PAROCHIAL CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF COVENTRY

c.1500-c.1600

Anthony Arthur Upton

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ABSTRACT

Parochial Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Coventry, c. 1500-c. 1600.

Anthony Arthur Upton

This thesis sets out to analyse the size, distribution and character of the clerical profession in the archdeaconry of Coventry between circa 1500 and the close of Elizabeth's reign. The focus of the thesis, therefore, is firmly on the parochial clergy, those priests with whom the laity were in closest day-to-day contact. Although a number of other historians have studied the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, this thesis aims to investigate in greater depth some of the unique characteristics of Coventry archdeaconry and its parochial clergy. Each chapter follows a partly chronological, partly thematic organisation. Throughout the thesis many points of similarity between old and new, in town and countryside are identified.

Chapter 2 delineates the physical extent of Coventry archdeaconry, describes its demographic characteristics and introduces authoritative figures, including the diocesan bishop and the archdeacon. Arguments are also presented in respect of the practical implications of minor orders and of the vexed question of ordination titles.

In Chapter 3 the number and deployment of clergy both before and after the severance from Rome are explored. Special attention is paid to the changing fortunes of the unbeneficed. The chapter also examines the adequacy of pastoral care in the light of a re-alignment of ministerial goals.

In Chapter 4 the focus moves to patronage as exercised in parochial appointments. Different patronal categories are examined and conclusions drawn in respect of the effects of the monastic dissolutions and whether the re-distribution of advowsons to secular patronage affected the ministry of the parochial clergy.

Pluralism is a contentious subject, the extent and effects of which in Coventry archdeaconry are explored in Chapter 5. Benefice tenure is subjected to scrutiny and fresh terrain surveyed in tracing the geographical mobility of parochial clergy.

This thesis contains 98,704 words

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ABBREVIATIONS

AASRP	*Associated Architectural Societies' Reports and Papers*
BL	British Library
BodL	Bodleian Library
Cal. Pap. R.	*Calendar of Papal Registers*
CCA	Coventry City Archives
CCC Camb.	Corpus Christi College, Cambridge
CPL	*Calendar of Papal Letters*
CPR	*Calendar of Patent Rolls*
CSPD	*Calendar of State Papers Domestic*
Dugdale, *Warwickshire*	W. Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire*
Emden, *BRUO*	A.B. Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford*
Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*	J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*
HMC	*Historical Manuscripts Commission*
HRO	Huntingdon Record Office
LAO	Lincoln Archives Office
LCL	Lichfield Cathedral Library
LJRO	Lichfield Joint Record Office
LPFD	*Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic*
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
LRO	Leicestershire Record Office
LRS	Lincoln Record Society
NLW	National Library of Wales
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office
SBTRO	Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office
SHC	Staffordshire Record Society, *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*
SRO	Staffordshire Record Office
TBAS	*Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society*
TNA: PRO	The National Archives: Public Record Office
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
VCH	*Victoria County History*
VE	*Valor Ecclesiasticus*
Venn, *Alumni Cantab.*	J. and J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Pt 1
WCRO	Warwickshire County Record Office
WRO	Worcestershire Record Office
WSL	William Salt Library

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> An understanding of the dynamics of the clerical profession, both in terms of individual careers and of fluctuations in the profession's overall size, distribution and character, is thus central not only to the interpretation of the development of society and religion...but also to studies of particular localities and regions.[1]

This quotation from 'The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835' encapsulates the main purpose of this thesis, which has set out to analyse the number of clergy and their distribution within the archdeaconry of Coventry between *circa* 1500 and the close of Elizabeth I's reign. Although space has precluded the investigation of the careers of individual clergy, clerical patronage and clerical mobility have been investigated in depth.

Most historians of Coventry and Lichfield have reached conclusions derived from studies based on a diocesan perspective, and on periods of limited duration. This thesis, however, sets out to examine some of the unique characteristics of Coventry archdeaconry and its parochial clergy. As Martin Ingram recognised, 'detailed local studies...are the best means of getting close to the religious life of the period'.[2] A more intensive study of that small but diverse ecclesiastical unit is particularly desirable, since within it lay a cathedral city which happened to be a regional capital ranking among the most important urban centres in the realm.

Published works relevant to this research include studies by Barbara Coulton, Tim Cooper, Mark Knight and Rosemary O'Day. A volume of essays edited by George Demidowicz contains substantial chapters on the cathedral priory of Coventry and its dissolution, but little that is relevant to the subject matter of this thesis.[3] Following E. Lindop's pioneering thesis on Coventry and Lichfield, recent postgraduate studies covering the whole diocese include a wealth of theses on Coventry.[4]

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1. <www.personal.rdg.ac.uk/~lhstalrs/cced.html> *The Clergy of the Church of England Database.*
2. M. Ingram, 'From Reformation to toleration: popular religious cultures in England, 1540-1690', in T. Harris, ed., *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 101.
3. B. Coulton, 'Implementing the Reformation in the urban community: Coventry and Shrewsbury 1559-1603', *Midland History* 25 (2000), pp. 43-60; T. Cooper, *The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1999); M. Knight, *Piety and Devotion Among the Warwickshire Gentry, 1485-1547*, Dugdale Society Occasional Papers 32 (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1989); R. O'Day, *The English Clergy: the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession 1558-1642* (Leicester, 1979), *passim*; G. Demidowicz, ed., *Coventry's First Cathedral: The Cathedral and Priory of St Mary* (Stamford, 1994).
4. E. Lindop, 'The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield during the Reformation with special reference to

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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Not all of those studies impinge directly on the subjects of this present research. Indeed, the two most striking differences between them and this present thesis lie in their wider territorial coverage and shorter chronological span. J.C. Bates, P. Hosker, and G.J. Stretch are rooted in the fifteenth century and based on episcopal registers; studies by Michael Cahill and Darren Oldridge begin in 1603 and are more concerned with religious issues; Rosemary O'Day, with emphasis on patronage, covers 1559-1642; C.A.M. Johnson concentrates on 'Reformation clergy' in what she called the 'crisis years', 1536-59; finally, Tim Cooper's comparative study of clerical careers only spans the episcopate of Bishop Blythe, 1503-31. None covers the entire sixteenth century or analyses the condition of the parochial clergy at both ends of that period punctuated by religious turbulence.

Coventry archdeaconry is eminently worthy of further research, therefore, given the city's regional importance and the variable nature of the territory over which the archdeacon exercised his authority. Joan D'Arcy and Mark Knight alone focus their respective studies on a single deanery and a single city.[5] The unique importance of this thesis, therefore, is that it concentrates on the state of the ministry in one sixteenth-century archdeaconry, which will facilitate comparison with the situation in other jurisdictions.

Many scholarly studies have stamped their mark on this present thesis. Nearly all cover such a diverse selection of topics that a thematic bibliographic profile would render frequent repetition not only inevitable but inevitably tedious. For that reason it has been decided to allow footnotes to be the best bibliographic guide to the most expansive or significant works studied.

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parochial life', unpubl. B.Litt thesis, University of Oxford (1938); J.C. Bates, 'The episcopate of William Bothe, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield 1447-1452 with an edition of his register', unpubl. M.Phil. thesis, University of Nottingham (1981); M. Cahill, 'The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield 1603-1642', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (2001); T.N. Cooper, 'The secular clergy of the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the early sixteenth century', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham (1992); P. Hosker, 'The register of Reginald Bowlers, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 1453-1459', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool (1979); C.A.M. Johnson, 'The Reformation clergy of Coventry and Lichfield, 1536-1559', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Emory University (1976); M. Jones, '"An earthly beast, a mole and an enemy to all godly learning": The life and career of Rowland Lee, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and lord president of the Council of the Marches', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales Cardiff (1998); R. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment in England in the Elizabethan and Early Stuart Periods, with special reference to the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', unpubl. Ph.D thesis, University of London (1972); D. Oldridge, 'Conflicts within the Established Church in Warwickshire 1603-42', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (1993); G.J. Stretch, 'The clergy and administration of the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield under Bishop John Hals, 1459-90', unpubl. M.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford (1990).

5. J. D'Arcy, 'Late medieval Catholicism and the impact of the Reformation in the deanery of Derby, c.1520 to c.1570', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham (1997); M. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry 1485-1558', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (1985).

1.1. Methodology

All clergy struggled to assimilate new theological positions and all were affected by the momentous changes which took place. Whilst they had little or no competence to control these changes, even within the confines of their own narrow territorial jurisdictions, the focus will be on issues which impinged on everyday parish life, punctuated by comments to illuminate particular circumstances. Three discrete but related topics will be examined to test the impact of these changes on the parochial clergy of Coventry archdeaconry and to assess the quality of the pastoral care they offered their parishioners.

First, the number and deployment of clergy both before and after the severance from Rome will be explored, and the impact of the Dissolution, the suppression of chantries, deprivations, high mortality, and the apparent cessation of ordinations. Second, ecclesiastical patronage was affected by these developments, too, and the implications of the changes will be addressed. Third, the extent, nature and resolution of the problem of pluralism, will be examined in the light of criticism expressed within both Church and Parliament. The beneficial or adverse effects of changes upon the parochial clergy will then be analysed.

Modern academic research manages to combine a rich admixture of the macroscopic and the microscopic. This thesis falls into the latter category. Each chapter follows a partly chronological, partly thematic organisation, reflecting the six 'phases' of religious significance identified by Christopher Marsh, which fit very conveniently and snugly into the time-scale adumbrated for this thesis.[6] This approach exposes the most significant features of each passing 'phase'.

Phase one, the early decades of the century, was 'relatively stable', a point emphasised by J.J. Scarisbrick and Eamon Duffy, insisting that the Church enjoyed wide popular support. The high level of clerical recruitment indicated a buoyant mood, notwithstanding shortcomings in the selection and training of candidates. Significantly, as Beat Kümin pointed out, 'lay control over clerical provision became an increasingly natural phenomenon at all levels of society'. There were many bequests for 'an honest priest' to sing masses for testators and others named by them. Lay-dominated guilds habitually employed priests to pray for the good estate of their members. Andrew Brown demonstrated how in Salisbury diocese churches were being embellished with gifts from the laity, others were being extended and some even completely or partially rebuilt.[7]

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6. C. Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth Century England: Holding Their Peace* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 18-23.

7. J.J. Scarisbrick, *Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984); E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the*

Phase two opened in the mid-1520s and terminated in 1547 with King Henry VIII's death. Intervening events irrevocably changed the face of the English Church. The bond with Rome was severed, monasteries were closed and new articles of religious belief promulgated. Particularly odious for the parochial clergy was the introduction in 1535 of a sequence of vexatious tax payments. Another development was the transfer of some regulars to the parochial ministry.

Edward VI's accession initiated the third phase, characterised by its specifically protestant ethos as reflected in the revised formularies and liturgy of the English Church. Chantries were abolished. Church wall-paintings, images, altars and rood lofts were outlawed. In 1549 the first English Prayer Book was published and re-issued three years later with modifications more pleasing to extreme Protestants. Difficult as it must have been for those clergy offended by the changes, Marshall perceived that they 'had to learn to be more circumspect in their dealings with parishioners'. Meanwhile, dispossessed chantrists now joined ex-monks in a search for ecclesiastical patronage.[8]

Under Mary Tudor the fourth phase saw the repeal of the previous reign's ecclesiastical legislation and an attempt to restore the *status quo* as it had existed at the end of Henry VIII's reign.[9] The Marian regime has been excoriated for the vehemence of its campaign against 'heretics' and criticised for its failure to establish political and religious stability. Certainly, a large number of deprivations in Coventry archdeaconry occurred during this phase, and an epidemic compounded the problem of replacing them by seriously depleting the parochial ministry. An early sympathetic re-appraisal of the problems faced by Mary and her council is evident in Tytler, and more recently in the writings of Andrew Pettegree and R. Pogson. They have argued that while lamentable errors of judgement were made, there were also serious obstacles to progress which might have been surmounted, given time - a currency prematurely bankrupted when Mary died after only five years on the throne.[10]

The fifth phase began with the accession of Elizabeth I. The reformed faith was proclaimed by Acts of Parliament in 1559, a revised Prayer Book was issued and its

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Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580 (New Haven and London, 1992); B. Kümin, 'Parish finance and the early Tudor clergy', in A. Pettegree, ed., *The Reformation of the Parishes: The Ministry and the Reformation in Town and Country:* (Manchester, 1993), p. 56; A.D. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 111-31.

8. J.R. Tanner, *Tudor Constitutional Documents A. D. 1485-1603 With an Historical Commentary* (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 99-120; Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, p. 224.

9. Tanner, *Tudor Constitutional Documents*, pp. 121-29.

10. See, for example, J. Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (8 vols, London, 1837-1841); P.F. Tytler, ed., *England Under the Reigns of Edward VI. and Mary* (2 vols, London, 1839) 1, pp. 49-52; A. Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Leicester, 1996), p. 165; R. Pogson, 'Revival and reform in Mary Tudor's Church: a question of money', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 25 (1974), pp. 249-65.

use enforced, and the Queen became supreme governor of the Church of England.[11] Probably this was the Established Church's most torrid period during the sixteenth century, for Mary's deprivations, the epidemic and natural wastage combined to bequeath a legacy of vacant benefices for which there was no adequate supply of able men to fill. An entirely new bench of English bishops was faced with the task of maintaining the parochial structure with a grossly inadequate workforce.[12]

Elizabeth's final decade completes Marsh's sixth and concluding phase which, he thought, looked 'reasonably settled' when compared with the preceding five phases. The 'simple, generational turn-over', were bequeathed 'no personal memory' of the religious culture within which their parents and grand-parents had been nurtured.[13] Perhaps the Church's survival owed everything to the well-oiled administrative structures it had inherited, for while much had changed beyond recognition, much also that had been familiar to earlier generations remained intact.

Within this chronological framework, each chapter will consider whether aspects of the parochial ministry relevant to the topic under discussion exhibited signs of continuity or discontinuity without getting drawn into what Brown saw as 'a somewhat pugilistic debate'. On the one hand Bossy claimed that there were stark 'discontinuities in the historical sequence', yet Marsh detected 'many signs of continuity', intimating that 'the nature of the balance between change and continuity is fundamental to an understanding of the English Reformation'. Kümin reckoned that although 'the impact of religious change in urban parishes must have been particularly acute', yet 'continuities should not be ignored'.[14]

Clearly there were many points of similarity between old and new, in town and countryside. Cathedrals and churches still dominated urban and village landscapes and the self-same parochial clergy (or most of them) were still burying corpses in those same buildings and their graveyards; leading worship in them, baptising infants and marrying couples; ecclesiastical courts presided over moral, ecclesiastical and disciplinary offences and also privately-instigated causes, much as before; tithes were still being paid to the parson and patrons were still presenting

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11. Tanner, *Tudor Constitutional Documents*, pp. 130-39.
12. Marsh, *Popular Religion*, p. 22; N. Tyacke, 'Introduction: Re-thinking the English Reformation', in N. Tyacke, ed., *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London, 1998), p. 22.
13. Marsh, *Popular Religion*, p. 23.
14. Brown, *Popular Piety*, p. 224; J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* (London, 1976), p. 4; Marsh, p. 4; B. Kümin, 'Voluntary religion and Reformation change in eight urban parishes', in P. Collinson and J. Craig, eds, *Reformation in English Towns*, (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 188. See also D. MacCulloch, 'The myth of the English Reformation', *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991), pp. 1-19; P. McGrath and J. Rowe, 'The Marian priests under Elizabeth I', *Recusant History* 17 (1984), p. 117.

their protégés to bishops for institution and they issuing mandates for archdeacons to induct them. No candidate could enter the clerical profession without being ordained at the hands of a bishop, first to the order of deacons and then to the order of priests. And no man could become a bishop without being consecrated by a minimum of three bishops.

Appendix 1 includes all the parishes covered by this study in order of deanery and Fig. 1. locates them in the Warwickshire landscape. Chapelries appear in alphabetical order under the parish to which they were attached. They are shown in italics to distinguish them from parish churches whose incumbents enjoyed the benefit of freehold or else had cure without institution. Appendix 2 lists valuations assessed at four set intervals. It has been compiled specifically for the comparison of individual benefice incomes.

Quotations from original sources are mostly modernised, with occasional *ipsissima verba* italicised. Quotations from published sources are invariably as they appear in print.

1.2. Sources

'The historian is a prisoner of his written sources'.[15] Thus bound, historians are apt to lament that their sources are inadequate, for medieval and early modern archives invariably fail to satisfy the critical expectations of sophisticated twenty-first century investigators. Data contained in sixteenth-century sources are often ambiguous or hugely deficient, which explains why some topics and individuals are dealt with more expansively than others.

But the archival resources now available are so vast in quantity that they defy the capacity of any single human being to sift more than a tiny fraction of the totality of documentary evidence. Computer technology has, of course, opened up possibilities undreamed of even as little as a decade ago. The compilation of a national clergy database, for example, will potentially enable historians to trace clergy who 'disappear' from one diocese to another.

The comparative ease with which modern historians can trace and view archival sources elevates the scholarship of such men as Sir William Dugdale to a truly magnificent level of achievement. Some of the manuscripts he cited have not survived, for example the bundled certificates of institutions to benefices, apparently still unentered in the registers. Probably this was the fault, first of negligent officials, but later of culpable indifference by Commonwealth administrators hostile to the

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15. P. Marshall, 'Attitudes of the English people to priests and priesthood, 1500-1533', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1990), p. 44.

episcopacy. Cooper suggests that many diocesan records were actually destroyed during the Civil War.[16] At the Battle of Lichfield in 1643 the cathedral itself was bombarded and badly damaged by parliamentary forces.

Comparatively little sixteenth-century Coventry and Lichfield archive material has been printed, apart from Peter Heath's volume on Bishop Blythe's monastic visitations, J. Fines on the Coventry Lollard trials, and Rosemary O'Day and J. Berlatsky on Bishop Bentham's Letter-book.[17] Many primary sources have been examined, beginning with the printed *Taxatio* of Pope Nicholas IV of 1291 and *Nonarum Inquisitiones* of 1341. This was not the only medieval valuation of ecclesiastical benefices, but it became the arbiter by which all subsequent clerical levies were raised until it was superseded by *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535.[18] But the most basic sources are the episcopal registers, visitation and court books, probate wills and inventories, and a miscellaneous collection of records which defies neat description, all located at the Lichfield Joint Record Office.

Unfortunately, the registering of institutions to benefices in the bishops' registers was erratic. Consequently, from that single source it is not possible to trace the sequence of incumbents in some parishes, although alternative archival evidence is sometimes available. Lichfield ordination registers appear to be substantially complete prior to 1532, although neither an ordinand's place of origin is shown, nor his first parish appointment, so there is always a tantalising gap before he re-appears (if he ever does) as being instituted to a benefice. On the other hand, titles are almost invariably recorded, notwithstanding that scholars may not yet fully understand their significance.[19]

Episcopal registers furnish the most comprehensive record of patrons who actually presented incumbents to livings in their gift. When they recorded the presentation of a clergyman by one who was not the actual owner of the advowson - a *pro hac vice* patron - the scribes punctiliously named the person or persons granting the *pro hac vice* patronage.[20] Doubtless the ubiquity of *pro hac vice*

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16. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, *passim*; Cooper, 'Secular clergy', p. 6.

17. P. Heath, *Bishop Geoffrey Blythe's Visitations c.1515-1525*, SHC, 4th ser. 7 (Oxford, 1973); J. Fines, 'Heresy trials in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1511-12', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (1963); R. O'Day and J. Berlatsky, eds, 'The Letter-Book of Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 1560-1561', *Camden Miscellany XXVII*, Camden 4th ser. 22 (1979), pp. 113-248.

18. S. Ayscough and J. Hunter, eds, *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliæ et Walliæ Auctoritate P. Nicholai IV c. A.D. 1291* (London, 1802); G. Vanderzee, *Nonarum Inquisitiones in Curia Scaccarii. Temp. Regis Edwardi III* (London, 1807); *VE*.

19. On titles see R.N. Swanson, 'Titles to orders in medieval English episcopal registers', in H. Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore, eds, *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R.H.C. Davies* (London, 1985), pp. 233-45.

20. A *pro hac vice* patron was one who had acquired, either from the *de jure* owner of the advowson or someone to whom that right had been granted by the true patron, the entitlement to present the

patronage explains the brevity of commentaries on advowsons appended to parish profiles in the Warwickshire volumes of the Victoria County History. Presentation deeds would solve the problem of patronage rights, since they give the name of the person presenting and by what right he or she held the patronage, but unlike some dioceses, no such deeds survive for the sixteenth century in Coventry and Lichfield.[21] Visitation books are valuable but incomplete indicators of the number of clergy, as those who failed to present themselves were not always named.

Fragmentary sets of sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century churchwardens' accounts survive for seven Coventry archdeaconry parishes. The most comprehensive are those at Warwickshire County Record Office: Coventry Holy Trinity, Great Packington, Foleshill, Kingsbury and Southam.[22] The only two surviving leaves from Burton Dassett's accounts have been printed, as has the Solihull Parish Book, a valuable source. An exciting discovery was made at Lichfield Joint Record Office during this research, namely, the churchwardens' accounts for Chilvers Coton, covering the reigns of Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I and containing revelatory details of changes to the parish church and its liturgical requirements during that critical period.[23]

No complete nominal list of clergy is known prior to the 1533 subsidy returns, but details of some Coventry archdeaconry clergy, their benefice income and taxable goods are included in the incomplete 1522 muster books for Knightlow hundred.[24] Much important evidence in respect of numbers, deployment, pluralism and non-residence is derived from these sources, which have greatly facilitated the drawing of analytical conclusions about the condition of the parochial clergy in the early sixteenth century.

An expansion of bureaucratic activity explains the impressive increase in archival sources generated by government officials. Innovative clerical taxation was responsible for the introduction of a whole range of new material. This augments information available elsewhere and greatly facilitates the compilation of lists of beneficed incumbents. Important evidence corroborating diocesan sources has been

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next incumbent.

21. D.M. Barratt, 'The condition of the parish clergy between the Reformation and 1660, with special reference to the dioceses of Oxford, Worcester and Gloucester', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1949), p. 364.

22. WCRO, DR 581/45 and DR 801/13 (Coventry Holy Trinity); DR 158/19 (Great Packington); DR 158/19 (Kingsbury); DR 223/38 (Foleshill); DR 50/9 (Southam). Kingsbury's accounts are in bundles of loose papers; those for Foleshill start in 1605 but have material relevant to the purposes of this study.

23. E. Carey-Hill, 'Churchwardens' Accounts of Burton Dassett, Warwickshire', *TBAS* 63 (1939-40), pp. 85-7; G.L. Bishop, ed., *Solihull Parish Book 1525-1720* (Birmingham, 1977); LJRO, B/C/5 (Chilvers Coton).

24. BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 118r-23v; CCA, Acc. 24/1; WCRO, HR 65/1.

researched at the British Library. This includes the Composition Books (from 1534) and the Bishops' Institution Certificates (from 1559). After 1534 all but the poorest-paid parochial clergy were obliged to pay first fruits, the equivalent of their first year's stipend, before entering upon their new appointment. Payment by instalments was permitted, and these were meticulously entered in the Composition Book, a priceless record of an incumbent's intent to occupy a benefice even where no evidence of his institution exists. Elizabethan diocesans were required to submit certificates of institution naming clerks and the benefices to which they had been admitted. These bundled documents survive in large numbers and are sometimes the sole evidence for an incumbency unrecorded elsewhere. The earlier Lord Keeper's Presentation Book is replete with the names of those who recommended protégés to named benefices, a valuable asset for assessing patronage, notwithstanding that petitions were sometimes unsuccessful. Another important British Library source is the record of examinations and deprivations for marriage during Mary's reign.[25] Key evidence for a small but significant number of institutions is contained in the *sede vacante* registers of the archbishops of Canterbury, to whom fell the responsibility for, *inter alia*, instituting incumbents in provincial dioceses temporarily without a bishop.[26]

Bishop Bentham's letter-book in the National Library of Wales, is an unusual archive which has been closely examined although it has been printed. Among the important material scrutinised at the Lambeth Palace Library is the 1559 subscription book, which includes the autograph signatures of about eighty who can be identified as Coventry archdeaconry clergy, although some subscribed outside Warwickshire altogether. The majority of incumbents coyly abstained from naming their benefices, a tactic which forced a certain degree of speculation in some instances. There, too, are the results of a 1593 survey, but the Coventry and Lichfield section is unfortunately badly faded, rendering parts of the script impossible to decipher even under ultra-violet light. Returns from various dioceses in response to Archbishop Parker's enquiry of 1561/2 have been carefully studied.[27] Many Star Chamber, Court of Requests and Chancery proceedings at The National Archives: Public Record Office have been scrutinised, and where the Calendars refer to documents relevant to Coventry archdeaconry they have been examined on microfilm.

Mention must be made of other sources which proved extremely valuable in tracing clergy. At Coventry City Archives a veritable quarry for the naming of

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25. TNA: PRO E 334/1-12; E 331/Coventry & Lichfield/1-8; BL, Lansdowne MSS 443, 444; Harl. MS 421, ff. 55-91.
26. C.E. Woodruff, *Calendar of Institutions by the Chapter of Canterbury Sede Vacante*, Kent Record Society 8 (Canterbury, 1924), *passim.*
27. NLW, 4919D; LPL, *Cart. Misc.* xiii no. 37; *Cart. Misc.* xiii no. 58; CCC, Camb., MS 97.

incumbents and unbeneficed clergy of Coventry archdeaconry on the eve of the Reformation is the Corpus Christi and St Nicholas guild book.[28] Similarly, parish registers at the Warwickshire County Record Office contain a large number of clergy names, although it has not been feasible to examine every single one. A contemporary working copy of the 1535 *Valor Ecclesiasticus* for the whole of Warwickshire is in the Archer Collection at the Shakespeare Birthplace Library at Stratford-upon-Avon, where other important archival sources used in this study are also deposited.[29] At Northamptonshire Record Office are Spencer family papers which contain occasional references to clergy of Coventry archdeaconry. Deposited at Birmingham Reference Library is the sixteenth-century register of the Guild of St Anne of Knowle. It is said to contain about 15,000 members' names, including a remarkable number of Coventry archdeaconry clergy.[30]

Efforts to trace elusive clergy, especially those who crossed county and diocesan borders, have been helped by published records such as university *alumni*, calendars of wills, and lists of clergy published in various record society publications. W.N. Landor's listings of clergy in Staffordshire, which lay within Coventry and Lichfield, and H.I. Longden's prodigious manuscript notes and published volumes on Northamptonshire clergy, produced some interesting links. Published lists of institutions in Lincoln diocese were instrumental in tracing many who also held ecclesiastical office in Coventry archdeaconry. Similar links with London diocese emerge in G. Hennessy's *Novum Repertorium* and V. Davis's *Register*.[31] Finally, mention must be made of *Crockford's Clerical Directory*, a source which ecclesiastical historians rarely acknowledge. It includes lists of every archbishop and bishop who has ever held office in the two English provinces and indexes every Anglican benefice in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Editions before 1976 are the most useful, for they contain an abundance of additional information which can prove

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28. CCA, BA/B/Q/23/1.

29. WCRO, see bibliography; SBTRO, DR 37/vol. 41.

30. NRO, Spencer Court Rolls, see Bibliography; BRL, Accession 1, transcribed by W.B. Bickley, *The Register of the Guild of Knowle in the County of Warwick, 1451-1535* (Walsall, 1894).

31. W.N. Landor, *Staffordshire Incumbents and Parochial Records (1530-1680)*, SHC (London, 1916); NRO, HIL MSS LVIII, LIX, LX; HIL 2109.2-3; Spencer MS 266; Spencer Roll 1607; H.I. Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy, 1500-1900* (15 vols, Northampton, 1939-1943); C.W. Foster, 'Institutions to benefices in the diocese of Lincoln in the sixteenth century', *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries* 5 (1896-8), pp. 129-44; 164-81; 194-209; 227-43; 6 (1901), pp. 3-19; 45-53; 78-85; 102-11; 142-7; C.W. Foster, 'Institutions to benefices in the diocese of Lincoln in the time of the Lord Nicholas, Bishop of Lincoln', *AASRP* 25 pt. II (1900), pp. 459-544; C.W. Foster, 'Institutions to benefices in the diocese of Lincoln, 1540-1570, Calendar no. I', *AASRP* 24 pt I (1897), pp. 1-32; pt II (1898), pp. 467-525; G. Hennessy, ed., *Novum Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochilae Londinense or London Diocesan Clergy Succession from the Earliest Time to the Year 1898* (London, 1898); V. Davis, *Clergy in London in the Late Middle Ages: A Register of Clergy Ordained in the Diocese of London Based on Episcopal Ordination Lists 1361-1539* (London, 2000).

invaluable, for example in identifying parishes, their status and their correct designation. The edition used for this research was published in 1967.[32]

1.3. Synopsis of thesis

Each chapter is undergirded by a common theme, namely, for good or bad the accumulative effects of government legislation upon the parochial clergy and their ministry. Three discrete topics are discussed, selected because each impinges in some way upon the others. Thus the chapters possess an underlying unity of purpose which becomes apparent on reflection of the whole. Of the vast number of clergy and candidates for ordination, for example, each one relied upon the patronage of others, but what livings did patrons have to offer the protégés they presented? Once installed on their freehold, how many of those clergy were resident, how many were habitually absent, and if so how many observed the requirements of canon law and provide a substitute pastor? Why did some clergy keep their benefices for considerable periods while others moved after a short interval? Numbers, patronage, pluralism, tenure and mobility were all closely connected.

Chapter 2 delineates the physical extent of Coventry archdeaconry, describes its demographic characteristics and introduces authoritative figures. The role of the diocesan bishop is obviously of primary importance, since within the whole diocese he was the supreme spiritual authority and unchallenged focus of unity. In theory and in practice, no incumbent could legally minister there without the bishop's own personal seal of approval, for every benefice was not only 'his charge' but also a legal property protected by law. Hence, institutions were entered in episcopal registers, although there was often a lack of care and diligence in recording them. No man, however, could be ordained without the imposition of the bishop's hands, duly recorded in the registers, after examination (hardly ever recorded) by the archdeacon, who headed the clergy of the archdeaconry. His authority was exercised over four deaneries, or groups of parishes. Arguments are presented in respect of the practical implications of minor orders and of the vexed question of ordination titles.

Chapter 3 grapples with the problem of numbers, a subject comprehensively studied by, for example, Margaret Bowker (Lincoln diocese), J.F. Fuggles (Leicester archdeaconry), Michael Zell (Kent, dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester) and, for Coventry and Lichfield, by R.N. Swanson, Tim Cooper, and others for earlier

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32. *Crockford's Clerical Directory 1965-66* (London, 1967).

periods. An important feature will be the deployment of clergy, with special attention to the changing fortunes of the unbeneficed. The chapter also investigates not only the recruitment and ordination of candidates but also problems connected with the apparent cessation of ordinations after 1532. Like all other dioceses, Coventry and Lichfield suffered the loss of many clergy between 1547 and 1559, making it an extremely difficult task for the hierarchy to fill all the parochial benefices. The chapter examines the adequacy of pastoral care in the light of a re-alignment of ministerial goals.

In Chapter 4 the focus moves to patronage as exercised in parochial appointments. Patronal categories will be explained and conclusions drawn in respect of the effects of the monastic dissolutions and whether the redistribution of advowsons to secular patronage affected the ministry of the parochial clergy. This chapter will survey the role of the parochial clergy themselves who (except for a few in a private capacity) exercised no *ex officio* rights of patronage. Often overlooked, their unofficial patronage was valued and important, particularly in respect of the men who served as parochial assistants.

Pluralism is a contentious subject, the extent and effects of which in Coventry archdeaconry will be explored in Chapter 5. Lindop (admittedly using limited sources) detected only nine or ten pluralists in Coventry archdeaconry in 1561, while O'Day also suggested that pluralism was not extensive there, but the evidence will be re-examined in greater detail. Bowker ascertained that in Lincoln diocese the parliamentary Act of 1529 made a considerable impact and saw, too, a correlation between pluralism and the unbeneficed, a link to be robustly explored here. She also perceived that inflation 'increased the likelihood of pluralism', which thus 'remained as big a problem after the Reformation as beforehand'.[33] Benefice tenure will be subjected to scrutiny and fresh terrain will be surveyed in tracing the geographical mobility of parochial clergy.

1.4. Terminology

The large number of compound place-names in Coventry archdeaconry - indeed the very title, 'diocese of Coventry and Lichfield' - has influenced the terminology adopted in this thesis simply to lessen tedious repetition. Hence, wherever textual references to 'Coventry and Lichfield' appear they should be interpreted to refer to the diocese, similarly 'Coventry archdeaconry' rather than 'the archdeaconry of...'.

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33. Lindop, 'Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', pp. 55-60; O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p. 287; M. Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: the Diocese of Lincoln Under John Longland, 1521-1547* (Cambridge, 1981), p.115.

Toponyms are shortened only where it is sensible to do so without inviting confusion, but Aston-juxta-Birmingham is consistently referred to as Aston, for although there are parishes called Aston elsewhere in the diocese there is none similarly named in Coventry archdeaconry.

Descriptive labels are susceptible to fashion. Scholars now challenge the validity of terms they consider anachronistic, yet such favoured alternatives as 'traditionalist', 'conservative', 'evangelical', 'reformer' can be equally unhelpful since they, too, can evoke disagreeable images. This thesis espouses 'Catholic' and 'Protestant', to be understood (following Marshall's argument) 'in a common-sense, non-technical way, the Catholics being those who preferred sacraments and the authority of an institutional Church to the greater scripturalism and individualism of the Protestants'.[34]

Clerical nomenclature can be ambiguous, so terms used in this thesis need to be explicitly defined. A clerk or cleric denotes someone in holy orders (that is, a subdeacon, deacon or priest), but where clergymen in general are intended, including those in minor orders, either 'clergy' or 'clerics' will be used. An incumbent is a beneficed parochial clergyman who, once instituted and inducted, enjoyed benefit of freehold. In law, he could not be removed from office except for serious crime, or ecclesiastical misconduct including simony. In effect, simony was ecclesiastical bribery, when a cleric obtained a benefice by payment of money to somebody who was in a position to see the transaction successfully completed.

Assistant clergy are difficult to define because of the multiplicity of terms used in archival sources. For example, 'chaplain' or 'stipendiary' are common descriptions. They appear to mean any wage-earning parochial clergyman other than a parish priest, curate or chantrist. They could be guild chaplains, or simply members of the parochial staff who were neither 'parish priest' nor 'curate' nor chief assistant. 'Chantrist' describes a chaplain charged with performing the duties and obligations imposed by the terms of a chantry foundation, but (in this thesis) also of the occupant of a chantry of limited duration.

But the terminology is confusing, for in the sixteenth century even beneficed vicars were frequently called ‘curate’, in the strict sense that they had the cure of souls. To this day, in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer ‘Form and Manner of Making of Deacons’, the bishop instructs the new deacon ‘to intimate...names...unto the Curate’, meaning the incumbent. Its use is anachronistic today when ‘the curate’ is always an assistant and ‘the parish priest’ the beneficed incumbent. Rectors were required to hire a substitute to perform all the pastoral functions in parishes where

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34. Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, p. 2; for discussion on 'labels' see P. Lake and M. Questier, *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. xiii-xix.

they had cure of souls but were themselves non-resident. Their assistants were often styled 'parish priest' and resided in the manse (that is, the benefice house), but entitlement to the rectorial tithes remained the legal property of the rector. It was common for non-resident incumbents to re-imburse their deputies only a fraction of the total benefice income. The context often determines the sense in which it was being used.

A prebendary was the canon of a cathedral drawing an income from the profits of a 'prebend', or estate belonging to a secular (that is, non-monastic) cathedral chapter. In Coventry archdeaconry there were six prebendal churches whose clergy were presented by the appropriate prebendaries of Lichfield cathedral . Some of these churches were vicarages whose incumbents were either collated (as at Bishop's Tachbrook) or instituted (as at Bishop's Itchington), while in others the prebendaries merely appointed wage-earning chaplains.

Admissions to benefices were (and are still) governed by parochial status. For example, the bishop institutes to a vacant rectory or vicarage when a candidate is presented to him by the patron of that living, who has to demonstrate by what right the title is held. If the bishop is himself the patron, then he is said to collate a candidate to the living. The institution or collation admits an incumbent to the spiritual cure of souls within his new parish and makes him responsible for maintaining a priestly presence there to celebrate all the sacraments and occasional services.

After the institution or collation of an incumbent, the bishop issued a mandate to the archdeacon authorising him to induct, that is, physically to grasp the new incumbent's hand and install him in his parish church. To announce to his parishioners that he had taken possession of the temporal fruits of the benefice the incumbent then tolled a bell. As legal transactions involving the transfer of real property, institutions and inductions were supposed to be entered in the bishops' registers, but (as will become clear) this was not always done, for reasons that are sometimes difficult to understand.

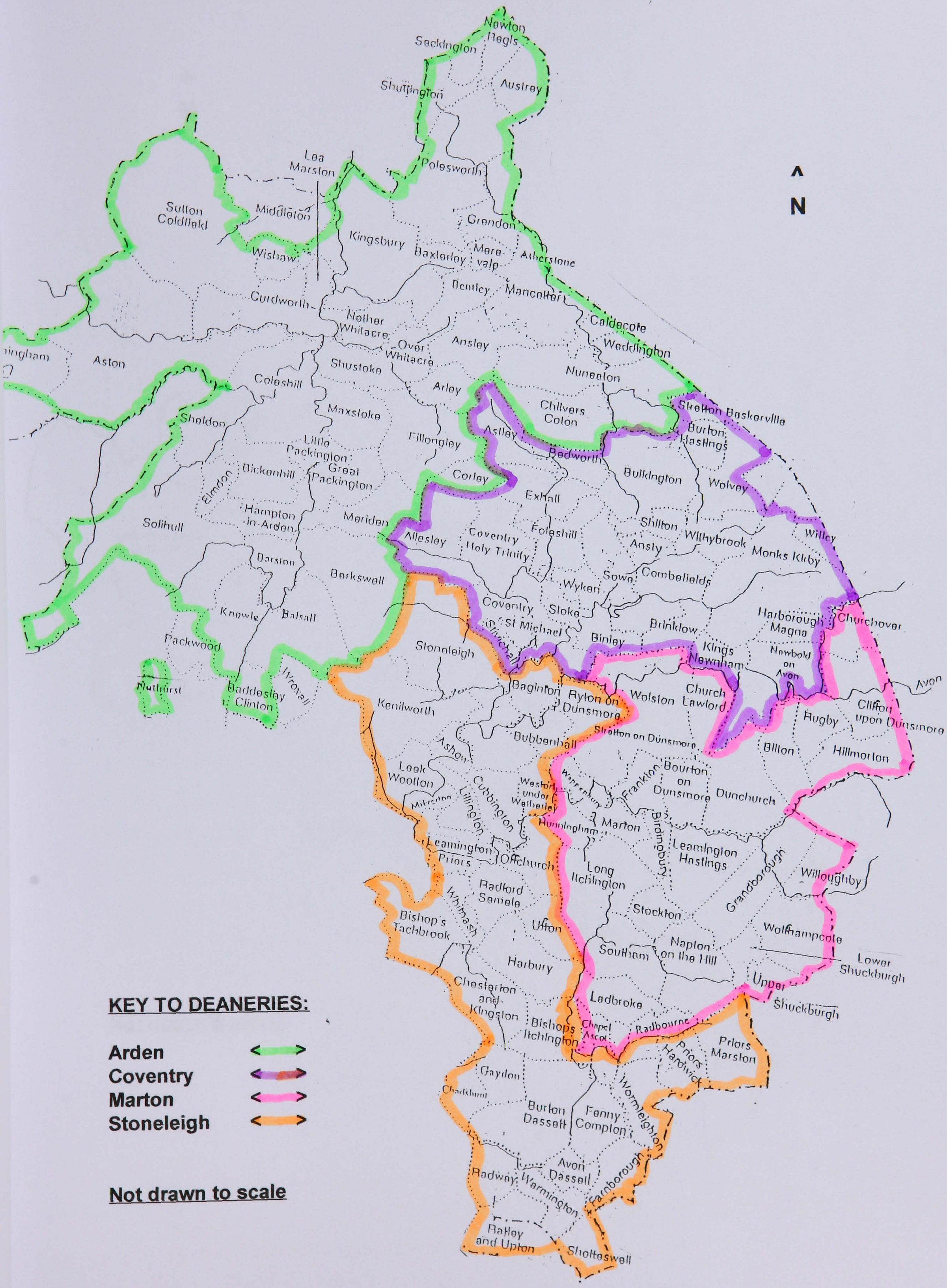
In certain parishes the incumbent was neither instituted nor collated, but was still responsible for the cure of souls. These were parishes, usually appropriated to monastic houses, where a perpetual vicarage was never formally ordained, and the clergy were appointed at will by the appropriator. Other parishes were private donatives, where the owner of the advowson was responsible for appointing and remunerating the incumbent.

Unless those presented to prebendal parishes held the freehold (as at Bishop's Itchington and Bishop's Tachbrook) they were usually regarded as stipendiaries appointed at will by the prebend and did not merit an entry in the bishop's register.

Instead, it was usual to enter their appointments in the Lichfield cathedral Chapter act book, although few of the prebendal appointments in Coventry archdeaconry were registered in the sixteenth century.

Fig. 1

Parishes of Coventry Archdeaconry in the sixteenth century



KEY TO DEANERIES:

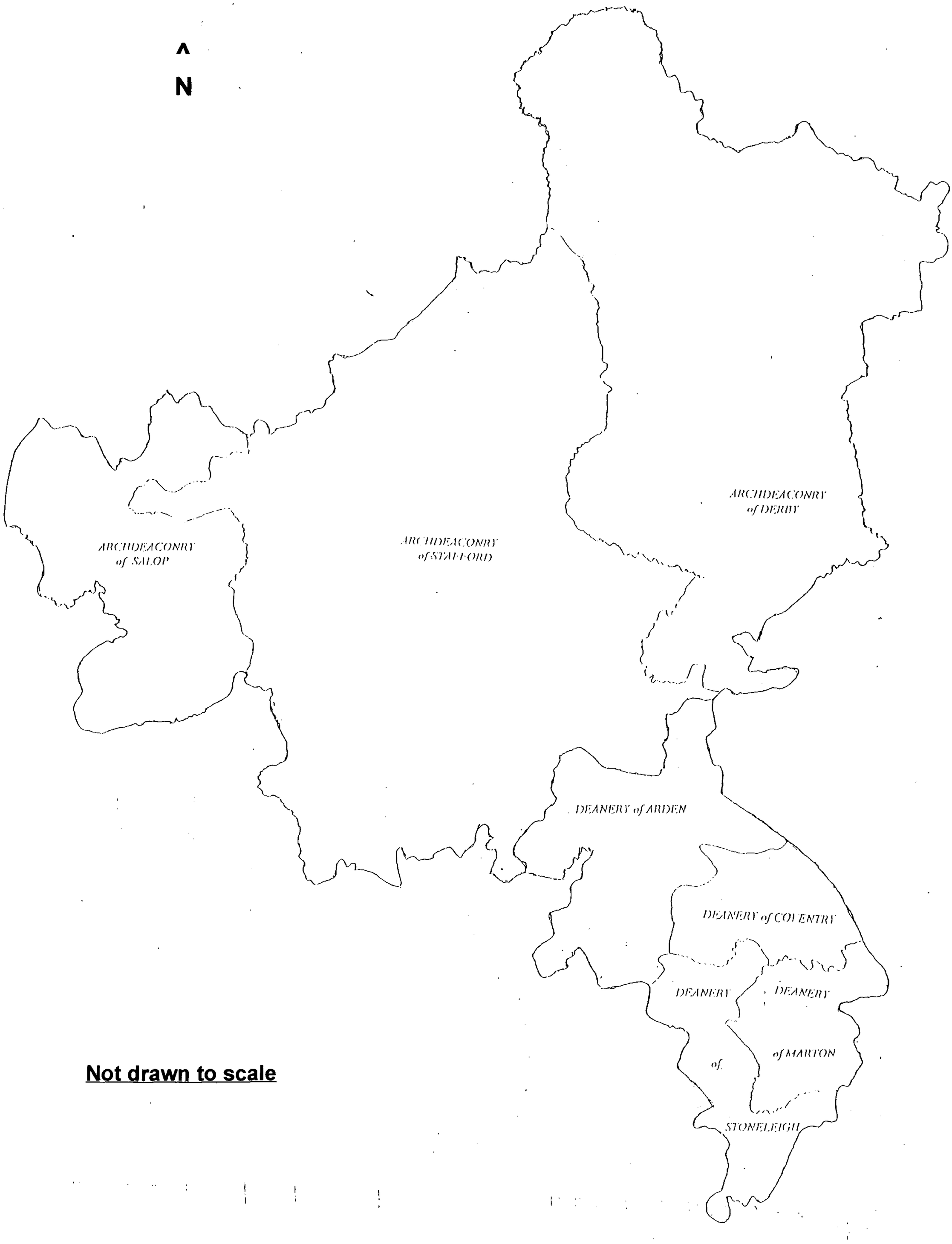
- **Arden**
- **Coventry**
- **Marton**
- **Stoneleigh**

Not drawn to scale

Fig. 2

Archdeaconries of the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in 1535

Source: *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 3



Not drawn to scale

CHAPTER 2

THE SETTING

Introduction

Archdeaconries have distinguishing features determined by their physical environment, their personnel and their history. This study of a single archidiaconal jurisdiction contributes to the debate on the state of the parish ministry in the sixteenth century because it focuses on uniquely local characteristics too manifold, variant and unrepresentative for research on a diocesan scale to comprehend. Some of the most important aspects affecting the development of Coventry archdeaconry will be briefly described as an introductory background to the parochial setting.

This chapter pursues changes for better or for worse within three ecclesiastical settings which dominated the *modus operandi* of parochial clergy during the sixteenth century. The first is the disciplinary and pastoral outreach of the diocesan or his archdeacon, under whose supervision the parochial clergy exercised their ministry. Second, the deanery, where at regular intervals clergy from several neighbouring parishes met with their peers to share mutual concerns and experiences in a supportive, relatively non-threatening environment, but where they were exposed to the benign or sometimes disturbing consequences of collective colloquy. Lastly, the parishes, whose incumbents were described by Christopher Harper-Bill as 'the only effective representatives of the Universal Church', focal figures who enjoyed the benefit of freehold and, within circumscribed limits, possessed a certain autonomy.[1] These settings occasionally overlapped, but each stamped its unique if variable impress upon the parochial clergy, jostling to produce an irregular range of responses even within individual dioceses.

Clearly, the pastoral priorities of rural parishioners differed from those in a market town or a bustling city centre, and at least some variations will be exposed.

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1. C. Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England 1400-1530* (London, 1989), p. 44. On the Universal Church, the 1549 Prayer Book and all its subsequent revisions contain the Catholic creeds - Athanasian, Apostles' and Nicene - and refer frequently to the Church of England as Catholic. In the Order for Holy Communion, the prayer for the 'whole state of Christ's Church' includes the petition that God will 'inspire continually the universal Church'.

Reference will be made to the urban/rural divide *vis-a-vis* demographic fluctuations which influenced pastoral ministry in the archdeaconry. Coventry's cosmopolitan ambience, for example, had favoured Lollard discontent there which gave way to an enthusiastic relish for protestant reform.[2] But the main thrust of this study is essentially social and administrative. It is conceded, however, that religious permutations impinged upon the parochial ministry and in their wake created unprecedented situations which require *ad hoc* explanatory comment.

Attention shifts from parishes and their topographical disposition to personnel. Since command structures varied little from one diocese to another, episcopal influence will be the focus rather than the agents who executed orders. The archdeacon's role will be examined more thoroughly, however, for he was the pivotal authority within his jurisdiction. Rural deans and suffragan bishops played a comparatively minor part in the drama unfolding on the ecclesiastical stage in the sixteenth century and require only passing attention. Each will be examined to determine the effects of the break with Rome upon the parochial clergy.

As for the principal subjects of this study, the parochial clergy, the fundamental characteristics of their ministerial organisation and pastoral outreach require adroit analysis. The importance of assistant clergy and chantrists and their place within the parochial system will be examined, the question of clerical equality raised and evidence of 'clerical community' within the archdeaconry explored.

Adjustments were made to the administration of holy orders during the Reformation period, and monastic grants of ordination titles were abolished at the Dissolution. These were all part of every aspiring cleric's experience, so the effects of these changes will be analysed, and the ascending stages of holy orders re-examined, with particular reference to their practical application in the parishes. Although the relevance of these topics is not immediately obvious, they are discussed because a substantial argument is mounted here which, if proved, could illuminate problems inherent in the vast numbers ordained and the titles they served. These matters therefore, being general, will precede the principal subjects of this chapter but their significance will be clear.

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2. For further reading on this topic see: J. Fines, 'Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1511-12', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (1963), pp. 160-74; J.A.F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 95-116; M. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry 1485-1558', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (1985), Chapter 8; S. McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities, 1420-1530* (Philadelphia, 1995), pp. 22-46; S. McSheffery and N. Tanner, *Lollards of Coventry, 1486-1522* (forthcoming).

2.1. Holy Orders

When a man received orders by the imposition of a bishop's hands with prayer, he was admitted into a fraternity whose members were found in every country of the Latin West. It is important to understand the progressive steps in the ordination cycle, for a significant argument of this thesis hinges on the employment of men before the lower orders were abolished.

Every person ordained in sixteenth-century England was a male, admitted to orders in an ascending series of ministerial competence. The four minor orders, doorkeeper, lector, exorcist and acolyte, of which in favourable circumstances two could be received in a single day, had fallen into disuse long before the break with Rome.[3] None bound a man to a clerical career, leaving him free to resume his secular employment without penalty. The four major orders, subdeacon, deacon, priest and bishop, were considered indelible, however, their recipients irrevocably pledged to lifelong celibacy.

It seems perverse to imagine that incumbents would engage assistants whose competence severely circumscribed their usefulness, on which basis it is argued here that those admitted to the inferior orders were generally unemployable as parochial clergy. If, as Christopher Haigh asserted, there was 'no formal preparation for the priesthood' and the newly-ordained received 'liturgical training by assisting at a parish altar, and their pastoral skills by observation', then these men are more likely to have pursued secular occupations, assisting in parish worship under the supervision of their incumbents.[4] This resonates more with A.K. McHardy's view, and it would have made good sense, enabling clergy in lesser orders to earn a living without becoming a burden on Church finances, meanwhile receiving rudimentary training in ministerial skills.[5]

By extension, this answers Margaret Bowker's implicit question (below, p. 82) namely, how could candidates, mostly young men unlikely to own any capital, bear the expense of ordination themselves? By remaining in secular employment whilst in minor orders, they would have saved sufficient out of their wages to defray those expenses. Parishioners were accustomed to seeing their incumbents toiling on the

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3. Minor orders were retained in the universities, however, to provide benefit of clergy: A.L. Moore, *Lectures and Papers on the History of the Reformation in England and on the Continent* (London, 1890), pp. 192-3.

4. C. Haigh, 'The priests and their people', in C. Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), p. 42.

5. A.K. McHardy, 'Careers and disappointments in the late-medieval Church: some English evidence', in W.J. Sheils and D. Wood, eds, *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay* (Oxford, 1989), p. 127.

glebe, so the sight of probationary clergy engaged in secular activities is unlikely to have caused offence to their own families and neighbours.

The diaconate was the earliest stage at which a man could exercise a useful full-time ministry as a parochial assistant. Only then would an incumbent feel disposed to pay him a modest wage. The age at which a man could be made deacon fluctuated. The first English Prayer Book of 1549 stipulated that he should be at least twenty-one years of age, raised to twenty-three years in the 1662 Prayer Book. Deacons were qualified to baptise and perform most clerical duties, but they could neither officiate at a marriage nor hear confessions. They were not authorised to celebrate Mass, or the Holy Communion, although their liturgical assistance was required. Deacons entering the parochial ministry normally did so as assistants or stipendiaries, which they remained even after priesting until they acquired a benefice. Present-day candidates are usually priested twelve months after being made deacon, but in the sixteenth century the interval was variable. The minimum age for a man to be ordained priest was eventually fixed at twenty-four years in 1549.[6]

Sometimes the successive orders are thought of as 'ranks', in the same way that a corporal is promoted to sergeant, but there are subtle nuances. A diocesan bishop, for example, has supreme spiritual jurisdiction and authority within his diocese, while a suffragan bishop enjoys equality of orders yet no corresponding *magisterium*. A sixteenth-century suffragan was often a monk or beneficed incumbent of quite humble status, even inferior to the diocesan's non-episcopal executive officers. His authority pertained to divine grace, mediated through the sacramental rites (such as ordinations) and ceremonies (such as consecrating churches) which, by virtue of his episcopal status, he alone was qualified to perform on behalf of the diocesan.

In the order of grace, priests were inferior to bishops. Ordination invested them with various powers, for example, to celebrate the Mass, or Holy Communion, and to pronounce forgiveness of sins within the context of sacramental confession. Apart from the gradation of orders, there was a different order of rank. This appertained to administrative and disciplinary aspects of ministerial jurisdiction, quite separate from the powers emanating from grace. Within the hierarchy, for example, an archdeacon was superior to an incumbent who yet shared equality with him as a priest, while an incumbent was superior to his priestly parochial assistants by virtue of his cure of souls.

After papal authority was abolished in England, an Act of 1535 ordered the destruction of old books of ecclesiastical offices including the Ordinal. Yet unlike

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6. E.C.S. Gibson, *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI* (London, 1910, 1960 rp), pp. 292, 438.

reformed churches on the continent, the English Church retained episcopal government. In the preface to its first post-Reformation Ordinal in 1550 it was affirmed that 'from the Apostles' time there hath been...Bishops, Priests, and Deacons' and that 'these orders should be continued, and reverently used, and esteemed, in this Church of England'.[7]

In this context, that which Carleton described as the 'excision of the minor orders, the subdiaconate, and the conferring of the first tonsure from the Edwardian Ordinals', must be evaluated according to its effect upon the parochial ministry.[8] If, as argued above, it was financially and practically inexpedient for incumbents to employ men whose ministerial usefulness was so minimal as to make them little more than liturgical spectators, then the abolition of minor orders was a positive reform. Moreover, it eliminated candidates' financial and logistical problems consequent upon the requirement for them to present themselves on up to four separate occasions for admission to the inferior orders.[9] The administrative burden on diocesan registries to produce requisite documentation was also significantly reduced. As recently as 1972 the Roman Catholic Church also abolished minor orders while similarly retaining the orders of bishop, priest and deacon.

Perhaps historians have been beguiled into believing that as acolytes and subdeacons were ordained in the sixteenth century they became immediately available for employment. This may well account for references to intense competition for benefices, encouraging the notion that because there were many fewer benefices than men ordained, therefore there must have been widespread unemployment among clergy in the inferior orders. This suggests a re-thinking of attitudes respecting the employment of men whose very number has been problematic.

2.2. Significance of Titles

As a term describing the provision of clerical stipends, *titulus* can be traced back to third-century Rome.[10] Even in the sixteenth-century, every candidate for holy orders (the priesthood, diaconate and, before it was abolished, the subdiaconate) was bound to produce evidence that he had been offered a job (a 'title') and could

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7. P.L. Hughes and J.F. Larkin, eds, *Tudor Royal Proclamations Volume I The Early Tudors (1485-1553)* (London, 1964), pp. 229-32.
8. K.W.T. Carleton, 'Episcopal office in the English Church, 1520-1559', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1995), p. 128.
9. T.N. Cooper, 'Secular clergy in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the early sixteenth century', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham (1992), p. 13.
10. F.L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London, 1957), pp. 1362-3.

therefore support himself financially. Swanson noted that there was 'no national ecclesiastical legislation declaring the minimum amount needed for a title'.[11] In any case, payment would have been guaranteed only for as long as the candidate 'served his title' and ceased when he quit his first appointment to take another. To this very day Canon C5 requires that every candidate for full-time ordained ministry in the Church of England secures a title.[12]

Before the Dissolution most candidates acquired a title from a monastic house. Perhaps the upsurge of monastic titles in the fourteenth century was a consequence of the Gregorian reform whereby the 'hierarchy reassumed control over parochial religion'.[13] Were they an episcopal remedy to thwart the potential abuse of holy orders? It may be no coincidence that even modest households sometimes employed private chaplains amenable to being deployed in a secondary, secular, capacity. Their dual role made them susceptible to manipulation to an extent which may have compromised not only their own spiritual authority but, by extension, that of the local parochial clergy. Since many medieval ordinands gave patrimony as their title, did some take orders to secure family or personal advantages? That well-to-do families frequently engaged chaplains of low social status to serve their private oratories might explain why so many were ordained to non-ecclesiastical titles: after Mass, they would be at their masters' disposal to undertake additional household duties.[14] Similarly, lesser householders with sufficient resources may have taken advantage of ecclesiastical laxity to enhance their status. By presenting a working son for ordination they acquired privileges, such as a private daily Mass. This probably explains why medieval bishops' registers contain such a phenomenal number of licences granted for private oratories.

Evidence supporting this argument is furnished in a will dated 26 May 1512. Bequeathing 6s. 8d. towards a 'certain Rood' in Mancetter church, Hugh Conghulton also left seven marks to William Knolles for two years' service praying for his soul and all Christian souls. Knolles was to 'have his exhibition till he be made priest and to sing in the parish church of Mancetter'. He was already in orders, having been made subdeacon on 6 March. Significantly, when Knolles was made deacon on 2

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11. R.N. Swanson, 'Titles to orders in medieval English episcopal registers', in H. Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore, eds, *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R.H.C. Davies* (London, 1985), p. 244.
12. Anon, *The Canons of the Church of England: Canons Ecclesiastical Promulged by the Convocations of Canterbury and York in 1964 and 1969* (London, 1969), p. 33.
13. B. Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c.1400-1560* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 15.
14. *HMC Middleton MSS*, pp. 314-6, where Robert Parrot, chaplain to the Willoughby family at Middleton, was also employed as 'receiver'.

June and priested on 18 September 1512, the title he gave was not his patron, Conghulton, but Merevale Abbey.[15]

It was not usual for a cleric to be ordained to the title of a benefice, but exceptions were made for university graduates and men of substance who at least were considered gentry. Thomas Adams, priested on 7 March 1506, giving his title as Birdingbury rectory, was doubtless that Thomas Adams who, when ordained subdeacon and deacon the previous year, was granted a title by Bordesley Abbey, Worcestershire. He was later beneficed as vicar of Feckenham, Worcestershire, where he resided and, in 1539, died. His will contains a puzzling reference to Nuneaton (*Eyton*), to which church he bequeathed 6s. 8d., and a further £5 'for a priest to sing' there for twelve months for his parents' souls. The Bordesley title is difficult to explain if Adams served briefly at Nuneaton, of which he may have been a native, but it is clear that he acquired Birdingbury (patron Sir Robert Throgmorton of Coughton) between receiving orders as deacon in September 1505 and his priesting in March 1506.[16]

Lichfield ordination registers carefully recorded the granting of titles, but failed to divulge either the candidates' home parishes or their first parochial appointments. Many Lincoln ordinands traced by Bowker received a title from the monastery nearest to their home, but of mid-fifteenth-century Coventry and Lichfield Bates argued that 'it is not true that the religious house nearest to the ordinand's home was invariably his sponsor'.[17] Tentative findings only hesitantly suggest that most natives of Coventry archdeaconry received a title from a local house. There is no difficulty tracing the ordination of many clergy who served in Coventry archdeaconry, but there is nearly always a lacuna between their priesting and first known appointment. This suggests that contractual documents between incumbents and their staff were so numerous that when they expired they were periodically purged from parish archives.

The most exhaustive research into titles in Coventry and Lichfield was undertaken by Tim Cooper, who found that there was no correlation between the granting of titles and presentations to benefices, nor was it suggestive of 'the comparative wealth of institutions'. In the absence of evidence that monastic titles 'represented a real guarantee of financial support', Cooper was persuaded that they were indicative

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15. TNA: PRO PROB 11, 25 Fetiplace, f. 197v; LJRO, B/A/1/14ii, unfol.

16. LJRO, B/A/1/14ii, unfol.; WRO, File II no. 24. D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England Volume III The Tudor Age* (repr. Cambridge, 1961), pp. 428-30. Adams was succeeded at Feckenham by John Feckenham, between 1545-1554 rector of Solihull, where his patron was Sir Robert Throgmorton's son, George.

17. M. Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln 1495-1520* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 61; J.C. Bates, 'The episcopate of William Bothe, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield 1447-1452 with an edition of his register', unpubl. M.Phil. thesis, University of Nottingham (1981), p. 57.

'of an investigative system already undertaken by the time the candidate presented himself for orders'.[18]

Irrefutable evidence being absent, it is difficult, as Swanson commented, to present more than 'an hypothesis, which still needs considerable refinement [since] whether the "monastic" titles can be proved to have had any reality is doubtful'. But his hypothesis that some monasteries acted as investigative agencies for the bishops by scrutinising personal histories and financial assets of men to whom they granted titles lacks credibility.[19] Profession of vows was a dubious qualification for such an intrusive assignment and inmates of the smaller monasteries were particularly unlikely to possess the necessary competence.

It is speculated here that monastic houses could not have accommodated cohorts of unemployable acolytes and subdeacons to whom they had granted titles. Nor can the grant of a monastic title have been a kind of financial pledge. Impecunious monasteries bestowed the majority of titles, yet had little capacity for remunerating those they so favoured. That is why it is contended here that the grant of a monastic title was not a financial guarantee. Although monasteries granted titles, their active role in preparing men for ordination is hard to perceive. In a practical sense, the newly-ordained only entered upon his 'title' when he took his first job and began to earn a wage. It would have made better sense for titles to be granted by the incumbents of parishes where the newly-ordained served, were accommodated, and were paid.

Several north Warwickshire monasteries issued titles.[20] These may well have been the venues where the majority of Coventry archdeaconry candidates assembled to be examined before having the order of subdeacon conferred upon them. Doubtless the examiners had a set routine for such engagements within their area.[21] Perhaps, therefore, the monastic title was a convenient label indicating the monastery where ordinands had been examined and approved by the archdeacon or his representatives. There, too, candidates for the diaconate may have received intimations of likely vacancies to pursue. Since religious houses attracted support from substantial members of the community, including patrons of livings, their heads

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18. Cooper, 'Secular clergy', pp. 23-37.
19. Swanson, 'Titles to orders', p. 243.
20. In the sixteenth century, eleven houses in Coventry archdeaconry issued titles to secular clergy: Alvecote, Arbury, Combe, Coventry St Anne (Charterhouse), Coventry St John Bablake, Kenilworth, Maxstoke, Merevale, Nuneaton, Polesworth and Stoneleigh.
21. P. Heath, *Bishop Geoffrey Blythe's Visitations c.1515-1525*, SHC, 4th ser. 7 (Oxford, 1973), p. lxiii. T. Cooper, *The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 17, confirms that all the candidates named in Blythe's monastic visitations were acolytes being examined prior to becoming subdeacons.

would have been privy to intelligence about benefices, which could be shared to their mutual advantage.

The abrupt termination of monastic titles at the Dissolution coincided with a sharp fall in the number of ordinands. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that the flow of ordinands in Coventry and Lichfield had already been declining during the first two decades of the sixteenth century. Crucially, however, the diocesan archives at Lichfield contain no surviving ordination registers between 1532-1623. Within the local context, therefore, the cessation of all records relating to the granting of titles to ordination candidates makes Swanson's reference to 'a reversion to the old forms of non-monastic titles' impossible to test. Some Lincoln ordinands were shown by Bowker to have been granted titles by 'laymen who had received monastic lands...as well as titles derived from the dissolved religious houses now in the hands of the court of augmentations'. Not only were the new owners of monastic lands 'more scrupulous and careful in their grant of titles', but non-residents were often difficult to locate.[22]

Whether by the mere purchase of monastic property laymen acquired the authority to grant titles to ordinands seems highly questionable. They would hardly have welcomed hordes of aspirant title-seekers at their front door. Cure of souls lay absolutely and inalienably with the beneficed incumbent, who alone possessed the freehold entitlement to delegate sacramental and ministerial duties to his assistant clergy. If parishioners sponsored a parochial assistant then they would expect some part in the selection process, but in theory they could not prevent the incumbent choosing his own man. For the remainder of the sixteenth century, however, the absence of ordination registers frustrates any attempt to determine how the system of granting titles evolved in Coventry archdeaconry in the aftermath of the Dissolution.

2.3. The archdeaconry[23]

A small area, its four deaneries are remarkably disparate, containing several distinctive regions for Warwickshire was, as Christine Carpenter observed, 'a wholly artificial creation, consisting of a number of areas, each of them facing outwards to

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22. Swanson, 'Titles to orders', p. 244; Bowker, 'Henrician Reformation and the parish clergy', p. 35; see also her reasoned discussion on titles in Bowker, *Secular Clergy*, pp. 61-4.

23. For the natural features of the study area see especially A.W. McPherson, 'Warwickshire', in L.D. Stamp, ed., *The Land of Britain, The Report of The Land Utilisation Survey of Britain* (London, 1946), pp. 655-842, and G.T. Warwick, 'Relief and physiographic regions', pp. 3-14 and *idem*, 'Geomorphology', pp. 37-46; L.J. Wills, 'Geology', pp. 15-36; and E.S. Twyman, 'Soils', pp. 55-64, all in R.H. Kinvig, J.G. Smith and M.J. Wise, eds, *Birmingham and its Regional Setting: A Scientific Survey* (Birmingham, 1950).

the neighbouring county'.[24] Coventry deanery contained the huge regional capital; Arden, well-wooded, had large undeveloped tracts interspersed with localised pockets of industrial expansion; Marton possessed abundant heathland; Stoneleigh's foot stood atop Edge Hill, its calf forest-entwined.

Warwickshire's ecclesiastical dichotomy in the Middle Ages requires an explanation. That Coventry's religious affiliations were always bound up with Lichfield and the north-west (Mercian territory) rather than with Worcester and the south-west (Hwiccian territory) cannot be doubted, even though towards the end of the eleventh century Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester, was delegated temporarily to oversee the diocese of Lichfield.[25] By tracing the political boundaries it is clear that there was some correlation between them and the diocesan boundary which separated Coventry and Lichfield from its western neighbour. By the last quarter of the seventh century the ecclesiastical parishes within the Hwiccian territory - the region that eventually evolved into the west Warwickshire hundreds of Barlichway and Kington - had been annexed to the Anglo-Saxon diocese of Worcester. The partition reflected therefore both the political and ecclesiastical frontiers, the medieval boundary separating the two dioceses approximating to that which once separated the ancient kingdoms of the Hwicce and the Mercians.[26]

A.H. Thompson demonstrated that the archidiaconal system was founded in the main upon county divisions. For example, the counties of Bedford, Buckingham, Leicester, and Oxford, all of which lay within the diocese of Lincoln, each had its own archdeacon. The close relationship between boundaries of the medieval shire and those of the archdeaconry betray a common origin, even if they do not always coincide.[27] Coventry was the most southerly of the five medieval archdeaconries within Coventry and Lichfield (Fig. 2 omits Chester archdeaconry, detached in 1541). The other four, Derby, Stafford, Chester and part of Shropshire (the rest was in Hereford diocese), more or less followed their respective county boundaries.

For administrative purposes, Coventry archdeaconry was sub-divided into four deaneries. Each came under the supervision of a rural dean, who co-ordinated certain specific activities and acted as an intermediary between the bishop and the

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24. C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 25.
25. R.R. Darlington, *Vita Wulfstani of William of Malmesbury*, Camden Society 3rd ser. 40 (1928), pp. xxv, xxvi.
26. For a broad history of the changing boundaries of the diocese see J.C. Cox, 'Ecclesiastical history', in W. Page, ed., *VCH Warwickshire*, 2 (1908), pp. 1-4; F.R. Thorn, 'Hundreds and wapentakes', in A. Williams and R.W.H. Erskine, eds, *The Warwickshire Domesday* (London, 1991), pp. 22-3.
27. Thompson, *English Clergy and their Organization*, p. 64; P.T. Mitchell-Fox, 'The character and development of territorial organization in the Midlands in the early Middle Ages' (400-1086), unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham (1995), p. 69.

parish. Between them, the deaneries contained an assorted number of parishes which varied enormously in size, population and value. There was a distinct correlation between the four medieval deaneries and the hundredal divisions of the Anglo-Saxon period. In Domesday Warwickshire, there were four hundreds in the north-east of the county, Bomelau, Coleshill, Marton and Stoneleigh.

There are three curious anomalies, however, which suggest that diocesan boundaries may have been disputed at a very early stage of their development. First, there was a fifth hundred, Honesberie, which contained a cluster of ten parishes on Edge Hill bordering Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire.[28] During the thirteenth century they were absorbed within the hundred of Kington (or Kineton) in Worcester diocese, notwithstanding that Honesberie lay in Coventry and Lichfield under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the archdeacon of Coventry. Sixteenth-century Lichfield archives include all ten parishes in Stoneleigh deanery.[29]

Secondly, Bishop's Tachbrook, Chesterton, Chadshunt and Gaydon, all four of them Stoneleigh deanery ecclesiastical units contiguous with the diocesan border, lay in a completely different Domesday hundred, that of Tremelau, which like Honesberie was also absorbed within the hundred of Kington. Thirdly, and unusually, therefore, while the chapelries of Chadshunt and Gaydon were for the purposes of civil administration separated from their mother church of Bishop's Itchington, they all lay within Stoneleigh deanery.[30]

'It is remarkable', declared Della Hooke, 'how ecclesiastical divisions often seem to reflect some earlier arrangement' She linked this phenomenon to estate ownership which, 'whether it was lay or ecclesiastical, formed the most influential factor in determining areas of civil government'. So while from about the tenth century the civil horizons of all those settlements named faced westwards, it is probable that for pastoral oversight their inhabitants had turned northwards since the days of St Chad of Lichfield in the seventh century.[31]

The archdeacon of Coventry's territorial jurisdiction measured approximately forty-two miles from King's Newton in the north to Shotteswell in the south, and about thirty-seven miles on a sloping axis from Birmingham in the north-west to Priors Marston in the south-east. Inhospitable primeval landscape had deterred early settlement in the largest and most northerly deanery, Arden, hence its low recorded

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28. They were: Avon Dassett, Burton Dassett, Farnborough, Fenny Compton, Priors Hardwick, Radway, Ratley, Shotteswell, Warmington and Wormleighton.
29. B. Walker, 'The hundreds of Warwickshire', *TBAS* 31 (1905), pp. 22-46.
30. *VCH Warwickshire*, 5, p. 1; P.J.G. Upton, 'Change and decay: the Warwickshire manors of the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield from the late thirteenth to the late sixteenth centuries', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester (2002), Chapter Two, *passim*.
31. D. Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape: The Kingdom of the Hwicce* (Manchester, 1985), pp. 87, 96, 105-6.

population in 1086 compared with the other three deaneries. It was roughly coterminous with the Domesday hundred of Coleshill, subsequently re-named Hemlingford. Although for ecclesiastical purposes Arley was habitually included in Arden deanery, in reality it was a detached member of Long Itchington, in Marton hundred, with which it had been associated since at least 1001.[32]

Coventry deanery was a buffer separating the well-wooded Arden in the north from the heathlands of Marton in the south. Nestling in a valley at the south-west corner of the deanery, the very heart of the archdeaconry was the cathedral city itself. Vast by English medieval criteria, it straddled two major arterial routes and enjoyed substantial commercial links with other regions and the continent. Outside the city walls the focus of life in the deanery's parishes was predominantly agricultural.

Occupying the south-eastern sector of the county, the lozenge-shaped Marton deanery had the eponymous village as its focal centre. Distinctive characteristics included Dunsmore Heath in the north and the 'wolds' in the south.[33] It has been suggested by Della Hooke that a group of parishes in Marton deanery once formed part of a discrete estate, centred upon Dunsmore Heath, which later fragmented. The deanery also contained a number of deserted or shrunken settlements with ruined or abandoned churches. By 1586, for example, Radbourne had neither church nor people. The effects of demographic evolution on the parochial clergy will be examined in Chapter 3.[34] Taking its name from an extensive and well-wooded parish, Stoneleigh deanery comprised a narrow strip of land resembling the shape of a wellington boot, extending as far south as the Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire borders.

Somewhat anomalously, two Hemlingford hundred parishes lay outside the archdeacon of Coventry's jurisdiction: Edgbaston, a detached chapelry of the Staffordshire parish of Harborne, and Middleton, appropriated to Tamworth College, Staffordshire. Both came under Stafford archdeaconry and are thus excluded from this study. Honiley and Packwood are similarly omitted. Notwithstanding its status as a rectory, Honiley appears to have been the poorest benefice in the whole

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32. *VCH Warwickshire*, 6, p. 8.
33. The concept of the Warwickshire wolds has recently been revived - see H.S.A. Fox, 'The people of the wolds in English settlement history', in M. Aston, D. Austin and C. Dyer, eds, *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England: Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 79-101; see also Upton, 'Warwickshire manors', Chapter Two.
34. D. Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscapes of the West Midlands: The Charter Evidence* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 112-3; A. Peel, ed., *The Seconde Parte of a Register* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1915), 2, p. 174; L. Toulmin Smith, ed., *The Itinerary of John Leland* (5 vols, London, 1907-10), 5, p. 109. For a discussion of desertion see C.J. Bond, 'Deserted medieval villages in Warwickshire and Worcestershire', in T.R. Slater and P.J. Jarvis, eds, *Field and Forest An Historical Geography of Warwickshire and Worcestershire*, (Norwich, 1982), pp. 147-71.

archdeaconry, for it was worth only one mark in 1291. Even in 1535 its income was only £1 13s. 4d., too little to support a resident priest, so the parish was served by a friar from Warwick. After the Dissolution, Honiley taxpayers themselves hired the services of a priest, whom they were paying £5 in 1568. Visitation records mention Honiley only twice, and only one sixteenth-century institution is recorded there.[35] Other references are rare, begging the reluctant decision to rule this parish out. Packwood is disregarded for the very cogent reason that it was a detached outpost of Wasperton, a Warwickshire parish in Worcester diocese.[36]

Cartographic evidence, and observations by sixteenth-century travellers such as John Leland, illuminate the mental image of the parochial environments within which the parochial clergy ministered.[37] Contemporary maps depict the study area as the central hub of England's medieval transport system, attributable in part to Coventry's regional primacy and industrial dynamism. Three Roman roads passed through Coventry archdeaconry: Watling Street in the east, Rykneld Street in the west, and the Fosse Way which cut a diagonal course through the centre from south-west to north-east. Saltways from Droitwich passed through the archdeaconry as did cattle droving tracks from Wales (of which 'Welsh Road' at Southam is an example).

Apart from routes branching out from Coventry towards all the major towns of Warwickshire and well beyond the county boundary, two major arteries passed through the medieval city. These contributed significantly towards the development of its overseas trade, which passed through ports as far separated as Boston, Bristol, Chester and Southampton. From Birmingham, too, a network of roads guaranteed its rise as a manufacturing centre, particularly its position on the Rykneld Street. Market towns - Atherstone, Nuneaton, Solihull, for example - were similarly at the core of a lacework of roads from their hinterlands. Indeed, Coleshill, Dunchurch and Southam straddled major highways, and not even the remotest of villages lay any distance from a major road.[38]

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35. G. Vanderzee, *Nonarum Inquisitiones in Curia Scaccarii. Temp. Regis Edwardi III* (London, 1807), p. 448; *VE*, 3, p. 81; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 2, p. 644; *VCH Warwickshire*, 3, p. 123; LJRO, B/V/1/7; p. 35r; B/V/1/9, p. 13r; B/A/1/15, f. 45r.

36. J.J. Belton, *The Story of Packwood, Warwickshire, From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (n.p., 1951), pp. 27-8. Curiously, Packwood clergy appear thrice in visitation records and there are tenuous links with Coventry and Lichfield. For instance, for the 1533 clerical subsidy Thomas Smith was assessed with Arden deanery clergy, and *VE* included Packwood under Arden deanery. Stipendiary ministers there included Hugh Bate, who in 1559 subscribed to the royal supremacy at Coventry: LPL, *Cart. Misc.* xiii no. 58, f. 16r.

37. Christopher Saxton, *Warwickshire* 1576; John Speed, *Warwickshire* 1610; Toulmin Smith, *Itinerary of John Leland*, 5.

