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In the Labyrinth: John Dee and Reformation Manchester*

Stephen Bowd

The Labyrinth

On 8 September 1597 John Dee (1527-1609), the warden of Christ's College in Manchester, wrote to his old friend Sir Edward Dyer at court about his difficult new life in the north of England. Dee told Dyer that he was overcome or 'enforced' by 'the most intricate, [c]umbersome, and (in manner) lamentable affayres & estate, of this defamed & disordred Colledge of Manchester'.¹ In particular, he complained that he was assigned maintenance for himself and his household by the college fellows, and that he was bound by college oath to apply to them in order to earn this 'right & dignitie'. This humiliation had cost him a great deal in terms of time and effort since he had arrived in the town the previous year. Furthermore, Dee explained that his problems were compounded by 'tymes of very great dearth here' so that unless God in his providence had not 'stirred up some mens harte' to send him barrels of rye from

* The Manchester European Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University generously supported the cost of research trips to London, Oxford, and Cambridge. I am very grateful for the guidance I have received from the anonymous reader, Andrew Brown, Alex Craven, Christopher Hunwick, Glyn Parry, Michael Powell, William Sherman, Alex Walsham and Tom Webster.

¹ Dee to Dyer, Manchester, 8 Sept. 1597: B[ritish] L[ibrary], Harley MS 249, fos. 95r-105r. This letter largely consists of a guide to the reading of Dee's 1577 work *THALATTOKRATIA BRETTANIKI; Miscelanea quaedam extemporanea; De imperij Brytanici Iurisdictione, in Mari* [THE BRITISH SEA-SOVEREIGNTY; or an Extemporaneous Miscellany on the Sea-Jurisdiction of the British Empire]. Lisa Jardine and William Sherman, 'Pragmatic readers: knowledge transactions and scholarly services in late Elizabethan England', in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (ed.), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain. Essays in honour of Patrick Collinson* (Cambridge, 1994), 111-13.

Danzig, some cattle from Wales, and some fish from Hull he could not see how his household of eighteen could have lived on the daily stipend of 4s.² He added: ‘So hard & thinne a dyet, never in all my life, did I, nay was I forced, so long, to tast[e].’ Indeed, no servant of his had ever had ‘so slender allowance, at their table.’

Yet all of this had not disturbed him inwardly so much as the ‘Cares & Cumbers for the Colledge affaires’ which had ‘altered, yea bar[r]ed and stayed’ his ‘whole course of life’ and deprived him of ‘so many years contynued Joyes, <taken> in ... most esteemed Studies and exercises.’ On this matter, he concluded that it had pleased God to lead him ‘*per multas tribulationes*’. However, he now sought somewhat less divine aid: ‘I know no one (as yet) of her Majesties most honourable privy Counsaile, who, willingly <& cumfortably> will listen unto my {pitifull} Complaynt, & declaration, how this Colledge of Manchester, is allmost, become No Colledge, in any respect (I say) in any respect. for I can veryfie my wordes, so manifestly’. Failing the intervention of the Privy Council he added a last hope that God would give ‘grace sufficient, & send me mighty help, (tempore opportuno) to ende them: Or els they will help to hasten my deliverance, from these and all other vayne, & earthly Actions humane.’ Dee expressed his considerable exasperation with

² On 27 Jun. 1597 Dee noted in his diary: ‘News came from Hull of 23 barrels of Dansk rye sent me from John Pontoys.’ See also entries for 10 Aug., 5 Sept. 1596 (seventeen cattle were sent to Dee by Welsh relatives) and for 4, 7, and 20 Jul. 1597. Dee’s ‘diary’ for this period consists of annotations made in two printed astrological manuals (now Bodl[eian Library, Oxford], Ashmole 487 and 488). All references to Dee’s diary in this article are to the modern-spelling edition of the text: *The D[iaries] of J[ohn] D[ee]*, ed. Edward Fenton (Charlbury, 1998). I have compared this with the annotated text of the Manchester diary edited in six parts by John Eglington Bailey, ‘Dr John Dee, Warden of Manchester (1595 to 1608)’, *Local Gleanings: an archaeological and historical magazine chiefly relating to Lancashire and Cheshire*, i, nos. 1-6 (1879).

Mancunian affairs in the margin at the top of one page of the letter by writing: ‘EX MANCESTRIANO LABYRINTHO.’³

Dee’s letter throws light on a relatively neglected episode in the life of a man better known for his studies of alchemy and astrology, or for his ‘conversations with angels’ than for his clerical duties in an early modern Barchester. However, the precise nature of Dee’s Mancunian labyrinth has long puzzled scholars and some have suggested that his esoteric studies and his reputation as a ‘conjurer’ lay at the root of his troubles.⁴ Dee spent a lifetime searching for the keys with which he might unlock the secrets of harmony between religion and philosophy in the universe in the past, the present and the future. He devoted himself to study and writing, experimentation, prayer and contemplation, and the promotion of his ambitious intellectual and political schemes at various European courts. Dee believed in his capacity to grasp the wonders and secrets of the world and to arrange them in some meaningful and useful way. He concluded that some men could lift their eyes up from the distractions of a busy and corrupted world and perceive some of the order and harmony of a universe that had been breathed into life by God. By comprehending much of this harmony using mathematics, and later in his career the cabalistic, alchemical, or scriptural keys given to him by the angels Dee expected to understand the hidden connections between the earth and the heavens and between all natural things. God would reveal to Dee the divine language that he had used to create the universe. Using this

³ BL, Harley, MS 249, fos. 104v, 105r. < > = insertion between the lines, { } = marginal insertion.

⁴ Peter J. French, *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (London, 1972), 7; Frances Yates, ‘John Dee: Christian Cabalist’, in ead., *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (First pbd 1979. Repr., London, 2001), 105-110; Charlotte Fell Smith, *John Dee (1527-1608)* (London, 1909), chs. 21-3.

immensely powerful language he would then help to usher in the Last Days, which the angels told him were due in 1588.⁵

Dee's interests aroused hostile contemporary comments, which he was at pains to rebuff throughout his life,⁶ but he was by no means an isolated figure in Elizabethan England. Nicholas Clulee, Deborah Harkness and William Sherman have carefully investigated his publications, surviving manuscripts and marginal annotations, and they have pointed out where Dee's natural philosophy drew upon medieval sources, or they have set Dee back in the mainstream of intellectual life in the Renaissance. They have also situated Dee at court or in other public or political arenas, and they have shown how his library and his vast expertise in arts and sciences were put to good use by prominent figures from the queen downwards. Dee has been renamed an 'intelligencer', a 'retailer of special knowledge', and a 'Christian natural philosopher'. The idea that he invoked demons has been discarded in favour of a more thorough analysis of the Christian and humanist aspects of Dee's conversations with angels.⁷

Dee's arcane knowledge was certainly of use to the crown in 1558-9, when he used astrology to calculate a propitious day for Queen Elizabeth's coronation, and again in the 1580s when the ambitious Earl of Leicester encouraged his work on the

⁵ My outline of Dee's interests here is based on Deborah E. Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁶ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, ed. George Townsend (8 vols., reprint. New York, 1965), vii. 349, 641-4, 681, 756-7; *DJD*, 22 Feb. 1593. Dee's last four publications were concerned with rebutting just such a slander.

⁷ Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion* (London, 1988); Harkness, *John Dee's*; William H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst, 1995).

‘British Empire’ to support claims to English Protestant leadership in the Low Countries.⁸ However, there were limits to the patronage Dee received: Elizabeth never proved to be a substantial sponsor for Dee’s schemes and his proposal for calendar reform, which would have brought England in line with the continent almost two centuries before it finally adopted the Gregorian system, was blocked by the ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁹ Moreover, Dee was quickly dropped by courtiers such as Leicester in response to changes in royal policy or political events more broadly and his schemes for Elizabethan imperialism met with indifference or hostility. Dee’s attempts to find support on the continent also failed: when he arrived in Prague in 1584 he found Emperor Rudolf II more interested in the financial rewards of alchemy than the role of ‘world emperor’ assigned to him in Dee’s mystical programme of renewal.¹⁰

After Dee returned to England in 1589 he was shocked to discover that in his absence much of his large library at Mortlake had been dispersed. He petitioned the crown for help and in 1592 he set out his hopes for future projects to Queen Elizabeth’s commissioners. In particular, he asked for the mastership of the hospital of St. Cross in Winchester because he would ‘faine retyre myself for some yeares ensuing from the multitude and haunt of my common friends, and other, who visit me’. Dee argued that at St Cross he would be close to the glasshouses of Sussex where he could oversee the manufacture of instruments needed in his work; he could

⁸ Glyn Parry, ‘John Dee and the Elizabethan British Empire in its European Context’, *Historical Journal*, 49/3 (2006), 643-75. I am grateful to Professor Parry for letting me see this article before publication and for discussing his forthcoming book on Dee with me.

⁹ Robert Poole, *Time’s Alteration. Calendar reform in early modern England* (London, 1998), ch. 5.

