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The Social Background to the Reformation in Gloucestershire

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By K. G. POWELL

I dwell within half a mile of the Fossway, and you would wonder to see how they come by flocks out of the west country to many images, but chiefly to the blood of Hailes. And they believe verily that it was in Christ's body, shed upon the mount of Calvary for our salvation.¹ In a letter to Ralph Morice, secretary to Thomas Cranmer, written in May 1533, Hugh Latimer, rector of West Kington (Wilts.), bore witness to the continued strength of conservative religious feelings on the eve of the Reformation.² Within a few years, Latimer, a leading personality among early English Protestants, was to obtain from the Crown the see of Worcester. In 1538 he presided over the destruction of the Blood of Hailes and other relics which, in the opinion of reformers, had led to the damnation of countless souls.³ Latimer's experiment in reform in his diocese in the years 1535-9 had little impact upon the mass of the laity, although Protestantism gained new adherents among both the parish clergy and the intelligent laity.⁴ In the reign of Edward VI, the Protestant faith being now prescribed by the state, John Hooper was optimistic about its future progress among the common people. Yet he recognised clearly that a majority were apathetic if not actively opposed to the new doctrines. Lack of interest in the church and its services, whether Catholic or Protestant, was a common attitude in English society before and after the Reformation. A Bristol preacher complained that people came to sermons 'verie seldome' and that, when they did come, 'they love nothinge worse and thinke no tyme worse spent then the time while thei be hearing the word of God.'⁵ Clerics often reported that

¹ H. Latimer, *Works*, Vol. II, ed. G. E. Corrie (Parker Society, Cambridge, 1845), p. 364.

² For Latimer's incumbency of West Kington, see R. Demaus, *Hugh Latimer* (Rev. edn., London, 1881), Ch. 4, pp. 92-168.

³ A. G. Chester, *Hugh Latimer* (Philadelphia, U.S.A., 1954), p. 133; *Letters and Papers . . . of Henry VIII*, ed. J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner, R. H. Brodie (London, 1862-1910) (*L & P*), XIII (2), 709. Latimer was assisted by a commission including Henry Holbeach, Richard Tracy, and the abbot of Hailes, Stephen Segar. The latter was eager to be rid of the relic and later wrote to Thomas Cromwell for permission to destroy the case in which the 'faynyd relycke' had stood: *L & P*, XIII (2), 409 (Public Record Office (P.R.O.) State Papers (S.P.) 1,136, f. 221).

⁴ Brief discussion of this development in K. G. Powell, 'The Beginnings of Protestantism in Gloucestershire', *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, xc (1971) pp. 148-49.

services were interrupted by 'babbling' congregations. At Dymock in 1548 the majority of the parish spent service-times gossiping in the church-yard.⁶ Reverence for sacred places did not prevent parishes from allowing churches to fall into disrepair or parishioners from stealing plate and other church goods. Many individuals behaved with gross irreverence. At Upleadon in 1540, two men shocked the congregation with obscene mockeries of the sacred rites. The church at Ashleworth was the scene of near-riots when squabbles between members of the parish over the order of precedence in entering and leaving church reached crisis-point. In 1557, a Bristol man accused of fornication with a known prostitute was said to have arranged assignations at a church, 'the where he used to meet her and there, when he had shutt the churche-dore, he used her as she saith most ungodly and abominably in a pewe . . .'⁷ Lay indifference to the teachings of the church, both moral and doctrinal, was to be a perennial pastoral problem from the Reformation to the present day. In the Tudor period, this indifference may be blamed, firstly, on the gradual destruction of the popular Catholic faith of the people and, secondly, on the failure of the church to provide and maintain adequate preaching and teaching. This lack of pastoral care was in large part due to a 'manpower crisis' which remained unsolved throughout the Tudor period. Protestantism had first won control of the authority of the state and had proceeded to win the allegiance of a growing proportion of the upper and middle classes, in effect of the literate and articulate lay-people. The mass of the clergy were, for several decades, suspicious of changes in belief and liturgy, although those who had begun their careers as Catholic priests were gradually displaced by younger men, Protestants and often graduates.⁸ In this way, the principles of the Reformation came to be at the cultural and religious heart of English society. The nature and course of this process, of the liberation of the Protestant Reformation from

⁵ R. Edgeworth, *Sermons very fruitfull, godly and learned* (London, 1557; S.T.C. 7482), ff. xxxiii-xxxiii. Edgeworth lamented the fact that people left church before the sermon and retired to 'alehouses or tavernes' . . . (Ibid., f. xii).

⁶ Gloucester City Library, Gloucester Diocesan Records (G.D.R.) 4, Episcopal visitation, 1548, p. 43.

⁷ Worcestershire Record Office, 802, BA 2764, Visitation book of bishop John Bell, p. 110; G.D.R. 1, Court book, Gloucester diocese, 1541-42, p. 39; Bristol Archives Office, Cause book, Bristol diocese, 1557-58, p. 67.

⁸ In 1534, 73 Gloucestershire clerics held M.A. degrees but a high proportion of these were non-resident: D. M. Barratt, 'The Condition of the Parish Clergy from the Reformation to 1660' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1949), p. 50. In the 1560s, 10 livings in the deanery of Gloucester alone were 'void' (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Rawlinson C. 790, ff. 8v-29). In 1566, Lower Swell possessed neither 'vicar nor curett': G.D.R. 22, Episcopal visitation of 1566, p. 27.

persecution and the clasp of the official, institutional reform, forms the main theme of this short study. The evidence is drawn from the author's research into Tudor Bristol and Gloucestershire, but should be viewed in the light of current research into parallel urban and rural communities.⁹

Protestantism was not the first doctrinal challenge faced by the medieval Catholic church. The heresies of John Wyclif had caused alarm in the reign of Edward III, when they for a time drew support from many substantial men. The latter, however, failed to back an assault on the basic principles of the church—the mass, purgatory and the doctrine of salvation. Wycliffite ideas, often ill-understood, gained a wide circulation during the 15th century among a rebellious minority. Bristol became a centre of Lollard activity and remained so until the 1530s, when local dissenters rallied to the cause of Hugh Latimer and George Wishart, Protestant evangelists whom the clergy and many lay-men sought to silence.¹⁰ Handbills posted in the town at this time demonstrated clearly the existence of bitter opposition to the orthodox faith. The clergy, the 'knave priests', were damned as 'enemys to God's word . . . hard harted knavys that will not faver the worde of God.' In the opinion of the (unknown) writer, those prominent laymen who permitted the persecution of a 'faithfull reder' were no better.¹¹ Protestantism echoed many Lollard principles—the denial of the value of relics and ceremonies, of the papal primacy, and of the sacrificial nature of the mass—but sought to develop an appeal far wider than that of a furtive and undynamic heterodoxy. The Protestant faith was extremely vulnerable to charges that it undermined authority and privilege and encouraged vice. A conservative publicist warned the wealthy to 'be well ware of such doctrine, if they either love to be partakers of heaven or desire to keep their worldly estate,' while Roger Edgeworth declared that Protestants were 'fell to all desires of darke ignoraunce, living carnally, nother regarding prayers, fasting, abstinence, nor chastitie'.¹² Lollardy was strongly tinged with anti-hierarchical notions. The Staunton heretic who boasted in 1541 that 'hit was as goode to confesse hym to a tree

⁹ For example, D. M. Palliser, *The Reformation in York, 1534-53*, (York, 1971) and two contributions on orthodoxy and unorthodoxy in Coventry: C. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry 1450-1550' in *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700*, ed. P. Clark and P. Slack (London, 1972), pp. 57-85; I. Luxton, 'The Lichfield Court Book: A Postscript', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XLIV, (1971) pp. 120-25.

¹⁰ J. A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards: 1414-1520* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 20-51; K. G. Powell, 'Beginnings of Protestantism' . . . , pp. 141-43; Idem., *The Marian Martyrs and the Reformation in Bristol* (Bristol, Historical Association, 1972), pp. 6-7.

¹¹ *L & P*, xiv (1), 184; British Museum, MS. Cotton Cleopatra E V, ff. 390-91.