38. R.A. Pelham, 'The growth of settlement and industry c.1100-c.1700', in R.H. Kinvig, J.G. Smith and M.J. Wise, eds, *Birmingham and its Regional Setting: A Scientific Survey* (Birmingham, 1950), pp. 147-52; D. Moore, *The Roads of Solihull* (Solihull, 1987), unpag.

Mobility within Coventry archdeaconry was easier than in Derbyshire, the Staffordshire moors or parts of the diocese where road communications were less well developed, so when visitations were called they were not exclusively held at deanery 'capitals'. For example, in October 1560 the archiepiscopal visitation of Marton deanery was held at Dunchurch and in October 1579 Bishop Overton even held his visitation of Coventry deanery at Kenilworth. Ease of communication was doubtless a compelling advantage for like-minded clergy convening meetings for mutual support. It is noticeable that all the Coventry archdeaconry clergy who, with Thomas Cartwright of Warwick, were implicated in the quest to abolish the episcopacy and establish presbyterianism, came from parishes on, or adjacent to, major roads.[39]

2.4. The Parish

The smallest territorial unit of ecclesiastical administration was the parish, the setting within which the parochial clergy exercised their ministry. Political, doctrinal and liturgical imperatives were there refined and subtly adjusted wherever they collided with practical considerations which drew pragmatic responses from the clergy. As the individual arenas within which divers clergy operated, local idiosyncracies inevitably fashioned their ministerial priorities.[40]

Out of 100 benefices in Coventry archdeaconry in 1291, (fifty-eight rectories, forty-two vicarages), the status of several was subsequently adjusted. Indeed, by 1535 the proportions were reversed; the number of rectories had fallen while the number of vicarages had risen.[41] By the sixteenth century one-third to one-half of all English parish churches had been appropriated and their revenues confiscated by monasteries or other corporations. Of 3,849 impropriated livings in England and Wales in 1603 traced by Philip Tyler, 'all but a handful were the result of earlier monastic appropriations'.[42] Crucially, the status of ecclesiastical units determined the legal standing of their incumbents.

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39. LJRO, B/V/1/2, 4, 11. They were John Ashbye (Chilvers Coton), Humphrey Fenn (Coventry Holy Trinity), Anthony Nutter (Fenny Drayton, formerly of Maxstoke), Matthew Hulme (Leamington Hastings), Leonard Fetherston (Long Itchington), John Oxenbridge, (Southam), Edward Lorde (Wolston) and his curate Daniel Wighte.
40. Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 6.
41. S. Ayscough and J. Hunter, eds, *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliæ et Walliæ Auctoritate P. Nicholai IV c. A.D. 1291* (London, 1802), pp. 241-2; *VE*, 3, pp. 58-82; J.R.H. Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1946), pp. 24, 42.
42. Harper-Bill, *Pre-Reformation Church*, p. 45; P. Tyler, 'The status of the Elizabethan parochial clergy', in G.J. Cuming, ed., *Studies in Church History* 4 (Leiden, 1967), p. 79.

It was agreed by Beat Kümin and other historians that '"the cold hand of canon law" froze the parochial map around 1200', Andrew Brown adding the important rider that 'it did not always adapt to social change'. Further intensive research is necessary before it can be ascertained how early the boundaries of the parishes of Coventry archdeaconry were established. [43] J.B. Harley demonstrated that up to 25% of north Warwickshire parishes first appear in records after 1086. The final stages in their evolutionary process occurred in the thirteenth century, when Baddesley Clinton emerged as a parish independent of its parent, Hampton-in-Arden, perhaps as a consequence of the Statutes of Winchester. But it was, argued L. Genicot, 'the introduction of the tithe [which] forced the determination of the material boundaries', since 'every peasant who had to pay it wanted to know exactly the *metae parochiales*'.[44] Once drawn, the parish boundaries of Coventry archdeaconry remained largely unchanged until at least 1600, thus confirming Brown's observation. It is important here to distinguish between size and status, for while parishes lost no territorial integrity, some succumbed to the grasping hand of monastic appropriators.

Glancing backwards, no church buildings were recorded anywhere in Domesday Warwickshire, even though fragments of Anglo-Saxon masonry have been identified in some churches. Priests were recorded in as many as thirty different settlements in the study area in 1086, all of them located in places where a parish church existed in the later Middle Ages.[45] Their presence is not necessarily indicative of the existence of churches there at such an early date, however, or that anything like the present parochial structure was already in place.[46] Furthermore, they may have been attached to minster churches, or to manorial churches which, as John Blair and Richard Sharpe demonstrated, 'perpetuated as the majority of rural parish churches, were a new phenomenon of the tenth and eleventh centuries'.[47]

Parochial status was negotiable and descriptive consistency was rare even in contemporary surveys. 'Enumerating churches and parishes', concluded Michael

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43. Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 16; A.D. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995), p. 70; compare R. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London, 1989), pp. 225-6.

44. J.B. Harley, 'Population and land utilisation in the Warwickshire hundreds of Stoneleigh and Kineton', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham (1960), p. 89; *VCH Warwickshire*, 4, p. 19; L. Genicot, *Rural Communities in the Medieval West* (Baltimore, London, 1990), pp. 91, 93-4.

45. The settlements were: Aston-juxta-Birmingham, Austrey, Caldecote, Coleshill, Fillongley, Hampton-in-Arden, Kingsbury, Solihull, Wishaw (Arden); Burton Hastings, Harborough Magna, Monks Kirby, Wolvey (Coventry); Bilton, Clifton-on-Dunsmore, Dunchurch, Ladbroke, Leamington Hastings, Long Itchington, Napton, Wolfhampcote, Wolston (Marton); Bishops Tachbrook, Burton Dassett, Fenny Compton, Harbury, Leamington Priors, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Stoneleigh, Wormleighton (Stoneleigh).

46. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 141.

47. J. Blair and R. Sharpe, eds, *Pastoral Care Before the Parish* (Leicester, 1992), p. 7.

Zell, 'is a fruitless task'. The key to Zell's analysis in his study of Kent clergy is his interpretation of 'churches', which to him meant 'not simply those with rector or vicar, but all churches normally served by an incumbent or a resident curate. Visitations always cover a slightly differing number of churches. Decayed parishes or chapels do not count'.[48] That over-simplifies, for in law a benefice was (and is) a freehold property. Even if a church was ruined and the parish completely depopulated, under-recording in visitation returns or episcopal registers could neither revoke the patron's right to present nor annul the incumbent's title to his benefice. They still counted even in Canterbury diocese where J.I. Daeley, too, discovered that 'because of the "decay" of some churches and the union of others, the number of churches varied'.[49]

Historians studying Coventry archdeaconry have based calculations on different sets of criteria: Lindop projected 97 *parishes*, O'Day 109 *churches* (including free chapels and donatives) and Cooper 124 *benefices*.[50] The discrepancies are not easily resolved, for the number of benefices and the status of some of them invites confusion. The sixteenth century may be divided into two overlapping periods. Up to c.1540, the forty-two rectories and fifty-eight vicarages may be categorised as *benefices*. Subsequently, while the number of rectories remained virtually unchanged, a total of 118 *benefices* may be identified. For convenience, persistent inconsistencies and ambiguities have been resolved here by treating stipendiaries and donatives as nominal vicarages. The figure does not quite harmonise with the 1563 household return, but it happily embraces all those benefices described as having institution without cure.

Aberrations and inconsistencies in the 1533 clerical subsidy, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, Archbishop Parker's 1562 survey and visitation records of 1558-1614, suggest that the parochial system was evolving during the sixteenth century.[51] Bishop Bentham's household return to the Privy Council in 1563 recognised three groups of parishes.

(i) benefices, either rectories or vicarages, having dependent chapels

(ii) benefices, either rectories or vicarages, without dependent chapels

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48. M. Zell, 'The personnel of the clergy in Kent, in the Reformation period', *English Historical Review* 89 (1974), p. 515 n. 4.

49. J.I. Daeley, 'Pluralism in the diocese of Canterbury during the administration of Matthew Parker, 1559-1575', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 18 (1967), p. 40 n 8.

50. E. Lindop, 'The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield during the Reformation with special reference to parochial life', unpubl. B.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford (1938), p. 55; R. O'Day, *The English Clergy: the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession 1558-1642* (Leicester, 1979), p. 8; Cooper, 'Secular clergy', p. 127.

51. BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 118r-23v; *VE*, 3; CCC Camb., MS 97, ff. 29r-33r; LJRO, B/V/1/2-5, 7-9, 11, 13, 15-20, 22-24, 28; LJRO, D 30/AA/11; BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 165r-81v.

(iii) livings where clergy had cure of souls but were neither instituted nor inducted.[52] There were hints of evolutionary shifts. For example, Brownsover was placed in the third category although it was a chapelry of Clifton-on-Dunsmore and had never achieved independent parochial status. On the other hand, it had been granted baptismal and burial rights by the appropriators, Leicester Abbey, on account of its distance 'from the Mother Church...and the hindrance of access thereto by the overflowing of Avon, oft times'. [53] Upper Shuckburgh was placed in the same category. A vicarage was never ordained there when the rectory was appropriated to Wroxhall Abbey in 1163, so when the nunnery was dissolved in 1536 the cure, served by a stipendiary, became a private donative.[54]

Ministers appointed to the majority of livings having cure of souls without institution or induction were variously described as 'stipendiary', 'curate', or 'vicar'. After 1539 the Coventry suburban parishes, no longer yoked to the cathedral priory, groped towards an uncertain future. Their lay impropriators were apt to impose capitalist priorities which deterred well-qualified clergy from accepting ill-rewarded charges in their gift. When parishes were transferred from monastic to lay control, therefore, the change of status was not an unequivocal declaration of future prosperity. Seven such parishes in Coventry deanery were clustered along the northern and eastern fringes of Coventry.[55] Other parishes in this category included Chesterton, a living in the gift of the vicars choral of Lichfield, and Milverton, a chapelry of Leek Wootton.

Shuttington furnishes a less typical example. Pastoral oversight there had always been undertaken by regulars from Alvecote priory, a monastic cell within the parish whose clergy never appeared in visitation returns because the mother house, Great Malvern priory (Worcestershire), was papally exempted from episcopal jurisdiction.[56] After the Dissolution the living became a private donative and the right of presentation passed to a layman.[57]

When *Valor Ecclesiasticus* was compiled, the majority of stipendiaries were dependents of their appropriating authorities and were denied benefit of freehold. They were usually resident on their benefices and faithfully discharged their ministerial duties, so it seems entirely appropriate to equate them with their more

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52. BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 165r-81v.

53. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 12.

54. J.W. Ryland, *Records of Wroxall Abbey and Manor, Warwickshire* (London, 1903), p. 2; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 310.

55. They were: Ansty, Binley, Exhall, Foleshill, Shilton, Sowe and Wyken.

56. Heath, *Bishop Blythe's Visitations*, p. xi. By papal licence it was also exempted from the Bishop of Worcester.

57. *VCH Warwickshire*, 4, p. 214.

fortunate beneficed colleagues. Five Arden deanery parishes, noted in 1563 as having cure without institution, had been re-categorised. Monastic dissolutions inaugurated a period of temporary ambiguity surrounding the status of some parishes and their clergy.

Collegiate establishments in Coventry archdeaconry suffered different fates. After the closure of Bablake College in Coventry its church of St John Baptist was granted to Coventry Corporation and was not immediately integrated within the parochial system. At Astley College the last dean, Ralph Broke, became a stipendiary curate. His immediate successors, probably nominated by the lords of the manor, appear likewise to have served the parish without institution or induction. The earliest recorded institution to a vicarage at Astley was in 1625. Knowle, a member of the extensive parish of Hampton-in-Arden since the twelfth century, is a most curious anomaly. Westminster Abbey acquired the manor in 1290, but it was not until 1403 that a local benefactor erected a chapel there. This was enlarged following the establishment of a chantry college in 1416.[58] On its dissolution in 1547 the rector was appointed perpetual curate of Knowle which, although it was a peculiar jurisdiction and contained an official sanctuary, remained a member of Hampton-in-Arden until as late as 1859.

Of the six prebendal parishes, Bubbenhall, Ryton-on-Dunsmore and Ufton were served by stipendiaries appointed by the prebendaries. At Bishop's Itchington, and Wolvey, vicars were instituted and inducted, while at Bishop's Tachbrook, of which the bishop was himself patron, vicars were collated.

When the monasteries were dissolved their total assets, including any rectories they had appropriated, passed into the custody of the crown, which in due course sold off much of the property to lay impropriators. Many monasteries had found it economically expedient to lease their appropriated rectories rather than farm them directly, and the crown usually made it a condition of sale that purchasers must allow those contracts to run their full course.

Coventry archdeaconry's largest parishes were located in the north, where early settlement had been inhibited by the poor soils of the Forest of Arden. Yet its proportion of large parishes was smaller than, for example, in Lancashire, where 'the fundamental geographical feature...the size of its parishes' was determined by the sparsity of its population. Approximately four-fifths of that county's parishes had three or four townships, with as many as thirty in Whalley. Christopher Haigh calculated that in fourteen counties in the Midlands and south-eastern England the majority of parishes averaged four square miles or less in area. He also

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58. *CPR 1548-1549*, p. 81; LJRO, B/V/1/2, p. 71; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 115; *VCH Warwickshire*, 4, pp. 94, 98.

demonstrated that the size of parishes in Lancashire was primarily determined by the terrain. Swanson made the same point about Yorkshire parishes, one of which covered almost ninety square miles.[59]

Some examples will illustrate the diversity of parishes within Coventry archdeaconry. Arden's most extensive parishes included Hampton-in-Arden, covering *in toto* some 7½ square miles and included chapelries at Knowle, Temple Balsall and Nuthurst, which last lay about 6½ miles from its parent vill.[60] Medieval chapelries dependent upon Aston existed at Castle Bromwich, Deritend, Ward End and Water Orton.[61] Coleshill supported chapelries at Lea Marston, Upper and Nether Whitacre, while Kingsbury, the hundredal centre, maintained dependent chapelries at Hurley and Dosthill.

Chapelries were also found in the other three deaneries, but other characteristics illustrate the heterogeneous nature of Coventry archdeaconry landscapes. In Stoneleigh, for example, Bishop's Itchington was a large parish in the Warwickshire wolds. In the Middle Ages it sustained dependent chapels at Upper Itchington, Gaydon and Chadshunt. Its neighbouring parish, Burton Dassett, was one of the most populous and prosperous in medieval Warwickshire. Situated in the Dassett Hills, it embraced five scattered settlements and two medieval chapels, of which the one at Northend still survives, albeit as a cowshed. At Wolston in Marton deanery there was a parish church, with dependent chapels at Stretton-on-Dunsmore and the failed borough of Bretford on Dunsmore Heath. The chapelries of Brownsover and Newton were both dependencies of Clifton-on-Dunsmore.

Charles Phythian-Adams warned that 'the reconstruction of demographic trends in the later middle ages is a notoriously precarious undertaking'. There are no reliable population indicators before the mid-sixteenth century and, as Wrightson pointed out, even the most satisfactory modern computations are difficult to assess. Goose likened the household returns of 1563 to 'a curate's egg, and it is difficult to determine which parts are good and which are bad'.[62] Yet they furnish the best available data regarding the population of England at that time. As an 'artist's impression', rather than a 'snapshot', they suggest the distribution of population within Coventry archdeaconry in the middle years of the sixteenth century.

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59. C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (London, 1975), pp. 22, 31; R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (pb edn, Oxford, 1993), pp. 4-5.
60. *VCH Warwickshire*, 4, where the acreage of each parish is given.
61. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 9v.
62. C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 33; K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1982), p. 122; BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 165-73; N. Goose, 'The bishops' census of 1563: a re-examination of its reliability', <http://www.ihrinfo.ac.uk/ihr/esh/bishart2.html> *An Electronic Seminars in History Presentation* (1998), pp. 1-8.

By the mid-sixteenth century Arden had become the most populous deanery in Coventry archdeaconry. This is hardly surprising, because although its rural inhabitants were more widely scattered, it covered the largest area and accommodated a network of small towns. Yet it contained less than one half of the total number of households in Coventry archdeaconry and only one third of the total number of parishes in the archdeaconry. Coventry was the most densely-populated town in the whole diocese in the sixteenth century and dominated its eponymous deanery of twenty-three parishes. Marton deanery's twenty-five parishes included the sparsely-populated Dunsmore Heath, while Stoneleigh deanery, with twenty-four parishes, was predominantly rural in character.

Depopulation occurred in several Warwickshire parishes as the result of demographic movement or proprietorial re-structuring. Some churches survived. Burton Dassett was partly depopulated in 1499 following the enclosure of 360 acres in the open fields for sheep-rearing and at Wormleighton, too, depopulation followed enclosure and a shift of emphasis from grain production to sheep-rearing. Yet their churches survived, as did that at Wolfhampcote. All three parishes were examples of what Swanson described as the 'enclosure and the transfer from grain to sheep [which] sometimes left churches stranded and effectively deprived of their congregations'.[63]

Rural parishes were particularly susceptible to depopulation, forcing the abandonment of parish churches and chapels.[64] This deprived their incumbents of income from fees and, potentially, tithes. Griffin Lloid, rector of Radbourne, which like its members Hodnell and Arlescote - all three located in the Lias Clay plain bordering Northamptonshire - was church-less and depopulated, was unusually fortunate. He received an annual £5 stipend from his patron and was also an habitually non-resident pluralist.[65] In 1633 his successor, Robert Meakin, reportedly 'living in the house of Sir Randle Crewe in London...Hath £20 per annum'.[66] The whole parish was given over to pasture, so the patrons not only received an ample income from tithes but also, as there were no parishioners they appear to have escaped censure for neglecting their duty to maintain the chancel.

In north-east Warwickshire, inhabitants abandoned Stretton Baskerville after a destructive fire destroyed much of the village. Dugdale lamented that the church 'grew to such ruin, that it was of no other use than the shelter of cattle'. By 1633 the

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63. M.W. Beresford, 'The deserted villages of Warwickshire', *TBAS* 66 (1945-46), pp. 88, 98-9; Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 45.

64. P.B. Chatwin, 'Ruined and desecrated churches and chapels in Warwickshire', *TBAS* 68 (1952), p. 10.

65. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 330 (Radbourne); NRO, Book X, ff. 132v-3r (1610).

66. TNA: PRO SP 16/250/68, f. 210.

township's dozen communicants had 'no known church to go unto' but attended services at Burton Hastings, where the church had survived despite depopulation.[67] Although the rector of Stretton, Richard Paule, lived in London, he still received the benefice income of £13 6s. 8d.. The 'true value' of his benefice was stated in 1611 to have been £20.[68]

A potent combination of fluctuating economic, demographic and doctrinal drifts had a conspicuous effect upon the deployment of clergy. At Caldecote, for example, the population had steadily declined and its rectory lay vacant for seventeen years between 1558-75.[69] Only eight households were reported there in the 1563 census, when the tally of households at Lea Marston substantially exceeded that of Caldecote. Lea and its sister chapelries the Whitacres, Upper and Nether, all possessed chapels worthy of parochial status and contained more households (twenty-nine, thirty-five and twenty-one respectively) than many independent parishes.

Elsewhere, by contrast, burgeoning industrial activity stimulated a substantial population increase. Before the Dissolution the inhabitants of Attleborough, a chapelry in the parish of Nuneaton, had for many years been served by a priest appointed by the nuns of Nuneaton priory, who paid him £5 *per annum*. By 1563, Attleborough contained no fewer than one hundred out of the 280 households in Nuneaton.[70] For the same reason, in 1517 a new chapel was erected at Ward End, a fringe district of the parish of Aston, the cost of which was defrayed by a Coventry entrepreneur.[71] Industrial developments encouraged immigrant colonisation of their catchment areas, but small and poorly-endowed urban parishes were not immune to adverse migratory trends.

Homogeneity was not characteristic of Coventry archdeaconry. Later chapters will discuss the effects of the more obvious contrasts, most conspicuously those between town parishes - especially the two in Coventry - and those of the Arden and Feldon regions. Time sometimes created great disparities. For instance, by acts of benevolence the tenacious Bishop of Exeter, John Veysey, invigorated his native Sutton Coldfield, transforming it from a sleepy north Warwickshire backwater into a

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67. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 51; Burton Hastings was appropriated to Nuneaton Abbey but a vicarage was never ordained and it was served by a stipendiary. When the advowson was sold in 1540 the living became a private donative.

68. TNA: PRO SP 16/250/68, f. 211; LJRO, B/A/1/7, f. 166v; D 30/2/7/96, f. 191v.

69. TNA: PRO SP 15/12/108, f. 253r; LJRO, B/V/1/2, p. 95. The living was recorded as vacant in June 1558, and again in 1565 when it was said that the living had been vacant 'since last rector died four years ago'. The next rector, James Worship, was instituted in 1575: TNA: PRO E 331/Cov & Lich/4 no.24.

70. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 2, p. 1070; BL, Harl. MS 594, f. 166v.

71. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 9v.

flourishing township. Meanwhile, an ambitious civil servant, Thomas Fisher, was granted a trio of episcopal manors in south Warwickshire but, for reasons too complex to describe here, he failed to reverse their declining fortunes.[72] In Birmingham and neighbouring Aston industrial entrepreneurs exploited their topographical advantages, while Coventry's two parishes suffered poverty in the wake of the city's economic 'desolation'. Towards the end of the sixteenth century coal extraction was licensed in a string of parishes north of Coventry - Foleshill, Bedworth and Nuneaton, while a crescent of rural parishes lining the county's eastern border felt the pinch as sheep-rearing speculators forced agricultural workers to migrate in order to survive.

These generalisations intimate the lack of parochial homogeneity in Coventry archdeaconry during the sixteenth century and prepare the way for subsequent chapters to examine in greater detail those concomitant issues which affected the parochial clergy. Meanwhile, it is important to review the principal officers of the archdeaconry, beginning with the diocesan bishop himself, to ascertain what influence he had in respect of the parochial clergy, and how decisive an impact he had on the parochial ministry in Coventry archdeaconry. How frequently, for example, did the bishop visit his Warwickshire clergy in their parishes, and how did he impose his authority over them?

2.5. The diocesan bishop[73]

At the apex of the diocesan hierarchy was the bishop, supported by officials, lay as well as ordained. Because the diocese was so vast, and because its bishops were frequently absent on royal duties as lords president of the Council of the Marches, and because Coventry archdeaconry was so remote from the centre of episcopal activity and administration, many parishes probably never, or at best only rarely, received a visit from their diocesan. Indeed, Stephen Thompson described 'the problem of large, unwieldy dioceses' as 'one of the major obstacles to a bishop fulfilling his pastoral role in person'. He concluded that 'very few appear to have visited the parochial clergy and laity in person'.[74]

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72. Upton, 'Warwickshire manors', pp. 145-8.
73. The sixteenth-century bishops of Coventry and Lichfield were: John Arundel (1496-1502), Geoffrey Blythe (1503-1531); Rowland Lee (1534-1543); Richard Sampson (1543-1544); Ralph Bayne (1554-1559); Thomas Bentham (1560-1579); William Overton (1579-1609).
74. M. Jones, '"An earthly beast, a mole and an enemy to all godly learning": The life and career of Rowland Lee, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and Lord President of the Council of the Marches', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales Cardiff (1998), p. 57; S. Thompson, 'The pastoral work of the English and Welsh bishops, 1550-1558', unpubl. D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford (1984), p. 223.

The last medieval bishop to visit his Warwickshire manors regularly was Walter Langton, although Bishop Hals ventured into Coventry archdeaconry on at least forty occasions during his long episcopacy (1459-90).[75] It is clear that the Elizabethan bishops rarely ventured into Coventry archdeaconry where, as Michael Cahill pointed out, they lacked an official residence which would have provided a convenient headquarters to exert their personal influence in Warwickshire.[76] Theoretically, however, their power to intervene *in remotis* in matters touching the parochial clergy was awesome, for as Kümin wrote, 'bishops had a range of opportunities to influence parochial life'. Charged to uphold Christian orthodoxy and moral standards in their diocese, they dispensed justice through their consistory courts to any reported to have fallen short of what was expected of a Christian subject.[77]

Discussing five principal ways 'in which bishops affected the parishes', Thompson identified education of the clergy; pluralism and non-residence; disciplinary sanctions against the clergy; church buildings; and contact with the laity through episcopal courts. Routine administration of justice in episcopal courts was delegated to officials, for as Thompson observed, it was 'very rare for any bishop, Catholic or Protestant, to preside over their own courts in the period 1500-1560'. On certain occasions and in exceptional circumstances, however, bishops did sit in person. For example, Bishop Blythe's approach to the trial of heretics reflected that of his contemporary bishops.[78] Fines accepted that it was desirable, but not absolutely necessary, that Bishop Blythe presided over some, but not all, of the sessions during the trial of Coventry Lollards, the initial stages of which took place at Maxstoke in 1511-2.[79] Of all the bishops of Coventry and Lichfield, argued O'Day, Bentham 'intervened in disciplinary jurisdiction in a manner unparalleled before or after in the

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75. Upton, 'Warwickshire manors', Chapter Four; G.J. Stretch, 'The clergy and administration of the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield under Bishop John Hals, 1459-90' unpubl. M.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford (1990), pp. 354-63 itinerary.

76. M. Cahill, 'The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1603-1642', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (2001), p. 16; *VCH Staffordshire*, 3, p. 56 n.22. The Bishop's Palace in Coventry was rarely occupied by the bishops, being intermittently leased out since at least 1364. I owe to my wife, Dr Penny Upton, the following references: SRO, D(W) 1734/J1948, f. 14v (1463-1464); WSL, S(MS) 335 (1), f. 28v (1472-1473); LJRO, B/A/21/123984, f. 15v (1475-1476); B/A/21/124089, f. 17r (1534-1535).

77. Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 226. The influence and stewardship of bishops has been discussed at length in, for example, Carleton, 'Episcopal office in the English Church'; J. D'Arcy, 'Late medieval Catholicism and the impact of the Reformation in the deanery of Derby, c.1520 to c.1570', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham (1997), pp. 7-10; Lindop, 'Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', pp. 65-75; Stretch, 'Clergy and administration', pp. 78-84.; Thompson, *English Clergy and Their Organization*, pp. 1-39; Thompson, 'Pastoral work of bishops'; J.A.F. Thomson, *The Early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529* (London, 1993), pp. 46-60; Upton, 'Warwickshire manors', *passim*.

78. Thompson, 'Pastoral work of bishops'; pp. 98, 117, 121, 123-4.

79. M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (pb 1990), p. 59; J. Fines, 'Heresy trials in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1511-12', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (1963), p. 168.

records of the diocese', but Ralph Houlbrooke contended that he 'had perforce to leave much of the work of supervision to local officers'.[80] Yet his successor, William Overton, appears to have been exasperated by his failure to proceed more effectively against those who flouted his authority, believing that he had 'the stubbornist diocese in all this land' - indeed, that it was 'the very sink of the whole realm, both for corrupt religion and life'.[81] 'Some of the most intractable pastoral problems', Houlbrooke noted, 'were due to defects in the parochial structure, which imposed 'a limit to what bishops' could do'. Unfortunately for Bentham and Overton, 'ecclesiastical courts emerged from the Reformation gravely weakened', and it is ironic that in view of their drive to eradicate Catholicism, a 'major threat to the courts came from militant Protestantism'.[82]

When Hals died the see remained vacant for three years, after which William Smith served for three years, followed by John Arundel (1496-1501), when the diocese was again without a bishop until Geoffrey Blythe was enthroned in 1503. Mark Knight emphasised the disruptive effects caused by the 'quick succession of bishops' and 'frequent changes of administrations'.[83] Disruption at parochial level occurred in Coventry archdeaconry after John Veysey was consecrated Bishop of Exeter in 1520 and vacated Coventry St Michael, of which he had been a largely absentee vicar since 1507. He seems to have strengthened links between the two dioceses by favouring former colleagues with livings in his new jurisdiction and influencing appointments in Coventry archdeaconry.[84] For instance, his successor at St Michael's was George Grey, also dean of Newark College, Leicester, who in 1524 was admitted to the Devonshire rectory of Ilfracombe.[85] When Grey died in 1533 he was succeeded at St Michael's by Richard Manchester, a chantry priest in Veysey's native town of Sutton Coldfield who subsequently was made a canon of Exeter Cathedral, where he died in 1542.[86] The vicar of Broadhempston, Devon, Richard Middlemore, a Birmingham man and also Veysey's chaplain, was in 1536 presented to the rectory of Birmingham, home of some of Veysey's own relatives.[87] Yet another beneficiary of Veysey's pervasive influence in Warwickshire was Ralph Wendon. He held several appointments in the south-west, but in 1529 was presented to the

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80. R. O'Day and J. Berlatsky, eds, 'The Letter-book of Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield', *Camden Miscellany XXVII*, Camden 4th ser. 22 (1979), p. 118; R. Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1979), p. 212.
81. M. Cahill 'The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1603-1642', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (2001), p. 23 quoting TNA: PRO SP 12/149/37; BL, Lansdowne MS 36, no. 16, f. 45.
82. Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, pp.212-3, 266-7.
83. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', p. 479.
84. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 5r, 8v.
85. Emden, BRUO 1501-1540, p. 247.
86. *LPFD Henry VIII*, 4 (iii), no. 3026; TNA: PRO Prob 11 F.4 Spert.
87. Chambers, *Faculty Office Registers*, p. .61; LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 14r.

rectory of Sutton Coldfield in which church, in 1554, he buried his centenarian patron.[88]

Within a year of taking office, a bishop was expected to assess the state of his diocese by conducting a 'primary' visitation and, subsequently, one every third year (a 'triennial'). Coventry and Lichfield's earliest surviving visitation records date from 1515, but have little bearing on the parochial clergy for they were principally concerned with monastic houses.[89] The earliest returns from Coventry archdeaconry parishes are from Bishop Bayne's visitation of 1558 and Archbishop Parker's metropolitan visitation of 1560. Documentary evidence survives from Bishop Bentham's primary visitation of 1561, but his injunctions comprise the only extant record of his 1565 visitation. After June 1570 an almost complete set of visitation books exists, although as sources of information their usefulness is variable. Breaches of ecclesiastical codes of conduct were supposed to be 'presented' by incumbents or churchwardens and offenders were then dealt with through the Church's own disciplinary courts.[90]

Before a visitation, bishops promulgated articles declaring issues which they intended to raise. It was by Injunctions that religious policy was uniformly advertised throughout the diocese and bishops clearly intended them to be enforced. But it is important to pause here to reflect upon the impact they were meant to have on the parochial clergy. Primarily, they were issued to correct faults detected during a visitation. Only a few complete sets of Coventry and Lichfield episcopal Injunctions survive from the sixteenth century, the earliest being those of Bishop Lee, which concluded with an admonition that his clergy...

> firmly do observe and keep these and all singular mine Injunctions. And that ye and every one of you that are priests, having cure or not cure, as well beneficed as not beneficed within my diocese, do get a copy of these Injunctions, to the intent that ye may observe, and cause to be observed, the contents of the same.[91]

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88. Emden, BRUO, p. 709; LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 12v.
89. Heath, *Bishop Blythe's Visitations.*
90. They are, LJRO, B/V/1/2 (1558); B/V/1/4 (1560); B/V/1/5 (1561); B/V/1/7 (1570); B/V/1/8 (1573); B/V/1/9 (1576); B/V/1/11 (1579); B/V/1/13 (1581); B/V/1/16 (1584); B/V/1/17 (1584); B/V/1/19 (1586); B/V/1/20 (1586); B/V/1/23 (1597); B/V/1/24 (1605). For a summary of the procedures followed in ecclesiastical courts see Bray, *Anglican Canons*, pp. cviii-cvix, 782-811, 906-10. Note that B/V/1/15 (1584) has been described as a survey 'mis-identified as a *liber cleri*' which should be 'transferred to a class of its own', see D.J. Crankshaw, 'Elizabethan and early Jacobean surveys of the Ministry of the Church of England', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Cambridge (1998), pp. 15, 113.'
91. W.H. Frere and W.M. Kennedy, eds, *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation* (3 vols, London, 1910), 2, pp. 23-4.

Lee was the first English bishop to be appointed after the rejection of papal authority and to swear an oath of loyalty to the sovereign as 'supreme head of the Church'.[92] His injunctions betray the influence of recent legislation respecting the papacy, for bishops were directed to enforce the royal supremacy by compelling their clergy to 'instruct and teach' it to their congregations. It is no surprise, therefore, that Lee (and his Tudor successors) urged obedience to 'our prince and sovereign lord'.

But Lee's injunctions 'were also the product of an episcopal visitation' carried out by his official, David Pole, in June 1538. Incumbents were ordered to preach a sermon at least four times every year 'according to the true scripture of God', and to instruct their parishioners in such as way as to 'excite and move [them] unto all such works as are expressly commanded of God'. Every church was to be provided with a Bible. Clerical discipline was also addressed. For example, Lee had been 'credibly informed' that 'certain priests' dressed almost like laymen, and ordered them to wear clothing appropriate to their calling 'whereby they may be known of the clergy'.[93]

Evidence suggests that Lee's Elizabethan successors, Bentham and Overton, made diligent preparations for their visitations, and the injunctions they subsequently issued throw light on their endeavours to introduce reforms they considered necessary.[94] Their priorities varied, for much depended on the state of local compliance with current statutory regulations, and the personality of the bishop himself, although this thesis is not the place to enlarge upon the many topics investigated.

Both Bentham and Overton diligently sought to destroy papist relics and practices, dealing rigorously and firmly with any clergy suspected of ignoring liturgical reforms. When on 16 June 1561 John Bavand, rector of Solihull, sent a proxy to represent him at the visitation, he was summoned to appear personally before the bishop at Lichfield on 21 July. Probably, the bishop's primary concern was to ascertain whether Bavand had rectified certain 'disorder about the communion' which had been brought to his attention the previous year. For an undisclosed reason, at the same visitation Bentham also ordered Matthew Bewcer, lector [lay reader] of Churchover, to appear before him.[95] But he appears to have shown greater latitude towards offenders with reformist sympathies. Cahill demonstrated that Bentham's successor, William Overton, 'a pastorally-exercised Calvinist bishop', also harboured

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92. Jones, '"An earthly beast"', pp. 99-100.
93. Jones, '"An earthly beast"', pp. .74-5; W.H. Frere and W.M. Kennedy, eds, *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation* (3 vols, London, 1910), 2, pp. 23-4.
94. NLW, 4919D, ff. 94, 96; Crankshaw, 'Surveys of the Ministry', p. 113, pp. 112-5; Frere and Kennedy, pp. 163-170; W.P.M. Kennedy, *Elizabethan Episcopal Administration: An Essay in Sociology and Politics* (3 vols, London, 1924), 3, pp. 161-74.
95. LJRO, B/V/1/5, pp. 22, 29; NLW, 4919D, f. 46.

a 'long-standing antipathy to Catholicism'. Indeed, his 'enthusiasm to promote reformed religion was complemented by an equally strong drive to eradicate Catholicism'. Moreover, Cahill pointed out that Overton's 'latitudinarianism with regard to puritans was not replicated in his attitude towards Catholics' - a trait which was also reminiscent of his predecessor.[96] If records contained data sufficiently comprehensive to permit detailed analysis of the results of visitations, however, they would reveal the ordinary's vulnerability. From his remote fastness, the bishop was impotent and, as Kümin observed, 'depended on the cooperation of parish representatives' to detect irregularities and present offenders.[97]

From some visitation records little can be gleaned since they give no more than lists of clergy. The 1580 *liber cleri* illustrates the visitation agenda conducted by Bishop Overton himself and the subsequent reckoning when offenders were called to account. Material selected from this record will illustrate some aspects of the visitatorial process and its consequences.[98] 'Most of our knowledge of sixteenth century clergy', as Margaret Bowker observed, 'is filtered through the reports of the churchwardens and parishioners at the visitations of the bishop or archdeacon'. Since they portray the less attractive examples of clerical behaviour, several of which have been described in a recent study of the diocese, Peter Marshall's more balanced view is doubtless better representative of reality.[99]

Parochial records such as churchwardens' accounts include incidental references to visitations. For example, the fragmentary Burton Dassett accounts for 1529 include an entry to the effect that the wardens 'Paid at the bishop's visitation at Ryton[-on-Dunsmore] 2s.' Triennial visitations were recorded at Aston in July 1576, October 1597 and September 1600. It should not be assumed that bishops always personally carried out visitations for, as Peter Heath has shown, they often delegated that task to a diocesan officer. Indeed, the accounts go on to declare that the wardens 'Spent at the official's court at Stoneleigh, 6d.', although it is unclear whether the reference was to the bishop's official or the archdeacon's. In 1558 Bishop Bayne delegated the triennial visitation to his vicar-general, Anthony Draycott.[100]

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96. M. Cahill, 'The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1603-1642', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (2001), pp. 24, 30, 31.
97. P. Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (Toronto, 1969), pp. 114-5; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 227.
98. LJRO, B/V/1/13, pp. 61-92; Frere and Kennedy, *Visitation Articles and Injunctions*.
99. Bowker, *Secular Clergy*, p. 110; Cooper, 'Secular clergy', pp. 240-65; P. Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 90-1, 145-6, 176.
100. E. Carey-Hill, 'Churchwardens' Accounts of Burton Dassett, Warwickshire', *TBAS* 63 (1939-40), p. 87; W.F. Carter, ed., *The Registers of the Parish of Aston-juxta-Birmingham Volume I 1544-1639/40* (2 vols, 1900), 1, pp. 17a, 42a, 2; Heath, *Bishop Blythe's Visitations*, p. xiv; LJRO, B/V/1/2, ff. 67-95.

Churchwardens' accounts suggest that parish officers punctiliously discharged their responsibilities. For example, the archiepiscopal visitation at Coleshill in 1560 was attended by the wardens and four parishioners of Chilvers Coton. Their personal expenses amounted to 2s. 6d., being the cost of their dinners...'and horse meat'.[101] Additional expenses included 4d. for a book of the articles. When the archdeaconry had *three* visitations in a single year, 1584, first by the Archbishop of Canterbury, then by the over-zealous diocesan and lastly by the archdeacon, the churchwardens of Southam paid them 4s. 9d., 2s. 6d. and 2s. 4d., respectively.[102]

Like most other dioceses, Coventry and Lichfield contained a number of peculiar jurisdictions, a subject about which there has been very little research. These were autonomous ecclesiastical districts over which the bishop had no direct control.[103] A custumal of 1574 categorically asserted that the lord of Knowle manor may, because it was 'a peculiar jurisdiction of itself keep a spiritual court within the town of Knowle for all matters touching the ecclesiastical laws of this realm, so that it is exempted from the diocese of the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry (*sic*) and all other bishops'. Spiritual courts were still being held there in the nineteenth century, and the lords also had power of probate. Apparently this could be delegated, for a witness in a disputed testamentary case *circa* 1590 deposed that 'Mr Gryffin of Warwick was ordinary, appointed under the Earl of Leicester, lord or farmer of the manor of Knowle, for the proving of wills, being a peculiar jurisdiction time out of mind within the said manor'.[104]

Peculiars were a thorn in the flesh to men like Bentham and Overton. In 1564 Bentham complained bitterly that 'many offenders' escaped censure because they 'fly into exempt places & peculiar jurisdictions and so avoid ordinary correction'. Overton was even more explicit, informing the privy council in 1582 that 'The peculiar jurisdictions within my diocese are very many; and the recusants...so hid and harboured therein, that I cannot...search them out'.[105]

There was a related issue which probably concentrated the bishops' thoughts, namely, the curiously unarticulated fact that peculiars were the cause of lost

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101. LJRO, B/C/5.
102. WCRO, DR 50/9, f. 4.
103. There is very little literature about peculiar jurisdictions and nothing about those in Warwickshire, but see R.M. Haines, *The Administration of the Diocese of Worcester in the First Half of the Fourteenth Century* (London, 1965), esp. pp. 13-29; Swanson, *Church and Society,* pp. 18-24; R.N. Swanson, 'Peculiar practices: the jurisdictional jigsaw of the pre-Reformation Church', *Midland History* 26 (2001), pp. 69-95.
104. SBTRO, DR 98/1217; T.W. Downing, *The Records of Knowle*, (Birmingham, 1914), p. 283; TNA: PRO C 2Eliz/F9/15.
105. M. Bateson, 'Original Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council, 1564', *Camden Miscellany* 9 (1893), p. 41; J. Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion*, iii (2), (4 vols, London, 1824), p. 212.

revenue. Their clergy were exempt from episcopal visitation and therefore from payment of procurations, that is, fees the bishops charged parochial clergy for expenses incurred in the visitation process. Furthermore, the income from fees levied by spiritual courts in peculiar jurisdictions, and also from the potentially lucrative probate of wills, went not to the bishop but (in the case of Knowle) to the lord of the manor.

Coventry's dysfunctional ecclesiastical pedigree was unique among England's major cities of the sixteenth century. Bishop Lee's most conspicuous failure apropos Coventry archdeaconry was the loss of the cathedral priory church in 1539. Earlier, when Lee had discussed the problem with Cromwell he had been assured that the cathedral would not be suppressed. But on 8 January 1539 the city's mayor and corporation wrote to advise Lee that the cathedral was to be suppressed, begging him to approach the King to prevent this happening. Instead, Lee wrote to Cromwell, reminding him of their discussion and suggesting that the cathedral should become a secular college, 'for it is my principal see and head church'. Cromwell did nothing to save his friend's cathedral, which was surrendered on 15 January.[106]

Nothing, until the reconstruction of the city centre following the extensive damage caused by the bombing raids of 1940, had a more dramatic impact on Coventry than the total destruction of its cathedral priory after its suppression in 1539. In retrospect, the priory chapter added nothing to the efficiency of the diocese, while the very existence of two cathedral chapters invited controversy between them, being jealous of their respective rights and privileges. Although Lichfield was a considerably smaller and less important city than Coventry, its cathedral was a secular foundation and the administrative centre of the diocese. Even when resident in the diocese, successive bishops opted to live at Eccleshall Castle, Staffordshire, and only occasionally lodged at their palace in Coventry. Except when large and impressive religious ceremonies were required, for example on occasions when king and parliament assembled in the city, Coventry's cathedral functioned largely as a monastic church.

Notwithstanding that the hierarchy lost political influence and standing at court, Vage has argued that 'bishops were now more absolute within their territories than their later medieval predecessors had ever been', although their pastoral energies were deflected by the requirement to enforce 'successive state-imposed religious settlements', and also 'the advent of puritanism [which] produced major attacks on episcopal authority'. Nor were these the only worries, for the financial plight of some

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106. J.J. Scarisbrick, 'The dissolution of St Mary's Priory, Coventry', in G. Demidowicz, ed., *Coventry's First Cathedral: The Cathedral and Priory of St Mary* (Stamford, 1994), pp. 158-68; Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', pp. 239-40, 245.

bishops had a debilitating effect upon their capacity fully to focus on serving the servants of God, as O'Day has demonstrated of Bishop Bentham.[107]

As far as the parochial clergy were concerned the pastoral and disciplinary roles of the bishop remained unchanged after the Elizabethan Settlement. Episcopal ordination remained the sole qualification for all who aspired to ecclesiastical office, and confirmation by a bishop the only access to reception of Holy Communion by the laity. Clergy, beneficed as well as unbeneficed, were as much obliged to attend the bishops' periodic visitations before as after the break with Rome and the bishop's consistory court continued to rule in matters of spiritual discipline over both clergy and laity. Here, Loades has wonderfully exposed a conundrum, for was it really 'no exaggeration to say' that it was only the Catholic Mary Tudor's legacy that ensured 'the survival of episcopacy in the Anglican Church'.[108]

It has been necessary to demonstrate that the bishop was responsible for the cure of souls throughout the diocese. As the chief pastor, the 'Father in God', he delegated a share of that responsibility to every incumbent whom he instituted, with the words 'Receive thy cure, my charge', first requiring the incumbent to take an oath of canonical obedience to him. This explains the relationship between the bishop and his clergy, and the justification for holding visitations 'to the end that he may get some good knowledge of the state, sufficiency, and ability of the clergy and other persons whom he is to visit'.[109] The pastoral care of the clergy was the bishop's personal responsibility and this section has illustrated how his absence neither impeded his disciplinary powers nor diminished his spiritual influence. But whether absent on government business like the earlier sixteenth-century bishops, or else, like the later sixteenth-century bishops, content to control from a distance, the practical administration of the vast diocese was often left to officials. By drawing attention to peculiar jurisdictions, about which so little has been written, it has been shown that episcopal oversight was not everywhere applicable.

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107. J.A. Vage, 'The diocese of Exeter 1519-1641: a study of Church government in the age of the Reformation', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Cambridge (1991), pp. 6, 10; see esp. R. O'Day, 'Thomas Bentham: a case study in the problems of the early Elizabethan episcopate', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 23 (1972), pp. 137-59.

108. D.M. Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government, and Religion in England, 1553-1558* (London, 1979), p. 465.

109. C.B. Moss, *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Dogmatic Theology* (London, 1961), p. 392; Anon, *The Canons of the Church of England*, Canon C 18.4, p. 46.

2.6. The archdeacon

Within each archdeaconry the senior executive was the archdeacon. Described by A.H. Thomson as 'normally members of the clerical upper class', prior to the Reformation they were often absentees from their charges. Known as the 'bishop's eye', their principal responsibility according to Lyndwood was 'to procure, provide and see that the sacraments be duly kept...churches...visited and overseen'. Another of their roles was to induct incumbents into benefices whenever mandated by the bishop, although they often delegated this task to their officials. Ancient law and custom bound archdeacons to hold an annual visitation of the parishes in their jurisdiction, a consequential part of their annual income called procurations being thus derived. Through these visitations archdeacons imposed their authority and erring clergy and parishioners alike were cited to appear at archidiaconal courts. It was David Crankshaw's complaint that archidiaconal 'visitations remain under-researched', but no records of archdeacon's visitations or their courts have survived at Lichfield for the sixteenth century.[110] Quite apart from their routine disciplinary duties, it was the awesome responsibility of later holders of the office to interpret and implement the evolving dynamics of protestantism among the clergy over whom they exercised authority.

There were at least eight successive archdeacons of Coventry during the sixteenth century, the first three of whom have left little record of their stewardship, despite heretical activity in Coventry and Birmingham during that period. Thomas Mills (1488-1505) and George Strangeways (1505-9?) were both residentiary canons of Lichfield with no real interest in serving the office, while Ralph Collingwood (1509?-10) became Dean of Lichfield in 1512 and had more on his mind than the archdeaconry of Coventry. In October 1510 Bishop Blythe collated his nephew, John, who was only 22 years old at the time and still a student at the University of Paris (*Parusiam*). During the heresy trials in 1511-2, John Blythe, now a Bachelor of Canon Law, was one of eight who assisted his uncle, but whether at the age of 23 he was any more than a passive observer is difficult to know.[111]

Some uncertainty follows Blythe's death in 1547 for his successor's admission to office was not entered in the episcopal register. This oversight may have been a consequence of Bishop Sampson's strange decision in 1544 to sell to a layman the

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110. Thomson, *Early Tudor Church and Society*, p. 118; J.V. Bullard and H.C. Bell, eds, *Lyndwood's Provinciale: The Text of the Canons Therein Contained, Reprinted from the Translation Made in 1534* (London, 1929), pp. 17-20; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, pp. 197-200; J. Shiners and W.J. Dohar, *Pastors and the Care of Souls in Medieval England* (Indiana, 1998), p. 95; Crankshaw, 'Surveys of the Ministry, p. 6 n. 24.

111. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 5v; Fines, 'Heresy trials', p. 168.

right to present the next archdeacon.[112] Henry Comberford's tenure (if he was Blythe's successor - the only reference to his being archdeacon of Coventry is in Bentham's Letter-Book) was in any case terminated by the summer of 1559. Reported to the Privy Council for 'lewd preaching and misdemeanour', he was subsequently deprived and banished to his Suffolk rectory of Polstead. Two years later Bentham was obliged to issue a travel warrant for the exiled 'late archdeacon of Coventry' to answer a cause in London regarding dilapidations - expenses arising out of his time in office. Doubtless Comberford's successor, Thomas Lever, was keen that this 'most obstinate popish priest' would never return to the diocese and his fears were allayed in November 1570 when Comberford was arrested and imprisoned. He died, still languishing in prison, in 1586.[113]

Of all the sixteenth-century archdeacons of Coventry, Thomas Lever (1560-77) made the deepest impression on the historical record, for his wide acquaintance included some of the leading continental reformers with whom he regularly corresponded. His fame was enhanced by the report that it was he who had persuaded the Queen to refuse the title 'supreme head' of the Church of England. A renowned Marian exile, Lever returned to England after Elizabeth I's accession and before April 1559 had married a widow with three children. In the autumn of 1559 Lever settled in Coventry, where he and others were invited 'to proclaim the Gospel'. By the summer of 1560 his wife bore his first child, a daughter.[114]

Lever's forceful personality had already made an impact in the city. Commenting on resistance to change during Edward's reign, Knight argued 'that in Coventry the injunctions [of July 1547] were apparently not implemented immediately, if at all', and that 'defiance of the Edwardian Reformation shows it was unwelcome'. This rings true, for Coventry Holy Trinity accounts suggest that the churchwardens had been reluctant to desecrate hallowed church fittings until after Lever had preached there. They then ordered the 'taking down of the rood & Mary & John'. Later came 'the carpenters...pulling down the rood lofts' and the peremptory removal of the stone altar and its substitution by a wooden table. Notwithstanding that in 1564 they had paid 4d. for 'blotting out the trinities about the church', as late as 1570 the wardens were presented for *quasdam picturas in ecclesia non abolitas et imaginem Trinitatus.* This suggests that Lever was neither wholly successful nor altogether popular, for it

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112. H.E. Savage, *The Cathedral and the Chapter 1530-1553* (Lichfield, 1927), p. 9.
113. The difficulty of tracing successive archdeacons of Coventry between 1510-1577 is well illustrated by the lacuna in Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 199; NLW, 4949D, f. 82; LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, f. 48; J. Dasent, *Acts of the Privy Council* 1558-1570, (32 vols, London, 1890-1907), pp. 60, 64, 71, 87; TNA: PRO Dom. Eliz. CXVII no.23 (on microfilm).
114. J. Bruce, ed., *Correspondence of Matthew Parker, D.D., Archbishop of Canterbury* Parker Society (Cambridge, 1853), p. 66; H. Robinson, ed., *The Zurich Letters* Parker Society (Cambridge, 1842), pp. 84-8.

appears to be an example of what Alexandra Walsham called an 'ample witness to the resilience of the "Old Religion"...in regions closer to the nerve-centres of Protestantism'.[115]

It is important to pause here to examine Lever's engagement as 'preacher' and his emergence as archdeacon, the chronology of which has never been challenged. In a letter to the continental reformer Henry Bullinger in July 1560, Lever claimed that 'great numbers zealous for evangelical truth' in Coventry 'invited other preachers, and myself in particular, to proclaim the gospel to them'. He intimated that there was no contractual agreement whereby they were 'bound to each other', only that the townspeople 'liberally maintained me and my family in this city...by free kindness and love'.[116] This was ironic, for it glossed over the fact that Coventry corporation made a levy upon every house towards the support of all the 'good ministers sent' there. It can hardly be described as a spontaneous and voluntary act of support either for Lever or for the protestant 'gospel preached freely'.[117] Although only one of several preachers, Lever's erudition and celebrity preacher status - Arber discloses that he was extolled as 'the Boanerges of the Reformation' - were guaranteed to attract large audiences.[118]

The invitation to become archdeacon clearly post-dated that letter, in which Lever never hinted that he expected to remain anything other than a freelance preacher. Now that invites speculation. Thomas Bentham entered the diocese as bishop in May or June, 1560.[119] Although the two had been acquainted as fellow exiles, it was probably only then that he learned that Lever was domiciled in the city. This may have led the new bishop to conclude that Lever was a conveniently suitable candidate to fill the vacant archdeaconry of Coventry. Unfortunately, the bishop's register does not record Lever's admission to the archdeaconry, which cannot have been before the autumn of 1560. He compounded on 22 August that year, but although he had 'not yet his *mandat[um] ad ind[u]ce[n]d[um]*', it is clear from Bentham's letter of 26 August that he did not think this would prejudice the archidiaconal visitation Lever was planning.[120]

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115. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', pp. 221-2; WCRO, DR 801/13, unfol.; DR 581/45, ff. 10v, 11r; LJRO, B/V/1/7, p. 129; A. Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (pb edn, Woodbridge, 1999), p. 15.
116. Robinson, *Zurich Letters*, pp. 86-7
117. C. Bliss Burbidge, *Old Coventry and Lady Godiva* (Birmingham, n.d.), p. 230.
118. E. Arber, ed., *Thomas Lever, M.A. Fellow and Preacher of St John's College, Cambridge, Sermons 1550* (Westminster, 1895), p. 16.
119. R. O'Day and J. Berlatsky, eds, 'The Letter-book of Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield', *Camden Miscellany XXVII*, Camden 4th ser. 22 (1979), p. 115.
120. TNA: PRO E 179/308/1, p. 2; E 334, f. 82v; NLW, 4919D, f. 48 - the text is difficult to read but this transcription makes better sense than 'mandate and, indeed', given in O'Day and Berlatsky, p. 150.

Evidence suggests that Lever was greatly excited by the prospect of reforming his new charge and had to be restrained by Bishop Bentham when he submitted a draft of the articles of enquiry he proposed to circulate to parishes. Anxious to make a prompt start, Lever's urban ignorance of rural matters was immediately challenged by Bentham, who required the visitation to be deferred for 'one week longer by reason of harvest'. Moreover, the articles further exposed Lever's weak grasp of his constituency, for Bentham chided him that 'the first & 2 of the last to be more meet for Coventry & such towns than villages far distant in the country'. Moreover, he was advised 'to add likewise interrogatories accordingly as the archdeacon of London hath done'. Even at an early date, it seems, Lever had already begun to examine candidates, for Bentham charged him to present for ordination on 15 December 1560 'those whom you have meet against that day'.[121]

Although it is difficult to assess an archdeacon's influence, it is clear that Lever could be very intimidating. By default most examples of archidiaconal activity given here are from his tenure for, as Darren Oldridge rightly noted, a less combative 'institutional approach to religion precluded the kind of active ministry and organisation which made the "godly" clergy conspicuous'. Between 1561-71 Lever exploited his standing as a leading returned exile by successfully persuading the Lord Keeper to present his own protégés to vacant benefices in his gift.[122]

Lever died in 1577 and was succeeded by William James whose *pro hac vice* patron was Robert earl of Leicester, not the diocesan bishop. He resigned in 1584 when he was made Dean of Christ Church, Oxford and was followed by William Hinton, who was also presented by *pro hac vice* patrons. A kinsman of Archbishop Whitgift, Hinton had been instituted as vicar of Coventry St Michael in 1583 and held both offices until 1623, when he resigned the vicarage but remained as archdeacon, until his death in 1631.[123]

Unlike Lever, Hinton had no sympathy for Puritan zealots whom he described as 'giddie heads'. There was mutual antipathy between them, and Hinton's parochial ministry was blighted by the activities of religious extremists, doubtless mischievously encouraged by Humphrey Fenn, who had returned to Coventry in 1592 after being deprived as vicar of Holy Trinity and imprisoned for nonconformity. Even some rancorous members of Hinton's own congregation were disloyal. Their refusal to receive communion kneeling as required by the 1604 canon, evoked a

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121. NLW, 4919D, f. 65.
122. D. Oldridge, 'Conflicts within the Established Church in Warwickshire 1603-42', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (1993), p. 145; BL, Lansdowne MS 443, ff. 107r, 115v, 118v, 137r, 143v, 184v, 197r.
123. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 47r; B/A/2ii/1, p. 36; B/A/1/16, f. 84r.

long and bitter dispute.[124] It is somewhat ironic that Hinton's theological stance received its strongest support from Francis Holyoake, rector of Southam, for Lever in his day had similar support from Holyoake's radical protestant predecessor, John Oxenbridge.

Surviving churchwardens' accounts demonstrate that archidiaconal visitations were regularly conducted and fees paid, although they do not always indicate whether they were personally conducted by the archdeacon. It is likely that Lever conducted his own first visitation in 1560, at which the wardens of Great Packington 'pd expenses at Mr Archdeacon's visitation at Coleshill, 14d. and for making our bill there 4d'. Their accounts for 1577-8 contain consecutive entries which suggest that Lever's successor conducted a visitation so soon after assuming office that they were obliged to verify his credentials:

> Spent at Master Lever's visitation for our charges & bill, 2s. 8d.
> Spent at Mr doctor James visitation our archdeacon, 3s. 2d.[125]

The consistory court was held in a chamber at the west end of Coventry Holy Trinity church. It is divided from the north aisle by two arches and although it is known today as the Archdeacon's Chapel its original dedication is unknown. The Holy Trinity churchwardens' accounts record the payment of 14d. 'for mending over the Court Chapel' in 1588 and a further 4s. 4d. in 1589 for 'six days & half work about making the Seat for the Bishop, in the Consistory'. In 1627 repairs were carried out 'at the west end of the Church over the Archdeacon's Court'.[126]

When immoral livers or offenders against ecclesiastical law were detected at archidiaconal visitations they were cited to appear at the archdeacon's court. While there are no records of such courts in Coventry and Lichfield, evidence that they were regularly convened comes from incidental references. At Foleshill in 1605 the churchwardens' accounts records that they not only paid 20d. 'for articles which we received at Dr Hinton's court', but also 2s. 4d. 'at the archdeacon's court in the month of February and another 2s. 4d. 'at the archdeacon's court in the month of April', with a further 1s. 'unto the chancellor's man'. Five years later the wardens paid 5s. when they found themselves back at the archdeacon's court, only to be 'called to Mr Dr Hinton's court afterwards' and mulcted a further 4s. 7d.[127]

An archidiaconal reprimand was not always conducive to good behaviour. In 1584 John Large and Nicholas Jewkes, parishioners of Little Packington, were summoned

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124. Oldridge, 'Conflicts', pp. 283-9.
125. WCRO, DR 158/19, no. 34.
126. T. Sharp, *History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry* (Birmingham, 1871), p. 99.
127. WCRO, DR 223/38, ff. 2r, 6r.

to appear at the archdeacon's court for fishing during the time of divine service on 29 July, together with John Dyall of the same parish, whose 'piping and dancing in his house detained divers other persons' on 23 August. Clearly angered by their humiliating experience, the three attended Evensong the following Sunday and 'disturbed...the minister and congregation unreverently', for which aggravated offence they were presented to the bishop himself.[128]

According to archives, Elizabethan archdeacons of Coventry, unlike their earlier Tudor predecessors, were resident and more assiduous in undertaking their supervisory obligations. Thomas Lever was certainly a persuasive orator, considering the powerful effect of his sermon upon the Holy Trinity congregation, but he was not averse to exercising coercive powers. In 1561, for instance, he compelled parishioners of Packington to remove their rood screen and ordered the wardens to report to the archdeacon's official when they had complied, or face the consequences.[129] Routine engagements such as the induction of incumbents, meanwhile, were sometimes delegated to rural deans.

2.7. Rural deans

Notwithstanding his extra-parochial responsibilities, a rural dean was in Hosker's words 'a subordinate figure at the very foot of the ladder of devolved responsibility'. R.A.R. Hartridge maintained that 'the office was not regarded as a step in advancement, but as a thankless burden that did nobody any good'. Deans, as Thomson pointed out, were of necessity resident within their own deaneries, since decanal responsibilities could be discharged only by one available to respond with promptitude to emergencies or engagements of a more routine nature. In Exeter diocese, Vage demonstrated that a 'man was chosen to serve as rural dean less because of seniority, experience or ability, and more because of the benefice he held', and that the office was associated with particular benefices. Moreover, they were elected by their peers. It should not be assumed, however, as Swanson has pointed out, that all dioceses followed 'an identical model'.[130]

Christopher Haigh demonstrated that in Lancashire 'the office of Dean was given to men of low standing', the consequence of which was that their disciplinary role

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128. LJRO, B/V/1/17, p. 177.
129. WCRO, DR 158/19, no. 10.
130. P. Hosker, 'The Register of Reginald Bowlers, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 1453-1459', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool (1978), p. 171; R.A.R. Hartridge, *A History of Vicarages in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1930), p. 154; A.H. Thompson, 'Diocesan organization in the Middle Ages archdeacons and rural deans', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 29 (1943), p. 189; Thomson, *Early Tudor Church and Society*, p. 118; Vage, 'The diocese of Exeter 1519-1641', p. 20; Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 26.

was ineffective in the face of pluralists, who tended to be men of intellectual weight and social influence. It was for that reason, perhaps, Haigh found the 'activity of rural deans...not easy to trace'. He thought, too, that since their sphere of authority was so limited, they probably lacked 'any real knowledge of parish life, for deaneries were not too large'.[131] What little evidence there is from Coventry archdeaconry suggests that its rural deans were usually beneficed incumbents such as David Chirbury, vicar of Newbold-on-Avon and rural dean of Coventry.[132]

Assistant clergy were eligible for appointment, although Martha Skeeters thought it 'exceptional' for a chantry priest to be rural dean of Bristol in 1531. He was not unique, for in 1534 the rural dean of Arden, Henry Somerland, was chantry priest at Meriden. His fellow deans were all beneficed incumbents, Richard Blokle[y], dean of Coventry, was vicar of Wolvey, John Crosse, dean of Stoneleigh, vicar of Offchurch, and Robert Myln[er] vicar of Marton.[133] Material concerning rural deans in Coventry archdeaconry is scarce, and little can be added to the sum total of knowledge about the activities of these officials.

Hosker suggested that by the 1530s 'the evolution of [other] offices...deprived the deans of much of their general utility and more important functions', with the result that they became functionaries possessing only local superintendence. Deans in the Gloucester diocese were treated with disdain by their new bishop, John Hooper, when he issued his Injunctions in 1551. Personally addressing his clergy deanery by deanery, Hooper directed each deanery chapter to assemble before him or his deputy four times annually to discuss theological questions and settle disputes.[134] In Lincoln diocese 'very little evidence survives to indicate how useful the rural deans were at this time' and 'no indication of what they were doing'.[135]

Effective episcopal oversight depended upon a chain of command percolating right down to the parishes. In consultation with the archdeacon, it was the diocesan bishop's prerogative to appoint rural deans, who were involved in a supervisory capacity, much as their modern counterparts today, but with somewhat wider and graver responsibilities where criminal matters were concerned. As chancellor of Norwich in August 1578, Thomas Becon composed a three-page missive to his

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131. C. Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester (1969), pp. 19, 37.
132. TNA: PRO C 1/1033/23-4; C 1/594/63.
133. M. Skeeters, *Community and Clergy: Bristol and the Reformation c.1530-c.1570* (Oxford,1993), p. 221 n. 3; LJRO, B/C/10i/1, f. 58r.
134. Hosker, 'Register of Reginald Bowles', p. 169; D.G. Newcombe, 'John Hooper's visitation and examination of the clergy in the diocese of Gloucester, 1551', in B.A. Kümin, ed., *Reformations Old and New: Essays on the Socio-Economic Impact of Religious Change c.1470-1630* (Aldershot,1996), pp. 65, 66.
135. Bowker, *Secular Clergy*, p. 36.

bishop on 'A Form of Government of the Church', in which he suggested making better use of *Decani rurales*.[136] Thomas Lever also made 'notes for some reformation', and during his episcopate Thomas Bentham proposed to 'revive or re-invigorate the office of rural dean'. Significantly, item 20 of Bentham's 1565 visitation injunctions specifically required incumbents to present defaulters 'unto your dean...every quarter once when he shall sit at any church within his deanery calling you before him'.[137]

Notwithstanding that Bentham 'wished to restore the role of the dean as administrator of discipline', it cannot be ascertained whether he actually appointed any for, as O'Day pointed out, 'no administrative records appear to be extant for the period 1560-5'. In a submission to the privy council in 1564, Bentham referred to his dependence upon 'mine Archdeacon Mr Lever, & other Rural Deans', leading O'Day to conclude that Bentham treated men of the calibre of Augustine Bernher and his successor at Southam, John Oxenbridge, as rural deans whether or not they 'were officially thus styled'. Indeed, it may well have been as rural dean that in 1572 Oxenbridge scrupulously supervised the payment of creditors following the death of John Bell, vicar of Napton.[138]

2.8. Typology of parochial clergy

It is important to distinguish between the various types of clergy because, although theoretically all priests shared an equal status, their appointments did not confer an equivalent social status. The parochial clergy, as Marshall said, 'comprehended a vast range of types...from richly beneficed rectors to poor salaried stipendiaries, taking in curates, chantry, and fraternity priests along the way'.[139] Much depended on the status of the benefice itself, or whether a religious house held the advowson. As for parochial assistants it is also necessary to introduce the different types of employment available to them.

Rectors were the freehold occupants of rectories, the most sought-after livings. They enjoyed all fruits of the benefice including tithes, fees and customary dues and, as a consequence, were wholly responsible for the cure of souls there, and also the maintenance and repair of the chancel of the parish church and the rectorial mansion. Vicars, on the other hand, while in normal circumstances they enjoyed

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136. Rodes, *Ecclesiastical Administration*, p. 115; *HMC* 9th Report, Part 2, pp. 195-8; O'Day, *English Clergy*, pp. 42-4.
137. P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (pb edn, Oxford, 1990), pp. 182-4; *VCH Staffordshire*, 3, p. 48; Frere and Kennedy, *Visitation Articles and Injunctions*, 3, p. 169.
138. O'Day, *English Clergy*, pp. 42-43; LJRO, B/C/11/1572, John Bell.
139. Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, pp. 127-8.

benefit of freehold, occupied cures where the rectorial income had been appropriated, usually by a monastery. When granting monastic requests to appropriate rectories, bishops routinely charged them to endow a vicarage to protect the rights and privileges of successive vicars, to pay them an adequate stipend, and to ensure that alms were regularly distributed to the poor of the parish. The appropriating monastery became the corporate rector, entitled to collect parochial tithes. As a *quid pro quo*, to discharge their spiritual and ministerial duties within the parish they were bound to appoint a priest and pay him a salary. This was often a mere pittance, but it may have been supplemented by small tithes, fees and customary dues. Stipendiary income varied according to the nature of the parish economy and was a particularly contentious problem in towns, where tithing was difficult to enforce.[140]

It is necessary to review the historical background to appropriations, for unless subsequently revised, the terms prescribed when vicarages were ordained operated right up to the time of the Dissolution. For example, when Mancetter was appropriated in 1450, Bishop Booth ordered Merevale Abbey to endow a vicarage with sixteen marks *per annum* and within two years to erect a suitable manse for the vicar and his successors. Thereafter, the abbey as patrons presented successive incumbents to their freehold.[141] Out of ninety-eight benefices in 1291, fifty-four were appropriated to monasteries of which thirteen, including two foreign houses, lay outside Warwickshire. Eight further monastic appropriations occurred before 1535, and there are examples of appropriated benefices changing hands.

Appropriations sometimes occurred without a vicarage being ordained, creating a third tier of parochial incumbent who enjoyed a somewhat fragile security of tenure. For example, when the cathedral priory appropriated Coventry St Michael in 1249, it duly ordained a vicarage there, but its dependent chapelries at Ansty, Exhall, Foleshill, Sowe, Stoke and Wyken, all in the vicinity of the city, were not similarly endowed.[142] Instead, the prior reserved to himself the right to appoint chaplains to serve these parishes. He could also dismiss them at will, for although they were responsible for the cure of souls they lacked the benefit of freehold, a legal right only conveyed at institution by the diocesan bishop and induction by the archdeacon. For that reason the occupation of such benefices prior to the Dissolution was not recorded in the episcopal registers. Tracing the succession of clergy through those parishes is, therefore, fraught with uncertainty. Known indiscriminately as chaplains,

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140. On appropriations see Hartridge, *A History of Vicarages*, and an excellent summary in Moorman, *Church Life in England*, esp. pp. 38-48.
141. LJRO, B/A/1/10, ff. 61r-3v. Chapter Four, below, demonstrates that monasteries sometimes temporarily relinquished patronal rights in return for a fee.
142. *VE* 3, p. 60.

stipendiaries or vicars, they received wages out of the lesser tithes and were usually allowed other customary offerings. Benefices in this category passed through a period of uncertain status after the Dissolution, when lay impropriators purchased rectories and, sometimes reluctantly, assumed responsibility for maintaining chancels and paying clergy stipends.

As for the place of the unbeneficed, the parochial system comprehended an impressive range of occupational roles for them. Incumbents of densely-populated or spatially large parishes in particular often hired one or more assistants - equivalent to modern curates. Subordinates would assist the incumbent in the execution of his responsibilities, performing such important duties as visiting the sick, taking services, officiating at funerals or weddings, without ever usurping the rights, privileges and obligations which went with the cure of souls. It is probably no exaggeration to claim that without such assistance, incumbents would have been hard pressed to maintain the pastoral role assigned to them. Under the direction of experienced clergy, assistants received ministerial training and developed pastoral skills, thus perpetuating the 'professional' and vocational attributes of the parochial ministry. Perhaps their practical role as continuators of parochial orthodoxy is an aspect of their importance that has not been fully appreciated.

As late as the 1540s, chantrists were not directly subject to the authority of the legal incumbent. They were appointed in accordance with the directions of a testator, often long-dead, who had provided an endowment to maintain a priest to offer daily mass 'for ever', for a stipulated period of time, or until funds were exhausted. Chantries were administered by testators' executors or their successors in perpetuity, and incumbents had no power to intervene, although there are examples of chantrists whose regulations required them to assist incumbents, short of compromising their independence. For that reason, and because many of them were preferred to benefices after the suppression of chantries in 1547, chantrists are here regarded as parochial clergy.

Twenty-two Coventry archdeaconry chantrists were identified in *Valor Ecclesiasticus*. In wills they are sometimes called 'ghostly father', which seems to imply that while discharging their somewhat more exclusive role some at least were engaged in a pastoral ministry. A distinction must be drawn between three separate groups of chantrists, the first having no immediate relevance to this study since they were members of self-governing chantry colleges (Astley, Bablake and Knowle), hospitals (Birmingham and Coventry) and guilds (Birmingham, Knowle, Mancetter and several in Coventry). The second group consisted of 'career' chantrists who spent many years, sometimes their whole ministry serving a single chantry. Careerists included men of the calibre such as Anthony Molineux, who served

Copston's Chantry in Coventry cathedral priory from 1528 until 1536.[143] The third and most elusive group of chantrists were chaplains hired for a specific period, whether for a single occasion, or for weeks, months or years.

Chantrists were both numerous and ubiquitous, yet there is a virtual silence about the men who performed this sacramental ministry. Their identities were rarely revealed although they were plainly obliged to co-operate with incumbents and function within the parochial system. How were testamentary bequests for chantrists advertised, and how were prospective applicants selected? It seems reasonable to suggest that the diocesan officials responsible for proving wills and entering details in the probate act book, acted as agents. Not only were they well-placed to collate details regarding location and terms of employment, but financial reward was a powerful incentive. Acting on behalf of fee-paying clerical clients they might have suggested prospective employers to approach, while acting on behalf of executors charged with satisfying testators' directions, they might have received remuneration for recommending suitable candidates.

Other opportunities for employment were offered by trade or religious guilds set up in many parishes, the former being particularly active in commercial centres such as Coventry where merchants and artisans concentrated for the transaction of business. Although guilds were primarily organised for the benefit of the laity, from whose ranks their officers were almost exclusively drawn, at their annual meeting guild members would appoint chaplains to offer daily mass for departed members' souls, to officiate at guild services and to act as custodians of such ecclesiastical goods and ornaments as the guild possessed. Chaplains were sometimes accommodated in property owned by the guild, but the extent of their accountability to the incumbent of the parish in which the guild had its chapel was probably peripheral and at best ambiguous. As with chantries, so with guilds, their religious *raison d'être* was extinguished once prayer for the dead was abolished by statute. Like many monks, some guild chaplains were also probably laicised, although many others joined the pool of redundant clergy who sought employment within the parochial structure.[144]

Chaplaincies also existed outside the parochial ministry, for example, in monasteries and convents where daily mass was celebrated until they, too, were suppressed in the 1530s and 1540s. Chaplains such as Roger Glen, Richard Grenhowe and Richard Whytacre of Nuneaton Abbey, were secular, not regular priests, attending to the spiritual welfare of monks and nuns, hearing their confessions and generally performing all the pastoral duties associated with their

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143. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f.14v; B/A/1/14iii, f. 35r.
144. LJRO, B/C/11/John Banwell, 1560. This former monk was a barber at Wolston when he died.

sacerdotal office. Furthermore, some monastic chaplains acted as administrators.[145] Hospitals, too, employed priests to minister to their inmates. Between 1542-7 John Wigston, chaplain of Ford's Hospital, Coventry, was paid 12d. *per annum* for the 'singing bread and wine' he provided as part of his pastoral ministry.[146] Many gentry and aristocratic households included chaplains. Some secular clergy entered a collegiate establishment, seeking there a congenial environment in which communal life was regulated by statutes drawn up at its foundation.

The so-called clerical proletariat included sacerdotal itinerants, peripatetic clergy who hired out their services to any parish, guild, or individual whether clerical or lay, willing to employ them on a short-term basis. Their multifarious activities are captured in archival sources with tantalising irregularity. They were variously described in records and, as Zell found in Kent, so did Bowker in Lincolnshire, lamenting that these men were 'notoriously difficult to trace' because they were 'always on the move from one subservient position to another'.[147] In Coventry archdeaconry, too, they were elusive to the extent that their role in the parochial structure makes them eminently worthy of scrutiny.

The wholesale transfer of many former monks and chantrists into the parochial ministry has an added significance. Their spiritual credentials must not be dismissed simply because circumstances forced them to adopt a different role from the one originally chosen. 'Conformity', asserted Walsham in a different context, 'needs to be seen as a positive option rather than a form of spineless apathy or ethical surrender'.[148] There is no evidence that before the dissolution of the monasteries or the suppression of chantries the majority of these men were remote or completely disengaged from the parochial ministry, or that they were incapable of becoming true pastors of their flocks. Indeed, many who transferred were probably ideally suited for the parochial ministry.

This discussion on clerical typology has emphasised both the equality of priests as far as their orders are concerned, and their unequal status in the hierarchical structure. It is important to bear this distinction in mind, for orders are conferred by divine grace, whereas the office held is merely a human appointment.

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145. BL, Harl. MS 594, f. 122v; A.D. Watkins, 'Society and economy in the northern part of the Forest of Arden, Warwickshire, 1350-1540', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham (1989), p. 65.
146. SBTRO, DR 10/1870, pp. 8r, 9v, 12r, 14r.
147. Zell, 'Personnel of the clergy in Kent', p. 514-515; M. Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: the Diocese of Lincoln Under John Longland 1521-1547* (Cambridge,1981), p. 126.
148. A. Walsham, '"Yielding to the extremity of the time": conformity, orthodoxy and the post-Reformation Catholic community", in P. Lake and M. Questier, *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 213.

2.9. The clerical community

Since the diocesan bishop resided in Staffordshire, the absence of an 'episcopal focal point' had one significant impact upon the clergy of Coventry archdeaconry for, as Skeeters remarked about Bristol, 'it added rather than detracted from the civic and personal levels of clerical community'. A further similarity was that Coventry's monastic cathedral, being headed by a prior and convent, lacked altogether a 'centralised cathedral clergy who might have distinguished themselves from the rest of the city's clergy'.[149] But one notable difference was that Bristol contained nineteen parishes churches, Coventry only two. Furthermore, before the 1530s their two incumbents were usually non-residents, men of substance who were accorded some kind of deferential primacy whenever they appeared in the city.

Turning to what Skeeters described as 'the civic and personal levels of clerical community', it seems natural to consider briefly the 'multiplicity of hierarchies which gave more strength to all the lower clergy'. Just as Bristol's civic 'cycle of rituals...symbolized the union of ecclesiastical and secular elements', so Coventry's clergy played a prominent role in the inaugural ceremonies of the corporation and the guilds. Indeed, as Charles Phythian-Adams has demonstrated, civic and guild officers were expected to take part in corporate acts of worship. Before the Reformation, the mayor and his entourage were 'expected to attend church daily' since this 'helped to legitimate authority'.[150] Perhaps the most telling evidence of the strong links between clergy and community is the number of chapels established in both parish churches by the city's trade guilds, at least seven in St Michael's and four in Holy Trinity.