¹⁰ R. J. W. Evans, *Rudolf II and his World: a Study in Intellectual History, 1576-1612* (2nd corrected edn., London, 1997), 218-28.

also provide room and lodging for more learned men and assistants than at his Mortlake home; set up a printing press; and indeed communicate with the continent with greater freedom.¹¹ Dee was also lobbying for the positions of chancellor at St Paul's and provost of Eton, but after some delay, during which he angled for an invitation to the court of the landgrave of Hesse,¹² he was awarded the less lucrative post of warden of Christ's College in Manchester in distant Lancashire.¹³ Queen Elizabeth's response to the Countess of Warwick, who had thanked her on Dee's behalf for the appointment, may fairly sum up Dee's own feelings: 'She [the queen] took it graciously: and was sorry that it was so far from hence: but that some better thing near hand shall be found for me'.¹⁴

Elizabethan Lancashire

As Christopher Haigh has shown, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth efforts to impose political control and religious conformity on Lancashire and the north-west of England were hampered by history, geography and socio-economic factors.¹⁵ The county was large, poor, thinly populated, and badly served by roads or other methods

¹¹ John Dee, 'The Compendious Rehearsall of John Dee ... made unto two Honorable Commissioners ... 1592', in *Autobiographical Tracts of Dr John Dee, warden of the college of Manchester*, ed. James Crossley, Chetham Society, old series xxiv (1851), 39-41.

¹² Dee to Moritz of Hesse, Mortlake, 22 Jan. 1595, Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel und Landesbibliothek, 2° Ms. Chem. 19 (2), fos. 114r-15v, 117v. Microfilm.

¹³ The wardenship was first mentioned to Dee by the archbishop of Canterbury on 3 Jan. 1595: *DJD*. The royal grant of the wardenship to Dee is dated 7 May 1595: M[anchester] C[athedral] A[rchives], MS 93. I am grateful to Dr Michael Powell for drawing my attention to this document.

¹⁴ *DJD*, 31 Jul. 1595.

¹⁵ Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), pt. 1.

of communication, with very few towns of any significance. Political authority was divided, absent, or ineffective. The Council of the North never held any authority over the county because it was a county palatine and a part of the Duchy of Lancaster. However, the Duchy administration based in London never provided leadership in religious or political matters and its local officers were more concerned with raising revenues from the land. The palatinate organisation was similarly ineffective. In practice the earl of Derby guided local government with the aid of a handful of county clients.¹⁶

The religious life of the county was focused on chapels rather than parish churches which, given the size of parishes, were often distant from the communities they were supposed to serve. These large rural parishes provided lucrative benefices for pluralists who were usually non-resident, and to make matters worse the educational standard of resident clergy was generally inferior to that of the rest of the country. Episcopal control over much of the county was also ineffective due to the size and topography of the diocese, conflicting and competing ecclesiastical jurisdictions, and a series of indolent or conservative bishops of Chester. The cumulative result of all of this was to keep Lancashire fairly isolated from the mainstream of religious change in Reformation England and to maintain traditional patterns of belief which were elsewhere being challenged or overturned. This meant, for example, that there was a high level of charitable bequests to religious causes, and a high number of chantry foundations even in the 1540s.¹⁷

One of the principal beneficiaries of pious bequest and grants was the collegiate church of St Mary, St Denys and St George in Manchester. A college was founded

¹⁶ Ibid., 104-5

¹⁷ Ibid., 65-75.

there in 1421 by the lord and rector of the manor to supply the church with a warden to fulfil the duties of rector and a resident community of chantry priests to pray for the souls of the lord's family members in purgatory. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the collegiate community was endowed with some fine buildings, including several chapels – it was noted in 1539 that the college church was ‘almost thoroughwyt doble ilyd *ex quadrato lapide durissimo*’¹⁸ – but it was dissolved in the second wave of Protestant dissolutions in 1547 and the buildings were acquired by the earl of Derby. Although the college was refounded by Queen Mary in 1553, dissolved again by Elizabeth I and refounded in 1578 as Christ's College, the buildings remained in hands of the earls of Derby (whose forebears were wardens between 1481 and 1506) while much of its land was acquired by the crown and then leased.

The refounded college in Mary's reign was distinguished by the Catholic fervour of its new personnel, and there is some evidence that traditional Catholicism survived and prospered in the area well into the reign of Elizabeth. For example, there are instances of Mancunians saving church images, ‘shrines’ and ‘monuments of superstition’ from destruction in the 1570s.¹⁹ Many households doubtless continued to use old books to recite Latin prayers and to observe fasts and feast days. The homes of landowners and gentry also served as centres for traditional beliefs and practices.

¹⁸ *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith (5 vols., London, 1964), iv. 6. One modern authority has commented: ‘Together the church and college buildings represent one of the largest and most complete examples of a late medieval collegiate foundation in the country.’ Clare Hartwell, *The History and Architecture of Chetham's School and Library* (New Haven and London, 2004), 12.

¹⁹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 203-5, 219-20. However, these instances may also reflect ‘uncertainty about the succession’ and a reluctance yet again ‘to destroy expensive furnishings and fittings’, Peter Marshall, *Reformation England 1480-1642* (London, 2003), 120.

For example, the Blundells at Crosby Hall in south-west Lancashire provided one focus for networks of Catholics.²⁰ The ‘northern court’ of the earls of Derby was also largely conservative in outlook: the enthusiastic patronage of theatre companies by successive earls and countesses of Derby reflects the more general persistence in Lancashire of an attachment to traditional pursuits increasingly deplored by the more rigorous, or ‘hotter’ sort of Protestant.²¹ In sum, the county was known in London for its religious backwardness – a place where the Catholics, whether ‘Church papists’ paying lip-service to new rites or recusants who refused to go to church at all, and the religiously uneducated or plain uninterested were believed to exist in dangerously large numbers. Oliver Carter, a fellow of Christ’s College, lamented in 1579 that his ‘poore neighbours’ had been ‘over much seduced ... by ... Popish devises’, and that the ‘godlie Magistrates’ were hindered in their attempts to spread the word since

there be not onelie close and secret enemies, which wander abroad in corners, seducing the simple by wicked doctrine, sedicious & traiterous libells, and false tales, alienating their mindes by all meanes, from true religion unto superstition, but also the rabble of the Romishe merchantes

²⁰ Margaret Sena, ‘William Blundell and the networks of Catholic dissent in post-Reformation England’, ch. 4 in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (eds.), *Communities in early modern England: networks, place, rhetoric* (Manchester and New York, 2000).

²¹ Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625. The Ford Lectures 1979* (Oxford, 1982), 205-6. Church ales and religious drama also persisted in Tewkesbury into the early seventeenth century due in part to a lack of strong noble or upper gentry leadership and episcopal inaction: Caroline Litzenberger, ‘The Coming of Protestantism to Elizabethan Tewkesbury’, ch. 4 in Patrick Collinson and John Craig (eds.), *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (Basingstoke, 1998), here at 86-88.

with their masking wares, do so increase and multiplie, that unlesse redresse bee had in time, I do feare least great inconvenience and mischief will ensue thereof.

Carter saw in his neighbours ‘such a readinesse to imbrace everie fonde idolatrous tradition invented by man, to accept the advise and counsell of everie ignorant, & lurking rebellious priest, to persist in their old doating customes, and heathenishe ceremonies’.²² In his view the Catholic church was ‘a cage of uncleane birdes [Rev. 18. 2] ... a Sinagoge of Sathan [Rev. 2. 9]’ led by adulterers and ‘coniurers’ such as Sylvester II who gave his soul to the Devil.²³ Carter asserted that the Catholic church exceeded previous idolatrous churches:

In outwarde pompe, in superfluous ornaments, in unnecessarie toyes, in vaine decking of ... Churches with gold and silver, and other precious and costly attire, in unprofitable rites, in furnishinge ... temples with abominable idols, in pleasing the eare, in delightinge the eye, in ringinge, in roaring, in toying, in trifling, in nodding, in becking, & in ducking, in all such heathenishe shewes, and sensles significations.²⁴

There may have been some truth in Carter’s accusations of proselytising Catholics: in 1584 twelve priests held in the Salford gaol were described as forming a ‘college’ on

²² Oliver Carter, *An Answere ... unto certaine Popish Questions and Demuandes* (London, 1579), ‘The Epistle Dedicatorie’ (to the fourth earl of Derby).

²³ *Ibid.*, fos. 20r, 29r (sigs C4r, D5r).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, fo. 34r-v (sig. E2r-v).

account of their continued organization and bold activities in receiving ‘both exhortations and absolutions at their pleasure’. Six years later the bishop of Chester noted the ‘lewde rebellious speeches and usage of the prisoners in the ffleete at Manchester’²⁵, while in 1598 the Member of Parliament for Lancashire wrote of ‘some lewd priests’ who were alleged to have practiced exorcism in order to gain converts to Catholicism.²⁶

However, the note of alarm sounded by Carter and his contemporaries does not simply reflect their fears about the danger and extent of Catholicism or superstition, but also indicates the ways in which they were writing towards their own different or overlapping ends. The spirit of reformation in Lancashire coexisted with a wide variety of responses to unsettled religious times which could range from acceptance or resignation to passive or even active resistance. The passage to a reformed church and people was also shaped by local politics and tradition in the shape of Carter’s ‘godlie Magistrate’. It was a combination of these religious and secular cross-currents, the ‘birthpangs of Protestant England’, which severely buffeted Dee during his time as warden in Manchester.²⁷

²⁵ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 257; Joseph Gillow, *Lord Burghley’s Map of Lancashire in 1590. With notes on the Designated Manorial Lords, Biographical and Genealogical, and Brief Histories of their Estates traced down to the Present Day* (London, 1907), 1; *Kenyon Mss.*, 14th report, appendix, pt. 4, (Historical Manuscripts Commission, 1894), 603-4. For other cases of prisons as ‘sites of evangelical and polemical activitiy’ see Peter Lake and Michael Questier, ‘Prisons, priests and people’, ch. 8 in Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *England’s Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London, 1998).

²⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 291; Sir Richard Molyneux to Sir John Stanhope, Sestone, 13 Jun. 1598, in *Salisbury Mss.* (Historical Manuscripts Commission, 1899), viii. 213-4.

²⁷ Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England. Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. The Third Anstey Memorial Lectures in the University of Kent at Canterbury 12-15 May 1986 (Basingstoke, 1988).

Magistracy and Ministry in Manchester

Historians of early-modern England are now divided over the origins, extent, and pace of the reformations which occurred during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth I.²⁸ Triumphalist accounts of the royal sponsorship of a nationalized church rolling back the frontiers of a defective Catholicism with growing popular approval have been revised. For example, Eamon Duffy has provided compelling evidence for the survival and continuity of 'traditional religion', which confirms many of the conclusions Christopher Haigh reached in his study of Lancashire.²⁹ The extent of the political and social engagement of the English Catholic community is also being reassessed with emphasis shifting from the influence of trained Tridentine priests from the Continent to continuities in local belief and practice. Historians have also issued warnings about too casual a use of terms such as 'Puritan' and too ready an assumption that Puritans were always contentious and disruptive elements in English society paving the way towards the civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century.³⁰ In response to Eamon Duffy, historians have shown how many, perhaps the majority, of people in sixteenth-century England were persuaded by traditional or

²⁸ For an introduction to some of these issues see Christopher Haigh, 'The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation', ch. 1 in Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987).

²⁹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven and London, 1992). See also Christopher Haigh, 'The continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', ch. 9 in Haigh, *English Reformation*.

³⁰ Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*. For some words of warning about the use of the terms 'Puritan' and 'Puritanism' in relation to popular culture see Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (ed.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), intro.

communal elements in Protestantism to accept the new regime and even to find it personally satisfying, although confessional identities may have been fluid well into the seventeenth century. The startling diversity of beliefs underlying outward conformity which have been uncovered has led ‘post-revisionist’ historians to offer caution rather than confidence in marking the ontological or temporal boundaries of that great monolith of Whig history: ‘The English Reformation’.³¹ Dee’s outward conformity similarly masked, or was mingled with, a notable spectrum of beliefs,³² while Manchester provides an interesting case-study of the highly complex process of reform. As Alexandra Walsham has remarked, the bare bones of the relationship between English society and belief may be fleshed out by means of a ‘painstaking reconstitution of communities, and of the networks of religious affiliation criss-crossing them.’³³

The deanery of Manchester exhibited some of the most obvious signs of religious change, if not complete conformity to the prescribed rites of the Church of England, in Elizabethan Lancashire. By the end of the century the ancient township of Manchester had grown into a marketing and regional centre of about two thousand

³¹ A ‘post-revisionist’ synthesis which highlights the sheer variety of religious points of view is Marshall, *Reformation England*. See also Alexandra Walsham, ‘The Parochial Roots of Laudianism Revisited: Catholics, Anti-Calvinists and “Parish Anglicans” in Early Stuart England’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xlix (1998), 620-51. I am grateful to Dr Walsham for sending me an offprint of her article.

³² For evidence of Dee’s conformity, such as disapproval of sabbath breaking, see *DJD*, 13 Jan. 1583; 21 May 1590; 13 Oct. 1592. On his rather less orthodox views see Clulee, *John Dee’s*, 207, 216-7, 218, 221-2, 231-4, and Harkness, *John Dee’s*, 128-9, 149-56. Compare Elizabeth I’s ‘deeply idiosyncratic’ Protestantism, Marshall, *Reformation England*, 119.

³³ Walsham, ‘Parochial Roots’, 650.

people well placed for trade and commerce in wool and linen with London (and thence to France), the West Riding, and via the ports of Chester and Liverpool, with Ireland.³⁴ The existence of these channels of communication with puritan centres such as London and Halifax allowed elements of religious reform to enter the town's bloodstream.³⁵ Cambridge graduates, such as Carter, were also importing new ideas and practices to the town from the fenland stronghold of Puritanism.³⁶ For example, Carter and his colleagues preached sermons to the laity at synods held three times a year in Preston. These gatherings or 'exercises' were rolled out across the diocese and Carter also preached at Bury, and in the home of the fourth earl of Derby during the 1580s.³⁷ While these sermons and exercises are often associated with Puritanism it should be noted that they were often held on market days and could be convivial

³⁴ T. S. Willan, *Elizabethan Manchester*, Chetham Society, 3rd series xxvii (1980), 39, 63; Norman Lowe, *The Lancashire Textile Industry in the Sixteenth Century*, Chetham Society, 3rd series xx (1972).

³⁵ On Halifax see William and Sarah Sheils, 'Textiles and Reform: Halifax and its Hinterland', ch. 7 in Collinson and Craig, *Reformation in English Towns*. Similarly, in a study of religious change in Shrewsbury Patrick Collinson has noted: 'Part of the story must be that the new religion was imported from London, in part exchange for ... cloth'. See his 'The Shearmen's Tree and the preacher: the Strange Death of Merry England in Shrewsbury and Beyond', ch. 12 in *ibid.*, here at 212. Mancunians were among the audience for a puritan sermon at Stourbridge Fair at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, 146 n. 19.

³⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, ch. 11, 299, 308-9.

³⁷ R. C. Richardson *Puritanism in North-West England: A Regional Study of the Diocese of Chester to 1642* (Manchester, 1972), 65 n. 171, 66 n. 173; F. R. Raines (ed.) *The Stanley Papers, pt.ii. The Derby household books; comprising an account of the household regulations and expenses of Edward and Henry, third and fourth Earls of Derby; together with a diary containing the names of the guests who visited the latter Earl at his houses in Lancashire, by William ffarrington, esquire, the comptroller [1561-90]*, Chetham Society, old series xxix (1853), 30.

social occasions good for trade and inoffensive to more conservative observers.³⁸ The widespread importance attached to preaching is indicated by the fact that the Prayer Book services at the college were shortened to give more time for sermons and Sir Robert Cecil, who was the chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster instituted Queen's preachers in 1599.³⁹

The author of a study of northwestern Puritanism has argued that in the diocese of Chester – which encompassed Manchester – there existed a 'working co-operation' between the secular authorities, such as Cecil and the local gentry, and the puritan clergy to stamp out recusancy and 'superstition'.⁴⁰ A purged ecclesiastical commission and commission of peace gave such efforts a fair wind from c.1570 onwards, but growing fears of Jesuit priests and invasion by Catholic Spain by way of Ireland also stimulated action.⁴¹ By the 1590s justices of the peace suspected of inclining towards, or even protecting the lax were marked men.⁴² The bishop of Chester, based at Christ's College in Manchester after 1581, undertook a more vigorous campaign for conformity in the area. Most people who still held on to the old faith were probably too sensible to stay in Manchester or openly to flout

³⁸ Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, 136-42, 264.

³⁹ Christopher Haigh, 'Puritan evangelism in the reign of Elizabeth I', *English Historical Review*, xcii (1977), 30-58, here at 33; Ernest Axon, 'The King's Preachers in Lancashire, 1599-1845', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, lvi (1941-2), 68-103.

⁴⁰ Richardson, *Puritanism in North-West*, 18.

⁴¹ Roger B. Manning, 'The Making of a Protestant Aristocracy: the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of the Diocese of Chester, 1550-98', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xlix (1976), 60-79.

⁴² London, [The] N[ational] A[rchives]: P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], SP 12/235, no. 5; Gillow, *Lord Burghley's Map*; Alison Wall, "The Greatest Disgrace": The Making and Unmaking of JPs in Elizabethan and Jacobean England', *English Historical Review*, cxix (2004), 312-32.

conformity in such an exposed environment, and many probably embraced some of the new rites which were most congenial to them. As a result, the presentments for recusancy were low in the deanery of Manchester and the majority of those presented were gentry whose status allowed them to escape punishment.⁴³

Recusants and ‘church papists’ were not the only targets of those in the church interested in enforcing conformity; the Puritans of Manchester were occasionally targets for ecclesiastical censure, especially after c.1589 when the government moved to suppress their more disruptive elements in the country at large. In 1590 the archbishop of York reprimanded Oliver Carter and others for their failure to wear surplices or to use the Book of Common Prayer – both objects of suspicion as they were not sanctioned by scripture, implied a separate priestly caste or smacked of other Catholic rites and beliefs.⁴⁴ Carter, Edward Fleetwood, and John Buckley, as well as William Leigh, and William Langley were forced to appear before the bishop of Chester in Manchester and were enjoined to make an answer to the charges. They defended themselves by means of Edmund Hopwood, a local justice of the peace and member of the ecclesiastical commission, whom they described as ‘an earneste favourer of the preachers and the worke of the mynisterie’, explaining that the state of religion in the county was poor because of its ‘obstinate papists and the zealous professours of relligione’ who were either too superstitious or scandalized by papist abuses. They explained that since Carter and his colleagues had made ‘presentments’

⁴³ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 283-4.