¹² John Christopherson, cited D. M. Loades, *The Oxford Martyrs* (London, 1970), p. 79; Edgeworth, *Sermons* . . . , f. cxxxiii.

as to a prest' was a true forerunner of the Separatist tradition.¹³ Medieval heresy in Bristol had drawn support from craftsmen and artisans—weavers, dyers, and smiths—and its survival into the mid-16th century depended on the allegiance of people who lacked social position. In the reign of Henry VIII a carpet-maker, a wire-drawer, and a bow-maker were noted among those in the town holding unorthodox views.¹⁴ The bow-maker, Robert Jurdon, was friendly with a master weaver, Henry Foxall, who had trading connections with Coventry (a major centre of proletarian dissent).¹⁵ The majority of those burned for heresy in Bristol during Mary's reign were clothworkers and their ideas were thoroughly Wycliffite. In the market towns and villages of Gloucestershire, heresy seemed no real threat to the faith, although it was most active in the cloth-producing area of the Cotswolds and in the Forest of Dean.¹⁶ It was scattered in structure and again involved only the lower classes—smiths, millers, labourers, carpenters. It was also backward-looking, dogmatic, and based firmly on a set of almost mythical tenets (for example, the conception of the pope as AntiChrist). A Woolaston labourer who abjured heresy in 1511 maintained a pathetic devotion to the memory of two friends burned at Lydney some twelve years earlier.¹⁷ Where Lollard groups existed, they met in farmhouses, mills, blacksmiths' shops, cellars, and even caves.¹⁸ The heresy occasionally benefited from clerical leadership. In the 1520s, a guild-priest from 'Shepynorton' [Chipping Norton, Oxon.] was spreading disbelief in the Lechlade area regarding the validity of image-worship and of the sacraments.¹⁹ Few of those whose errors brought them into church courts seem to have derived their ideas from books. Many were illiterate, although John Croft of Eardisley, (Herefordshire), who had spread heresy in the Forest of Dean *c.* 1500, possessed 'divers books conteyning heresies and errors'.²⁰ John Maundrel, a Wiltshire man burned at Salisbury in 1556, seems to have been illiterate but knew large sections of the scriptures by heart. While working as a shepherd in Gloucestershire, Maundrel had

¹³ Worcs. R.O., Visitation book of bishop Bell, p. 109.

¹⁴ J. A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards* . . . , p. 47; Visitation book of bishop Bell, p. 117.

¹⁵ *Calendar of the Bristol Apprentices Book*, 1532-65, Pt. 1, 1532-42, ed. D. Hollis (Bristol Record Society, 1949), p. 149.

¹⁶ K. G. Powell, 'Beginnings of Protestantism' . . . , pp. 145-48.

¹⁷ *Register of Richard Mayew, Bishop of Hereford*, ed. A. T. Bannister (Canterbury and York Society, xxvii, London, 1921), pp. 109-11.

¹⁸ S. Rudder, *A New History of Gloucestershire* (Cirencester, 1779) records that several Marian martyrs hid in 'Crocket's Hole' at Newent: pp. 563-64.

¹⁹ Worcs. R. O., Visitation book of bishop Bell, p. 25.

²⁰ British Museum; MS. Harleian 421 ff. 129v-131v.

acquired at least one disciple (who suffered at the stake with him).²¹ The reimposition of Catholicism by Mary provided a stimulus to many extremists to risk all in futile protest against royal policies. Only one of the Gloucestershire victims of the persecution (Thomas Drewry of Gloucester) admitted Protestant influence on his religious thought. But his view of the eucharist was as much Lollard as Protestant.²² When Lollardy lacked leadership and the stimulus of persecution, it could easily degenerate into a rationalistic, semi-proverbial sneering at half-comprehended sacred mysteries. The mass was derided as an 'idol' and two Slimbridge men who maintained this view proceeded to mock other rites: holy oil was 'of no vertue . . . but rather it is mete to greyce sheepe and bootes'.²³ Brought to court in 1548, they were eager to recant. John Clement of Oldbury-on-Severn, who had also been prosecuted for 'reviling' the sacrament in that year, pleaded that he was 'but a simple man in lernyng, hearyng as he understod the lyke words repeated by those that were authorized to preache, reported the same agayne'.²⁴ Clement's grasp of theological issues was probably no more sound than that of the Wotton-under-Edge man who believed sincerely that adultery was in accordance with divine law: 'I knowe the law is for me to have children by adulterie; I wolde wysshe Moses lawe to be agayne'.²⁵

Lollardy (a term which may be stretched to include scepticism and irreverence) posed no serious threat to the orthodox faith in the early 16th century. It was unorganized, diverse in character and objectives and largely unpopular. In the early 1530s, most English men and women were strongly attached to the Catholic faith and its ritual trappings, although many critics pointed out the failings of the clergy as a potential danger to the church. Thomas More complained that the parochial clergy were all too often ignorant and immoral.²⁶ According to a modern biographer, the scandalous state of the church in Gloucestershire moved Tyndale to translate the Scriptures: 'In Gloucestershire, Tyndale would see the church perhaps at its worst . . . the ecclesiastics were . . . sunk in an ignorance and superstition, which few dioceses can have equalled, much less surpassed'.²⁷ This judgement—an unfair one—seems to be based on a reading of the results of Bishop Hooper's 1551 visitation of the Gloucestershire clergy.²⁸ The

²¹ J. Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* . . . ed. G. Townsend (London, 1843-49) (*A&M*), VIII, p. 102.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 144-45.

²³ G. D. R. 4, p. 34.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁵ G.D.R. 6, Court book, Gloucester diocese, 1551-53, p. 62.

²⁶ A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (Rev. edn., London, 1967), p. 72.

²⁷ J. F. Mozley, *William Tyndale* (London, 1937), pp. 10-11.

²⁸ Printed by J. Gairdner in *English Historical Review* (*E.H.R.*), XIX, (1904), pp. 98-121.

statistics drawn from this document revealed, amongst other things, that 168 of 311 clergy were unable to repeat the Ten Commandments and 34 were ignorant of the authorship of the Lord's Prayer. Hooper's inquiry was, understandably from the viewpoint of a reforming bishop, based on scriptural knowledge. But most of those examined had served for many years as priests in a church which placed emphasis on the sacraments rather than the Word. Ability to perform those sacraments plus a knowledge of Latin had long been considered by all, save a few humanist critics, the principal requisites of a priest. In the event, few priests were condemned (as was William Adys, curate of Oxenhall) as 'totally ignorant'.²⁹ Those described as learned included not only reformers (for example Nicholas Oldsworth, rector of St Michael, Gloucester, John Parkhurst, rector of Bishops Cleeve, and James Ashe, rector of Alderton) but also known conservatives like William Phelps, curate of Cirencester, William Sherwood, rector of Cold Ashton, and Thomas Caponhurst, rector of Slimbridge. Many clergymen were old-fashioned in their ideas and, as Hooper was to learn, strongly attached to traditional ways. But few were scandalously ignorant. Indeed, parishioners were quick to complain at the advent of an unsuitable incumbent. In 1563, the people of Woodchester reported that their curate was totally illiterate. In the same year, the people of Bibury complained that their vicar, Richard Bagge, was incompetent: 'the said Richard Bagge, in King Edward's tyme, dwellyd with a baker and prentised to the same crafte, misusinge himself, went awaye and to orders of priest hade in quene Marie's tyme, being no gramarian nor having no understanding in hit; afterward in the same raigne of quene Maries became a Fryer and nowe vicar of Bybery'. Bagge was later discovered to be the owner of forbidden Latin service books, although his parishioners probably objected more strongly to his wife, 'a woman ungodly, proud, envious, and a common scold'.³⁰ Many Protestants despaired totally of the clergy. Richard Tracy, the pamphleteer son of the arch-heretic William Tracy of Toddington, devoted his literary career to a condemnation of the clergy and their deceptions.³¹ An objective examination of the priesthood in 16th century Gloucestershire reveals that few were profound scholars (although many possessed books and manuscripts) and even fewer thoroughly acquainted with 'modern' learning. Books mentioned in the wills of clerics in the

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

³⁰ G.D.R. 20, Register of Presentments, Gloucester diocese, 1563, pp. 9, 59. Bagge had been ordained sub-deacon in the diocese of London in February, 1558/9, deacon and priest in March (Guildhall Library, London, Card-index of London ordinations).

period 1500–60 include both traditional works (such as the *Vita Christi* of Ludolphus Saxonicus and the Biblical commentaries of Nicholas of Lyra) and more modern publications (for example, Thomas Lupset's *Exhortation to Young Men* and the officially issued *Institution of a Christian Man* (Bishops' Book) of 1537.³² Hugh Veysey, vicar of Pucklechurch (d. 1541), bequeathed assorted books to a Wells priest and a 'masse booke' to his parish.³³ Edmund Caterall, incumbent of Little Rissington (d. 1569), left his library to Henry Clayton, parson of Oddington. John Knowles, vicar of Ashleworth (d. 1558) instructed that Thomas Harwell, vicar of Corse, was to have 'all the choiese of mi bokes . . .'³⁴ Thomas Miryfield, priest of the Kalendars Guild of Bristol, noted a 'parchement portewys' (to be chained in All Saints' church) and a processional.³⁵ Thomas Caponhurst, ex-Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and rector of Slimbridge until his death in 1577, had a considerable library and ordered that it was to be divided between his three brothers. John Bromsgrove, a Tewkesbury priest who died in 1545, possessed 'Chrisostom's works' and the 'comen glöse'. Walter May, prebendary and treasurer at Hereford Cathedral and incumbent at English Bicknor, left most of his books to two young university scholars from the Forest of Dean: Richard Marrett at Oxford and one Smith, 'the sonne of William Smithe of Staunton', who was studying at Cambridge.³⁶ May, himself a native of the Forest, had been a scholar at Oriel College, Oxford, where he proceeded M.A. in 1514.³⁷ He was a considerable pluralist and a wealthy man. His testament provided for the distribution of alms to the poor, for the endowment of a fellowship at Oriel for natives of the Forest, and for elaborate funeral obsequies. Solemn mass and *dirige* were to be sung at Newland, English Bicknor, Upton St Leonard's, and Staunton, trentals of masses being ordered at Newland and Bicknor.