Also striking is the frequency with which the register of Knowle Guild recorded the admission of groups of parishioners accompanied by one or more of their parish clergy. For example, John Boynyngton and several of his Foleshill congregation joined in 1504. He was one of many Coventry archdeaconry clergy who not only regularly attended dinners of the Corpus Christi Guild of Coventry and was named regularly in the pages of that guild's register, but also supported a religious guild in a small rural community.[151]

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149. Skeeters, *Community and Clergy*, pp. 32-3, 111. Bristol's experience was the reverse of Coventry's, for it had no cathedral until its former Augustinian Abbey church was elevated to cathedral rank in 1542.

150. Skeeters, *Community and Clergy*, pp. 32-3; C. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen: the communal year at Coventry 1450-1550', in P. Clark and P. Slack, eds, *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (London, 1972), p. 61.

151. W.B. Bickley, *The Register of the Guild of Knowle in the County of Warwick, 1451-1535* (Walsall, 1894), p.169; CCA, BA/B/Q/23/1, *passim*.

Left to their own devices, the city's subsidiary clergy 'formed a close-knit community' and clearly maintained good relations with the laity.[152] Evidence derives mainly from wills. For example, William Mylner, Thomas Morys and William Baillie among other assistant clergy made bequests to occupants of chambers in the clergy house known as Jesus Hall, and almost every clerical will of the period was witnessed by other clergy. The choice of witnesses and beneficiaries demonstrates that clerical friendships or associations often crossed social boundaries and suggests cordial relations existed between employers and their subordinates. William Baillie of St Michael's left 12d. each to Roger Cappe, vicar of Holy Trinity, William Mathewe, chantry priest of St Michael's, and John Caryngton of Corpus Christi Guild, and his best surplice to Simon Bellister, curate of St Michael's. In the same year the warden of Bablake College, Master Daubey, witnessed the will of Charles Bucke, a stipendiary of Holy Trinity, while in 1540 Thomas Fesshar of St Michael's bequeathed a spruce coffer to the Bishop of Bangor. Only one critical reservation was ever expressed and that in regard to a matter of theological conscience. William Queniborough stipulated in his will that only 'an honest priest which was never married say Mass daily' for him and his lay employers. His executors were never called upon to exercise their discretion, for Queniborough's will was dated as late as March 1559.[153]

Beneficed clergy and lowly chaplains alike solicited colleagues' prayers for their souls after death. John Bale, chaplain of Birmingham, in 1511 bequeathed £10 'to a certain honest priest to celebrate for my soul and the souls of all the faithful departed in the parish church of Birmingham, for two years'.[154] The multiple pluralist Walter Wolmer, rector of Solihull, dying in 1523 willed his executors to provide an 'honest secular priest to sing for my soul and all Christian souls in Warwick Collegiate Church for two years' and that he should receive an annual stipend of £6, to be paid at quarterly intervals.[155] In 1529 Richard Deping, vicar of Fillongley, left £6 'to a discreet secular priest to sing and pray for my soul in the parish Church of Fillongley aforesaid by the space and term of one whole year next after my decease'.[156] Also in 1529 Henry Blount, chaplain of Polesworth, instructed his executors to hire a priest for the space of three years at seven marks a year, to 'sing for me in Polesworth church, if the parish will find him a clerk to help him to say mass, or else

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152. P. Carter, 'Economic problems of provincial urban clergy during the Reformation', in P. Collinson and J. Craig, *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 151.
153. LJRO, B/C/10ii/1, p. 32 (William Mylner, 1531); B/C/11, (Thomas Morys, 1541); B/C/10i/4, p. 9r, (1543, William Baillie); B/C/11, (1543, Charles Bucke); B/C/10i/2, p. 3r (1540, Thomas Fesshar); B/C/11 (1559, William Queneborough).
154. TNA: PRO PROB 11, 2 Fetiplace.
155. TNA: PRO PROB 11, 7 Bodfelde, ff. 53v-4v.
156. TNA: PRO PROB 11, 6 Jankyn, ff. 48r-v.

he shall sing at Grendon church'.[157] In 1536 John Ynglysshe, curate of Warmington, bequeathed eight marks annually to 'an honest priest to sing for the wealth of my soul and all Christian souls for the space of five years'.[158]

Notwithstanding the warmth exhibited towards other secular clergy, their wills disclose a disdain for monastic establishments which Knight also observed among the laity.[159] Only a handful made bequests to friars, suggesting that secular-regular relations were less cordial than in Bristol. In 1524 the non-resident vicar of Holy Trinity, Thomas Orton, left 20s. and 10s. to Coventry Carthusians and Carmelites respectively. Similarly in the rural districts, few bonds of friendship and mutual support were apparent between seculars and regulars. Hugh Lehee, rector of Fenny Compton and a diocesan official, in 1502 left 10s. to the Coventry friars, and in 1507 Richard Power, curate of Milverton left them 6d. Walter Wolmer, rector of Solihull, gave generously towards friaries in Atherstone, Warwick and Coventry and even requested burial in the Coventry Whitefriars' church. Another benefactor was Thomas Palmer, vicar of Fillongley, who left an unspecified number of books of sermons and theological tomes to the conventual library and 40s. to his 'kinsman' there, Friar William.[160] In 1523 Walter Wolmer described the vicar and three curates of Warwick St Nicholas as his 'well-beloved friends'. A moving bequest by John Cross, vicar of Offchurch, in 1557, required

> a solemn Dirige and Mass of requiem executed of my old friend Thomas More & that he will vouch Safe to bury my body of his Charity, unto whom I give and bequeath my sorrel nag, best saddle & bridle, for his great pains & kindness at this time & all others which I require my executor Thomas Cross to see him well recompensed & looked upon besides the debt I owe him.

Appointing More as his overseer, Cross dubbed him 'my old loving brother'.[161]

Following the 1559 Settlement clerical bequests assumed fresh dimensions. Chantry endowments and multiple gifts to churches disappeared as ministerial patterns evolved. In March 1566 the unmarried Leonard West of Little Packington willed his neighbour ('my friend') William Raves, vicar of Great Packington, to bury him and bequeathed 6s. 8d. In the same year, John Fenton of Coleshill, also unmarried, left a furred gown to 'my friend' Richard Wenlock, vicar of Meriden. The closest any Elizabethan clerical testator came to displaying affection towards

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157. LJRO, B/C/10ii/1.
158. LJRO, B/C/11, John Ynglysshe, 1537.
159. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', pp. 42, 44, 45, 48, 50.
160. Skeeters, *Community and Clergy*, pp. 16-7; TNA: PRO PROB 11, 29 Bodfelde, f. 226r (Thomas Orton); 20 Blamyr, f. 172r (Hugh Lehee); 34 Adeane, f. 270 (Richard Power); 7 Bodfelde, ff. 53v-4r (Walter Wolmer); LJRO, B/C/10i/2, p. 31 (Thomas Palmer).
161. TNA: PRO Prob 11, 7 Bodfelde, ff. 53v-4v; LJRO, B/C/10i/5, p. 125r.

fellow-clergy was in 1572, when the rector of Whitnash, Edward Bullyphante, a married man, appointed his 'faithful friend' William Bothe, a former Birmingham guild priest, as his supervisor.[162] But celibacy was no longer an obligation and by 1562, fifteen out of seventy-two clergy in Coventry archdeaconry were married.[163] Provision for wives and families became a regular a feature of clergy wills, replacing bequests to churches. Perhaps this also explains why specific references to clerical friendships appeared less abundantly after the Settlement, although it is clear that the sense of clerical community remained strong.

A novel phenomenon which enlarged the sense of community among the parochial clergy was the emergence of clerical dynasties, in Coventry archdeaconry as elsewhere.[164] For example, after twelve years as vicar of Leamington Hastings, Robert Holme was in 1570 succeeded by his son, Matthew. When Martin Delene died in 1611, having been rector of Ashow since 1586, his son Timothy, currently curate of Kenilworth, was presented. William Drax's reputation for drunkenness and idle preaching habits during his incumbency as vicar of Stoneleigh (1564-98) was clearly exaggerated, for it was there that he taught his son Thomas the rudiments of the Christian Faith and encouraged him to seek ordination. Thomas was recorded as curate of Coventry St Michael in 1597 and 1610, and became vicar of Colwich, Staffordshire, in 1613.[165]

Attempts to enlighten the biblical and theological competence of the parochial clergy were probably instrumental in encouraging them to develop and share their critical awareness of religious literature. About 1547, 'Injunctions given to the clergy' required 'the Priests in, and about [Coventry], being now but meanly or scant learned...except the Vicars of the Churches of the Trinity and saint Michael's...be present at all, & shall daily, on the working days, receive singular and open lessons of divinity'.[166] Books featured in bequests to fellow clergy throughout the sixteenth century. William Mylner left 'a book called *Hampole*' to his friend Harry Marler; John Wellys left two unnamed books to John Bateman of St Michael's; Thomas Corben left a Latin Bible to his colleague Henry Hall, also of St Michael's. Few contemporary Coventry archdeaconry clergy wills and inventories suggested a library as comprehensively well-stocked as that of Hugh Symons, vicar of Coventry St Michael from 1553-77, who bequeathed to his grandson, also Hugh, 'all my books specified

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162. LJRO, B/C/11/1566 (Leonard West); B/C/11/1566 (John Fenton); B/C/10i/7, f. 13r (Edward Bullyphante).
163. CCC Camb. MS 97, ff. 29r-33r.
164. O'Day, *English Clergy*, p. 161.
165. LJRO, B/V/1/22, p. 5; B/V/1/23, p. 97; W.N. Landor, *Staffordshire Incumbents and Parochial Records (1530-1680)*, SHC (London, 1916), pp. 74, 76.
166. T. Sharp, *History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry* (Birmingham, 1871), p. 125.

named and expressed in a certain Catalogue thereof made'. In the gatehouse chamber appraisers found no fewer than forty-one books, which they valued at a mere 41s., although whether these were included in the catalogue is not made clear. Unfortunately, none of the titles is recorded even though one of the appraisers was a clergyman, Richard Wenlocke, vicar of Meriden. He himself died the following year leaving, among other bequests to William Shuttleworth, vicar of Great Packington, his 'book of Marlorate's work upon the Gospel of St Matthew & my little Bible in verses, and two books which I did lend to Mr Tunkes which was then schoolmaster of Coleshill the one called a *Callapine* and the other had Gregory Charlet's name, parson of Berkswell, written in it'. Elizabethan clergy came to exhibit an easy familiarity with the authorship of the books they studied, reflecting the intensive educative programme which required them to meet at regular intervals for biblical and theological debate. Perhaps it also enhanced their recognition of clerical community, for clergy were more than hitherto inclined to pass on their books and to identify titles and authors.[167]

2.10. Conclusion

Principally, this chapter has concentrated on the settings and personnel most affecting the parochial clergy of Coventry archdeaconry in the sixteenth century. Its four heterogeneous deaneries reflected Warwickshire's own artificial genesis, which has been amply demonstrated here by the discovery of the extraordinarily complex situation in Stoneleigh deanery, where archidiaconal jurisdiction and secular administration merge and strangely overlap diocesan territorial boundaries, giving rise to inconsistencies which require further exploration.

Priests, but not necessarily churches, were noted in thirty north Warwickshire settlements in 1086. By 1291 its parochial system appears to have been substantially complete, with 100 parishes explicitly identified. Following the dissolution of the monasteries the crown sold into lay ownership numbers of advowsons formerly held by monasteries, a process of redistribution which affected the status of some benefices. This chapter has traced how, between 1291 and 1600, changing vicissitudes brought a change of status to many parishes, and how this affected the clergy who served them. It also establishes, and by reference to the

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167. LJRO, B/C/10ii/1, p. 32 *(*1531, William Mylner); B/C/11 (1538, John Wellys), B/C/10i/5, p. 36v (1551, Thomas Corben), B/C/11. Amusingly, Hugh senior persisted in calling his grandson his 'niece'! Hugh junior's father, Hacker, was rector of Elmdon (1576-1634). LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, f. 43v; B/A/1/15, f. 47r; B/C/11. O'Day, *English Clergy*, pp. 163-9, provides further evidence of 'clerical friendships [arising from] a common educational background and shared "scholarly", "professional" and religious interests'.

sources explains how, the number of Coventry archdeaconry parishes in 1600 may be reckoned (Appendix 1).

Care has been taken to emphasise the physical setting because this helps to understand how parochial clergy came to allocate their pastoral priorities. Territorially extensive parishes clearly required incumbents to spend more time in the saddle than small compact parishes or densely-populated urban parishes. And reference to the well-developed road system has been necessary to explain how relatively easy it would have been to assemble clergy for professional meetings, and for friendships to be forged between like-minded clergy within and beyond Coventry archdeaconry. The focus then moved from settings to personnel.

Holy orders, the sequence through which aspiring clergy progressed towards exercising a parochial ministry, were bestowed by the laying on of a bishop's hands with prayer. Four lesser orders were repudiated by the reformed Church, which retained the scriptural deacons, priests and bishops. Importantly, this chapter has introduced a novel interpretation of the meaning of ordination titles, arguing that the fairly rapid and uniform adoption of monastic titles was introduced to control the secular employment of ordained persons who subsequently slipped beyond the reach of episcopal sanction. Since monastic heads were respected figureheads and enjoyed the confidence of the 'managerial' classes, they would have had access to information regarding the vacation of benefices. Their familiarity with such issues doubtless explains why monasteries came to dominate the granting of ordination titles.

Occasions when diocesan bishops visited Coventry archdeaconry were few at any time during the sixteenth century. Yet their influence was immense. For example, no man could be ordained except by a bishop. And no incumbent could be instituted without first being presented to the bishop and making an oath of spiritual obedience to him. Clergy were under obligation to present themselves at episcopal visitations, at which any suspected of transgressing ecclesiastical law were liable to be summoned to appear before the bishop's own consistory court.

Yet the bishops were not wholly in control, for they were unable to exercise any authority in 'peculiar jurisdictions'. Documentary evidence has been produced to demonstrate how successive bishops lamented the limitation of their authority, and how others could take advantage of it. Although peculiar jurisdictions held their own spiritual courts and had probate of wills, it is strange that bishops did not complain that they were losing revenue from that source.

Their more immediate supervisory role required archdeacons to hold an annual visitation, although no sixteenth-century record of them has survived for Coventry archdeaconry. There is therefore no indication as to how actively the earlier

archdeacons pursued their task, but the evidence of churchwardens' accounts suggests that Lever and Hinton zealously performed their archidiaconal duties. Material in respect of the activities of rural deans is extremely slight, but there is strong evidence that Bentham and Lever were particularly keen to enhance the office.

Parochial clergy, on the other hand, were numerous and difficult to categorise because there were so many different levels at which they operated. Incumbents' benefice of freehold was protected by law, but contracts negotiated between incumbents and their assistants carried no such guarantee, although breaches of contract could be challenged in the courts.

A well-developed sense of community seems to have characterised clergy at all levels. They witnessed each others' wills, were required to participate in funeral and burial rites of their departed brethren, were hired to recite Masses on behalf of testators' passage through purgatory, and received bequests of books and professional goods such as vestments, as well as articles of clothing, in testamentary dispositions. The absence of a tier of ambitious 'clerical elites', characteristic of secular cathedral chapters, almost certainly enhanced fraternal relations, particularly in Coventry itself. Only when theological perspectives were re-aligned and clergy were granted the freedom to marry was this intimate sense of clerical community partially abandoned in favour of deeper commitment to wives and family dependents.

The religious turbulence which so dramatically changed English ecclesiastical settings in the sixteenth century provided unique opportunities for a radical restructuring of the diocesan and parochial system and, indeed, of abolishing episcopal government altogether in favour of a continental protestant pattern. Notwithstanding that the most potent symbol of the 'Old Faith' in Coventry archdeaconry, the cathedral church itself, was razed to the ground, the apostolic succession of bishops was retained within a Church both Catholic and Reformed. Moreover, nothing was done to overhaul the existing diocesan and parochial models of Church government, and ecclesiastical courts were preserved almost entirely in their accustomed fashion.[168]

That more radical change was not imposed suggests that whatever their private opinion of the system they had inherited, the contemporary authorities were obliged to operate within it and enforce it. Crucially, however, in an age when religious sensitivities were so disturbed, this worked to their advantage because of the overwhelming need to re-assure the majority of English churchgoers with explicit

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168. G.W.O. Addleshaw, *Rectors, Vicars and Patrons in Twelfth and Early Thirteenth-Century Canon Law* (York, 1956), p. 3.

gestures of continuity and stability. There is no evidence to suggest that most responded with anything other than apparent contentment that the parochial structures had survived virtually intact, whether or not they deplored the passing of familiar patterns of worship. The Elizabethan Settlement offered them sufficient environmental continuity to absorb the unsavoury consequences of religious fratricide and to come to terms with - even appreciate - that which Ingram so aptly described as the 'aesthetic and emotional appeal of the Anglican liturgy'.[169] Superficially, then, and 'from one point of view', it would appear that the Settlement 'settled nothing', for both the administrative and the hierarchical structures survived the sixteenth century.[170] Having delineated the settings within which those tiers of clergy and the laity operated, the thesis continues with an investigation into the numerical strength and deployment of the parochial clergy themselves.

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169. J. Maltby, *Prayer Book People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 36-52; C. Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding Their Peace* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 38-9; M. Ingram, 'From Reformation to toleration: popular religious cultures in England, 1540-1690', in T. Harris, ed., *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 112.
170. P. Collinson and J. Craig, *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 16.

CHAPTER 3

NUMBERS AND DEPLOYMENT

Introduction

Both quantitatively and qualitatively, the clerical cohort played a significant role in English society. It is important, therefore, to consider the number of parochial clergy during the sixteenth century and their pastoral impact within Coventry archdeaconry. England in 1500 was a nation with a huge clerical constituency - perhaps as many as 40,000 in a population of about three million, so clergy were everywhere a familiar sight. For some, ordination was a professional qualification since universities, being Church establishments, required academic members to be at least in minor orders. Others in minor orders were employed by the crown, which endowed them with benefices in lieu of a salary. Most clergy entered the pastoral ministry, albeit few were called to a benefice. Their ubiquitous and conspicuous presence is a clear commentary on the religious aspirations of English parishioners and fully justifies this investigation into their numerical state, particularly since historians such as Margaret Bowker, Tim Cooper and Michael Zell, have also made regional studies of the number of sixteenth-century clergy.[1]

It is a compelling subject because there was such an astonishing transformation of the parochial ministry both in numbers and in character, during the course of the sixteenth century. This chapter's principal aims are to calculate the number of parochial clergy employed in Coventry archdeaconry at various intervals during the sixteenth century; to examine how those clergy were deployed; to compare the ratio of beneficed to unbeneficed as the century progressed; and to investigate the recruitment and ordination of candidates to the ministry especially in the wake of mid-century religious crises. These aims will be marshalled in support of a basic two-pronged objective: to determine the extent to which numerical fluctuations

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1. M. Bowker, 'The Henrician Reformation and the parish clergy', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 50 (1979), pp. 30-47; T.N. Cooper, 'The secular clergy of the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the early sixteenth century', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham (1992); M. Zell, 'The personnel of the clergy in Kent, in the Reformation period', *English Historical Review* 89 (1974), pp. 513-33.

facilitated or hindered the work of the parochial clergy. It is conceded that contemporaries were probably ignorant of the 'implications of so fundamental a change for perceptions of the ministry'.[2]

The sequential arrangement exposes both short-term aberrations and more durable trends. Unbeneficed clergy will receive expansive consideration here because, with the exception of fluctuations following Elizabeth's accession, there appears to have been no difficulty filling vacant benefices. Evidence suggests that except for normally brief interregna, most benefices were occupied at any given moment during the first half of the sixteenth century.

3.1. The national context

The nature of the job itself requires attention. Many in the early sixteenth century were attracted to the Church as a career, for ordination conferred status and it offered a large variety of opportunities for employment. Most ordination candidates were probably not motivated by delusions of promotion to high office but were content, even happy, with a more lowly role. The concept that clerics were permanently anxious for and frustrated by lack of 'promotion' is a touch anachronistic, for few would have harboured expectations greater than the simple chaplaincy to which they were temperamentally and intellectually best suited. For such men a benefice would have been the dizzy height of ambition.

Comment on the numerical strength of the clergy in the sixteenth century has often foundered on the question of the unbeneficed. Urban studies have best succeeded in uncovering evidence of this hugely under-recorded class, largely because of corporate bureaucracy and a greater abundance of wills. Martha Skeeters identified many assistants in her analysis of the Bristol clergy, yet Zell lamented of the two Kent dioceses, Canterbury and Rochester, that 'one of the most difficult problems is to estimate the overall number of available clergy at different periods within the county as a whole' - a sentiment expressed by researchers in other dioceses.[3] This is hardly surprising, for relevant statistics were unavailable either in diocesan registries or government departments. Some clergy vanished without trace, persuading another Kent historian that if 'the large number of "disappeared" incumbents is to be accounted for in detail, research into every diocesan archive in the country is necessary'.[4]

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2. P. Marshall, *The Face of the Pastoral Ministry in the East Riding, 1525-1595* (York, 1995), p. 4.
3. M. Skeeters, *Community and Clergy: Bristol and the Reformation c.1530-c.1570* (Oxford,1993), *passim;* Zell, 'Personnel of the clergy in Kent', p. 516.
4. C. Buckingham, 'The movement of clergy in the diocese of Canterbury, 1552-1562', *Recusant History* 14 (1977-78), p. 219. A national database of clergy presently being compiled under the

Unbeneficed clergy were far more numerous in 1500 than they were at the close of the Tudor period in 1603. A.K. McHardy polarised 'historians contemplating the unbeneficed [who] are apt to comment on their numerousness', and others who 'wonder how, by the 1520s, their numbers had decreased'. R.N. Swanson reckoned that in 1500 there were approximately 26,500 secular clergy in England and Wales - significantly fewer than J.R.H. Moorman's estimated 40,000 'at least' ministering in England's 9,500 parishes in the thirteenth century. If, as seems probable, most interregna were brief, then the shortfall of 13,500 can only be reconciled by assuming a substantial reduction in the number of openings for the unbeneficed. G.J. Stretch, on the other hand, asserts that the Church had never 'represented so popular a career as it did in the early years of the reign of Henry VIII'.[5]

Such lowly aspirations are not to be derided, for as Peter Marshall has well demonstrated, the priestly role was both multifarious and always burdened with grave spiritual responsibilities. Nor was an ordinand bereft of training, for not only was he groomed for sacerdotal servitude by his parochial clergy, but in his continuing ministry he was facilitated by the availability of literature on what Patrick Collinson describes as 'the technicalities of his trade - or profession'. More significantly, Collinson ascribes these manuals of instruction as being 'not so much [for] the privileged clergy who were beneficed as for the small army of stipendiary priests upon whom the performance of pastoral duties so often depended'.[6]

In this sense, thought Collinson, it was 'absurd to suggest that the pre-Reformation clergy were utterly lacking in "professional" qualities'. Pointing out that 'to be a beneficed parish priest was only one of several options available to "clerks"' in the medieval Church, Collinson went on to pose an important question. 'Did "the rise of the parochial clergy" imply the "emergence and consolidation" of one of the professional groups diversifying modern English society?' In answering his own question he argued against Rosemary O'Day's appealing notion. 'In some important respects', he believed, 'the "parish priest" in this typical, late-medieval

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direction of Dr K. Fincham will help solve some of these problems.

5. A.K. McHardy, 'Careers and disappointments in the late-medieval Church: some English evidence', in W.J. Sheils and D. Wood, eds, *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay* (Oxford, 1989), p. 129; R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (pb edn, Oxford, 1993), p. 30. He arrived at this figure by assuming the number of parishes to be 8,800 and guessing that three clergy per parish was a 'not unreasonable' complement; J.R.H. Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1946), p. 52; G.J. Stretch, 'The clergy and administration of the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield under Bishop John Hals, 1459-90' unpubl. M.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford (1990); p. 123.

6. P. Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994); P. Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625* (Oxford, 1982), p. 99; W.A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955), esp. chapters 9 and 10 on manuals of instruction and expositions on religion and morality.

sense...was more of a "professional" than the seventeenth-century parson', and it was 'quite erroneous to suggest that the effect of the Reformation was actually to "deprofessionalize" the clerical role'.[7]

It was Collinson, too, who demonstrated that there was official 'recognition of the need to instruct the great submerged mass of ignorant parsons', while leaving the implementation of ways and means to local enterprise.[8] As shown above, Elizabethan bishops were disturbed by the lack of learned ministers and bewailed their lack of opportunity to attract more into their own dioceses. Yet as the century progressed and lay literacy increased, the emergent idea of an educated man in every parish began to prosper as more and more graduates were ordained. Whether an arts degree made a man more pastorally effective, however, was a question left unaddressed, but there is clear evidence that training in ministerial skills was vigorously encouraged.[9]

Estimates of the total clerical population on the eve of the Reformation range between 20-40,000, but nobody is really sure.[10] A wide margin of tolerance should be allowed, therefore, when calculating the number of parochial clergy during the sixteenth century. Coventry and Lichfield was not the only English diocese to experience a reduction in the number of clergy during the century's religious upheavals. The smooth transfer of benefices from one incumbent to another was temporarily interrupted by political and religious machinations which created a shortage of capable clergy willing to accept benefices. For instance, 'the problem of finding able ministers remained grave' in the newly-created see of Peterborough in 1560. That year, a survey of 257 Northamptonshire parishes revealed a known work-force of 229, but twenty-one vacant benefices and a further twenty-seven held by non-resident incumbents.[11]

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7. Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, pp. 97, 99; R. O'Day, *The English Clergy: the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession 1558-1642* (Leicester, 1979); R. O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1450-1800* (Harlow, 2000).

8. P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (pb edn, Oxford, 1990), p. 170.

9. See below, section 3.3, for discussion on clerical education.

10. It has been variously reckoned that there must have been 23,500, or at least 20,000 clergy, 'serving in the roughly 9,500 parishes in 1535'. Even the number of parishes is uncertain, although it has been calculated that there were precisely 8,838 rectories, of which 3,307 had been appropriated with vicarages, in round figures, roughly '9,000 parishes in medieval England'. C. Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), p. 5; R. O'Day, 'The anatomy of a profession: the clergy of the Church of England', in W. Prest, ed., *The Professions in Early Modern England* (Beckenham, 1987), p. 30; P. Carter, 'Royal taxation of the English parish clergy, 1535-58', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Cambridge (1994), p. 130; D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England Vol. II* (repr. Cambridge, 1961) p. 291; P. Heath, *English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (Toronto, 1969), p. 27.

11. The diocese covered Northamptonshire and Rutland. W.J. Sheils, *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558-1610*, Northamptonshire Record Society 30 (Northampton, 1979), pp. 21, 90.

Desperate straits give substance to Thomas Bentham's letter to his neighbouring Bishop Sandys of Worcester, in November 1560, advising him 'I lack many good ministers'. Edmund Grindal's letter to Conrad Hubert, the Strasbourg preacher, also bewailed the 'great dearth of godly ministers', similarly reported the length and breadth of England during the 1560s. The prelates' adjectival 'good' and 'godly' suggest a qualitative nuance, for what they lamented was lack of evangelical vigour as much as declining vocations.[12] Public esteem for the ministry had fallen so low that able men were deterred from entering a profession which inspired such little confidence.[13] Consequently, Elizabeth's first archbishop, Matthew Parker, and his newly-appointed suffragans, sought desperately to encourage men to offer themselves for ordination to strengthen a depleted and demoralised work-force. There was a ready response, but the mediocre quality of those coming forward for ordination was disappointing. Gradually ordinands' educational standards attained levels more compatible with the kind of pastoral ministry envisaged by the reformers, but many still lacked either the intellectual capacity to rouse their parishioners or the talent for social engagement. The dire, but temporary, shortage of clergy begs questions regarding the recruitment of candidates for ordination which must now be addressed.

3.2. Ordinations

Recruitment of ordination candidates seems to have been more successful in the early sixteenth century than at any time before or since. It is important to examine this phenomenon, which has also attracted the attention of scholars such as Margaret Bowker (Lincoln), Claire Cross (York) and Michael Zell (Kent).[14] What gives added momentum is a sudden and dramatic fall in the number of vocations during the 1520s, raising questions which are difficult to answer. Despite attempts by many historians, none has yet provided a completely satisfactory explanation to one of the most puzzling features of the sixteenth-century Church.

Having reached a peak in the early sixteenth century, the numbers ordained in England dropped sharply after about 1520. The correlation between falling vocations, economic considerations, uncertainties following the break with Rome,

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12. NLW, 4919D, f. 64; H. Robinson, *Zurich Letters*, Parker Society (2 vols, Cambridge, 1842, 1845), 2, p. viii.

13. C. Haigh, 'Anticlericalism and clericalism, 1580-1640', in N. Aston and M. Cragoe, eds, *Anticlericalism in Britain c.1500-1914* (Stroud, 2000), p. 19.

14. Bowker, 'Henrician Reformation and the parish clergy', pp. 30-47; C. Cross, 'Ordinations in the diocese of York 1500-1630', in C. Cross, ed., *Patronage and Recruitment in the Tudor and Early Stuart Church* (York, 1996), pp. 1-19; Zell, 'Personnel of the clergy in Kent', pp. 513-33.

and particularly the dissolution of the monasteries and later the chantries, has been variously interpreted. To Stretch, it reflected changes in lay attitudes rather than episcopal policy, for 'underlying economic or demographic factors could not account for a transformation that was both so rapid and of such dramatic proportions'.[15]

Cooper found that among 'the possible explanations put forward...two in particular seem most convincing', namely, taxation and 'over-supply of priests'.[16] There is little to indicate how many of those ordained found employment in Coventry archdeaconry. It is argued here, therefore, that economic prudence would have forbidden an annual intake of priests and deacons exceeding the number required to fill current and imminent vacancies among the unbeneficed.

Since O'Day attributed 'the decline in recruits...to the apparently high standards of admission enforced during the reign' of Edward VI, it is interesting to note J.C.H. Aveling's suggested that a shortage of places at schools and universities 'discouraged applicants for ordination'. The most likely cause, however, was the 'progressive demoralization of the clergy from 1529 onwards', an opinion expressed by Marshall which resonates very strongly with conclusions drawn during this present research.[17]

Indeed, taking up Marshall's theme, Diarmaid MacCulloch was also led to conclude that they were 'an indication of shattered morale amid destructive change', echoing R.L. Storey's argument that innovative Henrician policies precipitated the dramatic fall in the number of ordinands even before Mary ascended the throne in 1553. Storey considered that anticlerical legislation was responsible, while Christopher Haigh was positively certain that 'attacks upon the clergy which began in 1529 had an immediate impact on ordinations'. Whether a festering anticlericalism among the laity discouraged the recruitment of candidates for ordination is unlikely, however.[18]

It is widely accepted that the active constituents of the heretical and anticlerical movement known as Lollardy, for instance, involved only a tiny proportion of the

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15. Stretch, 'Clergy and administration', p. 123.
16. Cooper, 'Secular clergy', pp. 48-9.
17. R. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment in England in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods, with special reference to the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1972), p. 226; J.C.H. Aveling, 'The English clergy, Catholic and Protestant, in the 16th and 17th centuries', in W. Haase, ed., *Rome and the Anglicans: Historical and Doctrinal Aspects of Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations* (Berlin, 1982), p. 80; Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, p. 230.
18. D. MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England 1547-1603* (Basingstoke, 1990), p. 111; R.L. Storey, 'Ordinations of secular priests in early Tudor London', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 33 (1989), p. 129; C. Haigh, 'Anticlericalism and the English Reformation', in C. Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 71.

population.[19] Furthermore, both J.J. Scarisbrick and Eamon Duffy have mustered evidence to support their view that the generality of parishes were thriving and well supported.[20] On the other hand, A.G. Dickens maintained that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the Church and the clergy, whose representative role was frequently brought into question, often as the result of the personal shortcomings of the clergy. Tithes were cited as the source of bitter tensions between incumbent and parishioner, as also was the former's insistence on receiving payment of mortuaries and other ecclesiastical dues. Haigh refuted this, insisting that the Reformation itself spawned anticlericalism, and that zealous Protestant clergy came to be disliked because of their uncompromising attitudes.[21]

Whilst not disagreeing with this, Marshall insisted that tensions had always existed and that post-Reformation clergy were just as likely to protest about the lack of esteem by the laity as their predecessors a generation or more earlier. By then, however, the grounds for demanding such deference had shifted, for whereas pre-Reformation priests were thought to hold the key to salvation as dispensers of the sacraments, post-Reformation ministers demanded recognition as holding the key to salvation through their preaching and exposition of the scriptures. Marshall lamented that complaints of ill-feeling against the clergy were more frequent and more numerous from the 1540s.[22]

Except for its prevalence among 'particular interest groups' such as common lawyers, J.A.F. Thomson doubted both the character and the extent of anticlericalism and could find 'little reason' to suppose that parishioners were habitually inclined to lack respect for the Church. He suggested that while lay-clerical tensions were inevitable, 'the balance between goodwill in some places and ill will in others cannot be satisfactorily measured'. Despite the potential for conflict and a wealth of documentation drawing attention to 'individual hostility, with violence on clerics', Swanson saw 'remarkably little evidence for real anticlericalism' at the parish level.[23]

Dismissing arguments 'to reduce anticlericalism to the grievances of common lawyers', Nicholas Tyacke robustly asserted that 'revisionists are in danger of scoring an own goal', accusing them of being 'prone to belittle the power of ideas in bringing about the Reformation'. It was, insisted Tyacke, the 'subversive potential

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19. C. Harper-Bill, 'Who wanted the English Reformation?', *Medieval History* 2 (1992), pp. 71-2.
20. J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984); E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven and London, 1992).
21. A.G. Dickens, 'The shape of anti-clericalism and the English Reformation', in E.I. Kouri and T. Scott, eds, *Politics and Society in Reformation Europe* (Basingstoke, 1987), pp. 390-1, 395; Haigh, *English Reformations*; Haigh, 'Anticlericalism and the English Reformation', p. 74.
22. Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, pp. 228-9.
23. J.A.F. Thomson, *The Early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529* (London, 1993), p. 291; Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 259.

particularly of the doctrine of justification by faith alone' which undermined 'medieval Catholic teaching and practice'. Consequently, the 'great round of masses, prayers, penances, pilgrimages and related observances' became 'largely irrelevant' and, thus marginalised, 'radically reduced the role of both priests and ecclesiastical institutions'.[24]

The latest contributor to the discussion is Ethan Shagan, who challenges revisionists who have simply 'inverted existing scholarship', particularly Haigh for his 'aggressive' mocking of the concept of anticlericalism. Shagan countered with a 'new perspective' aimed to 're-establish substantial links between religious innovation, royal policy and outbreaks of...attacks against priests', giving many persuasive examples in support. Widespread anticlericalism has not been detected in Coventry archdeaconry, notwithstanding that the city itself was home to a group of dissidents. In 1542, two of six accused of contravening the Six Articles denounced priests as knaves, but they may have been motivated by a feud with John Ramridge, vicar of Coventry St Michael. On the other hand, Mark Knight found 'little evidence of anticlerical feeling in the city'. Indeed, he declared that 'citizens were content with [the clergy]'.[25]

Further documentary evidence has been detected which supports Knight's suggestion of a long-standing acrimonious relationship between John Ramridge, vicar of St Michael's, and various citizens of Coventry. Some malcontent lay persons present at a synod held in Holy Trinity church in October 1542 happily seized an opportunity to denounce him for his observations on taxation during a sermon he preached on that occasion. A commission of enquiry was duly appointed and the 38-year-old incumbent was indicted to respond to a set of interrogations. Several deponents purported to have heard a particularly colourful analogy. 'When the King's portion and the Curates' wages be taken out of his benefice that then his part thereof was like a *banbery chese*, that is to say, nothing but parings'. Challenged to explain a statement allegedly bordering on treason, Ramridge denied preaching the words, but agreed that 'he paid out three standing portions'. The affair soured relations between Ramridge and his parishioners for years to come, especially after he was obliged to recant strongly-held opinions on transubstantiation from his own pulpit.[26]

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24. N. Tyacke, 'Introduction: Re-thinking the English Reformation', in N. Tyacke, ed., *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London, 1998), pp. 10-1.
25. E.H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 132; M. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry 1485-1558', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (1985), p. 556.
26. TNA: PRO C 47/7/9; E 347/17/1; Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', pp. 506-9. Ramridge must be added to the 'not more than twenty cases' of clergy in difficulties with the Council, 'almost all of them under suspicion of seditious utterances', according to W.K. Jordan, *Edward VI The Threshold of Power* (London, 1970), pp. 250-1.

A personality clash probably lay behind an appeal by John Radeley soon after he became Master of the Tailors' Craft of Coventry. He complained that Robert Louthe, recently dismissed as Tailors' chaplain, had concealed 'ornaments and jewels' of which he had been granted custody. Clearly, Louthe resented his dismissal and refused to hand over the goods 'unless he stand still priest of the Crafts'. Radeley was incensed because Louthe 'excites divers variances', even bringing 'actions afore the Mayor and bailiffs', hence he petitioned the Lord Chancellor for a ruling against Louthe. The result is not recorded, but the case illustrates how anticlericalism, which in this case was directed against an individual rather than a whole class, could be inflamed by a priest's stubborn refusal to accept dismissal and ungracious attempt to bargain.[27]

Whether Thomas Holmes, a priest of Coventry Holy Trinity, was the butt of anticlerical feeling or the unwitting victim of a deliberate conspiracy is uncertain. Sometime between 1538 and 1544, he was accused of stealing money from a parishioner as she lay 'diseased and very sick and at the point of death'. Called to hear Alice Gytten's confession, Holmes ministered 'the sacrament of the altar' and departed, but next day he returned to visit her thrice. Alice recovered from her sickness with suspicious speed and, with remarkably alert powers of observation for a person supposedly 'at the point of death', noticed that a linen bag containing 50s. had gone missing. Holmes was accused of stealing it in the expectation that Alice was 'past her perfect knowledge and remembrance'. Naturally, he denied the charge, but the verdict is not known.[28]

Outside Coventry, serious social misgivings possibly coloured two unrelated incidents which resonate with surprisingly modern sentiments of popular unease over the perceived relaxed attitudes of clergy towards immigrant miscreants. In 1528 a motley company of fifteen 'thieves and murderers and other Riotous and ill-disposed persons' from Knowle sanctuary, occupied a house at Temple Balsall, two miles distant. While this case neither mentions nor specifically involved clergy, it does imply a lack of strict supervision on their part which may have courted resentment. This was also implicit during a commission of enquiry in 1538, regarding a felony committed in London. Witnesses then deposed that Ralph Marshall, a chaplain and sanctuary official of Knowle, had blatantly accompanied Hugh Hervye, an accused thief, on a drinking tour of hostelries in Knowle.[29]

Excessive zeal for reform may have antagonised some congregations and roused anticlerical feelings. Slipped into the *liber cleri* for 1573 is a loose presentment by

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27. TNA: PRO C 1/158/26.
28. TNA: PRO C 1/807/53
29. TNA: PRO STAC 2/12 no. 236; SP 1/130.

Thomas Flavell, churchwarden of Bourton-on-Dunsmore, stating, 'I do present that Richard Prowde our Parson will not Wear the Surplice According to the Queen's Majesty's Injunctions'. There is no indication that Prowde was censured, but his failure to abide by the Prayer Book rubrics clearly offended Flavell who, in 1584, was presented for absenting himself from communion on the grounds that 'he will not receive at the parson's hand'.[30]

Between 1517-59 'fewer and fewer...offered themselves for holy orders - in some years almost none at all'. Only six ordinations were held in the diocese of Winchester between 1531-41 and the sum total of priests ordained was merely eight.[31] Of 854 deacons and 825 priests ordained in Exeter diocese between 1519-44, only thirty were priested during the final five-year period.[32] More optimistically, Haigh reckoned that between 1542-6 about 40 priests annually were ordained in the newly-created diocese of Chester, although between 1547-55 the county's 'supply of ordinands...almost dried up'.[33]

During the closing years of Henry's reign fewer candidates were ordained in all English dioceses. At York the 'considerable surplus of underemployed unbeneficed priests' meant that 'inducements for taking orders had deteriorated sharply', besides which 'changes in theology were beginning to take effect'.[34] The average number priested in Lincoln diocese between 1522-35 was just over 126, whereafter numbers began to decline. R.B. Walker found that seventy-six were priested in 1536, but only seventy-nine altogether between 1541-7. Since no Edwardian ordination register survives there, few are thought to have been ordained during his reign.[35]

Edward's accession appears everywhere to have interrupted the regular sequence of ordinations. Partly, but not wholly, this was a consequence of the dissolutions, which released hundreds of mature clergy, pensioners, ex-religious and chantrists who became suddenly 'available to serve cures' just as recruitment was beginning to falter.[36] Whether this fortuitous influx precipitated what Barratt described as 'an extensive turning away from the Church as a career' is a moot point.[37] Perhaps the hierarchy anticipated a surplus as redundant ex-religious

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30. LJRO, B/V/1/8, p. 160; B/V/1/17, p. 161; Prowde had been a Marian exile: C. Garrett, *The Marian Exiles, A Study in the Origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, 1966 rp), p. 262.
31. P. Hughes, *The Reformation in England* (3 vols, London, 1954-1955), 3, p. 53.
32. D.H. Pill, 'The administration of the diocese of Exeter under Bishop Veysey', *Report & Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 98 (1966), pp. 269, 271.
33. C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (London, 1975), p. 154.
34. Cross, 'Ordinations in the diocese of York 1500-1630', pp. 11-2.
35. M. Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln Under John Longland 1521-1547* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 40; R.B. Walker, 'A history of the Reformation in the archdeaconries of Lincoln and Stow, 1534-94', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool (1959), p. 247.
36. Walker, 'Archdeaconries of Lincoln and Stow', p. 247.
37. D.M. Barratt, 'The condition of the parish clergy between the Reformation and 1660, with special

sought employment, for 'the smallness of numbers [of ordinands] is hard to account for'.[38] Philip Tyler detected hints of a deliberate episcopal policy to reduce the number of ordinations at Durham, where Bishop Tunstall had a mind not only to accommodate ex-regulars with livings but to reduce the size of the clerical proletariat.[39]

Gaps appear in most diocesan lists of ordinations, none being recorded in Chester diocese between 1547-55. Furthermore, there is evidence of a 'mass withdrawal of clergy labour' in Lancashire, where almost 50% of the county's priests 'disappeared' between 1548-54.[40] In his pioneering work on the 1550 'English' Ordinal, Frere was 'disappointed to find so little [information] as there is...evidence as to ordinations is meagre'. He discovered only 116 men ordained between 1549-53 and concluded that 'in a good number of dioceses ordinations were not being held'.[41]

The downward bias in Coventry and Lichfield between 1504-31 (Fig. 3) reveals a pattern of peaks and troughs. The volume of those priested reached a maximum in 1513 before descending into a gradual decline punctuated by occasional trend-breaking pinnacles. Between 1504-31, 4,446 priests and 4,451 deacons were ordained. For the last full five-year period, 1527-31, the average number of those priested fell to only 114 *per annum* and of those made deacon to 103. Figures from other dioceses suggest a 35% reduction between 1536-46. If that same percentage were arbitrarily applied to Coventry and Lichfield, the average number of priests ordained there *per annum* between 1533-47 would then have fallen from 114 to seventy-four, and deacons from 103 to sixty-seven. On the other hand that is pure speculation, and Skeeters' cautionary note in respect of 'serious interpretive problems' even where ordination lists do survive, should be taken seriously.[42]

The annual intake of newly-ordained priests and deacons is a matter for speculation since the ordination registers list titles but fail to identify parochial appointments. Out of all the 1,712 Coventry and Lichfield clergy named in the 1533 subsidy, about 15% were employed in Coventry archdeaconry, so as a rough and ready calculation it is suggested that about the same proportion of newly-ordained

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reference to the dioceses of Oxford, Worcester and Gloucester', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1949), p.10.

38. Pill, 'Exeter under Bishop Veysey', p. 271.

39. P. Tyler, 'The status of the Elizabethan parochial clergy', in G.J. Cuming, ed., *Studies in Church History* 4 (Leiden, 1967), p. 81.

40. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 154.

41. W.H. Frere, *The Marian Reaction in its Relation to the English Clergy. A Study of the Episcopal Registers*, (London, 1896), pp. 90-1, 100, 252-73.

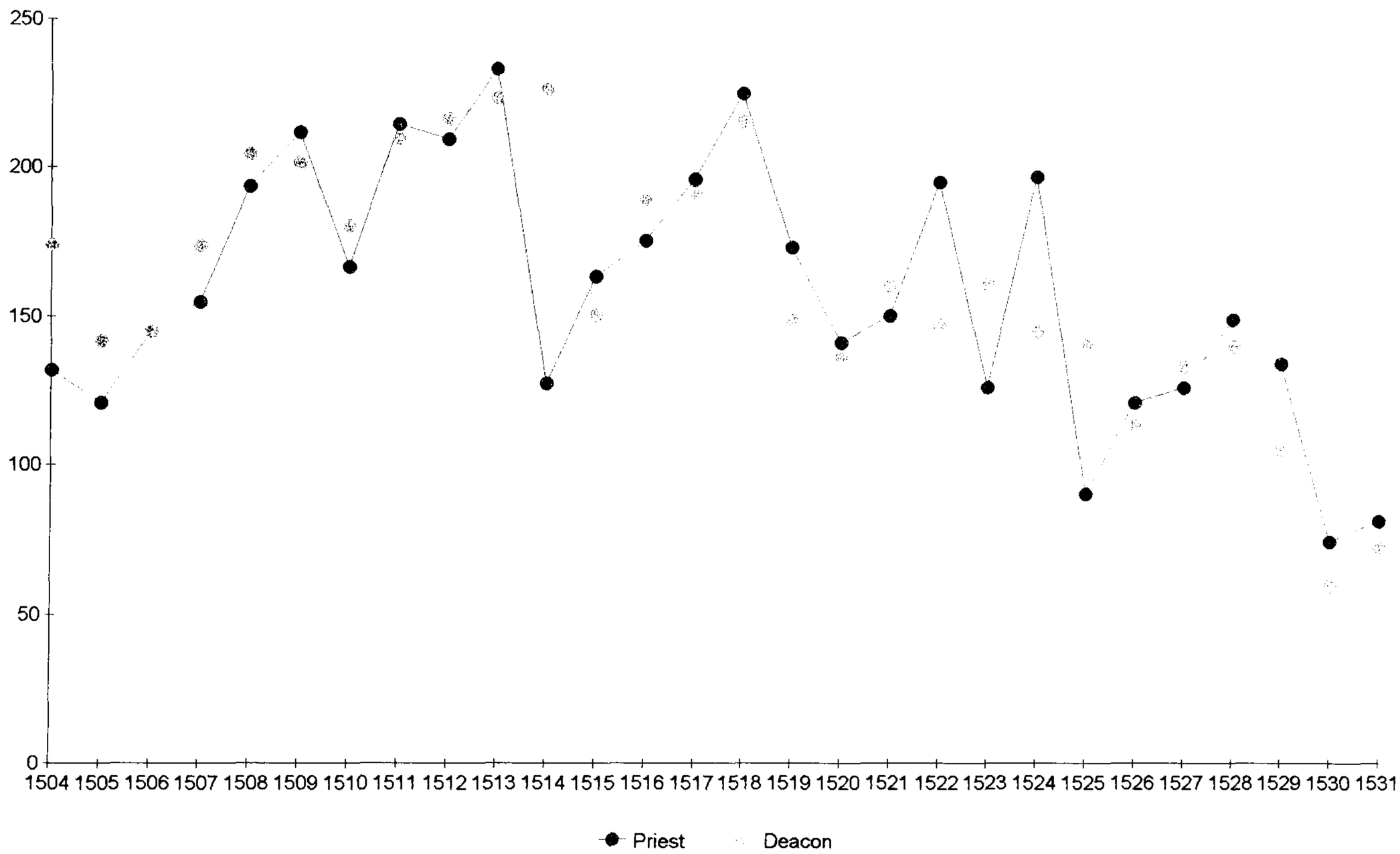
42. Skeeters, *Community and Clergy*, p. 82.

priests, that is, sixteen, sought employment there every year.[43] It has to be pointed out that the number of those made deacon has not been overlooked. They are, in fact, irrelevant, since the majority of those priested would have been deacons already working in the archdeaconry, not newcomers. At first sight the cumulative effect of these figures seems to be quite staggering. On average, in Coventry and Lichfield, forty-nine were priested every year between 1518-27, leading Cooper to calculate that 'each year ten new priests were being ordained for every living which became vacant'.[44] Between 1503-32, 102 institutions to Coventry archdeaconry benefices were recorded, averaging 3.4 *per annum*.

FIG. 3

Number of priests and deacons ordained annually in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1504-31

Source: LJRO, B/A/1/14ii-14iii



Given that the known work-force in Coventry archdeaconry in 1533 was 241, of whom 97 were beneficed, the remainder were men whose mobility was probably far more volatile than incumbents having benefit of freehold. The turnover of assistant clergy, however, cannot be accurately measured.

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43. It is stressed that this is a notional figure, based on a single source frozen in a moment of time.
44. Cooper, 'Secular clergy', p. 53.

Apart from two fragmentary lists of ordinands in 1567 and 1569 there is a total absence of Coventry and Lichfield ordination lists between 1532 and 1623, so speculation about the likely number of candidates ordained during that period is futile.[45] That an initial lack of recruits forced early Elizabethan bishops to tolerate what Philip Marsh described as 'suitably reconstructed clergymen' is certain, but only three Henrician clergy were still in office as late as the 1586 visitation.[46] Marian ordinations were certainly held in the diocese, but of some three dozen Coventry and Lichfield candidates ordained by other Marian bishops, only William Boyes, Nicholas Clayton, John Christopher and Richard Foxe, are known to have served in Coventry archdeaconry.[47] It was discovered by Claire Cross that among candidates in York diocese who 'for ideological reasons' had shunned ordination during Edward VI's reign there was a 'new demand for orders', to which the Marian bishops responded.[48] The apparent paucity of candidates during Mary's reign, however, may be attributed to deficiencies in the records. It is unlikely to reflect protestant resistance, although this cannot be pressed since, as Haigh warned, 'religious motivation cannot be proved'.[49]

Evidence from his letter-book discloses that soon after becoming Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, Thomas Bentham informed his registrar to make the statutory declaration of what was probably to be his first ordination, on 21 September 1560. Likewise, Thomas Lever, archdeacon of Coventry, was instructed to present all those candidates 'such as you know meet to enter in to the ministry'. The registrar was subsequently notified regarding 'those which I had ordained...deacons and for an institution to one of them'. This was a reference to Thomas Wootton, instituted to Baginton rectory on 30 September and ordained priest on 15 December. The latter

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45. R. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment in England in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods, with special reference to the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1972), p. 252.

46. C. Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding Their Peace* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 93; LJRO, B/V/1/19, pp. 12, 20, 21, Richard Hawbert, vicar of Wolfhampcote, priested by Bishop Lee in 1538, Dionisius Dudley, rector of Weddington and Thomas Gilbert, vicar of Fillongley, priested by Bishop Sampson in 1544 and 1545 respectively.

47. LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, f. 43r; B/V/1/15, p. 21; Boyes instituted as rector of Wishaw on 5 August 1552 and priested by Bishop Ralph Baynes of Coventry and Lichfield, 31 May 1555; Frere, *Marian Reaction*, pp. 255, 257, 260, has Boyes made an acolyte by the Bishop of Oxford in 1554. Both Christopher and Foxe were 'of Coventry and Lichfield', the first made subdeacon by the Bishop of London in 1558 to serve at Attleborough, Nuneaton parish, and Foxe, made subdeacon by the Bishop of London, and deacon and priest by the Bishop of Oxford, in April 1557; R. Peters, *Oculus Episcopi: Administration in the Archdeaconry of St Albans 1580-1625* (Manchester, 1963), p. 13, where Nicholas Clayton, vicar of Nuneaton 1564-1572, is said to have been ordained by Bishop Baynes in 1556; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 157.

48. Cross, 'Ordinations in the diocese of York', pp. 12-3.

49. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 157.

ceremony was alluded to in Bentham's letter dated 21 November advising Lever to prepare 'those whom you have meet against that day'.[50]

Libri cleri identify about three dozen Coventry archdeaconry clergy ordained by Bentham. The fortuitous survival of two lists of ordinands is evidence that he ordained twenty-two men on 30 November 1567 and thirty-two on 3 April 1569.[51] Clearly, missing ordination registers would furnish many more such names from both Bentham's episcopate and that of his successor, William Overton. Although there is no surviving ordination register from Overton's stewardship there is no doubt that he conferred Orders on a substantial number. Indeed, Lord Burghley accused him of 'making seventy ministers in one day for money', a charge he refuted by blaming his predecessor's lax ordination policy.[52] Records suggest that by 1600 levels of recruitment had improved in Coventry and Lichfield, as in other dioceses, but the number of ordained was clearly much lower than in the early 1500s.[53]

Significant numbers of Henrician clergy had died during the reign of Mary Tudor, including at least thirty in Coventry archdeaconry. Some were replaced by clergy already serving in the archdeaconry, others by a sprinkling of clergy from across diocesan borders. In particular, at least four came from Northamptonshire, while others, not all of whom took up residence in Warwickshire, were recruited from as far afield as Lancashire and Yorkshire.[54] There was clearly a pool of clergy available to fill vacancies, but the deep end was becoming shallower and a shortage of clergy became more readily apparent. By the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign the rate of attrition had exposed huge deficiencies in the clerical work-force which the newly-appointed protestant bishops were keen to redress, and so 'resorted in the first place to mass ordinations to fill the vacant cures'.[55]

The 1222 Council of Oxford decreed that archdeacons should examine ordination candidates and determine their suitability for holy orders. They were to satisfy him that they had attained the appropriate age, were morally virtuous and educationally qualified. Lyndwood's *Provinciale* forbade men's admission to minor orders 'without

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50. NLW, 4919D, ff. 49, 52, 65, 94; R. O'Day and J. Berlatsky, eds, 'The Letter-Book of Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 15601561', *Camden Miscellany XXVII* 4th ser. 22 (1979), p. 157 n. 117, where the Wootton reference is attributed to a cleric not instituted until the end of October; Dugdale *Warwickshire,* 1, p. 234: the institution is not recorded in the bishop's register.
51. LJRO, B/V/1/15, 19, 23; *CSPD 1547-1580*, p. 251. Fifty men were involved altogether, four of them appearing in both lists.
52. C. Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1960), pp. 303, 570 n. 31, cited briefly in *CSPD Eliz. 1581-90*, p. 229.
53. LJRO, B/V/1/15, 19; LPL, *Cart. Misc.* XIII no. 37.
54. Local: Francis Kimberley (Great Harborough), Nicholas Caponhurst (Corley); from Northants: John Awgood and Thomas Knight (both Wormleighton), Thomas Jackson (Priors Hardwick), Thurstan Morrey (Fillongley); from Lancashire: Edward Keble (Bishop's Itchington); from Yorkshire: Anthony Blake (Rugby).
55. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p. 235.

they have convenient presentors and be by their testimony admitted'. Standards were temporarily lowered during the severe shortage of clergy in 1559, when bishops agreed to admit to the diaconate men without knowledge of Latin so long as they could produce 'character testimonials'. As deacons they were to serve an unspecified 'good time of experience' before they might be considered for priests orders.[56]

Stretch lamented that as a 'routine administrative record, the Lichfield ordination lists reveal little of the actual processes involved', and Cooper also emphasised the sparsity of 'surviving evidence of examination procedures'. Both they and Peter Heath have demonstrated that Coventry and Lichfield ordinands were examined as a matter of course during the early sixteenth century, although of an earlier period Hosker complained that 'it is impossible to say how rigorously candidates were interviewed'.[57] O'Day drew attention to Lever's proposals for reform in the 1570s in which he 'laid squarely upon the shoulders' of the Archdeacon the task of examining candidates prior to their ordination.[58]

Since theological colleges did not exist before the nineteenth century, it is possible that religious houses such as Merevale and Maxstoke were the venues where ordinands 'titled' to them routinely gathered to be examined for their suitability for ordination, and perhaps to consider offers of employment. Once approved, the candidate had to ascertain where the next convenient ordination would be held and there present himself with all relevant documentation. Ordination could be financially stressful for candidates from impoverished backgrounds. Expenditure over and above the purchase of ecclesiastical robes and correct clerical attire include a fee to the bishop, usually 6s. 8d., and if the ordination was held at a distant church, then overnight accommodation and perhaps stabling charges were inevitable.[59] Parishes may have helped defray the cost of robes and accessories, but the question implicit in Margaret Bowker's recital of expenses is addressed above, p. 20.

Clearly, even at a time when the Church was one of the most significant employers in the realm, recruits were expected to meet certain basic standards.

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56. J.F. Fuggles, 'The parish clergy in the archdeaconry of Leicester 1520-1540', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archæological and Historical Society* 46 (1970-71), p. 26; J.V. Bullard and H.C. Bell, eds, *Lyndwood's Provinciale: The Text of the Canons Therein Contained, Reprinted from the Translation Made in 1534* (London, 1929), pp. 9-10; W.P. Haugaard, *Elizabeth and the English Reformation* (repr., Cambridge, 1970), p. 164.

57. Stretch, 'Clergy and administration', p. 91; T. Cooper, *The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 14-8; P. Heath, *Bishop Geoffrey Blythe's Visitations, c.1515-1525*, SHC, 4th ser. 7 (Oxford, 1973), pp. lxiii-lxiv; P. Hosker, 'The Register of Reginald Bowlers, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 1453-1459', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool (1978), p. 335.

58. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p. 53.

59. M. Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln 1495-1520* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 40.

These were imposed by sifting out those men who, after examination, were deemed unequal to the task. It has been suggested that the severity of those standards was a reason for the decline in recruitment, although a combination of reasons is more likely. There is no hard evidence to link falling recruitment to individual cases which reflect anticlerical attitudes, but accumulatively they must have been a contributory factor. On balance, the most compelling reason for the dramatic fall in the number of ordinands was an instinctively cautious reaction to governmental interference in matters of religious belief and practice and constitutional changes which did not receive overwhelming approbation in parishes throughout the realm. Whatever the cause, archival evidence is silent as to whether there was a fall in the level of recruitment in Coventry archdeaconry. Subsequent developments suggest that there was, and that it had a serious impact on the parochial ministry in the 1560s.

3.3. Clerical Education and Deployment of Graduates

Raising the standard of clerical education was a topic which seriously occupied the hierarchy in the later middle ages. During the fourteenth century, religious literature and manuals of instruction for parish priests endeavoured to develop their pastoral techniques, particularly following what Pantin described as 'the revival of town life and the rise of an educated laity'.[60] Notwithstanding the foundation of colleges at both Oxford and Cambridge by the fifteenth century, specifically to improve clerical education by attracting more graduates, only a small minority of those ordained possessed a university degree. Throughout the sixteenth century, clerical education was a hotly-debated topic.[61] The urgent task of expounding the Church's Articles of Faith, and of proclaiming the royal supremacy, particularly in the towns and large country parishes, required of the parochial clergy a certain level of intellectual competence which graduates were most likely to possess.[62]

Bishops became heavily involved in efforts to recruit educated men for ordination and, by careful deployment, to advance the effectiveness of pastoral care and weaken the impact of pluralism and eradicate non-residence.[63] For example, in Lancashire in the later sixteenth century Bishop Chadderton established 'exercises' to improve the education of his clergy.[64] Elizabethan bishops strove hard to raise the abysmally poor educational standard of many of their clergy. In December 1586 the

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60. Bowker, *Secular Clergy*, p. 42; Pantin, *English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 189.
61. Bowker, p. 42.
62. Bowker, *Henrician Reformation*, p. 119.
63. Sheils, *Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough*, p. 21.
64. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 240.

Convocation of Canterbury passed regulations ordering non-graduates every day to study a chapter of the Bible, every week a sermon from Bullinger's *Decades*, and every quarter to make their notes available for examination by a neighbouring clergyman. Such were the favoured training methods of the Elizabethan Church.[65] The educational background of many ordinands cannot be established, however, and the only data which are available for clerical education are of the number of graduates who were presented to benefices. They may be taken as providing a useful comparative guide between one period and another.[66]

In 1533, about 16% of Coventry archdeaconry incumbents were graduates. This figure rose to about 21% by 1547, before falling back to 15% by 1558. His lack of opportunities to exercise patronage combined with the poor quality of many of his clergy prompted Bentham's plaintive lament to Edmund Grindal in 1560 that he was 'destitute of learned men, for lack of living to give them'.[67] Thus, in the early 1560s when the choice of candidates was minimal, even characters with questionable motives went on to enjoy successful if unremarkable careers, illustrated by the achievements of such unlettered recruits as Richard Fox. He was ordained in 1557 and served successive curacies, first at Sutton Coldfield, then at Stone, Staffordshire, although in 1576 he was assessed as utterly ignorant of the scriptures with 'little knowledge' of Latin. Perhaps the assessor's expectations of biblical knowledge were too exacting, while Latin in services was abolished in 1558 and was pastorally irrelevant.[68]

Fox's first living was Baxterley, to which he was instituted in 1564. The following year he compounded for Witherley, Leicestershire, which being only three miles distant he held in plurality with Baxterley. Through marriage he then acquired the patronage of Ibstock, Leicestershire, and in 1573 entered that living himself by granting away the right of next presentation in a transaction bordering on simony. He also briefly owned the advowson of Corley vicarage before relinquishing his interest. In 1583 he was dignified with a prebend in Lichfield cathedral and died in 1597.[69]

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65. Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 198-9.
66. Bowker, *Secular Clergy*, pp. 41-2.
67. NLW, MS 4919D, f. 62.
68. W.H. Frere, *The Marian Reaction in its Relation to the English Clergy. A Study of the Episcopal Registers*, (London, 1896), p. 260; C.W. Foster, *The State of the Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I as Illustrated by Documents Relating to the Diocese of Lincoln Volume I*, LRS 23 (Lincoln, 1926), pp. 36, 113; LJRO, B/V/1/3, p. 18; B/V/1/4, p. 40; B/V/1/5, p. 28; NLW, 4919D, p. 55, begs the question why, if Fox was so ignorant, Bishop Bentham was so keen to have him presented to Curdworth?
69. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 35v; AASRP, 37, p. 335; Foster, *State of the Church*, p. 36; C.W. Foster, *Lincoln Episcopal Records in the Time of Thomas Cooper, S.T.P. Bishop of Lincoln A.D. 1571 to A.D. 1584*, LRS 2 (Lincoln, 1912), p. 35; SBTRO, DR 10/243, 244; H.P.F. King, ed., *John Le Neve: Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1300-1541 Lincoln Diocese* 1 (London, 1962), p. 603; TNA: PRO PROB 11, 66 Lewyn, ff. 61v-2r.

After a spell as curate of Coventry St Michael, Fox's contemporary Christopher Meltham was in 1560 instituted to King's Newnham and in 1562 to its neighbouring parish, Newbold-on-Avon. Notwithstanding that he was unlearned and a non-preacher, he held them in plurality until his death in 1572.[70] By contrast, the curate of Mancetter in 1560 was George Bruche, an Oxford MA who as a Marian 'intruder' had recently been evicted from Coventry Holy Trinity.[71]

From the mid-sixteenth century onwards there was little improvement in the number of graduate incumbents taking up livings in Coventry archdeaconry. Indeed, observing the large cohort of non-graduate clergy deployed in the whole diocese as late as 1593, Crankshaw deduced that either there was 'a disproportionate number of meagre livings...or benefices which were disproportionately subject to impoverishment through impropriation'.[72] By 1603 the number of graduate incumbents in Coventry archdeaconry had risen to 33% and to over 50% by 1611, although many of the latter group of graduates were only BAs, whereas most graduate incumbents detected in the archdeaconry in the early sixteenth century were MAs.[73] This improvement may be attributed to one or more different causes. First, the expansion of the universities; second, episcopal policy, as bishops made efforts to improve the low educational attainments of many clergy; and third, because since 1558 the nature of the parochial ministry itself had shifted towards a more didactic rather than a sacramentally-based kind of pastoral care.

Although the number of graduate incumbents fluctuated, is there any evidence that they were favoured by certain patrons? Moreover, were graduate incumbents able to gain the wealthier livings? There is evidence that at the time of the mid-sixteenth-century watershed the crown's ecclesiastical patronage was heavily weighted in favour of men whose ordination was a stepping-stone to the diplomatic service rather than the pastoral ministry. Others were careerists in royal service, many of them graduates and pluralists, their livings provided in lieu of salaries as

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70. TNA: PRO E 331/Cov & Lich/2; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 31v; CCC Camb., MS 97, f. 31r; WCRO, DR 176/1.

71. LJRO, B/V/1/4, p. 48; Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, 1, p. 200.

72. D.J. Crankshaw, 'Elizabethan and early Jacobean surveys of the Ministry of the Church of England', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Cambridge (1998), p. 269, commenting on St John's Ms 118. See also R. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment in England in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods, with special reference to the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1972), p. 253 for the observation that in 1584 the distribution of graduates was so uneven in the diocese that areas such as that around Coventry were comparatively well served whereas large stretches of Staffs and Derbys had no graduate clergy.

73. Compare this with 24% of *all* clergy in the diocese in 1603: R. O'Day, *The English Clergy: the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession 1558-1642* (1979), p. 132.

functionaries of Church or State.[74] But not all crown candidates can be identified as careerists or university graduates.[75]

The assertion by A.H. Thompson that some monasteries may have presented suitably-qualified clergy to livings in their gift in anticipation that their 'influence at court or experience in the practice of ecclesiastical tribunals' would work to their advantage has been challenged by Cooper.[76] In Coventry archdeaconry monasteries appointed few university graduates to their appropriated livings in the half-century before the study period. Stretch calculated that between 1459-90 Coventry cathedral priory presented fifteen graduates throughout the whole diocese. To this may be added that of the twenty-five known graduates presented to Coventry archdeaconry livings between 1500-39, five were presented by the cathedral priory. In 1500 Thomas Jones and Robert Rowthall, the future bishop of Durham, both doctors of laws, were instituted to Priors Hardwick and Southam respectively. Jones's incumbency was brief, for in 1501 he was succeeded by another doctor of laws, Thomas Orton, who in 1508 also accepted the prior's gift of Coventry Holy Trinity, holding both livings in plurality until his death in 1524. When Coventry St Michael fell vacant in 1520 the prior presented Lord George Grey, an Oxford graduate, and lastly, in 1529, Robert Sherwood was presented to Meriden.[77] Significantly, St Michael's was the most valuable benefice in the priory's gift. Grey was the youngest son of the Marquis of Dorset, whose family was closely associated with Astley College, of which they were patrons. Clearly there was every reason why the priory should assiduously cultivate the good-will of an influential Midlands family whose status was enhanced by affinities with the king himself.

Priors Hardwick and Southam were respectively the second and third most valuable livings in Coventry priory's gift. There must have been compelling reasons why the priory granted two of their benefices to Orton to hold in plurality, quite apart from his Lichfield prebend. Evidently the priory considered Orton worth patronising, although it is not now possible to discover why. Rowthall's presentation to Southam is more intelligible, but it is difficult to imagine Sherwood's motivation for accepting Meriden, which he resigned within months making no arrangement for a pension from his non-graduate successor. Some of the most valuable livings in Coventry archdeaconry were owned by monasteries, but only Coventry cathedral priory appears to have consistently appointed graduates, some livings such as Coventry St

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74. P. Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (Toronto, 1969), pp. 50-6.
75. For a detailed study of patronage see Chapter 4.
76. A.H. Thompson, *The English Clergy and their Organization in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1947), p. 105; Heath, *English Parish Clergy*, pp. 34-5; Cooper, 'Secular clergy', p. 59.
77. Stretch, 'Clergy and administration', p. 233; LJRO, B/A/1/13, ff. 205r-v, 206v; B/A/1/14i, ff. 5r, 8v, 14v; Emden, *BRUO to 1540*, p. 247.

Michael and Priors Hardwick being particularly attractive for that very reason. By contrast to monastic patrons, lay patrons seemed to favour above all kinship and service rather than the educational status of potential incumbents.

Stretch observed that during his study period 'graduates secured many of the wealthiest livings' in the diocese and, furthermore, that the proportion of graduates presented rose from 20% between 1452-90 to 29% between 1490-1515.[78] Wealthy parishes such as Allesley, Monks Kirby, Solihull and Southam were obvious targets for graduate career clergy. Certain livings, not all of them financially attractive, were more consistently bestowed upon graduates than others. For example, Kenilworth Abbey presented John Sparowe (1506) and John Pysfort (1511) to Baginton, John Mogriche (1519), Ralph Whitehed (1528) and Henry Breten (1534) to Brinklow, and John Clark to Great Packington (1528).[79] Axholme presented George Percy to Withybrooke (1501) and, to Monks Kirby, Thomas Wenlock (1503), Henry Sherman (1521) and Robert Newton (1528).[80] Monks Kirby was among the most valuable monastic benefices in Coventry archdeaconry, a magnet for ambitious clerics, who with equanimity pocketed a surplus income far exceeding the annual wage they paid to any of their three curates. Wenlock was simultaneously vicar of Kingsbury, where he retained the services of a curate, and where also a chaplain served the Bracebridge chantry. Sherman, too, was a pluralist, being rector of Mobberley, Cheshire, from 1511 until his death in 1528. He was succeeded at Monks Kirby by Robert Newton, who resigned after only four months, but not before he had negotiated a wholly disproportionate annual pension of five marks from his successor William Stokwyth. Newton was still receiving this pension five years later, in addition to an income from a Derby prebend.[81] By the opening decade of the seventeenth century, when more than half of the incumbents in Coventry archdeaconry were graduates, it is worth noting that the ten least valuable livings were mostly occupied by non-graduates, including two pluralists, Briscoe and Fox, and the twenty most valuable livings were occupied mostly by MA graduates. In many cases it is likely that graduates were able to acquire the most lucrative benefices because social contacts made at university often worked to their advantage.

One recurrent feature in Coventry archdeaconry is the number of university graduates who were pluralists, doubtless because they often had enough influence to secure more than one benefice, although some non-graduates also held parallel

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78. Stretch, 'Clergy and administration', p. 192.
79. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, ff. 4v, 6r, 13v, 14v; B/A/1/14iii, f. 13v; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 220.
80. LJRO, B/A/1/13, f. 205v; B/A/1/14i, ff. 3r, 9r, 14v.
81. LJRO, B/A/1/13, ff. 203r, 206r; B/A/1/14i, ff. 3v, 6v, 7v, 12v, 14v, 57r; BL, Harl. MS 594, f. 129v.

benefices.[82] This was no new phenomenon. In his study of Coventry and Lichfield between 1459-90, Stretch identified 170 graduates occupying between them 268 benefices. He subsequently traced 119 of them in published lists of University *alumni* and calculated that they held between them more than 800 benefices throughout England, an average of more than seven livings each. Yet during that period graduate incumbents held only one-quarter of the rectories and one-eighth of the vicarages in the whole diocese.[83]

At least 36% of incumbents in Coventry archdeaconry were pluralists at the beginning of the sixteenth century and were almost all graduates. But in the wake of the 1529 Pluralities Act the number of pluralists had fallen sharply to 15% of all incumbents - fewer than half of whom were graduates - and by 1603 there were only eight (mostly non-graduate) pluralist incumbents in the archdeaconry, most of them occupying adjacent benefices such as Robert Briscoe at Foleshill and Exhall and John Foxe at Baxterley and Kingsbury. It is clear, therefore, that the 1529 Act brought an abrupt halt to a lucrative system whereby graduate clergy were able over the course of a career to acquire several benefices. By the end of the sixteenth century, few clergy, whether graduate or non-graduate, were double-beneficed in Coventry archdeaconry at any one time.

3.4. Early years, 1501-22

The precise number of parochial clergy ministering in Coventry archdeaconry at any given moment during the sixteenth century is difficult to estimate. In particular, there is insufficient evidence to ascertain how many unbeneficed parochial clergy there were in 1501. Storey has demonstrated that candidates from provincial dioceses, including a steady trickle from Coventry and Lichfield, sought ordination in London believing 'that they would have more opportunities of employment in the capital'. Reason suggests that its monastic establishments, especially the cathedral priory, would similarly attract clergy to Coventry, a bustling city whose assorted craft and religious guilds offered a variety of employment prospects. If Skeeters correctly described Bristol 'as a provincial capital [drawing] clergy from the countryside of more than one diocese', then it is equally plausible that daily masses in Coventry's churches were recited in a smattering of regional accents.[84] Perhaps that had always been the case, so the complement of clergy in the archdeaconry in 1501 had

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82. See Chapter 5 for a detailed examination of pluralism.
83. Stretch, 'Clergy and administration', pp. 190-2.
84. Storey, 'Ordinations in early Tudor London', pp. 127-9, 132; Skeeters, *Community and Clergy*, p. 83.

possibly altered only slightly since 1377. Of an estimated 33,231 beneficed and unbeneficed clergy in England that year, some 2,122 (6.4%) ministered in Coventry and Lichfield, of whose five archdeaconries Coventry had the highest clerical population, 513 (24% of the diocesan total) including nuns and regulars.[85]

Extrapolating the number of monastics in 1377 is a hazardous undertaking, for clergy were simply categorised as 272 beneficed and 241 unbeneficed. To avoid confusion, therefore, monastics will be considered 'beneficed', since this neatly resolves the discrepancy between the number of freehold livings, ninety-six, and a surplus of 176. There were fifteen cloistered houses in the archdeaconry in 1377 and a rough census based on the number of inmates in 1496 and at the surrender of houses in the 1530s indicates a figure of 161.[86] Given a century's time lapse this remarkable correspondence between the two sets of figures lends credibility to these figures. A total of 241 unbeneficed in 1377 seems very plausible, comparing favourably with the 1522 complement and with the 166 unbeneficed in 1533. They played an important role not only in the religious ceremonial accompanying Coventry's guild and corporate activities, but also as parish assistants in Birmingham, Nuneaton, Solihull and elsewhere. Moreover, there were frequent bequests for priests to say Mass for the repose of testators' and 'all Christian souls'. But there is good reason to believe that the number had in fact declined by 1501, particularly in Coventry, to a level commensurate with the figures adduced above.

TAB. 3.1

Number of incumbents identified, 1501, arranged by deanery

Deanery	Parishes	Rectors	Vicars
Arden	22	9	13
Coventry	12	4	8
Marton	11	6	5
Stoneleigh	14	4	10
No data	37		
TOTALS:	**96**	**23**	**36**

Logistical problems preclude the option of analysing the number of clergy ministering in the archdeaconry at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Efforts to trace the unbroken sequence of incumbents occupying benefices in 1500-1 failed

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85. J.C. Russell, *British Medieval Population* (Albuquerque, 1948), p. 135. For comparison, Russell gives the clerical population other archdeaconries as: Chester 498, Stafford 501, Salop 154, Derby 456.

86. Heath, *Bishop Blythe's Visitations*, pp. 168-71; *Eighth Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Record Office,* (London, 1847), App. II, pp. 16-8, 31, 35; *LPFD Henry VIII,* 10, January-June 1536, no. 1191.

because out of ninety-six parishes only fifty-nine (61%) yielded continuity of succession (Tab. 3.1). There were sixteen recorded institutions to Coventry archdeaconry benefices in 1500 and 1501, but gaps in the registers raise unanswerable questions. In a typical example, Adam Stapull, instituted to Ashow on 15 June 1500, disappeared without further trace in the Lichfield registers.[87] There is no record of his successor being instituted, although Sir Thomas Glaziar, 'rector of *Aschoe*', was admitted to membership of the Guild of Knowle in 1504.[88] If this vacancy coincided with John Arundell's translation to Exeter in mid-1502 it may have been overlooked when a scribe too hastily closed the outgoing bishop's register. Also silent is the Canterbury *sede vacante* register where the institution should have been recorded if carried out during the vacancy-in-see. Remarkably, in 1489 one Adam Stabull was instituted to Wellesbourne, a Warwickshire parish about ten miles distant from Ashow but in the Worcester diocese. This Adam received papal licence to accept a second benefice about 1498, but had vacated Wellesbourne by 1512.[89] Probably the two Adams are synonymous, it being unlikely that the name should occur simultaneously within a few miles either side of the diocesan boundary.