⁴⁴ Richardson, *Puritanism in North-West*, 24-6.

of the Catholics the latter were now seeking revenge by making these accusations in the assizes.⁴⁵

The archbishop of York instructed the bishop of Chester to enforce the use of the surplice and the Book of Common Prayer and he rejected the bishop's argument that if the men were given 'som little liberty, they will not medle with state and govern[en]t' because he believed that it was 'no good course to geeve men leave to do evill beecawse they may do good.'⁴⁶ Hopwood, who had met with the archbishop of York, wrote to say that he would encourage them to wear the surplice and reprimand any failure to do so. However, Hopwood also asked for an extension of the deadline to conform, and he added that despite their failure to wear the surplice these ministers had done good work in spreading reformed religion in the county.⁴⁷ Similar arguments were used to excuse absenteeism, the failure to catechise children, or even to keep up church fabric on the part of puritan clergy throughout this period.⁴⁸ At one chapel in Fleetwood's Wigan living in 1598 the people did not know their catechism and some could not say the Lords Prayer and the Ten Commandments. At Manchester college catechising was neglected in 1578, 1592, 1595 and 1601, only one out of the seven fellows preached, and the church fabric was in a poor state.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Carter et al., to the archbishop of York, Oct. 1590, in F. R. Raines (ed.), 'A Visitation of the Diocese of Chester by John, Archbishop of York, held in the chapter house of the collegiate and parish church of Manchester, 1590, with the archbishop's correspondence with the clergy' in *Chetham Miscellanies*, Chetham Society, old series xcvi (1875), 3-22.

13; *Kenyon Mss.*, 597-8.

⁴⁶ Raines, 'Visitation of the Diocese', 15.

⁴⁷ [Hopwood] to Bunny, Staincliff [Stoneclough], 14 Nov. 1590, postscript: *Kenyon Mss.*, 599.

⁴⁸ Haigh, 'Puritan evangelism'.

⁴⁹ Idem, *Reformation and Resistance*, 305-6.

There are hints in Dee's letter of 1597 to Dyer that these national and county-wide religious battles were also being fought out in the college. The stage was set for a series of tense confrontations over conformity in which Dee seems invariably to have been on the losing side. In rather acrimonious circumstances the fellows of the college refused to grant Dee £5 for the rent of a house.⁵⁰ Oliver Carter, who practiced as a solicitor to supplement his income, threatened to sue Dee – probably for unpaid wages.⁵¹ Carter also seems to have fallen to discarding the 'popish rag' of the surplice, or at least to have voiced his disagreement once again with this and other aspects of Elizabethan conformity in church. Dee noted in his diary how Carter exhibited 'impudent and evident disobedience in the church'.⁵² The following day he 'repented, and some pacification was made', but Carter was still causing disturbances in the college house three years later.⁵³

It is likely that Dee's problems with Matthew Palmer, the new curate, also originated in Palmer's obstreperous nonconformity: Palmer caused Dee some 'troublesome days' in the spring of 1597.⁵⁴ A letter from Edward Glover and others described as 'inhabitants of Manchester and Salforde' to Dee on 5 April that year may help to illuminate the origins of these incidents. The writer describes: 'The

⁵⁰ *DJD*, 14 Nov. 1597.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 22 Jan. 1597. A year later Dee came before the local justices of the peace to inform against two preachers for misusing his name to deceive a third party: *ibid.*, 19 Jan. 1598.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 25 Sept. 1597. Carter was presented for not wearing the surplice while administering the sacrament in 1592 and 1604: C[hester], C[ounty] R[ecord] O[ffice], EDV 1/10, fo. 168r; EDV 1/13, fo. 64r. He was presented for non-residency in Oct. 1601: EDV 1/12b, fo. 110r.

⁵³ *DJD*, 7 November 1600. Dee mentions further 'Quarrels' on 18 Dec. 1600.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11-12 Apr. 1597. Palmer expressed 'open enmity' before a visitor, Sir Edward Fitton on 27 May. Fitton 'told Palmer to his face that he had known him to be a mutinous man and a falsus &c.'

uncharitable and malicious proceedings of Mr. Palmer against our godlie and learned preacher, Mr. Heaton'. Palmer had been attacking Heaton – for unfortunately unspecified reasons – from the pulpit and in private, and Dee was asked to call him to order or to remove him altogether.⁵⁵ Dee notes a further 'supplication exhibited by the parishioners' in his diary five days later. Perhaps the puritan Palmer regarded Heaton's administration of the sacraments insufficiently godly.⁵⁶

On his return to Manchester from London in the summer of 1600 after an absence of about two years Dee mustered some diplomatic energy and rather than displaying his 'heady displeasure' with the fellows 'by reason of their manifold misusing of themselves against' him, he 'did with all lenity entertain them, and showed the most part of the things that I had brought to pass at London for the College good, &c.'⁵⁷ In this way he managed 'a certain blessed reconciliation' among the wayward fellows, he had an organ installed, and even obtained the resignation of Thomas Williamson, one of the fellows appointed in 1578. However, despite his best efforts, Dee noted on 11 September 1600 that: 'Commissioners from the Bishop of Chester authorised by the Bishop of Chester did call me before them in the church about 3 of the clock after noon, and did deliver to me certain petitions put up by the

⁵⁵ Edward Glover and nineteen others to Dee, Manchester and Salford, 5 Apr. 1597: *Kenyon Mss.*, 619. I have also consulted a contemporary copy of the letter in [Preston], L[ancashire] R[ecord] O[ffice], DDKE/acc.7840, fol. 181v (pencil foliation).

⁵⁶ Dee, who owed Heaton £5, may have been sympathetic to the maligned preacher since he accepted a curate on his recommendation, and lent him a Biblical concordance and a book by crypto-Calvinist Christoph Pezel: *DJD*, 1 Aug. 1596; 5, 11 and 25 Feb. 1597.

⁵⁷ 'We held our audit: I and the Fellows for the two years last past in my absence'. *Ibid.*, 31 July 1600.

Fellows against me to answer – before the 18 of this month. I answered them all *ex tempore*, and yet they gave me leave to write at leisure.⁵⁸

Dee's position in the college was not helped by the absence of local political support. William Stanley, the sixth earl of Derby, who succeeded to the title in 1594 had houses at Knowsley and Lathom near Liverpool, and Alport Lodge (formerly a collegiate property) on Deansgate in Manchester. However, between 1594 and 1607 the family was embroiled in inheritance difficulties and debts, and lost control of the lieutenancy of the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire (although the earl was elected mayor of Liverpool in 1603).⁵⁹ As a result the collegiate patronage which the Stanleys had enjoyed earlier in the sixteenth century was materially diminished: Alport Lodge was sold in 1599 and the other college buildings in their possession were leased by 1600.⁶⁰

Moreover, the Stanley family name was linked with Catholics at home and abroad.⁶¹ Edward Fleetwood's efforts to purge the area of Catholicism and to correct

⁵⁸ I have found no record of this in the presentments listed in the diocese of Chester visitation court correction books for 1600-2: CCRO, EDV 1/12b, fos. 6r-30v (ex officio), fos. 103r-118v (Manchester parish).

⁵⁹ On the difficulties of the 1590s, when the earls were forced to sell much of their land, see Barry Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby 1385-1672: The Origins, Wealth and Power of a Landowning Family*, Chetham Society, 3rd series xxx (1983), ch. 4 and appendix A.

⁶⁰ Alport Lodge was sold in Mar. 1599 to Sir Randle Brereton of Malpas: M[anchester,] C[entral] R[eference] L[ibrary], [Manchester Archives and Local Studies], M377, box 6, no. 1. See also Hartwell, *History and Architecture*, 51, 53.

⁶¹ Coward, *The Stanleys*, 145-6. During 1591-2 there were a number of letters intercepted by Lord Burghley, which linked Lord Strange or his father the earl of Derby to Catholic plots: *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1591-1594*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (13 vols., London, 1867), xii. 39-40, 183-4, 234, 256, 257. On Dee's personal contact with the sixth earl of

religious backsliding, especially sabbatarian offences, were made with the fear that the Stanleys or their fellow members of the ecclesiastical commission were turning a blind eye to reform. After 1587 Fleetwood appealed to the magistracy with reports on the ‘small reformation’ in Lancashire and Cheshire. He exhorted the earl of Derby in person and gloomily noted the earl’s ‘humor of carelesse securitie in tolleratinge and no way sowndly reforminge the notorious backwardnesse of his whole Company in religion, and chefely of the chefest abowte him.’⁶² Lord Burghley, the lord treasurer and the queen’s trusted adviser, was happy to clip a powerful magnate’s wings by working with Fleetwood in his attempts to purge the ecclesiastical commissioners of lax Derby clients, or by allowing the Catholic Sir Richard Molyneux to remain on the ‘purged’ commission of 1598 since he conformed outwardly and his family were old rivals of the earls of Derby.⁶³

It seems that on the occasion when the magistracy – in the form of the new lord of the manor of Manchester – and the ministry did unite in action, Dee was the victim. Sir Nicholas Mosley was a wealthy and ambitious man who served as Lord Mayor of London in 1599-1600 after two decades in the capital exporting cloth. In March 1596 Mosley and his son Rowland acquired the manor of Manchester from John Lacy of London for £3500.⁶⁴ Around the same time both men acquired the manor of Cheetham and Cheetwood, and Rowland paid £8000 to Sir Robert Cecil for

Derby or his secretary see *DJD*, 11 Jun., 21 Jun., 13 Sept., 22 Sept. 1595; 26 Jun., 27 Jul. 1596; 19 and 21 Aug. 1597.