The conservatism of most of the clergy did not deter them from retaining their benefices under the Protestant regime of Queen Elizabeth. Thomas Mychell, incumbent of Eastleach Turville (d. 1568), produced in his will a strange combination of new and old

³¹ Most notably in his *Supplycacion to . . . Kyng Henry the Eyght* (London, 1544).

³² *Wells Wills*, ed. F. W. Weaver (London, 1890), p. 28; Gloucester City Library, Gloucestershire wills 344/1558, 88/1556; Worcs. R.O., Worcestershire wills 17/1539.

³³ *Wells Wills*, p. 65.

³⁴ Gloucestershire wills, 19/1569, 263/1558.

³⁵ Worcestershire wills, 377/1539.

³⁶ Gloucestershire wills, 159/1577; P.R.O., Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills (P.C.C.), 44 Pynnyng, 10 Welles.

³⁷ J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1500–1714* (Oxford, 1891–92) (*Alumni*) (entries arranged in alphabetical order of names).

ideas: he trusted to be saved 'onely by the merites of [the] blessed passion' but beseeched at the same time the prayers of the Blessed Virgin and saints.³⁸ Bishop Hooper wrote despairingly of men who were willing to subscribe 'privately in the paper' to views they opposed in their hearts.³⁹ Hooper waged a constant battle against 'superstitions', the attempts made by many priests to preserve as much of the old ceremonial routine as possible. Yet not one of a large group of constant offenders in this matter lost his living.⁴⁰ Absolute conformity in thought and deed was an unenforceable ideal and many troublesome characters escaped punishment for quite serious offences. In the crisis years of the mid-1530s, John Knowles, vicar of Ashleworth, had refused utterly to announce from his pulpit the administration of the oath of succession: 'he wold not publishe it nother for king nor quene but saied he wold it hadd ben brent or ever it came'. Knowles was arrested but, after being bailed by a local justice, seems to have escaped the consequences of his treasonable words.⁴¹ In 1549, George Rowe, curate at Winchcombe, was brought before the Privy Council on charges of 'singing masse twysse at Sudeley this last Christmas . . .'. Rowe was subsequently released and was still in office in 1551.⁴² John Penne, vicar of Mickleton and an Oxford graduate, made every effort to preserve chantry masses in his church: 'he said *dirige* as it is called and ministred the communion on the morowe after, beyng the monethes mynd of oon Walter Evaltes'.⁴³ Penne may perhaps be identified with the Thomas Penne who was preaching the doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's body (a teaching associated with the Catholic view of the eucharist) in Gloucester. Penne was made to sign a full recantation after appearance before a court under Hooper's presidency.⁴⁴ The futility of Hooper's attempts to make of his clergy a body useful to the Reformation is clearly demonstrated by the fact that many notorious conservatives remained in office long after 1559. In 1574, John Barón, rector of Siddington St Mary, confessed that he 'had said masse and did trust to lyve to

³⁸ P.C.C. 8 Sheffielde.

³⁹ J. Hooper, *Later Writings*, ed. C. Nevinson (Parker Society, Cambridge, 1852) I, p. xviii. Hooper added, 'I have a great hope of the people. God send good justices and faithful ministers and all will be well'.

⁴⁰ F. D. Price, 'Gloucester Diocese under Bishop Hooper', *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LX, (1938), pp. 51-151, cites many examples. See, for example, pp. 119-21.

⁴¹ P.R.O. Star Chamber Proceedings, Henry VIII: 21/120; cited G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 120-21.

⁴² *Acts of the Privy Council* ed. J. R. Dasent (London, 1890-1907) (A.P.C.) II, p. 401 (26th Feb., 1549/50).

⁴³ G.D.R. 6, p. 104.

⁴⁴ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic (C.S.P. Dom.)*, I, 1547-80, ed. R. Lemon (London, 1856), XIII, 24-24i, p. 33 (P.R.O., S.P. 10, 13, ff. 48-51).

saye masse againe and that the gosple ys not the worde of God but doctrine of the Churche'.⁴⁵ As late as 1584, Ralph Ecton, rector of Kemerton, had in his possession 'papist books' and a 'massing cake'.⁴⁶ The desire of the average conservative parish priest to cling to office at all costs made him useless as an agent of the Counter-Reformation. Simon Southern, curate and later rector at Hinton-on-the-Green, a member of the circle of conservative humanists surrounding the Evesham monk Robert Joseph, adopted a more courageous course. Instituted in 1541, Southern had apparently accepted the Edwardian reforms without protest but refused to subscribe in 1559. Abandoning his benefice, Southern began a new career as a priest ministering to recusant families in his native Worcestershire. In 1582 he was arrested and brought before bishop Whitgift, admitting his activities and declaring that he 'had bene a preiste one and fyftie yeres and all . . .'.⁴⁷ The influence of the parish priest, whether conservative or progressive, depended on his position as, simultaneously, a member of a close-knit community (anti-clerical feelings were most strong in large towns) and a man set apart from his fellows by unique, 'magical' powers. The preacher William Hubberdin was merely stating a common belief in an extreme form when he denied that any lay-man could pray directly to God.⁴⁸ Protestantism abolished the magical elements of priesthood—a controversial and related issue was that of clerical marriage, a phenomenon unpopular with many lay-people.⁴⁹ The average Henrician priest was a local man, on a level with many of his parishioners, usually educated at a school within his native shire. John Dydson, the Protestant vicar of Coaley, was probably the son of a Winchcombe yeoman while Thomas Rutter, curate at Weston Subedge and later rector of Alderton, was the son of an Alderton yeoman farmer. James Ashe, who preceded Rutter at Alderton, had been born the son of a Hertfordshire gentleman. He entered Winchester College in 1517 and proceeded to New College in

⁴⁵ F. D. Price, 'The Commission for ecclesiastical causes for the dioceses of Bristol and Gloucester, 1574', *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LIX, (1937), p. 150.

⁴⁶ *Victoria County Histories (V.C.H.) Gloucestershire*, VIII, ed. C. R. Elrington (London, 1968), p. 217 (citing episcopal visitation of Gloucester, 1584 (G.D.R. 54), f. 19). Ecton was allowed to recant and retain his living.

⁴⁷ C. W. Clarke, 'Simon Southern's early life as a priest', *Worcestershire Recusant*, II, (1968) pp. 1-6; V. M. Webster, 'Two Marian priests in Worcestershire', *ibid.*, I, (1963) pp. 23-24. For the Joseph circle, see *The Letter Book of Robert Joseph*, ed. J. C. H. Aveling and W. A. Pantin (Oxford, Oxford Historical Society, New Series, XIX, 1967), pp. xxii-xxvii and *passim*.

⁴⁸ *L&P*, VI, 572 (P.R.O., S.P. 6 (Theological Tracts) 3, 14, f. 60).

⁴⁹ In 1563, a Berkeley woman was accused of calling the children of the parson there 'bastards': G. Baskerville, 'Elections to Convocation in the Diocese of Gloucester under Bishop Hooper', *E.H.R.*, XLIV, (1929), p. 10.

1520.⁵⁰ Many benefices could hope to attract only the poorest sort of priest: Upper Slaughter was worth £4.14s.0d. in 1535 and Syde just £3.18s.3d. In the Elizabethan and Stuart period, on the other hand, the average clergyman was attempting to ape the life style of the gentry. Perhaps a significant spiritual gap was developing as 'the economic gap between parson and peasant was being widened'.⁵¹

Reformers realized that catholicism (a clerical, sacramental faith) could not survive if clergy and sacraments were denied to its adherents. But the destruction of popular piety was not a simple process. Tudor Gloucestershire had ample evidence of the piety of men and women of all classes. Structural and decorative work at great parish churches such as those at Cirencester and Fairford continued into the 16th century. Perhaps the last major church-building project in the great local tradition was that initiated at Cold Ashton c. 1508 by Thomas Key, rector of that parish.⁵² Key totally rebuilt the parish church of the Holy Trinity by the time of his death in 1540. (Understandably, Key was a zealous conservative and tried to stem the Protestant tide in his neighbourhood. In 1533 he clashed with the itinerant preacher, John Erley, whom he declared to be 'on of master Latymer's disciples, which, he sayd, hath doon more hurt yn this contrey then Luther & all his disciples hath doon by yond see').⁵³ Innumerable contemporary wills testify to a widespread faith in the traditional apparatus of salvation. John Morwent, a Hartpury yeoman (d. 1547), left 12d. to the high altar of the church there and 6s.8d. for church expenses; a trental of masses was to be said for his soul. His brother, Robert Morwent, was President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, but made generous bequests in his own testament to charitable and pious works in Gloucestershire. A sum of £5 was to be given for the upkeep of the high altar in Hartpury. Morwent's executors included Alexander Belsire, President of St John's College and a native of Yate.⁵⁴ Thomas Norton, Esq., of Bristol (d. 1513), left money for 'the gyldyng of thymage of St. Jamys at the High Auter of St. Peters'; John Browne (another wealthy Bristolian) made a generous bequest to the Bristol Austin Friars.⁵⁵ Chantry masses were often endowed

⁵⁰ Gloucestershire wills, 224/1557; *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, I, p. 336; T. F. Kirby, *Winchester Scholars* (London, 1888), p. 108.