The 1522 muster books are the earliest nominal record of any practical use for identifying and locating individual clergy in Coventry archdeaconry. That for the county of the city of Coventry covers the suburban parishes of Ansty, Exhall, Foleshill and Stoke, whose clergy, John Oley, Ralph Orrell, William Worleche and Thomas Pert respectively, were all appointees of the prior of St Mary's cathedral priory. John Wright, who resided at Caludon and probably doubled as priest in charge of Wyken, was chaplain to Thomas Tree, who paid him 'wages besides his meat and drink to the yearly value of four marks'.[90] At St Michael's the absentee vicar, George Grey, employed Richard Shirley as parish priest to supervise twenty-three assistant clergy, including six chantrists.[91] William Milner, parish priest of Coventry Holy Trinity, ran that parish in the absence of the pluralist vicar, John Orton, and presumably supervised twelve other assistants, including two chantrists. At both churches large clerical cohorts served chantries and guild altars endowed for daily Mass.[92] As well, the book contains *in toto* the names and particulars of fifty-five

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87. LJRO, B/A/1/13, f. 204r.
88. LJRO, B/A/1/13, f. 278v records Glaziar's priesting, 23 February 1499; W.B. Bickley, *The Register of the Guild of Knowle in the County of Warwick, 1451-1535* (Walsall, 1894), p. 168. The editorial dating of some sections of the register is suspect.
89. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 573; *CPL*, 16, p. 650 no. 1431.
90. CCA, Acc 24/1, ff. 114r, 111r, 98v, 105v, 107v.
91. A.H. Thompson, *The History of the Hospital and the New College of the Annunciation of St Mary in the Newarke, Leicester* (Leicester, 1937), touches on Grey's tenure of the deanery there.
92. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', pp. 445-6; TNA: PRO PROB 11/29 Bodfelde, ff. 226r-v, John Orton requested burial at Godstow, Oxfordshire, where he was also rector.

clerics. The separate Warwickshire book (for Knightlow hundred only) includes John Smith of Shilton and Richard Tedde of Sowe, raising the total of suburban clergy to fifty-seven.[93] The suburban incumbents were the only clergy who exercised their pastoral ministry outside the city walls. A mere 10% of all these clergy had oversight of a parish, for the overwhelming 86% of those named were either assistants or else engaged in an institutional capacity.

Rural parishes usually had a lower ratio of clergy to laity than their urban equivalents. Not only were countryside clergy less numerous on the ground but, 'town-dwellers had a different relationship' with their clergy, partly as a result of the latter's greater dependence upon the laity for employment.[94] Unbeneficed rural clergy often ministered single-handedly on behalf of their habitually absent incumbents, although incumbents and their assistants were recorded together in twelve of the parishes. Outside Coventry, clergy were named in only forty-one parishes and chapelries, eight of which failed to register a resident priest.[95] It would be rash to suggest that any were bereft of spiritual oversight; chapelries were doubtless served from other churches. By way of comparison, one quarter of Rutland parishes recorded no resident clergyman in 1522.[96]

Twenty parishes from Coventry deanery, three from Arden, thirteen from Marton and sixteen from Stoneleigh are included in the muster books.[97] 'Rural' clergy numbered forty-seven, comprising twenty-nine beneficed incumbents (including William Bulwyke, one of six chaplains at Astley College and also the vicar of Stoneleigh) and thirteen curates, parish priests, or chantry chaplains. Hence, outside Coventry the proportion of beneficed to unbeneficed comprehensively shifted - sixty-eight being beneficed and only forty falling into other categories. Clearly the number of clergy exceeded the 106 included in the demonstrably incomplete muster books, for from other sources a further forty-one incumbents and twenty-two assistant clergy have been detected, raising the tally to seventy-six rectors, vicars and stipendiaries in charge of parishes, and taking the aggregate of secular clergy detected in 1522 to 165.

While the number of assistant clergy never reached extravagant levels in rural parishes, the same cannot be said of Coventry to which many were attracted,

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93. WCRO, HR 65/1. For an exposition on this document and a fragment of the 1522 muster for Kineton hundred, TNA: PRO SC 12/16/10, newly-identified by my wife, see P.J.G. Upton, 'Change and decay: the Warwickshire manors of the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield from the late thirteenth century to the late sixteenth centuries', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester (2002), pp. 196-9.
94. McHardy, 'Careers and disappointments', p. 118.
95. They were: Binley, Bishop's Itchington, Burton Hastings, Hunningham, Milverton, Packington (Great or Little not specified), Ufton, and Weston-under-Wetherley.
96. WCRO, HR 65/1; J. Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry* (London, 1977), p. 50.
97. All figures include chapelries.

presumably because, as in Bristol, they 'had more choice about worship and more diversity'. It is doubtful whether there were as many clergy in Coventry as the 'more than 140' (including regulars) that were reckoned to inhabit Bristol in 1530.[98] Undoubtedly there were other clergy in Coventry, particularly regulars, who escaped the call to muster. A striking feature is the disproportionate number of clergy (fifty-two) in the county of the city, 49% of the total number of all those detected in the whole archdeaconry. Between them, the two Coventry parish churches alone employed thirty-nine clergy, or 37%, including the two non-resident vicars. Richard Tedde, chaplain of Shepey's chantry in St Michael's, offered the Mass at Sowe, where he was the [stipendiary] vicar, and, similarly, William Worleche, chaplain of a cathedral priory chantry, offered the Mass at Foleshill, where he was the [stipendiary] vicar.[99] Thirteen secular clergy belonged to establishments independent of the parochial network. This high concentration of clergy within the walled city greatly distorts the bald statistics in Tab. 3.2, which excludes regulars attached to the various monastic foundations.

TAB. 3.2

Number of known clergy in 1522, arranged by deanery

Deanery	Parishes	Rectors	Vicars	Others
Arden	24	8	13	10
Coventry	21	5	8	70
Marton	18	5	11	12
Stoneleigh	19	6	12	0
No data	18			
TOTALS:	**100**	**24**	**44**	**92**

To what extent chantrists were routinely engaged in pastoral activity cannot be precisely determined. Lyndwood enjoined them to 'be present in the chancel at Mattins, at Evensong and other divine service in due hours, wearing surplices', so their faces would have been familiar to parishioners. They were not totally detached from normal parochial life and doubtless built up a network of friendships and relationships as spiritual guides. Indeed, McHardy argued that chantrists engaged in parish services not merely as a duty but because 'parishioners wanted impressive ceremonial...secured by the participation of several priests in the daily liturgy', great festivals and funerals.[100] Perpetual chantries were seldom founded in rural parishes, however, one of only two in Marton deanery being located at Stretton-on-Dunsmore in the parish of Wolston. Others, not recorded in the musters, were founded at

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98. Skeeters, *Community and Clergy*, pp. 11, 12.
99. T. Sharp, *History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry* (Birmingham, 1871), p. 36.
100. Bullard and Bell, *Lyndwood's Provinciale*, p. 28; McHardy, 'Careers and disappointments', p. 120.

Bulkington and Monks Kirby in Coventry deanery, but most of the remaining nine were in Arden deanery. The chantry certificates intimate that chantrists assisted the Birmingham clergy.[101]

When making testamentary dispositions, parochial clergy sometimes involved chantry chaplains, but they were not often named in lay wills examined during this research. Exceptionally, Henry Somerland, chantrist of Meriden, both witnessed and was a beneficiary in lay wills. For example, in 1517 he was left 1s. 8d. to bury Roland Robynson of Berkswell and a further 1s. 8d. to pray for him at home. As both witness and overseer of the will of Thomas Wedgewod of Meriden in 1525, he was bequeathed a nag for his pains. Probably some of his testamentary assignments arose because of his position as rural dean.[102] The dearth of testamentary evidence notwithstanding, it is probable that the participation of chantrists in parochial activities was appreciated, insomuch that 'over the realm as a whole substantial injury may have been done to the cure of souls in some scores of communities'.[103]

3.5. Clerical subsidy, 1533

Although a specific date has never been assigned to this archive it seems reasonably certain that it related to the 'second fifth' despatched by Richard Strete, archdeacon of Salop and principal collector of clerical taxes for Coventry and Lichfield, to the Bishop of London, on 24 July 1533. Strete's accompanying note suggests that the Abbot of Merevale (he was not named, but it must have been William Arnold) had been charged with collecting the Coventry archdeaconry portion. He in turn probably delegated to the four rural deans, the practical and unpleasant task of collecting dues directly from the hands of the parochial clergy.[104] For some purposes the subsidy list is more helpful than *Valor* which, despite its unique prominence, ignores the existence of most assistant clergy.

Compiled just before the break with Rome, the 1533 nominal list is a pivotal document, the earliest comprehensive guide to the numerical strength of the parochial ministry in Coventry archdeaconry, its distribution and the manner of its deployment.[105] Apart from Shuttington, where the priest was a monk, not a single parish was overlooked. Doubtless some clergy managed by stealth to avoid the trawl, but others were excluded, such as the unemployed and those wholly engaged

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101. TNA: PRO E 301/31.
102. LJRO, B/C/10ii/1, pp. 18, 89.
103. C. Burgess, '"For the Increase of Divine Service": chantries in the parish in late medieval Bristol', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), pp. 52-4.
104. TNA: PRO SP 1/889; *LPFD Henry VIII*, vol. 6, p. 384, no. 889.
105. BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 118r-23v.

in secular occupations such as teaching, and private chaplains like Hugh Proffett, chaplain to the Raleigh family of Farnborough.[106] It named eight cathedral dignitaries who were rectors of prebendal parishes, including Edmund Strethay, prebendary of Wolvey and also rector of Frankton. Between thirty and forty clergy may be deducted from the total number of tax-payers, as being non-parochial clergy they are irrelevant for present purposes.

The return facilitates a retrospective assessment of the parochial ministry, as well being a bench-mark for subsequent fluctuations. Stretch calculated that at least 4,000 secular clergy were employed in the whole diocese in 1531.[107] On this figure, however, assuming that 15% ministered in Coventry archdeaconry, its share was six hundred secular clergy, but the schedule names only 241 different individuals. A shortfall of 359 prospective taxpayers seems most improbable. Bishops were customarily responsible for collecting their respective diocesan quotas, so they, or their agents, with efficiency born of long experience, would surely have detected such widespread evasion.[108]

In 1533 almost every benefice was occupied. William Steyn of Churchover died shortly after paying his instalment of 8s. 10½d. and Hugh Purefoy, admitted to the rectory on 15 June, was spared since he was still a student at Oxford. Similarly, the instalment of £4 due from George Grey, vicar of Coventry St Michael, had already been collected, probably from his representatives. He himself had recently died on a visit to Calais, hence the source describes him as 'late vicar'.[109]

Most of the taxpayers were unbeneficed. This unique opportunity, therefore, justifies close scrutiny of their deployment throughout the archdeaconry since what Cooper described as the 'elusiveness of this section of the clergy', makes historians 'almost entirely dependent on the survival of visitation material, records of court proceedings and, increasingly, on taxation returns', for whatever can be known about them. Parochial assistants, including twenty-eight chantrists, numbered eighty-seven. A further twenty-three, of whom twelve were attached to the two Coventry churches, were probably clerical itinerants who moved from one temporary

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106. LJRO, B/C/11/Hugh Proffett, 1536.
107. Stretch, 'Clergy and administration, p. 124 n. 1.
108. S.M. Jack, 'English bishops as tax collectors in the sixteenth century', *Parergon* 14 (1996), p. 131.
109. The proportion is roughly in line with his estimate of 'a fifth or a quarter of parishes' in Haigh, 'Anticlericalism and the English Reformation', p. 61; LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 2r. Grey had vacated the rectory of Much Hadham, Hertfordshire, by October 1532. It cannot be established when his successor at St Michael's was instituted because it went unrecorded in the bishop's register, perhaps because appropriate measures for recording institutions were overlooked during the vacancy-in-see. When Richard Manchester attended the Lenten dinner of the Corpus Christi Guild in Coventry in 1533 he was already being styled vicar of St Michael's: CCA, BA/B/Q/23/1, f. 299r; Emden, *BRUO*, p. 247.

appointment to another, or else depended for their extended tenure on unconditional subservience to their employers' terms.[110]

Of fifty-seven curates *qua* curates, some were parish priests, literally vicarious incumbents. Of them, Arden deanery had eighteen (32%) and Marton seventeen (30%). Few parishes enjoyed the luxury of more than one curate, some of whom deputised for habitually non-resident incumbents, while others acquired a measure of independence as priests in charge of chapelries. In Arden deanery, for example, the vicar of Aston employed Richard Mason at Deritend and Thomas Webbe at Castle Bromwich; John Baker and James Cashell were curates at Solihull and Edward Seman a chantrist.

Large parishes were often associated with well-wooded territory, but this was not necessarily the case. In Stoneleigh deanery the sum total of assistant clergy was only thirteen. Bishop's Itchington possessed 23% of them, its three subsidiary chapels served by Gilbert Barton, John Axson and, apparently part-time with Shuckburgh, W. Bryden (*sic*). Even in decline, Itchington's neighbouring parish, Burton Dassett, maintained Richard Lee and Richard Lyncoln to serve its scattered settlements. Priors Hardwick supported dependent chapelries at Priors Marston and Lower Shuckburgh, served by Roger Prestbury and W. Bryden respectively. Coventry deanery's modest tally of nine curates must be balanced against the more generous score of eleven chantrists and the even more impressive total of sixteen whose status cannot be established (Fig. 4).

At least twenty-three beneficed clergy were either pluralists or non-residents whose ministerial obligations were discharged by assistant clergy. Stretch calculated that in 1533 less than one-third of all the 1,712 clergy in Coventry and Lichfield were beneficed. Hosker assumed that auxiliary clergy 'formed a crucial part of the parochial staff...Most parishes would, therefore, possess at least one unbeneficed curate'. This concurs with Zell's conclusion in his study of Kent, where in Canterbury diocese in 1521 the average of 1.7 clergy per parish was similar to the smaller diocese of Rochester in 1533-4. Haigh calculated that the almost 230 assistants in Lancashire in 1548 comprised some 64% of the clerical work-force there.[111]

In Coventry archdeaconry the average overall distribution of the 110 non-beneficed clergy was 0.9 per parish. By refining the figures, however, a very different portrait emerges. Astley and Knowle, for example, were served by collegiate priests included in the category designated 'others', in this case institutional. Further

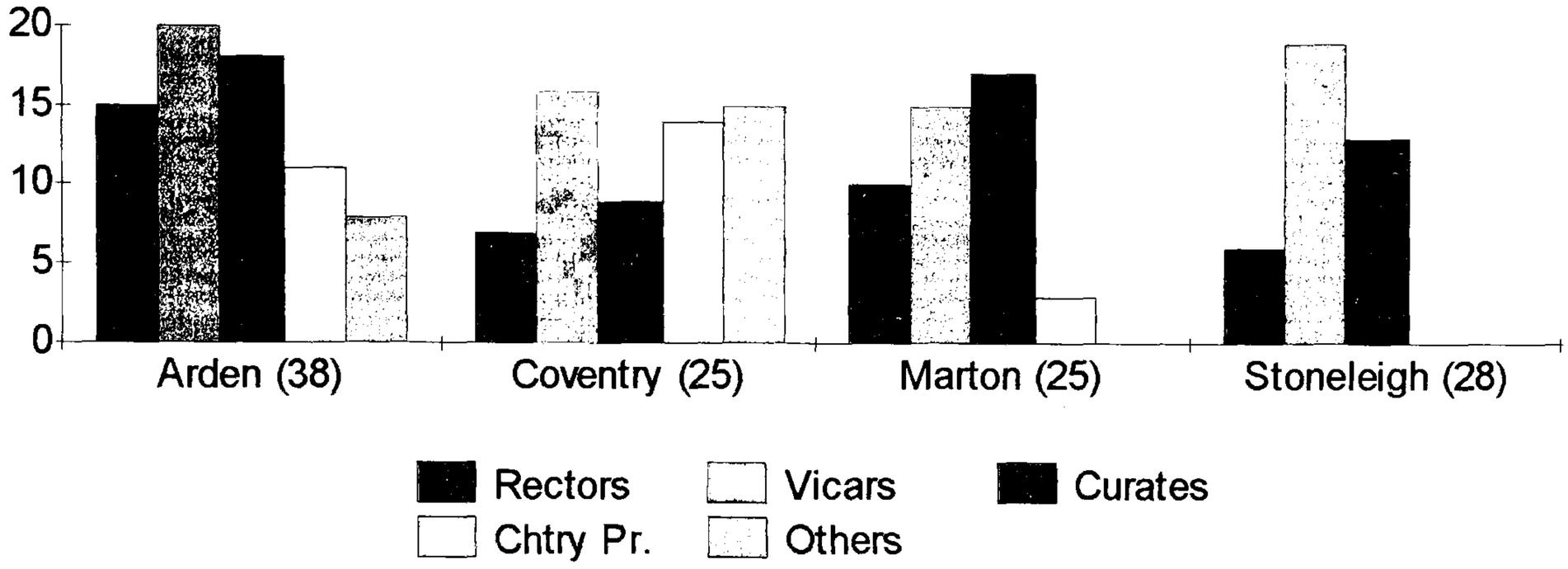
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110. The subsidy return did not always specify status, but in many instances the deficiency has been remedied by reference to contemporary sources; Cooper, 'Secular clergy', p. 124.
111. Stretch, 'Clergy and administration', p. 167 n. 2; Hosker, 'Register of Reginald Bowlers', p. 360; Zell, 'Personnel of the clergy in Kent', p. 517; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 34.

refinement reveals that the 110 - curates, chantrists and others of unspecified status - were engaged in only fifty-four parishes (47%), thus raising the average to approximately two assistants per parish.

FIG. 4

Breakdown of clergy in each deanery of Coventry archdeaconry in 1533
Source: BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 118r-123v



KEY: Bracketed numerals indicate number of parishes and chapelries, total 116

Vicars include stipendiaries in parishes having cure without institution

Sixty parishes (53%) apparently lacked an assistant, although that may be a misinterpretation of the evidence, for it is possible that some assistant clergy worked in more than one parish. Microscopic analysis reveals that fourteen parishes - all with dependent chapelries - possessed between them no fewer than 70 assistants, an average of five each. Birmingham, for example, accounted for six assistants, including chantrists and guild chaplains. Aston boasted five and Monks Kirby four. Bishop's Itchington, Nuneaton, Solihull and Wolston each had three assistants, and Burton Dassett, Mancetter, Newbold-on-Avon and Polesworth two.[112]

Not surprisingly, the largest concentration of assistant clergy was recorded at Coventry Holy Trinity (eleven) and Coventry St Michael (sixteen). The remaining forty parishes shared the balance of forty-one assistants, although it is unclear whether the 'curates' of Ansley and Baxterley, respectively John Twycrosse and George Whytereson, were not actually incumbents. They were both named as incumbents in *Valor* two years later, but no record of their institutions has been found.[113] At Harbury it is not at all clear whether the vicarage was vacant. Humphrey

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112. Nuneaton and Polesworth abbeys each employed three secular clergy not included in the above calculations.
113. LJRO, B/A/1/13, f.185r. Whitereson was ordained priest on 18 April 1495.

Rosyngdale was described as curate there, otherwise the source is ambiguous respecting the benefice-holder.[114]

3.6. Turmoil, 1534-69

For three decades after Parliament revoked papal authority in England and recognised Henry VIII as 'Supreme Head' of the English Church, the realm was plunged into religious confusion. Within that context the parochial clergy were faced with terrible choices which had a permanent impact on the parochial ministry and its subsequent development. This thesis, however, pursues not consciences but consequences, examining their effect on the deployment and numerical adequacy of the parochial clergy in Coventry archdeaconry.

While the overall number of clergy declined between 1533 and 1558, some sixty-five rectors and ninety-five vicars, a total of 160, were instituted to benefices in Coventry archdeaconry. The average of six institutions *per annum* suggests that there was still an adequate if otherwise shrinking reserve of unbeneficed to promote to vacant livings.[115] As no nominal lists survive for either the later years of Henry VIII or the intervening reign of Edward VI, when so many regulars and chantrists were dispossessed of their livelihood, the next relevant indicator of the health of the parochial ministry in the post-Henrician period is the *liber cleri* of 1558, a particularly compelling source since it shows the numerical state of the archdeaconry in the dying months of the Marian administration.[116]

By 1558 the pool of clergy available for filling vacant livings had been drained by deprivations, mortality, and the cessation of ordinations. Only one of Mary Tudor's bishops kept his see when Elizabeth I ascended the throne and their successors were faced with the enormous task of recruiting ordination candidates and simultaneously revising the liturgical and doctrinal principles of a Church both Catholic and Reformed. This is not the place for discussing such complex issues, but it was within that *milieu* that the parochial ministry was re-fashioned to meet newly-revised pastoral criteria.

Emphasis on preaching, religious instruction and formal worship superseded ascetic, devotional and vicarious aspects of the Church's spirituality. This new cerebral approach to ministry required greater application by parochial clergy,

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114. LJRO, B/A/1/14ii, Rosyngdale was made deacon in February 1529. When priested by the suffragan Bishop of Panaden at Alvecote Priory on 27 April 1529 he was, uniquely, the only candidate presented.

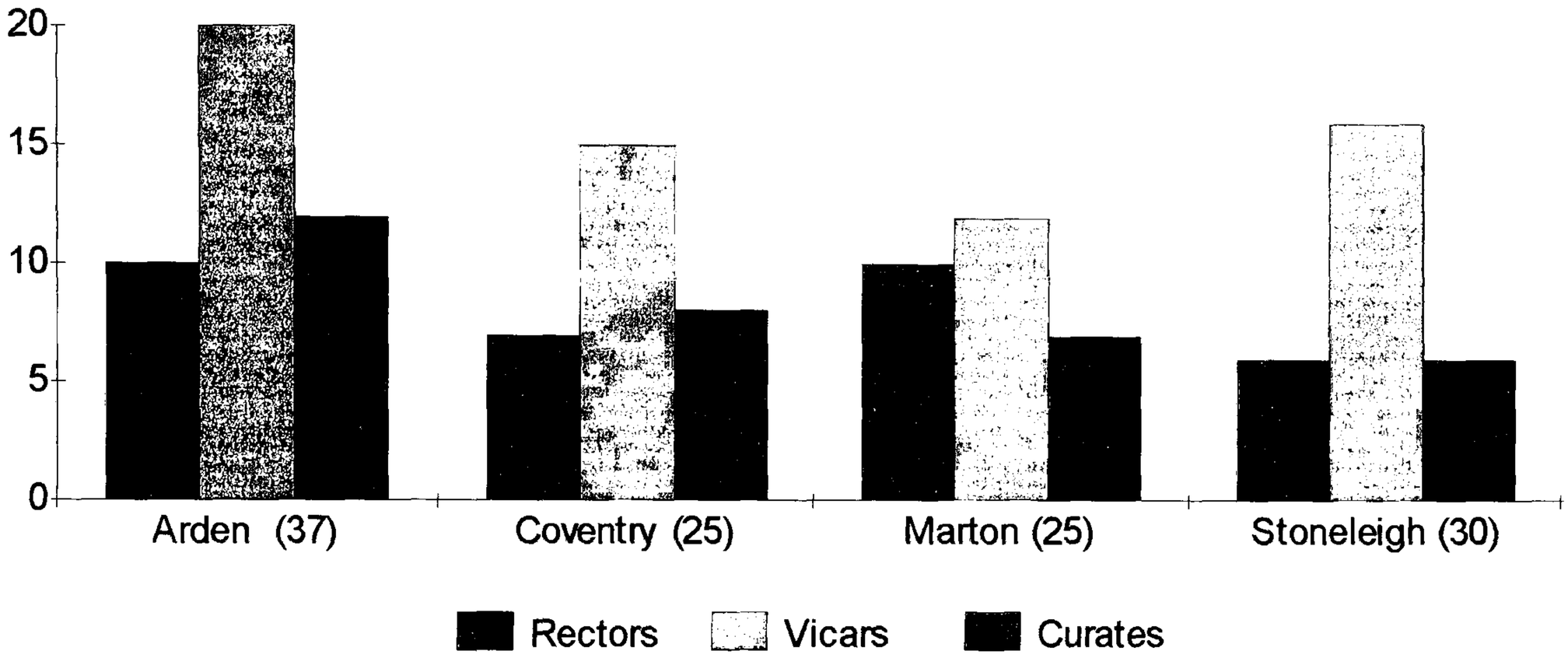
115. LJRO, B/V/1/2.

116. For a summary of the changing religious scenery see W.J. Sheils, *The English Reformation 1530-1570* (London, 1989).

although the pastoral imperative remained unchanged. Success came to depend less on numerical strength than on professional competence.[117] Meanwhile, in a desperate bid to fill hundreds of vacant benefices nationwide, the new bishops ordained any reasonably intelligent man willing to enter the clerical estate, so long as could satisfy them that he was responding to a genuine vocation.

FIG. 5

Breakdown of clergy in each deanery of the Coventry archdeaconry in 1558
Sources: LJRO, B/V/1/2, with additional evidence from records of institutions



KEY: Bracketed numerals indicate number of parishes and chapelries, total 117

Vicars include stipendiaries in parishes having cure without institution

The elimination of about thirty clerical posts in the two Coventry parishes explains the huge deficit in the number of unbeneficed in the 1558 visitation book, for the city's churches accounted for 30% of the archdeaconry's unbeneficed in 1533, 11% in 1558 and only 7% in 1560. Some city clergy may eventually have been absorbed into benefices or other ecclesiastical appointments, but the closure of religious institutions rendered superfluous assistants redundant. Private chaplaincies were available to those willing to accept employers' terms and conditions. It is not known how many former parochial clergy in Coventry archdeaconry accepted domestic chaplaincies (in which capacity they fall outside the bounds of this study) and few examples are known. Two former chantrists of Coventry Holy Trinity, William Queniborough and William Abell, entered the household of the Coventry recorder, Ralph Swillington, but Humphrey Fenn was the most exceptional example of a beneficed incumbent engaged as a private chaplain. Having, in Cahill's phrase,

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117. See O'Day, *English Clergy*, on professionalization.

'lived on the brink of secession', Fenn was in 1584 suspended from Coventry Holy Trinity for non-subscription, and subsequently engaged as his private chaplain by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who took him on his Netherlands campaign, and later gave moral support during Fenn's imprisonment.[118]

Of the 130 clergy named in the visitation in June 1558, twenty-three (18%) were survivors from 1533, but the depletion of the work-force by about half between 1533 and 1558 demonstrates the enormity of the religious changes in Coventry archdeaconry. Nine incumbents remained in the same benefice throughout the quarter-century, two moved to a different living in the archdeaconry, while four who were assistants in 1533 had become beneficed by 1558. The remainder were assistants throughout the period, though not necessarily in the same parish.

The absorption of ex-religious into the parochial ministry was a significant development because of the potential threat to the recruitment of fresh candidates to the ministry. It is important to investigate this development, therefore, to ascertain whether the dissolution of the monasteries had any impact on parishes within Coventry archdeaconry. Regulars, being obliged to seek a faculty to renounce their vows, transferred less easily than secular chantrists, or guild priests, but having 'exchanged habits' they became enmeshed within the parochial system and thus fall within the scope of this study. Some forty-five ex-religious and chantrists on Cardinal Pole's 1556 pension list were domiciled in Coventry archdeaconry. At least fifteen (9%) out of the 160 clergy instituted to livings there between 1533-58, were former monks.[119]

After surrendering their houses, Robert Bate, abbot of Combe, and Thomas Dagley, prior of Arbury, acquired benefices in Coventry archdeaconry. Bate was rector of Church Lawford 1547-67, while Dagley was successively beneficed in three Warwickshire parishes (the first of which lay in Worcester diocese) and, after a spell as curate of Weston-under-Wetherley, died in retirement at Nuneaton in 1568. The most prominent ex-religious to minister in Coventry archdeaconry was John Feckenham, presented to Solihull by Sir George Throgmorton in 1545, resigned in 1554 to become abbot of the newly-restored abbey of Westminster.[120]

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118. LJRO, B/C/11/1577 (Queniborough); TNA: PRO E 301/131, f. 36r; M. Cahill, 'The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1603-1642', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (2001), p. 91; S. Adams, *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558-1561, 1584-1586*, Camden Society 5th ser. 6 (1995), pp. 295, 352, 358, 363, 368, 452, 459.

119. TNA: PRO E 164/31.

120. D.S. Chambers, ed., *Faculty Office Registers 1534-1549: A Calendar of the First two Registers of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Faculty Office Edited With an Introduction and Index* (Oxford, 1966), *passim*, for individual and block licences granted to named personnel of various monasteries; LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 42r-v (Bate); Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 2, p. 719 (Dagley); LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 12r, 35v; B/C/11/William Dagley 1568; LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, f. 41r, B/A/1/15, f. 2r (Feckenham).

Several Kenilworth canons were presented to benefices in Coventry archdeaconry. Some had been inmates of religious houses which formerly held the patronage of the livings to which they were later presented by lay patrons, often following *pro hac vice* grants. For example, Thomas Parker, an Augustinian canon 1522-38, was in 1542 instituted to Ashow, which advowson the Kenilworth canons had owned before the Dissolution.[121] For some ex-religious the transition to parochial life may not have been entirely congenial. That might explain why the Maxstoke monk Robert Bosworth, having been granted dispensation to hold a benefice with a 'change of habits', remained as curate in charge of the chapelry of Bentley, in Shustoke parish, which he had administered before the Dissolution. There he was buried in 1570.[122]

Other dispossessed religious must have found secular life very complex. For example, William Bond, an Augustinian canon of Rocester Abbey, in 1538 migrated to its Staffordshire collegiate neighbour, Burton-on-Trent, from which he was also ousted when it, too, was suppressed. Settled as curate of Upper Whitacre by 1553 and by then also married, he was for that reason deprived in 1554. At the 1560 visitation he was curate of the neighbouring parish of Ansley, where the following year he was reported dead and buried.[123] Like Bond, some ex-religious distanced themselves from their monastic surroundings, either to return to an area already familiar to them or else to any location where employment was offered. Thus John Cropthorne, a monk of Worcester cathedral priory, served a curacy at Bricklehampton, Worcestershire, before finding a niche as curate of Avon Dassett between 1565-76.[124]

The case of William Foster, erstwhile monk of Coventry cathedral priory, deserves particular attention, since research for this thesis has revealed that he was a hitherto undetected Marian exile. In 1543 he was presented to Corley vicarage whose patron, the Coventry merchant Henry Over, was bound as one of Foster's sureties. In 1554, Foster was deprived for being married, which for a former monk was potentially dangerous. Despairing 'for the safeguard of his life and conscience' Foster, for £20 redeemable on re-payment, mortgaged the patent entitling him to an annual life pension of £5 6s. 8d. to one John Tallantes of Coventry. Returning from exile, Foster was presented to Bedworth rectory and attempted to retrieve his patent, but was rebuffed by Over, to whom Tallantes meanwhile had sold it. When Over

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121. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 18v.
122. Chambers, *Faculty Office Registers*, p. 86; TNA: PRO E 178/3239/4, mem. 4; WCRO, DRB 39/1, f. 36v.
123. *DKR* 8th Report, App. 2, p. 39; TNA: PRO E 101/76/20; LJRO, B/V/1/4, p. 46; TNA: PRO E 178/3239/4, mem. 4
124. CCC Camb., MS 97, f. 129r, LJRO, B/V/1/8, p. 20; B/V/1/9, p. 28.

died, Foster sued his former patron's son, Richard, who had inherited the patent and was drawing the pension. He robustly rebutted Foster's claim, but the conclusion is not known and, in any case, the details are irrelevant in this context.[125]

Some fifty-three incumbents had been instituted since Mary's accession, and at the visitation in June 1558 (Fig. 5) only six parishes lacked an incumbent. It was an astonishing achievement, particularly since at Grandborough the four-week vacancy caused by the death of Thomas Redborne was filled within three weeks of the visitation taking place; Francis Kymberley had just been instituted to Great Harborough, creating a lengthy vacancy at Wappenbury, his former parish; and at Caldecote the recent unexplained departure of William Cotterel left another long-term vacancy which proved difficult to fill. The point is that two of these three vacancies had been quickly filled despite an impending acute shortage of suitable clergy.

It is not unlikely that several regular priests from nearby monasteries settled in Coventry after the Dissolution and served as parochial assistants during Mary's reign, but found employment in the secular world when Elizabeth I succeeded to the throne. For example, a former monk named Richard Banwell had settled in Wolston, where he settled as a married man and became a barber. He still maintained links with other ex-monastics, and in 1558 was an appraiser of the inventory of Robert Bate, the last abbot of Combe, who had become rector of Church Lawford.[126]

Principally from the evidence of wills, Knight has demonstrated that traditional religion 'was flourishing in Coventry' in the early decades of the sixteenth century and that 'the citizens were content with [their clergy]'. By the early 1530s, when Coventry's economy suffered 'a sudden and dramatic decline', the city's religious life faltered as financial support was reduced. 'Every effort was made...to maintain the number of priests', but it is clear that 'chantries decayed...religious guilds were badly affected'.[127] It was a peculiarly urban problem. Adverse trading conditions depressed income levels and donations to hitherto successful institutions dried up. Chaplaincies suffered, being vulnerable to economic fluctuations. The collapse of industrial markets followed by the dissolution of religious establishments had a catastrophic effect upon the number of clergy in Coventry.[128]

This spectacular collapse transformed the pattern of parochial ministry as the clerical phalanx dispersed. Whereas in 1522 a fifty-strong clergy work-force had

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125. LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, f. 40v; TNA: PRO E 334/2, f. 144r; BL, Harl. MS 421, f. 57; BL, Lansdowne MS 443, f. 76v; ; TNA: PRO C 3/63/31/1-4.
126. LJRO, B/C/11/Robert Bate, 1558; Richard Banwell, 1561.
127. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', pp. 554, 556, 557, 559.
128. C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979).

been employed there, by 1558 there were only a vicar and one curate at Holy Trinity and a curate and three assistants at St Michael's where the vicar, Hugh Symons, had been temporarily suspended.[129] Almost certainly, the financial problems which precipitated the failure of the parochial ministry led to the introduction of unofficial 'town preachers', maintained by citizens themselves. This can hardly have been a spontaneous or voluntary declaration of support by Coventry's householders, as has been supposed, since in 1559 funds were collected by means of a levy raised by the corporation.[130]

Here it may be appropriate to introduce the curious case of George Cheston. In 1562 letters patent were issued presenting Cheston to Coventry Holy Trinity at the petition of *Magister* Lever. Perhaps in anticipation of this, the city's mayor ordered that Cheston be paid 20s. 'towards the reparations of his house'. The following year that house was identified as 'the Vicarage', for which Cheston had started to pay 20s. *per annum* in rent.[131] At a parish meeting in 1564, 20d. was expended when 'the books were delivered to Mr Cheston', who received a fee for preaching a sermon in 1565. Meanwhile, he continued to reside in the vicarage and pay 20s. rent *per annum*.[132]

It is perfectly clear, however, that although Cheston was living in the vicarage and taking a very active part in church life, he had still not been formally admitted as vicar, for Coventry Holy Trinity was not only declared 'vacant' in December 1564, but also in a return of 1565 it was still vacant and had been so 'since the death of the last vicar three years ago'. Indeed, it was not until 5 April 1568 that Cheston was finally instituted.[133]

This begs questions about Cheston's role between 1562 and 1568. In the first place, why did the mayor direct the city treasurer to repair church property? And why was Cheston allowed to reside in the benefice house when he was not the vicar? Clearly, Cheston was not entitled to receive fruits of the benefice before he was inducted, so any income he received must have been derived from another source. That he was permitted to reside in the benefice house after the corporation had defrayed part of the cost of repairs in 1562 is not particularly significant, for the rectory, excluding the advowson, had been acquired by the corporation in 1565.[134] It does suggest, however, that the corporation had persuaded Cheston to become

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129. J.R. Dasent, ed., *Acts of the Privy Council of England* (32 vols, London, 1890-1907) 4, pp. 333, 338.
130. Sharp, *Antiquities of the City of Coventry*, p. 120.
131. BL, Lansdowne MS 443, f. 115v; WCRO, DR 801/13, unfol.
132. WCRO, DR 581/45, ff. 18v, 21r, 29r;
133. TNA: PRO E 334/5, f. 56r; SP 15/12/108, f. 254r; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 43r.
134. *CPR*, 1563-1566, p. 203.

lecturer instead and that, like Lever before him, he was supported by the citizenry. It may be speculated that such an accommodation had been made necessary by the dire financial state of the parish and was a contingency arrangement until such time as the situation improved.[135]

Meanwhile, Coventry archdeaconry assistant clergy were being thinly spread, except in parishes with dependent chapels. Whereas in 1522 the complement at Wolston comprised a vicar, curate and two chantrists, in 1560 the vicar ministered single-handedly.[136] Similarly at Knowle, whose collegiate establishment had attracted an abnormally large concentration of clergy, the rector was made perpetual curate in sole charge of the chapelry.[137]

Although *Valor Ecclesiasticus* made concessions for certain rents, pensions, and unavoidable disbursements such as professional fees, wages for deputies 'serving of cures' were explicitly ruled out. Parish size mattered, therefore, whether demographic or territorial, rendering assistants' wages a vexatious liability. Some of the largest and most valuable parishes in Coventry archdeaconry, for example, Aston, Bishop's Itchington, Monks Kirby and Priors Hardwick contained several chapelries and therefore benefice income, however substantial, was reduced by the obligation to employ curates and pay their wages.

It has been demonstrated by D.J. Peet that incumbents resented having tax concessions withdrawn when they hired deputies out of necessity, and they received robust if unavailing support from Archbishop Lee of York.[138] Patrick Carter also identified resentment as a possible factor behind the decline in the number of assistant clergy, a theme supported by R.B. Walker, who thought that it encouraged some to dispense with assistants' services 'even before the disuse of the Mass rendered them superfluous'.[139] Felicity Heal's assertion that the 'rapid decline in the number of assistant clergy' was the result of inflation whereby 'incumbents could no longer afford to employ them at a tolerable wage', does not seem to be borne out in Coventry archdeaconry, however, where pastoral re-alignment, not financial reticence, is a more satisfactory explanation.[140]

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135. For earlier financial problems see P. Carter, 'Economic problems of provincial urban clergy during the Reformation', in P. Collinson and J. Craig, *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 147, 158.
136. Robinson, *Zurich Letters*, p. 85; WCRO, HR 65/1; LJRO, B/V/1/4, p. 67.
137. TNA: PRO E 301/57 no. 23.
138. D.J. Peet, 'The mid-sixteenth clergy, with particular reference to the dioceses of Norwich and York', unpubl. D.Phil thesis, University of Cambridge (1980), pp. 387-91.
139. Carter, 'Royal taxation', p. 152; Walker, 'Archdeaconries of Lincoln and Stow', p. 53.
140. F. Heal, 'Economic problems of the clergy', in F. Heal and R. O'Day, eds, *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I* (London, 1977), p. 108.

Parishioners of Coleshill petitioned for more adequate provision of pastoral care on the grounds that their vicar was evading *in absentia* pastoral obligations. It was an unusual case, for the appropriators, Markyate priory, had granted £4 annually towards the stipend of a morrow-mass priest. Augmentations Office receipts confirm that they continued this payment for four years before the aggrieved parishioners complained that their vicar, John Fenton, had accepted the instalments, but 'of his covetous & crafty mind ever since the dissolution' failed to engage a replacement morrow-mass priest. Fenton was 'Official of Coventry', so the allegation probably arose out of his absences from the parish on account of his wider responsibilities and, therefore, his perceived neglect of parochial matters notwithstanding the presence of a curate. The outcome of the petition is not recorded.[141]

It is noticeable that 19% of those assistants named in the 1558 visitation and 42% of those in the 1560 visitation, *in toto* sixteen clergy, cannot be traced beyond those dates. There is insufficient evidence to make a definitive judgement as to why a quarter of the assistant clergy in Coventry archdeaconry disappeared. In view of the number of vacancies it cannot be attributable to lack of opportunity. Unrecorded deaths are, doubtless, partly responsible, but economic considerations may also have been a factor. While heeding Haigh's cautionary note that it is 'wisest to avoid the temptation of monocausal explanations', it is difficult to resist the suspicion that dissatisfaction with yet another religious *volte-face* was a considerable deterrent for men with sensitive religious principles. Out of a sample of 172 Lancashire clergy in 1554, twenty-one died and two resigned, leaving only fifty-one, or 34% of the surviving 149, still ministering in 1563. The rest had 'disappeared'. In the end, the quantifying of auxiliary clergy is in every diocese a real problem.[142]

Direct comparison between Coventry and Lancashire is not possible, but some unambiguous similarities exist. Whatever the reason for the decline in the number of subsidiary clergy, at Archbishop Parker's visitation of Coventry archdeaconry in 1560 there were twenty-three curates, fifteen fewer than in 1558. At Bentham's delayed primary visitation in 1561 a mere twelve curates were named. A similar trend was noted in Lancashire, where the number of priests declined from 172 in 1554 to ninety-eight in 1563 and seventy-nine in 1565.[143]

As late as 1547, even resident incumbents sought assistance at major festivals, when extra services were customarily held. Worshippers were under obligation to make their confession before receiving Easter communion, so to cope with seasonal fluctuations incumbents hired temporary clerical assistance, possibly with the

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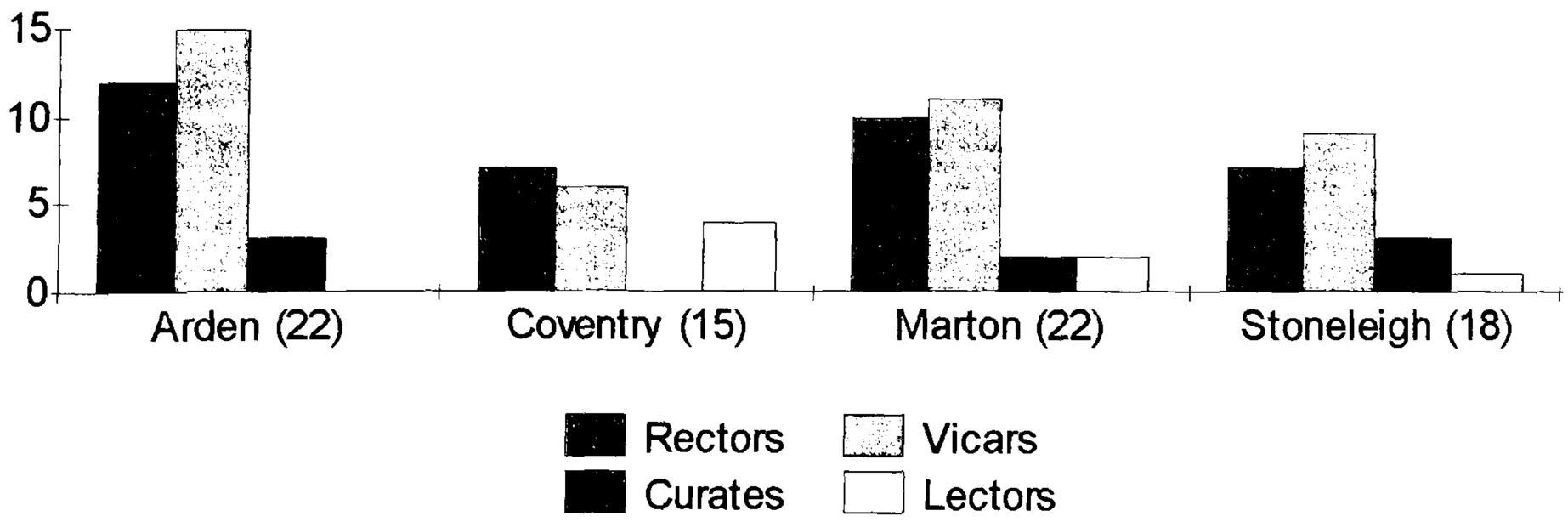
141. TNA: PRO E 314/44; E 321/4 no. 28.
142. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp. 157, 215.
143. LJRO, B/V/1/4, 5; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 215.

consent (and financial support) of parishioners. Applicants were probably earnest jobbing priests who flitted from one short-term appointment to another, receiving a modest income from their brief assignments. These sacerdotal itinerants were finally made redundant after 1559 when the Elizabethan Settlement extinguished their *raison d'être* and they were nudged in new directions. Yet help was still required when incumbents suffered ill-health, grew infirm with age, or served populous parishes. Lack of administrative records makes it hazardous even to speculate how many auxiliary clergy were engaged at any one time in the parishes, but their unchronicled passage through the orbit of historical research merits further investigation.

Mary's death and the re-establishment of protestantism confer particular importance upon a trio of sources commencing with the archiepiscopal visitation of 1560 which named 103 clergy.[144] Astonishingly, although about two dozen benefices had already changed hands since 1558 there were few vacancies. Only three parochial clergy remained in Coventry, where St Michael's was the only parish in the whole archdeaconry with more than one resident clergyman; Holy Trinity was vacant. This contrasted starkly with Ely diocese where, out of 152 livings in January 1560, there were thirty-two vacancies, eleven of which were filled by the end of the year.[145] At Ansley, William Bonde had been the caretaker minister since Henry Hondys left for Corley the previous year; at Chilvers Coton the vicar, Henry Wylkyns, had been ordained in 1509 and was probably senile. After his death in 1561 Wylkyns' curate, William Pate, succeeded as vicar. Failing health dogged Farnborough's vicar, who also died in 1561 leaving Richard Gabriell temporarily in charge.[146]

FIG. 6

Breakdown of clergy in each deanery of the Coventry archdeaconry in 1561
Source: LJRO, B/V/1/5



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144. LJRO, B/V/1/4.
145. Heal, 'Reformation in the diocese of Ely', p. 156.
146. LJRO, B/A/1/14ii; B/A/1/14iii; B/V/1/4, p. 63.

Bentham's primary visitation in late May/early June 1561 (Fig. 6) exposed a continuing deterioration in the number of parochial clergy.[147] The entire work-force of eighty-two included seventy beneficed incumbents. Of twelve ordained assistants, four served chapelries, three were employed in parishes where the benefice was vacant (Chilvers Coton, Cubbington and Stoneleigh) and absentee rectors hired curates at Rugby, Sutton Coldfield and Warmington. The curates of Church Lawford and Fillongley presented themselves alongside their presumably resident vicars. Finally, lay readers had been appointed at Brownsover, Churchover, Ryton-on-Dunsmore and Stretton-on-Dunsmore, and the Coventry suburban parishes of Ansty, Shilton and Stoke.

Lay readers, or lectors, were introduced by Archbishop Parker in 1559. They were authorised to perform certain ministerial functions in parishes without a beneficed incumbent, but they were not allowed to preach without special licence, or to administer the sacraments. They could officiate at Morning or Evening Prayer and in necessity bury the dead, church women, and baptise, but they were also enjoined to keep the register book. Their appointment was temporary and gave them no claim to any rights in the benefice where they exercised their ministry. Indeed, Rosemary O'Day has shown that readers were 'required to swear "to give place upon convenient warning"', and were therefore 'easily removable and fully answerable to the ordinary'. The scheme was soon abandoned, however, and few references to lectors appear in subsequent records.[148]

These trends were corroborated by Archbishop Parker's survey during the latter half of 1562.[149] The survey overlooked at least six parishes of which only one was among the known thirty-six vacancies, including chapelries. It is calculated that the number of clergy currently operating in Coventry archdeaconry was seventy-seven, including stipendiaries.

Bishop Bentham's return to the Privy Council, dated 27 July 1563 was in response to searching questions the bishops were ordered to answer about the state of the ministry in their respective dioceses.[150] For example, they were required to submit a census of households. This Bentham did for all but a handful of parishes, arranged by deanery and irrespective of status. The council demanded to know the state of occupancy of benefices, but nominal lists of their incumbents were eschewed and curacies altogether disregarded. Two of the eighteen reported vacancies were

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147. LJRO, B/V/1/5.
148. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p. 240; W.P.M. Kennedy, *Elizabethan Episcopal Administration: An Essay in Sociology and Politics* (3 vols, London, 1924), 1, p. lxxxii.
149. CCC Camb., MS 97, ff. 29r-33r.
150. BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 165r-81v.

rectories, Baxterley and Caldecote, although Baddesley Clinton, also vacant, was strangely overlooked. The remaining sixteen vacancies were all vicarages, but a seventeenth, Weston-under-Wetherley, was similarly overlooked. For whatever reason, Burton Hastings was the only cure without institution included. Of nineteen livings in this category in 1563 only Astley (Ralph Broke), Foleshill (Richard Palmer), and Milverton (Thomas More) are known from other sources to have been occupied.

Seven changes of personnel had taken place since the 1561 visitation, but some inconsistencies in the bishop's return cannot be reconciled. For instance, Radford Semele appeared twice - once with a vicar and once without! Lillington, listed as having a vicar, had been vacated by Thomas Badnall in June 1561 when he was instituted to Offchurch. This is confirmed in an undated schedule of vacant benefices, endorsed 'Return made to Queen Elizabeth by Sundry Bishops' and probably compiled in 1565. Lillington was there recorded as having been vacant since the cession of the last vicar four years previously. It also showed no fewer than twenty-three vacant benefices in Coventry archdeaconry.[151] Three livings only recently voided included Ashow whose rector, Thomas Parker, was recorded in a separate exchequer list naming pensioners who had died. His date of death was given as 19 November 1564, thus corroborating similar evidence from Bristol diocese that this particular schedule was compiled between late 1564 or early 1565.[152] Two of the benefices named as vacant in 1565 were filled within a few months, but a further thirteen livings vacant at the 1561 visitation, including Coventry Holy Trinity, remained unoccupied.

3.7. Consolidation, 1570-1603

By 1570 the halving of the clerical work-force between 1540 and 1560 had been absorbed and controlled. Visitation books reveal how the Established Church was beginning to resolve its numerical crisis.[153] The transformation of a numerically declining parochial work-force was an extraordinary phenomenon which deserves closer scrutiny. In this context, however, it is merely necessary to observe that during the late Elizabethan period there was no recurrence of the wildly fluctuating statistics suffered during the middle years of the century as the parochial ministry assumed its new shape.[154] Progress towards reducing the number of vacant benefices was palpable, although clerical mobility was occasionally erratic.

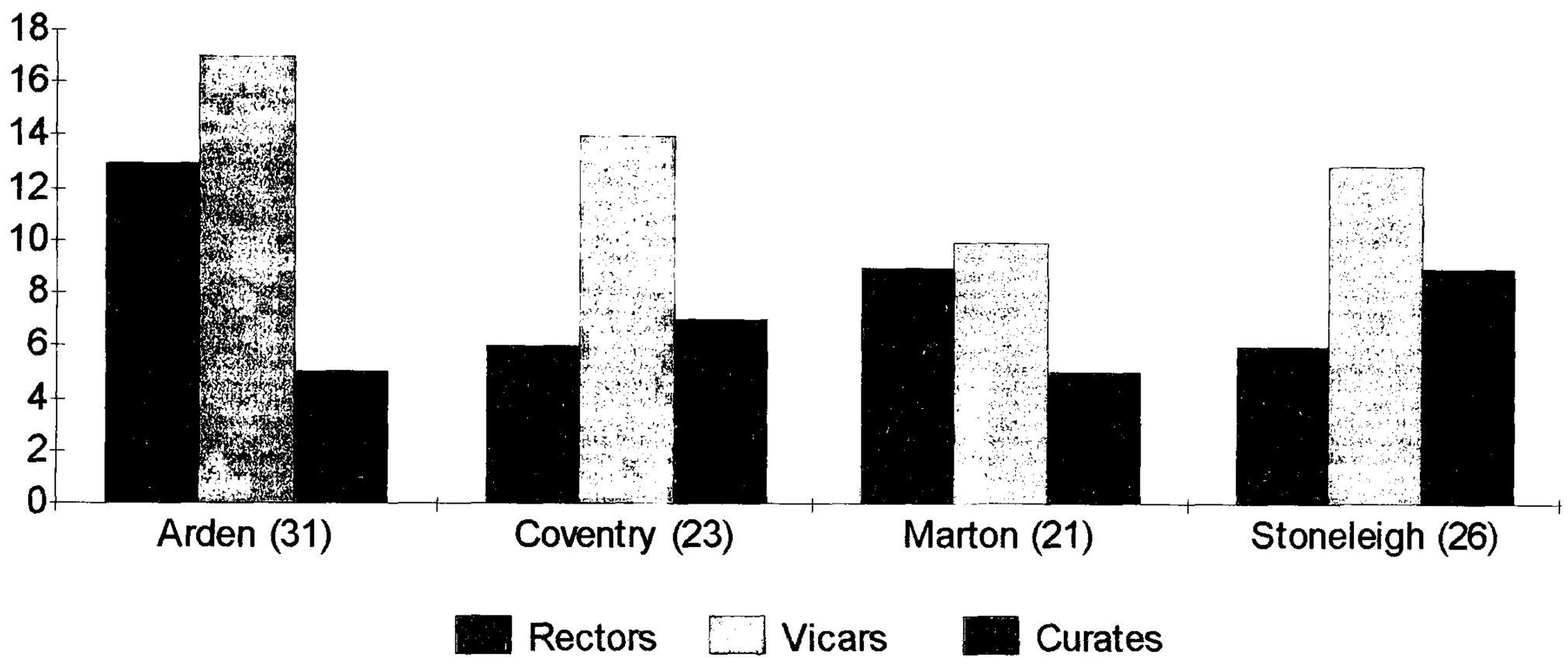
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151. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 30r, 21 June 1561; TNA: PRO SP 15/12/108, ff. 252v-4r.
152. TNA: PRO E 135/1/24; Skeeters, *Community and Clergy*, p. 249 n. 5.
153. LJRO, B/V/1/7-9, 11, 13, 15-16, 19, 20, 23.
154. O'Day, *English Clergy*, which deals with the professionalization of the English clergy after the Reformation.

The 1570 visitation named 108 clergy representing ninety-five parishes including chapelries, and two pebendaries.[155] Three rectories were currently vacant, although at Allesley the previous incumbent, Thomas Saunders, had died only six weeks previously and was shortly replaced by his son, Samuel. Baddesley Clinton had been long vacant; at Birdingbury, Maurice Rowlands was poised to replace William Clever, who had resigned.[156] The tally included twenty-three assistants, a remarkable surge since 1561, when there were only twelve. None of the seven lectors engaged in 1561 remained and the proportion of curates had risen to about 19% of all clergy. (Fig. 7).

FIG. 7

Breakdown of clergy in each deanery of the Coventry archdeaconry in 1570
Sources: LJRO, B/V/1/7, and evidence from institution register



Almost identical figures emerged at a visitation in June 1573, when 110 parochial clergy were active in seventy-eight livings including cures without institution. Twenty-eight curacies were now being served, 25% of all clergy in the archdeaconry. There were interregna at Birdingbury where Hugh Conway's institution was imminent, and at Radbourne, vacant since the death of Robert Holme.[157] Baddesley Clinton, Maxstoke and Wappenbury, were the only unoccupied benefices at the July 1576 visitation, when 116 clergy were named.[158] Of ninety-five beneficed incumbents only three were now double-beneficed in the archdeaconry, holding between them three rectories, a vicarage and two stipendiary livings. But the number

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155. LJRO, B/V/1/7.
156. LJRO, B/C/11 Thomas Saunders' will dated 3 May 1570; B/A/1/15, f. 44r, institution of Samuel Saunders on 4 October 1570; B/A/1/15, f. 43v gives Maurice Rowland's institution at Birdingbury as 18 August 1570.
157. LJRO, B/V/1/8.
158. LJRO, B/V/1/9.

of curates had declined to twenty-one, 18% of the total complement. By October 1579, out of 100 clergy three held two livings in the archdeaconry. Seven vacant livings were recorded, among them Bickenhill and four stipendiary livings, while Church Lawford appears to have been sequestered. The number of curates remained static at twenty-one.[159]

Fierce controversy over the nature and effectiveness of the parochial ministry characterised the 1580s. Bishops and disaffected critics alike were motivated to produce surveys, all purporting to demonstrate the true extent of professional competence, or lack it, among the parochial clergy, a topic reflected in some of the five surviving visitation records from this decade.[160] One such survey, compiled for Bishop Overton in 1584, has been identified by Crankshaw, who suggested that 'the puritan surveys, novel only in their frankness and vehemence', were deliberately contentious.[161]

Damning comments were, indeed, contained in the so-called Puritan Survey of 1586, where barely a dozen of the 117 different clergy named were favourably mentioned. There seems little doubt that a few clergy deserved exposure for serious moral lapses. Such a man was Geoffrey Jones, vicar of Corley: 'Dumb, a drunkard, gamester, quarreler, swearer, pilferer, adulterer'. As long ago as 1573 he had been described in the bishop's own court as 'a quarrelsome witness...and evasive'. Worse, in 1584 he was presented for keeping 'company with Agnes Jones saying she is his wife & with Johana Underwod who says he is her husband'. Indeed, in 1588 other aspects of his scandalous behaviour were portrayed by Martin Marprelate.[162]

There is good reason to doubt the soundness of the 1586 Puritan Survey, however. For example, William Crook was supposedly 'unable to read', notwithstanding that he had written several testators' wills. An old man, Crook had been rector of Stockton since 1543 and previously, according to the survey, a 'mass-priest', so if he *was* unable to read then it was because his eyesight had deteriorated, an interpretation the survey avoided. At Meriden, furthermore, Henry Williams (not to be confused with the similarly-named former dean of Lichfield) was described as having been 'a serving man' - an unlikely occupation for a double-beneficed Bachelor of Law![163]

Who could have measured the movements of John Antrobus, vicar of Bishop's Tachbrook, so closely as to observe that he 'bendeth himself wholly to the plough

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159. LJRO, B/V/1/11.
160. LJRO, B/V/1/13, 16, 19-20.
161. LJRO, B/V/1/15; Crankshaw, 'Surveys of the Ministry', p. 15.
162. Peel, *Seconde Parte*, 2, p. 171; LJRO, B/V/1/8, pp. 32, 174; B/V/1/17, p. 184; Marprelate Tract 1. *Oh read ouer Dr Iohn Bridges*, pp. 41-2.
163. Peel, *Seconde Parte*, 2, pp. 171 (Williams), 174 (Crook).

and cart'? How could he have possibly known that 'he does not study'? Not at all? The Tachbrook registers reveal that between 1575 and 1599 there were at least 198 children baptised, sixty-eight couples married and 134 corpses buried including, in 1578, the vicar's own first wife after only four months of marriage.[164] Were the bereaved left to mourn without him ministering to them, did he never visit the sick, or prepare the children for Confirmation? Did the parishioners of Tachbrook never hear their vicar toll the bell before the daily offices in church, as the Prayer Book directed? Between the time Antrobus became vicar in June 1575 and the Puritan Survey in 1586, he would have been responsible for 132 Sunday services even if he conducted only one every week.

Few Coventry archdeaconry clergy were licensed preachers in 1587, but owing to textual ambiguities it is not possible to give a precise figure. At least fifty-eight were declared to be 'dumb', that is, unlicensed to preach, but specific details are not always given for the remainder. Not all preachers received the clear approbation of the puritans. A former schoolmaster, Thomas Butter, was said to be of 'little Profit to hearers' at Arley, where he was vicar, but he was also accused of being 'Unreformed in speech from swearing'.[165] Nor, apparently, was every license-holder a diligent pulpit orator, for it was said that William Drax, vicar of Stoneleigh, 'Seldom preaches & with no Profit'. As if to justify the sweeping assumption, the entry closed with the comment: 'Noted drunkard'.[166]

In view of Archdeacon Hinton's low opinion of puritans, it is surprising that he was described as 'honest and of some towardness' as vicar of Coventry St Michael. Few clergy, and they mostly known protestants, received even faint praise. For example, Coleshill's vicar, Ralph Fox, 'had a good gift and was very willing to labour'. A decade later he was one of the Warwickshire ministers who proclaimed a fast day at Southam and was called to answer for it before the diocesan himself.[167] Robert Cope, vicar of Ansley, was a 'diligent and painful old man' - he had been deprived for non-subscription in 1574 but re-instituted the following year - and Leonard Fetherston, vicar of Long Itchington, although 'no allowed preacher' was yet 'but diligent and honest'. He was, of course, a signatory to the Warwickshire presbyterian group's *Book of Discipline* in 1588.[168] Two contrasting characters were the 'willing'

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164. WCRO, DR 46/1.
165. Peel, *Seconde Parte*, 2, p. 171.
166. Peel, p. 173.
167. Peel, p. 169; M. Cahill, 'The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1603-1642', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (2001), p. 101. Other participants included John Oxenbridge of Southam and Henry Bradshaw of Bulkington.
168. Peel, pp. 169 (Cope), 174 (Fetherston); LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 45v; B/V/1/15, f. 20 (Cope); A.F.S. Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism 1535-1603* (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 258-61, 298.

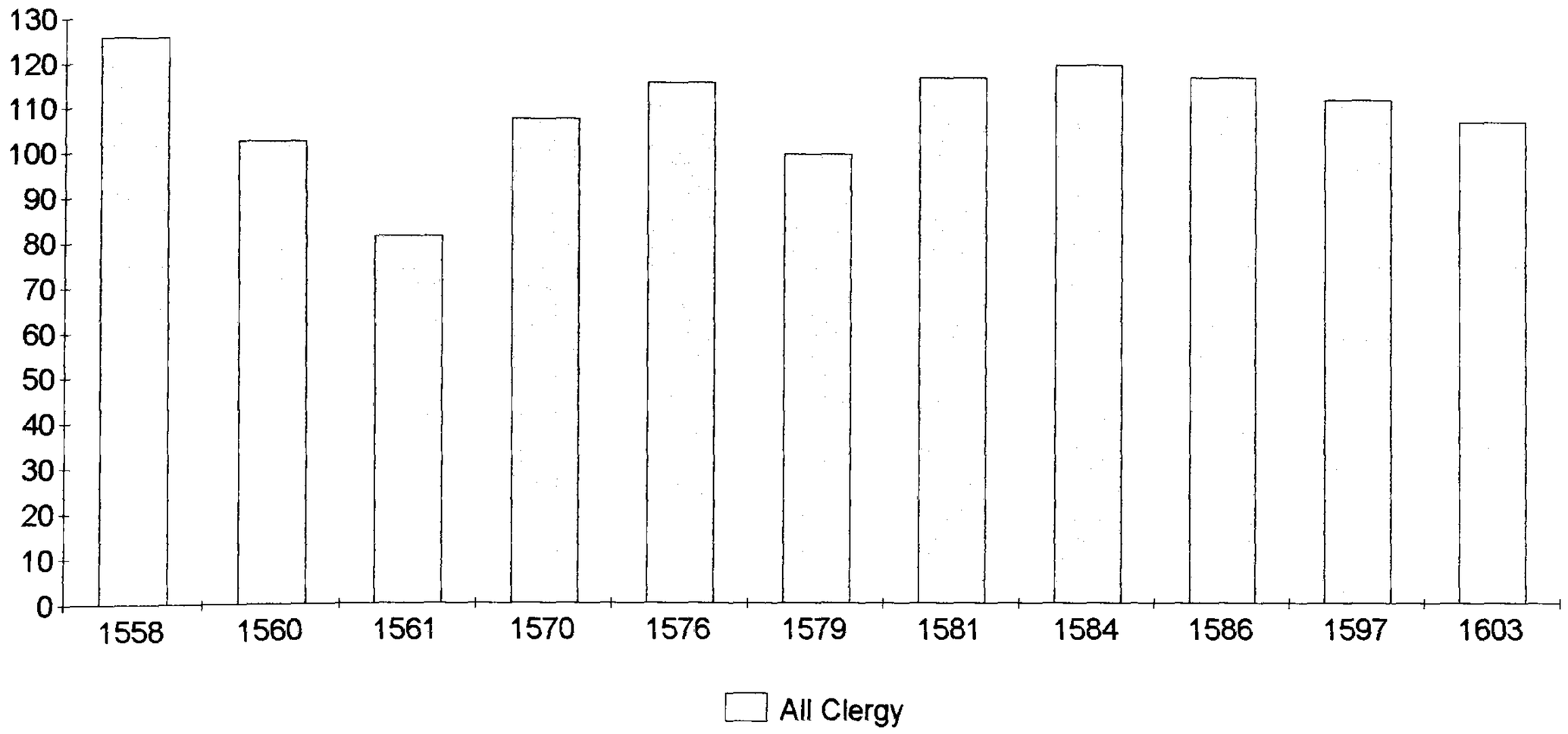
John Terry, vicar of Withybrooke, handicapped by a 'slender ability' and the reputedly 'vain man' Richard Tinney, vicar of Clifton-on-Dunsmore. He possessed 'a gift which he uses little', an accusation which sits uneasily with his being 'an interpreter to his flock' notwithstanding his lack of a preacher's licence.[169]

There was a world of difference between the colourful rhetoric used by the puritans and the stereotyped and infinitely less descriptive language of the diocesan survey. William Crook, for example, was simply called a non-learned non-preacher in Parker's survey of 1562.[170] In 1592 the allegedly-erstwhile 'serving man' Henry Williams, having moved from Meriden to Aston, and the former schoolmaster Thomas Butter, were both considered of 'respectable life and conversation, learned, and well trained in the sacred scriptures'.[171] In 1586 the diocesan authorities considered Ralph Fox to be 'of commendable character; moderately learned', and in 1592 he was credited as being 'of respectable life and conversation'.[172]

The *liber cleri* for June 1581 names 117 clergy. Two of three vacant benefices had been only recently voided, while the situation at the third is uncertain. Only three vacant livings were noted at a visitation on 21 July 1584, and 120 clergy, making this the most satisfactory numerical muster since the Elizabethan Settlement.

FIG. 8

Number of clergy in Coventry archdeaconry at intervals, 1558-1603
Sources: LJRO, B/V/1/4-5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, 20, 23; D30/AA 11



169. Peel, pp. 169 (Terry); 172, 174 (Tinney).
170. CCC, Parker MS 97, f. 30r.
171. LPL, *Cart. Misc.* XIII no. 37, mm. 1, 2.
172. LJRO, B/V/1/19, f. 8; LPL, *Cart. Misc.* XIII no. 37, m. 12.

The thin distribution of assistant clergy contrasts starkly with their comparative ubiquity half-a-century earlier. From seventy-three assistants in 1533, excluding chantrists, they had been pared to eighteen. Yet Priors Hardwick enjoyed the luxury of curates serving dependent chapelries at Priors Marston and Lower Shuckburgh. Aston with three chapels had only one curate; the vicar of Wolston employed a curate at Stretton-on-Dunsmore. Absentee rectors at Churchover and Ladbroke had placed curates in pastoral charge, but the situation at Birmingham and Solihull is unclear. Luke Smith held both rectories but was marked absent at the first and hired a curate at the other. At Exhall, the newly-ordained deacon Richard Sampson was, unusually, curate to a stipendiary vicar, Robert Briscoe, who equally unusually was also stipendiary vicar of the contiguous parish of Foleshill. That unlikely combination exposes Briscoe as a very wealthy man, a conclusion which his will amply justifies.[173] Elsewhere, curates served three vacant benefices, Baddesley Clinton, Kenilworth and Maxstoke, and the prebendal parishes of Bubbenhall, Ryton-on-Dunsmore and Ufton.

It is noteworthy that the only *resident* incumbents with curates were Humphrey Fenn at Coventry Holy Trinity and John Oxenbridge at Southam. Both incumbents were engaged in extra-parochial activities; both were disciples of Thomas Cartwright of Warwick and championed his cause for a presbyterian-style ministry; both were imprisoned for nonconformity; both were deprived; both became 'preachers' in Coventry and both eventually died there.[174]

Fenn was one of only a small number in Coventry archdeaconry suspended for refusing to subscribe, so it may be useful to examine his situation more closely. The *liber cleri* named his curate as Matthew Hammond, who had been priested by Bishop Hooper of Gloucester in July 1583. It is possible that Fenn was too zealous for Hammond, a mercer's apprentice until his ordination. Perhaps others shared the disquiet, since at a visitation in 1584 one Reynold Chanoner was presented 'for abusing the minister (Fenn), saying his calling was accursed before God and that he ought not by God's law do what he doeth'. This may have been a reference to Fenn's involvement with the group of radical Warwickshire clergy. By 1586, when the puritans conducted their survey, they found that Fenn had been deprived for non-subscription rendering Holy Trinity a 'Cure since neglected', and Hammond had departed for a curacy at Binley.[175]

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173. TNA: PRO Prob 11, 45 Ridley.
174. For their involvement in the Warwickshire Synod see A.F.S. Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism 1535-1603* (Cambridge, 1925), and Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, *passim*.
175. LJRO B/V/1/17, p.157; A. Peel, ed., *The Seconde Parte of a Register* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1915), 2, p. 169.

According to J.A. Chester, Lever's 'spiritual heir was Humphrey Fenn'. Chester also asserted that Fenn was restored in 1585 after 'a great contention with one Griffin, a Welshman'.[176] It is now possible to establish the identity of this man. It is probable that the Lord Chancellor was under the impression that Fenn had been deprived, for which reason in June 1585 he presented one Edward Griffithe (*sic*) to what he thought was the vacant vicarage of Holy Trinity.[177] That he was synonymous with 'one Griffin, a Welshman', is clear for he was, indeed, a Welshman, born at Pen-y-Goss, Montgomeryshire. He was priested in London in 1568 and eventually instituted as vicar of Staines, Middlesex. Fenn fiercely contested Griffithe's presentation to Holy Trinity and amid general rejoicing (if the record is to be believed) the Welshman was 'dismissed'. There is no record in the bishop's register to suggest that he was ever instituted, however, or even that he had compounded for the living.[178] A more likely explanation is that Griffin made an exploratory visit to the city and the 'great contention' was no more than a heated discussion between the two men which, for propaganda purposes, Fenn exaggerated out of all proportion.

The 1586 *liber cleri* reveals an aggregate of 122 parochial clergy, five more than the number given in an independent puritan survey of Coventry archdeaconry that same year.[179] Thereafter, the number and deployment of assistant clergy generally fluctuated only slightly. The final decade yielded two sources: a survey commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury and a *liber cleri* for October 1597.[180] At the latter visitation, 112 clergy including fourteen curates (12%) were named. Grendon rectory had fallen vacant and Baddesley Clinton was probably still vacant. To complete this review, one final record establishes that in 1603, a total of 107 clergy were presented from 105 parishes.[181] Weston-under-Wetherley and Baddesley Clinton were both overlooked in this survey, in which no vacancies were explicitly recorded. For convenience, Fig. 8 provides total clergy numbers at intervals between 1558 and 1603.

A decrease of some 36% in the number of curates between 1597 and 1603, from fourteen to nine, is rather puzzling at first sight, but may be partly attributed to an increase in the number of resident incumbents - twenty-three benefices changed hands during those six years. At least one curate died, William Hudson of Aston,

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176. J.A. Chester, 'Poor relief in Coventry', unpubl. M.Phil thesis, University of Reading (1982), p. 185; F. Bliss Burbridge, *Old Coventry and Lady Godiva* (Birmingham, n.d.), p. 234.
177. BL, Lansdowne MS 444, f. 91v.
178. Venn, *Alumni Cantab.* 2, p. 266; B. Poole, *Coventry: Its History and Antiquities* (London, 1870), p. 205.
179. LJRO, B/V/1/20; Peel, *Seconde Parte*, 2, pp. 165-74.
180. LJRO, B/V/1/23; LPL, *Cart. Misc.* xiii no. 37.
181. LJRO, D 30/AA 11.

buried in 1599 in which same year Julian Winsper, curate of Foleshill, became vicar of Stoke. Some moved into another diocese, for instance Peter Eckersall, who finally relinquished Mancetter and settled across the border in Leicestershire. On the other hand, Ralph Wilding remained curate of Wappenbury for twenty-three years before being offered the rectory of Fenny Compton in 1617.[182] Some curates remained in the same parish well into the seventeenth century, but owing to constraints on time it has not been possible to trace the careers of others whose careers spanned the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries.

Reasons for non-attendance at visitations are rarely possible to establish. Some, for example the vicars of Bishop's Itchington and Bishop's Tachbrook, were always exempt because their parishes were peculiar jurisdictions. It is not altogether clear, however, why John Antrobus, vicar of Bishop's Tachbrook, attended in 1584. Perhaps it may be explained by a controversy over the advowson between Bishop Overton and Edward Fisher.[183] Some absentees were pluralists resident elsewhere on other benefices. For example, Griffin Lloid, rector of Radbourne, a deserted settlement, lived at Ashby St. Legers, Northamptonshire, where he had been rector since 1576.[184] Another explanation for absence was age or sickness. The vicar of Marton, Matthew Gilbey, a Henrician ordained in 1540, was probably too infirm to attend in November 1586: his successor entered eight months later.[185] Similarly, Edward James, rector of Elmdon since 1541, failed to appear in 1573. Since his burial was recorded in June 1574 his absence too was probably age-related.[186]

3.8. Cure of souls

An aspect of the parochial ministry worthy of scrutiny is the ratio of clergy to households, an investigation never previously attempted in respect of the sixteenth-century Coventry archdeaconry, for whose inhabitants the normal place of worship was their parish church and its incumbent or his deputy their 'ghostly father'. Wider choices were available for those dwelling in territorially large parishes with several chapelries such as Bishop's Itchington. Before the Dissolution, monastic towns such as Kenilworth and parishes with a chantry chapel, such as Kingsbury, also offered alternative places of worship. Pastoral oversight may have overlapped

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182. W.F. Carter *Register of Aston-juxta-Birmingham* (2 vols, Birmingham, 1900) 1, p. 1; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, pp. 203, 520 (Winsper, Wilding): LJRO, B/V/1/23, p. 109 (Eckersall).
183. For further analysis of this complex matter see Upton, 'Warwickshire manors', esp. Chapter 6.
184. H.I. Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy, 1500-1900* (15 vols, Northamptom, 1939-1943), 9, p. 13.
185. LJRO, B/V/1/20, p. 96.
186. WCRO, DRB 14/1, ff. 4v, 11v; LJRO, B/A/1/14ii records his ordination as an acolyte on 7 March 1528.

in those parishes, notwithstanding that the cure of souls was always the charge of the beneficed incumbent.

In this section, only urban centres have been selected for the purpose of analysing the ratio of clergy to laity, for it is considered that rural parishes do not lend themselves to this kind of scrutiny. Their demographic fluctuations, while doubtless disturbing for those who lived and ministered there, were on a less dramatic scale than in the towns. Furthermore, in normal circumstances the number of parishioners would never overwhelm the local clergy's ability to cope.

The two principal urban centres in Coventry archdeaconry in the sixteenth century were Coventry and Birmingham, with eight lesser urban centres of which three have been selected for this analytical exercise.[187] Coventry was by far the most populous town in the region, with Birmingham an increasingly important centre for the manufacture of metal goods. The three smaller towns are chosen from different deaneries and representative of different types of parish: Nuneaton (Arden) in the north of the county where mineral extraction was being more vigorously exploited; the market town of Southam (Marton) on the edge of the Warwickshire wolds; and Brinklow (Coventry), a small borough located in the central Avon valley. It is intended to test the numerical strength of the parochial ministry in those towns in the 1520s and the 1560s. There was considerable population expansion in the sixteenth century, much of it in the towns, so it is instructive to analyse the numerical adequacy of clerical cover in urban centres at a time when population levels were growing and the number of clergy diminishing.

Notwithstanding its size and importance, Coventry had a smaller clerical population *per capita* than some other large towns of the period. Its ratio of parishioners to parochial clergy was considerably larger than in Boston or Exeter, for example. In 1539 the Lincolnshire port of Boston, with 2,300 inhabitants and only one parish church, had a vicar, two curates and thirty-two resident clergy.[188] During the early sixteenth century there were some 8,000 inhabitants in Exeter, another large and important city which, like Bristol, had nineteen parish churches and many chantries. In 1540 its clerical complement of 137 included thirty-two unbeneficed, of whom nineteen were chantrists at the cathedral. Although, on W.G. Hoskins' population figures, the ratio of laity to beneficed clergy was 76:1, some chantrists may also have been delegated a measure of supervisory responsibility.[189] In round

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187. A. Watkins, *Small Towns in the Forest of Arden in the Fifteenth Century*, Dugdale Society Occasional Papers 38 (1998), p. 22.
188. Walker, 'Archdeaconries of Lincoln and Stow', p. 24.
189. W.T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540-1640: The Growth of an English Country Town* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 82; Skeeters, *Community and Clergy*, p. 111; W.G. Hoskins, *Two Thousand Years in Exeter* (Exeter, repr., 1974), pp. 51, 56f.

figures, meanwhile, Coventry's 9,000 residents in 1500 had fallen to 7,500 in 1520, by which time a total of some thirty-eight clergy, excluding their absentee incumbents, were attached to the two parish churches. The ratio of 197:1 eased to 158:1 over the next three years, when Coventry lost a further 1,500 inhabitants. By mid-century only 4,000-5,000 remained.[190]

With depopulation on such a vast and rapid scale the livelihood of many assistant clergy was seriously threatened. Financial stringency forced the amalgamation of some chantries with parishes whose stipendiaries were economically straitened, to the mutual benefit of both but with loss of employment opportunities for others. Fraternities and guilds were likewise compelled to review chaplains' remuneration. Yet there does not appear to have been any diminution in the intensity of popular support for the Church. Even contemporaries such as Leland recognised that a spectacular collapse had occurred in the city's fortunes.[191]

Knight asserted that about eighty secular clergy were active in the city during the 1520s and that their numbers had been 'steadily declining' since at least the last quarter of the fifteenth century. In Phythian-Adams' study of Coventry's decline, a topic of fundamental importance to this thesis is relegated to a footnote, namely that the impact of depopulation upon the clerical constituency suggests that 'roughly 100 clerics in the city...seems reasonable'. However enthusiastically and piously the laity supported the Church, as McHardy observed, ultimately it was from their pockets that the clergy were paid.[192] No doubt they baulked at employing more clerics than they considered necessary to preserve more than a modicum of spiritual capital.