⁶² Fleetwood to Burghley, Wigan, 7 Sept. 1587: *Records of Early English Drama: Lancashire*, ed. David George (Toronto, 1991), 223.

⁶³ Manning, ‘Making of a Protestant’, 60-79.

⁶⁴ Willan, *Elizabethan Manchester*, 8-9.

the manors and lordships of Withington and Hough near Manchester.⁶⁵ Mosley's régime began with a drive to survey manorial land and to enclose commons land with a view to maximizing his revenues from both. He also moved to enhance his political authority by means of doses of sweetness and fear. He wined and dined the officers of the court leet (manorial court) over which Mosley or his relatives presided, and he regularly attended the Manchester quarter sessions. He saw off complaining burgesses with legal finagling and repelled rioters with cudgels.⁶⁶ In 1602 the enraged burgesses of Manchester claimed that Mosley had worked 'to alter, overthrowe and chaunge all the auncient priuiledges, usages and customs' such as common pasturage in 100 acres of Collyhurst, which had hitherto benefited the town as a place of recreation, shooting, and mustering troops, and as a location of cabins for plague victims.⁶⁷ In short, Mosley may not have been popular but he was surely influential.

Mosley's involvement in town affairs extended in the direction of religious matters, perhaps as part of an attempt to enforce civic unity at a moment when the influence of the Stanleys in the town was somewhat weakened. Like other urban gentry in the later sixteenth century Mosley may have felt that when the local

⁶⁵ The impressive extent of Mosley's wealth and lands is revealed in his will of 1612 printed in John Booker, *A History of the Ancient Chapels of Didsbury and Chorlton*, Chetham Society, old series xlii (1857), 131-40. The deeds relating to the Withington sale are in MCRL, Egerton MSS, M31/1/1/17-27. Cecil made a handsome profit from this sale: he had purchased the land from Sir William Hatton in July 1595 for only £2660.

⁶⁶ Willan, *Elizabethan Manchester*, 9-17. For comparable examples of gentleman exploiting tenants see Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), 103-16, 123-25. On revolts in this period see Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2002).

⁶⁷ Claim to the Duchy Court by the burgesses quoted in Willan, *Elizabethan Manchester*, 12.

magnates and institutional church failed to provide leadership in moral matters there was a danger that local order and government would break down.⁶⁸ Similar holy alliances were promoted or actually in place at Beverley, Bury St Edmunds, Colchester, Doncaster, Dorchester, Gloucester, Norwich and Salisbury at this time.⁶⁹ The court leet in Manchester very occasionally dealt with moral failings such as prostitution and sports, while the quarter sessions held in Mosley's presence at the turn of the century indicted, presented or punished recusants, absentees from church, adulterers, prostitutes, the parents of illegitimate children, an 'ape' baiter and the case of one man who was alleged to have said that 'he cared not for the bisshoppe of Chester and that hee had no King but God'.⁷⁰

Mosley, like Cecil and others in authority, seems to have been keen to promote preaching and he was content to lend his name to support the new fellow of the college William Bourne in this regard. Bourne, who replaced Thomas Williamson, was a preacher from Cambridge, a close friend of Carter, and a recalcitrant rejector of

⁶⁸ I am indebted to Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, 149-53 for my argument here. See also Martin Ingram, 'Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England', ch. 2 in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996).

⁶⁹ Marshall, *Reformation England*, 139 n. 74; Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, 143, 158-64; Claire Cross, 'Religion in Doncaster from the Reformation to the Civil War', ch. 2 in Collinson and Craig, *Reformation in English*; and David Lamburn, 'Politics and Religion in Early Modern Beverley', ch. 3 in *ibid.*

⁷⁰ *The Court Leet Records of the Manor of Manchester: from the year 1552 to the year 1686, and from the year 1731 to the year 1846*, ed. J. P. Earwaker (12 vols. Manchester, 1884-90), ii. 178, 239-40; *Lancashire Quarter Sessions Records. Vol. 1 Quarter Sessions Rolls, 1590-1606*, ed. James Tait, Chetham Society, new series lxxvii (1917), 86 n. 1, 96, 98, 100-1, 298, among other instances.

the surplice.⁷¹ His appearance on the scene seems to have rallied opposition to Warden Dee who had absented himself from the college for much longer than the three months usually allowed in any one year.⁷² It was likely due to these absences that Dee was reported by the Chester visitation court as ‘noe preacher’ in October 1601 and again in November 1604.⁷³ In February 1603 Mosley (together with Edward Fleetwood and William Leigh, whose attack on astrologers in a funeral sermon given in 1602 may be an oblique reference to Dee⁷⁴) wrote to Cecil to recommend that Bourne be made a fellow of the college. Mosley, Fleetwood and Leigh observed that there was only one preacher in the town, and added rather pointedly that Dee was ‘no

⁷¹ On Williamson, see Raines, ‘Visitation of the Diocese’, 6-7 n. 7. He gave only one sermon as fellow of the college in 1601, perhaps because he held three benefices: CCRO, EDV 1/12b, fo. 110r; Haigh, ‘Puritan evangelism’, 35.

⁷² The foundation document of 1578 permits a maximum absence of three months *per annum*: S. Hibbert, ‘History of the Collegiate Church of Manchester’, in *History of the Foundations in Manchester of Christ’s College, Chetham’s Hospital, and the Free Grammar School* (3 vols. Manchester, 1830), i. 93. Besides his absence from Manchester for much of the period between Mar. 1598 and Jun. 1600, Dee was at Viscount Montague’s house at Cowdray, West Sussex on 19 Sept. 1602; he was in London in Jul. and Aug. 1604, and was preparing to return to the capital the following November: Julian Roberts and Andrew G. Watson (ed.), *John Dee’s Library Catalogue* (London, 1990), 156; Bodl., MS Ashmole 1488, fo. 21v [red ink], 224 [Ashmole’s pagination]; MS Ashmole 1788, fo. 144r.

⁷³ CCRO, Visitation Correction Book, EDV 1/12b, fo. 110r; EDV 1/13, fo. 64r.

⁷⁴ Leigh wrote a letter on the corrupt state of religion and government in Lancashire on 15 Feb. 1603: *Salisbury Mss.*, xii. 643. His remarks on those who turn to astrology and ancient prophets such as Merlin to foretell the hour of doom can be found in *The Christians Watch: or, An Heavenly Instruction to all Christians, to expect with patience the happy day of their change by death or doome. Preached at Prestbury Church in Cheshire; at the Funerals of the right worshipfull Thomas Leigh of Adlington Esquire, the 16. of February Anno 1601.* (London, 1605), sig. E3.

preacher' while Bourne was 'a learned preacher'.⁷⁵ On the face of it, Dee's critics seem to have won this battle: at the end of September 1603 a letter was sent to the warden to ensure the election of Bourne as a fellow of the college. On the same day Bourne was even granted the wardenship of the college in reversion after Dee.⁷⁶ However, new royal priorities and national loyalty may ultimately have asserted themselves over this local matter for when Dee died Bourne was passed over in favour of a Scotsman.⁷⁷

Christ's College

Given all of these divisions it is not surprising that, as Christopher Haigh has noted: 'The Elizabethan college [of Manchester] was not, as some have supposed, a powerful agency of religious change but a society of careless and quarrelsome clerics.'⁷⁸ The resources available to the college were not on the scale of those of many other collegiate establishments such as Beverley and Southwell, which supported fifty-six and sixty-three priests and clerks respectively before the

⁷⁵ Sir Nicholas Mosley and others to Sir Robert Cecil, Manchester, 16 Feb. 1603: *Salisbury Mss.*, xii. 643. This letter is accompanied by another, dated the previous day at Wigan, which mentions '[h]aving latelie advertised yor [*sic*] Honor of the corrupte state of Religion and government in these parts' and assures Cecil of the good standing of Sir Edmund Trafford, the bearer of the letter. *The Palatine Notebook*, i (1881), 45-8.

⁷⁶ Mary A. E. Green, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1603-1610* (London, 1857), 41, 42.

⁷⁷ Arthur Scolfield to Edmund Hopwood, 9 Apr. 1609, and letters of May and Aug. 1609, *Kenyon Mss.*, 15-16; Green, *Calendar of State Papers*, 498, 499. Note also the comment in a letter from John Langley to Edmund Hopwood, Preston, c.1609: 'Lett us praye for an honeste warden', LRO, DDKE/9/122/15.

⁷⁸ Haigh, 'Puritan evangelism', 41.

Reformation.⁷⁹ Unlike Canterbury cathedral or Westminster abbey after the dissolutions, the college did not maintain its choral worship or, apparently, increase its educational provision in any way.⁸⁰ In 1600 Dee visited the school ‘and found great imperfection in all and every of the scholars’ to his ‘great grief’.⁸¹ Moreover, as we have seen, the fabric of the collegiate church was neglected and in decay.⁸²

At the root of some of these problems lay an erosion of clerical incomes. English clergy, especially those in small urban parishes, were badly affected by rising prices and new taxes during the sixteenth century. Some clergy were victims of tithes commuted to money, which lost its value through inflation, or they may have been reliant on personal tithes or tithes on lambs and wool rather than the ‘great tithes’ on more valuable crops which rectors commonly held. The civic authorities might supplement incomes quite generously, as at Beverley in the 1580s,⁸³ but the vicars of the collegiate churches in Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon in 1586 by contrast

⁷⁹ Peter Cunich, ‘The Dissolution of the Chantries’, ch. 9 in Collinson and Craig, *Reformation in English Towns*, here at 163.

