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**‘A Knowing Ministry’
The Reform of the Church under Oliver
Cromwell,
c. 1653-1660**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Kent

2017

Abstract

This thesis is a groundbreaking examination of the English Church under Oliver Cromwell. It provides the first detailed and comprehensive analysis of the work of his Commission of 'Triers', who were appointed to recruit clergy to a hard-pressed ministry and to enforce new standards of godliness. The thesis explains the origins of this initiative against the confusing political context of events in the 1640s, the abolition of the episcopalian Church of England, the work of the Westminster Assembly, the deep divisions resulting from fundamental ecclesiological arguments, and the collapse of former mechanisms for appointing ministers. More broadly, it demonstrates that the Triers were only one aspect of a religious programme developed to respond to the longstanding problems that faced the Cromwellians, when they took power in 1654, relating in particular to administrative breakdown, patronage, finance, the viability of livings, pluralities, and disagreements over the role of the state.

The Triers kept a series of Registers, which recorded all the ministers they approved for benefices between 1653 and 1659, together with the names of their patrons and referees. These Registers provide an astonishingly rich snapshot of clerical networks at this critical period, yielding some 24 000 names and accompanying details. It is an extensive and statistically robust archive but one that is also complex and difficult to interrogate, which accounts for its neglect hitherto. To enable this research, the contents have been entered into a relational database constructed for this study, which is the only means of handling the wealth of names, dates and relationships. It has facilitated a wide-ranging

investigation of the chronological and geographical patterns of clerical recruitment, an assessment of the radical changes to ecclesiastical patronage, and an analysis of the range of clergy permitted to hold positions in the Cromwellian Church. It has also exposed the previously hidden networks of men who knew and supported these clergy.

In particular, this thesis offers two major breakthroughs. In the first place, it argues that the Cromwellian religious programme has been misunderstood and it offers a new interpretation of their response to the problems they faced. It demonstrates that the importance of the Triers and Ejectors has been exaggerated in relation to other critical players, such as the Trustees for the Preaching Ministry. It also demonstrates that the whole programme was under-resourced and based on inadequate legislation, weaknesses which led, paradoxically, to a church that was more tolerant than that which operated before 1640 or was restored in 1660, and in which a broad diversity of religious opinion was able to flourish.

Secondly, it provides an important analysis of the results of the ecclesiastical reforms undertaken by the Cromwellians across the duration of the Protectorate, comparing the evidence of their achievements against the legislative intention. In doing so, it provides the first detailed understanding of the process and personnel involved in the creation of the Cromwellian ministry.

In addition, this thesis makes important contributions to several wider historiographical debates. It reveals the previously unrecognised breakdown of ecclesiastical administration in the early 1650s. It adds detailed information to

the imperfect understanding of the clerical profession in the mid-seventeenth-century. It provides new information on Cromwell's personal involvement in the creation of his church and his practice of ecclesiastical patronage. It contextualises and supplements recent work on underground episcopalianism during the 1650s. Finally, it argues that, far from being an aberration in the development of the Church of England in the seventeenth-century, the church of the 1650s both drew on existing practices and experimented with new initiatives that had a lasting impact on the Restoration church and the experience of nonconformity after 1660. By opening up the events and personnel of the church that preceded it and from which it drew a hitherto unknown number of serving ministers, this thesis offers the potential for a revision of aspects of the character of the Restoration church.

Acknowledgements

This thesis was supervised by Professor Stephen Taylor and Dr Andrew Foster and I would like to thank them both, equally, with love and deep respect, for the enthusiasm, patience and - above all - intellectual generosity that they have shown me during my research and writing. Every supervision has been a pleasure. They, more than any others, have taught me how to be a historian.

I owe very great thanks also to Dr Mark Merry at the IHR. Without his technical input and help with the database, I would not have been able to write this thesis in its current form, and he bore my incompetencies always with good humour, kindness and appropriate levels of amusement. I am also deeply indebted to Dr Clive Holmes and Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh, who have supported me at difficult moments, advised me, and listened patiently and at length whilst I have talked through the many puzzles that I've encountered. Dr Tom Lawrence and Dr Stuart Palmer have been my dearest friends and companions throughout, and my thanks to them here are inadequate but heartfelt.

I would like to thank also the staff at Lambeth Palace Library, who have - without exception - been kind and helpful; it has been a privilege and pleasure to work there. My brother, Professor Phil Warren, has frequently descended from the lofty heights of the biological sciences to provide essential and much appreciated technical advice - often in response to requests sprung on him when

he thought he was on holiday - and I am extremely grateful. Dr Joel Halcomb has been very generous with his time and knowledge, as has Dr David Wykes, who taught me the value of looking back as well as forward, and shared with me his deliciously dry wit. I would like to thank Professor Ken Fincham for his much valued advice and encouragement in the early stage of my work and his generosity with his library, particularly the long-loan of Richard Baxter's correspondence. And Dr Tom Reid has been unhesitatingly generous with his research and friendship and I will be forever in his debt for both.