⁵¹ *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, ed. J. Caley and J. Hunter (London, 1810-34) II, pp. 496, 439, 497; J. E. C. Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church* (Panther edn., London, 1971), p. 208.

⁵² D. Verey, *Gloucestershire: The Cotswolds* (*Buildings of England* series, Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 192-93.

⁵³ *L&P*, VI, 1192 (P.R.O., S.P. I, 79, ff. 124V-125).

⁵⁴ Gloucestershire wills, 70/1546; P.C.C. 40 Noodes. For permission to make use of material on the members of Corpus Christi College, I am indebted to Professor J. K. McConica, editor of the Tudor volume of the *History of the University of Oxford*.

⁵⁵ P.C.C. 30 Fettiplace; *Wells Wills*, pp. 44-45.

lavishly by the rich. The £12 left for this purpose by Christian Perkins, a widow of Temple parish, Bristol, in 1531, was not extraordinary. Ten years earlier, William Tranter of Bristol had bequeathed £66 for ten years of masses. He gave 20s. to each house of friars and a set of beads to the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Walsingham (Norfolk).⁵⁶ Evidence for the continued popularity of pilgrimages is provided in several wills, most notably that of Alice Terumber of Redcliffe (d. 1516) who specified that Thomasine Ferne (her cousin) was to receive 'for goyng on pilgrimagis . . . for every mile that she goeth or rydeth . . . a penny'.⁵⁷ John Dastyn, gentleman of Dumbleton (d. 1532), asked for the prayers of the friars at Gloucester and Worcester, to whom he made bequests. Guilds in London and several Huntingdonshire parishes were also among his beneficiaries.⁵⁸ At a lower social level, John Gelfe, an Ashleworth husbandman (d. 1546), demonstrated his attachment to the old ways by leaving a cow to maintain a lamp before the reserved sacrament. The beast was to remain in his wife's hands until her death.⁵⁹ Uncertainty about the future of chantries and other religious endowments was stimulated by Henry VIII's proposed confiscatory measure of 1545. William Jurdon, a Gloucester cutler and alderman who died the next year, stipulated that masses were to be sung for his soul only if his widow could spare the cash.⁶⁰ Investment in chantries was drying up rapidly and many old foundations lapsed, an unfortunate development in view of the many charitable, educational, and pastoral adjuncts of the system. Virtually all chantry priests were obliged to act as assistant curates. The Greyndour chantry at Newland was among those foundations which maintained a school.⁶¹ While the Edwardian government made every effort to ensure the continued existence of such educational facilities, some parishes suffered pastorally.⁶² The worst fears of the pious were realized a few years later when all church ornaments were seized, each parish being permitted to keep a chalice and bells. Many now-forbidden items were concealed by priests and sympathetic laymen. In 1551 images were found in the home of

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22; P.C.C. 22 Maynwaring.

⁵⁷ Gloucester City Library, Hockaday Abstracts, Bristol, St. John the Baptist file.

⁵⁸ P.C.C. 18 Thower.

⁵⁹ G. Baskerville, 'Ashleworth Ecclesiastical Records', *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, XLVIII, (1926), p. 279.

⁶⁰ Gloucestershire wills, 249/1546.

⁶¹ J. Maclean, 'Notes on the Greyndour Chapel and Chantry in the Church of Newland', *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, VII (1882-83), p. 123.

⁶² In 1563, the people of Cirencester complained that they had but one minister 'whereas it hath bene always accustomed to have ii priestes and a deacon': episcopal visitation of Gloucester diocese, 1563 (G.D.R. 21), p. 57. The Chantry Certificates for Gloucestershire are printed by J. Maclean in *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, VIII (1883-84), pp. 229-308. One of the more unusual adjuncts of the system operated at St. John the Baptist, Bristol, where 'Roode service' supported an organist.

Thomas Hunt at Winchcombe: he was forced to surrender them for defacement. In Bristol, children played with sacred objects cast out from churches.⁶³ Churchwardens' accounts show clearly the rapid changes in the latter place: as early as 1548, altars had been pulled down in St Werburgh's and the churchyard cross smashed. Scriptural texts were later painted on the whitened walls, to be removed in the Marian period.⁶⁴ Within a few years, a wealth of ancient civic pageantry had been swept away. Traditionally, holy days had been marked by official rituals. On All Hallows' Eve, the Mayor and aldermen attended service at All Saints' church and then retired to 'the Maire's place, there to have their Fyres and their drynkyngs with spiced cakebrede and sondry wynes'. Advent was marked by sermons at the Franciscan and Dominican houses and St Nicholas's Day by a procession to St Nicholas's church 'to hire theire Masse, and offre, and hire the bishop's sermon and have his blissyng . . .'⁶⁵ The revolutionary changes of the 1530s and 1540s brought about an indignant but futile reaction. Some predicted the downfall of the kingdom because of royal sacrilege. A Tewkesbury prophet warned rich laymen that they might be Henry's next target: 'Sirs, now beware and take heed, for all will away'.⁶⁶ Many showed staunch attachment to the old faith. William Glaskeryon, a Bristol pewterer who had been in trouble for slandering bishop Latimer, ordered in his will that he was to be interred before the high altar in Holy Trinity church. Small gifts were to be made to the altars of Holy Rood, St Christopher, and St Margaret. Glaskeryon's 'ghostly father', Robert Forster, was to receive 'a pewter basen of the greater sort'.⁶⁷ Harry Weston, gentleman of Hanham, encouraged a Dominican friar to preach in 1538 that the 'old fashion will come again'.⁶⁸ By 1548 bishop Wakeman was enquiring in his visitation articles whether 'all images, shrines and the like things' had been destroyed. A few years later, bishop Hooper ordered that all 'Tabernacles, tombs, sepulchres, tables, footstools, rood-lofts' and other fittings were to be removed. In particular, all screens ('closures, imparting and separations') were to be cut down.⁶⁹ In this manner, 'a whole,

⁶³ G.D.R. 6, p. 64; Edgeworth, *Sermons* . . . , f. xl.

⁶⁴ Bristol Archives Office, Churchwardens' accounts of St. Werburgh, Bristol, 1548-1615: entries for 10 December, 1548, December, 1554.

⁶⁵ R. Ricart, *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. L. T. Smith (London, Camden Society, New Series, v, 1872), pp. 79, 85, 80-81.

⁶⁶ *L&P*, xv, 183 (P.R.O., S.P. I, 157, f. 155).

⁶⁷ *L&P*, xii (2), 1147 (P.R.O., S.P. I, 119, f. 195). Glaskeryon had said of Latimer: 'I would he had never been born. I trust or I die to see him burnt'. P.C.C. 16 Spert.

⁶⁸ *L&P*, xiii (1), 950 (P.R.O., S.P. I, 132, f. 61).

⁶⁹ Hooper's visitation articles, 1551-52, printed in *Visitation Articles and Injunctions*, ed.

vigorous and variegated popular culture, the matrix of everyday life, was eroded and began to perish'.⁷⁰ This process of destruction left a vacuum in the lives of many people which was not immediately filled by the vernacular bible and new services. The vicar of Eldersfield who declared that 'it shuld not be lefull to any layeman to loke upon the Bible' and who kept saints' days as in times past was said to have the support of most of his flock.⁷¹

In the middle decades of the 16th century, despite bitter opposition, the vernacular bible (now, in theory at least, freely available to all) came to have a powerful impact in England. Even a shepherd could, through a sympathetic cleric, obtain his own New Testament. A Winchcombe monk railed at his brethren because they would neither 'revele the scrypturs no haue the scrypturs recytyd of ony other . . .' John Andrewes, curate at Wotton in 1540, held bible-reading sessions attended by many parishioners.⁷² Winterbourne parishioners complained of a priest who had said that 'the ymage of the crosse dyd prech to hym and to other men as lyvely as the xx chapter of Mathew'. Other parishes complained about inadequate preaching.⁷³ This novel enthusiasm for the Word was stimulated by the efforts of reforming preachers. Bishops Latimer and Hooper encouraged the exposition of the scriptures by preachers. The extent to which bibles were available, to those who desired them, is uncertain. Many clerics were loath to contribute to the cost of acquiring a parish bible. In 1548 the people of Newland reported that their parson was still refusing to pay his share.⁷⁴ Even as late as 1566, many parishes, Hasfield, Coaley, and Kemerton among them, possessed no bible (many may have been destroyed in Mary's reign). That in Todenham church was 'in decaye'.⁷⁵ Preaching had, of course, been long an important part of spiritual life. Roger Edgeworth attracted crowds from Redcliffe and Stapleton to his Bristol sermons. He refused to compromise with new notions on the format and content of his homilies, declaring that the 'hardnes' of the scriptures

W. H. Frere and W. P. M. Kennedy (London, Alcuin Club Collections, xiv-xvi, 1910), pp. 267-309. The rarity of medieval screens in Gloucestershire churches may be blamed largely on Hooper's efforts.