It is difficult to comprehend the sheer scale of the changes wrought in Coventry between 1524 and 1563. The city's skyline had been totally transformed with the levelling of the cathedral priory almost to the ground and other monastic houses at least partly destroyed or structurally re-modelled. Re-structured, too, were the forms of worship in the remaining churches, and the composition of the parochial ministry. Where there had been thirty-eight clergy in 1524, in 1563 only one parochial cleric is named as ministering in the city, although it is highly improbable that Hugh Symons of St Michael's was completely bereft of assistance. To the 503 households in Symons' parish must be added a further forty-nine in Holy Trinity, which currently lacked an incumbent.

Notwithstanding the absence of a navigable waterway anywhere in Coventry archdeaconry, Birmingham's geographical location close to ironwork centres in south

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190. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 281.
191. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', for evidence of lay support for the Church; L. Toulmin Smith, ed., *The Itinerary of John Leland* (5 vols, London, 1907-10), 2, p. 108.
192. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', pp. 3, 444, 447; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 197 n. 5; McHardy, 'Careers and disappointments', p. 119.

Staffordshire, radiating road network and propinquity to a major trade route, favoured its industrial development.[193] For thirty-two years, while the enterprising artisans of Birmingham were feverishly exploiting the good fortune which propelled their town towards the pre-eminence it enjoyed as 'England's workshop' in the nineteenth century, its rectory was occupied by an aristocrat whose feet walked upon the green and pleasant Close at Salisbury, where he was a residentiary canon. Instituted in 1504, Richard Sutton (*alias* Dudley) held the rectory until his death in 1536, and his parish priest during much of that period, Thomas Norres, was one of four clergy known to be resident and active in Birmingham.[194] Thomas Alen and Thomas Comberbache were chantrists there and Edmund Toffte Master of St Thomas's Hospital, but it is uncertain what pastoral work they undertook. At the very least they probably heard confessions before Easter, since the chantry commissioners reported that owing to the vast number of communicants the chantrists, 'with diuers other', assisted at the Easter Mass.[195]

According to the 1524/5 lay subsidy there were somewhere between 153 and 159 taxpayers in Birmingham, which Richard Holt interpreted 'to produce a figure of around 1,400 [inhabitants]'.[196] By 1563 the rector was the only parochial clergyman left in Birmingham, and the number of households was given as a round 200.[197]

Here as in Coventry, therefore, there was a significant deterioration in the numerical ratio of clergy to households, although it must be stressed that this does not insinuate a reduction in the quality of pastoral care individual parishioners received. What it suggests is a shift in pastoral emphasis which Marshall has identified with acute perception: that to pre-Reformation clergy, 'hearing confessions and saying mass were quintessentially pastoral acts', and to post-Settlement clergy, a 'much greater stress on the role of preaching in the cure of souls'.[198] Parishioners still expected their clergy to baptise, marry and bury them, but as deathbed rites and confession declined in importance, the abolition of masses for the departed further reduced lay dependence upon sacramental ministrations and gave impetus to the

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193. R.A. Pelham, 'The growth of settlement and industry c.1100-c.1700', in R.H. Kinvig, J.G. Smith, and M.J. Wise, eds, *Birmingham and its Regional Setting: A Scientific Survey* (Birmingham, 1950), pp.145-9.
194. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, ff. 3v, 19v; B. Jones, ed., *John Le Neve, Fasti Anglicanae 1300-1541, Coventry and Lichfield Diocese*, 10 (London, 1964), pp. 27, 46, 51; W. Bickley and J. Hill, eds, *Birmingham Parish Register* (Birmingham, 1889), p. viii.
195. TNA: PRO E 301/31 no. 29.
196. R. Holt, *The Early History of the Town of Birmingham 1166 to 1600*, Dugdale Society Occasional Papers 30 (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1985), pp. 15, 17, gives 157 taxpayers in 1525 whereas Sheail reckoned there were 153 in 1524 and 159 in 1525: J. Sheail (and R.W. Hoyle, ed.), *The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England As Indicated in the 1524/5 Lay Subsidy Returns*, List & Index Society Special Series 28, 29 (London, 1998), p. 364.
197. BL, Harl. MS 594, f. 166v.
198. Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, pp. 174, 192.

reformers' stress on developing religious knowledge through attendance at 'prophesyings' and sermons.

In the 1524 lay subsidy there were seventy-six taxpayers in Nuneaton together with another twenty-seven at Attleborough.[199] The combined population of Nuneaton and Attleborough must have been at least 515 and possibly as much as 900 although, as Goose rightly insisted, 'the subsidies are *not* lists of householders'.[200] The people were served by Robert Whittington, vicar of Nuneaton, who in turn was assisted by William Mollisdale, chantrist, and various other clergy including chaplains at the nunnery. The nuns paid for a chaplain exclusively to serve the Attleborough district. By 1563 there were 180 households at Nuneaton and a further 100 at Attleborough, giving a population of at least 1,400. Despite such rapid demographic growth the vicar, Thomas Stoning, was the only parochial clergyman, and he was also rector of Elmsthorpe, Leicestershire.[201]

After the Settlement 'the clergy found themselves at the sharp and uncomfortable end of religious developments', for as Marsh went on to say, 'the role of the parish clergy...changed very substantially'. The loss of so many subsidiary clergy meant that there were fewer clergy left to minister to an expanding population. It has been demonstrated above that in 1563 many parishes were without an incumbent. But even in some places where there were incumbents, for example Aston and Nuneaton, industry was attracting large numbers of workers and their families to settle. In this sense alone - all economic considerations aside - the loss of the 'clerical proletariat' put the Church at a serious disadvantage, for unlike beneficed incumbents, curates possessed no glebe to cultivate or tithes to collect. They could have allocated more time to pastoral visiting. Bereft of assistants and bound to their studies - but released from celibacy and often married with a family - Elizabethan incumbents were potentially more remote from their parishioners than at any previous time in the sixteenth century.[202]

In the early 1520s, Brinklow had an absentee pluralist incumbent, John Mogriche, who delegated his duties to his parish priest, Richard Parker. The number of taxpayers in 1524 totalled twenty-nine, giving a minimum population figure of 145. By 1563 the fifty-three householders (population at least 265) listed there were served by one clergyman, Simon Underwood, rector since 1559. Although the

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199. In the remainder of this section the 1524 subsidy is taken from Sheail, *Regional Distribution,* pp. 364-5, and 1563 from BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 118r-123v.
200. N.R. Goose, 'In search of the urban variable: towns and the English economy, 1500-1650', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 39 (1986), p. 183; Watkins, *Small Towns*, p. 20.
201. CCC Camb., MS 97, f. 32r. Although only about six miles distant from Nuneaton as the crow flies, Elmsthorpe was situated the other side of the Leicestershire town of Hinckley.
202. Cf Marsh, *Popular Religion*, pp. 86-7.

population of Brinklow had increased between the 1520s and the 1560s, it was nowhere near on the same scale as Nuneaton, and the populace were therefore probably adequately served by its sole clergyman.

Southam in the 1520s was similarly served by curates in the absence of a pluralist rector. The thirty-nine taxpayers there in 1524 represented a population of at least 195. After a rapid turnover of clergy in the 1550s (above, section 3.5), by 1563 the sole clergyman there, Augustine Bernher, served sixty-two households (or at least 310 people). The conjecture that he provided adequate pastoral cover can be argued from the evidence that at least two sets of parents gave their children his unusual Christian name at their baptism - a compliment to his ministerial care. Perhaps the same happened in other parishes, but this has not been pursued.[203]

In July 1563 the bishops were ordered to furnish the Privy Council with information about the number of households in every parish within their respective dioceses, and also the number of vacant benefices. Coventry and Lichfield is one of only seven of the surviving returns.[204] The data furnish the basis for a reconstruction of pastoral cover at a moment frozen in time, like much of the archive material used by historians. Without over-elaboration, therefore, this section merely draws attention to the possibility of a substantial study of a related topic which is beyond the scope of this present research, namely, what parochial ministry - the cure of souls - demanded of incumbents, how they organised their priorities, and the adequacy of pastoral cover.

The return contains some notable ambiguities and errors, but these have been corrected in Tab. 3.3. For example, Priors Hardwick is given under Marton deanery rather than Stoneleigh, a small error which distorts the deanery totals given at the end of the return. In the second part of the return, on the state of the benefices, Hardwick appears under the correct deanery. A serious ambiguity arises over Wolvey, which was twice recorded, once under Coventry deanery and again under peculiars. In both entries the number of households was identical, forty-four. This would suggest that the given total of 5,901 households for Coventry archdeaconry is inflated, for it ought to be 5,857. On the other hand, a simple error would both explain the confusion and restore the total given in the source. For 'Wolvey', should the scribe have written 'Stoke', a suburban parish in Coventry deanery which was otherwise completely overlooked? The number of households would have been about right.

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203. WCRO, DR 50/1, unfol.
204. Dyer, 'The bishops' census of 1563', pp. 19-37; A. Dyer and D.M. Palliser, eds, *The Diocesan Population Returns for 1563 and 1603* (Oxford, 2004, forthcoming).

The 5,901 households are conveniently arranged by deanery, but for statistical convenience of this study the five separately-recorded peculiar jurisdictions have been re-arranged by deanery (Tab. 3.3). Of the four deaneries, Arden, with thirty-eight parishes and five chapelries, had some of the fastest expanding centres of population. It contained 2,552 households. There were wide variations across the deanery. For example, there were only four households in Weddington, the least populous parish in the whole archdeaconry, while its neighbouring parish, Nuneaton, which included the rapidly-growing chapelry of Attleborough, had no fewer than 280 households. Is it possible that Dionisius Dudley, priested in 1544 and described as a 'popish priest' in 1586, was engaged in activities well beyond Weddington? His will suggests that, since in 1594 he bequeathed sums to the poor of eleven other parishes, mostly in Leicestershire including Ashby-de-la-Zouche and Measham, centres of Protestant reform.[205]

TAB. 3.3

Average number of households per parish in 1563

Deanery	*Number of Clergy*	*Number of Parishes*	*Number of Households*	*Crude population total*	*Ratio of Laity to Clergy*
Arden	28	38	2,552	12,760	456:1
Coventry	13	24	1,382	6,910	532:1
Marton	18	23	1,022	5,110	284:1
Stoneleigh	14	30	945	4,725	338:1
Totals	73	115	5,901	29,505	404:1

Source: BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 118r-123v

Six parishes appear to have been unserved by clergy. After 1559 Baddesley Clinton was without a rector until the end of the Tudor period, although its Catholic patrons are known to have harboured recusant priests in their magnificent moated hall in the 1580s-90s.[206] Not surprisingly, Richard Slaney was unknown in his parish at Baxterley since he resided at 'Winall' (Willenhall, Staffordshire), while both Caldecote and Mancetter were long-term vacancies. The situation at Bickenhill is intriguing, for although the living was vacant the curate, Anthony Offley, had the cure of souls and took the fruits of the benefice. This suggests that he was another

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205. LJRO, B/V/1/15, f. 21; Peel, *Seconde Parte*, 2, p.171; TNA: PRO PROB 11, 38 Scott, ff. 290v-1v. The other places were Atherstone, Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton (Warwickshire), and in Leicestershire: Higham-on-the-Hill, Ibstock, Nailstone, Packington-on-the-Heath, Squareson (?) and Swepston.

206. The National Trust, *Baddesley Clinton* (1983), pp. 28-9.

example of a priest appointed by Lever to serve parishes in a temporary capacity (below, p. 142).[207]

Coventry deanery contained the least number of parishes, yet it ranked second for the amount of households. The city alone had 552 (47%) out of the deanery total of 1,382, the remaining 830 being distributed among the remaining parishes and chapelries. Christopher Meltham ministered single-handedly to forty-six households in two adjoining parishes, Newbold-on-Avon and King's Newnham, while John Debank, who resided at Willoughby Waterleys, Leicestershire, in Lincoln diocese, also served his rectory at Willey which, a mere eight miles distant as the crow flies, had only thirteen households. The largest rural parish in the deanery, Monks Kirby, was the only one exceeding one hundred units, yet it was without a vicar. Thomas Ward was named as curate there in 1560 and was instituted to the vicarage nine years later, but it is uncertain what other ministerial cover its 133 households received.[208] Coventry Holy Trinity and Withybrooke were similarly vacant.

By contrast, Marton deanery enjoyed better pastoral cover, only three livings being listed as vacant. Grandborough had been vacant since the death of Edward Jordayne in 1561, Long Itchington, since Thomas Hopkyns died in 1560, and Wappenbury, vacant since Francis Kimberley's cession in 1557.[209] Fifteen of the parishes had fewer than fifty households and none raised more than Wolston's eighty-eight, although that included the distant chapelry of Stretton-on-Dunsmore.

All but nine parishes in Stoneleigh deanery contained thirty households or less, seven had sixty or less, and two just exceeded one hundred. In 1563 Stoneleigh had ten vacant livings, more than any of the other three deaneries. There is no obvious reason why there should have been so many vacancies, although seven of them were worth less than £6 *per annum*. Nevertheless, some 319 households, a substantial 34% proportion of all those in Stoneleigh deanery, appear to have received no pastoral oversight. The parish most seriously affected was Kenilworth which, with 110 households, had been vacant since the last vicar died fourteen years previously, and probably remained without a vicar for the rest of the century. Extraordinarily, in 1564, and for about the next thirty years, it was served by a curate, Richard Bettes.[210] Neither *libri cleri* nor central records support the statement made by a former vicar in 1717, that through the generosity of the earl of Leicester 'the incumbents kept a Curate first one Richard Botts (*sic*) who resided upon the

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207. CCC Camb., MS 97, f. 33r; TNA: PRO SP 15/12/108, f. 253.
208. LJRO, B/C/10i/5, f. 185r; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 43r.
209. TNA: PRO SP 15/12/108, f. 254r (Jordayne, Hopkyns, Wappenbury); Robert Holmes was rector of two parishes in the deanery, of which Radbourne was overlooked, being depopulated.
210. TNA: PRO SP 15/12/108, f. 253v; LJRO, B/C/11/John Clarke 1564; *HMC* 58th Report, Calendar of the MSS of the Marquess of Bath, vol. 5, 1533-1659, (London, 1980), p. 217.

place'. Betts was curate until at least 1588, but no incumbent was instituted during that time.[211]

England's population was currently expanding while the number of clergy had declined since the 1550s, so this exercise has proffered a cautious profile of spiritual cover in Coventry archdeaconry. Much more is known about the condition of the parochial ministry in the city than in its hinterland, which has been generally under-researched. While historic circumstances precipitated an unavoidable lack of pastoral care in 1563, a curious indifference subsequently developed in some parishes where the population was rapidly expanding. For example, towards the end of the sixteenth century the expansion of coal mining had attracted a large migrant work-force to Bedworth, yet its rector, Richard Briscoe, resided on his other benefice in the Leicestershire parish of Hinckley, about six miles distant. Bedworth more than most parishes needed a resident priest to serve its fast-growing population. The failure to insist that Bedworth had its own resident incumbent undoubtedly paved the way for dissenting factions in the seventeenth century. Similarly at Birmingham, population 1,500 in 1546, the number of baptisms rose from about forty per annum in 1560 to about seventy per annum between 1600-10. With immigration, Birmingham's population had grown by 264.8% by 1630, yet there is no evidence that Luke Smith, its pluralist rector between 1578-1614, ever engaged a curate.[212]

Yet the negative aspects of post-Reformation ministry must be balanced by equally positive results. As Patrick Collinson observed, post-Reformation England did not lack 'an effective pastoral ministry' and it alone, 'not expounding sermons to the empty air or to unwilling hearers', ensured the success of the Long Reformation.[213] As the ministry was being re-shaped the instinct for pastoral care remained its strongest continuity with the past, even if it was differently expressed. Indeed, the tradition of pastoral care from which the reformers had themselves benefited was the foundation on which they erected their own ministerial traditions - within the parochial system they had inherited.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter has thrown important new light on matters regarding the number of clergy ministering in Coventry archdeaconry parishes. By scrutinising many

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211. WCRO, DR 598/2, p. 2.
212. C. Gill, ed., *History of Birmingham* (2 vols, London, 1952), 1, p. 42; Pelham, 'The growth of settlement and industry', pp.151, 157; A. Whiteman, ed., *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition* (London, 1986), pp. 450, 453.
213. P. Collinson, 'Comment on Eamon Duffy's Neale Lecture and the Colloquium', in N. Tyacke, ed., *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London, 1998), pp. 83, 84.

manuscript sources it has explored in detail the statistical fortunes of the parochial ministry, not only in the troubled years of the Reformation, but at the commencement of the sixteenth century and at intervals right up to the end of the Tudor period in 1603.

Historians agree that while the number of beneficed incumbents remained at a fairly constant level, the unbeneficed are extremely difficult to trace. In this chapter it has been unequivocally confirmed that parochial clergy in Coventry archdeaconry were far more numerous in 1500 than they were at the close of the Tudor period in 1603.

Ordination statistics have been measured, since successful recruitment was essential to the maintenance and stability of the parochial ministry. Recruitment of ordinands in Coventry and Lichfield reached its highest peak in 1513 before gradually declining until the ordination register ceased in 1532. Reasons given for the decline have varied, including punitive taxation of the clergy, rigorous standards of examination, over-supply, growing lay hostility towards the clergy, and innovative royal policies. Although some local examples of anticlericalism have been given, the most compelling reason for declining vocations was the 'progressive demoralisation of the clergy' (Marshall), who suffered a 'shattered morale amid destructive change' (MacCulloch).[214]

In the absence of contemporary ordination registers it must also be presumed that the recruitment of ordination candidates continued apace, since by 1600 a curate was employed in one out of every fifteen Coventry archdeaconry parishes. Thus the mid-century numerical crisis, although not entirely resolved, was being addressed in the spirit of the reforms which had precipitated it. Somehow, a vastly reduced work-force not only enforced the new protestant ideology but also met parishioners' spiritual needs: preaching, visiting, reconciling.

It was found that during the first three decades of the fifteenth century the wealthier livings often went to graduates, in particular to pluralists who may also have been crown employees. After the Pluralism Act of 1529 this gradually ceased. About 16% of Coventry archdeaconry incumbents were graduates in 1533, the proportion rising to 21% in 1547. High mortality and deprivations were partly responsible for a significant fall in the number of graduates by 1558,. when only 15% of incumbents were graduates. For the remainder of the sixteenth century there was little improvement until the generational turnover and improved standards of education saw an impressive increase in the number of graduates in Coventry

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214. Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, p. 230; MacCulloch, *Later Reformation*, p. 111.

archdeaconry. In 1603 as many as 33% of its incumbents had a university degree, and in 1611 it was an even higher proportion, for the first time exceeding 50%.

Historians have perhaps too readily accepted that a superfluity of unbeneficed clergy were forced to eke out a precarious livelihood, with little expectation of securing a chaplaincy let alone a benefice. Yet it defies economic prudence and beggars common sense that every year thousands of (mostly young) men embraced a career which promised scant reward for spiritual endeavour in an allegedly hostile, anticlerical environment.

It is argued, therefore, that historians may have exaggerated the number of unemployed clergy in the first half of the sixteenth century. The hypothesis that the early-sixteenth-century Church was over-run by an excess of idle clergy is dubious. Incumbents may well have ministered to sparsely-populated parishes, but it has to be borne in mind that chantries and short-term chaplaincies were privately sponsored and therefore, rather than creating a surfeit of clergy, the chaplains who served them must have alleviated a keenly-felt pastoral need. Because they rarely appeared in official records, however, the full extent of their ministerial activities will never be known, although the number of testators who bequeathed sums to give temporary employment to such chaplains is vast.

It was found that in Coventry archdeaconry between 1500 and 1532, the newly-ordained rarely went straight into a benefice, so there was little correlation between the 159 admissions to benefices, averaging about four *per annum*, and the number of ordinands. These, it is argued, would have included secular clergy destined for the non-parochial ministry, for example in collegiate establishments.

Although uncertainty surrounds the precise number of clergy ministering in Coventry archdeaconry in 1500, it is reasonable to conclude that the tally of parochial clergy varied little before the Dissolution. Because interregna were normally of brief duration, the aggregate of beneficed incumbents remained fairly constant, except during the unusually-troubled 1560s. The earliest nominal evidence of any practical use here were the 1522 muster books, but they are incomplete. They name only 106 parochial clergy, but research in other sources has detected at least 165. Already, however, the disproportionate number attached to the two Coventry parish churches has been made clear.

No substantial guide to the numerical strength, distribution and deployment of the parochial ministry in Coventry archdeaconry has been found earlier than the nominal list of those who paid the clerical subsidy in 1533.[215] This overlooked only one parish - its priest was a monk. Careful analysis has identified 241 different parochial

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215. BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 118r-23v.

clergy, with almost every benefice occupied. Most of those who paid were unbeneficed including, over and above 110 subsidiary clergy, a further twelve of uncertain status and twenty-eight chantrists.

Pains were taken to establish the distribution of the unbeneficed clergy. It was found that they were deployed in only fifty-four parishes and chapelries, with sixty parishes apparently altogether lacking an assistant. Conversely, while fourteen parishes with dependent chapelries employed between them no fewer than seventy assistants averaging five per parish, the remaining forty shared the forty-one remaining assistants, of whom most were recorded in Coventry.

After 1533 the number of subsidiary clergy began seriously to decline in the wake of the dissolution of the monasteries, the abolition of minor orders in 1550, the suppression of colleges and chantries, the deprivation of married clergy, and the abnormally high mortality rate in the late 1550s. The *liber cleri* of 1558 furnishes the earliest subsequent glimpse of the numerical state of Coventry archdeaconry, when only 130 clergy were named. Twenty-three were survivors from 1533, but the work-force had shrunk by 52%, demonstrating the enormous impact of the religious changes on the parochial ministry. This figure accords remarkably with Lawrence Stone's observation that these changes 'had the immediate effect of halving the number of clergy in Tudor England'.[216]

It was found that at least thirty of the parochial clergy who were ordained before 1547 had died during the reign of Mary Tudor, and that while their replacements included clergy already serving in the archdeaconry, others were non-resident pluralists recruited from Northamptonshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire. A significant discovery was that a number of ex-religious and chantrists had been absorbed into the parochial ministry, partially compensating for the collapse in the recruitment of ordination candidates. At least forty-five ex-religious pensioners were found to have been domiciled in Coventry archdeaconry in 1556, and it has been demonstrated that at least fifteen monks were subsequently beneficed there, including a hitherto unsuspected former exile. Since the start of Mary's reign, some fifty-three incumbents had been instituted, yet comparison of sources has shown that notwithstanding the unprecedented reduction in the number of clergy available for redistribution, only six parishes still lacked an incumbent in 1558.

By 1561 the entire complement of Coventry archdeaconry clergy had been reduced to eighty-two, including twelve assistants. Thirty-seven benefices and chapelries were reported vacant in 1562 and nineteen in 1565, demonstrating the extent of the shortage. Notwithstanding that the clerical work-force had been halved

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216. L. Stone, 'Social mobility in England, 1500-1700', *Past & Present* 33 (1966), p. 24.

between 1540 and 1560, the Elizabethan hierarchy's attempts to resolve the numerical crisis and reduce the number of vacant benefices was beginning to take effect. The 1570 visitation named 108 clergy representing ninety-eight parishes, with five benefices and five stipendiary posts vacant. The tally included twenty-three curates, a remarkable surge since 1561 when there were only twelve, raising the proportion of curates to about 21% of all clergy. Progress was maintained, since the statistics for 1584 indicate that the parochial ministry in Coventry archdeaconry was recovering from its nadir some 20 years earlier. But the number of assistant clergy had declined sharply since 1533, when there were seventy-three, and their distribution was more sparse. By 1603, the total number of parochial clergy employed in 105 Coventry archdeaconry parishes was 107.

It was found that Coventry had a smaller clerical population *per capita* than some other large towns of the period. The city's falling roll of residents seriously threatened the livelihood of many assistant clergy, while financial stringency forced economies among the city's chantries and guilds. So serious was the situation that, it is hypothesised here, Coventry corporation supported one clergyman for seven years until parish finances became sufficient for him to enter the living.

It has been demonstrated that many parishes were temporarily deprived of spiritual leadership in the mid-sixteenth century, when fewer parochial clergy were available to minister to an expanding population. Of five urban centres studied, Birmingham also saw a significant deterioration in clerical cover between the 1520s and the 1560s. At Nuneaton, industry attracted large numbers of workers as the clerical work-force diminished. Brinklow and Southam were more fortunate, since their smaller population growth between 1520 and 1560 did not threaten the ability of their incumbents to give adequate pastoral cover.

CHAPTER 4

PATRONAGE

Introduction

As a discrete topic, patronage has been widely discussed for centuries. Valuable recent contributions to the debate on ecclesiastical patronage have been made by many scholars such as R. Donaldson and G.F. Lytle, and David Crankshaw's recent paper on aspects of aristocratic patronage. Claire Cross has added significantly to understanding patronage exercised by the nobility and Rosemary O'Day to that by the Lord Keeper on behalf of the crown.[1]

Introduced to England c.680, when manorial lords were erecting proprietory churches and providing ministerial cover in them, ecclesiastical patronage is a complex subject.[2] As the parochial system developed, responsibility for presenting clergy to serve the cure of souls did not pass exclusively to bishops, but rather to royal, aristocratic, or simply manorial lords. Significantly, it enabled patrons to present clergy who were sympathetic to their religious goals, but since different types of patrons and different types of protégés harboured different sets of motives the topic is hardly straightforward.

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1. R. Donaldson, 'Patronage and the Church: a study in the social structure of the secular clergy in the diocese of Durham (1311-1540)', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh (1955); G.F. Lytle. 'Religion and the lay patron in Reformation England', in G.F. Lytle and S. Orgel, eds, *Patronage in the Renaissance* (London, 1981), pp. 65-114; D. Crankshaw, 'The Elizabethan Faculty office and the aristocratic patronage of chaplains', in C. Cross, ed., *Patronage and Recruitment in the Tudor and Early Stuart Church*, (York, 1996), pp. 20-75; M. C. Cross, 'An example of lay intervention in the Elizabethan Church', in G.J. Cuming, ed., *Studies in Church H*istory II (London, 1965), pp. 273-82; R. O'Day, 'Ecclesiastical patronage: who controlled the Church?', in F. Heal and R. O'Day, eds, *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I* (London, 1977), pp.137-55; M.C. Cross, 'Noble patronage in the Elizabethan Church', *Historical Journal* 3 (1960), pp. 1-16; M.C. Cross, *The Puritan Earl: The Life of Henry Hastings Third Earl of Huntingdon 1536-1595* (London, 1966), *passim*; R. O'Day, 'The ecclesiastical patronage of the Lord Keeper, 1558-1642', *TRHS*, 5th ser. 23 (1973), pp. 89-109.

2. A. Waddilove, *Church Patronage Historically, Legally, and Morally Considered, in Connection with the Offence of Simony* (London, 1854); G.W.O. Addleshaw, *The Beginnings of the Parochial System*, (3rd edn, London, 1982).

Crown appointees in the early decades of the sixteenth century were provided to livings as a reward for their services, given that this was the customary method of remunerating clerics in the royal employ. The attrition of episcopal influence, rising lay educational standards and the diminution of ordination as a potential symbol of intellectual excellence, curtailed the need for clerical servants and the concomitant obligation to provide them with benefices. This rendered obsolete former criteria for selecting candidates for crown livings. On the other hand, bishops never lost sight of the need to promote men whose scholarly attributes could be used to improve educational standards among their clergy. Individual monasteries probably adopted a more pragmatic approach to patronage, for their options gave them flexibility of choice. On one hand, they could fill a vacancy with one who would further their interests at court, or in the episcopal palace, or in the retinue of a powerful magnate, and on the other it may have been to please the local oligarchy, to promote one of their own secular chaplains, or simply to appoint a compliant minion. Lay patrons were faced with similar choices, made easier or harder (as the case may be) if kinship was a factor. Perhaps it is axiomatic that all patronage was susceptible to self-interest.

Concern about their diminishing patronage was expressed by Edwardian and Elizabethan bishops as their temporal role suffered from predatory manoeuvres by the crown and its supporters. Prelates became acutely aware of their diminishing influence in the appointment of clergy to benefices formerly held by monks, who were doubtless more susceptible to episcopal pressure than aristocratic or other determined lay patrons. This chapter will review the fortunes of those few benefices over which the Church never lost control, others whose patronage was retained by the crown, and the remainder which came eventually into lay ownership. Whereas the redistribution of patronage in the deaneries was relatively smooth, oligarchic sensitivities raised awkward questions in Coventry, where the dissolution of monasteries, guilds, hospitals and a college resulted in the withdrawal of a substantial source of ecclesiastical patronage.

Essentially, patronage involved a contract of trust whereby patron and protégé were mutually satisfied that both their own best interests would be well served. The abolition of the current system would have been welcomed by reformers, but this was thwarted by the gentry, whose share of ecclesiastical patronage would have been drastically reduced.[3] Their reluctance suggests an agenda - particularly in urban centres - to secure greater control over the appointment of clergy.

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3. R. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment in England in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods, with special reference to the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1972), p. 219; C. Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church from Archbishop*

This chapter will explore the composition and character of parochial patronage as a preliminary to determine the consequences of the monastic dissolutions for the parochial clergy and their parishioners. Particular attention will be paid to the redistribution of livings appropriated to monasteries and advowsons held by monks, and how significantly this affected the parochial ministry as the laity wrested a major source of patronage from the Church. Initially, all monastic patronage became crown property and this chapter will examine the fate of those advowsons as they came onto the property market. Patronage exercised by individual clergy will be surveyed as a subject which has not always received adequate recognition.

Of particular interest for examples of patronage in respect of Warwickshire livings in Worcester diocese is Barratt's doctoral research. The typological development of ecclesiastical patronage in Coventry archdeaconry during the sixteenth century has never been fully appraised. Lindop's pioneer study of Coventry and Lichfield covered 'the Reformation' period, roughly 1535-70, and included a rudimentary glimpse of patronage in Coventry archdeaconry. In her doctoral thesis and subsequent book on the professionalization of the clergy between 1558-1642, O'Day included valuable observations on patronage. Oligarchical patronage during the 1540s-60s was investigated in Knight's survey of Coventry's religious life, Cooper devotes space to patronage in his evaluation of Bishop Blythe's episcopate and Darren Oldridge amply demonstrated how church patronage had developed by 1603.[4]

While its conclusions are exclusive to Coventry archdeaconry, this thesis contributes towards a comparison with other regional analyses. Furthermore, the focus on a single archdeaconry favours opportunities for research in less used sources without losing sight of variable experiences elsewhere. For example, material apropos of Leicester archdeaconry, Sheils' study of puritanism in Northamptonshire, and Barratt's work on Worcester and Oxford dioceses, demonstrate that there were clear affiliations between neighbouring parishes both sides of their respective county borders.[5]

Whitgift to the Long Parliament (London, 1956), p. 70.

4. D.M. Barratt, 'The condition of the parish clergy between the Reformation and 1660, with special reference to the dioceses of Oxford, Worcester and Gloucester', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1949), pp. 362 *seq.*; E. Lindop, 'The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield during the Reformation with special reference to parochial life', unpubl. B.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford (1938), pp. 78-84; O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment'; R. O'Day, *The English Clergy: the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession 1558-1642* (Leicester, 1979); M. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry 1485-1558', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (1985); O'Day, 'Lord Keeper's patronage', pp. 89-109; T.N. Cooper, 'Secular clergy in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the early sixteenth century', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham (1992); T. Cooper, *The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1999); D. Oldridge, 'Conflicts within the Established Church in Warwickshire 1603-42', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (1993).

5. J.F. Fuggles, 'The parish clergy in the archdeaconry of Leicester 1520-1540', *Transactions of the*

If O'Day found that 'patronage in the archdeaconry of Coventry was exceedingly fragmented', then its heterogeneous beneficiaries cherished equally fragmented aspirations.[6] Particularly interesting is the contrast between Coventry and its satellite parishes and the rest. Before the 1540s Coventry was dominated by a cluster of edifices comprising a magnificent cathedral and two spectacular parish churches. The residual effects of medieval prosperity were discernible in the number of guilds with their attendant chaplains and opportunities abounded for clergy drawn towards an urban ministry where communal activity was a vital attribute. As late as 1579 annual miracle plays drew hundreds of spectators from far and wide.[7]

Even when commercial debility and spoliation of the monasteries dented its prestigious reputation, Coventry and its hinterland accommodated an array of eminent families domiciled within it. The Berkeleys lived in relative obscurity at Caludon, north-east of the city, and the Greys had a seat only six miles away, at Astley. The succession of pre-Reformation Coventry incumbents suggests that clergy cultivated links with such families with a view to soliciting their patronage. Others solicited the attention of monastic patrons, Kenilworth and Coventry being the principal local dispensers of patronage. The guild registers of Corpus Christi Coventry and St Anne of Knowle testify that large numbers of lower clergy as well as monastic heads were members. Did some clergy attend guild functions to attract the attention of potential patrons, 'minnows' whose horizontal social network rarely brought them to the notice of those whose status was sufficiently substantial to influence clerical appointments? Alongside abbots who enjoyed the seasonal dinners of Coventry's Corpus Christi Guild were the city's oligarchs, corporate patrons who both 'hired and fired' the guild chaplains and, doubtless, had the ear of the prior whenever a vacancy occurred in one of the suburban parishes in his control.[8] Some clergy may have grasped that among the sundry and manifold benefits of guild membership there were opportunities for subtle self-advertisement in the relaxed, convivial atmosphere of a venison dinner.

This chapter will examine the ways in which ecclesiastical patronage was exercised in Coventry archdeaconry during the sixteenth century. In particular, it will seek to demonstrate that the parochial clergy, while lacking official patronage, were themselves pursuing a lesser but not unimportant role as patrons. As a preliminary

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Leicestershire Archæological and Historical Society 46 (1970-71), pp. 25-43; W.J. Sheils, *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558-1610*, Publications of the Northamptonshire Record Society 30 (Northampton, 1979); Barratt, 'Condition of the parish clergy'.

6. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p. 218.

7. R.W. Ingram, ed., *Records of English Drama: Coventry* (Manchester, 1981), pp. xvii, xix, xxiii.

8. CCA, BA/B/Q/23/1; W.B. Bickley, ed., *Register of the Guild of Knowle, 1435-1535* (Walsall, 1894); Ingram, *English Drama: Coventry*, p. liv.

introduction to what follows, it may be useful to note that Stretch calculated a total of 696 presentations to parochial livings in Coventry and Lichfield between May 1459 and October 1490. Religious houses made about 46% of all presentations, laity, nobility and crown 37%, and secular ecclesiastics 17%, of which about one-half were made by the bishop himself.[9] At least 619 presentations to parochial livings in Coventry archdeaconry have been detected during the sixteenth century, the percentages of each type being shown in the key to Fig. 9.

Finally, it is conceded that bargains struck with or between patrons are factors in practice which militate against categorisation of types of patronage. Nevertheless, it is contended that this does not justify abandoning the attempt to establish the actual owners of advowsons notwithstanding that it was found difficult even in 1558 and 1560.[10] But at the very least, the exercise will go some way towards exposing the extent of *pro hac vice* patronage and, by implication, the value placed on the right to present to ecclesiastical benefices. It cannot be argued that, because monasteries waived their right to present, therefore the laity's control of the Church has been under-estimated, since it cannot be established on what terms such leases were made or what conditions were imposed. Indeed, it is even possible that such bargains strengthened the hands of the religious houses, for no doubt, as Cooper suggested, there was no shortage of competition to secure patronal rights from monasteries.[11] That, surely, was an advantage monasteries could have zealously exploited.

4.1. Crown Patronage

Although 'the reigning monarch was the greatest single patron of livings in England', crown livings were relatively thinly distributed.[12] Despite its limited *de jure* patronage in most dioceses, the crown enjoyed unique additional opportunities to present, for example, during vacancies-in-see, as when John Hopkyns was instituted to Fenny Compton in 1532, between the death of Bishop Blyth and the appointment of Bishop Lee.[13] The crown exercised its discretion when a minor was in the King's wardship, so at Allesley in 1537 the King presented Richard Baldwyn during the minority of Henry Nevill, Lord Bergavenny. Five Coventry archdeaconry benefices in the sovereign's gift had been acquired as the result of late fifteenth-century

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9. G.J. Stretch, 'The clergy and administration of the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield Under Bishop John Hals, 1459-90', unpubl. M.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford (1990), p. 213.
10. LJRO, B/V/1/2, 4.
11. Cooper, 'Secular clergy', pp. 59-60.
12. See O'Day, 'Lord Keeper's patronage', pp. 89-109.
13. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 2r.

attainder.[14] Whenever *de jure* patrons failed to present within six months and, after a further twelve-month interval, neither the diocesan bishop nor the archbishop of Canterbury had presented, the crown's right to present was activated. Tab. 4.1 summarises the number of institutions to crown livings during the 118-year rule of the five successive Tudor monarchs.[15]

TAB. 4.1

Institutions to crown livings in Coventry archdeaconry, 1485-1603

Sovereign	***Reign***	***Presentations***	***average p.a.***
Henry VII	24 yrs	13	0.5
Henry VIII	38 yrs	21	0.6
Edward VI	6 yrs	7	1.2
Mary	5 yrs	14	2.8
Elizabeth I	45 yrs	76	1.7
Total	**118 yrs**	**131**	**1.1**

There was certainly 'diversity among recipients of crown patronage' in Coventry archdeaconry.[16] Before the mid-sixteenth-century watershed the crown's ecclesiastical patronage was heavily weighted in favour of men whose ordination was a stepping-stone to the diplomatic service rather than the pastoral ministry. Others were careerists in royal service, many of them graduates and pluralists, their livings provided in lieu of salaries as functionaries of Church or State.[17] Thomas Herytage, for example, an Oxford graduate, was master and principal surveyor of the King's works at the palace of Westminster and elsewhere, a Warwickshire man whose institution to Hampton-in-Arden is not recorded but who served that vicarage from at least 1518 until his death in 1537. He earned a shower of benefices including the precentorship of Lichfield cathedral and its concomitant prebend, Bishop's Itchington.[18]

From different moulds came the aristocratic Arthur Dudley, another Oxford graduate, and the ex-monk William Foster. Henry VIII presented Dudley, his erstwhile chaplain, to Coventry St Michael (which he resigned two days after his

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14. They were Avon Dassett, Berkswell, Sheldon, Solihull and Sutton Coldfield, see Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 526; 2, pp. 981, 913, 1004, 942-3.

15. Excluding one which was probably the result of a scribal error. In January 1487, on the presentation of Henry VII, Richard Saunder had been instituted to Berkswell, vacant by the resignation of John Hunt (LJRO, B/A/1/12, f. 33v). In April, however, John James was supposedly presented to Berkswell, void by the death of John Hunt and in the King's gift by reason of the minority of Edward, earl of Warwick. Actually, James was presented to Coston, Leics., in the King's gift by reason of the minority of Edward, earl of Warwick (*CPR 1485-1494*, i, pp.170, 194).

16. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p. 209.

17. P. Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (Toronto, 1969), pp. 50-6.

18. Emden, *BRUO*, 2, p. 917; CCA, BA/B/Q/23/1, f. 230v; LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 15r.

institution in 1538) and two decades later Elizabeth presented him to Sutton Coldfield (1559-63). Meanwhile, Dudley served other capacities including a canonry at Lichfield, where he famously out-manoeuvred iconoclasts by removing St Chad's bones from the cathedral.[19] Deprived of his monk's cowl, in 1543 Foster obtained a benefice, of which in 1554 he was deprived for being married and so fled the country. After Mary's death he returned to England and Elizabeth presented him to Bedworth on Marmaduke Constable's commendation.[20]

Not all crown candidates can be identified as careerists or university graduates. For example, Thomas Bird served the modestly-valued vicarage of Kenilworth 1545-52. It is possible that he was the Thomas Bird who gained a BA degree at Oxford, but nothing further is known of his academic achievements. In 1552 he moved from Kenilworth to the more lucrative vicarage of Aston, where he died in office in 1561.[21] Seven candidates were presented to benefices worth less than £9, the rest between £13-*c*.£16, strengthening the hypothesis that lucrative parishes such as Sutton Coldfield were habitually offered to careerists, less valuable cures to men of inferior status. Evidence to support Hosker's suggestion that there was a greater proportion of resignations in 'career' parishes as royal servants stepped up the ladder of promotion is singularly lacking in Coventry archdeaconry, Sutton Coldfield excepted.[22]

Unlike his predecessors, John Boole, presented to Southam in 1550 and deprived in 1554, was never accorded the title *Magister*, nor was there any hint that he had a university degree. But it was unusual for a non-graduate to hold that lucrative appointment, raising the possibility that he was synonymous with the John Bull of Coventry and Lichfield diocese who graduated from Oxford in 1540. Richard Pedder, vicar of King's Newnham 1552-9, actually entered the Lord Keeper's service. The remaining appointees were all presented to low-value cures consistent with their (presumably) non-graduate status. Mary's only graduate presentees were Richard Hutton to Bourton-on-Dunsmore and George Bruche to Coventry Holy Trinity. None of her other candidates possessed a university degree, but William Wrexham, a former friar and chantry chaplain, was appointed to the valuable rectory of Birmingham in 1554 vouchsafing a handsome annual pension of £6 to his predecessor.[23]

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19. *LPFD Henry VIII*, 13 (1), p. 65, g.190 (53); LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 15r; Emden, *BRUO to 1540*, pp. 675-6; *VCH Staffordshire*, 3, p. 168.
20. TNA: PRO C 3/63/31; BL, Lansdowne MS 443, f. 76v.
21. LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, ff. 41r, 43r; B/A/1/15, f. 30r; Emden, *BRUO*, p. 667.
22. P. Hosker, 'An edition of the register of Reginald Bowles, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield,1453-1459', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool (1978) p. 340.
23. Emden, *BRUO to 1540*, p. 82 (Boole); BL, Lansdowne MS 443, f. 92 (Pedder); LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 1v (Hutton, Bruche, Wrexham).

Some Elizabethan graduates accepted cures hitherto avoided by clerics with sights fixed on reaping better rewards for their superior educational qualifications. For example, when Matthew Pickering went to Harbury in 1572, George Mutley to Shustoke in 1576 and Thomas Davies to Grandborough in 1581, each anticipated an annual stipend of barely £5.[24] Cogent reasons may be advanced to account for all these appointments, not least that choice was becoming restricted as more graduates were being ordained. Moreover, few private patrons would tolerate clergy with disagreeable characteristics of which distant crown officials were ignorant. For example, in 1586 Pickering was reputedly a ruffian, the 'vicar of Hell'. In 1593 Mutley was non-resident and Davies somewhat unenlightened, notwithstanding his bachelor's degree.[25]

While it is difficult to ascertain the crown's criteria for selecting presentees, it is clear that the influence of well-placed individuals was occasionally responsible. For example, Simon Pope's presentation to Warmington may be attributed to his kinship with the former treasurer of the Court of Augmentations, Sir Thomas Pope, of nearby Wroxton, Oxfordshire.[26] A chaplain to the Marquis of Dorset, John Hammer, was granted dispensation to hold benefices in plurality just three weeks before being presented to Willey in 1543.[27] Whether Edward VI presented John Olde to Cubbington in 1549 because of his protestant credentials, or because he was chaplain to earl Ferrers, is unclear. A companion of Thomas Becon, Olde resigned his cure on Mary's accession and fled to the continent, where he died in voluntary exile in 1557.[28]

Mary Tudor's aggressive policy towards married clergy and those considered heretical resulted in fourteen incumbents being deprived in Coventry archdeaconry alone, consequently she was herself obliged to present four replacements, although not all of her candidates were instituted. For instance, in 1554 she presented William Helyn to Whitnash, but he seems never to have been instituted there notwithstanding that he compounded for the living. Neither, similarly, was Thomas Wilson admitted to Radway, despite being presented in May 1554. Since he was parish priest at Middleton, he chose to remain in north Warwickshire, which explains his institution to Ansley in November. In September, meanwhile, Radway was taken

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24. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 45r, 47r, 48v.
25. A. Peel, ed., *The Seconde Parte of a Register* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1915), 2, p. 173; O'Day, 'Lord Keeper's patronage', p. 96; LPL, *Cart. Misc.* xiii no. 37, mm. 1, 2.
26. LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, f. 40v.
27. B/A/1/14iv, f. 41v; LPL, Index to Muniment Books, p. 17; D.S. Chambers, ed., *Faculty Office Registers 1534-1549: A Calendar of the First two Registers of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Faculty Office Edited With an Introduction and Index* (Oxford, 1966), p. 285; TNA: PRO E 334/3, f. 105v.
28. LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, f. 42v; B/A/1/15, f. 8v; C. Garrett, *The Marian Exiles, A Study in the Origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, 1966 rp), p. 241.

by Thomas Meacock, curate of Burford, Oxfordshire, less than forty miles distant as the crow flies. Both livings were currently in the Queen's gift, so it seems that an accommodation was made by all interested parties.[29]

It has not been possible to trace the religious leanings of the four who replaced the deprived incumbents. In the circumstances their orthodoxy may be taken for granted, almost certainly in the case of George Bruche. Two, however, subscribed in 1559: William Porter, who retained Kingsbury at the expense of John Alcock, while Thomas Meacock retained his Oxfordshire curacy but vacated Radway in 1558/9. Richard Hutton's movements cannot be traced after he resigned Bourton-on-Dunsmore in 1555.[30]

Some of Mary's other presentees may be identified as being in sympathy with her regime even though they subscribed in 1559. A former chantrist at Aston, William Wrexham was presented to Birmingham in 1554 on the resignation of his predecessor, Richard Myddlemore, to whom he agreed to pay a life pension of £6 *per annum*. Remarkably, because he was a non-graduate occupying a benefice normally held by men with a master's degree, he remained rector there until his death in 1578.[31] It may also be appropriate to mention the remarkable longevity of Henry Hands, who succeeded Thomas Wilson (above) at Ansley. Ordained in 1509, Hands was admitted to the Mastership of St Thomas' Hospital, Birmingham in 1538. In 1548 he was described as having been granted a pension of 10 marks *per annum*, 'late of the Free Chapel of St Mary, Birmingham'. In his will dated 1552 Simon Broke, vicar of Aston, described Hands as 'parson of the Priory', but he may have been assisting in Birmingham at the time, while drawing his pension. In 1557 he was presented to Ansley, but subscribed to the royal supremacy two years later and moved to the less valuable living of Corley. There in 1570 he died, still in office and receiving an annual pension 'out of Birmingham College' (*sic*).[32] It is clear that however loyal most of Mary's presentees were during her reign, their allegiance to the new sovereign took precedence over fealty to Rome.

At her accession, Elizabeth's immediate problem was finding enough suitable candidates to fill all the vacant benefices. She made the greatest number of presentations in a single year in 1559 (six) when four, possibly five, followed the death of the previous incumbent. Only one was presented to a pre-Dissolution *de*

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29. *CPR 1553-54*, 1, pp. 42; TNA: PRO E 334, f. 136v (Helyn); LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 2r (Meacock), 8v (Wilson).
30. For Bruche see p. 194; LPL, *Cart. Misc.* XIII 58, f. 11r; H. Gee, *The Elizabethan Clergy and the Settlement of Religion 1558-1564* (Oxford, 1898), p. 118.
31. TNA: PRO E 301/57, f. 3v; LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 1v, 47v; LPL, *Cart. Misc.* XIII 58, f. 15v.
32. LJRO, B/A/1/14ii, unfol.; B/A/1/14iii, f. 16r; B/A/1/15, f. 10r; TNA: PRO E 101/76/4; E 178/3239/4, m. 4.

jure crown living, Arthur Dudley to Sutton Coldfield, the remainder having been disposed of to lay patrons. Of an aggregate of ninety presentations, not all of which were effected, most were to benefices acquired by monastic surrender, but no pattern emerges to suggest what motivated their choice other than what can be surmised from the Lord Keeper's presentation books.[33]

While death accounted for fifty vacancies (41%), resignation for thirty-one (25%) and deprivation for fourteen (12%), the cause of voidance in twenty-seven crown benefices (22%) is not precisely known as sources are either silent or unavailable. Highest mortality among crown appointees was recorded in 1546 and 1557, there being four deaths in each year, and three in 1559. Resignations averaged three *per annum* during the study period, spaced at irregular intervals. There were no significant clusters of resignations which might have suggested wide disaffection with the regime. At least twelve transferred to other parishes, some within Coventry archdeaconry, and at least one other retired from the active ministry. Under Mary, the removal of married clergy was the primary reason for deprivations, the majority of which, however, occurred chiefly for non-conformity during Elizabeth's reign.

A total of fifty-five monastic advowsons in Coventry archdeaconry fell into crown hands at the Dissolution, although the Coventry priory chapelries, Exhall, Foleshill, Sowe, Stoke and Wyken were only subsequently re-claimed by the Lord Keeper. For economic reasons Wyken was yoked with Stoke and Exhall with Foleshill and, like Sowe, appear temporarily to have become private donatives. Also, the situation at Ansty and Shilton invited confusion since, although the Lord Keeper appointed 'stipendiaries' to both livings, they were eventually merged with Bulkington.[34] By the end of the sixteenth century the crown had retained thirty-one former monastic advowsons in Coventry archdeaconry, compared to twenty-nine (out of seventy-two) in Shropshire archdeaconry.[35]

Following the dissolution of the monasteries, administrators of crown livings began to be importuned by lobbyists. But the scattered distribution of its livings made the crown dependent on worthies with local knowledge to petition on behalf of suitable clerics, whom they commended to particular benefices. Protégés were assessed by the Lord Keeper's own chaplains, who themselves occasionally recommended clergy. Percyval Wyburn, for example, commended Richard Cotes to Foleshill (1565) and Ralph Kent to Whitnash (1572).[36] It is not possible to establish

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33. BL, Lansdowne MS 443, *passim*; MS 444, *passim*.
34. S. Bassett, *Anglo-Saxon Coventry and its Churches*', Dugdale Society Occasional Papers 41 (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2001), p. 22, argued that in Saxon times Bulkington was the mother church of Ansty and Shilton.
35. O'Day, 'Who controlled the Church?', p. 141.
36. BL, Lansdowne MS 443, ff. 143v, 207r; O'Day, *English Clergy*, pp. 114-5; O'Day, 'Clerical

why Wyburn should support Kent in that way, but there were sound reasons for him to endorse Cotes's admission to Foleshill, which was contiguous with both the Coventry parishes. At the bishop's visitation in 1570 Cotes was presented for not wearing a surplice at Holy Communion, which suggests his vestiarian position.[37] In June 1574 he was instituted as rector of Sharnford, a Leicestershire parish some ten miles from Foleshill, but within four months he was dead. His will suggests that he was deeply committed to the protestant cause and acquainted with Robert Spark, a leading protestant who not only refused to wear the surplice but was also incumbent of parishes contiguous with Sharnford. Cotes appointed Spark and another Leicestershire incumbent, Thomas Higginson, vicar of Claybrook, as overseer of his will, in which he bequeathed a Geneva Bible, 'divinity books', and (untitled) works by the continental protestant divines Bullinger, Calvin, Marlorate and Musculus. To 'the hotter sort of protestants' like Wyburn, possession of such reading material and resistance to the surplice would have marked Cotes out as an ideal candidate for preferment.[38]

During Nicholas Bacon's tenure as Lord Keeper (1559-79) were recorded the names of petitioners for patronage in Coventry archdeaconry, but amongst sixty-five commendations some were unsuccessful, including John Lounde, who in 1559 petitioned on his own behalf for Leamington Hastings. Two other self-petitioners were successful, Simon Underwood for Brinklow (1559) and Robert Crofte for Harbury (1560). Altogether, 110 such personal applications were successful in 1558-9, but thereafter only four were ever granted.[39]

Members of the aristocracy, ecclesiastical dignitaries, and gentry, were frequent petitioners. For instance, in 1565 Lord Grey of Wilton petitioned for Thomas Vaughan's admission to Bickenhill, where there had been a tenuous Grey interest at the end of the fourteenth century.[40] Alexander Nowell, dean of St Paul's 1560-1602 and a former Marian exile, tendered seven successful petitions. Sir Anthony Cooke, another returned exile and the father-in-law of Sir William Cecil, Elizabeth's secretary, petitioned in favour of Christopher Meltham's admission to Newbold-on-Avon in 1562 and nine years later for Edward Bowne's admission

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patronage and recruitment', p. 219.

37. LJRO, B/V/1/7, p. 16.

38. LRO, Will; M.C. Cross, *The Puritan Earl: The Life of Henry Hastings Third Earl of Huntingdon 1536-1595* (London, 1966), pp. 136, 139; C.W. Foster, ed., *The State of the Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I as Illustrated by Documents Relating to the Diocese of Lincoln Volume I*, LRS 23 (Lincoln, 1926), pp. 38, 360; W.J. Shiels, *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558-1610*, Northamptonshire Record Society 30 (1979), p. 2.

39. BL, Lansdowne MS 443, ff. 77r, 79r, 100r; O'Day, 'Lord Keeper's patronage', p. 96.

40. BL, Lansdowne MS 443, f. 147r; *VCH Warwickshire*, 4, pp. 35-6.

there.[41] Thomas Lever, however, was among the most substantial influences within the whole diocese, for during his tenure of office (1560-77) he successfully petitioned on behalf of eight clergy in his jurisdiction.[42] Out of thirteen candidates recommended to crown livings by Thomas Bentham only three, John Bell (Napton) 1569, Wilfrid Rosse (Mancetter) 1573 and John Savage (Polesworth) 1577, were in Coventry archdeaconry. Savage, indeed, was not instituted until March 1579.[43] Few statesmen appear among Coventry archdeaconry petitioners, among whom were influential Warwickshire men such as Sir Thomas Lucy and Clement Throgmorton. Leicester's sole petition for a crown benefice in Lever's jurisdiction occurred in 1572 when he recommended Thomas Hancock's admission to Napton, a rare example of his recommending a university graduate.[44]

Commendatory letters are rare, but one example is that from Sir John Haryngton. Dated 6 August 1588 and despatched from Combe, it solicits the 'favour and means' of Sir Francis Walsingham to secure Nuneaton vicarage for 'one Mr [Nicholas] Beale'. Apparently, Beale had been in Haryngton's employ for the past four years and had 'behaved himself very honestly'. Furthermore, he had 'discharged his Duty in preaching and teaching in such sort as was fit for his calling' - aptitudes admired by patrons with vacant livings in their gift. In this case, Haryngton's commendation was successful, for Beale was offered Nuneaton two years later.[45] No record of his institution survives but he compounded for the living in August 1590.[46]

4.2. Episcopal patronage[47]

Patronage exercised by bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries is significant for what it reveals about their comprehension of spiritual priorities, their diligence in executing their primary function as guardians of the flock, and their response to the uncompromising demands of societal expectations. Episcopal patronage was

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41. BL, Lansdowne MS 443, ff. 207r, 84r, 184r, 225r, 116v, 201v.
42. BL, Lansdowne MS 443, ff. 107r, 115v, 118v (two), 137r, 143v, where Wyburn petitioned and Lever commended, 184r, 197r; O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p. 213.
43. BL, Lansdowne MS 443, ff. 178r, 216v, 253v; LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 43v, 46r, 47v; O'Day, *English Clergy*, p. 45.
44. BL, Lansdowne MS 443, f. 207r. see below, pp. 161-2 for Hancock; F.M. Butler, 'The Erle of Leycester and his friends' and ecclesiastical patronage in the Elizabethan era: a study of the religious patronage of the earls of Leicester, Bedford, Huntingdon and Warwick, Sir Francis Knollys, Sir Walter Mildmay, Sir Henry Sydney, Sir Philip Sydney and Sir Francis Walsingham, with special reference to their promotion of precise religion, 1558-1590', unpubl. M.Phil. thesis, University of London (2001), p. 71.
45. TNA: PRO SP 12/214/37.
46. TNA: PRO E 334/11, f. 98v.
47. For excellent discussion on episcopal patronage see S. Thompson, 'The pastoral work of the English and Welsh bishops, 1550-1558', unpubl. D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford (1984), pp. 20-77.

primarily associated with the right to fill vacant cathedral canonries, a 'most crucial and treasured aspect of his power', which enabled him to 'provide sufficient incentives and rewards for key diocesan officers and servants'.[48]

In the mid-fifteenth century the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield could claim *de jure* patronage of nineteen vicarages within his diocese, but lost four when Chester diocese was created in 1541.[49] In Coventry archdeaconry the bishops only had *de jure* rights in Bishop's Tachbrook, Dunchurch and Fenny Compton, roughly 3% of all advowsons, or about half the average amount of patronage enjoyed by other English diocesans.

In certain circumstances bishops could appoint men of their own choice to parochial livings where they did not normally enjoy the right to collate. For example, a patron (other than the sovereign) failing to present a candidate to a benefice within six months of its falling vacant, forfeited his right to the bishop. According to official records, successive bishops collated only seven candidates to Coventry archdeaconry livings between 1500-1603, but the actual figure is almost certainly higher. At Bishop's Tachbrook at least two collations and at Dunchurch as many as five, went unrecorded.[50]

Geoffrey Blythe collated only seven nominees during his thirty-year episcopate (1503-33), three in Coventry archdeaconry. John Hopton was collated to Bishop's Tachbrook in 1512, but by 1533 he was vicar of Eccleshall, Staffordshire, where he died in 1553. Perhaps, since the bishop's official residence lay in that parish, Blythe negotiated a transfer as a token of appreciation for his protégé's ministry at Tachbrook. On accepting Blythe's offer of a prebendal stall in 1515 Nicholas Stokesley (whose collation was not recorded) resigned Dunchurch, whereupon the bishop, demonstrating his readiness to patronise men of ability and potential, collated Ralph Whitehead.[51]

Since 1514 Whitehead had been vicar of Tanworth-in-Arden, a Warwickshire parish in Worcester diocese. Also in 1515, he was made a prebendary of Gnosall,

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48. Hosker, 'Register of Reginald Bowles', p. 340.

49. J.C. Bates, 'The episcopate of William Bothe Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield 1447-1452 with an edition of his register', unpubl. M.Phil. thesis, University of Nottingham (1981), p. 57; on p. 80 n. 111, Bates quoted uncritically a source which mistakenly included Bishop's Itchington but overlooked Fenny Compton; Thompson, 'Pastoral work of bishops', p. 27.

50. The incumbents were: Hugh Fletcher (sometime between 1512-33) and Robert Williamson (c.1560), both at Tachbrook; and at Dunchurch, Nicholas Stokesley (1504-1505), Richard Strethay (1521-1522), Robert Blythe (1523-1528), Arthur Swinsen (1559) and Sampson Hawkshurst (1599); Cooper, *Last Generation*, p. 49 n. 63. Cooper has overlooked the Dunchurch and Fenny Compton collations; LJRO, D 30/2/1/2, f. 102r.

51. LCL, Chapter Act Book 3, f. 105r; SHC 1915, p. 88 (Hopton);LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 7r (Stokesley); Stokesley was probably related to the vicar of Willoughby, and more importantly to the future bishop of London.

Staffordshire, and a prebendary of St John's, Chester, which latter he resigned the same year. Yet further dignities came his way, for in 1517 he was collated to the prebend of Pipa Parva. This he resigned in 1519 when he was collated to another Lichfield prebend, Weeford. In 1520 Whitehead was appointed Chancellor of Lichfield cathedral and thus resigned Dunchurch. For six years, Whitehead was also rector of Brinklow, which benefice he held from 1528 until a few months before his death in 1534. Additionally, Whitehead was the bishop's commissary and sequestrator general in 1520, and acting president of the consistory court in 1529.[52]

Another prominent beneficiary of Blythe's patronage was his vicar-general and eventual successor as bishop, Rowland Lee, collated to Fenny Compton in 1526.[53] The bishops' registers record only four known graduates collated in Coventry archdeaconry during the study period, but this may be an artificially low figure owing to under-recording. Voidances during vacancies-in-see and the alienation of patronage rights further reduced the bishops' potential to augment their graduate strength.[54]

At first sight it is astonishing that Bishop Sampson alienated all three Coventry archdeaconry advowsons in his gift, and a fourth where his right was questionable. Perhaps he was among those who feared that Edward's accession would, as Barratt noted, encourage a protestant court to make further inroads into ecclesiastical patronage. Troubled financially, Sampson capitulated to pessimism, concluding deals offering short-term financial relief. In a 1558 lawsuit Sampson's successor, Ralph Bayne, successfully contested the Fenny Compton alienation on the grounds that his predecessor had no right to dispose of advowsons in the first place.[55]

Indeed, out of 147 presentations in the whole diocese between 1560-70, Bentham collated only five candidates, including two in Coventry archdeaconry, both *per lapsum temporis*: Henry Stephens (Leamington Priors) and Roger Elyot (Churchover).[56] O'Day noted that Bentham 'was constantly searching for opportunities to exercise patronage'. Whether he coerced private patrons into

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52. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 2, p. 776; Jones, *Church in Chester*, p. 156; Le Neve 10, pp. 10, 51, 65; LJRO, B/A/1/14i, ff. 7r, 14v, 15r-v (Dunchurch, Brinklow); Heath, *Bishop Blythe's Visitations*, pp. xiv-xv.

53. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 11v.

54. They were Ralph Whitehed (Dunchurch), Roland Lee (Fenny Compton), and Roger Elyot (Churchover). He also collated John Shirburne to a chantry at Stretton-on-Dunsmore.

55. LCL, Chapter Act Book 4, f. 142v; *CPR 1548-1549*, p. 403; R. O'Day, 'Cumulative debt: the bishops of Coventry and Lichfield and their economic problems', *Midland History* 3 (1975), pp. 79-80; Barratt, 'Condition of the parish clergy', p. 368; P.J.G. Upton, 'Change and decay: the Warwickshire manors of the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield from the late thirteenth to the late sixteenth centuries', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester (2002), pp. 144-6.

56. NLW, MS 4919D, f. 62; LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 32r (Stephens), 42v (Elyot); O'Day, *English Clergy*, p. 45.

presenting men of his choice cannot be proved, but shortly after he became bishop in 1560 he instructed his chancellor to forward a letter of presentation to Curdworth to one Richard Fox, who had been ordained in 1557 and was currently serving his title as curate of Sutton Coldfield. The attempted interference was rebuffed, for the patron, Edward Arden, presented his own man, Edmund Turner, after whose deprivation, Arden in May 1561 presented a newly-ordained priest named Edmund Lingard, who served his whole ministry in Curdworth.[57]

Clearly, bishops were obliged to compromise when faced with competing requests for patronage. After Edward Lord was deprived of Wolston vicarage in 1590, Bishop Overton 'designed the living for one of his chaplains'. He was probably unaware that the *de jure* patron, Roger Wigston, had offered the benefice to Hugh Clark, a zealous puritan curate from Northamptonshire. When Clark turned up at Eccleshall demanding to be instituted, Overton refused, and for months did all in his power to prevent the institution. 'This is an hot fellow indeed', fumed the bishop. A series of unseemly exchanges continued, until Clark was arrested when Overton accused him of treasonable words against the Queen. At Warwick Assizes, Sir Thomas Lucy's testimony swayed the jury's verdict in Clark's favour and the bishop, humiliated, was obliged to institute the 'hot fellow' rather than his preferred candidate.[58]

Bishops were largely impotent to interfere with the rights of patrons, of increasingly humble origins, who purchased rights of presentation to advance their own kith and kin. Mention of this aspect of private patronage is justified for its impact on the 'professionalization' of the clergy.[59] The bishops' problem is amply illustrated by the episodes at Curdworth and Wolston, for only where patrons' nominees were clearly unsuitable could they refuse to institute.

4.3. Clerical patronage

With the elimination of opportunities to influence presentations to former monastic advowsons, senior clergy exploited whatever opportunities for patronage remained. Archdeacons of Coventry had no *de jure* rights of patronage, but O'Day has

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57. NLW, 4919D, f. 55; O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p. 213; W.H. Frere, *The Marian Reaction in its Relation to the English Clergy. A Study of the Episcopal Registers*, (London, 1896), p. 260; LJRO, B/V/1/4, pp. 40 (Fox), 127 (Turner); B/V/1/5, p. 28 (Fox); B/V/1/15, p. 17, gives Lingard's priesting as 18 May 1561. Turner's institution is not recorded.
58. F.L. Colville, *The Worthies of Warwickshire Who Lived Between 1500 and 1800* (London, 1870), pp. 112-21.
59. Hill, *Economic Problems*, pp. 55-6; For professionalization of the clergy see O'Day, *English Clergy*; M. Hawkins, 'Ambiguity and contradiction in "the rise of professionalism": the English clergy, 1570-1730', in A.L. Beier, D. Cannadine and J.M. Rosenheim, eds, *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 241-69.

suggested that men of the calibre of Thomas Lever could persuade susceptible private patrons to present men of whose religious attitudes they approved.[60] Burdened by a critical shortage of clergy at the beginning of his episcopate, Bentham gave Lever discretion to appoint clergy to serve vacant cures in a purely temporary capacity, until suitable incumbents could be appointed. In an undated case in Chancery, but probably about 1565, Roger Ingham explicitly asserted that Lever had appointed him to serve the parish of Grandborough after a three-year vacancy during which it had been destitute of a priest for the 'celebrating of divine service'. The archdeacon, Ingham declared, had been granted 'full power from the bishop to appoint such honest ministers as by his discretion should think meet to serve such cures as were then void within his jurisdiction'. Ingham was particularly dismayed that crops he had sown on the glebe had been sequestered, but legally he 'disclosed no title to the vicarage but only that he was placed in it by the Archdeacon to serve as a "mynyster"'.[61] While Lever seized these opportunities to exercise unofficial patronage, such appointments conferred no benefit of freehold.

Lichfield prebendaries selected clergy in the six Coventry archdeaconry parishes from which they drew revenue.[62] Admissions to prebendal parishes were usually entered in the episcopal registers, but throughout the study period admissions to Bubbenhall, Ryton-on-Dunsmore and Ufton were never recorded, either in the bishops' registers or in Lichfield cathedral Chapter Act Books, although their clergy attended visitations and their names occur in other archives. It is reasonable to assume that the prebendaries, as rectors of those parishes, appointed clergy and paid their wages out of the rectorial income. At Ryton-on-Dunsmore the curate, Alexander Legh, farmed the parsonage from the prebend, Richard Wyatt, who resided at York where he held a canonry.[63] A layman farmed a moiety of Ufton rectory where his kinsman, William Odam, had been curate from at least 1534 until his death in 1546. A brass dated 1587 in Ufton church has an inscription to Richard Woddams, 'Parson and Patron and Vossioner of the Church and Parish of Ufton'.[64]

Patronage sought of the beneficed by unbeneficed clerics is largely hidden from modern research. When he compounded for Ansley in 1550, one of George Chapman's sureties was John Olde, vicar of Cubbington, indicating that financial patronage sometimes depended upon a particular theological alignment. It is

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60. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p. 213.
61. TNA: PRO C 3/98/70, no. 12.
62. They were: Bishop's Itchington (in the gift of the precentor), Bishop's Tachbrook, Bubbenhall, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Ufton and Wolvey. At Wolvey the right to present alternated between the prebendary and the monks of Combe.
63. WCRO, HR 65/1, p. 16.
64. TNA: PRO PROB, 11, F.17 Alen, f. 135 (William Odams); PROB 11, 75 Spencer, ff. 279-80 Richard Woddams.

noteworthy that both Chapman's and Olde's successors were instituted in November 1554, after they had resigned their respective cures.[65] Apart from appointing curates or other assistant clergy, incumbents were not *ipso facto* patrons of livings. Occasionally, a cleric would privately purchase the right to present to a living. For example, in 1580 one of the *pro hac vice* patrons who presented John Sledd to Aston was Roger Elyott, rector of the neighbouring parish of Sutton Coldfield. Years later, Elyott entered a *caveat* in respect of his own benefice so that after his death his widow, Elizabeth, could present their son, also Roger. This she did in 1595.[66]

Whether he coveted the living and would have connived to have himself presented, given the opportunity, is not disclosed, but in 1620 John Keeling, vicar of Bickenhill, claimed in his will to have purchased the advowson of Coleshill vicarage from Sir Robert Digby, and possessed documentation to that effect 'in writing under [Sir Robert's] hand'. Since the living was occupied by Richard Fox 1574-1627 and the bishop presented *per lapsum temporis* in 1627, it is clear that Keeling's widow had either disposed of the patronage or simply failed to present.[67]

Canon law forbade a clergyman presenting himself, although a third party could transact the formalities as if acting independently.[68] This happened when Richard Fox, the erstwhile curate of Sutton Coldfield, was instituted to Ibstock, Leicestershire, in 1573. He was admitted to Baxterley in 1564 but resigned in 1569 to become rector of Witherley, Leicestershire. By marriage, Fox acquired the advowson of Ibstock, the next presentation to which was assigned to two laymen who presented him when the living fell vacant.[69] If, as historians agree, the laity did extend their control over the clerical estate, it is clear that individual clergy with sufficient subtlety could persuade secular patrons to accede to their wishes. Fox's patrons were a draper and a grazier, men of humble origin cajoled not by a man of superior intellect but one of their own, 'bred in the schools...utterly ignorant of the scriptures...a little knowledge of the latin tongue'.[70]

Before the Dissolution, Corley vicarage was appropriated to Coventry priory, and illustrates how robustly monastic policy was sometimes perpetuated by post-Dissolution patrons. During the early sixteenth century the priors had habitually appointed local clergy, especially to serve their chapels within the county of the city. In 1534 Philip Warbulton entered a *caveat* claiming that he had been granted the

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65. TNA: PRO E 334/4, f. 51r; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 8v.
66. LPL, Reg. Grindal 2, f. 435v; LJRO, B/V/1/3, p. 105; TNA: PRO E 331/Cov & Lich/7.
67. LJRO, B/C/11/1621, will of John Keeling; B/A/1/16, f. 69v.
68. Barratt, 'Condition of the parish clergy', pp. 379-81.
69. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 35v, 43r; C.W. Foster, *Lincoln Episcopal Records in the Time of Thomas Cooper, S.T.P. Bishop of Lincoln A.D. 1571 to A.D. 1584*, LRS 2 (Lincoln, 1912), p. 249.
70. C.W. Foster, *The State of the Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I as Illustrated by Documents Relating to the Diocese of Lincoln Volume I*, LRS 23 (Lincoln, 1926), pp. 36, 113.

right of next presentation, but the agreement must have expired by 1542 when the advowson was conveyed to Henry Over. In 1543 he presented an erstwhile Coventry monk, William Foster, before conveying the advowson to Michael Cameswell, a kinsman of the last prior. After Foster's removal in 1554 Cameswell presented in quick succession two former Holy Trinity chaplains, Richard Branker, who died in 1557, and Nicholas Caponhurst.[71] Subsequently the advowson came into clerical hands.

The episcopal register does not record Henry Hondys' presentation in 1559, following Caponhurst's death, presumably an administrative oversight during the vacancy-in-see. Testimony produced in Chancery indicates that Cameswell presented but twice, so Hondys' *pro hac vice* patron was probably Thomas Saunders, who in 1560 had lodged a *caveat* claiming the right by charter from Cameswell.[72] Nicholas Harding of Fillongley supposedly exercised the right to present in 1571, but Richard and Margaret Fox acted as Harding's executors when they presented Geoffrey Jones in 1572. They became *de jure* patrons in 1583 when Harding's son William granted Corley advowson to Fox.[73] The following year, the advowson passed to Henry Williams, vicar of the adjoining parish, Meriden. Within twelve months he gave the advowson to a layman, Arthur Gregory, who in 1592 granted the right of next presentation to his brother Christopher, a clergyman.[74] It is difficult to see what advantages other than financial either Fox or Williams anticipated by virtue of their patronage. Neither could have coveted the benefice for himself and no vacancy occurred during their brief ownership of patronal rights.

Few parochial clergy emerged from the 'county' classes or exercised patronage as an inherited right. Patronage available to parochial clergy remains an obscure subject, but its importance should not be minimised. Beneficed incumbents who chose their own assistants would naturally select men willing to endorse their ministerial strategy and be receptive to their spiritual and professional guidance. They would seek candidates possessing talents and aptitudes most relevant to the pastoral ministry in their own unique environments and select the one most congenially suited. The working relationship between a vicar and his curate demanded acute spiritual compatibility and historians should beware of dismissing all such contracts as devices to secure the advancement of friends or relatives.

Some clergy engaged kinsmen as curates and incumbents were occasionally succeeded by relatives, suggesting that they could indeed influence their patron's

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71. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 9r; B/A/1/14iv, f. 40v; B/A/1/15, ff. 2r, 10v.
72. *VCH Warwickshire*, 4, p. 60; LJRO, B/V/1/3, p. 83.
73. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 2, p. 1023; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 44v; SBTRO, DR 10/243.
74. SBTRO, DR 10/244, 245, 250.

choice of successor. For instance, at Sheldon in 1579, Henry Blakemore's curate was his nephew, William. As vicar of West Bromwich, Staffordshire, Henry was non-resident at Sheldon, where he was instituted in 1560. When he died in 1582 the patron, owing him £6, presented William, who was still only a deacon. His institution was deferred until 28 April, following his priesting on the 2nd.[75]

A novel phenomenon occurred when sons of the first generation of married clergy became eligible for ordination. Some succeeded their fathers, an early illustration of manipulative paternalism involving Hugh Symons, vicar of Coventry St Michael since 1553. In 1574 Henry Mayne presented him to Elmdon rectory, which he resigned two years later, whereupon Mayne presented Symons's unusually-named son, Hacker. Clearly, Hugh's motive was to secure a benefice for Hacker who, although instituted in February 1576, was not priested until April, by Bishop Bullingham of Worcester.[76]

Fraternal connections favoured Ralph Baxter's appointment to King's Newnham in 1559. His brother, John, had been instituted as vicar there in 1534, while Ralph was still an Augustinian canon at Kenilworth. After the Dissolution in 1539 Ralph was granted dispensation to become a secular priest and hold a benefice, and it is possible that he settled in Newnham. In 1552 he was granted administration of his brother's estate. The next vicar, Richard Pedder, resigned in 1559 creating the vacancy filled by Ralph, on the presentation of Sir Thomas Leigh, *de jure* patron. Whether Ralph was Leigh's deliberate choice or whether Pedder, by then one of the Lord Keeper's chaplains, influenced his former patron's decision, may never be known. Either way Ralph's incumbency was brief, for he died in January 1560 and in his will requested burial near his brother John in Newnham chancel.[77]

Avuncular benevolence is also discovered. Robert Dypsye, who died as vicar of Packington, Leicestershire, in 1536, was probably that rector of King's Newton who in 1517 was pardoned for murder. Doubtless that hastened his move to Lincoln diocese. He willed that 'if Robert Dipse my nephew will be priest that he have his finding of my goods to the value of 7 marks to make him priest'. Nephew Robert was ordained and served his title as curate of Bilton, where he was instituted as rector in 1558, the year he died.[78]

Some incumbents were succeeded by their curates, raising the possibility of bargains being struck with patrons. For example, James Tanfield may have been

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75. LJRO, B/V/1/11, p. 30; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 2, p. 1005; CCC Camb., MS 97, f. 32r; TNA: PRO PROB 11, 18 Tirwhite; LJRO, B/V/1/15, p. 18.
76. Hawkins, 'Ambiguity and contradiction', p. 268; LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, f. 43v; B/A/1/15, ff. 45v, 46v; B/V/1/15, p. 17.
77. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 102; Chambers, *Faculty Office Registers*, p. 169; LJRO, B/C/10i/5, p. 36r; B/A/1/14iv, f. 43r; B/A/1/15, f. 12v; B/C/11/1559/60, Ralph Baxter.
78. *LPFD Henry VIII, 2 (2)*, p. 941 no. 2918; LRO will; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 11v.

quite elderly in 1557 when he was presented to Bourton-on-Dunsmore, for when he died only two years later the patron, Sir Humphrey Stafford, presented the curate, William Goddard. With only 22 households in 1563 it was not a particularly large parish and only one previous curate had ever been recorded there, in 1533. It is probably no coincidence that in 1558 the 'farmer of the parsonage' was one Henry Goddard, doubtless a kinsman of William who, it may reasonably be concluded, was appointed curate in anticipation of replacing an ailing incumbent.[79]

Longevity played a part in the career of Ralph Fox, who received minor Orders at Chester in 1555. Priested in 1565, he was curate of Sheldon by 1570 then of Coleshill by 1573. His vicar, Simon Digby, was deprived in 1564 and Fox was promoted, dying in office, aged ninety-six, in 1627. It was Fox's abnormally-long tenure of Coleshill which frustrated John Keeling's ambition (above, p. 143). Coincidentally, Fox may have exercised patronage on behalf of a fellow Lancastrian, Ralph Worsley, curate of Aston between 1570-3, but by 1579 curate of Lower Whitacre in the parish of Coleshill and still there in 1592.[80]

4.4. Monastic patronage

In the later years of their existence, monasteries began increasingly to lease out rights of patronage, either for short-term financial gain or else to foster good relations. Consequently, this artificially inflated the extent of lay patronage and for several years after the Dissolution there occurred frequent retrospective claims to such leases. The question of patronage when *de jure* patrons allowed somebody else to present is complicated. Sales of former monastic advowsons after the Dissolution and subsequent licences to alienate are recorded on the patent rolls in prolific numbers.