I have, at times, leant heavily on the support of Julia Foster, Jackie Waller and Claire Taylor and thank them, with love, for their patience and generosity. I also wish to thank Dr David Crankshaw and my friends, especially Dr Valerie Hitchman, at the 'Religious History of Britain' seminar at the IHR, who have been supportive and open with their knowledge and research. And I acknowledge here my gratitude to all those scholars and friends whom I have not mentioned by name, but who have nevertheless shared their time, research and ideas with me over the last few years, whether at conferences, in passing conversations or simply in response to direct enquiry. And I owe my deepest thanks to Dr Paul Brown, QC, for his unquestioning support, generosity and understanding.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes of this thesis:

AC	Venn, J. and Venn, J., <i>Alumni Cantabrigienses</i> , Part 1: 4 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 1922)
AO	J. Foster, <i>Alumni Oxonienses</i> , Early Series: 4 vols. (Oxford and London: Parker, 1891),
A&O	C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, eds., <i>Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660</i> , 3 vols. (London: 1911; repr. Florida: W. M. Gaunt & Sons, 1972),
BIHR	Borthwick Institute of Historical Research
BQ	<i>Baptist Quarterly</i>
CCC	<i>Calendar of the proceedings of the Committee for Compounding &c, preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office; 1643-1660</i> , 5 vols. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode for HMSO, 1889)
CCRB	N. H. Keeble and G. F. Nuttall (eds.) <i>Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter</i> , 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)
CHA	Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Archives
CJ	<i>Journals of the House of Commons (1640-1667)</i> , 8 vols. (London:1803)
CQR	<i>Church Quarterly Review</i>
CR	A. G. Matthews, <i>Calamy Revised</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1934)
DUP	Delaware University Press
ELJ	<i>Ecclesiastical Law Journal</i>
HJ	<i>The Historical Journal</i>
HLC	History of Lincolnshire Committee
HLQ	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
HP	<i>The humble proposals of Mr. Owen, Mr. Tho. Goodwin, Mr. Nye, Mr. Sympson, and other ministers for the furtherance and propagation of the Gospel in this nation</i> (1652)
HUP	Harvard University Press
'IoG'	'Instrument of Government' in S. R. Gardiner, ed., <i>Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution</i> , 3rd. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906)
JBS	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Church and State</i>

<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
KAS	Kent Archaeological Society
LUP	Leicester University Press
<i>LJ</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Lords (1660-1666)</i> , vol. 11 (London: 1836)
LRS	Lincolnshire Record Society
MUP	Manchester University Press
NEA	National Eisteddfod Association
NUP	North-eastern University Press
<i>NH</i>	<i>Northern History</i>
<i>PH</i>	<i>Parliamentary History</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
Shaw	W. Shaw, <i>A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and Under the Commonwealth, 1640-1660</i> , 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1900)
SRS	Suffolk Records Society
SUP	Stanford University Press
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>WR</i>	A. G. Matthews, <i>Walker Revised</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948)
WRS	Wiltshire Record Society
YAS	Yorkshire Archaeological Society
YUP	Yale University Press

Archival references

There are many references in the footnotes to manuscripts in the Commonwealth papers (Comm.) at Lambeth Palace and in the State Papers (SP) at the National Archives. For the sake of brevity, the archival abbreviation ‘LPL’ (Lambeth Palace Library) should be assumed to precede every manuscript reference in the ‘Comm.’ series. Similarly, ‘TNA’ (The National Archives) should be assumed to precede every manuscript reference with an ‘SP’ appellation.

Place of publication

The place of publication for all printed primary sources was London, unless otherwise specified.

Terminology

The terminology of religion in the Interregnum is contested and sometimes confused. Many of the labels used in modern writing are historiographical constructs, whose finer points are important for works on ecclesiology, but less critical for a work on institutional and administrative history. This thesis has settled on the terminology below:

presbyterian: used for both religious and political presbyterians.

independent: used as an umbrella term for both religious and political godly, who were neither presbyterian nor belonging to radical sects, but believed in the essential autonomy of the parish, with or without state interference. This term was widely - if loosely - used in this way in the mid-seventeenth-century. Within the generic term 'independent', however, it has sometimes been necessary to differentiate between two sub-groups, for which the following terms are used:

- magisterial independent: those who believed that the magistrate had a role in the government of the church. (Oliver Cromwell, Thomas Goodwin and John Owen were within this group)¹
- congregationalist: those who supported the complete separation of church and state.

¹ Cromwell is included in this category because of his personal recognition of the validity of the independent position and his reliance on the support of independents. His rejection of 'set forms' in ecclesiology, however, put him outside the confines of either independency and presbyterianism, both of which he accepted as expressions of a godly church.

Notes on Text

'Registers'

To avoid repetition, where the word Registers is capitalised, this always refers to the Triers' Registers.

'National church'

The term 'national church' is used here to refer to the pre-1640 concept of a church that was upheld by the state through its support for universal clerical maintenance by tithe, and to which the population was expected to subscribe and were legally required to attend.