⁷⁰ Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen' . . . , p. 157.

⁷¹ G.D.R. 8, Deposition book, Gloucester Diocese, 1550-54, pp. 95-6 (29 June 1551).

⁷² J. F. Mozley, *Coverdale and his Bibles* (London, 1953), p. 284; *L6-P*, vii, 1367 (P.R.O., S.P. 1, 86, f. 162); Worcs. R.O., Visitation book of bishop Bell, p. 181.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁷⁴ G.D.R. 4, p. 56. For details of the cost of the Great Bible, see Dickens, *The English Reformation*, pp. 190-91.

⁷⁵ G.D.R. 22, Episcopal visitation of Gloucester diocese, 1566, with *liber cleri*, pp. 77, 106, 181, 186.

⁷⁶ Edgeworth, *Sermons* . . . , ff. clxi-clxi^v, lxii.

made it necessary for laypeople to ask guidance on the interpretation of the bible from priests. Simple exposition of the Word was, in his view, insufficient: 'feete and proper' stories were of use as 'a mery wrapping in or coveryng of' God's truth.⁷⁶ In 1533 the commons of Bristol soundly condemned this accepted method of biblical exegesis along with the sermons of William Hubberdin, who had compared Christ to 'a fole, an asse, a bolte, a fagotte-sticke and suche other naughty feynyngs beside'. They warned that, unless prevented, he would next compare Him to 'an horse, a fox-taile, an owle and suche vylany that abhorreth the eares of Christen people'.⁷⁷ In the 1540s the endowed sermon was becoming an acceptable alternative to soul-masses in the minds of many testators. The Bristol merchant class, several of whom ordered sermons of this kind to be preached in their memory, included many well-educated and theologically-conscious men.⁷⁸ A few had been at Oxford.⁷⁹ John White (d. 1559), had 'fifty greate bookes of Scripture and the lawe' and many smaller volumes.⁸⁰

Edgeworth lamented the spreading influence of 'seditious Englysshe bokes that have bene sent over from our Englysh runagates nowe abidyng wyth Luther in Saxonie'.⁸¹ One of the chief local sources of these works was Richard Webb, whose trade in 'heretikes' bokes' brought him before lord chancellor More.⁸² Webb bought books in London and a man well known in the unorthodox circles of the capital, Thomas Garret, was hiding from arrest in Bedminster in 1528.⁸³ It seems likely that the two men were associates. Also in 1528, an unnamed Stonehouse man was accused of preaching heresy and possessing the scriptures in English.⁸⁴ This hedge-preacher had claimed that all men were priests, equally able to minister in the church. He defended Luther against all comers and often read aloud from his works (which he helped to distribute locally). When prosecution seemed imminent, he burned part of his library. Brought before cardinal Wolsey, he was interrogated as to his contacts but no answers to the articles survive. An entry in bishop Bell's visitation book suggests a

⁷⁷ *L&P*, vi, 572 (P.R.O., S.P. 6, 3, 14, f. 60v). How far this document represents genuine popular feelings and to what extent it was a clerical concoction is, admittedly, open to dispute.

⁷⁸ William Shipman ordered the preaching of twelve sermons in St. Werburgh's, Bristol.

⁷⁹ Erasmus Prinne (1528-92), lawyer and merchant, was educated at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, which he entered in 1542. He was heir to Edward Prinne, first master of the Merchant Venturers' Guild (Corpus Christi College, Admissions Books; *Bristol Apprentice Book* ed. Hollis, *passim*; *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LXIV, (1943), p. 140 LXXI, (1952), p. 6.

⁸⁰ White's inventory is printed by L. J. Way, *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, XLII (1921), pp. 267-78.

⁸¹ Edgeworth, *Sermons*, f. xxxi.

⁸² T. More, *English Works* (London, 1557; S.T.C. 18076), pp. 727-28.

⁸³ *L&P*, IV (2), 4017.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 4444 (P.R.O., S.P. 1, 49, ff. 49-51v).

possible identification for this early Gloucestershire Protestant. In 1541, one Humfrey Grynshall, 'of the paryshe of Stonehowse', had been reading from and expounding the Scriptures in a Gloucester church. His denial of the existence of purgatory and of the value of soul-masses had caused uproar: 'a greate murmor, grudge & unquietnes amongst the Kynge's graces lovyng subjects there'. Some of those present in the church had 'cryade that the sayde Humfray myght be removed out of the churche & some that he myghte be kyllled'. Predictably, two of the hostile witnesses called against him were priests, Henry Hawkes and John Morys, but Roger Brown, a layman, reported that the people present had been 'greatly offended & disquyetede'. One suspects that many Gloucester people must have supported Grynshall, although the report suggests a uniform hostility.⁸⁵ Popular heresy of this kind was a foundation of English Puritanism. In an era of strife, attacks on the clergy assumed a new bitterness. In 1538 John Rawlins, parson of St Ewen's, Bristol, was indicted on charges of gross sexual immorality. He was found guilty of raping a young girl 'with force and arms'. Perhaps these charges were invented by individuals objecting to Rawlins's attacks on Latimer. Similarly, charges of being the father of a bastard made against Roger Tilar, minor canon at Gloucester, may have been prompted by anger at his advanced views.⁸⁶ Reformers claimed that clerical celibacy led to concubinage and asserted that lawful clerical marriage was preferable to fornication. Richard Cornewall, parson of Hill, took the opposite view. He lived with a concubine but opposed the legalisation of priestly matrimony, declaring of Latimer that 'if he would marry with her, the Bishop would be contented that he tilted up her tail in every bush'. In the 1560s John Northbrooke, vicar of Henbury and a famous Puritan preacher, taunted a fellow cleric who kept company with 'naughty women, as in Gloucestershire he led a naughty strompet aboute the countrie, called greene Apron.' Thomas Powell, chancellor of the diocese of Gloucester, was famed for his scandalous life.⁸⁷ In the reign of Edward VI, about fifty Gloucestershire clergymen married and raised families, including Lawrence Gase, incumbent of Coln Rogers. Gase was deprived of his living in consequence in 1554 but, having submitted to a divorce

⁸⁵ Worces. R.O., Visitation book of bishop Bell, pp. 137-42.

⁸⁶ *L&P*, XIII (2), 110 (P.R.O., S.P. 1, 135, ff. 102-104); G.D.R. 4, p. 23. Whether either of these accusations was true is uncertain.

⁸⁷ *L&P*, XIII (1), 545 (P.R.O., S.P. 1, 130, ff. 84-85v); J. Northbrooke, *Spiritus Vicarius Christi* (London, 1571; S.T.C. 18670), Dedicatory epistle; Visitation and court book, Gloucester diocese, 1531-71 (G.D.R. 9), p. 74 (James Williams, vicar of Hatherley, had said that Powell had been 'taken with a naughty woman in London' . . .).

process, was allowed to resume office. He died vicar of Painswick in 1564, leaving a wife, June Gase, and five daughters.⁸⁸

In the 1520s, William Tyndale had obtained a local notoriety on account of his attacks on the Gloucestershire clergy. His strongly critical attitudes were apparently prompted by a study of the works of Erasmus.⁸⁹ Born in the neighbourhood of North Nibley or Stinchcombe about 1495, Tyndale proceeded M.A. at Oxford in 1515 and then moved briefly to Cambridge.⁹⁰ By 1520 his brother Edward had entered the service of the Berkeley family as receiver of rents under Sir Robert Poyntz (whose daughter married John Walsh of Little Sodbury).⁹¹ In 1522 Tyndale, a graduate priest in his mid-twenties, entered the Walsh household as family tutor (and perhaps chaplain too). Here he worked on his translation of the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, first published by Erasmus in 1503. The *Enchiridion*, an especially apt project for this stage of the reformer's life, stressed the importance of the virtuous life as opposed to the many complex and often meaningless ceremonies then prevalent in the church. Tyndale's vigorous translation gave the work emphasis it had not previously possessed: veneration of saints and images is strongly condemned as is the religious life, 'full of supersticyon'.⁹² William Tyndale was to die far beyond the borders of his native shire, but Edward Tyndale remained a substantial local figure, no potential martyr but a committed Protestant. In 1546, he died at his Worcestershire manor of Pull Court, leaving an interesting will.⁹³ Bequeathing his soul to God alone, he includes among his beneficiaries Robert Grene, 'paryshe prest of Tewkysbery'. The latter was to receive a number of books: 'Pellican upon thold testament and Calopyn and all the boks in my cofer in my chamber . . .' Perhaps the unnamed volumes included some especially controversial titles. Tyndale also mentioned his son-in-law, Richard Trotman, and his 'old louing frendes' Thomas and Edward Trotman. Grene was, presumably, himself a Protestant. Richard Trotman, a member of a family of clothiers, also seems to have held advanced views. In 1540, he had

⁸⁸ Gloucestershire wills, 61/1564; G. Baskerville, 'Elections to Convocation' . . . , p. 23; G.D.R. 1B, Gloucester diocese presentations, 1542-1734, p. 10.

