CXXIX, pp. 51–2; Beamont, *Discourse*, p. 19).


29 Blackwood, *Lancs. Gentry*, pp. 52, 68, n. 58. These soldiers’ statements cannot be accepted without reserve, but they receive some support from an account given by the Reverend Adam Martindale of the recruiting methods adopted by the Earl of Derby’s officers (The Life of Adam Martindale, ed. R. Parkinson (C.S., o.s., IV, 1845), pp. 31–2).


32 These towns had a total population of 17,298 while the county had 150,669, according to the Hearth Tax returns (P.R.O., Exchequer, King’s Remembrancer, Hearth Tax Assessment, Ladyday 1664, E 179/250/11). For a discussion of these returns see Blackwood, *Lancs. Gentry*, p. 29, n. 16.


34 Although having only 949 inhabitants, Lancaster has been included in the list in view of its status as a county town.


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37 R. Halley wrote that 'Bury, with many Puritan inhabitants, was probably more divided in its political feeling than any other town of East Lancashire, as the Earl of Derby had many friends and retainers in its neighbourhood' (Halley, Lancashire: Its Puritanism and Nonconformity, I (London, 1869), p. 298).


41 See Blackwood, Lancs. Gentry, p. 8.

42 Wigan Central Library, Anderton Deeds and Papers, 16/24.

43 P.R.O. E179/250/11. The population of Warrington was probably the same in 1643 as in 1664. For a discussion of population in Lancashire during the seventeenth century see Blackwood, Lancs. Gentry, pp. 3–4, 7–8.


45 Ormerod, Civil War Tracts, p. 84.

46 C.J., IV, p. 277–8; V, p. 399.

47 Ormerod, Civil War Tracts, pp. 52, 116.


49 Beamont, Discourse, pp. 21–3; Ormerod, Civil War Tracts, pp. 83, 126, 132.

50 B. L., E. 1099(3); Broxap, Great Civil War in Lancashire, p. 122.


53 Ormerod, Civil War Tracts, pp. 30–5.

54 Ibid., pp. 112–13.


56 Despite the doubts that Dr. R. Hutton has recently cast on the Parliamentarianism of Manchester (Hutton, T.H.S.L.C., CXXIX, pp. 49, 51–3; idem, The Royalist War Effort, 1642–1646 (London, 1982), p. 18).


59 B.L., Additional MS. 34, 013, ff. 2–55.

60 Since some Royalist peasants, on account of their poverty, would neither fall within the sequestration ordinance of 27 March 1643 nor attract the attention of a Major-General.

61 There were 744 gentry families in Lancashire in 1642 (Blackwood, Lancs. Gentry, p. 5). I am assuming that in the palatinate, as in the rest of England, the peasants outnumbered the gentry by at least eleven to one. Sir Thomas Wilson reckoned that in 1600 England had 16,000 gentlemen (including esquires) and 500 knights. He also mentioned 10,000 yeomen 'of the richest sort' and 80,000 yeomen 'of meaner
ability' (Thomas Wilson, The State of England, Anno Dom. 1600, ed. F.J. Fisher, Camden Miscellany, Vol. XVI (Camden Society, 3rd series, LII, 1936), pp. 19, 23). Wilson said nothing about husbandmen, but 100,000 does not seem too high an estimate. This is, if anything, a generous estimate because the figure of 551 Royalist peasants in 1655 refers to individuals, not families.

62 Blackwood, Lancs. Gentry, p. 46.

63 Chetham Library, Manchester, Bailey Transcripts, Bdle 17.

64 Parkinson, Life of Adam Martindale, pp. 31–2.

65 Ormerod, Civil War Tracts, p. 64.

66 Ibid., p. 83.


69 L.R.O., Knowsley Deeds, DDK 12/7.

70 Ormerod, Civil War Tracts, pp. 64–5.


73 Beament, Discourse, p. 77.


75 Ormerod, Civil War Tracts, p. 84.

76 H.M.C., Tenth Report, App. IV, pp. 81–2.


78 L.R.O., DDK 12/7.

79 P.R.O., State Papers Domestic, Interregnum, SP 18/74, ff. 34–5.


82 P.R.O., State Papers Domestic, Committee for Advance of Money, SP 19/22/97; SP 19/145/18.


For details see Blackwood, thesis, p. 191 & n. 6.


Ibid., pp. 344–50.


Blackwood, *Lancs. Gentry*, p. 28 and calculations from Table 15.

See P.R.O., Exchequer, Lord Treasurer’s Remembrancer, Recusant Rolls, Pipe Office Series, E 377/34A–49 (1625–41). I shall be giving elsewhere a detailed account of the plebeian Catholics of Lancashire during the early seventeenth century.


In the Manchester *classis* the largest single group of lay elders comprised merchants, while in the Bury *classis* it consisted of yeomen (Shaw, *Minutes of the Manchester Classis, I–III, passim*; and *Minutes of the Bury Classis, I–II, passim*).

Blackwood, *Lancs. Gentry*, p. 28. Puritans are harder to identify and enumerate than Catholics during the Civil War period because the former were members of the established church, whereas most of the latter — being recusants — were not. A precise assessment of the strength of the Puritan gentry is also difficult because there is no equivalent of the official lists of Catholics presented for recusancy and other breaches of the penal laws. However, despite these problems there is sufficient evidence to provide the basis for a broad estimate of the numbers of Lancashire Puritan gentlemen. See Blackwood, *T.H.S.L.C.*, CXXVI, pp. 9 seq., 25, n. 63.


This is over twice the number of Catholic Royalist gentry estimated by Lindley, although he admitted that in Lancashire they outnumbered Catholic Neutral gentlemen. See Lindley in Manning, *Politics,*


111 Beamont, Discourse, p. 19.
112 Ibid.
114 Beamont, Discourse, p. 10.
115 Richardson, Puritanism in north-west England, p. 121. Bradshaw served in an infantry regiment commanded by Ralph Assheton of Middleton (P.R.O., Exchequer, King’s Remembrancer, Certificates as to the Sale of Crown Lands, E 121/5/7/68).
116 P.R.O. State Papers Domestic, Commonwealth Exchequer Papers, SP 28/211 (loose papers); SP 28/236 (unfoliated); Shaw, Manchester Presbyterian Classis, I–III, passim. Hyde attended sixty-eight meetings of the Manchester Classis between 1647 and 1660.

121 Blackwood, Lancs. Gentry, p. 65.
122 Ormerod, Civil War Tracts, p. 63.
123 Beamont, Discourse, p. 51.
124 Ibid., p. 11.
125 Ibid., p. 10.
126 Ormerod, Civil War Tracts, p. 56.
128 See Raines, Stanley Papers, Part III, vol. III.
129 Ormerod, Civil War Tracts, p. 184.
130 Clarendon, Rebellion, V, p. 185.
131 Stanning, Lancashire Royalist Composition Papers, IV, p. 19.