⁸⁰ Patrick Collinson, ‘The Protestant Cathedral, 1541-1660’, ch. 4 in Patrick Collinson, Nigel Ramsay and Margaret Sparks (eds.), *A History of Canterbury Cathedral* (Oxford, 1995); C. S. Knighton, ‘Economics and economies of a royal peculiar: Westminster Abbey, 1540-1640’, ch. 2 in Rosemary O’Day and Felicity Heal (eds.), *Princes and Paupers in the English Church 1500-1800* (Leicester, 1981).

⁸¹ *DJD*, 5 Aug. 1600. Admittedly, Dee’s standards may have been far above the Elizabethan norm.

⁸² Both the chancel and church were in decay by 1578; and the chancel was liable to collapse in 1590: Haigh, ‘Puritan evangelism’, 44. The visitation court of Chester on 11 Oct. 1608 found against Dee and the fellows because the chancel was ‘not in sufficient repaire’: see CCRO, Visitation Correction Book, EDV 1/15, fo. 132v.

⁸³ Lamburn, ‘Politics and Religion’, 67

were poorly remunerated by their town corporations.⁸⁴ There is no evidence that wealthy Mancunians were willing to help the fellows of Christ's College in a similar fashion. On the contrary, there is ample evidence that the licit and illicit dispersal of collegiate goods after the dissolution, as at Worcester's college of Christchurch (as the cathedral was renamed), enriched everyone but Christ's College.⁸⁵

The college's troubles originated in the 1560s when long leases were granted by the fellows to local gentry on very favourable terms – even if these lands were already subject to leases. In 1571 Warden Herle was found to be creaming off most of the college's income to pay his own salary, forcing impoverished fellows into 'physic and surgery' or even inn keeping, and he seems to have been involved in forgery.⁸⁶ Oliver Carter was appointed in an attempt to improve the calibre of the fellows but he sued Herle (as he would sue Dee) for unpaid wages and was himself stabbed by a disgruntled litigant of the college. Herle sold new leases with heavy entrance fines and legal fees, and even let farms out with little regard for the existing tenants' welfare. Disastrously, he also granted long-lease of the great tithes of Manchester to

⁸⁴ See Claire Cross, 'The Incomes of Provincial Urban Clergy, 1520-1645', in O'Day and Heal, *Princes and Paupers*, 65-89; and Michael L. Zell, 'Economic Problems of the Parochial Clergy in the Sixteenth Century', in *ibid.*, 19-43.

⁸⁵ Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Worcester: a Cathedral City in the Reformation', ch. 5 in Collinson and Craig, *Reformation in English*, here at 94-5.

⁸⁶ Christopher L. Hunwick, 'Who shall reform the reformers? Corruption in the Elizabethan Collegiate Church of Manchester', *Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* 101 (2005), 85-100. I am grateful to Dr Hunwick for sending me an offprint of his article.

the queen, and this was subsequently assigned to courtiers and sub-let.⁸⁷ As an anonymous well-informed contemporary, perhaps Dee, put it c.1603-9:

He [i.e. Herle] sould all the lands and tithes and all other commodities belonginge, a fewe onely except; and the house it selfe to the Earle of *Darby*, (in whose hands it is now,) and granted long leases of most or all the tithes, Colledge lands, and other sperituall livings to one *Killigreve*; and *Killigreve* granted them to the Queene; & shee to them that are now possessed of them to the utter overthrow of that famous rich Colledg [*sic*] so that he left nothing to the mentenance of such a port [*sic*] as in times past had their bene kept: Also the Queene called in the old foundation, and granted a new one, of a Warden, 4 Fellows, ij Parish-Curatts, 4 Musitians, ij Parish-clarkes, and 4 Queristers, alltho living be not left for them; an [*sic*] dedicated it to our Saviour Christe; so Hearle when he had done, resined it, and Doctor *Wooton* was installed in his place. Their is no Quiristers kept now.⁸⁸

An investigation instituted by Lord Burghley found that the warden and fellows did not live together in the college, whose property had been sold to the earl of Derby, but in their own homes – the warden stayed at an inn when he visited Manchester. When the queen refounded the college in 1578 four new fellows were appointed although they remained non-resident. Moreover, the owners of the tithe leases acquired from

⁸⁷ A list of those who leased lands from the queen is given in the 1578 foundation document and includes names subsequently very familiar to Dee in the courts: Hugh Travis, Ralph Kemp, Adam Holland, John Byron, and Ralph Holden. See Hibbert, 'History of the Collegiate Church', i. 94-5.

⁸⁸ [London], C[ollege] [of] A[rms], MS Lancaster C.37, fo. 169r.

the queen were unwilling to pay higher rents to fund the college or renegotiate the terms of their leases at all. By the time Dee arrived on the scene the lessees were suing each other, the college and tithe-payers ‘in a legal free-for-all’ which was typical of the increasing urban litigation after c.1540 between landlords who had acquired ecclesiastical properties and embittered townsmen.⁸⁹

To make matters worse, the last decade of the sixteenth century was marked by economic depression and social tensions, if not an outright ‘crisis’ in the towns.⁹⁰ As Dee found, three years of bad harvests coupled with a marked rise in the population had increased England’s reliance on imported Polish rye, and at this time the trade routes to the Continent were somewhat disrupted. As a consequence, not only were many areas of the north affected by a subsistence crisis and famine, but

⁸⁹ Haigh, ‘Puritan evangelism’, 43. Material relating to these suits is in NA: PRO, E 133/6/905; E 134/32Eliz/Trin 4. Some nineteenth-century transcriptions of these manuscripts are in M[anchester,] C[hetham’s] L[ibrary], Raines deeds and papers, miscellaneous rolls, bundles 190, 191. See also brief notices of plaintiffs in the court of duchy chamber in *Ducatus Lancastriae pars quarta. Calendar to the Pleadings from the fourteenth year to the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth* (3 vols. London, 1834) iii. 64, 80, 106, 124, 237, 265, 286, 370, 401. Suits which came before the manorial court of Newton are given in H. T. Croften, *A History of Newton Chapelry in the Ancient Parish of Manchester*, vol. ii, part 1, Chetham Society, new series liii (1904), 47-52, 63-74, 126-30. An account of the tangled affair is given by Hibbert, ‘History of the Collegiate Church’, i. 82-135. In general, see Robert Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and Political Culture, c.1540-1640* (Oxford, 1998), ch. 5. He does not mention Manchester but he does cite the case of Chester townsmen suing to gain the tithes of a collegiate church in 1596, *ibid.*, 81.

⁹⁰ Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the English Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989); Jonathan Barry, ‘Provincial Town Culture, 1640-1780: Urbane or Civic?’, in Joan H. Pittock and Andrew Wear (ed.), *Interpretation and Cultural History* (Basingstoke, 1991), 198-234; Tittler, *Reformation and the Towns*, 252, 340-1.

Mancunian cloth exporters were now competing with London to gain a foothold in the domestic textiles market. This combination of an inadequate income and economic depression meant that Dee, who had lobbied hard for a post in order to settle his debts, recoup the loss of his library, and promote new projects, was often in debt during his Manchester sojourn. Dee borrowed at least £36 17s. 4d., no doubt to pay for his accommodation, for wet nurses for his children, and other servants.⁹¹ Not surprisingly Dee energetically pursued his right to various tithes – especially those of corn, the price of which had increased fairly rapidly – in the expensive and notoriously lax diocesan consistory courts between 1596 and 1598.⁹² It is therefore not surprising to find Dee complaining to Dyer about the ‘hard & thinne a dyet’ his household had to endure, or to discover that in 1602 his son Arthur was chasing dowries and displaying ‘great greaf & discontentment for wante’.⁹³

As the new warden Dee was also immediately embroiled in the disputes over leased college land since the warden and fellows of the college were lords of the

⁹¹ *DJD*, 11, 17, 25 Feb. 1597; 11 Mar. 1598; 20, 30 Dec. 1600; 19 Jan. 1601. See also Willan, *Elizabethan Manchester*, 45, 89; G. J. Piccope, *Lancashire and Cheshire Wills and Inventories from the Ecclesiastical Court, Chester. The Third Portion*, Chetham Society, old series liv (1861), 165.

⁹² The records of the consistory court at Chester reveal that Dee was the complainant in nine cases during 1596 and 1597: CCRO, Consistory Cause Papers, EDC 5/1596, nos. 31 (against Thomas Lowe), 32 (Thomas Travesse); EDC 5/1597, nos. 35 (Roger Sowle), 36 (John Booth), 37 (Thomas Goodyere), 38 (Robert Bourdman), 39 (Robert Brooke), 41 (George Birch), and 42 (Hugh Travers [*sic*]). Dee refers to Goodyere in his diary on 14 and 21 Mar. 1596. He also mentions his problems with the tithe-corns of Hulme and Crumpsall, 20-27 Aug., 30 Aug. 1596; and records that he ‘stayed’ his disputes with Birch, Goodyer, Traves, and one Baxter (not in the CCRO papers) in the Chester courts, 9 Feb. 1598. All references to *DJD*. On the ineffectiveness, expense and unpopularity of the diocesan consistory court see Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 229.