Monasteries *in toto* held not only the largest number of benefices in Coventry archdeaconry but also the most valuable (Figs 4.3, 4.4). Their combined potential for attracting well-qualified men exceeded the pulling power of private patrons possessing fewer opportunities to exercise patronage and generally meaner livings. Furthermore, the religious were amenable to granting rights of next presentation which private patrons jealously guarded. After 1540 the laity acquired a far greater share of the more valuable benefices, enhancing their role as patrons just as

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79. Barratt, 'Condition of the parish clergy', pp. 403-4; LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 10r, 12r; BL, Harl. MS 594, f. 165v.

80. Frere, *Marian Reaction*, p. 60; LJRO, B/V/1/7, pp. 28, 29; B/V/1/8, pp. 23, 24; B/V/1/15, p. 16; B/V/1/11, p. 127; B/A/1/15, f. 45v; B/A/1/16, f. 59v; LPL, *Cart. Misc.* xiii no. 37, m. 1.

pastoral priorities and religious affiliations entered a state of evolutionary development.

In 1291 there were forty-five Coventry archdeaconry benefices appropriated to monasteries. Including dependent chapelries and suburban chapels annexed to Coventry St Michael and Holy Trinity this figure rose to fifty-five by 1535.[81] Before their dissolution, religious houses had in their collective gift the largest number of livings and, exceeding any other group of patrons, made one hundred presentations between 1500-38. No individual monastery presented more than Kenilworth, thirty-five candidates to fifteen livings in its gift, averaging roughly one every sixteen months over a period of thirty-eight years. Coventry cathedral priory and Maxstoke shared the next largest number of candidates, each presenting eight.

Presentations between 1500-79 (Fig. 9) reflect the redistribution of monastic patronage during the latter half of the sixteenth century. That religious houses made 21% of all presentations is remarkable, for not only did monastic presentations totally cease after 1539, but they also waived their right to present on at least a further thirty-four occasions.[82] Since presentees were not necessarily the owners of the advowsons, therefore, the full extent of monastic patronage is concealed, for the number of pre-Dissolution lay presentations exaggerates the number of advowsons held by the laity.

In the early sixteenth century fifteen monastic houses, including one cell, lay within the territorial limits of Coventry archdeaconry, four located within the city walls.[83] Earlier generations of monastic presentees may have been, in Hosker's words, 'relatively obscure local men' of a not particularly high intellectual calibre. It was observed by Stretch that monastic houses were frequently approached by laymen soliciting benefices for ordained relatives or servants. Monks faced conflicting priorities since they, too, felt it necessary to place potentially useful candidates in benefices within their gift, and there were occasions when communities placed one of their own members to serve a particular parish.[84] Canon

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81. S. Ayscough and J. Hunter, eds, *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliæ et Walliæ Auctoritate P. Nicholai IV c. A.D. 1291* (London, 1802); pp. 241-2, 244; *VE*, 3, pp. 58-82. The chapels were Ansty, Binley, Exhall, Foleshill, Keresley, Radford, Shilton, Sowe, Stivichall, Stoke, Willenhall and Wyken. Vicarages were never ordained there, as *VE* makes clear, and the chaplains' appointments could be terminated at the will of the prior.

82. Figures are suggestive rather than conclusive, since about 170 further institutions unrecorded in the episcopal registers have been deduced from other sources, including clergy traced in the Composition Books (TNA: PRO E 334/1-12). Monastic grants of next presentation have been calculated from bishops' registers; O'Day, 'Clerical recruitment and patronage', p. 198.

83. In Coventry: Benedictine Cathedral Priory of St Mary, Carthusians (St Anne), Franciscan Greyfriars, Carmelites (Whitefriars). Benedictines at Alvecote, a cell of Great Malvern Priory (Worcs.), nuns at Henwood, Nuneaton and Polesworth; Cistercians at Combe, Merevale and Stoneleigh; Augustinian canons at Arbury, Kenilworth and Maxstoke, and friars at Atherstone.

84. Hosker, 'Register of Reginald Bowles', p. 341; Stretch, 'Clergy and administration', pp. 234-5.

law forbade monks becoming beneficed incumbents, but Augustinians were exempt and sometimes despatched canons to serve livings in their gift. John Map or Max, 'canon regular', was instituted to Shotteswell in 1503 and John Keldemere, canon of Arbury, to Chilvers Coton in 1521.[85] Thomas Furness of Clattercote was vicar of Ratley from at least 1526 until his death in 1539, when his fellow-canon Christopher Silbane was instituted, both having been dispensed in 1538 to change habits and hold a benefice.[86]

Monastic appropriations, Cooper observed, ensured that 'a large proportion of the secular clergy of the diocese was being selected in the first instance by regulars'. Furthermore, 'houses from outside the diocese' presented a 'significant number' of candidates, with the corollary that 'part of the selection procedure [of secular clergy] was *extra*-diocesan'. More than that, 'little of precision...concerning monastic patronage' can be said, because 'the process behind their presentation of particular individuals is especially obscure'.[87]

A remarkable appointment was that of Thomas Hutton, presented to Kingsbury in 1521 by the Prioress of Markyate. Only four years earlier Hutton had been accused of incontinence - with the Prioress! Whatever her motive, she was keen to have the errant cleric transferred beyond the jurisdiction of the bishop of Lincoln.[88] Thomas Waryn, presented to Nuneaton by the prior of Shene in 1501, was a former vicar choral of the neighbouring college at Astley. To Nuneaton in 1521 Shene also presented Robert Whittington, who had been vicar of the adjoining parish of Mancetter for the previous seven years, suggesting that the Warwickshire men, or their agents, solicited the Surrey Carthusians, who were content to present them.[89] Thomas Maunsfeld, a canon of Newark College, Leicester, where he willed to be buried, and William Molder, successive rectors of Rugby, were almost certainly non-resident pluralists with no Warwickshire antecedents.[90]

Until 1535 monastic patrons had always held a monopoly of the more valuable livings (Figs. 10, 11), with Coventry St Michael and its dependent chapelries worth £50. Of eleven livings valued at £20 or above in 1535, four were controlled by monasteries, one by an Oxford college, one by an ecclesiastic, one by the crown and two by lay patrons. The number of monastic advowsons valued between £5-£10 is inflated because it also includes chapelries.

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85. C.E. Woodruff, ed., *Calendar of Institutions by the Chapter of Canterbury Sede Vacante*, Kent Record Society 8 (Canterbury, 1924), p. 116; LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 7v.
86. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 16v; Chambers, *Faculty Office Registers*, p. 152.
87. Cooper, 'Secular clergy', p. 58.
88. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 7v; M. Bowker, ed., *An Episcopal Court Book for the Diocese of Lincoln 1514-1520*, LRS 61 (Lincoln, 1967), p. 45.
89. LJRO, B/A/1/13, ff. 121r, 206r; B/A/1/14i, ff. 6v, 7v.
90. TNA: PRO PROB 11, 30 Adeane.

An interesting case has been detected at Maxstoke, one of the less-valuable of the monastic livings. In 1536, 'seven score houseling people' there petitioned against Reginald Digby, who farmed the rectory, alleging that he had withheld certain benefits from the vicar. The outcome of the case is not recorded, but what is of greater relevance here is that the patrons of the living were the prior and convent of Maxstoke, an Augustinian community of which the vicar happened to be a member. The incumbent, who received a mere £2 annual stipend, was compensated by having meat and drink provided, a child to wait on him, a gown every year, three 'casts of bread' and two gallons of ale weekly, his barber, laundry, candles, as much firewood as he needed, and all the costs of his manse.[91] It is clear from this case that some monastic patrons were committed to providing additional facilities for the incumbents of their poorer benefices. It also betokens a potential source of conflict in parishes where lay impropriators were to take responsibility for incumbents' wages.

Perhaps some monks anticipated the Dissolution and ingratiated themselves with their superiors or prospective patrons. For example, Thomas Parker and Richard Badger, former canons of Kenilworth, were respectively presented to the Abbey's former benefices of Ashow (1542) and Harbury (1550) both by patrons to whom the monastery had previously granted the right of next presentation. When Maxstoke priory was dissolved in 1539 the crown presented one of the community, Thomas Watts, to the recently-vacated parish church there while another of the monks, Robert Bosworth, became curate of Shustoke, formerly in the priory's gift. In 1538 William Foster of Coventry cathedral priory was granted dispensation to become a secular priest and presented to the former priory living of Corley in 1543. His fellow-monk, Thomas Leke, was also granted a dispensation and subsequently appointed curate of the former priory chapelry of Stivichall. John Lyster exchanged his responsibilities as sub-prior of Kenilworth for a curacy there and died about 1550.[92]

Once monastic patronage was eliminated the Church - including university colleges - retained patronage of only ten advowsons, with the bishop claiming a further three. Twenty-three advowsons were retained by the crown but crucially, as observed by Claire Cross, 'a greatly increased amount of patronage became vested in lay hands'.[93] This transfer of ecclesiastical patronage into lay ownership profoundly altered the balance of power to appoint incumbents, with the Church losing its

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91. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 2, p. 999; TNA: PRO REQ 2/9/8 (1).
92. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, ff. 16v, 18v; B/A/1/14iv, ff. 40v, 42v; B/C/10i/5, will of John Lees; TNA: PRO E 178/3239/4, m. 4; Chambers, *Faculty Office Registers*, p. 175; TNA: PRO E 135/1/24.
93. Cross, 'Noble patronage', p. 1.

hitherto unchallenged predominance. As a consequence, aspirants for the parochial ministry were selected for reasons other than their willingness to pay homage to hierarchical diktat. This did not necessarily lead to an improvement, either in incumbents' circumstances or their parishioners' pastoral care.

4.5. Lay patronage

Lay patronage before the monastic dissolutions was less socially robust in Coventry archdeaconry, where noble patronage had been shorn of benefices by attainder after 1485. Quasi-patronage, the temporary engagement of soul-priests who were never fully integrated within the parochial system but whose sacerdotal ministry supplemented that of the parochial clergy, flourished right up to the dissolution of chantries.

Of twenty advowsons in lay hands in 1500 all except Arley were manorial appendants. Only the Marquis of Dorset (Bedworth and Weddington) was patron of more than one Coventry archdeaconry living and none but the Burdetts at Seckington and the Fulthrops at Wishaw presented more than once. The majority of pre-Dissolution lay patrons in Coventry archdeaconry controlled advowsons by virtue of manorial titles, although most appear to have been non-resident. It was only when monastic property was redistributed that gentry seized the opportunity to acquire the advowsons of their local parish churches.[94] Throughout the course of the sixteenth-century lay patrons collectively presented 254 clergy, averaging nearly three every year. The reasons for only 225 of the voidances were recorded, 148 resulting from death, 63 resignations and 14 deprivations. In seventeen of the twenty parishes in lay hands in 1500 successive patrons appear to have experienced no difficulty filling vacancies. The exceptions were Baddesley Clinton (chronic under-recording), Caldecote (vacant 1558-75) and Weddington (uncertain 1535-51).

Throughout the whole diocese, about 38% of clergy were presented by private patrons between 1503-31.[95] This was more than double the Coventry archdeaconry figure, where only 17% (twenty-six out of 155) are known to have been presented by private patrons, most of whom had little opportunity to exercise their patronage. Twenty-nine incumbents presented by private patrons between 1500-39 served an average of twenty-two years each, while seventeen served in excess of twenty years. Their tenurial longevity exhibited an unexpected and quite astonishing contrast to those presented by monastic patrons. During the same period, an equivalent twenty-nine monastic appointees served an average of fractionally less

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94. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, ff. 3v, 7v, 17v; B/A/1/14iii, f. 15v.
95. Cooper, 'Secular clergy', p. 60.

than ten years each. Perhaps private patrons were less meddlesome than monastic appropriators who exercised strict bureaucratic control. On the other hand, monasteries were better equipped to promote their candidates, private patrons having only limited opportunities.

There was a dramatic increase in the number of lay patrons after 1539. Thirty-seven advowsons formerly administered by religious houses fell eventually into lay hands. In eighteen cases (49%) multiple sales ensued. The convoluted transfer of ownership of many advowsons during the mid- and later-sixteenth century makes it extraordinarily difficult to disentangle some patronage rights in Coventry archdeaconry. Even the hierarchy's attempts to identify holders of patronage rights, for instance during the visitations of 1558 and 1560, were largely unsuccessful.[96] By 1604 the attrition of the Church's patronage emboldened Archbishop Bancroft to claim that lay persons were appointing clergy to five-sixths of parochial livings.[97]

Because of fragmentation no one lay patron 'dominated the scene' and there 'were no really large blocks of lay patronage' within the archdeaconry.[98] After the Dissolution six lay patrons acquired multiple advowsons, among them the former Lord Mayor of London, Thomas Leigh, whose substantial ex-monastic properties in Warwickshire included the advowsons of King's Newnham (purchased 1553-4), Church Lawford (1554), Ashow (1562) and Churchover (1566). The total number of presentations by the Leigh family was thirteen during the study period and it is enlightening to note some of the clergy they preferred. A Marian ordinand priested by Bishop Bonner of London in 1557, Henry Berridge (King's Newnham in 1572 and Ashow in 1575) was also vicar of Winwick, Huntingdonshire from 1558, holding it in plurality with his Warwickshire livings until his death in 1581. Leigh also preferred Roger Barker, ordained by Bonner in 1558 to serve his title as curate of Binley. Instituted to Ashow in 1565, Barker became rector of St Laurence Jewry London in 1572, but returned to Warwickshire three years later and was instituted to Newbold-on-Avon, where he died in 1604. Leigh also presented former monks. Ralph Baxter received his late brother's living of King's Newnham in 1559, but his successor, Ralph Goldsmith, promptly relinquished the living as he was already vicar of Burton Dassett. All these appointments indicate a Catholic bias commensurate with Leigh's known association with papists. In 1567, however, Leigh presented to Church Lawford William Bolton, a man whose protestant leanings appear at variance with his previous protégés.[99]

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96. LJRO, B/V/1/2, 4; O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p.197.
97. R.G. Usher, *Reconstruction of the English Church* (2 vols, London,1910), 1, p. 95.
98. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment', p. 218.
99. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 12v, 29v, 42r-v, 44v; TNA: PRO E 331/Coventry & Lichfield/4 no. 24; Foster, *Lincoln Episcopal Records 1571 to 1584*, p. 71; Hennessy, *Novum Repertorium*, p. 267; *CSPD 3,*

Occasionally, an accommodation was made with the lord of the manor when a religious house appropriated a parochial benefice 'in gross', that is, as a discrete estate which was not a manorial appurtenance. At Baxterley the Astleys presented alternately with Merevale Abbey, and at Churchover, the Purefeys shared alternate presentations with Kenilworth Abbey. That house also held the advowson of Hampton-in-Arden, where they presented the incumbent chosen by the manorial lords. By a similar arrangement, in 1477 Leicester Abbey presented Thomas Maunsfeld to Rugby at the nomination of Sir Henry Stafford and his wife Margaret, Countess of Richmond, the mother, by an earlier spouse, of the future Henry VII. When Maunsfeld died in 1507, Margaret, by then married to her third husband, nominated William Molder.[100] Vicars of Burton Dassett were presented jointly by the canons of Arbury and the lords of the manor, the Sudleys, but owing to clerical longevity only one sixteenth century incumbent was presented before the Dissolution.[101]

Unexpired grants of next presentation made by religious houses before their dissolution were usually specifically protected when the crown disposed of monastic assets. For example, in July 1558 David Pole presented Edward Jurden to Grandborough by right of a grant from Thomas Alton, the last prior of Ranton, and in August 1558 William Higden, a Lincolnshire gentleman, presented Robert Holme to Leamington Hastings by right of a grant from Nostell priory.[102]

Noble patronage in Coventry archdeaconry was somewhat intermittent, for their various advowsons changed hands with confusing frequency. Members of the extended Dudley family, for example, briefly held presentation rights in a number of different benefices, Ambrose Dudley conceding the right to nominate to Rugby in 1558.[103] As earl of Warwick, Dudley presented Richard Astlyn to Leamington Hastings in 1567 and Henry Clerke in 1574, but neither man appears to have been a graduate notwithstanding a preference for 'university-educated men in sixteen out of [Dudley's] total of twenty-nine presentations'.[104] Ordained in 1571, Clerke, who had

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1591-1594, p. 372, letter dated 19 September 1593, from Richard Topcliffe to Lord Burghley, suggesting that at Buxton (Derbys.) Leigh and his wife attended a meeting with Francis Ridcall, 'the rebel and traitorous priest', and 'a number of papists'.

100. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, pp. 15-6 (Churchover); 2, pp. 956, 1055; LJRO, B/A/1/12, f. 24v; B/A/1/14i, f. 5r; W.O. Wait, *Rugby Past and Present, With an Historical Account of Neighbouring Parishes* (n.p., 1893), pp. 20-2.

101. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 524.

102. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 11v. On rights of next presentation see O'Day, *English Clergy*, pp. 105-12, and Barratt, 'Condition of the parish clergy', pp. 362-88.

103. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 11r. By marriage, Dudley briefly held the manor of Rugby before his ennoblement.

104. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 42v, 46r; F.M. Butler, '"The Erle of Leycester and his friends" and ecclesiastical patronage in the Elizabethan era: a study of the religious patronage of the earls of Leicester, Bedford, Huntingdon and Warwick, Sir Francis Knollys, Sir Walter Mildmay, Sir Henry

studied at Oxford without receiving a degree, was described as 'respectable and learned' in 1584. In 1586 he was 'of some towardness', suggesting that his religious sympathies were aligned with his patron's. At that time he was, apparently, non-resident, but it is not known whether he lived on another benefice.[105]

Notwithstanding his tenure of Kenilworth Castle, and although he actively supported protestant clergy in Warwickshire being 'present', as Collinson stated, 'at the puritan exercises [at Southam] when he was in their vicinity', the only advowsons Leicester held in Coventry archdeaconry were Hampton-in-Arden, its chapelries of Knowle and Temple Balsall, and, briefly, Long Itchington and Austrey.[106] There is no evidence that he ever presented clergy to any of those parishes. Indeed, Butler asserted that Leicester displayed 'a basic lack of concern for his patronage at local level, for although he is known to have owned fourteen advowsons he presented only four clergy'. Butler's explanation rings true of Leicester's patronage in Coventry archdeaconry, inasmuch as he 'sold his advowsons so rapidly that he seldom possessed them when a vacancy occurred'.[107] It is intriguing that on 13 December 1584 the Lord Keeper presented Leonard Fetherston to the vicarage of Hampton-in-Arden, though by what right he presented is uncertain since it was not a crown living in his gift. In any case, the presentation was not effected because Thomas Robinson had been vicar there since 1566 and when he died in office in 1594 he was succeeded by Walter Bickles.[108] Whatever his motives, Leicester was clearly involved in arranging the presentation, for only two days later, on 15 December, he ordered 40s. be given to 'Mr Fetherstone *parsone of Hampton in Arden* at his goyng in to the countrie'.[109] Fetherston had been vicar of Long Itchington since 1581, but it is uncertain who presented him because the institution is not recorded in the bishop's register and the certificate does not name the patron. Furthermore, in 1580 Leicester had transferred the advowson to Sir John Hubaud.[110]

In 1585 Leicester granted the right of next presentation to Austrey to Humphrey Ferrers, of the nearby town of Tamworth. His choice was the vicar there, Roger

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Sydney, Sir Philip Sydney and Sir Francis Walsingham, with special reference to their promotion of precise religion, 1558-1590', unpubl. M.Phil. thesis, University of London (2001), p. 60.

105. LJRO, B/V/1/15, f. 6; B/V/1/19, f. 3; LPL, *Cart. Misc.* XIII 37, m. 1v; Peel, *Seconde Parte*, p. 173.

106. P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (pb edn, Oxford, 1990), p. 176; *VCH Warwickshire*, 4, pp. 12, 86, 94 for Leicester's patronage at Austrey, Hampton-in-Arden and Knowle; 6, p. 126 at Long Itchington.

107. Butler, '"The Erle of Leycester"', p. 71.

108. BL, Lansdowne MS 444, f. 85r; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 42r; B/A/2ii/1, p. 40; TNA: PRO Prob 11, 73 Dixy.

109. S. Adams, *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558-1561, 1584-1586*, Camden Society, 5th ser. 6 (Cambridge, 1995), p. 202 (italics are editorial).

110. TNA: PRO E 331/Cov & Lich/5; VCH *Warwickshire* 6, p. 126.

Molde, who retained Austrey until his death in 1617, but lived in Tamworth until he resigned that benefice in 1610.[111] In 1577 Leicester did, however, present William James to the archdeaconry of Coventry by concession of Bishop Bentham. He also engaged as chaplain the suspended vicar of Coventry Holy Trinity, Humphrey Fenn, who subsequently accompanied his expedition to the Netherlands.[112] It would appear that Leicester did not take advantage of his Warwickshire advowsons 'to create a puritan party in the shires', despite his immense contribution to the protestant cause and particularly his support of the Southam exercises.[113]

Aristocratic families such as the Nevills, lords Bergavenny, at Allesley and the de Veres, earls of Oxford, at Bilton had long been non-resident lords of their respective manors. Both families habitually granted the right of next presentation to others and neither exercised *de jure* privilege there during the sixteenth century. There were remarkably few patrons among the nobility in Coventry archdeaconry, several having been attainted during the latter part of the fifteenth century. At Bedworth the Marquis of Dorset presented Robert Cowper in 1542 and Edward Bromley in 1543.[114] In Worcester diocese the gentry benefited when economic necessity obliged aristocrats to disgorge some of their recently-acquired monastic estates, including the advowsons of appropriated churches. Furthermore, as Barratt observed, 'an exceptional number of the nobility of this generation were convicted of treason and their property escheated to the crown'. The only comparable sixteenth-century evidence in Coventry archdeaconry was when Henry, Marquis of Dorset, was attainted and the advowson of Bedworth passed to the crown.[115]

Evidence reveals a number of opportunists emerging from the humbler ranks of society ready to take advantage of religious confusion to enhance their social status and economic fortunes.[116] Religious houses began increasingly to lease the right to collect tithes, to farm out rectories to local entrepreneurs and, since it was a legal property, to sell the right of presentation to a living when it next fell vacant. For example, when two Erdington citizens, Thomas Massey, esquire, and William Rogers, yeoman, presented Humphrey Robyns to Bickenhill in 1537, it was by virtue of a grant from the actual patrons, Markyate Priory, Bedfordshire. Only months

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111. Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 2, p.1123, identifies the patron, who is not named in the register, LJRO, B/A/2ii/1, p. 35; B/A/1/16, f. 3v; H.C. Mitchell, *Tamworth Parish Church* (Welwyn, 1935), p. 230.
112. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 47r; Adams, *Household Accounts*, pp. 295, 352, 358, 363, 451, 459 for Fenn as Leicester's chaplain.
113. Butler, '"The Erle of Leycester"', p. 71.
114. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 18v; B/A/1/14iv, f. 40v; B/A/1/15, ff. 42v, 47r.
115. Barratt, 'Condition of the parish clergy', p. 358; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, pp. 112-3.
116. C. Kitching, 'The disposal of monastic and chantry lands', in F. Heal and R. O'Day, eds, *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I* (London, 1977), pp. 122-3; B. Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c.1400-1560* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 258; Cooper, 'Secular clergy', pp. 66-70.

before that house was dissolved the nuns sold to one Thomas Pye the right of next presentation to Coleshill, to which vicarage he presented John Fenton in November 1538.[117]

An enterprising bourgeoisie whose humble origins did not prevent them nurturing ambitions above their station eagerly exploited the crown's pillage and subsequent disposal of monastic assets. There are few examples of 'lesser' people acquiring ex-monastic advowsons in Coventry archdeaconry, but Knight demonstrated how Henry Over, a Coventry mercer, ingratiated himself with Dr London, one of those responsible for supervising the dissolution of local monasteries. Between 1543-63 Over emerged as 'the most significant *local* figure in the market for confiscated lands' and after purchasing advowsons at Bulkington, Corley and Priors Hardwick became one of the most prolific dispensers of private patronage in Coventry archdeaconry.[118] The ambitious Spencers of Wormleighton were already consolidating their rise from successful sheep graziers to local gentry and titled landowners when they acquired the advowson of their home church, which had belonged to the dissolved Augustinian abbey of Kenilworth. At Curdworth the advowson, formerly owned by Leicester Abbey, came into the hands of the Ardens of nearby Park Hall, an ancient and substantial local family, but susceptible to fluctuating fortunes which took another turn for the worse when Edward was executed and attainted in 1585.[119]

A transaction of a more unusual kind was Thomas Fisher's acquisition of ecclesiastical property in Coventry archdeaconry. The son of Thomas Hawkyns, a Warwick fishmonger, Fisher adopted his father's trade as his surname and rose to become secretary to Edward Seymour, later Lord Protector. At the Dissolution he purchased the site of St Sepulchre's Priory, Warwick, converting it into his principal residence. In 1547 Fisher extinguished 500 years of episcopal rule by purchasing the bishop's manors in Warwickshire. Bishop Sampson also granted him the advowsons of the two parish churches, with the express approval of the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield since they were prebendal livings, and also the advowson of Fenny Compton.[120]

A few selected examples suffice to suggest the relationship between lay patrons and the clergy. The Staffords of Grafton, Worcestershire, presented four incumbents

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117. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, ff. 14v, 16v.
118. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', pp. 254, 293, 295-8.
119. *CPR* 1553-1554, p. 365; *LPFD* Henry VIII, 15, pp.114-5, g. 282.
120. They were: Bishop's Itchington, Bishop's Tachbrook, Chadshunt and Gaydon: P.J.G. Upton, 'Change and decay: the Warwickshire manors of the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield from the late thirteenth to the late sixteenth centuries', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester (2002), pp. 145-8.

to Bourton-on-Dunsmore. The earliest, Thomas Wyrley in 1532, was deprived for marriage in 1554. His replacement, James Tanfield, died in 1559 and was succeeded by his curate, William Goddard, who resigned in 1562, apparently without subscribing to the 1559 settlement, suggesting that he was a casualty of the ideological battlefield. There is no doubting his successor's enthusiasm for reform. A returned Marian exile, Richard Prowde was ordained by Archbishop Grindal in 1560 and held uncompromising religious views, although in an impudent letter to Burghley in 1579, he admitted that he was 'unworthy of so great calling, having no greater learning'. Whether or not the Staffords pursued a deliberately partisan reformist policy, it is noteworthy that three of their four appointees appear to have embraced the protestant ethos.[121]

Hosker's point regarding the selection of 'carefully chosen candidates...governed by two basic and self-reinforcing criteria - affinity and service', is well illustrated in Coventry archdeaconry by the choice of Palmer at Radbourne and Barrett at Ladbroke.[122] The Catesbys' tenure of Ladbroke and Radbourne manors was briefly suspended after Sir William's political indiscretion, for which he was executed and attainted in 1485. Sir John Risley acquired *de jure* rights of patronage, exercised once in each parish, but the attainder was eventually reversed and the Catesby connection restored. When Radbourne fell vacant in 1527, the Catesby heir, Richard, was a minor, so his guardian, Sir William Spencer, presented Thomas Palmer on his behalf. Presumably the young patron chose the candidate himself, the new rector being a kinsman. When Ladbroke next fell vacant three years later Richard had attained his majority, but was content to appoint Thomas Barrett, who had been curate there for six years and who agreed to pay his predecessor an annual pension.[123]

Personal patronal links were doubtless responsible for John Burman's institution to Radbourne in July 1496. He had been vicar of Ashby-St-Legers, Northamptonshire, since April that year, and subsequently held both benefices simultaneously until his death in 1527. His patron was Sir John Risley.[124] Robert, the executed William Catesby's half-brother, held the family living of Ladbroke from 1486 and also the vicarage of Mixbury, Oxfordshire, which he exchanged for the

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121. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 2r; B/A/1/15, ff. 10r, 12r, 30v; J. Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion* (4 vols, London, 1824), pp. 663-5.
122. Hosker, 'Register of Reginald Bowles', p. 344.
123. S.H.A.H[ervey], *Ladbroke and its Owners* (Bury St Edmunds, 1914), pp. 71, 352; LJRO, B/A/1/14i, ff. 4v, 12v, 15v.
124. H.I. Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutlandshire Clergy from 1500* (15 vols, Northampton, 1938-43) 2, p. 311; C. Harper-Bill, ed., *The Register of John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1486-1500* Canterbury and York Society 78 (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 115.

London rectory of St Martin-within-Ludgate in 1487, holding them simultaneously until his death in 1506.[125]

It has been estimated by Cooper that of all presentations made by the laity, one-fifth involved family members.[126] Despite depopulation at Stretton Baskerville the Smythes presented four successive rectors there before granting away the right of next presentation. In 1525 Walter Smythe was a minor and the new rector presented on his behalf by trustees was Edward Smythe, inviting speculation that a family connection was the decisive factor.[127] Thirteen years later John Walker, formerly curate of Newbold-on-Avon, was presented. There is no obvious connection with the Smythe family, but when Walker died in 1570 Richard Palmer was presented. His acquaintance with the Smythes went back to the 1560s when he was vicar, and Richard Smythe lay rector, of Foleshill. In 1564 Palmer moved to Wolvey, a parish contiguous with Stretton Baskerville and which he then held in plurality.[128] Now at least 55 years of age, Palmer's income was conveniently enhanced without any expansion to his pastoral liabilities. After Palmer died in 1581 Smythe presented the recently-ordained George Messenger. It is difficult to imagine why he accepted the cure of a deserted settlement in Warwickshire for he soon departed for Barwell, Leicestershire, where he died in 1601.[129] Meanwhile the right of next presentation passed to one William Welche, whose appointee William Robinson departed in 1607, when the church was already in an advanced state of disrepair. It had altogether disappeared by 1633. Kinship and service were clearly factors which governed the selection process.[130]

Members of the Throgmorton family, already well-established in Warwickshire, held the important livings of Solihull, Southam and Ladbroke. They also acquired Birdingbury through marriage.[131] It was Sir George who in 1545 presented John Feckenham, the last Abbot of Westminster, to Solihull, to which parish in 1557 his son Robert introduced a kinsman, the socially well-connected William Hubaud of Ipsley, and in 1560 the formidable Catholic divine John Bavand.[132] Contrarily,

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125. BodL, *VCH* Oxford Clergy List, p. 104; LJRO, B/A/1/12, f. 18r; G. Hennessy, ed., *Novum Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochilae Londinense or London Diocesan Clergy Succession from the Earliest Time to the Year 1898* (London, 1898), p. 292.
126. Cooper, 'Secular clergy', p. 61.
127. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 11v; I.S. Leadam, *The Domesday of Inclosures 1517-1518* (2 vols, London, 1897), 2, pp. 662-3 for Smythes' depopulation.
128. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 14v; B/A/1/15, ff. 35v, 44r.
129. LAO, Ep. Reg. XXVIIIA, f. 75v; Foster, *Lincoln Episcopal Records 1571 to 1584*, p. 44; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 48r; LRO will.
130. LJRO, D30/2/7/96, f. 191v; B/A/2ii/1, p. 33; TNA: PRO SP 16/250/68.
131. *VCH Warwickshire*, 6, p. 38.
132. LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, f. 41r (Feckenham); B/A/1/15, f. 10r; *VCH Warwickshire*, 6, p. 124 (Hubaud); Dugdale, *Warwickshire,* 2, p. 944 (Bavand).

Clement Throgmorton favoured reformers, his four candidates at Southam including Latimer's former companion, the Swiss Augustine Bernher.[133] This study cannot be an arena for debate on the efficacy of clerical didactics, but disparate theological teaching may partly explain why Solihull harboured one of the highest number of recusants in the county and, conversely, why Southam emerged as one of the principal centres of puritan activity.

Theological alignments were clearly important to patrons such as Roger Wigston of Wolston. His presentation of the radicals, Edward Lorde in 1585 and Hugh Clerke in 1591, demonstrate his commitment to protestantism. Moreover, Wigston was probably responsible for appointing the equally radical Daniel Wight to the curacy of Stretton-on-Dunsmore in Wolston parish. Lorde and Wight were both imprisoned for their abortive attempt to abolish the episcopacy in favour of presbyterianism, while Wigston and his wife were imprisoned for their part in printing the Marprelate tracts. The Ferrers family of Baddesley Clinton entertained papist sympathies. Among numerous faults attributed to him in the 1586 Puritan Survey, their curate, William Shaw, was 'unsound' and 'papist'.[134]

Some patrons, taking advantage of their unique powers of discretion, manipulated the clergy they presented by imposing conditions upon them. For example, John James alleged in chancery that before being presented to Avon Dassett in 1583 he was obliged to bind himself in the sum of £300 'to resign the benefice within fourteen days after being required' by his patron, Simon Raleigh. He soon discovered that Raleigh had deceived him by not declaring the full rectorial income. Furthermore, James, a bachelor, was persuaded to negotiate a housekeeping agreement with Raleigh's servant which the patron then blatantly exploited and ridiculed him as 'a Welsh *Creggyn*'. Judgement was given in James's favour, presumably because he astutely declared himself 'unable by the hard and evil dealings abovesaid' to pay his taxes.[135] Perhaps Bishop Overton had such cases in mind when he issued 'Certain Advertisements' in 1584, which included an allegation that '...the corruption of patrons aboundeth to the great decay of the sufficient maintenance of ministers', although his primary object was the integrity of the parochial ministry.[136]

Whereas Barratt made use of resignation and presentation deeds in respect of Warwickshire parishes in Worcester diocese, none for the sixteenth-century

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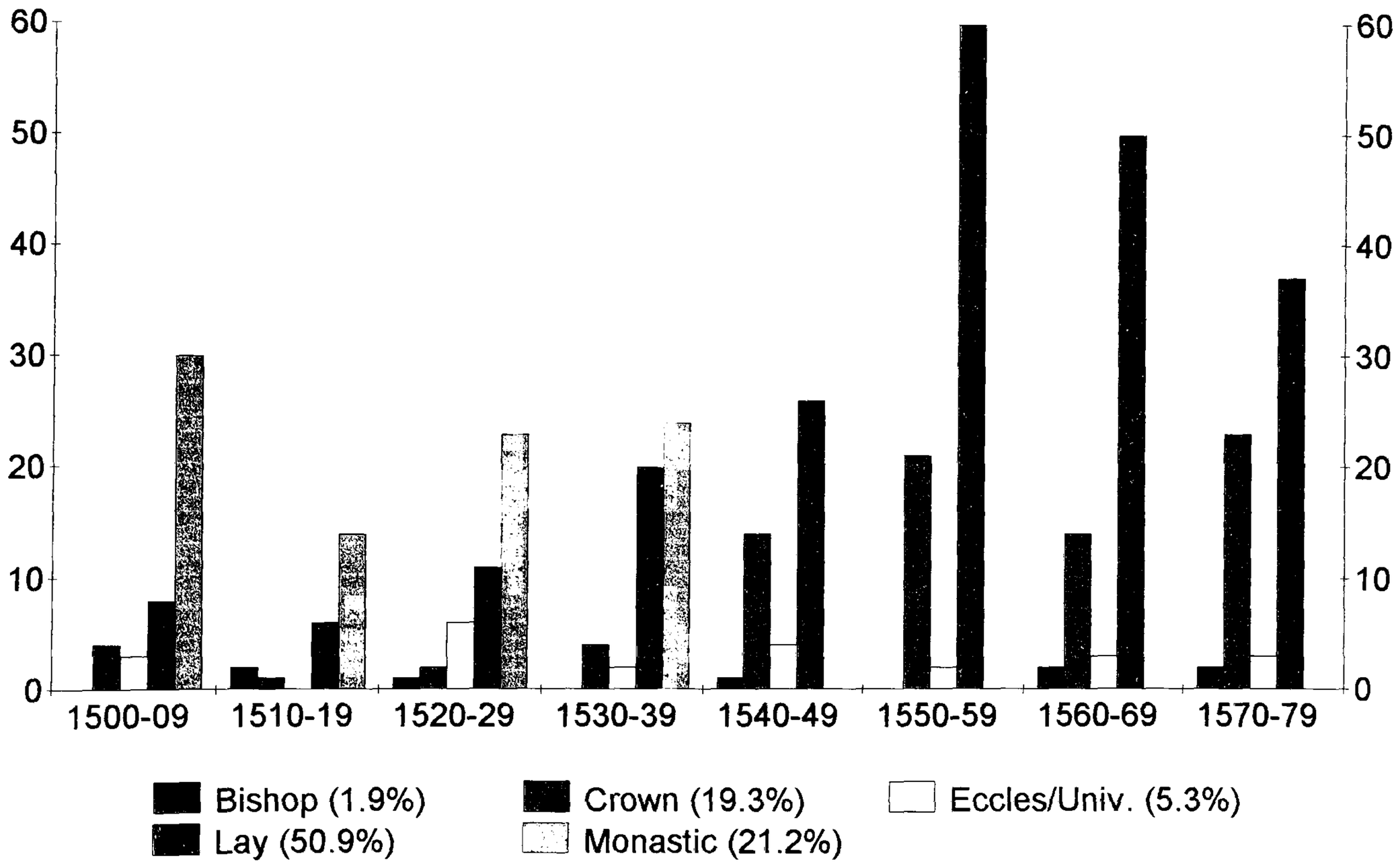
133. TNA: PRO E 334/7, f. 29r (Bernher).
134. LJRO, B/A/2ii/1, pp. 36, 39; A.F.S. Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge,1925), pp. 302-3, 332, 347; W. Pierce, *An Historical Introduction to the Marprelate Tracts: A Chapter in the Evolution of Religious and Civil Liberty in England* (London,1908), pp. 206-8, 319, 320; Peel, *Seconde Parte*, 2, p. 169.
135. TNA: PRO REQ 2/33/55.
136. W.P.M. Kennedy, *Elizabethan Episcopal Administration: An Essay in Sociology and Politics* (3 vols, London, 1924), 3, p. 167.

archdeaconry of Coventry has been preserved at Lichfield.[137] Circumstantial evidence only has been found respecting the election of parochial clergy by parishioners. In *circa* 1523, when John Edmondes contested Simon Broke's legal right to the vicarage of Aston, the interrogatories demanded to know, 'Whether the said Thomas [Ardern] procured or moved the parishioners to elect any vicar of their said Church at their pleasing'.[138] Episcopal registers are unlikely sources of information regarding the selection procedures since only patrons - or their legal representatives - presented and only their names were recorded. Evidence for incumbents being elected by parishioners is more likely to be found in peripheral rather than official documents.

All but three of the lay-controlled rectories in Coventry archdeaconry were worth less than £10, exceptions being Solihull, Grendon and Ladbroke. No fewer than eleven were valued at £5 or less, Elmdon and Seckington at a miserly £2 13s. 4d. (Figs. 10-12).

FIG. 9

Number of presentations by patronal types, by decade, 1500-79



Sources: LJRO, B/A/1/13-15, B/A/2ii/1; PRO, E 331/Coventry & Lichfield/1-8; *Kent Records* 8; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*.

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137. Barratt, 'Condition of the parish clergy', pp. 402-3.
138. TNA: PRO STAC 2/18/258.

4.6. University patronage

Notwithstanding its scant distribution in Coventry archdeaconry there is good reason to investigate how university colleges exercised their patronage. Universities, as Swanson has demonstrated, depended for 'their continued existence as institutions...upon constant support' for students and masters alike. Although 'most colleges held very few benefices', they helped 'solve part of the patronage problem, either by using advowsons to provide additional support to students through grants of rectories', or else a benefice for protégés 'who wished to give up studying'.[139] Margaret Bowker discovered that in Lincoln diocese, colleges 'tended to present their own members where possible', and that 'it was rare for colleges to overlook their own *alumni*'.[140] One further point, raised by Ryrie, was that 'the universities in particular, had a special place in reformist affections', so the potential for patronising well-educated clergy sympathetic to the new thinking was already clear in the 1530s.[141]

Before the Dissolution, in Coventry archdeaconry Willoughby alone was held by a university college, while Trinity College, Cambridge, did not acquire Monks Kirby and Withybrooke until 1546. During the sixteenth century only eight candidates, or 1.2% of the total number, were presented by university colleges. According to Bentham's return of vacant benefices, submitted to the Privy Council in 1565, Monks Kirby and Withybrooke had been vacant for several years. At Monks Kirby the vacancy caused by the death of William Stockwith in 1559 was not filled until 1569, when Thomas Ward was presented.[142] Withybrooke had been vacant two years when Bentham's primary visitation was held in October 1560, which explains why Robert Batson, the previous vicar, had last appeared in 1558, for in December that year he was instituted as rector of Kimcote, Leicestershire.[143]

There is no manifest reason why these two livings remained vacant so long. Curates ministered in both parishes during the interregna, but Monks Kirby was an extensive parish, with chapelries, and curates sufficiently competent to administer the parish. One of them (Ward) eventually succeeded as vicar. None of the other curates, Nicholas Alexander, Ralph Kent, John Morrys or Thomas Stoneinge, can be identified as Cambridge students or graduates and there is nothing to indicate how

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139. R.N. Swanson, 'Universities, graduates and benefices in later medieval England', *Past & Present*, 106 (1985), pp. 29, 53-4.
140. M. Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln 1495-1520* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 76.
141. A. Ryrie, 'English evangelical reformers in the last years of Henry VIII', unpubl. D.Phil thesis, University of Cambridge (2000), p. vii.
142. TNA: PRO SP 15/12/108, f. 254r; LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 14v; B/A/1/15, f. 43r.
143. LJRO, B/V/1/2, p. 71; B/V/1/4, p. 56; C.W. Foster, 'Institutions to benefices in the diocese of Lincoln in the sixteenth century', *Lincolnshire Notes & Queries* 5 (1898), p. 234.

they were selected.[144] Withybrooke was served by two successive curates, neither of them, apparently, former Cambridge students. It is possible that John Mosse was one of Lever's 'discretionary ministers', being reportedly entitled to the fruits of the benefice in 1565. By 1570 one John Barton was curate there. Although Barratt found that university colleges 'very rarely indeed' made grants of next presentation, Trinity probably allowed Lever to place appointees during a scarcity of able clergy since he was a former Master of St John's whose discretion they respected.[145]

By contrast, Willoughby was commonly served by an *alumnus* of Magdalen College, Oxford, where all save one of its sixteenth-century incumbents graduated. Richard Stokesley, who succeeded Thomas Farndon in 1506, was probably related to John Stokesley, the future bishop of London. He resigned in 1521 to become rector of North Luffenham (Rutland) and in 1537 his successor, William Humfrey, was appointed one of Bishop Stokesley's chaplains. Humfrey's death in 1547 ushered in the last Henrician vicar of Willoughby, Thomas Gardiner, deprived for non-conformity in 1561. With reform a high priority, the College then presented Thomas Hancock, an *alumnus* whose robust enthusiasm for Protestant reform had already earned him notoriety in Salisbury diocese.[146]

Little more is known about the earlier sixteenth-century incumbents of Willoughby, but fresh evidence about Thomas Hancock has been discovered. While quoting his memoirs, historians have been silent on his subsequent ministry, which appears to have been unresearched until now.[147] According to Hancock's memoirs, he was charged with a breach of the Six Articles and suspended from his curacy at Amport, Hampshire, during the 'laste yeare of the regne of king Henry the 8th', that is, sometime in 1546. After Henry's death in January 1547, Hancock secured a licence to preach and delivered provocative sermons in his native Christchurch, Hampshire, and at St Thomas', Salisbury, with predictable results. Clearly anticipating the protestant reforms, he boldly asserted that the Mass was idolatrous, for which the conservative authorities duly committed him to the assizes, where he was bound for causing a disturbance. He then appealed to Protector Somerset, whose intervention secured his release. Subsequently, called to be 'minister of God's word' at Poole, Dorset, Hancock's sermons inflamed conservative members of the congregation to

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144. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 43r.
145. LJRO, B/C/11/1560 will of Christopher Smyth; TNA: PRO SP 15/12/108, f. 254r; LJRO, B/V/1/7, p. 15; Barratt, 'Condition of the parish clergy', p. 372.
146. Emden, *BRUO*, pp. 305 (Humfrey); 227 (Gardiner); 263 (Hancock). Foster, *Alumni Oxoniensis*, 4, p. 1427, was mistaken in giving John Stokesley, the future bishop, as vicar of Willoughby.
147. Emden correctly identified him as vicar of Willoughby, but Garret, *Marian Exiles*, pp. 175-6, was uncertain about his status or his whereabouts after his return from the continent. A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1965), pp. 226-7, and R. Whiting, *Local Responses to the English Reformation* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp, 5, 170, 181, similarly pass over his later career.

such an extent that at Evensong on All Saints' Day there was a serious uproar. Shielded by Somerset's favour, however, Hancock remained in Poole until some time after Mary's accession, when his uncompromising posture caused such offence that he was advised by friends to flee abroad. In 1556 he, his wife, and their son Gideon, were all named as members of Knox's congregation at Geneva.[148]

Returning to England in 1559 or 1560, Hancock was in 1562 instituted to Willoughby and in 1573 to Napton, to which latter he had been recommended by the earl of Leicester.[149] There is evidence of Hancock's continuing opposition to what he had described in his memoirs as 'superstitious ceremonies...copes, vestments, &c', for in 1570 his churchwardens at Willoughby presented that 'the vycare never used the apparel appointed in devyn servyce'. Within five months of his institution to Napton, in August 1573 he was ordered to be reformed by Michaelmas (29 September) after the churchwardens there complained that he did 'not wear vestments as allotted'.[150] By then, Hancock was at least sixty years of age. In 1575 he resigned Napton, but retained Willoughby until 1579, when he successfully secured his son Gideon's preferment to the benefice, the last sixteenth-century vicar of Willoughby and the first non-Magdalen man of the century to serve the parish. Hancock senior's will has not been located, and since the burial register at Willoughby does not commence until 1625 it has not been possible to ascertain whether he died and was buried there. In 1602 Gideon left Warwickshire to become vicar of Fitz, Salop, where he died in 1616.[151]

What emerges from this study of university patronage in Coventry archdeaconry cannot be taken as representative of other jurisdictions, particularly since only three benefices are involved. The Oxford college appears to have taken a more active interest in preferring its own members to Willoughby than Trinity did in respect of its two Warwickshire benefices. On the other hand, Willoughby was reasonably accessible to travellers from Oxford and would have provided a convenient sinecure for academics or *alumni*, whereas Warwickshire was too distant from Cambridge for it to attract clergy who wished to combine their academic and pastoral careers.

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148. J.G. Nicholls, 'Autobiographical Narrative of Thomas Hancock, Minister of Poole (Harl. MS 425, f. 124)', in J.G. Nicholls, Narratives of the Days of the Reformation, Chiefly from the Manuscripts of John Foxe the Martyrologist; with two Contemporary Biographies of Archbishop Cranmer, *Camden Society* (1859), pp. 71-84; A. Ryrie, 'English evangelical reformers in the last years of Henry VIII', unpubl. D.Phil thesis, University of Cambridge (2000), p. 181, citing BL, Harl. MS 425, f. 66r.
149. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 31v, 45r; BL, Lansdowne MS 443, f. 207r.
150. Nicholls, 'Autobiographical Narrative', p. 72; LJRO, B/V/1/7, p. 133; B/V1/8, p. 166.
151. LJRO, B/V/1/15, p. 15; B/A/1/15, f. 47v; B/C/11.

4.7. Unions of benefices

Economic viability explains most unions of benefices. As Heath explained, it was the only option if incumbents were to maintain reasonable living standards, although patrons were loathe to surrender their right to present and mergers could be problematic where the ownership of advowsons was contested. Moreover, incumbents fiercely guarded their freehold, and parishioners' pastoral rights needed safeguarding.[152] Because so few unions of benefices occurred in Coventry archdeaconry during the sixteenth century they are of little significance, but it is considered necessary to mention those that did take place to reveal the circumstances surrounding the agreements, who authorised the transactions, and the impact they might have had on patronage rights. The two pre-Reformation examples are difficult to justify since they involved parishes in different dioceses, while the later ones united contiguous parishes as a sensible financial incentive to attract a resident incumbent.

Four unions of benefices have been traced in Coventry archdeaconry during the sixteenth century. The two benefices in different dioceses were separated by great distances and were united by papal licence. Further research in the Vatican archives - printed calendars of papal registers terminate in 1513 - would undoubtedly detect other examples. The two later unions involved contiguous benefices whose lay patrons themselves appear to have initiated the process.

Presented by Sir Edward Poynings, William Skynner was instituted to Bourton-on-Dunsmore in 1501, and in May 1507 to Cheriton (Kent). Poverty - often advanced as the reason for the union of benefices - cannot possibly account for a Warwickshire parish being merged with one in the diocese of Canterbury. Yet Skynner petitioned for the union claiming that Bourton-on-Dunsmore was valued at less than £10 *per annum*. Although strictly true, for *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* had valued it at £8, it may have been worth far more, since in *Valor* it was appraised at £19 17s. 2d. The Pope licensed Skynner to serve Cheriton 'in person or by deputy [and] retain it for as long as he shall hold' Bourton-on-Dunsmore. As long as he honoured its terms, the licence released Skynner from episcopal oversight by either of the diocesans or their officials, but he was to observe canonical requirements. On his death or resignation, the union was to be dissolved.[153]

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152. Heath, *English Parish Clergy*, pp. 164-6; Hill, *Economic Problems*, p. 70; R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (pb edn, Oxford, 1993), pp. 44-5, 52, 198.
153. LJRO, B/A/1/13, f. 206r; *Cal. Pap. R. 1503-1518* (1989), p. 531, no. 773; Ayscough and Hunter, *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, p. 241; *VE*, 3, p. 62.

Poynings, the son of a Kentish squire, had fought for Henry VII at Bosworth and, significantly, had a residence in the parish of Stanford, near Ashford, a stone's throw from Cheriton. After Bosworth, Henry confiscated the estates of those who had opposed him and distributed them among his supporters, a manoeuvre which brought Bourton-on-Dunsmore under Poynings' patronage. It seems likely that he promptly visited his newly-acquired manor and spent some time there, for in 1486 he and his wife, Isabella, were enrolled as members of the Guild of Knowle.[154] Skynner's predecessor at Bourton-on-Dunsmore, William Collet, instituted in 1476, resigned the cure in 1487 after his patron's attainder, only to be re-presented by Poynings. On Collet's death, Poynings presented Skynner, but the union with Cheriton died with him, his successor there being admitted in March 1532.[155]

In 1507 Avon Dassett was united with a rectory in Lincoln diocese after Thomas Dallison petitioned the pope to licence a union with Stoke Dry (Rutland). Somewhat disingenuously he asserted that its annual value did not exceed £5, but even on the still-current 1291 assessment it was worth £8 and it was revised upwards to £13 18s. 8d. in *Valor*. Presumably, though, he arrived at this figure by deducting the wage that he paid to a curate.[156] At his death in 1541 Dallison held at least two other rectories, one in Cornwall and another in Hertfordshire. He belonged to a wealthy Lincolnshire family, among whose members he bequeathed most of his worldly goods.

The terms of the union were similar to those imposed on Skynner, but Dallison was released from his oath of residence in any of his benefices while attending the Roman curia or studying at a university. He was routinely obliged to engage deputies to serve parishes where he was non-resident, and evidence suggests that he hired a string of curates at Avon Dassett between 1530-39. For example, John Esett was described as Alice Ennocke's ghostly father when in 1530 he witnessed her will bequeathing, *inter alia*, 4d. to the rood loft in Avon Dassett church. William Warner, named as curate in 1533, was assessed at 5s. 4d. for the subsidy that year. Evidence that Dallison employed other curates appears in 1536-7, when the wills of John Harchar and Thomas Enocke were witnessed Richard Neles, curate. Later in 1537, Thomas Elyot, curate, witnessed the will of Thomas Enocke's kinsman, William Enocke, who left funds to repaint St Katherine's cloth in Avon Dassett

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154. C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 574; TNA: PRO PROB 11, 21 Maynwaryng (1521); *CPR* 1485-94, p. 250; Bickley, *Knowle Guild*, p. 91.
155. LJRO, B/A/1/12, f. 24v; B/A/1/13, f. 206r; LPL, Reg. Warham 2, ff. 331r, 415r; Emden, *BRUO*, 3, p. 1711.
156. *Cal. Pap. R. 1503-1518* (1989), p. 557, no. 821; Ayscough and Hunter, *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, p. 241; *VE*, 3, p. 69.

church; and finally, in 1539, Roger Nyccolls was the curate who witnessed the will of another Avon Dassett parishioner, Hugh Man.[157]

It would be uncharitable to assert that Dallison never visited his Warwickshire rectory, for he may well have done at regular intervals. That he did not permanently reside in Hertfordshire is attested by his testamentary clause requesting burial in Clothall only if he died there. The union was short-lived, for Dallison resigned Stoke Dry in 1513 after negotiating an annual pension of 4 marks.[158]

Thomas Badnall, vicar of Offchurch died in 1579, during a vacancy-in-see and a neighbouring vicar, Hugh Jones of Weston-under-Wetherley, was instituted to serve both parishes, being but two miles distant from each other and with meagre income, which from both livings combined produced only £12 17s. 6d.[159] No conflict of patronal interests was involved because Thomas Morgan held both livings, but Jones died within seven months and the union collapsed when Morgan presented separate incumbents to both parishes.[160] When the contiguous parishes of Church Lawford and King's Newnham were united in 1595, Sir William Leigh was patron of both livings. The reason for that union given in the episcopal register was the insufficiency of the stipends. Both incumbents, William Wright (Church Lawford) and Roger Vicars (King's Newnham), with eighteen parishioners from Church Lawford and eight from King's Newnham 'willingly and readily' consented that Church Lawford become the 'parish church of the said towns...incorporated in one'.[161] King's Newnham church, still standing in 1730, was subsequently demolished and only the tower survives today.

4.8. Simony

Charges of simony - the buying or selling of ecclesiastical benefices - were extremely rare. Heath noted that the offence was sometimes 'disguised' by *pro hac vice* patronage, or through pensions, so 'the extent of simony defies measurement'. For defaulters there were stiff penalties, but the temptation remained to provide financial inducement to prospective patrons, who may have been tempted to view their advowsons as 'a convenient source of income for men who were doing other sorts of work for them'.[162] Only three known allegations of simony have been

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157. LJRO, B/C/10ii/2, p. 13 (Esett); BL, Harl. MS 594, f. 121v (Warner); B/C/11/1536, 1537 (two), 1539 (Harchar, Thomas and William Enocke, Man).
158. HRO, Huntingdon Wills, Vol. 6, p. 273; G. Phillips, ed., *The Rutland Magazine* 2 (Oakham, 1905-06), p. 194.
159. LPL, Reg. Grindal, ff. 430r-v; LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 85r-v;
160. LPL, Reg. Grindal 2, ff. 431v-2r; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 48r.
161. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 85r-v; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, p. 102.
162. Heath, *English Parish Clergy*, p. 37; R. Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the*

detected in Coventry archdeaconry during the sixteenth century, the first in respect of Thomas Stoning, vicar of Nuneaton, in May 1561. Clearly there was insufficient evidence to proceed against him because no case was made, and he remained in office until 1565, when he resigned for a living in Leicestershire.[163] In the second example, in 1579, Archbishop Grindal's archiepiscopal visitation recorded that Church Lawford was sequestrated because the rector, William Bolton, was 'suspected of simony'. Furthermore, Bolton held it in plurality with Beaudesert (Warwickshire), in Worcester diocese, but the matter was dropped when Bolton died in 1580.[164]

A series of interrogations furnish details of an Office-promoted case brought by William Dilke against Matthew King, vicar of Clifton-on-Dunsmore, in 1600. Dilke sought King's deprivation for non-subscription, neglect of his vicarage, and for suspected simony. Parishioners testified that they had heard rumours about King bribing Laurence Hill, his predecessor, £60 to secure him the living which he (Hill) 'could not keep'. According to witnesses, Hill confessed to the compact, had received £40 from King, but was aggrieved that he could not wring the remaining £20 from him. It was a damning indictment against both men, but the allegations failed. King remained at Clifton-on-Dunsmore until his death in 1632, while Hill was eventually instituted as vicar of Wolfhampcote in 1607.[165]

The dead cannot commit simony, but on his deathbed in 1598 Thomas Butter, rector of Arley, bequeathed a comparatively paltry 10s. to Walter Aston, a minor who had just inherited the patronage following his father's death. The bequest was probably both a pastoral gesture and a token acknowledgement of his debt to Walter's father, Sir Edward, for his readiness, first to sell him the right of next presentation in 1562, then to present him. Butter had waited fourteen years for the consummation of that contract, until his predecessor died in 1576.[166]

Some men displayed extraordinary keenness to acquire a particular living considering the size of the pension they agreed to pay their predecessor. Why did Thomas Barrett, curate until 1529, undertake to pay £12 annually to William Darley, his predecessor, if not to encourage him to vacate Ladbroke rectory?[167] The biggest pension in the study period was that which Arthur Dudley in 1538 and John Ramridge in 1539 inherited from their predecessor as vicar of Coventry St Michael, Richard Nethermyll who, in 1533, undertook to pay £20 *per annum* to Richard

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English Reformation (Oxford, 1979), pp. 191-2; Waddilove, *Church Patronage*.
163. NLW 4919D, ff. 94, 97; TNA: PRO SP 15/12/108, f. 254r.
164. LJRO, B/V/1/11, p. 149.
165. LJRO, B/C/5/1600; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 1, pp. 11, 305.
166. LJRO, B/C/11/Thomas Butter 1598; B/V/1/3, p. 91; B/A/1/15, f. 46v.
167. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 15v.

Manchester. Nine years later and £180 better off exclusive of other stipends and an Exeter canonry, Manchester died. The magnitude of this pension demonstrates a thinly 'disguised' simoniacal pursuit of a prestigious vicarage by the Nethermylls, one of the most prominent families in the city, although Dudley's vicariate lasted merely twelve months.[168] Less onerous was the four-mark annual pension that persuaded John Lakyn to resign Polesworth vicarage in John Bower's favour in 1538. Lakyn had been one of a consortium of three *hac vice* patrons who in 1536 had presented Bower to Maxstoke. The following year he (Lakyn) farmed out Great Harborough rectory, which he had held since at least 1533. This suggests that on leaving Polesworth Lakyn retired, being about 59 years old, his rent and pension producing a combined annual income of £10 2s. 8d. He died in 1541.[169] The liaison between Lakyn and Bower suggests a possible family link, since Bower was a younger man, priested as recently as June 1531 to the title of Merevale Abbey, which held the advowson of Maxstoke.[170] It was probably a similar arrangement whereby Henry Fidcock agreed to pay William Fidcock an eight marks *per annum* pension when he was instituted to Austrey in 1501. Doubtless the Fidcocks were related and it seems plausible that as part of the bargain William lodged in his kinsman's vicarage.[171]

It would be difficult to prove that some of the preceding examples involved blatantly simoniacal attributes. On the other hand, there is a suspicion that some men, perhaps older and more worldy-wise, viewed the acquisition of a second benefice as an opportunity to negotiate a pension, before disposing of the first - a covertly simoniacal transaction. The huge imbalance between the number of clergy and the availability of benefices prior to the Edwardian dissolutions (Chapter 3) not only explains why pensions were more frequently arranged before that time, but also how much greater was the pressure for benefices. Wherever motives are concerned, however, speculation even when based on archival evidence is bound to be suspect. The silence of contemporaries must be respected.

4.9. Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been ecclesiastical patronage in Coventry archdeaconry during the sixteenth century, and its clerical beneficiaries. While the redistribution of monastic patronage is traced in some detail, this chapter has

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168. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, ff. 6r, 15r, 16v.
169. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, ff. 14r, 15v; SBTRO, DR 10/514.
170. LJRO, B/A/1/14ii, f. 219r.
171. LJRO, B/A/1/13, f. 206r.

considered types of patron, how their patronage was dispensed, the several categories of clergy being favoured and whether they had been disadvantaged by the redistribution of patronage during the course of the sixteenth century.

In Coventry archdeaconry, the *de jure* patronage of the crown consisted of but one advowson, although others were acquired through attainder and wardship. Until mid-century, the crown presentees were often its own employees, but with ecclesiastical influence eclipsed, the requirement to reward clergy with richly-endowed benefices receded. This, and the acquisition of more than a score of advowsons through the seizure of monastic assets, impacted on the pattern of crown patronage. Crown livings worth less than 20 marks were administered by the Lord Keeper, whose agents accepted nominations from ecclesiastics and others anxious to secure promotion for their protégés. The question whether there was a recognisable tendency on the Lord Keeper's part to appoint candidates for their religious affiliations, has not been pursued.

That its successive bishops held little parochial patronage in Coventry and Lichfield is well known. In Coventry archdeaconry, they possessed *de jure* rights in three benefices, to which only three collations were recorded throughout the whole century, and one chantry to which they also collated thrice. Bishop Sampson alienated the episcopal advowsons, probably for financial reasons, but although his successor Ralph Bayne tried to recover them, Bishops Bentham and Overton still complained of their lack of suitable benefices to place men they wished to promote: Bentham collated only twice, Overton not at all.

Neither the archdeacon nor the beneficed clergy enjoyed *ex officio* rights of patronage, but their influence was demonstrably greater than the historical record reveals. For example, on nine occasions when crown livings became vacant in Coventry archdeaconry Thomas Lever seized the opportunity to petition the Lord Keeper to present men whom he himself was keen to introduce into his jurisdiction. It was discovered that Bentham specifically asked Lever to appoint men to serve vacant benefices until such time as they could be filled with suitably qualified clergy.

Because incumbents alone had the cure of souls and only they possessed the spiritual authority to delegate a portion of that responsibility, it is argued that the choice of parochial assistants lay ultimately with them, even if the parish paid their wages and played an advisory role. The selection of parochial assistants, an aspect of ecclesiastical patronage customary in most parishes, has gone largely unrecognised for lack of archival evidence.

Several examples have been uncovered where clergy purchased rights of next presentation, although it was expressly forbidden for them to present themselves. While it is not possible to prove what motivated clergy in this respect, it is clear that

for some it was to assure a kinsman's succession, for others an investment, and occasionally it was part of a covert simoniacal bargain.

With fifty-five appropriated advowsons in their collective ownership in Coventry archdeaconry, religious houses exercised rights of presentation on at least one hundred occasions during the sixteenth century. Residual effects of their patronage continued well after the dissolution of the monasteries, for rights of next presentation purchased from monastic patrons were still being honoured at least twenty-seven years later.[172] Twenty-nine monasteries owned patronal rights in Coventry archdeaconry, not all of them frequently exercised. Kenilworth Abbey with fifteen advowsons presented on thirty-five occasions, the next two most prolific monastic patrons eight times each.

It was ascertained that noble patronage in Coventry archdeaconry was patchy, with advowsons frequently changing hands. Both Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester and Ambrose Dudley, earl of Warwick, held advowsons in Coventry archdeaconry, but Leicester never presented and Warwick only twice. Research has revealed that of twenty advowsons in lay hands in 1500, nineteen were manorial appendants. Only one lay patron held more than a single benefice and none presented more than once. Most lay patrons at that time were non-resident in the parishes of which they were patrons of livings. Occasionally a religious house appropriated an advowson which was not an appurtenance of the manor, as at Baxterley, Hampton-in-Arden and Rugby, for example. In those circumstances a compromise arrangement was drawn up whereby the manorial lord nominated successive incumbents, but the monastery presented them.

The redistribution of monastic properties created an enormous opportunity for the laity to clinch a greater share of clerical patronage in the parishes. It was discovered that members of the laity acquired a further thirty-seven advowsons in Coventry archdeaconry after the Dissolution, increasing their share of the total parochial patronage to about 50%. Evidence has been produced showing that a growing number of them were emerging from the humbler ranks of society and that some were vulnerable to clerical manipulation. Occasionally, too, patrons presented kinsmen or curates of the previous incumbent and there is the suspicion of an element of hard bargaining between clergy and the lay patrons who presented them. By 1600 the majority of livings within Coventry archdeaconry were not only controlled by lay patrons, but also by patrons who lived within the parishes where

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172. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 42r, when Bartholomew Green was instituted to Southam rectory in 1566 his patron, William Gent, claimed a *pro hac vice* right purchased from Coventry Priory. LJRO, B/V/1/3, p. 89, at Austrey in 1566 William Dethick and Roger Starke claimed *pro hac vice* right granted by the Abbot and convent of Burton-on-Trent in 1536.

they owned the advowson. Kinship and service governed their choice of many of the parochial clergy, particularly after the Dissolution.

Patronage exercised by the universities was negligible in Coventry archdeaconry. Only four examples are known of benefices being united during the sixteenth century, two pre-1534 being short-lived, the last dating from 1595 remains to the present day.

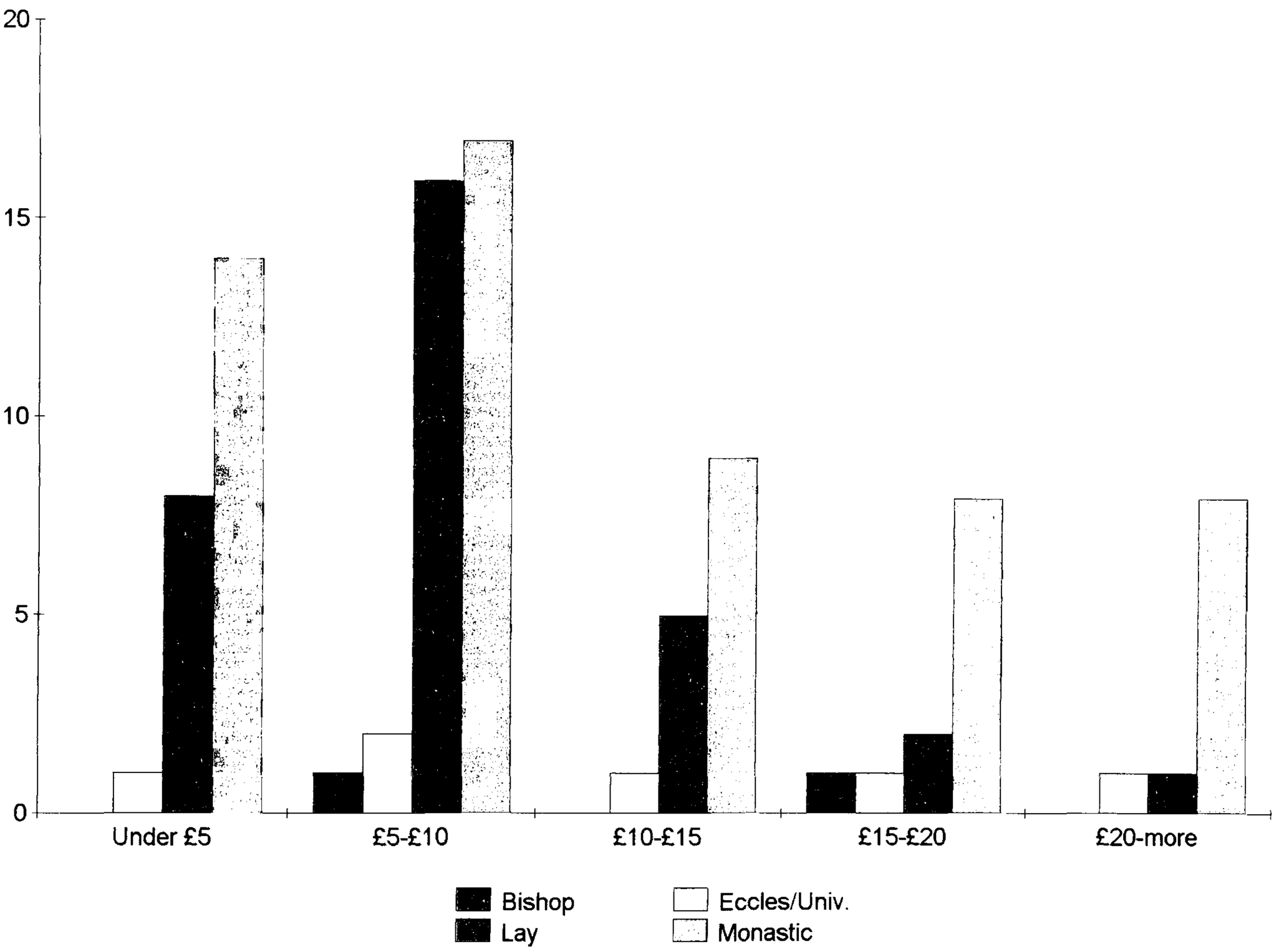
Notwithstanding the fretful attitude adopted by contemporaries towards simony, they failed to produce more than a handful of cases against miscreant clergy or patrons. Far from validating the conclusion that simony was unknown in Coventry archdeaconry, it suggests how easy it was to evade detection by duplicity.

Did the enormous redistribution of advowsons since 1500 improve the lot of the parochial clergy or not? It has been demonstrated that lay impropriators may have been unwilling to continue the former monastic patrons' custom of paying part of their incumbents' wages in kind. On the other hand, the abolition and redistribution of monastic patronage brought clear advantages to progressive clergy. The acquisition of ecclesiastical patronage by the gentry seems to have emboldened many clergy to aspire to an enhanced social standing, through intermarriage of their offspring.

CHARTS SUMMARISING BENEFICE VALUES

FIG. 10

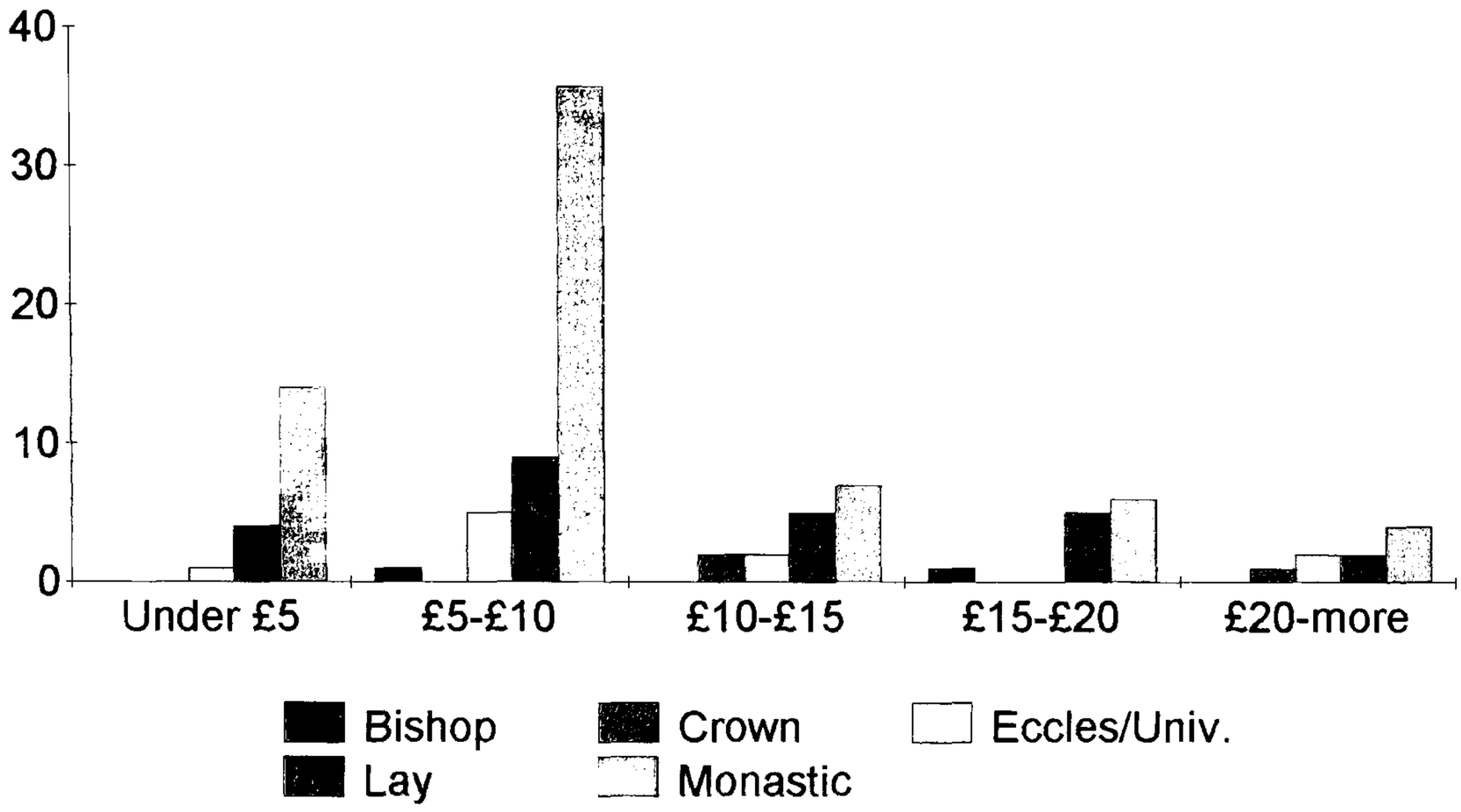
Value of benefices before 1534



SOURCE: *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* (1291)

FIG. 11

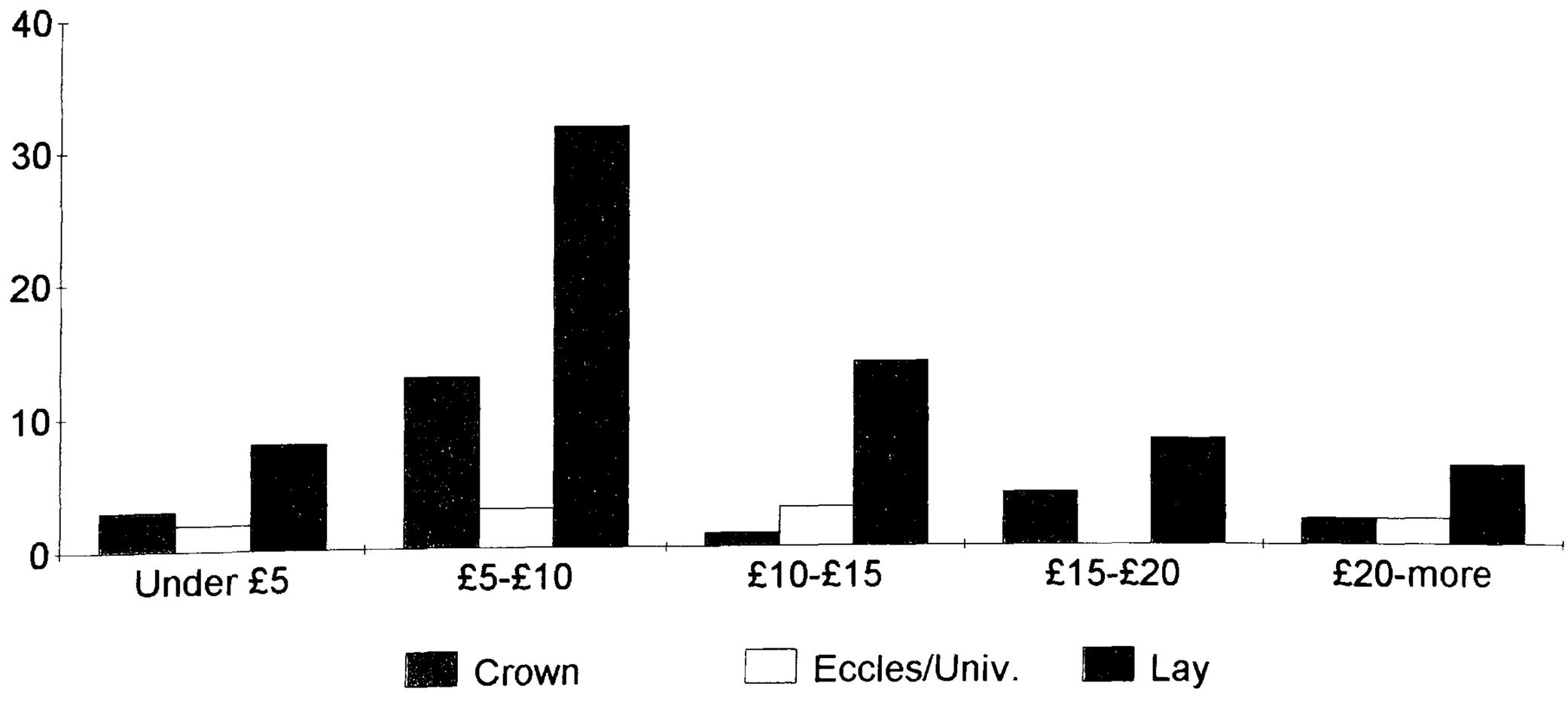
Value of benefices, 1535



SOURCE: *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (1535)

FIG. 12

Value of benefices post-Dissolution



SOURCE: *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (1535)

CHAPTER 5

PLURALISM, MOBILITY, TENURE

Introduction

As Margaret Bowker so aptly observed, 'In non-residence, pluralism and absenteeism, the aspirations of the successful and those of the lowly clerks meet'. Naked ambition drove 'the successful' to seek the most prestigious and financially rewarding appointments. 'Lowly clerks', driven by ideological convictions, represented the Universal Church to parishioners from whom they were set apart by reason of holy orders but, in Peter Marshall's words, 'in practice...were enmeshed in a complex nexus of social relations'.[1] They were the 'ghostly fathers' whose somewhat prosaic aspirations established them as the bed-rock of the parochial ministry. The historical record has largely disdained the labours of these men, the achievement of whose vocational ambition depended, paradoxically, on absentee incumbents who employed them and paid their miserly wages.