⁸⁹ Chief sources on Tyndale: *Dictionary of National Biography (D.N.B.)*; J. F. Mozley, *William Tyndale* (London, 1937); R. Demaus, *William Tyndale* (London, 1871).

⁹⁰ *D.N.B.*; Foster, *Alumni*.

⁹¹ Demaus, *William Tyndale*, pp. 5-6.

⁹² D. Erasmus, *A booke called in latyn Enchiridion* (Trans. W. Tyndale, London, 1533; S.T.C. 10479), sig. Kv. On Tyndale's translation, see J. A. Gee, 'Tyndale and the 1533 *Enchiridion* of Erasmus', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, XLIX, No. 2 (1934); also J. K. McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 145-6.

⁹³ P.C.C. 21 Alen.

become involved in the heresy case against John Dydson, vicar of Coaley. Questioned about his possession of books by Luther, Bucer, and Zwingli, Dydson revealed that he had given them to a 'frynde', Richard Trotman of 'Wottonscombe' (presumably Combe, near Wotton-under-Edge).⁹⁴ The connections between Tyndale, Trotman, Grene, and Dydson provide a tantalisingly brief glimpse of an early alliance between radical laymen and Protestant clerics. The Tyndales may have moved in the circle of William Tracy of Toddington, whose heretical will aroused bitter controversy in 1531. Tracy had been supposedly long an enemy of the clergy.⁹⁵ His second son, Richard, was to develop considerable literary talents as a reforming publicist, but his heir, Henry, shared his father's faith also. Composing his will at Toddington in the reign of Mary, Henry Tracy declared his faith in the sufficiency of the Passion and made no provision for traditional obits.⁹⁶ Henry Tracy's aunt Anne had married William Wye, of Tewkesbury and Lypiatt, an elderly man with children by a previous marriage.⁹⁷ Wye had three sons: Richard, William, and Robert. Richard Wye died in 1520, while still a young student at the Inner Temple in London. He left all his books 'that concerne devynite, humanitie, & felocifie' to his brother William, then a scholar at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. An Oxfordshire benefice in his possession was to be reserved for William when he graduated.⁹⁸ Proceeding M.A. in 1525, William Wye became rector of Wigginton (Oxon.). By 1532 he had added the living of Icomb and was later incumbent of both Rodmarton (1540-55) and of Great Rissington (1554-8).⁹⁹ Dying at the latter place in 1559, he was buried in the churchyard.¹⁰⁰ William Wye was evidently a learned man. In the 1530s he corresponded with Robert Joseph but the only letter to him preserved in the 'Letter Book' kept by Joseph suggests a lapse of their friendship.¹⁰¹ It would be presuming little to suggest that Wye had by this time adopted the Protestant faith. Not only was he nephew to William Tracy and cousin to Richard and Henry Tracy, but his aunt Elizabeth had married Sir Alexander Baynham of Westbury-on-Severn. Her son,

⁹⁴ Worcs. R.O., Visitation book of bishop Bell, p. 129.

⁹⁵ *Letter Book of Robert Joseph*, pp. 101-2 (letter from Joseph to Henry Wyllys, vicar of Toddington, dated 29 September 1530).

⁹⁶ Printed in Foxe, *A&M*, v, pp. 31-32.

⁹⁷ *Visitation of the County of Gloucester* (1623), ed. J. Maclean and W. C. Heane (London, Harleian Society, xxi, 1885), p. 165. This pedigree is not entirely accurate; see Wye's will (P.C.C. 26 Hogen).

⁹⁸ P.C.C. 26 Ayloffte.

⁹⁹ Foster, *Alumni*; Baskerville, 'Elections to Convocation' . . . , p. 21.

¹⁰⁰ Gloucestershire Records Office, Great Rissington parish register, entry for 17 September 1559.

¹⁰¹ *Letter Book of Robert Joseph*, pp. 41-42, 285.

William Wye's cousin James Baynham, had been burned for heresy in London in 1531.¹⁰² He had married the widow of the notorious pamphleteer Simon Fish and become deeply involved in unorthodox circles.¹⁰³ In 1551, Hooper found William Wye a learned man and, significantly, a reliable preacher.¹⁰⁴ In 1547 he was executor of the will of Catherine Tyndale. Three years earlier, he served in the same capacity to his brother Robert Wye, gentleman of Over Lypiatt.¹⁰⁵ The latter, a considerable landowner, was Escheator for Gloucestershire from the 1520s and became an enthusiast for the Reformation. In 1540 at a period when drastic action was being taken to silence the Protestant minority among the clergy, Wye was eager to report the misdemeanours of Thomas Trowell, parson of Avening, a reactionary whose missal contained 'Thomas Bekett name wryttyn by the name of Thomas byshopp nor raysyd nor polyd owt'.¹⁰⁶ Robert Wye married twice. His second wife was Jane Baynham, sister to James Baynham. (After Robert Wye's death, Jane married Hugh Westwood¹⁰⁷.) Wye's will (dated 22 November 1544) is 'reformed' in tone: he commits his soul 'to my moste mercyfull Lorde, my Savyor Jesu Christe, trusting now most faythfully to be saved thorough the merits of his bytter passion . . .' Dividing his lands between his sons and wife, Wye left pastures in Rodmarton to his brother, who witnessed the will. Another executor of the will was William Latimer, rector of Saintbury. The inclusion of the latter person's name is curious: he was a notable scholar (but no reformer) and his parish lay twenty-five miles from Robert Wye's home. (Latimer died in 1545 and his will includes a provision for chantry masses for himself and his parents¹⁰⁸.) Whether William Wye knew Latimer well is doubtful. Wye followed a conformist course during his later years. He did not marry and thus was able to keep his livings under Mary, actually gaining Great Rissington from the deprived Richard Browne.¹⁰⁹

William Wye owed his comfortable position among the clerical pluralists both to his family connections and to his university education. A college contemporary, Kenelm Deane, was admitted in 1517 and owed his place to the abbot of Winchcombe, a friend of bishop Richard Fox. The latter wrote to John Claymond, president

¹⁰² British Museum, MS. Harleian 1041, ff. 34v, 78v, 92v; *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LIII, (1932), pp. 98-99.

¹⁰³ Foxe, *A&M*, IV, pp. 697-706.

¹⁰⁴ J. Gairdner, 'Bishop Hooper's Visitation' . . ., *E.H.R.*, XIX (1904), p. 115.

¹⁰⁵ Gloucestershire wills, 5/1547; P.C.C. 19 Pynnyng.

¹⁰⁶ *L&P*, xv, 407 (P.R.O., S.P. 1, 158, f. 116).

¹⁰⁷ A. C. Painter, 'Hugh Westwood', *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LIV (1932), pp. 98-99.

¹⁰⁸ P.C.C. 38 Pynnyng.

¹⁰⁹ G.D.R. 1B, p. 11.

of Corpus Christi College, in that year, asking him to admit Deane, adding 'by hym ye may excuse you to Sir Robert Poynes for his childe, saying that ye can have but oon for Glocestershire'.¹¹⁰ By 1551 Kenelm Deane was both rector of Stanton with Snowhill and vicar of Frocester. He died in 1552.¹¹¹ Oxford colleges exercised a measure of clerical patronage, reserved for members of those societies. The rectory of Slimbridge was the preserve of ex-fellows of Magdalen College. In 1551 the greatest influence over clerical patronage in Gloucestershire lay in the hands of the king. The influence of ecclesiastics themselves (mainly cathedral chapters) was considerably less than that of local laymen.¹¹² But lay support for clerical reformers was often manifest in informal channels outside the conventional career structure of the church. Sir John Walsh befriended the preacher John Erley, as did Sir Nicholas Poyntz.¹¹³ But Erley's later career took him into the realms of extreme religious radicalism. In 1540 he was ordered to leave Gloucester in company with his ally Hugh Rawlins, alias Williams, parson of Holy Trinity. These men had attacked the Act of Six Articles of 1539.¹¹⁴ Reforming preachers and evangelists of this stamp seem to have rejected totally the mentality of the majority of the parish clergy, those who were 'part of the old, customary folk-religion . . . not leaders, preachers, evangelists' and who 'tended to stay put and make the best of whatever establishment they found themselves under'.¹¹⁵ In 1541 Erley was in Salisbury, at the very centre of a radical group and in contact with similar groups in London: 'suche maner of men as be favourable to the worde of Gode'. Among his opponents there was William Hubberdin, who attacked the 'companye' in the town which claimed that 'sowlez departed from thys worlde do but slepe and be withowte the ese of reason'. The members of the 'confederacye' were 'evyll, wyfull, and almost desperatt persons' and among the 'newe books' in their possession were 'a booke of the Germayne Confessyon and therwyth the Appolygye made by Phyllypp Melancthon and sett forthe by Richard Taverner'.¹¹⁶ Brought to trial before the bishop of Salisbury, Erley faced charges of heresy, but his fate is unknown (it is notable that three men, Spencer, a priest, Ramsey and Hewet,

¹¹⁰ *Letters of Richard Fox*, 1486-1527, ed. P. S. and H. M. Allen (Oxford, 1928), pp. 89-90.