⁹³ Richard Napier, astrological casebook, Bodl., MS Ashmole 221, fo. 51v.

manor of Newton, which bordered with Clayton demesne along the River Medlock in Manchester parish, and was the area that Warden Herle had gouged. Three interlinked areas of dispute were to affect Dee's personal position from the moment he arrived in Manchester⁹⁴: the recovery of tithes from tenants on these and other college lands; the prevention of encroachments and intrusions on college lands; and the upkeep of the fabric of the church and the maintenance of warden and fellows, which relied on the income from tenants. Dee and the fellows pursued their claims against tenants by informal means, and also in three formal forums: the manorial court of Newton, over which Dee presided within a couple of months of arriving; the court of Duchy Chamber in London; and the diocesan consistory court in Chester.⁹⁵

The surviving records of the manorial court, usually held at Newton township, a few miles from the college, reveal that many of the men pursued for encroachments on college land were frequent offenders, and it seems as if this court was ineffective in recovering fines or in enforcing its decisions. This may help to explain why the college prosecuted Richard Heape in the duchy court in 1598 for 'tresspass and encroachments on the wastes called Newton Common or Newton Heath'.⁹⁶ Heape had been called before the manorial court as far back as 1584 for building a smithy on college land there, and in 1596 it was noted at the manorial court that the

⁹⁴ And even before he arrived: *DJD*, 12, 28 Jul. 1595.

⁹⁵ A group of men also met to view and discuss encroachments at the end of Sept. 1596. They reported to the Manchester court leet the following Apr. and Jun., but Dee is not mentioned on this occasion: *Court Leet*, ii. 116, 124-5.

⁹⁶ *Ducatus Lancastriae*, iii. 370, no. 12. In like fashion, Thomas Goodyer was regularly reprimanded for 'encroachments' by the Manchester court leet: see *Court Leet Records*, ii. passim.

encroachment remained and that there had been ‘no reformation’ in this matter.⁹⁷ Dee may have tried to exert some informal pressure on tithe defaulters and intruders through meetings with their landlord Sir John Byron of Royton, but he seems to have had no luck here.⁹⁸ The warden and fellows proceeded against Heape and others regarding Newton Heath again in 1600: on 13 June that year a commission was formed to enquire on behalf of the wardens and fellows of the college regarding intrusions on the wastes of the manor of Newton by Heape and others. Depositions were taken at Newton on 1 September.⁹⁹ Finally, in November 1602 the warden and fellows of the college successfully proceeded against Richard Heape and others in the chancery court at Lancaster for unlawfully using Newton Heath.¹⁰⁰

At the beginning of 1596 a commission for the College was drafted in the duchy office in London. It noted the ‘veray & [sic] poore estate’ of the collegiate lands and leases; a problem compounded by missing, detained or damaged documentation. It was therefore necessary to undertake a new thorough survey of the collegiate lands with a view to restoring the collegiate income.¹⁰¹ Of particular concern were several disputes over the line of demarcation of the parish at Theale

⁹⁷ Croften, *History of Newton*, 60, 64, 68 (Heape fined for defaulting on an earlier fine), 72; *DJD*, 20 April. 1596.

⁹⁸ *DJD*, 2 Apr., 10-14 Jul., 3 Sept. 1596.

⁹⁹ NA: PRO, DL 4/42/9. See also the pleading of Dee and the fellows in the duchy court of Lancaster in 1600 against Ralph Sharplees otherwise Fogge for ‘Wrongful Possession of a Tenement called Shonocrosse in the manor of Newton’. *Ducatus Lancastriae*, iii. 456, no. 8.

¹⁰⁰ MCA, MS 93.

¹⁰¹ The draft commission is in MCA, uncatalogued. I am grateful to the archivist Christopher Hunwick for drawing this newly discovered document to my attention and for providing me with a transcription of it. The commission’s findings are in NA: PRO, DL 44/585.

Moor or ‘Theylemore’ near Moston.¹⁰² It was probably with this and the other matters in view that in 1597 Dee and others at the behest of ‘the higher powres’ made an especially thorough Rogationtide perambulation of the bounds of the parish of Manchester, which took in Theale Moor as well as Newton Heath. This ‘survey geometrical of the very circuits of Manchester parish’ took several days to complete and it allowed Dee to inspect the stakes placed at its bounds and to determine where the college’s parish boundary touched that of the rector of Prestwich’s parish: the aim was to use this ‘exact workmanship’ to draw up ‘a plat, or Charte’, presumably to determine who had the right to the tithes there.¹⁰³ This provoked an ‘unlawful assembly and rout’ against the surveyors of the manor of Newton.¹⁰⁴

On 20 May 1598 the commission again noted the ‘great decay and poore estate of the foresaid Christs Colledg [*sic*] in Manchester’, and directed special attention to discovering what belonged to the college and what had been detained. The six special commissioners – including Dee – were required to ‘enquire, survey, search, and try out the yearly value quality and quantity of all the mannors lands’ belonging to the college, and to call in documents and take statements from witnesses in order to do so. The ‘[r]ecord of survey made by our late dearly beloved Counsellor

¹⁰² NA: PRO, DL 44/585. There are extensive collegiate papers relating to disputes about the commoners’ rights, enclosures, and tithes of Theale Moor in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries deposited in Manchester, J[ohn] R[ylands] U[niversity] L[ibrary] [of] M[anchester], Clowes Deeds. College lands in Salford, some detained by Rafe Holden, were another source of dispute early in Dee’s wardenship. See *DJD*, 7 May, 22 and 25 Jun., 10-14 Jul. 1596; 12 Oct. 1597.

¹⁰³ *DJD*, 4 May 1597; Dee to the rector of Prestwich, Manchester, 2 May 1597, MCL, Mun. C. 6.63.

¹⁰⁴ *DJD*, 14-16 Jun. 1597.

Walter Mildmay Knight (then our principall Auditor)' in 1548 was noted,¹⁰⁵ and presumably some use was made of the more recent surveys and maps, including one of 'Manchester town described and measured by Mr Christopher Saxton' under Dee's supervision, and another of 'the way to Stopford [Stockport]' undertaken by Dee's servants.¹⁰⁶ However, for better information a jury of twenty 'honest and sufficient gentlemen' made a perambulation on Theale Moor, viewed the boundary and gave a verdict favourable to the college. Moreover, interrogatories were made of five men regarding 'the lymytte and bounde of the parishe of Manchester uppon Theylemore'. In his diary Dee notes 'the Commission set upon in the Chapter House' on 3 July 1600 – probably in this matter.¹⁰⁷ All of this was certified in the Duchy Chamber on 4 November 1600.¹⁰⁸ However, the case dragged on for several more years as the commissioners sought to deal with other Theale Moor defaulters such as James Asheton.¹⁰⁹ College lands at Dunham Massey in Cheshire were also a source of dispute with Sir George Booth between 1597 and 1604.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Sir Walter Mildmay was principal north auditor of the duchy of Lancaster between 1546 and 1589: Somerville, *History of the Duchy*, i. 437.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Bowd, 'John Dee and Christopher Saxton's Survey of Manchester (1596)', *Northern History* lxii (Sept. 2005), 275-92.

¹⁰⁷ *DJD*. Christopher Hunwick has recently discovered a record of the depositions of witnesses on this occasion. It is now in MCA, awaiting reference under current cataloguing project. I am grateful to Dr Hunwick for providing me with a transcription.

¹⁰⁸ NA: PRO, DL 44/585.

¹⁰⁹ James Asheton of Chadderton, farmer of tithes of Prestwich, was in dispute with the college and at variance with James Chetham of Nuthurst: JRULM, Clowes Deeds, MSS 764, 762, 758. Dee and the fellows proceeded in the duchy court of Lancaster in 1600 against James Asheton for tithes of Theale Moor: *Ducatus Lancastriae*, iii. 456, no. 9. Dee mentions that 'the commission and jury did find the tithes of Nuthurst due to Manchester against Mr James Ashton of Chadderton', *DJD*, 4 Nov. 1600. In

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It was probably with some sense of relief from these lengthy and tiresome affairs that Dee set out for London in November 1604 intending to stay in the city until the following Easter.¹¹¹ However, his absence from Manchester may have been prolonged by the outbreak of plague in the town during 1604-5 and rendered permanent by the death of his wife there.¹¹² Dee seems to have died in London on 26 March 1609 after

May 1601 publication of the findings of the commission called by Dee, Sir Edward Fitton, William Tatton, and the bishop of Chester into the boundaries of the waste between Manchester parish and Prestwich was stayed by Asheton: JRULM, Clowes Deeds, MS 461. Further material of 1600-4 relating to this dispute is in MCL, Raines Deeds and Papers, miscellaneous rolls, bundle 174.

¹¹⁰ *DJD*, 22 Apr., 23 Jun. 1597, and 13 Oct. 1600. Three letters on this matter dating to Oct-Nov. 1604 existed in a 'Register book' of instruments in the Manchester collegiate church archives in 1673. They are no longer extant but were noted and partially transcribed in the enclosure of a letter (from which I quote here) from H. Newcome to Elias Ashmole, Manchester, 11 Feb. 1672/3: Bodl., MS Ashmole 1788, fo. 144r. Also noted there are seven other leases, grants, and memoranda of 1597-1604 signed by Dee. Christopher Hunwick has informed me that these are no longer extant in the cathedral archive.