This is not a debate on pluralism, but an investigation into the effects of pluralism and non-residence in Coventry archdeaconry during the sixteenth century. The justification for this study is Tim Cooper's observation that 'little systematic research has been done on benefice-holding' beyond a limited number of regions.[2] His own sparse selection of examples from the Coventry archdeaconry does not do justice to its unique standing. It is important, therefore, to ascertain the extent of pluralism in the Coventry archdeaconry, both before and after the break with Rome; to probe the duration of benefice tenure; to survey fresh terrain by tracing the geographical mobility of parochial clergy, and to examine the correlation between pluralism and the unbeneficed.

In addressing length of tenure the causes of voidance - death, deprivation, resignation and cession (for convenience only, treated as synonymous with resignation) must be considered. 'Disappeared clergy' have been vigorously pursued

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1. M. Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: the Diocese of Lincoln Under John Longland 1521-1547* (Cambridge,1981), p. 42; P. Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p. 194. For examples see M. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry 1485-1558', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick (1985), pp. 416-20.
2. T. Cooper, *The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth century* (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 63.

to ascertain whether they re-emerged elsewhere, because any meaningful analysis of tenurial longevity and clerical mobility requires zealous efforts to trace migratory clergy if only to reconcile nominal and chronological ambiguities. Asking 'where did the rest of the "migrating" unbeneficed go?', Bowker conceded that the majority 'get "lost"...well over 50% disappear'.[3]

The chronological arrangement of this chapter is deliberate. Periodic terminal dates are focal points from which perspectives can be more accurately plotted on the historical chart. Thus, section 5.2 examines the state of the parochial ministry at the beginning of the sixteenth century and sets the norm by which all succeeding periods are measured. Section 5.3 explores the first quarter-century. Unusually turbulent religious permutations during the Edwardian and Marian regimes require delicate judgement regarding tenure and mobility in sections 5.5 and 5.6, while the unfolding consequences of the clerical dearth and religious settlement of 1559 are scrutinised in sections 5.7-8. But first, it is necessary to outline the background to pluralism.

5.1. Pluralism - the background

Neither a purely local nor a peculiarly English problem, pluralism had troubled Church leaders on the continent and had not been unknown to the early Fathers.[4] Perhaps no aspect of the parochial system has received more prolific or scathing condemnation than pluralism, since 'to draw the income for two posts, and to neglect the work of one or both, or at best to pay a deputy only a fraction of that income to perform the duties attached to them, had aroused criticism from the time of the Lollards'.[5] Sovereigns, magnates, even bishops justified pluralism as a means of providing clergy in their service with livings in lieu of a salary, but a single benefice was nearly always incapable of providing an income commensurate with their status.

An early distinction should be drawn between three different types of pluralists: first, those who 'could argue no mitigating circumstances in their favour', the wealthy, well-educated, well-connected careerists whom Bowker dubbed 'pure pluralists', motivated not by pastoral concern but by personal ambition, even greed; second, those described by J.F. Fuggles as 'poor pluralists', most of whom 'could easily supervise, if not directly minister in both his cures' because they were 'often quite near each other'; third, cathedral dignitaries who were pluralists as holders of

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3. Bowker, *Henrician Reformation*, p. 127.
4. A.H. Thompson, 'Pluralism in the mediaeval Church; with notes on pluralists in the diocese of Lincoln, 1366', *AASRP* 33 pt 1 (1915), p. 35.
5. R.A. Christophers, 'Social and educational background of the Surrey clergy, 1520-1620', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1975), p. 125.

prebends which yielded an income from a parish where they were not responsible for the cure of souls and rarely involved in the minutiae of their prebendal parishes.[6] Nor, since accommodation was restricted, were they usually resident within the cathedral close. All three types may be identified within Coventry archdeaconry.

Hill declared that one of the two 'fundamental causes of sixteenth-century pluralism', was the granting of several livings to clergy in the employ of the crown.[7] This compromised the requirement for a resident priest in every parish to preach the Gospel, teach the Faith and minister to the spiritual needs of the inhabitants, so pluralists strategically employed a deputy, usually for a mere fraction of the emoluments they themselves received. Consequently, many parishes were served by clergy with inferior educational qualifications and few delusions of professional grandeur. Contemporaries fulminated and modern historians denounce the practice, oblivious that at parochial level incumbents are valued more for their spiritual and pastoral competence than for any display of lofty intelligence. The point was unwittingly validated by no less a dignitary than Thomas Lever, Archdeacon of Coventry, when he admitted in a sermon before Edward VI in 1550,

> Yea, and whosoeuer listeth to mark thorow out all England, he shall see that a meane learned person, keping an house in his parysh, and kepynge of godly conuersacion, shall perswade and teach mo of his parishioners with communicacion at one meale, than the best lerned doctor of diuinite kepynge no house, can perswade or teache in his parish by preaching a dosen solemne sermons.[8]

Whether deputies serving in the place of non-resident clergy was such a grave injustice to the parishes they served is a moot point. As Collinson perceived, 'learning was one thing, professional competence another'. Nor did Cooper believe that stipendiaries were 'any less able to provide for the spiritual needs of their parishioners'. Indeed, Marshall pointed out that dutiful curates, 'and there is no reason to believe that the majority were not dutiful, might have been held in considerable regard by [their] parishioners'.[9]

There is little evidence to suggest that Coventry archdeaconry assistant clergy lacked pastoral skills and little to affirm the contrary. Sometimes as 'ghostly fathers',

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6. M. Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln 1495-1520* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 101; J.F. Fuggles, 'The parish clergy in the archdeaconry of Leicester 1520-1540', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* 46 (1971), p. 36.
7. C. Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (London,1956), p. 224.
8. E. Arber, ed., *Thomas Lever, M.A. Fellow and Preacher of St John's College, Cambridge, Sermons 1550* (Westminster, 1895), p. 88.
9. P. Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625* (Oxford,1982), p. 96; Cooper, *Last Generation*, pp. 70-1. See also Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', pp. 443-4; Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, p. 193.

curates and chantrists alike were regularly called upon to witness wills, a few random examples being, at Kingsbury between 1535 and 1552 Thomas White, curate, between 1533 and 1539 Edward Seman, chantrist of Solihull. and between 1548 and 1553 Thomas Barnes of Coventry Holy Trinity.

A frequent reason for the union of benefices under one incumbent was Hill's second fundamental cause of pluralism, namely, 'the fall in the purchasing power of all fixed incomes' which reduced some clergy to poverty. Reference has already been made to the spurious claims made by Thomas Dalyson at Avon Dassett and William Skynner at Bourton-on-Dunsmore, who both petitioned the Pope in 1507 to licence the union of their benefices with Stoke Dry (Rutland) and Cheriton (Kent) respectively. Technically, neither Dalyson nor Skynner held those benefices pluralistically, given the legal fiction sanctioned by papal licence. An eminently more worthy example was Hugh Jones, under whom the contiguous parishes of Offchurch and Weston-under-Wetherley were united in 1579, although the merger ended prematurely with Jones's death the following year. Career clergy, particularly those whose university education polished their social aptitudes and yielded significant friendships, had a clear advantage over those 'bred in the schools'.

The so-called Pluralities Act passed in 1529 was to Lehmberg 'an omnibus measure' creating what J.J. Scarisbrick perceived 'an important inroad...into the clerical franchise'. Jurisdiction in the matter was then removed from the Church and conveyed to the lay courts, with severe penalties prescribed for convicted offenders.[10] Incumbents applying to Rome for any kind of dispensation were liable to a £20 fine, while those absenting themselves from their cures for more than two months of the year risked a £10 fine. Henceforth, clergy were permitted to accept a second cure only if their currently-held living rendered a stipend lower than £8. Concessions were made for 'career' and graduate clergy, for whom the Act was, in Christopher Haigh's memorable phrase, 'emasculated by amendments'. He argues that clergy with 'influence enough to secure two benefices would surely have qualified under the Act'. Any four livings acquired before April 1530 could be retained without penalty. In accordance with common practice, lay informants were rewarded with half the fine of any miscreant clergyman whom they reported, although Haigh notes that between 1530-5 only 210 such prosecutions occurred, 'most of them brought by trouble-makers'.[11]

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10. 21 Henry VIII, c. 13, printed in *Statutes of the Realm*, III, pp. 292-6; S.E. Lehmberg, *The Reformation Parliament 1529-1536* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 92; J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968, rp 1990), p. 252.

11. C. Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society Under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), p. 98. Haigh's 'interpretation may fairly be disputed at every point': D. Crankshaw, 'The Elizabethan Faculty Office and the aristocratic patronage of chaplains', in C. Cross, ed., *Patronage and*

Royal patronage, and the threat that crown income arising from grants for dispensations could be abolished, ensured the survival of pluralism.[12] Archbishop Whitgift was not alone among bishops who supported the principle of pluralism in circumstances where a meagre benefice income diminished the financial integrity of learned men to levels incompatible with the fruits of scholarship. William Harrison, a beneficed cleric himself, derided livings worth £10-£30 as too financially unrewarding even for 'a mean scholar', suggesting contrariwise that '...the unition of two in one man' might benefit parishioners more 'in a month (I mean for doctrine) than they have had before...in many years'.[13]

Poverty was a very real problem for incumbents living on a fixed income in parishes where tithes had been commuted and there was little or no glebe. Such benefices were unattractive to graduates and, unaugmented, were too poorly endowed to provide an adequate stipend to support an incumbent, particularly one after 1559 who was married with a family. As Lipkin explained, 'given the exiguous incomes provided by all too many benefices, especially under the impact of the "price revolution", we cannot easily dismiss either the arguments or motivations of those who supported pluralities'.[14]

An increasingly acute shortage of clergy during the 1550s posed a separate problem which, Birt was driven to acknowledge, barred escape from 'the practice of granting the dispensation to hold in plurality more than one benefice'. More recently, in a sympathetic treatment of the Marian response to what he called 'the legacy of schism', Pogson concurred with Birt's assessment that despite Cardinal Pole's reluctance to issue dispensations for plurality, he was compelled to acquiesce 'while preaching its dire consequences and the need for change'. The legatine constitutions published by Pole in 1556 reveal the extent of his concern.[15]

Before 1562 there were no regulations governing the distances between benefices held by pluralists, but that year, Convocation recommended that clergy should not hold benefices more than twelve miles apart so that, as Thompson explained, 'they could spend some time in each'. In 1571 Convocation revised canon

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Recruitment in the Tudor and Early Stuart Church (York, 1996), 24.

12. J.I. Daeley, 'Pluralism in the diocese of Canterbury during the administration of Matthew Parker, 1559-1575', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 18 (1967), p. 36.

13. J. Strype, *The Life and Works of John Whitgift D.D.* (Oxford, 1822), p. 360; G. Edelen, ed., *The Description of England by William Harrison* (New York, 1968), pp. 27-8.

14. J.A. Lipkin, 'Pluralism in pre-Reformation England: a quantitative analysis of ecclesiastical incumbency, c.1490-1539', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Catholic University of America (1979), p. 168.

15. H.N. Birt, *The Elizabethan Religious Settlement: A Study of Contemporary Documents* (London, 1907), p. 160; R.H. Pogson, 'The legacy of the schism: confusion, continuity and change in the Marian clergy', in R. Tittler and J. Loach, eds, *The Mid-Tudor Polity c.1540-1560* (London, 1980), p. 129; G. Bray, *The Anglican Canons 1529-1947* Church of England Record Society 6 (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 68-161.

law to include, *inter alia*, a prohibition against clergy holding two cures lying more than twenty-six miles apart. When in 1584 the distance was relaxed to thirty miles 'unless they be within the same shire', it was insisted that dispensations for pluralism should be available only to preachers with 'at the least' a master of arts degree.[16]

'No clergy lists or Elizabethan returns', warned Barratt, 'provide complete information on the subject of pluralism'. She drew attention to occasional inconsistencies and advised against basing 'any account of pluralism...on lists or surveys only'. That, she cautioned, 'is likely to miss the worst cases [of pluralism], and generalisation...is misleading'. Notwithstanding difficulties of interpretation, on the related problem of absenteeism Peter Heath observed that 'for all their hazards, visitation records are the only statistical guide that we have on this matter'. He also surmised that the extent of pluralism in the late Middle Ages 'defies precise measurement' and, while doubting whether any diocese possessed sufficient documentation to provide satisfactory answers, insisted that 'intensive local research' was still required.[17]

Such comments further justify this study, while heeding Cooper's lament that, 'No other diocese is so well served with such material' as Bowker had at her disposal. Inevitably, any comparable 'study of Coventry and Lichfield must draw on a range of sources in order to build up an overall picture'. That range includes the muster books and clerical subsidy list, *libri cleri* from 1558, and an assortment of sources too diverse to classify succinctly.[18]

5.2. The Beneficed in 1501

The average tenure of 135 parochial incumbents instituted in the whole diocese during Bishop Hals' episcopate (1459-90) exceeded twenty years.[19] This is remarkably consistent with data available for fifty-four Coventry archdeaconry parishes where the average tenure of incumbents in occupation of benefices in 1500-1 was twenty-five years (Tab. 5.1). Of only ten who served less than ten years,

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16. E. Cardwell, ed., *Synodalia. A Collection of Articles of Religion, Canons, and Proceedings of Convocations in the Province of Canterbury, From the Year 1547 to the Year 1717. With Notes Historical and Explanatory* (2 vols, Oxford, 1842), 2, p. 503; Bray, *Anglican Canons*, pp. 201, 229; S. Thompson, 'The pastoral work of the English and Welsh bishops, 1500-1558', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1984), p. 104.

17. D.M. Barratt, 'The condition of the parish clergy between the Reformation and 1660, with special reference to the dioceses of Oxford, Worcester and Gloucester', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1949), pp. 155, 156-8; P. Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (Toronto, 1969), pp. 56, 57.

18. Cooper, *Last Generation*, p. 63.

19. G.J. Stretch, 'The clergy and administration of the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield under Bishop John Hals, 1459-90' unpubl. M.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford (1990), pp. 186-7.

two died in office and one vacated for reasons unknown. Four who resigned moved to other parishes and another may have retired. While William Sneleston of Baddesley Clinton and William Rawlinson of Kenilworth both resigned their livings after only two years, Richard Marten of Cubbington was one of two whose vicariates exceeded fifty years. This challenges Birt's suggestion that 'no incumbency would exceed...thirty-five years', and that a more likely average tenure was 12.5 years.[20] Since only 6% of incumbents at the turn of the sixteenth century moved within ten years of institution, opportunities for clergy to acquire benefices in Coventry archdeaconry were clearly restricted. Between 1500 to1510 inclusive the total number of known institutions was 49, averaging about four *per annum*.

TAB. 5.1

Tenurial longevity of 54 incumbents occupying benefices in 1500-1

Length of tenure	Number of clergy	Percentage
1-10 years	10	18%
11-20 years	16	30%
21-30 years	12	22%
31-40 years	8	15%
41-50 years	6	11%
51+ years	2	4%
TOTALS	**54**	**100%**

Rough calculations suggest that out of sixty-eight incumbents occupying benefices in 1500-1, forty (59%) neither held a second benefice nor vacated for another living, a proportion which fits very snugly with Stretch's calculation of approximately 60% for the whole diocese between 1459-90.[21] A further seven (10%) did move to other parishes. At least 36% of the incumbents (twenty-one) have been positively identified as pluralists and another was a possible pluralist. Some held a Coventry archdeaconry benefice and another living elsewhere.

Auxiliaries in the more bureaucratically sensitive environment of Coventry apart, archives overlook the vast majority of parochial assistants prior to 1533, when they were generally more prolific than at any subsequent period. Ignorance surrounding curates' deployment at the turn of the sixteenth century eliminates one vital yardstick for assessing absenteeism, for the presence of a parish priest strongly indicates a non-resident incumbent. Clearly, the study of assistant clergy, however circumscribed, can make an enormous contribution towards understanding the parochial profile.

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20. Birt, *Elizabethan Religious Settlement*, p. 200. Compare Bowker, *Secular Clergy*, p. 88, where she thought it 'unlikely that one incumbent held the living [Gate Burton, Lincs.] for nearly fifty years'.
21. Stretch, 'Clergy and administration', p. 201.

Non-resident incumbents in 1500 included William Dee, rector of Avon Dassett 1466-1500, who was simultaneously rector of Knowle College from 1488. In 1478 he had been granted a papal dispensation to occupy two incompatible benefices, and although he held four different livings in Warwickshire between 1466-87, he never transgressed the terms of the dispensation.[22] At Bourton-on-Dunsmore, William Collett (1487-1501) and his successor William Skynner (1501-33), were both graduates and both absentees, as were John Parkys (1489-1519) and his successor John Moggrich (1519-24) at Brinklow. Clues to the residence of pluralistic clergy are not invariably given in their wills, for some non-resident pluralists made generous bequests to their several parish churches and parishioners. In 1523 Walter Wolmer, rector of Solihull and a canon of St Mary's College, Warwick, left 'to the sustenance of Solihull Church £3 [of which] 20s. be doled to poor people of the same parish'. It was conditional, however, on 'dirige and mass...with ringing of bells and other solemnity', although he also left a further £6 13s. 4d. for 'painting and gilding the image of St Alphege' there. Others, including Thomas Dalyson, rector of Avon Dassett (1507-40), eschewed such bequests in favour of dispositions to friends or family members.[23]

Nearly all the wealthiest livings in Coventry archdeaconry in 1500 were occupied by non-resident pluralists, most of whom were university graduates. This was a common phenomenon. For example, resident graduate incumbents ministered to only 2% of Lancashire parishes in 1500 and in 1510 about half of the county's non-resident incumbents were university graduates. As late as 1548, only twenty out of 54 incumbents there had a degree.[24]

5.3. Relatively stable, 1501-22

In Stafford archdeaconry during Geoffrey Blyth's episcopacy (1503-32), the average tenure in a single parish was just under 14½ years. The following summary will provide a useful comparison with the situation in Coventry archdeaconry during the same period. Cooper calculated that of fifty-nine incumbents instituted in Coventry and Lichfield during that period only sixteen (27%) served more than twenty-five years. Six enjoyed tenures exceeding forty years, the longest fifty-three years. Twelve clergy (20%) stayed in one parish ten years or less, thirty-one (52%) held their benefices for between ten to twenty-five years.[25]

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22. *CPL* 13, ii, p. 637; LJRO, B/A/1/12, ff. 15v, 16r-v, 34r.
23. TNA: PRO PROB, 11, 7 Bodfelde, ff. 53v-4v; HRO, Huntingdon Wills, Vol. 6, pp. 273v-79v.
24. C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (London, 1975), p. 29.
25. T.N. Cooper, 'The secular clergy of the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the early sixteenth century', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham (1992), pp. 87-8.

In Coventry archdeaconry at the turn of the sixteenth century twelve (22%) of fifty-five incumbents occupied the same benefice well beyond 1522. They included William Steyne, for forty-seven years rector of Churchover, 1486-1533. Another lengthy rectorial incumbency was John Ewen's, instituted to Willey in 1484 and still there in 1522, although it is not known when, or why, his incumbency terminated. Some vicars also enjoyed long tenures. John Somerland of Meriden and Richard Blokley of Wolvey were both instituted in 1493, Somerland dying in 1529 and Blokley in 1538. The longest incumbency of all, fifty-seven years, was Thomas Byrde's, vicar of Wappenbury from 1478 until his death in 1535.[26] Like his, most lengthy incumbencies were terminated by death. In Lincoln diocese, Bowker established that between 1526-43, over 25% of incumbents remained in one parish until they died, and Zell came to a similar conclusion about Canterbury and Rochester dioceses.[27]

Comparatively few incumbencies begun between 1501-22 are known to have exceeded twenty years. Among the more exceptional whose tenures extended beyond thirty years were John Lakyn of Polesworth 1503-38 and Edward Pontesbury of Allesley, 1503-37, who was also rector of St Andrew Hubbard, London.[28] At least another dozen served their parishes for between twenty and thirty years, but whether by choice or circumstances the majority stayed for lesser periods. Out of 104 incumbencies, fifty were terminated by death, thirty-two by resignation including cession, and twenty-two causes remain unknown.

After resigning, incumbents are difficult to trace unless they moved to another benefice within Coventry archdeaconry. Those who obtained a living in another diocese are often discovered there only by chance, unless they were graduates whose names appear in published lists of university *alumni*. For example, out of twenty-seven incumbents who resigned benefices in Coventry archdeaconry between 1501 and 1519, about one-third were non-resident pluralists. Typical of them was Christopher Fisher, from 1500 to 1507 rector of Avon Dassett, to which he was presented by Henry VII in lieu of salary as a king's clerk. His resignation followed his papal provision as bishop of Elphin (never effected) in 1506, and his appointment as *custos* of the English Hospice in Rome.[29] John Taylor, rector of Sutton Coldfield 1505-17, his immediate successor George Heneage who resigned

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26. LJRO, B/A/1/12, f. 27v; B/A/1/14iii, f. 13v; LJRO, B/C/10i/2, f.14r.
27. Bowker, *Henrician Reformation*, p. 126; M. Zell, 'The personnel of the clergy in Kent, in the Reformation period', *English Historical Review* 89, (1974), p. 529.
28. G. Hennessy, ed., *Novum Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense or London Diocesan Clergy Succession From the Earliest Time to the Year 1898* (London, 1898), p. 307.
29. LJRO, B/A/1/13, f. 204v; *CPR* 1494-1509, p. 202; Emden, *BRUO to 1500*, 2, pp. 686-7; J. Allen ed., *The English Hospice in Rome*, Venerabile 21 (Sexcentenary Issue, 1962), pp. 162, 163, 165, 171, 268.

in 1521, and his successor John Burges, resigned 1527, were likewise prolific pluralists.[30] Pluralists of lesser distinction include Thomas Blundell, who resigned as rector of both Sheldon and Stockton in 1502 and was admitted to a prebend at Chester St John.[31] In 1504 William Clayton resigned Wishaw to concentrate on benefices he held in Lancashire and Yorkshire, while Richard Stokesley, vicar of Willoughby between 1506 and 1522, resigned to become rector of North Luffenham, Rutland, where he died in 1526 and was succeeded by his brother John, later Bishop of London.[32] Although only a deacon when he was admitted to Bishop's Itchington in 1493, William Bustard occupied the vicarage until 1521, notwithstanding that he held a law degree which was doubtless instrumental in his acquisition of many other benefices and the prebend of Ufton Cantoris in Lichfield cathedral .[33] When William Ingelard resigned Withybrooke in 1501 after holding the benefice for twenty-two years, his successor was George Percy *alias* Garde, with whom he exchanged the vicarage of Holy Trinity, Chelsea. Percy held various benefices in the Home Counties, and was also vicar of Thame, Oxfordshire. His vacation of Withybrook is not recorded, but it was certainly before 1521 and possibly as early as 1506.[34] In this period, those who retired from the parochial ministry as a result of age are unlikely to be mentioned in records again, particularly since burial registers were not kept before 1538.

Pluralism was clearly more extensive in Coventry archdeaconry than has been hitherto suspected. At least fifty-eight pluralist incumbents, some of whom were non-resident, can be identified throughout this quarter-century. Some parishes attracted a succession of absentee incumbents. Most pre-Dissolution vicars of the two Coventry parishes were pluralists, although not necessarily absentees. Thomas Bowde of Holy Trinity was successively Dean of Tettenhall and later of Tamworth, while his successor, Thomas Orton, held prebends as well as the vicarage of Priors Hardwick. After him, Nicholas Darrington had a string of prebends and the Cheshire vicarage of Wybundbury. A similar pattern emerged at St Michael's where influential

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30. Emden, *BRUO*, pp. 559-60 (Taylor), pp. 280-1 (Heneage); Emden, *BRUO to 1500* 1, p. 308 (Burges).
31. LJRO, B/A/1/13, f. 203r (Sheldon); C.E. Woodruff, ed., *Calendar of Institutions by the Chapter of Canterbury Sede Vacante*, Kent Record Society 8 (Canterbury, 1924), p. 115 (Stockton), p. 121 (Sheldon); Emden, *BRUO to 1500*, 1, p. 207. Blundell's tenure of Stockton is not given in Emden; D. Jones, *The Church in Chester 1300-1540*, Chetham Society 3rd. ser. 7 (1957), p. 156.
32. LJRO, B/A/1/13, f. 142r; B/A/1/14i, ff. 3v, 4r; Emden, *BRUO to 1500*, 1, p. 430; *LPFD Henry VIII*, 3 pt 2, p. 864, no. 2016/9; TNA: PRO Prob 11, 33 Porch.
33. LJRO, B/A/12/13, f. 140r; LCL, Chapter Act Book 3, f. 133r; Emden, *BRUO*, p. 327.
34. LJRO, B/A/1/13, f. 205v; G. Hennessy, ed., *Novum Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochilae Londinense or London Diocesan Clergy Succession from the Earliest Time to the Year 1898* (London, 1898), p. 120; BodL, VCH Oxfordshire Clergy List, p. 139; Venn, *Alumni Cantab.* 2, p. 191, where Percy's tenure of neither Withybrooke nor Thame is mentioned.

clerics such as John Vesey and George Grey, youngest son of the first Marquis of Dorset, respectively held diocesan appointments and the deanery of New College in Leicester.[35]

Christophers specifically identified crown livings as 'parishes with frequently absent incumbents' owing a primary obligation to a royal or ecclesiastical patron. Before the Dissolution only a handful of Coventry archdeaconry livings were under royal patronage and even they had been acquired by wardship or attainture. This fortuitous patronage was fully exploited to provide emoluments for careerists. At Sutton Coldfield, for example, three consecutive pluralist rectors were presented before Ralph Wendon established his thirty-two-year residential pastorate, although he also held the rectory of Lanivet, Cornwall.[36] This west-country connection may be attributed to his older and more eminent contemporary, John Vesey, Bishop of Exeter 1519-51 and 1553-5, himself a native of Sutton Coldfield and former vicar of Coventry St Michael. To Avon Dassett in 1507 the King presented Thomas Dalyson, a member of an eminent Lincolnshire family whose 1541 will suggests that he may have had a nodding acquaintance with Cromwell himself.[37] Links were also established across county boundaries. Thomas Knight, vicar of Burton Dassett 1483-*c.*1512, was also incumbent of the Northamptonshire parishes of Badby and Passenham. That he was non-resident in Warwickshire is confirmed by a 1495 will describing him as 'official of Northampton'.[38]

Occasionally less financially-rewarding benefices such as Austrey, Meriden and Willoughby, were occupied by pluralists. Indeed, they were not averse to acquiring 'benefices below the "norm" of £10...to accumulate odd small sums', and 'still managed to hire stipendiaries as curates'.[39] Until that liberty was challenged by statute in 1529, clergy might be dispensed to hold as many benefices as they could acquire however distantly they were separated. These examples demonstrate both the fairly predictable and the somewhat haphazard occurrence of pluralistic incumbencies.

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35. LJRO, B/A/1/13, ff. 134v-5r; B/A/1/14i, ff. 3r, 8r.
36. Christophers, 'Surrey clergy', p.129; LJRO, B/A/1/14i, ff. 2r, 7v; Emden, *BRUO*, p. 709.
37. *CPR Henry 7 (2) 1494-1509*, p. 202; Emden, *BRUO*, pp. 686-7; LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 4v; B/A/1/14iii, f. 15r; HRO, Huntingdon Wills, Vol. 6, pp. 273v-9v.
38. LJRO, B/A/1/12, f. 30v; TNA: PRO PROB 11, 29 Vox, f. 231v, will of Roger Heritage.
39. R.N. Swanson, 'Standards of livings: parochial revenues in pre-Reformation England', in C. Harper-Bill, ed., *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 180.

TAB. 5.2

Length of tenure of 80 incumbents instituted between 1501-22

Length of tenure	Number of clergy	Percentage
1-10 years	12	15%
11-20 years	27	34%
21-30 years	23	29%
31-40 years	11	14%
41-50 years	6	7%
51+ years	1	1%
TOTALS	**80**	**100**

The average length of tenure of incumbents instituted to Coventry archdeaconry benefices during this period was 23 years, and Tab. 5.2 shows a remarkably consistent tenurial pattern when compared with Tab. 5.1. Disregarding twenty-eight 'open-ended' incumbencies where one or both terminal dates are unknown, the average tenure of the remaining fifty-two clerics rises to twenty-six years - consistent with the clergy occupying benefices in 1501. The shortest incumbency was one year, while the most exceptional lasted fifty-seven years.

5.4. Breaking traditions, 1522-47

Three cogent reasons demand a more detailed scrutiny of mobility during the quarter-century 1522-47. First, the 1529 Act which regulated the extent of pluralism; second, the religious re-alignment of the English Church after her rejection of papal authority in 1534, when innovative forms of liturgical expression had the potential to encourage disgruntled clergy to abandon their orders; third, first fruits and tenths forced clergy to re-assess their economic situation. Although not all of them were recorded in the registers, there were least 173 institutions between 1522-47 of which sixty-nine were to rectories and 104 to vicarages. It has been possible to calculate that of 111 of those incumbencies the average length of tenure was 15 years, but during the same period ninety-one voidances resulted from the death of the previous incumbent and thirty-seven as a result of resignations (Tab. 5.4).

The 1522 musters and 1533 subsidy furnish the earliest nominal evidence of parochial clergy ministering in Coventry archdeaconry, and where they were deployed. When compared with *Valor* these schedules facilitate a comprehensive study of mobility patterns extending over a 13-year period, but the non-beneficed, ignored by *Valor*, are necessarily treated separately. The vast majority of Coventry archdeaconry incumbents named in 1533 still occupied the same benefices in 1535. A detailed analysis of the two-year turnover would serve no useful purpose, notwithstanding that the break with Rome occurred between the 1533 subsidy and

1535. A few sparse figures will suffice. Between 1533-5 there were nine vacations in 104 parishes, 4.5 *per annum*, while between 1522-35 vacations in thirty-one parishes numbered seventeen, a somewhat lesser average of 1.3 *per annum*. No nominal lists survive for the period between 1535-47, so the death of Henry VIII in the latter year provides the most convenient focal event to terminate this division. The ensuing surge of protestant directives aimed at transforming the life and ethos of the English Church shaped the attitudes of those ordained between 1547 and Mary's accession in 1553 and - with greater relevance here - had the potential to determine the tenurial fortunes of the whole body of clergy.

Of seventy-six incumbents identified in 1522, twenty-five still occupied the same livings in 1535. Additional to those already mentioned as spanning the years 1522-33 were three rectors and twelve vicars, of whom six, all vicars, occupied their livings throughout the whole term 1522-47. Prior to 1539 a quarter of all vacancies occurred for reasons unknown, but throughout the whole period 1522-47, ninety-two (53%) followed the death of the previous incumbent, thirty-six (21%) followed resignation, the remaining 2% being two deprivations and an exchange (with a chantry). Known institutions 1522-9 numbered fifty-one, an annual average of 5.4, rising to eight *per annum* 1530-9. The 1530s had the largest turnover of benefices, with twenty resignations, thirty-three deaths, one deprivation and twenty-six causes of vacancy unknown. By contrast, between 1540-7 the annual rate declined to five. Out of forty-two institutions, only one unknown cause of vacancy occurred.

During the last eight years of Henry's reign the mortality rate was conspicuously high: 86%, or thirty-seven incumbents. Also noteworthy is the mere handful of three resignations, notwithstanding heightened tension over religious uncertainties. Peter Irlam prematurely resigned Hampton-in-Arden in the mistaken belief that he had acquired Warmington rectory, but that he was never instituted there may be attributed to his reputation as a disruptive influence and a spend-thrift.[40] It is not known why Robert Cowper of Bedworth, and Thomas Orme of Meriden, resigned their livings in 1543 and 1544 respectively. They simply disappear from the records. That there was no flurry of resignations 1535-47 suggests that neither the imposition of first fruits and tenths nor the monastic suppressions, excited hostile reaction sufficient to distort patterns of mobility.

Of thirty-seven incumbents who resigned their cures 1522-47, at least twenty-three were preferred to other livings, while the number of resignations following the 1547 watershed remained fairly constant, bearing in mind that reasons for vacations of benefices were often omitted in the later registers of institutions and

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40. TNA: PRO E 334/2, f. 135; SP 1/97, p. 70.

many are deduced by reference to other sources, such as wills (Tab. 5.3). As in the earlier period there was still a large proportion of 'careerists' whose benefices were provided in lieu of a salary. For example, Richard Parker held livings in London and Oxfordshire before his unrecorded institution to Bulkington, of which he was only briefly vicar before resigning in 1525 following his appointment as Treasurer of Lincoln cathedral and rector of Waltham-on-the-Wolds, Leicestershire.[41] Among the more distinguished of the incumbents who resigned Coventry archdeaconry benefices during this period were Rowland Lee, the future bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, rector of Fenny Compton from 1526 until his resignation in 1532, and Henry Syddal, who after two years' occupancy resigned the adjoining parish of Farnborough in 1534. Syddal is best known, perhaps, for his role in the trial of Archbishop Cranmer.[42]

TAB. 5.3
Number of recorded resignations, 1501-1599

Decade	Rectors	Vicars	Total in decade
1501-09	6	7	13
1510-19	3	6	9
1520-29	5	13	18
1530-39	5	15	20
1540-49	1	2	3
1550-59	6	14	20
1560-69	9	11	20
1570-79	7	9	16
1580-89	3	18	21
1590-99	2	5	7
TOTALS	**47**	**100**	**147**

TAB. 5.4

Length of tenure of 111 incumbents instituted between 1522-47

Length of tenure	Number of clergy	Percentage
less than 12 months	2	2%
1-10 years	35	32%
11-20 years	45	40%
21-30 years	15	13%
31-40 years	13	12%
41+ years	1	1%
TOTALS	**111**	**100%**

41. Emden, *BRUO*, p. 432.
42. LJRO, B/A/1/14ii, unfol., where Sir Henry Sydall, BA was 'ordained to the title of his benefice'; B/A/1/14iii, ff. 2r; 13r; Emden, *BRUO*, p. 551.

Among eighty incumbents of Coventry archdeaconry in 1529 some twenty-five (31%) have been identified as pluralists. This may be compared with an approximate 17.5% in Leicester archdeaconry in 1526 (thirty-eight pluralists out of about 200 beneficed clergy) and also with Cooper's 'accurate impression' that in 1533, fifty livings in Stafford archdeaconry were held by twenty-two pluralists comprising 5% of all incumbents in the diocese.[43] Representing almost 6%, the Coventry archdeaconry figure includes pluralists beneficed in other dioceses, unlike Cooper's calculation which is only based on those double-beneficed within Stafford archdeaconry. John Lakin and Thomas Palmer alone were double-beneficed in Coventry archdeaconry, Lakin as rector of Great Harborough and vicar of Polesworth, Palmer as rector of Elmdon, where he resided, and also of depopulated Radbourne.[44]

Some, such as Ralph Pole of Southam and Edmund Strethay of Frankton, occupied livings elsewhere in the diocese, while Edward Pontesbury of Allesley, held a London benefice and Philip Mesurer of Warmington was also rector of Charlwood, Surrey.[45] Of the remaining twenty-four incumbents some had prebends, appointments without cure of souls and exempted under the Act, permitting William Darley of Austrey to be simultaneously prebendary of Ufton. None equalled Richard Dudley for multiple pluralism. He was not only rector of Birmingham 1504-36, but simultaneously held the Lancashire rectories of Walton and Warton, several prebends or canonries including one at Lichfield, and was precentor at Salisbury, where he was also a resident canon.

Career clergy found some parishes - the wealthiest - more attractive than others. Graduates held thirteen out of the twenty most valuable livings in Coventry archdeaconry in 1529. William Basse of Bilton was the only non-pluralist graduate among them and it is probable that he was resident on his benefice, the seventeenth wealthiest. While Ralph Wendon (Sutton Coldfield) may have been resident, the remaining eleven graduates probably saw little of their Warwickshire parishes. George Grey was certainly non-resident in Coventry St Michael for he was dean of Newark College in Leicester. Diocesan officials such as Richard Egerton (Grendon, tenth most valuable living in the archdeaconry), Ralph Whitehead (Brinklow, sixteenth most valuable) and Rowland Lee, future bishop of the diocese (Fenny Compton, twentieth most valuable) were clearly non-resident, but five non-graduate residents also held lucrative benefices.

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43. Fuggles, 'Archdeaconry of Leicester', p. 35; Cooper, *Last Generation*, p. 66.
44. Kent Record Society 8, p. 101, but Lakin's institution to Great Harborough not recorded; LJRO, B/A/1/14i, ff. 12v, 13v (Palmer).
45. Hennessy, *Novum Repertorium,* p. 307; *VE*, 2, p. 43.

In his study of Surrey clergy, Christophers discovered that until the mid-sixteenth century large parishes in that county were usually replete with assistant clergy, who 'practically encouraged incumbents to remain absentees'.[46] This was clearly the case at Monks Kirby and the two Coventry parishes, all of which had cohorts of assistant clergy. Unlike rectors, vicars were required to reside on their benefices, but some were sufficiently affluent to employ deputies themselves. Deprived of Mancetter in 1530 for moral and disciplinary offences, William Whittington was frequently absent from his charge (stipend worth £10 13s. 4d. in *Valor*), and almost certainly betrayed the trust of his ecclesiastical superiors, his patrons, and his parishioners. It seems probable that to cover his absences this peccant priest devolved his pastoral duties to the guild and chantry priests of Mancetter, notwithstanding that their paymasters hired them for designated parochial enterprises.[47]

5.5. Discord and disease, 1547-58

Excluding short-term interregna, all but five of ninety-five benefices were occupied in 1547, although the situation at Arley, Baddesley Clinton, Leek Wootton, Maxstoke and Weddington is unclear. Furthermore, records are laconic for the prebendal parishes of Bubbenhall, Ryton-on-Dunsmore and Ufton. The complicated strands of evidence accumulated for this whole period reveal the considerable disturbance occasioned by religious turmoil and unusually high mortality.

Some thirty-four out of ninety (38%) Coventry archdeaconry incumbents identified in 1547 still occupied the same benefices to which they had been instituted in or before 1535. A number had previously served other parishes in the archdeaconry. For example, between 1530 and his preferment in 1543 to the neighbouring vicarage of Stoneleigh, John Hessam was curate of Allesley, and Henry Hussey, rector of Baddesley Clinton since 1533, moved to Avon Dassett in 1541.

During the whole period 1547-58 there were 83 known institutions, an average of about seven *per annum*. The annual mobility rate became increasingly erratic, three or four between 1547-51 rising to as many as twenty-two in 1554, falling to eighteen in 1557 and nine in 1558. Discord and disease explain these dramatic fluctuations. Excluding two re-institutions of incumbents who had not vacated their benefices - probably an administrative device to rectify legal flaws - a total of twenty-eight admissions were recorded between January 1547 and July 1553, a rough average of one every three months. Between 9 November 1553 and 25 October 1558 there

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46. Christophers, 'Surrey clergy', p. 130.
47. *VE*, 3, p. 81; LJRO, B/C/2/1, ff. 132r, 139v; B/C/2/2, f. 43r.

were a further fifty-two institutions. In addition, two clergy compounded but were never instituted, a total of fifty-four presentations to forty-four different parishes during the reign of Mary Tudor.[48]

Some forty-three incumbents possessed of benefices in 1547 were still there in 1558, although five of them died during the latter year. This is a somewhat startling statistic because it suggests that just under half of all parishes in Coventry archdeaconry had the same incumbent throughout the period, and that a substantial number of voidances occurred in a relatively small number of parishes. No clear pattern emerged whereby a link could be established. The clergy deprived for marriage were mostly isolated from others similarly deprived, so there does not appear to have been an element of 'strength in numbers'.

In 1554 the hierarchy launched an offensive to filter out married clergy and others they considered theologically suspect and, where desirable, redistribute ministerial personnel.[49] Out of forty-two clergy from Coventry and Lichfield examined for being married or for holding heretical views, a disproportionate 45% ministered in Coventry archdeaconry. Eleven were beneficed incumbents whose deprivation necessitated their replacement by celibates or clergy who had renounced their wives, although it is not known what happened to non-beneficed clergy such as Henry Farington (Shilton), Thomas Hewes (Mancetter), and John Sendal (Birmingham). Two incumbents were investigated for expressing heretical opinions. In 1553 Nicholas Cartwright, vicar of Nuneaton, maintained that the consecrated bread and wine at Mass remained merely bread and wine and should not to be worshipped as the very Body and Blood of Christ, which cannot be truly received by evil-doers. Leonard West, rector of Little Packington, was in 1556 similarly examined for declaring that 'the Mass is abominable...if I were a rich man I would go out of the realm for I would never say Mass'. On recanting their errors, both West and Cartwright were allowed to retain their livings.[50]

Some of the deprived probably entered secular employment outside the Church's ministry, others left the diocese to be beneficed elsewhere. Edward Bullivant of Whitnash may be synonymous with the Edward Bolevaunt who was instituted to Hothfield rectory, Kent, in place of the deprived Henry Goodriche. In 1559, when

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48. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 1r, 1v, 8r-11v; TNA: PRO E 334/4, ff. 136v, 180r.

49. For discussion on Marian deprivations see H.L. Parish, 'Precedent, policy, and practice: clerical marriage and the English Reformation', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1996), pp. 234-304.

50. BL, Harl. MS 421, ff. 55-91. The eleven incumbents deprived of their livings were Richard Baldwin (Allesley), Richard Worley (Bourton-on-Dunsmore), William Foster (Corley), William Bennet (Coventry Holy Trinity), Hugh Symons (Coventry St Michael), Edward Hopkinson (Hillmorton), John Alcock (Kingsbury), William Warner (Radway), John Vernam (Shotteswell), Simon Pope (Warmington) and Edward Bullivant (Whitnash). For Cartwright and West see ff. 88, 84.

Goodriche was restored, Bullivant was re-instated at Whitnash.[51] William Warner of Radway promptly moved to Cambridgeshire, where he displaced Richard Burnet as vicar of Wendy. Curiously, Warner was not re-instated at Radway after Elizabeth I's accession, but was appointed curate of the adjoining parish of Ratley, where his family had its seat and owned the patronage. Warner's neighbour, Simon Pope of Warmington, robustly petitioned the Queen to annul his deprivation on the grounds that he was summarily dismissed without any opportunity to defend himself. Although Pope's attempt to recover his freehold proved futile, he and his wife, Mary Ludford, remained in Warmington, where he died in 1567.[52] Others, such as Hugh Symonds of Coventry Holy Trinity and Richard Baldwin of Allesley were, like Bullivant, restored to their livings in 1559. Research for this thesis reveals that William Foster fled abroad and on returning to England in 1559 he eschewed the opportunity to reclaim Corley vicarage and was presented to the rectory of Bedworth.[53]

As in Surrey where, 'By 1554 almost all clergy had been found benefices if they could conform to the new era', so in Coventry archdeaconry deprived clergy were speedily replaced and the ensuing institutions duly recorded in Bishop Baynes' register. Only one entry is missing, but since Thomas Mason compounded for Hillmorton on 21 June 1555 it may be confidently assumed that he was promptly instituted.[54] On the other hand, the vacancy at Coventry St Michael appears not to have been filled, either because the parish had four sufficiently competent curates, or because no suitable candidate was forthcoming. While the disruptive effects of the purge were only felt in a small minority of Coventry archdeaconry parishes, the steadily diminishing number of clergy, not all of them particularly well qualified, was clearly disquieting.

By 1555 and 1556 mobility had returned to normal, four institutions in each year, but then a national influenza epidemic brutally shattered prospects of a smooth return to the *status quo*.

> [It]...began in the dearth [of] 1556, and increased more and more the two following years...[there] died many priests, that a great number of parish churches in divers places of the realm, were unserved and no curates could be gotten for money.[55]

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51. C. Buckingham, 'The movement of clergy in the diocese of Canterbury, 1552-62', *Recusant History* 14 (1977-1978), p. 231.
52. Kent Record Society 8, p. 134 (Warner); BL, Harl. MS 421, f. 53; R.M. Glencross, ed., *Administrations in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1559-1571* (2 vols, Exeter, 1912, 1917), 1, p. 81.
53. TNA: PRO C 3/63/31 (Foster).
54. Christophers, 'Surrey clergy', p. 132; TNA: PRO E 334/6, f. 24r.
55. J. Strype, quoted in C. Burgess, 'Strategies for eternity: perpetual chantry foundation in late medieval Bristol', in C. Harper-Bill, ed., *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 530.

It is clear that the epidemic struck quite randomly, with only three insignificant clusters of parishes. In those two years alone death claimed twenty-three incumbents, aggravating the average mortality rate for the whole period, which was already unnaturally high. Solihull had three rectors in quick succession, for after Thomas Barnes *alias* Chambers died in May 1557 following a three-year incumbency, William Hubawd was instituted, but succumbed in August 1558 and was succeeded by William Barnes *alias* Chambers.[56] Parishioners of Bourton-on-Dunsmore were particularly unfortunate. After Thomas Worley was deprived in March 1554, his successor, Richard Hutton, instituted in July, vacated within a year. It is possible that he was the same Hutton, a doctor of laws, who in 1521 had been instituted vicar of Kingsbury and had later acquired the livings of Albury and Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey, where he died in 1556. He was succeeded in July 1555 by Henry Skynner who died only weeks later and was followed in October by James Tansfield. After his death in 1559 came William Goddard. He resigned three years later and was replaced by Richard Prowde - six incumbents in only eight years![57] Eleven other parishes had two rapid changes, most of which were occasioned by the death of the previous incumbent, furnishing graphic evidence of the scale of the epidemic among the clergy of Coventry archdeaconry. The awesome mortality rate represents only the beneficed clergy, and the number of unbeneficed victims is unknown.

In 1547, eighteen years after the Pluralism Act was passed, thirteen out of eighty-nine incumbents were pluralists, with Edward Bower of Ansley and King's Newton, the sole double-beneficed incumbent in the whole of Coventry archdeaconry. Moreover, the numerical decline from twenty-five pluralists out of eighty in 1529 to thirteen out of eighty-nine in 1547, reduced the overall percentage of pluralists from 31% in 1529 to 15% in 1547, a significant 16% reduction. A rump of 'career' pluralists remained, including John Feckenham of Solihull; William Leson of Southam, who also held Cropredy (Oxfordshire) and Upton-on-Severn (Worcestershire); and the multi-pluralist John Fisher of Wolfhampcote, who having in 1544 been granted a dispensation to hold three benefices with or without cure, also held livings at Critch, Northamptonshire, and Great Milton, Oxfordshire.[58]

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56. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 10r, 12r; E.A. Fry, ed., *The Register of Solihull Vol. 1 1538-1668*, Parish Register Society 53 (London, 1904), p. 166.
57. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 7v; B/A/1/15, ff. 1v, 9r, 10r, 12r, 30v; Christophers, 'Surrey clergy', p. 138.
58. D.S. Chambers, ed., *Faculty Office Registers 1534-1549: A Calendar of the First two Registers of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Faculty Office Edited With an Introduction and Index* (Oxford, 1966), p. 238.

Bowker's research showed that while effects varied from one archdeaconry to another, for much of Lincoln diocese there was 'sufficient evidence...to suggest that there was an immediate decline in non-residence and pluralism in the early 1530s'. Elsewhere she insisted that the 'full effects of the statutory limits placed on pluralism were...unlikely to be felt until the generation of clergy who had acquired livings before 1529 had died out'. There was an apparent trend 'to tie the most valuable livings to pluralism', so that 'by 1540 servants of the crown or chaplains to a grandee...were taking a larger share of the parishes than they had in 1518-9 or in 1530'.[59]

TAB. 5.5

Length of tenure of 71 incumbents instituted between 1547-58

Length of tenure	Incumbents	Percentage
less than 12 months	2	3%
1-10 years	49	69%
11-20 years	11	15%
21-30 years	4	6%
31-40 years	5	7%
TOTALS	**71**	**100%**

It has been demonstrated that benefices vacated in Coventry archdeaconry were promptly filled prior to the 1558 epidemic, but this bequeathed a perilously small reserve of suitable replacements. In the 1558 visitation call-book fifteen pluralist incumbents have been identified affecting about 18% of all Coventry archdeaconry parishes. Of thirty-five who held a benefice in 1547, three had since acquired a second living in the archdeaconry, raising the number of double-beneficed there to five.[60] The remainder were six rectors with livings in other counties, and six vicars whose second livings lay reasonably close to their Warwickshire parishes. Richard Briscoe of Bulkington, for example, was also vicar of the nearby Leicestershire parish of Hinckley. Among those occupying livings outside Coventry and Lichfield was Thomas Coton of Farnborough, who was also rector of Lighthorne, a Warwickshire parish only seven miles distant but in Worcester diocese.

Tenurial longevity during this period was substantially shorter than at any time in the sixteenth century. Out of seventy-one incumbencies susceptible to statistical analysis, the average was a mere eight years in office (Tab. 5.5), the five longest incumbencies lasting between thirty-one to thirty-nine years. Over the whole period,

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59. Bowker, *Henrician Reformation*, pp. 113, 118, 119.

60. They were William Harwar (Brinklow and Wolston); Robert Holme (Radbourne and Leamington Hastings); Bernard Massey (Frankton and Priors Hardwick); Thomas Gardyner (Cubbington and Willoughby) and Ralph Pickering (Maxstoke and Shustoke).

fifty-eight vacancies followed the death of the previous incumbent and seventeen were the result of resignations.

During this period, then, the proportion of pluralists rose from 15% to 20%, from thirteen to fifteen but still short of the twenty-five of 1529. Since then, significant changes had taken place, not least being the loss of all the chantry and monastic establishments. At Mary's death in November 1558 the reserve of personnel suitably qualified to occupy a benefice was almost exhausted and the extent of the Church's manpower crisis was about to be exposed. The new reign opened, therefore, with a hitherto unprecedented shortage of clergy precipitated by (a) a quarter-century of intensely divisive political meddling in the Church's doctrinal and structural patterns, (b) the cessation of ordinations as an episcopal response to a buoyant yet temporary over-supply of clergy, (c) the re-deployment of ex-religious and former chantrists where married incumbents had been deprived and (d) the severe effects of the influenza epidemic. Out of fifty-four institutions during Mary's reign, at least twenty-nine were caused by the death of the previous incumbent, as many as sixteen in 1557 and seven in 1558. Forty-eight out of eighty-eight changes of benefice occurred between 1553-8, an average of almost fifteen every year and nearly four times the norm for the first quarter-century. Patterns of tenurial mobility were distorted for years as the Church's hierarchy struggled to restore order and stability.

5.6. Uneasy Settlement, 1559-70

Approximately 2,000 benefices throughout England may have been vacant at the beginning of this period.[61] In Coventry archdeaconry, nine incumbents out of the 129 parochial clergy identified in Bishop Ralph Baynes' visitation in June 1558 were dead when Queen Elizabeth I acceded on 17 November 1558, and a further eleven had died by the end of September 1559. Within fifteen months, therefore, mortality reduced the clerical work-force by 16%, including 24% of eighty-three incumbents. Their replacement was a formidable task because the epidemic had created a national shortage of clergy. Twenty admissions to Coventry archdeaconry livings can be traced between November 1558 and September 1559, averaging two every month, but for reasons that are obscure, seven of them went unrecorded. For example, there is no reference in the episcopal register to Robert Carlell's institution to Bulkington, to which his predecessor, Richard Briscoe, was instituted in 1557 and,

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61. P. Tyler, 'The Status of the Elizabethan Parochial Clergy' in G.J. Cuming, ed., *Studies in Church History* 4 (1967), p. 84.

probably, obliged to renounce after acquiring Hinckley in 1558 without first obtaining a dispensation to hold both benefices.[62]

A few incumbents deprived in 1554 were now restored to their benefices without comment in the episcopal register, while clergy who had been canonically admitted in their place were removed without redress. For example, George Bruche was instituted as vicar of Coventry Holy Trinity following William Bennet's deprivation for marriage in 1554. Apparently without re-institution, Bennet had regained possession by September 1559 while Bruche temporarily retreated to a curacy at Mancetter before acquiring a less prestigious incumbency at Witherley, Leicestershire.[63] Presumably, the new protestant hierarchy regarded the Marian deprivations for matrimony as unlawful disturbance of incumbents' freehold occupancy in defiance of the legislation permitting clerical marriage passed in 1547. An unusual sequence of events followed Nicholas Tomson's institution to Southam on 22 April 1559. He abandoned his rights to the benefice when his occupation was successfully challenged by John Boole, who in 1554 had been deprived for being married. Tomson had been presented to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Oliver Clerke, the incumbent who displaced Boole in 1554. It cannot be explained why Boole was not restored at once, unless he could not be located and was unaware that the vacancy had occurred. Alternatively, Tomson may have been presented before Mary died and his subsequent admission went unchallenged before Boole could protest. By a freak coincidence, Boole died only three months after his restoration to Southam, the vacancy being filled by Augustine Bernher, the Swiss former companion of Bishop Hugh Latimer. Meanwhile, Tomson migrated to Winchester diocese where he acquired the rectory of Crux-Easton, Hampshire.[64]

It is necessary to pause here to consider whether the religious changes imposed by law affected patterns of mobility among the parochial clergy. After 1529, Parliament became the driving force behind religious practice in England, passing Acts which sanctioned and regulated changes which the ecclesiastical authorities were mostly powerless to prevent. Under Henry, the sequence continued with Acts revoking papal authority and dissolving the monasteries, followed by the Edwardian suppression of chantries and liturgical revisions, and the Marian reaction whereby

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62. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 11r-12v, 29v; Kent Record Society 8, pp. 19, 125, 138; TNA: PRO E 334, ff. 3r, 7r, 12r-v, 15r, 16v, 29r, 34r; *CPR Eliz., I, 1558-1560*, pp. 123-6; C.W. Foster, 'Institutions to benefices in the diocese of Lincoln in the sixteenth century', *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries* 5 (1896-8), p. 236.

63. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 1v; B/V/1/4, p. 48; LPL, *Cart. Misc. xiii no. 58*, f. 15v; C.W. Foster, 'Institutions to benefices in the diocese of Lincoln, 1540-1570, Calendar no. I', *AASRP* 24 pt II (1898), p. 481.

64. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 12r (Tomson); TNA: PRO E 337/3 no. 23 (Boole); E 334/7, f. 29r (Bernher); W.H. Frere, *Registrum Matthei Parker, Diocesis Cantuariensis, A.D. 1559-1575*, Canterbury and York Society 35 (Oxford, 1928), p. 206.

papal oversight was re-introduced. After twenty years of religious uncertainty, is there any evidence to suggest how the parochial clergy reacted to the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559?

Under legislation introduced by the new protestant regime, visitors were commissioned to organise and oversee, diocese by diocese, clerical subscription to the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. Returns survive from only six dioceses, including Coventry and Lichfield. The epidemic had not yet run its full course and it is possible that sickness prevented some clergy from attending the session to subscribe. Almost certainly that explains why Robert Mylner, vicar of Napton, failed to subscribe, since he died in November 1559.[65] Thirteen of sixty-four (20%) who subscribed on 30 September and 2 October 1559 cannot be identified as Coventry archdeaconry clergy, but appear to have belonged to other dioceses. All but four of the remaining fifty-one (80%) were beneficed incumbents, two being double-beneficed in Coventry archdeaconry. Seven others attended sessions elsewhere.[66]

Subscribers included men who held office under Mary, Edward VI and even Henry VIII. Indeed, sixteen subscribing incumbents had been admitted before 1547, five between 1547-53, and a further nineteen had taken office under Mary. Several appointed under Henry VIII had all been in office at least thirteen years before they subscribed in 1559, the longest-surviving of them being Henry Rode, rector of Sheldon, who had been admitted in 1527.[67] Thomas Warmyngton, rector of Churchover since 1535, died in 1566 but did not subscribe in this diocese, being resident at Shalstone, Buckinghamshire. This was particularly unfortunate for Churchover's twenty-six households, for when Roger Elyot succeeded he remained in residence at Sutton Coldfield, where he had been rector since 1564. During those two incumbencies alone Churchover was served by curates for at least sixty-one years.[68]

Many of the 103 parochial clergy identified in the archiepiscopal visitation of Coventry archdeaconry in October 1560 had been named in the 1558 visitation, but it is apparent that when the first Elizabethan bishop, Thomas Bentham, held his

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65. LJRO, B/C/10i/5, f. 178v. Probate granted 30.11.1559.

66. Robert Holme (Leamington Hastings and Radbourne) and Bernard Massey (Priors Hardwick and Frankton). The seven who subscribed elsewhere were: Augustine Bernher (Southam), Thomas Dagyle (Baginton), John Debanks (Willey), Arthur Dudley (Sutton Coldfield), Henry Hands (Corley), William Porter (Kingsbury), Humphrey Wering (Whitnash).

67. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 13v (Rode); Others included Richard Cowper (Clifton-on-Dunsmore since 1536), Humphrey Robyns (Bickenhill) and John Walker (Stretton Baskerville), both since 1537; Cowper, Robyns, Walker, LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, ff. 14r, 14v.

68. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 13r; B/V/1/2, p. 69 (Warmyngton); B/A/1/15, ff. 42v, 36r; TNA: PRO SP 12/76; BL, Harl. MS 594, f. 166a (Elyot).

primary visitation in June 1561, natural wastage and other causes had already cost the archdeaconry a large percentage of its Marian work-force. It had reached its nadir, with only seventy beneficed and twelve assistant clergy, just 65% of its 1558 strength.

Further confirmation of deteriorating ministerial resources comes from Archbishop Matthew Parker's 1562 enquiry into the state of the ministry.[69] Only a handful of returns survive, including that for Coventry and Lichfield, and it is not alone in illustrating a profoundly disturbing picture of parochial under-staffing, Twenty-five of all the benefices in Coventry archdeaconry then stood vacant and the total work-force was seventy-seven, including four curates. Whereas at Mary's death the number of known pluralists was eighteen, Parker's 1562 enquiry detected nineteen, although of three double-beneficed in Coventry archdeaconry, Christopher Meltham had only recently been granted dispensation to hold the adjoining benefices of Newbold-on-Avon and King's Newnham in plurality.[70]

Among those occupying benefices outside Coventry archdeaconry was John Bavant, the donnish rector of Solihull, who resided at Oxford, where he was reader in Greek at St John's College.[71] Thomas Knight divided his time between Wormleighton and his other vicarage, Harpole, Northamptonshire.[72] Resident on their Coventry archdeaconry benefices in preference to one in another diocese were Farmer of Austrey and Thomas Stoning of Nuneaton, who respectively held the Leicestershire livings of Norton-juxta-Twycross and Elmthorpe. Exceptionally, Anthony Blake had an unscrupulous disregard for the regulations. In 1554, he had been deprived of Doncaster and Whiston, Yorkshire, but acquired the rectories of St Dunstan-in-the-West, London, in 1556 and of Rugby in 1558. Restored to his Yorkshire livings in 1559, he somehow managed to retain Rugby and St Dunstan's, and was also presented to East Barnet, Hertfordshire, and in 1568 to Langton, Yorkshire. Furthermore in 1562 he had been installed as a prebendary of York. He died in possession of all seven in 1570.[73]

An unusually large number of institutions followed in the first ten months after Elizabeth I's accession. They included sixteen resulting from the death of the previous incumbent, but only two resignations were recorded - William Harwar (Brinklow and Wolston) and Richard Pedder, vicar of the neighbouring parish of

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69. CCC Camb., MS 97, ff. 29r-33r.
70. TNA: PRO SP 12/76, f. 21v.
71. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, 1, p. 88; W.N. Landor, *Staffordshire Incumbents and Parochial Records (1530-1680)*, SHC 1915 (London, 1916), p. 287.
72. He is not the Thomas Knight mentioned above, p. 183. The name is very common in this region and other clergy are similarly named, making identification extremely difficult.
73. Venn, *Alumni Cantab.* 1, p. 163; Hennessy, *Novum Repertorium*, p. LXXIX; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 11r; TNA: PRO SP 12/10, ff. 60v-2v.

King's Newnham. The cause of the remaining voidance cannot be attributed because Ralph Pickering's institution to Maxstoke was not recorded in any of the usual sources. Dugdale certainly had access to the documentation and footnoted it in his *Antiquities*, but the relevant folio has since been lost.[74]

Between 1560-70, twenty-three parochial clergy in Coventry archdeaconry resigned their livings, thirteen being cessions. Of ten whose movements could not be subsequently traced, five had subscribed in 1559, suggesting that there was little if any protest against the religious settlement with its concomitant demands for conformity and uniformity. Of the cessions, 54% were to benefices in other jurisdictions - four in Leicestershire and one each in Staffordshire, Northamptonshire and Worcester diocese, but the significance of this is obscure.[75] Six other resignations were straightforward, including Ralph Goldsmith, who was already double-beneficed and therefore obliged to relinquish King's Newnham, while Robert Holmes resigned Leamington Hastings in favour of his son Matthew.[76] For the remainder of the sixteenth century only one of the Coventry archdeaconry incumbents who resigned can be compared even with the lesser pluralists of the earlier periods. Gervase Carrington was rector of Brinklow between 1580-1585, but moved parishes with such bewildering frequency, mostly in Worcester diocese where he was also dignified with a prebend, that it would be tedious even to footnote the references. During his incumbency at Brinklow, however, it is clear that he must have been resident, for in 1583 he was engaged in *extra*-parochial matters as 'official of the archdeacon of Coventry'.[77]

Several clergy were deprived during that period. Death terminated a further thirty-eight incumbencies, the mortality rate reducing the 1560 (103 clergy) and 1570 (108 clergy) cohorts by almost one-third. In only seven cases has it not been possible to establish the cause of voidance. An annual average of nearly seven benefices was vacated during that decade, by the end of which there were positive signs of a revival.

At the next recorded visitation, June 1570, beneficed incumbents (83) outnumbered curates (23) by more than three to one, suggesting that the proportion of absentee incumbents had fallen. In average years, curates and other assistants accounted for 38% of the total number of clergy in Coventry archdeaconry. Most

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74. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 12v; Woodruff, *Calendar of Institutions*, p. 19; Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, 2, p. 1000.

75. To Leicestershire went Richard Foxe (Baxterley), William Harwar (Brinklow and Wolston), John Lounde (Cubbington) and Thomas Stoning (Nuneaton); to Staffordshire, Arthur Dudley (Sutton Coldfield); to Northamptonshire, Thurstan Moseley (Priors Hardwick), and to Worcester diocese, John Vernam (Shotteswell).

76. TNA: PRO E 331/Cov & Lich/2; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 43v.

77. LJRO, B/A/2ii/1, p.35; SBTRO, DR 10/2073; Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, 2.

critically, in 1561 their proportion declined to 15% with only twelve assistants being identified. Perhaps this reflects a deliberate policy by Thomas Lever to extinguish absenteeism and non-residence within his archdeaconry. In sermons preached before Edward VI in 1550 Lever had denounced to the King those who 'mainteyne your chapleynes to take Pluralities, and your other seruauntes mo offyces then they can or wyll discharge'. Yet somewhat disingenuously, in 1563 he not only acquired the Mastership of Sherburn Hospital, which he retained till death, but also, in 1564, a Durham prebend. It seems an extraordinary example of double standards that in 1567, having been deprived of his prebend for non-conformity, Lever retained his archdeaconry.[78]

Only small numbers of double-beneficed clergy were detected by Barratt in the post-Reformation dioceses of Oxford and Worcester, contiguous with the southern and western boundaries of Coventry archdeaconry. There were thirteen pluralists in Oxford archdeaconry in 1526, and twelve in the new diocese in 1560, while in Worcester the double-beneficed numbered eleven in 1534, increasing to fourteen in 1560. She also counted twenty-one double-beneficed in Gloucester diocese in 1561 and a further twenty-seven who occupied livings in other dioceses.[79]

TAB. 5.6

Length of tenure of 103 incumbents instituted 1559-70

Length of tenure	Number of clergy
less than 12 months	3
1-10 years	49
11-20 years	28
21-30 years	9
31-40 years	8
41-50 years	4
51+ years	2
TOTALS	**103**

Out of 103 institutions in Coventry archdeaconry (Tab. 5.6) the average incumbency lasted only 14 years, somewhat less than in earlier periods. Two clergy served over fifty years and a further four exceeded forty years.[80] The number of lengthy incumbencies in Coventry archdeaconry had seriously declined, probably as a result of exceptional circumstances. Religious disputes within *Ecclesia Anglicana*, and the continuing epidemic, were both politically and environmentally damaging.

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78. Arber, *Sermons*, pp. 5-6, 8, 65; H.C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 87, 115.
79. Barratt, 'Condition of the clergy', pp. 137-8.
80. They were: Edmund Enos (Bilton 1570-1621) and Edmund Lyngard (Curdworth, 1561-1618); Richard Pole (Burton Dassett, 1564-1607), John Smith (Frankton, 1569-1619), Matthew Holme (Leamington Hastings, 1570-1617), and John Debank (Willey, 1559-1602).

Dissatisfaction with aspects of parochial ministry may possibly be reflected in the abnormally high level of resignations, reaching 24% of all voidances. It is expedient, first, to observe that ten incumbents voluntarily resigned only to move to another parish and, secondly, to distinguish between voluntary resignations and coerced departures. For tabular convenience, all have been uniformly categorised in this study, but for greater clarity they are: first, when an incumbent of his own choice moves from one benefice to another, technically called 'cession'; second, retirement in old age, although he may still function as an auxiliary; third, where an infringement of the regulations has been detected, for example the acquisition of a second benefice without the necessary dispensation, an incumbent was obliged to relinquish one of his cures.

Excluding clergy instituted in 1554 but peremptorily removed when their married predecessors were restored, six incumbents suffered deprivation during this period. Five who had been deprived for marriage in 1554 successfully regained their cures in 1559, displacing the current occupiers all of whom soon settled in other parishes.[81] After 1559 the rehabilitation of married clergy removed them as targets for legal contention, but the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity which wedded Church and State fused an alliance unacceptable to both papists and the hotter kind of protestant. The evidence is not sufficient to support any suggestion that large numbers of incumbents were so out of sympathy with statutory requirements that they were inclined to resign their benefices, however. It is unfortunate that the cause of seventy-seven vacations between 1560 and 1599 are not recorded in the registers of institutions, so it is difficult to know whether they were the result of conscientious objection or more mundane motives.

Catholic scruples certainly ensured the deprivation of Coventry archdeaconry's most eminent victim in 1570: John Bavand, absentee rector of Solihull, who for principled opposition was imprisoned in Ipswich Castle and subsequently hounded as a seminary priest. Others were deprived for disciplinary reasons, for example, in 1561 both Edmund Turner of Curdworth and Thomas Gardiner of Willoughby were deprived of their benefices for nonconformity.[82] Mortality rates remained high, with the death of the benefice holder terminating 53% of incumbencies between 1559-70.

It is interesting to observe that of twenty-three assistants named in the 1570 visitation, only five were deployed in the seventeen parishes served by pluralist

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81. Richard Baldwin (Allesley, dislodging Thomas Stele), Edward Bullivant (Whitnash, dislodging Humphrey Wering), William Bennet (Coventry Holy Trinity, dislodging George Bruche), John Vernam (Shotteswell, dislodging William Rouse), and John Boole (Southam, dislodging Nicholas Tomson).
82. G. Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests: A Dictionary of the Secular Clergy of England and Wales 1558-1850, I Elizabethan 1558-1603* (Ware, 1968), p. 27; LJRO, B/V/1/4, p. 127; B/C/2/5, unfol.

incumbents in 1571.[83] Was that a gross dereliction of their responsibilities by the incumbents of the twelve other parishes? Apparently this was not the case, since they were all double-beneficed within the statutory limits, so it must be supposed that they shared their time between their respective parishes. For example, Radbourne was quite deserted, acquitting Robert Holme to minister full-time at Leamington Hastings. Even combined, the adjoining parishes of Thorpe Constantine in Staffordshire and Seckington in Warwickshire (fifteen households in 1563) had few inhabitants, so even single-handedly, William Hayes was quite able to minister to both.

Elsewhere, however, expanding populations were causing problems, as at Bedworth, whose rector was a non-resident pluralist. Since his two parishes lay within an hour's horse ride of each other it was perfectly legitimate to hold them in plurality, but it exposed the huge pitfalls involved in ministering simultaneously to two large parishes.[84] At Birmingham, too, the rector was a pluralist with demanding rectorial responsibilities at Solihull, a comparative backwater compared with Birmingham but still a territorially large and populous parish.[85] There is no clear evidence that Richard Briscoe ever engaged a curate at Bedworth or Luke Smith at Birmingham. It was in parishes such as these that the loss of a clerical proletariat was most acutely felt, for their withdrawal left some communities 'unchurched' and cleared the way for subsequent minority dissent.

5.7. Subscription enforced, 1571-1603

By 1571 the Church of England was being tormented on the one hand by the disgruntled who pressed for a radical re-alignment of its theological and hierarchical structures, and on the other by dissatisfied traditionalists who yearned for a reformed Church re-united with Rome. Somewhere between both extremes stood the silent majority who conformed and about whom much less is known.[86] Most parochial clergy appear to have outwardly conformed, but those whose conscience would not allow them to acquiesce had only two options - to resign holy orders or to resist statutory orders.

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83. LJRO, B/V/1/7: the parishes were Churchover, Rugby, Sheldon, Warmington and Willey.
84. BL, Harl. MS. 594, f. 165v.
85. C. Gill, ed., *History of Birmingham* (2 vols, London, 1952), 1, p. 42; R.A. Pelham, 'The growth of settlement and industry c. 1100-c. 1700', R.H. Kinvig, J.G. Smith, M.J. Wise, eds, *Birmingham and its Regional Setting: a Scientific Survey* (Birmingham, 1950), pp. 151, 157.
86. For detailed discussion see A. Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (pb edn, Woodbridge, 1999), and J. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998).

It is contended here that the fortunes of the parochial clergy in earlier decades had been shaped as much by the accidents of nature as transformed by human endeavour. But the latter dominated later developments, for in tackling a crippling manpower crisis in the early 1560s the hierarchy unwisely recruited too many unsuitable candidates for ordination. Subsequently, a stratagem for reforming the parochial ministry engaged Church leaders, whose verbal conflict with protestant activists and sullen recusants alike was hampered by the Queen's habitual equivocation. How, then, did changing circumstances impinge upon the tenurial aspirations of the parochial clergy?

Deliberately chosen to open this period, 1571 was a landmark year during which an Act was passed requiring all clergy to subscribe to the Articles of Religion by Christmas. It was, declared E.J. Bicknell, specifically 'aimed at men ordained under Mary...ingeniously drawn up in the interests of the Puritans'. The Act stipulated that any 'priest or minister' failing to 'declare his assent and subscribe' before Christmas should suffer *ipso facto* deprivation, 'and all his ecclesiastical promotions shall be void, as if he were then naturally dead'.[87] Significantly, Pope Pius V's bull *Regnans in Excelsis* excommunicating Elizabeth I in 1570 ensured that the problem of religious compliance became 'embedded in a political matrix'.[88]

Out of 144 institutions between 1571-c.1600 (Tab. 5.7), incumbents' tenure of office averaged eighteen years, slightly longer than the fourteen of those instituted between 1559-70. Marked differences emerge when the statistics are subjected to greater scrutiny. For instance, the number of incumbents instituted between 1571-c.1600 who remained in one parish less than twenty years declined when compared with those instituted 1559-70 from 80% to 61.6%. Meanwhile, tenures of twenty-one years or more rose from twenty-three to fifty-six, which although more than double the number was a percentage increase of only 15.3%. Three times as many clergy now served more than fifty years.[89] Furthermore, instead of four beneficed clergy exceeding forty years in one parish there were now fourteen. Such

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87. E.J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (London, 1919, rev. 1961), p. 20; Bray, *Anglican Canons*, pp. xlviii-l, 201; G.W. Prothero, ed., *Select Statutes and Other Constitutional Documents* (4th edn, Oxford, 1944), 13 Eliz. Cap. XII, p. 64. For discussion on the significance of the 1570s see C. Litzenberger, 'Defining the Church of England: religious change in the 1570s', in S. Wabuda and C. Litzenberger, eds., *Belief and Practice in Reformation England: A Tribute to Patrick Collinson from his Students* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 137-53.

88. J.L. LaRocca, 'Time, death, and the next generation: the early Elizabethan recusancy policy, 1558-1574', *Albion* 2 (1982), p. 104.

89. They were Edward Bolton (Rugby, 1571-1622), William Shuttleworth (Packington Magna, 1573-1624), Ralph Foxe (Coleshill, 1574-1627), Robert Briscoe (Foleshill 1574-1628), Richard Gardiner (Radford Semele, 1575-1631), Hacker Symons (Elmdon, 1576-1634) and Luke Smith (Solihull, 1590-1645).

extended incumbencies suggest that patterns of parochial ministry were evolving in response to exterior developments.

It is conceivable, for example, that many Elizabethan incumbents became engaged in a pastoral ministry very similar to that exercised by the 'parish priests' who in former days deputised for absentee incumbents. Responsible for maintaining the spiritual life of the parish they served, many of them enjoyed long tenures of office. Bishop Overton's emphasis on ministerial reform arguably revitalised the parochial clergy's perception of their pastoral role and enhanced their sense of satisfaction, notwithstanding what O'Day described as 'the slur cast upon his character both by contemporaries and by later historians [which] seems to have blurred the picture considerably'. Crankshaw, refuting Collinson, thought that the bishop's 'initiative belies Overton's reputation as "no reformer"'.[90] A further example is the conspicuous difference which may be observed in the matter of resignations since the middle of the sixteenth century. Hitherto, many clergy who resigned were pluralists who occupied benefices *in absentia* by virtue of their service to Church or State. With a singular exception, all those who resigned in the latter half of the century were motivated by more pragmatic considerations such as preferment to another parish, or passing on a livelihood to a kinsman, or simply retirement, which last cause is difficult to trace, for scrutiny of calendars of wills is only a preliminary to laborious examination of possible matches.