¹¹¹ Baskerville, 'Elections to Convocation' . . . , p. 31.

¹¹² Figures calculated on the basis of Gairdner, 'Hooper's Visitation'.

¹¹³ *L&P*, VI, 1192.

¹¹⁴ *L&P*, xv, 183 (P.R.O., S.P. 1, 157, ff. 155-155v). Erley was said to have been 'somytym a fryer & after an armyte at Mylo's ende' . . .

¹¹⁵ J. C. H. Aveling, *Catholic Recusancy in the City of York: 1558-1791* (Catholic Record Society, London, 1970), p. 19.

¹¹⁶ P.R.O., Star Chamber Proceedings, Henry VIII, 2, 34/28.

were condemned for sacramentarian heresy and burned at Salisbury in 1541).¹¹⁷ One Gloucestershire priest, Antony Parsons, curate of Stroud, seems to have died for his beliefs. In 1540, John Dydson, John Andrewes, and James Ashe were amongst the clergy harried for their views.¹¹⁸ Reports having been sent to the episcopal officers that Henry Costen, curate of Berkeley, had preached 'yn the church of All Sayntts yn Glowcetter the xii sonday after Trinitie Sunday . . . and ther sayd that the masse nor suffragis of the same wyll helpe nether profytt the solls departyd and there sayd also that the servys yn the church was butt roryng & crying', he was brought to penance and forced to recant.¹¹⁹ Parsons, 'who hathe beyn a Friar and is nowe pariche prest of Strowde in Glocettershere', was probably forced to make a similar recantation after being responsible for 'yll prechyng'. He was imprisoned in Gloucester castle for a short period but then seems to have left the diocese. He was not serving a Gloucestershire cure in 1551 and may be identified with the Antony Parsons (Person, Peerson) who was causing trouble in Kent in 1543. He, and another preacher, had come 'out of other dioceses into this'. Amongst Parsons's actions had been incitement to people to smash images; he had also 'cast the parson of Pevyngton's beads into the fire in derision'.¹²⁰ He had also preached in Berkshire, especially at Windsor, where he was 'greatly esteemed among the people, who flocked so much to his sermons which he made both in the town and country, that the great priests of the castle, with other papists of the town . . . were sore offended'. Parsons had preached 'against the sacrament of the altar, and their popish mass'. His case was brought to the attention of bishop Stephen Gardiner and he was subsequently condemned and burned to death at Windsor.¹²¹

In many towns and villages, individual priests became central figures in religious controversy and often social strife too. Hugh Rawlins, parish priest at Holy Trinity, Gloucester, was dismissed from his cure on charges of negligence.¹²² His friends suggested that he had suffered for his views and added that Thomas Bell, sheriff of Gloucester, was the person mainly responsible for this injustice. Latimer subsequently restored Rawlins to office and Thomas Evans, the local official who had implemented the deprivation, wrote to Thomas Cromwell, arguing that Rawlins was a dangerous man. He

¹¹⁷ Foxe, *A&M*, v, p. 443.

¹¹⁸ K. G. Powell, 'Beginnings of Protestantism' . . . , pp. 150-1.

¹¹⁹ Worcs. R.O., Visitation book of bishop Bell, pp. 143-9

¹²⁰ *L&P*, xv, 408 (P.R.O., S.P. 1, 158, f. 117); *L&P*, xviii (2) 546 (pp. 354, 313).

¹²¹ Foxe, *A&M*, v, pp. 472-4, 487, 493-4.

¹²² *L&P*, xii (1), 701 (P.R.O., S.P. 1, 117, f. 91).

admitted that he had acted 'more hastlye than wyselye' in the matter but 'all the parysshe that be of reputacion (too excepte)' had supported his action.¹²³ The matter was far from closed. Thomas Bell, whose hatred for Latimer and all reformers was well known, had, complained Nicholas Arnold, Member of Parliament for the county, attacked many godly preachers who needed defence from 'such ungodly people as this Bell'.¹²⁴ In a letter to Thomas Garret, chaplain and aide to Hugh Latimer, John Huggyns and John Rastell, both substantial Gloucester citizens, reported that Bell had frequently spoken slightly of the 'horsesone heretycke' Latimer. Moreover, many shared his views including John Dull, butcher, William Jurdon, and a Mr Barker, described as 'brawling Barker' and 'brabbling Barker'. Admittedly, Bell had powerful friends—Sir William Kingston, Dr John Bell, and bishop Stokesley of London. He even claimed access to the duke of Norfolk. But, continued Huggyns and Rastell, there were many who favoured reform amongst the men of Gloucester, including John and Nicholas Arnold and 'good Mr. Porter', that is, Arthur Porter. The town, they argued, needed an official commission like that set up in Bristol. Already, one man, Robert Pole, had been punished for sedition and his case should have proved a warning for Bell and his friends: 'I suppose that if they had not been altogether brutish mad, Poolys trouble had been a sufficient warning for them'.¹²⁵ The town was evidently deeply divided over religious issues. In 1540, Thomas Evans claimed that Rawlins and Erley had 'sett the best of the towne of Glouceter oon in a nother is toppe'. His claim that the removal of these men restored concord immediately must be viewed with considerable scepticism.¹²⁶ In the 1550s Hooper enjoyed the support of Rastell and other Gloucester progressives. Rastell, an alderman, sat on the commission hearing charges against the seditious preacher Thomas Penne. He died in 1558, committing his soul 'to the greate mercy of allmighty God, purchased by the passyon and deathe of our Lorde and Sauyor Christe Jesu . . .' ¹²⁷ Among the beneficiaries of the will was Rastell's son John, who received a bequest 'as hys place and callinge dothe requyre' (he was then fellow of New College, Oxford, but died at Ingolstadt as a Jesuit).¹²⁸ Another Gloucester man friendly with Hooper was John Sandford, who went abroad

¹²³ *L&P*, xii (2), Appendix 13 (P.R.O., S.P. 1, 127, f. 223).

¹²⁴ *L&P*, xii (1), 831.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 308.

¹²⁶ *L&P*, xv, 183 (P.R.O., S.P. 1, 157, ff. 155-155v).

¹²⁷ For Penne, see above; P.C.C. 45 Noodes.

¹²⁸ Foster, *Alumni*.

after Mary's accession.¹²⁹ In his will, Sandford described himself as 'late of Stonehowse yn the countie of Glocester, clothier . . .' ¹³⁰ In 1525 he had leased a mill at Stonehouse and this he bought from Gloucester corporation in 1544. In 1549 he invested a large sum in former monastic lands at Eastington and Leonard Stanley, but his wealth stemmed mainly from his thriving manufacturing operations. His products were exported to Germany and Sandford kept an agency in Frankfurt.¹³¹ By 1550 he was living in Gloucester and the next year, through Hooper, he requested permission from the Privy Council to eat meat on fish-days (perhaps because of objections to the covert survival, for economic reasons, of Catholic fasts).¹³² His German connections made exile during Mary's reign a relatively easy matter. Sandford died on his return to England in 1559, leaving a strongly Protestant testament which included provisions for a gift of £10 'to the English congregacions of Frankforthe and Geneva', if they were still intact.

In Bristol, the commission set up in 1533 and the events of the next few years (when the conservatives suffered some notable setbacks) had not brought about civic calm. The substantial citizenry feared proletarian radicalism and social division: those burned for dissent during the Marian Reaction were largely of very humble station.¹³³ Protestant preaching, beginning in earnest in the mid-1530s, and the free circulation of ideas in a great port were major factors in the collapse of orthodoxy and unity. As early as 1537, Alice Hutton, the widow of a merchant, composed a will in avowedly Protestant terms, stating unequivocally that her 'hole trust' of salvation was in the Passion. She made no provision for obits, but asked her friends to remember her in their prayers.¹³⁴ Her executors included William Shipman, who shared Mrs Hutton's views and those of her son David (d. 1535). The witnesses to David Hutton's will included two priests, Marshall and Benet, who were among Latimer's chaplains.¹³⁵ Ralph Leche, a salt merchant who died in 1539, also rejected conventional notions of salvation and asked to be buried 'without pompe, pride or vayneglorye.' Recognising that his funeral would involve obnoxious

¹²⁹ C. H. Garrett, *The Marian Exiles* (Cambridge, 1938), p. 278. Miss Garrett found 'no trace' of Sandford after 1556.

¹³⁰ P.C.C. 40 Mellershe.

¹³¹ *V.C.H. Gloucestershire*, x, ed. C.R. Elrington and N. M. Herbert (London, 1972), pp. 281, 133, 260.

¹³² Garrett, *Marian Exiles*, p. 278.