¹¹¹ Interrogatories on the matter of Dee's dispute with James Asheton of Chadderton over Theale Moor took place on 8 Oct. 1604. Dee probably intended to present the finding to the Duchy chamber in London: MCL, Raines deeds and papers, miscellaneous rolls, bundle 174. Dee and the fellows of the college wrote to Sir George Booth, Manchester, 6 Nov. 1604: 'o[u]r Wardan is to goe towards London next weeke'; and same to same, Manchester, 10 Nov. 1604, requesting a postponement of business until next easter since '[o]ur warden is to travill towards London some day next week.' Bodl., MS Ashmole 1788, fo. 144r.

¹¹² It seems likely that he made this trip since Dee was found to be 'no preacher' by the Chester visitation court in Nov. 1604: see CCRO, Visitation Correction Book, EDV 1/13, fo. 64r. A confused local oral tradition about this sequence of events may lie behind a deleted sentence among the transcriptions of Dee material enclosed in the letter of 1673 from Henry Newcome of Manchester to his

a fairly long illness,¹¹³ ignored by the new king and his court, satirised in the theatre,¹¹⁴ scorned by the well-placed or well-informed,¹¹⁵ and unlamented in Manchester.¹¹⁶

By any standards it was a disappointing conclusion to his life. The post of warden had offered Dee few, if any, of the rewards he expected in return for his years of hard work. Faced with religious and political division and assaulted by personal attacks Dee may have found the prospect of an eirenic exploration of the secrets of the universe and promises of a universal order ever more attractive, if increasingly

brother-in-law Elias Ashmole: ‘Some old persons remember his wife living a widow in the coll[ege] house at Manchester and it may bee presumed did dye at Manchester’: see Bodl., MS Ashmole 1788, fo. 144r. This letter is only partially printed in *Elias Ashmole (1617-1692). His Autobiographical and Historical Notes, his Correspondence, and Other Contemporary Sources Relating to his Life and Work*. ed. and intro., C. H. Josten (5 vols., Oxford, 1966), iv. 1307-9. On Jane Dee’s death see *The Registers of the Cathedral Church of Manchester: Christenings, Burials, and Weddings, 1573-1616* (Cambridge, 1908), 349. On the impact of plague in the area see T. S. Willan, ‘Plague in perspective: the case of Manchester in 1605’, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, cxxxii (1982), 29-40.

¹¹³ John Pontois (who supplied Dee with grain in 1597, see n. 2 above) seems to have recorded the progress of Dee’s last illness in Dee’s diary: 15 Aug. 1608 ‘Hor. 5. ½ p.m J. [illegible]’; 21 Aug. [death’s head], ‘H: 4. p.m.’; 26 Mar. 1609 ‘Jō [death’s head] Δ. Hor: 3. a.m.’ See Bodl., MS Ashmole 488.

¹¹⁴ Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* [c.1610], act II, scene 2, lines 20-1.

¹¹⁵ John Chamberlain describes Dee as ‘an old imposturing jugler’ in a letter to Dudley Carleton, London, 1 Mar. 1599, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. and intro., Norman Egbert McClure (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1939), i. 70.

¹¹⁶ Although note the generally favourable, if largely derivative, comments made by a local antiquarian cleric in c.1652-6: Richard Hollingworth, ‘Mancuniensis or An history of the towne of Manchester & w[ha]t is most memorable’, MCL, Mun. A. 6. 51, fos. 21r-22r.

illusory and impractical in such a hostile environment. Dee's natural philosophical investigations, including alchemy, and his conversations with angels required an 'experimental household' with private rooms, apparatus and assistants.¹¹⁷ However, no warden's lodging was built until the seventeenth century, and Dee may only have been able to use Alport Lodge until 1599 when the earl of Derby sold it. Dee certainly had the use of some rooms at the college itself by 1600 since he mentions 'my dining-room' there on one occasion when he was entertaining visitors,¹¹⁸ but a few months after the fellows withheld Dee's grant he hired 'the close', which may indicate that with the sale of Alport Lodge imminent he was forced to take inferior lodgings.¹¹⁹ It is therefore tempting to draw the conclusion that Dee's normal investigations would have been severely curtailed and that his wife Jane would have found this northern household particularly difficult to manage. There is some evidence that Dee practised alchemy in the north and that he was consulted locally as a 'cunning man' in a bid to recover stolen property and identify a thief.¹²⁰ On the whole, though, it seems as if Dee's studies, while not entirely 'stayed', as he claimed in 1597, were directed into narrower, more local and antiquarian channels by material and geographical restrictions.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Deborah Harkness, 'Managing an experimental household: the Dees of Mortlake and the practice of natural philosophy', *Isis* lv (1986), 247-62.

¹¹⁸ *DJD*, 13 Oct. 1600.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28 Jan. 1598.

¹²⁰ *DJD*, 17 Dec. 1597; 1 Nov. 1600; Bodl., MS Bodley 485, fos. 176v, 179v; Bodl., MS Ashmole 1488, fo. 21v [red ink], 224 [Ashmole's pagination]; BL, Cotton MS Appendix XLVI, part II, fos. 231v, 232r. Microfiche.

¹²¹ See Bowd, 'John Dee', 284-92.

Perhaps as a result of these restrictions on his ‘most esteemed Studies and exercises’ Dee avoided the accusation of conjuring which was made against him at other times. In fact, most of Dee’s trouble in Manchester stemmed from the fact that he was the representative of conformity in the sense that he was an appointee of the archbishop of Canterbury and followed, outwardly at least, the rites of the Church of England. The ‘graven images’ (or Carter’s ‘senses significations’), paraphernalia such as the surplice, and non-scriptural texts such the Book of Common Prayer introduced by the church were regarded with almost as much repugnance by the liturgical nonconformists as any semi-Catholic ‘superstitious’ words, symbols, objects, rituals and ancient books employed by Dee in his angelic conversations or alchemical investigations in Manchester. Any attempt by Dee to impose the former on such men was bound to cause trouble.

The Manchester Dee who aroused Carter’s hostility was a practical warden keen to secure and augment his income through the courts and other semi-public arenas; an agent of conformity at odds with many of his colleagues over some key elements of worship; and a careful and energetic investigator of local history and topography. However, he was largely powerless to break the Gordian knot of religious, social, and personal difficulties that he found in the town and college. It probably did not help that although Dee was certainly not short of distinguished local visitors he was rejected or ignored by the royal court, probably as a consequence of his association with the disgraced Sir Walter Raleigh, and he was superseded by a younger generation with closer ties to the new king.¹²² In sum, his natural and

¹²² For example, Dee dined with Raleigh soon after his return from Guiana, *DJD*, 9 Oct. 1595. The hostility of the earl of Salisbury (Sir Robert Cecil) towards Raleigh was marked, and may also have

spiritual investigations signally failed to deliver the fruits and profits which they had initially promised, and Dee never found a path out of the labyrinth of the English Reformation as it was played out in the college of turbulent fellows in Manchester.

Finally, just as Dee's time in Manchester has not received the serious attention it deserves until recently, so 'pre-industrial' Manchester has, in some ways, languished in the 'waiting-room' or labyrinth of history. Unincorporated until 1838 the town's seigniorial government, its manorial courts and the dominance of the Stanleys or the Mosleys, marked it out as something of an anachronism even in c.1600 as many comparable communities rushed to gain incorporation, or to take advantage of the dissolution of ecclesiastical lands and create an oligarchic civic culture. However, in this article I have attempted to show how an urban reformation also touched Manchester. Like many other towns ecclesiastical lands tumbled from crown hands to the landed gentry and then to ambitious urban gentry such as the Mosleys.¹²³ The duchy or local manorial courts were the arenas for disputes over the ownership and use of land. Such disputes, as well as the open conflict of armed men on the mosses and moors around Manchester, reflect 'a virtual crisis of authority' which has also been identified elsewhere in England, especially during the crisis decade of the 1590s when plague and economic slump sharpened social and political

extended to Dee as was noted in an 'angelic conversation' of Jul. 1607, BL, Cotton MS App. XLVI, part II, fo. 229r. Microfiche.

¹²³ Compare the case of the rich and locally influential Whalley Abbey in east Lancashire, which passed to the crown in 1537 and was then purchased by local men in 1553: Michael Mullett, 'The Reformation in the Parish of Whalley', ch. 6 in Robert Poole (ed.) *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories* (Manchester, 2002), here at 88-96.

conflicts.¹²⁴ The dominance of manorial forms of government perhaps stifled the development of robust self-governing institutions locally, but in seeking to promote their authority and autonomy after the Reformation some townsmen turned to the discipline and obedience embodied by Puritanism. It was this heady mixture of social, religious, and political authority which Dee encountered in the making in Manchester, and it was this same cocktail of assertive localism which surely fuelled the town's anti-royalist and anti-Derby stance into the 1640s and beyond.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ On the role of Puritanism in consolidating 'oligarchic authority' in a town of comparable size under great socio-economic pressures see Peter Clark, "'The Ramouth-Gilead of the Good': Urban Change and Political Radicalism at Gloucester, 1540-1640", in Jonathan Barry (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town: A Reader in English Urban History, 1530-1688* (London, 1990), 244-73, esp. 265-9.

¹²⁵ See *ibid.*, 272-3; Tittler, *Reformation and the Towns*, esp. chs 4, 5, 8, and conclusion.