TAB. 5.7

Length of tenure of 144 incumbents instituted 1570-1600

Length of tenure	Number of clergy	Percentage
less than 12 months	4	2.7%
1-10 years	63	43.7%
11-20 years	21	14.6%
21-30 years	18	12.5%
31-40 years	24	16.7%
41-50 years	9	6.3%
51+ years	5	3.5%
TOTALS	**144**	**100%**

Death was the final arbiter on sixty occasions of benefice voidance during this period, while human ambition, infirmity or prudence resulted in thirty-eight resignations (including cessions). Loss of freehold rights was a constant threat to clergy who refused to conform to the 1571 Act, and others guilty of disciplinary

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90. R. O'Day, 'Clerical patronage and recruitment in England in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods, with special reference to the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1972), p. 57; D.J. Crankshaw, 'Elizabethan and early Jacobean surveys of the Ministry of the Church of England', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Cambridge (1998), p. 115; P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (pb edn, Oxford, 1990), p. 184.

misdemeanours, for both alike risked deprivation. Most surprising, therefore, is the small number of deprivations in this period, only ten, although some resignations may well have resulted from the detection of canonical infringements. Matthew Pykering, for instance, was already vicar of Bathampton, Somerset, when in 1572 he was instituted to Harbury. In 1577 he resigned Bathampton to become vicar of Hinton Blewitt, Somerset, but he retained Harbury until he was deprived in 1587. Pykering, an Oxford graduate, clearly contravened canon law by holding two benefices more than one hundred miles apart. Deprivation in one diocese (he retained Hinton) did not prevent him securing in 1599 the rectory of Great Shelsley, Worcestershire, where in 1610 he died and willed to be buried. Pykering's death was given as the cause of the vacancy when his successor was admitted to Hinton Blewitt in 1613. Clearly, if an incumbent was resident in another diocese and his whereabouts unknown either to the curate or his parishioners, news of his death was not always promptly reported either to the patron of the living or the diocesan authorities.[91]

Twelve out of ninety-five livings in Coventry archdeaconry were vacant in September 1571. The remaining eighty-three were occupied by seventy-seven different clergy, of whom twelve have been identified as pluralists holding between them at least seventeen parishes. Six incumbents were double-beneficed in Coventry archdeaconry and all lay within the permitted distances.[92] Some incumbents resided in other dioceses and chose to be buried outside Warwickshire.[93] Although located in different counties, all of their secondary charges lay less than twenty miles distant, but other pluralists held livings far from Warwickshire. For example, Henry Smith (Solihull) was reputedly beneficed in Carlisle diocese (untraced) and John Hall (Warmington) was a prebendary of Chichester Cathedral as well as rector of Iffley, Oxfordshire, some forty miles from Warmington.[94]

Between 1571 and 1586 two-thirds of the livings changed hands with Elyot and Briscoe emerging as sole survivors of the above group (footnotes 89, 92). In 1574

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91. F.W. Weaver, ed., *Somerset Incumbents* (Bristol, 1889), pp. 239, 270; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 45r; BL, Lansdowne MS 444, f. 123v; Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, 3, p. 1162; T.R. Nash, *Collections for a History of Worcestershire*, (2 vols, London, 1781-1782), 2, p. 353; WRO, will proved 30 June 1610.
92. The six were Roger Barker (Ashow and Cubbington), William Bolton (Berkswell and Church Lawford), Roger Elyot (Churchover and Sutton Coldfield), Matthew Holmes (Leamington Hastings and Radbourne), Christopher Meltham (Newnham Regis and Newton Regis), and Richard Palmer (Stretton Baskerville and Wolvey).
93. They were Richard Briscoe (Bedworth) at Hinckley, Leicestershire, William Hayes (Seckington) at Thorpe Constantine, Staffordshire, Henry Blackmore (Sheldon), apparently content to exercise a non-beneficed ministry at West Bromwich, Staffordshire, and Thomas Knight (Wormleighton) at Harpole, Northamptonshire.
94. TNA: PRO PROB 11, 8 Draper, ff. 62v-3r (Hall).

the latter's brother, Robert, ordained in Lincoln diocese in 1568, became vicar of Foleshill and of Exhall, and William Fayre served Sowe and Wyken, all four parishes being contiguous and former dependencies of Coventry priory. There were now seven pluralists where there had been twelve.

For the purposes of this study the final tally of pluralists, in 1603, amounted to eight, five of them double-beneficed in Coventry archdeaconry.[95] Only one (Inckforbie) contravened the statute by holding two benefices more than thirty miles apart. Barratt noted that the law was but slackly observed in Oxfordshire before the permitted distance between parishes was extended to thirty miles in 1584. After that, pluralists only held cures which were 'within a day's ride of each other'. Barratt calculated that Oxford diocese had eighteen double-beneficed incumbents in 1580 and eleven in 1600, while Worcester had twelve in 1580 and seven in 1600.[96]

The fractional increase in Coventry archdeaconry was short-lived, but the sample is too small for purposes of comparison. 'Pluralism was more rare' by 1620, noted O'Day, who detected a significant change in the pattern of clerical careers, with tenurial mobility 'comparatively rare'. One possible explanation for this is that the development of their preaching and teaching skills may have encouraged incumbents to develop closer relationships with the communities they served. A more plausible reason is the rise of a new phenomenon - married clergy.

In the early sixteenth century, when clergy still had to pursue a celibate life, the average tenure of a benefice in Coventry archdeaconry was twenty-three years. By the middle of the century this had dipped to only eight years. From the 1560s onwards the situation improved so that by the end of the century the average tenure had been restored to the level of the early 1500s, with a growing number of clergy serving forty years or longer in one parish. In many cases of lengthy tenure in one place, therefore, marriage may well have been a factor. The evidence of wills, for example, suggests that some clergy were moved to purchase property for posterity, and nurtured the desire to settle wife and children in one place.

In Roger Barker's case this must have been particularly strong. Ordained in 1558, he had been curate of Binley before taking on first Ashow in 1565 and Cubbington in 1569, serving them in plurality before resigning both in 1572. He then spent a brief spell as an incumbent in London before returning to Coventry archdeaconry in 1575

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95. They were William Fayre, Robert Briscoe, John Barwell (Seckington and Newton Regis), John Foxe (Baxterley and Kingsbury) and Luke Smythe (Birmingham and Solihull, at which latter he had succeeded his kinsman Henry in 1590), all double-beneficed in Coventry archdeaconry, and Roger Moulde (Austrey, also vicar of Tamworth, Staffordshire), Roger Inckforbie (Ladbroke and rector of Standlake, Oxfordshire), and Henry Clerke (Leamington Priors, also vicar of Rowington, a Warwickshire parish in Worcester diocese).
96. Barratt, 'Condition of the clergy', pp. 145-6, 150.

to spend the next twenty-nine years as rector of Newbold-on-Avon, where he died in 1604. In his will, he bequeathed to his wife, Marie, the house and messuage he had bought in the adjoining parish of Bilton, making provision for his 'seven poor children'. When the destitute Welshman John James arrived at Avon Dassett in 1583 he was either unmarried or, possibly, a widower. At his death in 1617 he divided various properties which he had purchased in Avon Dassett and Fenny Compton to his second wife, Anne, and their two daughters. To Anne he left a house near Avon Dassett church, and 20s. to repair the pathway between the two - but was there an ulterior motive behind his bequest of £3 towards a tower clock?[97] John Richardson's whole ministry was spent as rector of Warmington, from 1572 until his death in 1602. He had lands in an adjacent parish, Mollington, which he left to his wife, Margaret, and made provision for his six children, of whom one, his son William, was not in England.[98]

For some at least, therefore, the raising of a family was surely not only a powerful incentive for domiciliary stability but an irresistible opportunity to exploit the opening of new windows into parishioners' souls. Celibate clergy in the pre-Reformation era may not have personally experienced the tensions of married life, but post-Settlement clergy wives became eyes and ears for their ordained husbands. Through child-birth and raising families their spouses became enmeshed in a network of relationships to which earlier generations of clerics were never so intimately exposed.

5.8. The non-beneficed, including chantrists

So far, the chapter has followed a chronological order and focused largely on the beneficed. Now the focus moves to the unbeneficed, whose terminological descriptions are not always given consistently in the sources. This section differs from those preceding it in another significant manner, for it is concerned with a large body of clergy who are generally less well-documented than beneficed incumbents, making analytical comparisons difficult (Fig. 13). On the other hand, this section looks at the fortunes of some who, made redundant when their respective establishments were dissolved, transferred to the parochial ministry. Since no previous survey has been conducted of this group of clergy in Coventry archdeaconry, this passage contributes towards an understanding of the fate of some former monks and chantrists who later entered the parochial ministry.

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97. LJRO, B/C/11/ 1604, Roger Barker.
98. TNA: PRO Prob 11, 14 Bolein, ff. 104v-5v.

No incontestable statement can be made regarding the frequency with which the unbeneficed moved from one appointment to another. Assistants were in no position to drive hard bargains, for they were constrained to seek employment on the best terms they could negotiate with prospective employers. Denied benefit of freehold, each was at the mercy of his employer. There are sound reasons for charting the movement of assistant clergy, where possible, for while some re-appear in a similar capacity elsewhere, others acquired a benefice, either in Coventry archdeaconry or in another jurisdiction. This sub-section is the appropriate forum for examining the relationship between non-resident incumbents and their deputies.

It is difficult to disagree with Hosker that, at least in certain respects, prior to the Reformation the unbeneficed 'were the very backbone of the local Church', a constituency which, as Philip Tyler observed, 'shored up the parochial system in pre-Reformation England'. The tenurial mobility of some less elusive examples of this substantial category will be scrutinised, especially since their social and pastoral significance and the sum total of chantries and other chapelries has never been fully probed. Mark Knight calculated that the total number of dispossessed 'chantry, obit and stipendiary priests' in Coventry was twenty-three.[99] The *raison d'être* of the unbeneficed was transformed after 1547 when chantries were abolished and ministerial priorities revised. The new protestant liturgy pared ceremonial to the bare minimum and obviated the ritual requirement for clerical assistants, thus effecting a huge reduction in their number. Moreover, in the new Prayer Book, recitation of the daily offices, Mattins and Evensong, was substituted for the Mass as a clerical obligation. At a stroke, in a dramatic change of pastoral emphasis, obits and requiems for the dead were banned in favour of sermons and pastoral instruction for the living. A further consequence, as Hill pointed out, was that because curates were not licensed to preach, parishioners with a non-resident incumbent were, potentially at least, 'deprived of spiritual food'.[100]

Chantrists were rarely responsible for the cure of souls, but in 1396, when papal licence was granted to found Knowle chapel, its clergy were accorded supervisory privileges independent of the incumbent, the vicar of Hampton-in-Arden. When a college of chantry priests was established at Knowle in 1416 the chapelry was in all but name elevated to parochial status. In 1548 the chantry commissioners reported that the rector, Gilbert Fowler, was 'appointed to be curate there'.[101] Elsewhere, too,

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99. P. Hosker, 'An edition of the register of Reginald Bowles, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield,1453-1459', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool (1978), p. 359; P. Tyler, 'The status of the Elizabethan parochial clergy', in G. J. Cuming, ed., *Studies in Church History* 4 (Leiden, 1967), p. 81; Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', p. 451.
100. Hill, *Economic Problems*, p. 224.
101. *Cal. Pap. R. 1362-1404*, p. 536; *CPR Henry V, 2, 1416-1422*, p. 47; TNA: PRO E 301/53, f. 2v,

chantrists assisted parochial clergy in the education of the young, participated in liturgical services, and recited the daily offices in the parish church. At Solihull, for example, which was reckoned to have some seven hundred houseling people, a chantry was founded for one priest to sing Mass, celebrate divine service in the parish church, and assist the rector in necessitous times by ministering all manner of sacraments and sacramentals to parishioners, most of whom dwelt from three to five miles from the church. In Coventry at least some chantrists were instructed to assist in the daily round of prayer in their respective churches.[102]

The distinction between chantrists who served amortised foundations and those engaged for prescribed periods ranging from a few weeks to several years is neatly described by Thompson.[103] It was recognised by scribes who regularly, but not consistently, entered 'career' chantrists' admissions in the bishops' registers but excluded others. Presumably there was a further motive for this - the levying of an episcopal fee for preliminary procedures such as the issue of a licence, possibly following an examination of the candidate's suitability.

The maximum number of chantrists whose tenurial longevity it is possible to estimate is twenty-seven, a sample too restricted for anything other than tentative comment. Eight chantrists (30%), had potentially life-long careers abruptly terminated when their foundations were compulsorily dissolved in 1547. At Stretton-on-Dunsmore, for example, John Shirborne was admitted to the chantry of St Thomas the Martyr in January 1544 and in June 1545, in the 'hedhouse' of the chantry, granted the foundation to Francis Everarde of London, for life, with remainder to the King. It is unclear who authorised the transaction, but Shirborne's subsequent career embraced a brief spell as vicar of Lillington prior to incumbencies in Essex, Cheshire and Lancashire.[104]

Seven other chantrists, none with less than six years' service, were recorded at the Dissolution, including John Stokes, aged sixty years, who had served Hillmorton chantry for twenty-nine years before being deprived of his livelihood. Instituted to King's Newnham vicarage in 1552, he died shortly afterwards and was succeeded within one month.[105] The two longest-serving sixteenth-century chantrists in Coventry archdeaconry, Henry Somerland (36 years at Meriden) and Richard Venton (54 years at Sheldon) died with the integrity of their careers intact in 1536 and 1538

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no. 23.

102. TNA: PRO E 301/31, ff. 17r-v; Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', p. 449.

103. A.H. Thompson, *The English Clergy and Their Organization in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1947), p. 136. See also Burgess, 'Strategies for eternity', pp. 9-14.

104. LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, ff. 40v, 43r; *LPFD Henry VIII, 20 (1)*, p. 438 no. 874; Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, 3, p. 1347.

105. LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 8v; B/A/1/14iv, f. 43r.

respectively. Founders of chantries sometimes erected a house to accommodate successive chaplains, often with a plot adjacent where garden produce could be grown, and they commonly bequeathed properties in perpetuity to provide chaplains' stipends. This kind of chantry attracted 'career chantrists', men like Venton, who dwelt in a chantry house on the north side of the churchyard and appears to have engaged in activities well beyond his own parish.[106]

Many priests dispossessed when chantries were abolished in 1547 never re-appeared in an active capacity. One was the Birmingham chantrist John Grene, who retired to Coleshill and died there in 1557.[107] Others acquired curacies or entered secular employment where they were relatively safe from prying bureaucrats. Robert Wheteley, for instance, was sub-dean of Astley College at its surrender in 1545, but became curate of Fillongley before retiring to Burton Hastings, where he died in 1557.[108] Some former Coventry archdeaconry chantrists acquired very lucrative livings, for example, William Wrexham of Aston who became rector of Birmingham, and Thomas Barnes, chantrist at Coventry Holy Trinity, rector of Solihull, where he was succeeded by his kinsman William in 1559.[109] Fellow chantrists at Coventry Holy Trinity, Richard Branker and Nicholas Caponhurst were successive vicars of the considerably less valuable living of Corley, while in 1550 and 1553, testators regarded Robert Walker as vicar of Stivichall, a dependency of Coventry St Michael. A former chantrist of St Michael's, William Matthew, succeeded Walker at Stivichall before becoming vicar of Ansty.[110] A small minority sought security in other dioceses. One such was Robert Shelmerdyn, chantrist at Solihull, who acquired Spernall and Morton Bagot, Warwickshire rectories in Worcester diocese, before transferring to Peterborough diocese where in 1562 he was instituted as rector of Haselbeech, Northamptonshire, dying there in 1579.[111]

There were gains as well as losses. Richard Budworth had been a guild priest at Henley-in-Arden, another Warwickshire parish in Worcester diocese, but he crossed into Coventry archdeaconry and become vicar of Leek Wootton in 1549. It was the vacancy caused by his death that Churchley filled ten years later. The cessation of ordinations in Coventry and Lichfield diocese in 1532, a phenomenon replicated in

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106. W.B. Bickley, *The Register of the Guild of Knowle in the County of Warwick, 1451-1535* (Walsall, 1894), p. 143 (Somerland); LJRO, B/A/1/12, f. 32v; *VCH Warwickshire*, 4, p. 205.
107. TNA: PRO E 135/1/24; LJRO, B/C/10i/5, unfol.
108. *LPFD Henry VIII, 20 (2)*, no. 825; LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 16r; LJRO, B/C/11/1546, Leonard Holbache and Thomas Averey; TNA: PRO E 178/3239/4, m. 4.
109. LJRO, B/A/1/15; ff. 1v (Wrexham), 2r (Thomas Barnes), 12r (William Barnes).
110. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff. 2r (Branker), 10v (Caponhurst); B/C/11/1550 John Barow; B/C/11/1553 Christopher Auncell (Walker); B/V/1/17, p. 34; B/V/1/16, p. 40; B/V/1/20, p. 75 (Matthew).
111. TNA: PRO E 334/4, f. 97v; NRO, 2109.2, where he was described as an 'unlearned stubborn priest late of the diocese of Worcester' ordered to remain in Northamptonshire.

most other dioceses, reduced a potential surplus of unbeneficed clergy to more manageable proportions.[112] Numerically, the existing clerical cohort was barely capable of filling vacated benefices and curacies without compromising the pastoral efficiency of the parochial ministry.

In the circumstances, the most sophisticated analysis possible demonstrates that chantrists' tenurial patterns were roughly similar to those of beneficed incumbents. Given that the sample is too small to argue that it is typical of this category, four (15%) served two years or less in their chantry, while the most characteristic term, three-to-ten years, was enjoyed by eleven chantrists (40%), with a further seven (26%) enjoying eleven-to-twenty years in office. Somerland and Venton were untypical, comprising only 8% of the whole, but scrutiny of the reasons for voidance cautions against adopting a simplistic assessment of chantrists' longevity. For example, William Bate died in office less than two years after being appointed in 1534. Yet he was priested in 1507 and held Withybrooke vicarage for at least twelve years before exchanging it with John Dawby for Allesley's chantry in Coventry Holy Trinity. It is hazardous to suggest motives, but a chamber in Jesus Hall, the priests' common lodging, was easier to maintain than a mansion. Moreover, a chantrist's responsibilities were less stressful than those of a beneficed incumbent.[113]

There is something singularly odd about the choice of Anthony Molineux as chaplain of Copston's chantry in Coventry cathedral priory in 1528. This was the most desirable chantry in the archdeaconry, its annual income of £12 8s. 2d. being superior to that enjoyed by many beneficed incumbents. Now Molineux was academically highly-qualified and hailed from a family possessing wealth, influence and important ecclesiastical patronage rights in Lancashire. Three significant clues suggest that Molineux was that rare example, a non-resident chantrist. In the first place, when admitted to the chantry he was represented by a proxy, a leading member of the Coventry oligarchy named John Bond. Second, in 1533 Molineux was only assessed on £5. Molineux's contract to pay John Fletcher, his predecessor, an annual life pension of five marks *in humanis*, was a legitimate deduction, but it still left a handsome excess of about £9. The probable rationale is that Molineux hired a substitute to discharge his responsibilities in Coventry for £4 *per annum*, a fairly standard rate for chantrists. Third, that a man with influential connexions would eschew the opportunity to participate in the city's social activities is improbable, yet not once was Molineux named among those who attended the dinners of Coventry's hugely important Corpus Christi Guild. One further twist argues that Bond secured

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112. TNA: PRO E 301/57, f. 3v, no. 30; TNA: PRO E 334/4, f. 23r. Budworth's institution was not recorded, but he compounded in February 1549; LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 29v.
113. LJRO, B/A/1/14iii, f. 13r; B/A/1/14ii, unfol.

the chaplaincy for Molineux to enhance his personal standing with the Molineux clan. On 3 December 1538 Bond lay dying in the rectory at Sefton, which benefice lay in the gift of the Molineux family. There composing his will, he appointed as executors his wife Ellen and her brother, the newly-appointed rector of Sefton, Anthony Molineux, doctor of divinity.[114]

Apart from chantrists there was a vast assortment of unbeneficed clergy (see Chapter 2.6 above). They are not well-documented and are extremely difficult to trace. Furthermore, the 'large number of common surnames make personal identification often hazardous'.[115] In 1522, the forty-seven unbeneficed clergy who mustered included chantrists drawn from only twelve parishes. The statistics compiled here therefore represent an extremely narrow and untypical sample, for the two Coventry parishes account for thirty-five of those assistants and Wolston for three. Yet as the only secure evidence available for that decade they provide a tentative launching-pad for subsequent calculations. The movements of all forty-seven and the careers of twenty-two of them can be traced with reasonable confidence. None of the remainder was found in 1533, with the possible exception of Thomas Holmes of Coventry Holy Trinity, one of perhaps three contemporaries of that name. Disentangling their respective movements is thwarted by a dearth of evidence, but it is possible that Holmes was vicar of Weston-under-Wetherley from 1530 until his death in 1540.

TAB. 5.8

Mobility of 47 unbeneficed clergy and chantrists detected 1522

missing or dead by 1533	25	53%
In the same parish in 1533	18	38%
In different unbeneficed ministry 1533	4	9%
Total	47	100%

Some unbeneficed noted before 1522 had disappeared by 1533 (Tab. 5.8). For example, John Illage, ordained in 1476, served at Coventry St Michael from at least 1501 until the final reference to him in 1522. At Coventry Holy Trinity Christopher Ive served from 1490 and was last mentioned in 1525. Suggestive of a certain amount of internal mobility within the city was the ministry of Thomas Morres, who served both the Coventry churches in turn between his ordination in 1504 and death in 1541.[116]

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114. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp. 25, *passim;* BL, Harl. MS 594, f. 118v; LJRO, B/A/1/14i, f. 14v; TNA: PRO PROB 11, F.19 Dyngeley, ff. 151-2.
115. Zell, 'Personnel of the clergy in Kent', p. 515.
116. LJRO, B/A/1/12, f. 256r; CCA, Acc. 24/1, ff. 97v, 99r-v; BA/B/Q/23/1, *passim*.

An impressive example of mobility over a very long period is furnished by the career of John Bateman. He probably joined Holy Trinity as a 24-year-old soon after his ordination in 1521. By 1533 he was listed at St Michael and, in 1573 at the advanced age of 82, curate of Allesley.[117]

Discussion of longevity raises an important topic, for in his study of Durham clergy Denham suggested that 'the true test of origins for the unbeneficed would be longevity of tenure'. He argued the 'strong likelihood' that unbeneficed clergy who drew poor stipends 'were local men', since those with education and 'the right contacts' would seek more lucrative employment elsewhere. He thought it 'fair to postulate that the longer a priest...remained bound to a particular area, the more likely he was to have come from that very area'.[118] Knight has demonstrated that between 1485 and 1558 the two Coventry parish churches were staffed by a number of local men.[119] In the rest of the archdeaconry there is evidence that, before the Reformation at least, both beneficed and unbeneficed sometimes returned to minister in parishes close to where they were brought up.

Few examples occur of assistants in 1522 who subsequently acquired benefices. Nicholas Wykes, ordained in 1517 and a chaplain at Holy Trinity in 1522, was instituted as rector of Willey in 1523 and resigned in 1539. He was very likely that Nicholas Wykes who died as rector of a Gloucestershire parish in 1570. Beyond the walled city lay a phalanx of parishes whose stipendiary clergy were appointed by the Prior of Coventry. They did not enjoy benefit of freehold yet sometimes tarried for several years without further promotion. For example, John Smith served Shilton from at least 1512-41, William Amerson (a chaplain at Coventry Holy Trinity in 1522) was vicar of Foleshill from 1529-44, and John Wolley served Ansty from at least 1522-48. All three died in office. Evidence respecting assistants in rural parishes is weak. In 1522 John Redyard was curate of Stretton-on-Dunsmore, was admitted as chantrist there in 1536 and died in 1541. The parish priest at Stockton, Robert Pykhamer, mustered in 1522 and was still ministering there when he died in 1534.

Evidence gathered for the period 1533-58, though considerable, is fragmentary and not amenable to tabular analysis. During that quarter-century the number of assistant clergy shrank by two-thirds, from 122 in 1533 to thirty-eight in 1558, when only seven assistant clergy remained of those who had paid their subsidy in 1533. Many unbeneficed disappeared from view after 1533 as a result of a twenty-five year

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117. LJRO, B/A/1/14ii, unfol; B/C/10i/1, p. 7; B/V/1/8, p. 11; CCA, Acc. 24/1; TNA: PRO E 301/57, f. 2r no. 21.

118. L.M. Stevens Benham, 'The Durham clergy, 1494-1540: a study of continuity and mediocrity among the unbeneficed', in D. Marcombe, ed., *The Last Principality: Politics, Religion and Society in the Bishopric of Durham, 1494-1660* (Nottingham, 1987), p. 9.

119. Knight, 'Religious life in Coventry', *passim*.

lacuna in the Lichfield archives. Even Margaret Bowker and Christopher Haigh, equipped with sources more generous than are available at Lichfield, could not categorically solve similar problems in their own areas of research.

In Lancashire between 1548-54, 32% of the chantrists and 48% of the non-beneficed 'vanished inexplicably', while in other counties well over half of all unbeneficed disappeared during the 1540s. Perhaps like some of Haigh's Lancashire clergy, they 'simply retired into private life'.[120] Some married unbeneficed may have sidled into secular occupations after 1554, abandoning their orders rather than their wives. Birmingham survivors such as Thomas Comberbache and Henry Fensam, erstwhile guild chaplains, obtained curacies there until in 1556 Comberbache became vicar of Dunton, Bedfordshire. Fensam died at the age of sixty-six in 1557, but the fate of another Birmingham priest, Thomas Allen, is not known, other than that he was still receiving a pension in the mid-1550s.[121] Richard Lago's career was more durable. Curate of Great Harborough in 1533, he was admitted to Hurley chantry in Kingsbury parish in 1546 but dispossessed after only one year and re-instated as curate there and at Baxterley, the adjoining parish. He died in 1573. Another long-serving Kingsbury assistant was Thomas Whyte, ordained in 1499 and still active in that parish at least between 1533-52.[122]

Few curates were ever beneficed. John Hessam, probably curate of Allesley since his ordination in 1524, acquired the living of Stoneleigh in 1545 but his reason for vacating in 1560 is not recorded. He may have migrated to Staverton, Northamptonshire, where a John Hessam witnessed many wills between 1561 and his death in 1571.[123] Edmund Milnerson, curate of Bubbenhall in 1557, was instituted to Baginton in 1558 but promptly died.[124]

Visitation call-books from 1558 onwards furnish occasional information on the deployment of some parochial assistants. Of the unbeneficed in the 1558 visitation, it proved impossible to reconcile conflicting data regarding William Clerke, John Johnson and Thomas Warde. Of the remainder, twelve (31%) acquired benefices in Coventry archdeaconry or elsewhere, and ten (26%) either remained as curates in the same parish or re-located to a curacy elsewhere. Only John Swanne of

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120. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 153; Bowker, *Henrician Reformation*, p. 127; A.G. Dickens, *The Marian Reaction in the Diocese of York: Part I, The Clergy* (London, 1957), p. 14.
121. C.W. Foster, 'Institutions to benefices in the diocese of Lincoln in the sixteenth century', *Lincolnshire Notes & Queries* 6 (1901), p. 146; TNA: PRO E 135/1/24; *Deputy Keeper's Report, Appendix to the 49th Report* (London, 1888), p. 213.
122. SBTRO, DR 37/vol. 41, f. 39r; LJRO, B/A/1/14iv, f. 41v; B/V/1/4, p. 47; TNA: PRO E 135/1/24; LJRO, B/C/11, Whyte's name appears in a series of seven wills during those years.
123. H.I. Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy, 1500-1900* (15 vols, Northampton, 1939-1943), 5, p. 259.
124. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 10v; B/C/11/Edmund Milnerson, 1558.

Dunchurch is known to have died while still a curate, comprising a significantly smaller mortality rate than that suffered by beneficed incumbents, although as fresh evidence emerges a more accurate assessment will be possible.[125]

Four assistants, Robert Dypsye at Bilton (admitted - and died - 1559), William Goddard at Bourton-on-Dunsmore (admitted 1559, resigned 1562), William Nycklyn at Fenny Compton (admitted 1559, died 1574) and William Rowley at Grendon (admitted 1558 and deprived 1579) were presented to benefices where they were already serving as curates. All succeeded the incumbent they had served under, and with clergy in short supply, succession of this sort begs the question whether they were deliberately selected or did patrons present them through default of choice. When Nuneaton fell vacant in 1558 the (presumably *pro hac vice*) patron, Robert Langley, presented the curate of neighbouring Chilvers Coton, James Lingart, who died in 1561.[126]

The deployment of assistants in 1558 suggests that eight (21%) were ministering in nine of twenty-two parishes with pluralist incumbents. At Allesley and Dunchurch, Hugh Henshaw and John Swanne respectively were curates to incumbents who held other livings in the diocese, Thomas Steele being a vicar-choral at Lichfield cathedral , and Thomas Bolte, rector of Handsworth, Staffordshire. It is not known what other promotions were held by William Basse, Robert Dypsie's employer at Bilton, but it is assumed that he was an absentee rector because he had previously employed Henry Milner as his parish priest there. Almost certainly, William Goddard of Bourton-on-Dunsmore was a kinsman of Henry Goddard, who had the rectory at farm from James Tansfield and who doubtless installed him as parish priest. The unnamed curate of Churchover was answerable to Thomas Warmington, who resided in Buckinghamshire, while William Nycklyn at Fenny Compton and Thomas Warde at Fillongley served incumbents who held Northamptonshire livings, William Dawson and Thurstan Morrey. [127]

Unusually, but not uniquely, John Johnson served two incumbents, Thomas Gardiner at Cubbington and William Huband at Solihull. Both his employers were pluralists who probably alternated with him between serving their second benefices, Willoughby and Ipsley respectively. Haigh concluded that for assistant clergy in Lancashire, 'pluralism was one of the few legal ways by which an adequate income could be secured', such as the chantrist in 1521 who held a freehold benefice in Essex and the chaplain who also served a cure in Somerset.[128] The only other

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125. WCRO, DR 73/1, f. 13r.
126. LJRO, B/A/1/15, ff.11v, 12r-v; 30r-v, 46v, 48r.
127. LJRO, B/V/1/2, *passim*; B/C/11/William Prest, 1558.
128. C. Haigh, 'The Reformation in Lancashire to 1558', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester (1969), p. 111.

evidence of that kind of pluralism in Coventry archdeaconry was William Churchley, simultaneously chantrist at Aston and at Kidderminster, Worcestershire, sixteen miles distant as the crow flies. His chantries suppressed, he remained in the parish of Aston as curate of Castle Bromwich, until in 1559 he was presented to Leek Wootton vicarage, where he died in 1569. Churchley's curacy at Aston is well-documented, although McHardy found that 'the names of chaplains were linked to chapelries only in exceptional cases'.[129]

Some parishes with pluralist incumbents were probably served by retired clergy. For example, although no assistant clergy were listed at Nuneaton, it is inconceivable that that populous parish was bereft of clergy while its incumbent, Nicholas Cartwright, was domiciled in Banbury. Three clerical employees of the abbey may well have settled in the district after the Dissolution and ministered to the inhabitants, while clergy pensioners Robert Glyn, Richard Inge, Robert Pate and Ralph Tomson were buried in the parish, indicating that they were residents.[130] The highest proportion of assistants in 1558 were the twenty-one (54%) deployed in dependent chapelries. For instance, John Marpole, Reginald Wright and William Waterhouse, serving the Whitacres and Lea Marston respectively, were curates of the mother church of Coleshill. Thomas More was a long-serving curate of Milverton, in Leek Wootton parish, and John Todde of Hunningham, a dependency of Weston-under-Wetherley. Only five assistant clergy (13%) were now attached to the two Coventry parishes, four at St Michael and one at Holy Trinity, demonstrating how severely the Reformation had impaired the prospects of clergy seeking employment in the city. The remaining seven assistants (18%) were either deployed in parishes where the living was vacant, such as John Christopher at Baxterley, James Lingart at Mancetter and Robert Stephens of Baddesley Clinton, or where incumbents required cover owing to age, illness, or absence on extra-parochial business. At Grendon, for example, William Rowley was curate to Edmund Woodsend who occasionally acted as surrogate Vicar-General and similarly at Coleshill, Geoffrey Holdryngton was curate to John Fenton, official of Coventry.[131]

It was common practice for incumbents, as well as monasteries, to 'farm out' their benefices, such cases often being detected by chance.[132] An interesting phenomenon has been observed which may be worthy of mention within the context

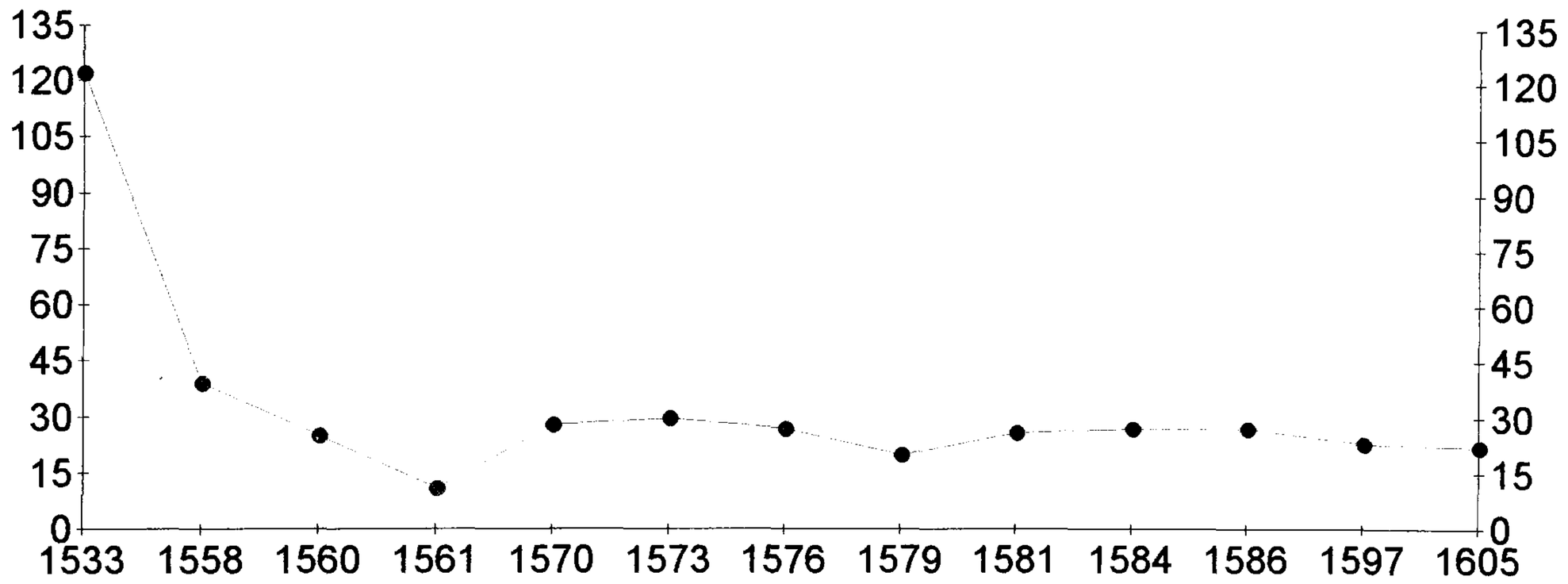
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129. BL, Harl. MS 594, f. 122r; LJRO, B/V/1/2, p. 88; B/A/1/15, f. 29v; Nash, *Worcestershire*, 2, pp. 58, 474; A.K. McHardy, 'Careers and disappointments in the late-medieval Church: some English evidence', in W.J. Sheils and D. Wood, eds, *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay* (Oxford, 1989), p. 116.
130. TNA: PRO E 178/3239/4, mem. 4.
131. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 15v; B/V/1/2, p. 87.
132. R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (pb edn, Oxford, 1993), see especially pp. 238-42.

of pluralism. In three separate examples of incumbents leasing their benefices, the principal lessee was a layman charged with the responsibility of finding a priest to serve the parish, and in each case a priest was named as co-lessee. In 1498, when John Hall leased Wormleighton vicarage for five years to William Cooper, the King's cofferer, his co-lessee was John Harryes, chaplain.[133] Similarly, in about 1501, Thomas Waren leased out his vicarage of Nuneaton to Richard Smith, for three years during which Robert Lowes, priest, was to dwell in the mansion and Smith was to pay him his wages for ministering to the pastoral needs of the parish and serve the cure.[134] A later example occurred in 1550. William Bennet leased out Coventry Holy Trinity vicarage to John Talontes, a goldsmith, and John Farmer, clerk, for seven years. The lessees were to meet all parochial liabilities, and find a curate. Since Farmer had been a guild priest in the city it is probable that he then undertook the pastoral care of the parish.[135]

FIG. 13

Number of unbeneficed clergy, including chantrists, 1533-1605



Sources: BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 118r-123v; LJRO, B/V/1/2, 4, 5, 7-9, 11, 13, 15, 19-20, 23-24

Evidence regarding assistant clergy between 1561-70 is scant. Diocesan sources remained habitually taciturn, and no visitation call-books survive for the intervening period. Clergy appear less frequently in probate wills, a hitherto prolific source. This reflects the increasingly secular nature of society, for with the expansion of lay literacy, testators invited neighbours to act as witnesses and executors, reducing the dominant death-bed role once played by the clergy. It is disappointing that two *extra*-diocesan surveys of the state of the ministry only concern beneficed clergy and

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133. NRO, Spencer MS 1678; *VE*, 3, pp. 64, 69.
134. TNA: PRO C 273/5; SBTRO, DR 37/vol. 41, f. 38r.
135. WCRO, DR 429/74; DR 581/45, f. 21r.

mostly disregarded assistant clergy. Archbishop Parker's enquiry of 1562 identifies only one curate not otherwise known, Edmund Swindels of Upper Whitacre.[136]

In 1565 bishops were required to state the number of vacant livings in their dioceses, how long they had remained unoccupied and for what reason. Four curates were named as receiving the fruits of the benefices they served, but a further nineteen benefices were completely unserved. It is possible that Francis Duckett, described as curate of Radway, was synonymous with the Francis Duckett who had just resigned the rectory of Sarsden, Oxfordshire, which he had held since 1562. Radway was said to have been vacant since the death of the last vicar eight years previously.[137]

By 1569 two curates had re-located, Anthony Offley of Bickenhill to become vicar of Leek Wootton, where he died in 1587, and John Mosse of Withybrooke to a curacy at Caldecote, where he became a rare Coventry archdeaconry example of a pluralist curate, for he also served at Chilvers Coton, about four miles distant. Thomas Gilbert, of Fillongley, appears to have died in 1582, after which his son was presented to the living.[138]

Miscellaneous evidence yields the names of other assistants. One Birmingham curate sometime between 1564-78, John Littleton, was also a schoolmaster, while Edward Waite (1560-83) was one of two curates named in the Solihull parish book. The other, William Osborne, was named in 1568 only because he owed the churchwardens 6s. 8d.. He moved to Wappenbury as curate in 1570.[139]

The names of many hitherto undetected assistants would surface if every surviving sixteenth-century parish register, and literally thousands of wills, were minutely examined. Meanwhile, just about all that is currently known about assistant clergy during this decade of silence has been assembled. All the available evidence suggests, however, that during this period assistant clergy were not averse to moving from one curacy to another, and that not all acquired a freehold benefice.

After 1570, *libri cleri* appear at more regular intervals and information about assistant clergy is more forthcoming.[140] Of the thirty-eight assistant clergy named at the 1558 visitation, thirteen left no further trace in any sources examined. Of the

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136. BL, Harl. MS 594, ff. 118r-23v; CCC Camb., MS 97, f. 32v.
137. Frere, *Registrum Matthei Parker*, p. 1011; TNA: PRO SP 15/12/108, ff. 253r-v; S.S. Pearce, 'The clergy of the deaneries of Chipping Norton and Deddington and the peculiars of Banbury and Cropredy during the settlement of 1559 and afterwards', *Oxfordshire Archaeological Society Report* 1916 (1917), p. 43.
138. LJRO, B/A/1/15, f. 43v; B/V/1/7, p. 35.
139. W.B. Bickley and J. Hill, eds, *Birmingham Parish Register* (Birmingham, 1889), p. viii; G.L. Bishop, ed., *Solihull Parish Book 1525-1720* (Birmingham, 1977), pp. 69, 72, 73, 77, 80, 82; Fry, *Register of Solihull Vol. 1*, p. 179.
140. LJRO, B/V/1/7-9, 11,13, 15, 19-20, 23-24.

remaining twenty-five, twelve went on to acquire a benefice and another eight re-located to curacies elsewhere, but only two survivors had failed to receive promotion by 1570. Roger Prestbury was curate of Priors Marston, a chapelry in Priors Hardwick parish, in 1558, but subsequently moved to the chapelry of Chadshunt. Perhaps because the mother church of Bishop's Itchington had been without a vicar for about twelve years and the chapel possessed full sacramental rights, Prestbury was mistakenly described in a 1570 indenture as 'vicar' of Chadshunt.[141] In 1557 Thomas Moore, chantrist of Guys Cliffe, near Warwick, 1521-47, was curate of Milverton, a chapelry of Leek Wootton, where he remained at least as late as the 1573 visitation, the last known reference to him.[142]

At Churchover, John Jonson was curate to Roger Elyot, whose principal benefice, Sutton Coldfield, lay marginally within the thirty-mile limit from Churchover, but appalling conditions on the direct route, the Watling Street, probably proved too much of a deterrent to travellers even in the sixteenth century. Although Willey lay only ten miles from his Leicestershire living of Willoughby Waterleys, John Debank hired Hugh Jones as his curate there, since he also held livings in Northamptonshire and Essex. Even as poor a living as Harbury had a pluralist vicar, for Robert Crofts, who resided on his Berkshire benefice of Marcham, hired Ralph Kent to administer his Warwickshire parish. Before moving to a curacy and subsequent 53-year incumbency at Coleshill, Ralph Fox was Henry Blakemore's curate at Sheldon.

Apart from those engaged to cover for absentee incumbents, several curates ministered during parochial interregna. John Mosse and later John Barton covered at Withybrooke during a thirteen-year vacancy. A succession of curates, Thomas Stanershe, William Osborne, Anthony Spurryer and John Bolton, maintained the pastoral ministry during the interregnum at Wappenbury between 1557 and 1582, while for at least twenty-three years, 1564-87, Richard Bettes ministered as curate of Kenilworth. They were years during which Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, held court in the castle and famously entertained Queen Elizabeth there. Before his death, the earl also 'repaired and beautified the chancel', setting up his coat of arms on the east wall.[143]

Some territorially extensive parishes maintained chapelries with curates in charge long after many chapels had been made redundant following Henrician and Edwardian commissions. Demographics partly explain this. Much of modern Birmingham lay in the parish of Aston, where as late as 1517 a new chapel was

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141. SBTRO, DR 98/1197. I am grateful to my wife, Penny, for this reference, and for supplying vital background information. Chadshunt was never a vicarage during the study period and no institutions were recorded there.
142. *LPFD Henry VIII, 3 pt 2*, p. 1180, no.2807 (23); LJRO, B/C/11/1557 John Cross; B/V/1/8, p. 169.
143. WCRO, DR 598/2, p. 2.

founded to accommodate the expanding population of [Water] Orton. Elsewhere, flooding sometimes prevented distant parishioners attending their parish church. When the college of Knowle was suppressed in 1547 the collegiate church survived and its rector remained in office as curate there only because it was considered...

> very Necessarye that the said Chappell do stande For that the people shall not be hable in Wynter to come to their p[ar]oche churche, Whiche ys Hampton being two miles from Knoll and devided ffrom the same w[i]t[h] a greate and daungerowse water w[hi]ch in winter at eu[er]ye Raine so Rageth and ou[er]floweth all the Cuntrey theare abowte that neyther man nor beaste can passe w[i]thowte ymmynent daunger of peryshing.[144]

Indeed, after prolonged rainfall the River Blythe to this very day overflows and submerges large tracts of surrounding countryside.

5.9. Conclusion

Research has uncovered evidence that during the sixteenth century, the incidence of pluralism in Coventry archdeaconry was somewhat greater than had been anticipated. In 1500, for example, twenty-one incumbents out of fifty-nine are now known to have held other benefices. These represented some 36% of all the archdeaconry's incumbents at that time, although a further 59% of them never held any other benefice. When the Pluralism Act was passed in 1529, the number of Coventry archdeaconry pluralists was at its zenith, twenty-five, but significant changes occurred as a result of the Henrician assault on the Church.

By 1547, the proportion of pluralists had fallen to thirteen, a mere 15% of all incumbents in Coventry archdeaconry, indicating that the 1529 Pluralism Act had begun to make an impact there. Within two decades, however, discord and disease had depleted the parochial ministry to an extent where pluralism was embraced as a necessary alternative to leaving benefices vacant. But the fifteen-strong pluralistic cohort in 1558 had risen to nineteen (26% of the total workforce) in 1562, while the hierarchy strove desperately to recruit men for the ministry. During the remainder of the sixteenth century pluralism began to decline, for in 1571 only twelve incumbents had more than one benefice, reducing even further, to eight in 1603. Yet notwithstanding the best efforts of parliament and reformers alike, pluralism was still flourishing in that year, when in Coventry archdeaconry fewer parishes were being served by pluralist incumbents than at any time during the previous century.

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144. Bickley, *Register of the Guild of Knowle*, p. xxxi.

Many late-Elizabethan pluralist incumbents were no longer motivated by the desire for self-aggrandisement. Instead, because inflation had reduced the value of many poorer benefices to less than subsistence level, they had become pluralists of necessity, simply to gain no more than a modest financial security. The need to hire a curate was obviated when two contiguous or nearby benefices could be served single-handedly, but a surplus income from a second living provided some incumbents an economic cushion wherewith to engage a curate in the parish where they themselves were non-resident. The crown eschewed the practice of employing clerical careerists and rewarding them with rich, widely-separated livings on which they never resided.

Human and natural elements both played a part in determining patterns of benefice tenure. It is calculated that the average tenure of those whose incumbencies spanned the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was twenty-five years. Between 1501-22 the average tenure was only slightly less at twenty-three years, but the unsettling effects of religious vicissitudes and high mortality 1534-59 were reflected in an abnormally high number of benefice voidances which significantly reduced the average incumbency to only fourteen years' duration. Indeed, the most troubled years, 1547-58, saw average tenures plunge to a mere eight years. As experiential memories of religious fratricide faded, however, confidence in the Established Church recovered and a new generation of protestant clergy ensured pastoral continuity, with incumbencies averaging eighteen years by the end of the sixteenth century.

It was found to be a characteristic of the sixteenth century that the majority of clergy never ministered for more than ten years in one benefice, except between 1500-22 when the proportion of those vacating a benefice in less than ten years was only 15%. This more than doubled to 32% between 1522-47. The next period, 1547-58, was the most disturbed, when the proportion of incumbents staying ten years or less reached as much as 69%, a figure which reduced by stages from 49% in the period 1559-70 to 43.7% between 1571-1603.[145]

While this suggests that problems of conscience and pastoral practice may have been substantially overcome by the close of the Tudor period, research has also revealed that many of the clergy serving longer tenures were married. It is suggested, therefore, that this was a significant factor, for it encouraged them to remain in one parish as their children grew. Indeed, a few examples have been been extracted from their wills of clergy who purchased property which they bequeathed to their widows and off-spring.

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145. See Tabs 5.2-5.6, above.

Historians agree that the permanently unbeneficed are difficult to trace, for which very reason generous space has been allotted to them in this chapter. The huge reduction in the number of assistant clergy after 1559 is associated, at least in part, with the changing face of pluralism. Some have considered that the decline in the number of parochial assistants may be attributed to parsimonious pluralists refusing to employ curates because they had been denied tax relief. Whereas in the early sixteenth century 'pure pluralists' occupied benefices where they were obliged to engage deputies, their virtual extinction by the 1550s, together with the soaring effects of inflation and taxation, led inevitably to an upsurge of 'poor pluralists', men whose very subsistence depended on holding two benefices which, producing a modest income, they could supervise single-handedly without the services of a curate, except in cases of old age or illness.

Chantrists and guild chaplains were secular clergy made redundant by the passing of the Chantries Act in 1547. By definition they were not parochial clergy in the sense of being assistants answerable to the incumbent, for their employers were either chantry administrators or guild officials. It has been demonstrated by reference to the chantry certificates that many of these clergy were required to take part in parochial activities, and most of them probably assisted at the parish Mass every Sunday, so parishioners would not have regarded them as strangers. For those who later embraced the parochial ministry, therefore, their pastoral experience, however limited, would have equipped them for the task. This chapter has also furnished fresh evidence of chantrists' activities in Coventry archdeaconry, and of parochial chaplains whose bewildering range of descriptive labels defy neat categorisation.

Reforms introduced by the Pluralism Act of 1529 were long overdue, for the system whereby the wealthy and well-connected were showered with benefices by kings, magnates and prelates alike was manifestly unfair. That it took time to act was inevitable. The redistribution of monastic advowsons, the loss of political influence by the episcopacy, economic and demographic fluctuations in the parishes and, not least, the re-alignment of pastoral priorities, all contributed towards a radical change in the character of pluralism itself. Pluralist incumbents were no longer the rich and socially refined, but, rather, pastors of relatively small means who could not subsist on the income from a single benefice. But pluralism was a double-edged sword, for the demise of the system which permitted 'careerists' to be habitually absent from their benefices extinguished the prospects of a less glamorous career for those who were equally dependent upon it.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the issues raised by the anonymous writer of the introduction to the Church of England Database quoted at the head of Chapter 1. It has focused upon the number and deployment of the clergy both before and after the severance from Rome, patronage, and the extent, nature and destiny of pluralism, and examined these topics in the context of continuity and change.

In setting the scene, Chapter 2 described the unique characteristics of Coventry archdeaconry, its four deaneries wedded to ancient territorial boundaries, and the administrative distribution of their heterogeneous parishes. Hierarchical structures were scrutinised with respect to personnel, beginning with an examination of the diocesan bishop's authority and influence within the archdeaconry. The office of the archdeacon was similarly scrutinised and the elusive role of rural deans. Most particularly, the typology of parochial clergy was delineated, and evidence of clerical community teased out.

Religious turbulence dramatically changed English ecclesiastical settings in the sixteenth century and provided unique opportunities for a radical restructuring of the diocesan and parochial system and, indeed, of abolishing episcopal government altogether in favour of a continental protestant pattern. That did not happen, and the existing models of diocesan and parochial government, including the ecclesiastical courts, were preserved almost entirely in their accustomed fashion. The majority of churchgoers must have been content that the parochial structures survived virtually intact, whether or not they deplored the passing of familiar patterns of worship.

Chapter 2 is important for refuting the argument that ordination titles were a legal fiction. This is comprehensively rejected here in favour of a novel interpretation of their purpose. It was contended that the fairly rapid and uniform adoption of monastic titles was probably a calculated episcopal device to control the secular employment of ordained persons who subsequently slipped beyond the reach of episcopal sanction. The title then became a label indicating where candidates had been examined prior to ordination. It was considered unlikely that most monastic inmates were sufficiently competent to participate in the examination process itself, which in any case was the bishop's own responsibility. But since monastic heads were respected figureheads and enjoyed the confidence of the 'managerial' classes, they

would have had access to information regarding parochial staff requirements which could be passed on to ordinands ready to enter the full-time ministry. Their familiarity with such issues, and the further advantage of having guest houses where their title-holders could be accommodated for short periods, doubtless explains why monasteries came to dominate the granting of ordination titles.

Numbers and deployment are compelling subjects because of the transformation of the parochial ministry both in numerical strength and in character, during the course of the sixteenth century. Chapter 3 aimed to calculate the number of parochial clergy employed in Coventry archdeaconry at various intervals during the sixteenth century; to examine how those clergy were deployed; to compare the ratio of beneficed to unbeneficed as the century progressed; and to investigate the recruitment and ordination of candidates to the ministry especially in the wake of mid-century religious crises. It was ascertained that during the sixteenth century the aggregate of beneficed incumbents remained fairly constant, except during the unusually-troubled 1560s. Before the 1540s the 'clerical proletariat' considerably outnumbered beneficed clergy. After the dissolution of the monasteries and chantries, a whole limb of ministerial activity was amputated when prayer for the dead was abolished by statutory decree. Sections were grafted into the parochial structure, but the painful transfusion may be seen in retrospect as granting temporary stability to an ailing body gasping for recovery of its integrity. By the end of the sixteenth century there were clear signs of a better-educated clergy.

The regular sequence of ordinations ground to a halt after Edward's accession, while Marian ordinations made little impact before the reaction ran its course and a new protestant agenda was implemented. An ensuing dearth of clergy galvanised the hierarchy into ordaining large numbers, many lacking social and intellectual skills, while better-qualified men spurned ordination, deterred by the prospects of poverty, cultural deprivation, mediocre job-satisfaction and peer contempt.[1] By 1558 an irreversible development saw the beneficed outnumber assistants. Clerical recruitment must have distinctly improved by 1570, since after that date most Coventry archdeaconry benefices were occupied. Assistant clergy never again outnumbered the beneficed.

Chapter 3 considered the problem of over-supply of ordinands and concluded that this has been exaggerated. First, it was contended that most clergy in minor orders were never employed by the Church, but remained in their secular environment until they were in deacons orders. During this probationary period they received instruction from their own local clergy and made an appropriate contribution to parish

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1. See, for instance, C. Haigh, 'Anti-clericalism and clericalism, 1580-1640', in N. Aston and M. Cragoe, eds, *Anticlericalism in Britain c.1500-1914* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 18-9.

worship. Thus they received rudimentary training in their chosen vocation while simultaneously earning a living wage with which to defray expenses prior to their first official ecclesiastical appointment, that is, their 'title', which guaranteed an income until such time as they moved to another job.

Second, it was suggested that although there was indeed a vast number of curacies, chaplaincies and particularly temporary 'prayer fellowships', they alleviated a genuinely-felt pastoral need. Because these have been hidden from investigative research owing to chronic under-recording, however, historians have been misled into hypothesising that the newly-ordained were obsessed with acquiring a benefice. It was argued that most sixteenth-century parochial clergy happily exercised a subsidiary ministry. Since parishes possessed neither the facilities nor the need to retain evidence of contractual agreements once they had expired, they were systematically purged, bequeathing a veil of silence over the activities of this most ubiquitous and mysterious sector of the clerical fraternity. Third, that so many men would enthusiastically embrace the Church as a career knowing (what, surely, would have been obvious to contemporaries) they were doomed to unemployment, was rejected as an incredulous concept. Fourth, it was reckoned that mortality, retirements, resignations and other vacations would have tolerated the absorption of surplus clergy without jeopardizing the livelihood of the existing work-force. It was demonstrated how many urban centres suffered a significant reduction in the number of their parochial clergy at the same time as their populations were expanding. It is suggested that this laid the grounds for future dissent.

Chapter 4 investigated the composition and character of parochial patronage. Attention was paid to the redistribution of livings appropriated to monasteries and advowsons held by monks, and how significantly this affected the parochial ministry. Various other types of patronage have been explored, as well as the union of benefices, and simony.

Prior to the dissolution of the monasteries the majority of advowsons were in the hands of the religious. It has been demonstrated that fifty-five livings came under monastic control and that despite the termination of monastic patronage in 1539, their share of presentations to benefices was as high as 21% in the period 1500-79. They also owned a greater share of the more valuable livings in Coventry archdeaconry, favouring graduates in some appointments, but generally exhibiting no specific grounds for choice. While monasteries enjoyed a notional monopoly of ecclesiastical patronage, most individual houses fared little better than other patrons.

In 1500 only a handful of advowsons came under royal patronage in Coventry archdeaconry, and they mostly by default. After the Dissolution, however, the crown

retained thirty-one. Whereas in the early sixteenth century its protégés were often wealthy well-connected pluralists, and in mid-century crown appointments tended to be influenced by ecclesiastics or aristocrats, by the end of the period there seems to have been no specific policy to benefit particular groups of contenders. Notwithstanding the crown's huge increase in the accretion of advowsons, however, even under Mary Tudor the rate of presentations was only three *per annum* falling to two under Elizabeth I.

Episcopal patronage was meagre, for bishops made only 1.9% of all presentations up to 1579. Throughout the sixteenth century bishops constantly complained about their lack of patronage, apart from Richard Sampson who alienated all three advowsons in his gift. University patronage was even more sparse, but the greatest beneficiaries of the redistribution of monastic patronage were the gentry. Their overall share of the number of presentations, 50.9%, was always greater than any other type of patron in the sixteenth century, but rose dramatically in the 1550s.

It was discovered that only twenty advowsons were lay-owned in 1500, but by 1600 they were in control of some fifty-seven livings. Few private patrons controlled more than a handful of advowsons after the Dissolution, the most prolific being the Leighs of Stoneleigh, who went on to make the largest number (thirteen) of lay presentations. A shrunken clerical work-force was thus more than ever dependent upon lay patronage, the ascendancy of which was particularly recognisable where successive clergy were presented to benefices with ruinous churches and parishioners who attended services in neighbouring parishes. Far from losing all control, individual incumbents appear to have had some influence over lay patrons in making appointments to benefices, sometimes even a degree of manipulation. A substantial argument of Chapter 3 has emphasised the neglected concept of ordinary parochial clergy themselves as patrons, not least in their choice of assistant clergy. Only a handful of cases of simony have been detected, perhaps suggesting that in reality many evaded detection by duplicity.

Chapter 5 explored the effects of pluralism and non-residence in Coventry archdeaconry during the sixteenth century, the mobility of parochial clergy, and the correlation between pluralism and the unbeneficed. It was discovered that in Coventry archdeaconry in 1500 some 36% of all known incumbents were pluralists - a rather higher proportion than anticipated. When the so-called Pluralism Act was passed in 1529, the number of pluralists was at its zenith, twenty-five, but significant changes occurred as a result of the Henrician assault on the Church. By 1603 only eight incumbents were pluralists. The unsettling effects of religious vicissitudes and high mortality 1534-59 was reflected in an abnormally high number of benefice

voidances, reducing average incumbencies from twenty-five to fourteen years' duration. In terms of tenure a novel phenomenon was that sons of the first generation of married clergy were themselves coming of age to be ordained, some succeeding their fathers after serving them as curates. Marriage, it is suggested, was one reason for the increasing number of incumbents serving longer tenures of office in one parish.

Historians agree that clergy who remained unbeneficed throughout their career are difficult to trace, for which very reason generous space has been allotted to them in this thesis. Assistant clergy, particularly those serving before 1559, are difficult to trace, since they did not have benefit of freehold and their appointments were therefore unrecorded in episcopal registers. Often they have been detected only through incidental references to them in wills. The huge reduction in the number of assistant clergy after 1559 is associated, at least in part, with the changing face of pluralism. Whereas in the early sixteenth century 'pure pluralists' occupied benefices where they were obliged to engage deputies, their virtual extinction by the 1550s, together with the soaring effects of inflation and taxation, led inevitably to an upsurge of 'poor pluralists', men whose very subsistence depended on holding two benefices which, producing a modest income, they could supervise single-handedly without the services of a curate.

The purpose of this thesis has been to analyse the size, distribution and character of the parochial clergy in the Coventry archdeaconry between 1501 and the close of Elizabeth I's reign. The fundamental difference between 1500 and 1600 is that the 'job-description' of the parochial clergy was changed as a direct result of doctrinal re-alignments, fresh theological perspectives and rising educational standards. As Ingram recognised, 'within the bounds of the Church of England there was diversity', which helps explain why continuities with the past convinced doubters to stay in the fold; subtle hints of reform persuaded others to stay, in the expectation that their hopes of further reforms would be fulfilled.[2]

Between 1500 and 1600 there was a huge reduction in the number of auxiliary clergy. The traditional parochial ministry, based on grace received through sacraments administered by accredited representatives of the Church, gave way to a didactic ministry based on the scriptures and motivated by protestant beliefs interpreted by a new generation of accredited representatives of the Church.

The serious question whether the greatly reduced clerical work-force was able to meet all its pastoral commitments is not capable of a simplistic answer. There are many confusing inconsistencies which baffle analytical consensus. For example,

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2. M. Ingram, 'From Reformation to toleration: popular religious cultures in England, 1540-1690', in T. Harris, ed., *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 102.

Chapter 3 presented a detailed 'before-and-after' analysis of the numerical state of the parochial clergy in 1522, when there were 165 known clergy working in Coventry archdeaconry parishes, and 1561 when there were only eighty-two. Moreover, by calculating the number of households in the 1563 household census, this thesis has suggested a growing disparity between the number of clergy and their parishioners, particularly in the fastest-growing parishes of Coventry archdeaconry. Indeed, it has been hypothesised that there was a correlation between this and the well-documented rise of dissent in such places as (for instance) Bedworth and Birmingham.

The transition from a Catholic to a Protestant Church over the course of the sixteenth century had brought about a drastic fall in the number of clergy in Coventry archdeaconry, resulting in the virtual disappearance of unbeneficed clergy and a considerable rise in lay patronage. The Church was not called upon to face a comparable period of administrative change again either nationally or locally until the nineteenth century.

APPENDIX 1
PARISHES OF COVENTRY ARCHDEACONRY
and principal chapelries, arranged by deanery

ARDEN

Ansley (V)
Arley (R)
Aston (V)
Castle Bromwich (C)
Deritend (C)
Ward End (C)
Water Orton (C)
Austrey (V)
Baddesley Clinton (R)
Baxterley (R)
Berkswell (R)
Barston (C)
Bickenhill (V)
Birmingham (R)
Caldecote (R)
Chilvers Coton (V)
Coleshill (V)
Lea Marston (C)
Lower Whitacre (C)
Upper Whitacre (C)
Corley (V)
Curdworth (V)
Elmdon (R)
Fillongley (V)
Grendon (R)
Hampton-in-Arden (V)
Knowle (C)
Nuthurst (C)
[Temple] Balsall (C)
Kingsbury (V)
Dosthill (C)
Hurley (C)
Mancetter (V)
Atherstone (C)
Maxstoke (V)
Meriden (V)
Newton Regis (R)
Nuneaton (V)
Attleborough (C)
Packington, Great (V)
Packington, Little (R)
Polesworth (V)
Seckington (R)
Sheldon (R)
Shustoke (V)
Bentley (C)
Shuttington (D)
Solihull (R)
Sutton Coldfield (R)
Weddington (R)
Wishaw (V)

COVENTRY

Allesley (R)
Ansty (V)
Astley (S)
Bedworth (R)
Binley (S)
Brinklow (R)
Bulkington (V)
Burton Hastings (S)
Churchover (R)
Coventry Holy Trinity (V)
Coventry St Michael (V)
Exhall (V)
Foleshill (V)
Great Harborough (R)
King's Newnham (V)
Monks Kirby (V)
Newbold-on-Avon (R)
Shilton (V)
Sowe (V)
Stivichall (S)
Stoke (V)
Stretton Baskerville (R)
Willey (R)
Withybrooke (V)
Wolvey (V)
Wyken (S)

MARTON

Bilton (R)
Birdingbury (R)
Bourton-on-Dunsmore (R)
Church Lawford (R)
Clifton-on-Dunsmore (V)
Brownsover (C)
Dunchurch (V)
Frankton (R)
Grandborough (V)
Hillmorton (V)
Ladbroke (R)
Leamington Hastings (V)
Long Itchington (V)
Marton (V)
Napton (V)
Radbourne (R)
Rugby (R)
Southam (R)
Stockton (R)
Upper Shuckburgh (D)
Wappenbury (V)
Willoughby (V)
Wolfhampcote (V)
Wolston (V)
Stretton-on-Dunsmore (C)

STONELEIGH

Ashow (R)
Avon Dassett (R)
Baginton (R)
Bishop's Itchington (V)
Chadshunt (C)
Gaydon (C)
Upper Itchington (C)
Bishop's Tachbrook (V)
Bubbenhall (P)
Burton Dassett (V)
Northend (C)
Chesterton (S)
Cubbington (V)
Farnborough (V)
Fenny Compton (R)
Harbury (V)
Kenilworth (V)
Leamington Priors (V)
Leek Wootton (V)
Milverton (C)
Lillington (V)
Offchurch (V)
Priors Hardwick (V)
Lower Shuckburgh (C)
Priors Marston (C)
Radford Semele (V)
Radway (V)
Ratley (V)
Ryton-on-Dunsmore (P)
Shotteswell (V)
Stoneleigh (V)
Ufton (P)
Warmington (R)
Weston-u-Wetherley (V)
Hunningham (C)
Whitnash (R)
Wormleighton (V)

Key:
R = Rectory
V = Vicarage
S = Stipendiary
D = Donative
P = Prebendal

NOTE: Lower Shuckburgh is in Marton deanery, but as a chapelry of Priors Hardwick it has been placed with its parent in Stoneleigh deanery.

APPENDIX 2

Benefice valuations 1522, 1533, 1535, 1611

Parish	*1522*	*1533*	*1535*	*1611*
Allesley		£12. 0s. 0d.	£17. 18s. 8d.	£100. 0s. 0d.
Ansley			£6. 6s. 8d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Ansty			£5. 0s. 0d.	£13. 6s. 8d.
Arley		£6. 0s. 0d.	£9. 0s. 6d.	£40. 0s. 0d.
Ashow	£7. 0s. 0d.	£6. 13s. 4d.	£6. 2s. 0d.	£26. 13s. 4d.
Aston		£12. 0s. 0d.	£21. 4s. 8d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Austrey		£2. 13s. 4d.	£8. 0s. 0d.	£66. 13s. 4d.
Avon Dassett		£12. 0s. 0d.	£13. 8s. 8d.	£60. 0s. 0d.
Baddesley Clinton		£3. 7s. 2¼d.	£4. 6s. 8d.	
Baginton	£12. 0s. 0d.	£12. 0s. 0d.	£8. 1s. 8d.	£40. 0s. 0d.
Baxterley			£5. 0s. 0d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Bedworth		£12. 0s. 0d.	£10. 3s. 10d.	£100. 0s. 0d.
Berkswell		£12. 0s. 0d.	£14. 12s. 4d.	£100. 0s. 0d.
Bickenhill		£6. 0s. 0d.	£7. 17s. 2d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Bilton	£7. 0s. 0d.	£22. 10s. 0d.	£16. 10s. 6d.	£160. 0s. 0d.
Birdingbury		£3. 6s. 10½d.	£7. 10s. 0d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Birmingham		£30. 0s. 0d.	£19. 3s. 6d.	£60. 0s. 0d.
Bishop's Itchington		£12. 0s. 0d.	£26. 13s. 4d.	
Bishop's Tachbrook		£5. 0s. 0d.	£5. 13s. 4d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Bourton-on-Dunsmore		£22. 10s. 0d.	£19. 17s. 2d.	£80. 0s. 0d.
Brinklow		£7. 10s. 0d.	£17. 10s. 0s.	£100. 0s. 0d.
Bubbenhall				
Bulkington	£6. 13s. 4d.	£6. 13s. 4d.	£6. 10s. 6d.	£13. 6s. 8d.
Burton Dassett		£12. 0s. 0d.	£14. 0s. 0d.	£13. 6s. 8d.
Caldecote		£6. 1s. 6¾d.	£6. 15s. 0d.	£60. 0s. 0d.
Chesterton		£4. 13s. 4d.	£5. 16s. 8d.	£200. 0s. 0d.
Chilvers Coton		£7. 10s. 0d.	£7. 4s. 0d.	£24. 0s. 0d.
Church Lawford	£6. 13s. 4d.	£12. 0s. 0d.	£11. 15s. 4d.	£66. 13s. 4d.
Churchover	£5. 6s. 8d.	£6. 13s. 4d.	£15. 0s. 0d.	£40. 0s. 0d.
Clifton-on-Dunsmore	£10. 0s. 0d.	£6. 0s. 0d	£8. 1s. 8d.	£50. 0s. 0d.
Coleshill		£12. 0s. 0d.	£10. 18s. 6d.	£66. 13s. 4d.
Corley		£4. 13s. 4d.	£4. 0s. 0d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Coventry Holy Trinity	£25. 0s. 0d.	£22. 10s. 0d.	£26. 5s. 6d.	£60. 0s. 0d.
Coventry St Michael	£10. 0s. 0d.	£60. 0s. 0d.	£50. 0s. 0d.	£100. 0s. 0d.
Cubbington	£6. 13s. 4d.	£6. 13s. 4d.	£6. 6s. 8d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Curdworth		£6. 0s. 0d.	£5. 0s. 0d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Dunchurch	£13. 6s. 8d.	£12. 0s. 0d.	£14. 1s. 4d.	£50. 0s. 0d.
Elmdon		£6. 0s. 0d.	£4. 8s. 0d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Exhall	£5. 0s. 0d.	£4. 13s. 4d.	£5. 0s. 0d.	£5. 0s. 0d.
Farnborough		£2. 0s. 0d.	£5. 12s. 0d.	£24. 0s. 0d.
Fenny Compton		£12. 0s. 0d.	£15. 18s. 2d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Fillongley		£7. 10s. 0d.	£8. 9s. 9d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Foleshill	£5. 0s. 0d.	£4. 13s. 4d.	£5. 0s. 0d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Frankton		£4. 0s. 0d.	£5. 12s. 0d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Grandborough		£5. 10s. 2¼d.	£5. 0s. 0d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Great Harborough		£6. 0s. 0d.	£14. 13s. 2d.	£60. 0s. 0d.
Grendon		£20. 0s. 0d.	£20. 3s. 4d.	£100. 0s. 0d.
Hampton-in-Arden		£15. 0s. 0d.	£15. 6s. 8d.	£50. 0s. 0d.
Harbury	£5. 0s. 0d.	£4. 13s. 4d.	£5. 0s. 0d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Hillmorton		£6. 0s. 0d.	£6. 10s. 6d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Hodnell		£4. 13s. 4d.		
Kenilworth		£3. 6s. 6¾d.	£6. 13s. 4d.	£10. 0s. 0d.
King's Newnham	£6. 13s. 4d.	£5. 10s. 2¼d.	£5. 5s. 10¼d.	£5. 0s. 0d.
Kingsbury		£6. 0s. 0d.	£8. 9s. 10d.	
Ladbroke	£1. 0s. 4d.	£12. 0s. 0d.	£13. 10s. 0d.	£180. 0s. 0d.
Lea Marston		£4. 13s. 4d.		£8. 0s. 0d.
Leamington Hastings		£22. 10s. 0d.	£20. 0s. 0d.	£160. 0s. 0d.
Leamington Priors	£5. 0s. 0d.	£4. 13s. 4d.	£6. 10s. 0d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Leek Wootton	£6. 0s. 0d.	£5. 0s. 0d.	£5. 12s. 0d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Lillington		£4. 13s. 4d.	£5. 13s. 4d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Long Itchington	£6. 13s. 4d.	£6. 13s. 4d.	£7. 0s. 8d.	£29. 0s. 0d.
Mancetter		£12. 0s. 0d.	£10. 13s. 4d.	£10. 0s. 0d.
Marton		£6. 0s. 0d.	£7. 14s. 8d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Maxstoke		£4. 0s. 0d.	£5. 6s. 8d.	£8. 0s. 0d.
Meriden		£4. 0s. 0d.	£5. 12s. 0d.	£24. 0s. 0d.
Monks Kirby		£18. 0s. 0d.	£22. 9s. 6d.	£13. 6s. 8d.

Parish	*1522*	*1533*	*1535*	*1611*
Napton	£10. 0s. 0d.	£3. 6s. 10½d.	£9. 14s. 0d.	£3. 0s. 0d.
Newbold-on-Avon	£8. 0s. 0d.	£4. 0s. 0d.	£14. 12s. 0d.	£66. 13s. 4d.
Newton Regis		£12. 0s. 0d.	£14. 1s. 4d.	
Nuneaton		£15. 0s. 0d.	£24. 14s. 6d.	£40. 0s. 0d.
Offchurch	£8. 0s. 0d.	£6. 0s. 0d.	£7. 7s. 6d.	£26. 13s. 4d.
Packington, Great		£5. 0s. 0d.	£7. 10s. 1d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Packington Little		£5. 0s. 0d.	£3. 0s. 0d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Polesworth		£5. 10s. 2¼d.	£10. 0s. 0d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Priors Hardwick	£8. 0s. 0d.	£12. 0s. 0d.	£23. 16s. 0d.	£6. 0s. 0d.
Radbourne		£5. 0s. 0d.	£4. 17s. 2d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Radford Semele	£8. 0s. 0d.	£5. 0s. 0d.	£6. 16s. 4¼d.	£13. 6s. 8d.
Radway		£5.10s.2¼d.	£5. 12s. 0d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Ratley		£5.10s.2¼d.	£6. 12s. 0d.	£13. 6s. 8d.
Rugby		£15. 0s. 0d.	£17. 19s. 2d.	£60. 0s. 0d.
Ryton-on-Dunsmore		£4. 13s. 4d.	£11. 6s. 8d.	
Seckington		£6. 0s. 0d.	£5. 16s. 0d.	£5. 16s. 0½d.
Sheldon		£6. 0s. 0d.	£8. 10s. 10d.	£50. 0s. 0d.
Shilton	£5. 0s. 0d.	£4. 13s. 4d.	£5. 0s. 0d.	£8. 0s. 0d.
Shotteswell		£5.10s.2¼d.	£5. 13s. 4d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Shustoke		£6. 0s. 0d.	£5. 7s. 0d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Shuttington				£2. 0s. 0d.
Solihull		£30. 0s. 0d.	£24. 18s. 4d.	£100. 0s. 0d.
Southam		£30. 0s. 0d.	£22. 17s. 4d.	£160. 0s. 0d.
Sowe	£5. 0s. 0d.	£4. 13s. 4d.	£5. 0s. 0d.	£13. 6s. 8d.
Stivichall		£4. 13s. 4d.		£8. 0s. 0d.
Stockton		£7. 10s. 0d.	£10. 7s. 0d.	£50. 0s. 0d.
Stoke	£6. 0s. 0d.	£4. 13s. 4d.	£5. 12s. 0d.	£8. 0s. 0d.
Stoneleigh	£4. 0s. 0d.	£6. 13s. 4d.	£6. 15s. 4d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Stretton Baskerville		£5.10s.2¼d.	£6. 0s. 0d.	£20. 0s. 0d.
Sutton Coldfield		£30. 0s. 0d.	£33. 9s. 0d.	£120. 0s. 0d.
Ufton			£4. 13s. 4d.	£8. 0s. 0d.
Upper Shuckburgh		£4. 13s. 4d.		£8. 0s. 0d.
Wappenbury	£8. 0s. 0d.	£7. 10s. 0d.	£8. 0s. 0d.	£8. 0s. 0d.
Warmington		£15. 0s. 0d.	£16. 3s. 10d.	£80. 0s. 0d.
Weddington		£5. 0s. 0d.	£8. 10s. 6d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Weston-under-Wetherley		£4. 0s. 0d.	£5. 19s. 0d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Whitacre, Lower				£10. 0s. 0d.
Whitacre, Upper				£8. 0s. 0d.
Whitnash	£6. 13s. 4d.	£6. 0s. 0d.	£5. 19s. 8d.	£66. 13s. 4d.
Willey	£6. 0s. 0d.	£6. 13s. 4d.	£8. 6s. 0d.	£26. 13s. 4d.
Willoughby		£2. 0s. 0d.	£9. 4s. 4d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Wishaw		£2. 13s. 4d.	£5. 5s. 0d.	£26. 13s. 4d.
Withybroke	£6. 0s. 0d.	£5. 10s. 2¼d.	£8. 6s. 8d.	£10. 0s. 0d.
Wolfhampcote		£4. 0s. 0d.	£12. 18s. 2d.	£13. 6s. 8d.
Wolston	£7. 0s. 0d.	£12. 0s. 0d.	£15. 10s. 0d.	£50. 0s. 0d.
Wolvey		£6. 13s. 4d.	£6. 6s. 4d.	£30. 0s. 0d.
Wormleighton		£6. 13s. 4d.	£6. 13s. 4d.	£13. 6s. 8d.
Wyken	£2. 13s. 4d.	£4. 13s. 4d.	£5. 0s. 0d.	£6. 0s. 0d.

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