¹³³ For a succinct account of events in Bristol, 1533-39, see G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police*, pp. 112-20. For the background to the Marian persecutions, see K. G. Powell, *The Marian Martyrs* . . ., passim.

¹³⁴ P.C.C. 26 Dyngelley.

¹³⁵ P.C.C. 30 Hogen; for Benet and Marshall, see *L&P*, x, 1099.

Catholic rites, he asked that it 'be done as nygh as they can accordyng to Gode's worde'.¹³⁶ John Shipman, who died in 1543, left similar instructions for his last rites.¹³⁷ The lack of communication between Protestant merchants and proletarian heretics made possible the continuation of stable government in Bristol during Mary's reign. But there was little enthusiasm for the Marian regime and some of those involved in the persecution later adopted Puritan views.¹³⁸ Outside Bristol and Gloucester, the spread of Protestant ideas is more difficult to chart with accuracy. By the reign of Edward VI, the more intelligent of the gentry were taking an interest in the new doctrines and the accession of Mary did not halt this process. In 1555 John Kettilby, esquire, of Siddington, committed his soul to Christ 'trustyng by the meritts of his precyous passion'.¹³⁹ Nicholas Poyntz of Iron Acton (d. 1557) had been a strong supporter of the Henrician Reformation.¹⁴⁰ One of his executors was the fervent anti-Marian Sir John St. Loe.¹⁴¹ Poyntz's son John left the country entirely as did Edward and Thomas Oldsworth, relatives of Nicholas Oldsworth, rector of St Michael, Gloucester.¹⁴² One man of strong opinions who did not go into exile under Mary was William Thomas, a Welshman who had lands at Barnsley. Thomas, a writer and scholar of distinction, had been clerk to the Privy Council and a tutor to Edward VI.¹⁴³ With his friend Nicholas Arnold, he became involved in the Wyatt conspiracy and advocated the assassination of the queen. After the collapse of the plot, Thomas fled towards his home but, having fallen seriously ill, was hidden in the parsonage at Bagendon. Here he was eventually arrested after a frantic hunt organized by Sir Anthony Hungerford, sheriff of Gloucestershire. The rector of Bagendon, John a Mynde, insisted that Thomas had been imposed upon him: he had stayed at Bagendon for some weeks, recuperating from his sickness and sitting mostly in the orchard 'readyng of the Byble, Salust, Marcus Aurelius, and most of all a booke of Italyon of his owne'.¹⁴⁴ Thomas soon after died a traitor's death in London.

In many parishes, the influence of priests on their flocks must

¹³⁶ P.C.C. 13 Alenger.

¹³⁷ P.C.C. F. 21 Spert.

¹³⁸ For example, John Stone, involved in the arrest of the martyr Thomas Hale (Foxe, *A&M*, VIII, pp. 503-4) seems to have been friendly with the preacher John Northbrooke (see his will, P.C.C. 32 Pyckering).

¹³⁹ P.C.C. F. 40 More.

¹⁴⁰ *L&P*, VI, 1133.

¹⁴¹ P.C.C. 22 Wrastley.

¹⁴² C. H. Garrett, *Marian Exiles* . . . , p. 242.

¹⁴³ *D.N.B.*; E. R. Adair, 'William Thomas: a forgotten clerk of the privy council' in *Tudor Studies*, ed. R. W. Seton-Watson (London, 1924).

¹⁴⁴ *C.S.P.Dom.*, I, 1547-80: Mary III, 30 (P.R.O., S.P. 11, 3, ff. 75-6v).

have been decisive. Thus when, in 1542, James Ashe, rector of Alderton, drew up the will of William Rote of that parish, he naturally omitted conventional references to the Blessed Virgin and saints.¹⁴⁵ The Protestant will of William Freme of Tarlton (d. 1538) was probably drafted by his curate, Stephen Bure.¹⁴⁶ A number of Thornbury wills of the 1540s, all strongly 'reformed' in tone, suggest the dangers of will-counting. Not only do all begin with the phrase 'my soull to God almyghty, trystyng by the meretts of Crystys passyon to inherett the kyngdom of heuyn', but every one is written in the same hand, evidently that of the parish priest.¹⁴⁷ Yet clerical influence is by no means a total explanation for the spread of Protestantism in Gloucestershire. Demonstrably, the majority of the parish clergy were hostile or apathetic to the new doctrines. Bitter divisions in Wotton-under-Edge in 1536 were, according to John Poyntz, a result of 'divers opinions'.¹⁴⁸ Defenders of Henry VIII's policies were embroiled in conflict with conservatives predicting 'a new world on midsummer-day' and stern retribution for all reformers. Here, as earlier in Bristol, support for the old ways in doctrine and ritual was becoming dangerously enmeshed with treason: prophecies were a powerful weapon in the arsenal of propagandists.¹⁴⁹ But Tudor society was not entirely governed by a retrogressive mythology, neither was religious dogma the permanent obsession of normal people. Most were preoccupied with the simple problems of economic survival and, hopefully, the improvement of their social position.

The peculiar danger of Protestantism to the established religious and cultural order lay in its dynamic appeal to individualism and activity as opposed to co-operation and passivity. Thus Protestantism spread rapidly among the merchant class of Bristol and Gloucester and among the clothiers, shopkeepers, traders, and craftsmen of the small towns—Wotton, Dursley, Cam, Stroud, Stonehouse, Newent, Lydney, Tewkesbury. Especially interesting is the importance of the cloth-producing areas in the development of Protestantism (and later of Nonconformity). John Fowler, a Protestant graduate who became vicar of Bisley in 1543, was the son of a Stonehouse clothier.¹⁵⁰ By 1558, the Fowlers had a part share in the manor of Stonehouse and also possessed the advowson of the parish (Edward

¹⁴⁵ Gloucestershire wills, 49/1542.

¹⁴⁶ P.C.C. 27 Dynegeley.

¹⁴⁷ Gloucestershire wills, 28/1542 (will of Richard Marten); cf. for example, 81/1543, 35 and 104/1544, 139/1545, 169/1547.

¹⁴⁸ *L&P*, x, 790.

¹⁴⁹ For the influence of prophecy, see, for example, G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police*, pp. 58-62.

¹⁵⁰ Gloucestershire wills, 33/1553; M. A. Rudd, *Historical Records of Bisley with Lypiatt* (Gloucester, 1937), p. 144.

Fowler was vicar of Stonehouse, 1556-63).¹⁵¹ Many other 'rising' families were attracted by Protestantism. Thomas Crewe, a Dursley clothier who died in 1551, was in doctrinal agreement with his relative and namesake, Thomas Crewe of Alderley (d. 1552), who believed that he would, after his death, obtain mercy and forgiveness and 'leve ever lastinglye . . . in the glorious and blessid kingdom'.¹⁵² It was to the clothing area of the Cotswolds that the Wiltshire heretic John Maundrel came in Mary's reign, knowing that he would find there sympathetic employers (Tetbury and Cirencester had been among many market towns frequently visited by leading Wiltshire clothiers).¹⁵³ Bishop Paul Bushe addressed his notable defence of orthodoxy to the wife of a clothier (she had supposedly shocked him with her 'blynde ignoraunce' which, he suspected, had been the result of reading 'Englyshe Pamflettes').¹⁵⁴ The church was slow to respond to social change: Stroud, a fast-growing town throughout the Tudor period, remained a chapelry of Bisley, a small village, until the mid-17th century.¹⁵⁵ Perennial shortages of clergy (and the absence, after 1539, of a flexible evangelical force such as the friars) made the situation worse. In 1554 Sir Anthony Hungerford reported to the Council that most of Gloucestershire was 'good, tractable, proper, and quyet' but a few places were troublesome. Chief among the latter were 'the townes of Doursley, Bisley, and Tedburie, which be townes of many light persons'.¹⁵⁶ With these 'light persons', the heirs of the Lollards and ancestors of the Puritans, lay the future development of English Protestantism. The inhabitants of Cirencester who, in 1574, gathered in desolate places to worship God 'according to their owne fantasies' were carrying to a logical conclusion the principles of a religious revolution begun in the youth of William Tyndale.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ *V.C.H. Gloucestershire*, x, pp. 274-5.

¹⁵² Gloucestershire wills, 127/1551; P.C.C. 13 Powell.

¹⁵³ Foxe, *A&M*, viii, p. 102; *V.C.H. Wiltshire*, iv, ed. E. Crittall (London, 1959), p. 144.

¹⁵⁴ P. Bushe, *A brefe exhortation . . . to one Margarete Burges* (London, 1556; S.T.C. 4184), sigs. Aii_v, Avi_v.

¹⁵⁵ Baskerville, 'Elections to Convocation' . . . , p. 28.

¹⁵⁶ *C.S.P.Dom.* 1, 1547-80, Mary, III, 13 (P.R.O., S.P. 11, 3, ff. 39-40).

¹⁵⁷ F. D. Price, 'The commission for ecclesiastical causes for the dioceses of Bristol and Gloucester, 1574', *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LIX (1938), p. 167.