'Cromwellian Church'

For the sake of brevity, it has been necessary to refer to the 'Cromwellian church' throughout this thesis. This does not mean that the thesis assumes the existence of a 'Cromwellian church' as a coherent institution, and, indeed, it considers this question in its concluding chapters.

Dates

In the 1650s, the new year began on the 25th of March; in this thesis, dates have been amended to begin the new year on the 1st of January.

Church Dedications

The Cromwellian regime avoided the use of 'St' before the dedications of churches: 'St Paul's' became merely 'Paul's'. This practice has been followed in this thesis, except where the use of 'St' has been necessary for clarity.

**‘You have now a godly ministry, you have
a knowing ministry,
such a one as, without vanity be it spoken, the world has not the
like: men knowing the things of God, and able to search into the
things of God’**

Oliver Cromwell, speech to both Houses of Parliament, at the opening of the
Second Protectorate Parliament, 20th January, 1658

‘A Knowing Ministry’
The Reform of the Church under Oliver Cromwell
c.1653 - 1660

Introduction

This thesis explores the reform of the church under Oliver Cromwell and his son and successor, Richard. It presents the first comprehensive analysis of the archive of the Commission for the Approbation of Ministers, or ‘Triers’, who were one of the three agencies established by the Cromwellian regime to refashion the parochial ministry. In doing so, it provides a reconceptualisation of the regime’s hitherto misinterpreted religious programme, which, in turn, opens up a new understanding of the national church under the two Protectors. It does not delve deeply into the theological debates of the period, nor does it revisit attempts to define levels of independency, presbyterianism or episcopalianism, nor indeed does it join the long-running arguments over the numbers of clergy who suffered - on either side - during the revolution. It offers, instead, the first comprehensive, institutional history of the Triers and their work in re-shaping the ministry, based upon their dense administrative archive in the Commonwealth papers at Lambeth Palace Library. From this, it presents a contextualised understanding of the reforms that they achieved and the character of the resulting national church in the 1650s.

Despite widespread and consistent scholarly interest in the puritan revolution, in Oliver Cromwell personally, and in the development of the post-reformation English church, the nature of the Cromwellian church itself has remained stubbornly opaque. Contemporary comment on the Triers, in particular, was sparse and invariably negative, accusing them of illegitimacy, bias and avarice and often censuring their admission of unlearned and unordained men into the ministry.¹ These complaints were almost universally echoed in the few Restoration commentaries that considered the subject.² Only the eminent Worcestershire minister, Richard Baxter, took a different line. Looking back on the freedom he and his fellow non-conformists had experienced in the 1650s, he concluded,

The truth is, to give them [the Triers] their due, they did abundance of good to the church. They saved many a congregation from ignorant, ungodly, drunken teachers ... So great was the benefit above the hurt which they brought to the church, that many thousands of souls ... grieved when the Prelatists afterward cast them out again.³

And he added, with uncanny prescience, that he supposed his views would carry considerable weight because of his known hostility to the Triers during their

¹ For example: Anon, *Hypocrisie Discovered* (1655); Anon, *The Protector, (so called), in part unvailed* (1655); J. Goodwin, *Basanista'i* (1657).

² For example: H. Foulis, *The History of the Wicked Plots and Conspiracies of our Pretended Saints* (1662); BL, Add. MS. 19526 (H. Gregory, *Narrative of Travels of Charles II*, [nd., after 1660], vol.1); I. Walton, *Love and Truth* (1680).

³ R. Baxter, M. Sylvester, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London: 1696), 72.

existence. His recollections, although probably written in the late 1660s or soon afterwards, were not published until 1696, and were shortly followed in 1702 by the non-conformist Edmund Calamy's hagiography of Baxter himself, to which Calamy added an annotated list of the nonconformist ministers who had been excluded from the church at the Restoration.⁴

In 1713, the episcopalian minister John Walker retaliated, publishing his own collection of personal accounts of the ejections of royalist, episcopalian ministers during the revolution, in his *Sufferings of the Clergy*. Accusing the Triers of approving 'many of that rabble of wild enthusiasts which invaded the pulpits in those days, made up of soldiers, pedlars, bankrupt tradesmen and mechanicks', and gleefully quoting some of the choicer accusations made by 'victims' of the Triers, Walker re-awakened dormant grievances over the treatment of the episcopalian clergy.⁵ Reflecting, perhaps intentionally, the contemporary language of 'sufferings' used by the Quakers, Calamy and Walker's martyrologies have come to dominate much of the subsequent approach to this subject.⁶ In narrowing the subject matter down to 'ejections' and focusing on the

⁴ E. Calamy, *An Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's History of his Life and Times. With an account of many others of those worthy ministers who were ejected, after the Restauration of King Charles the Second ... And a continuation of their history, till the year 1691* (London: 1702). Calamy enlarged and revised his work in 1713 and 1727, and it was subsequently augmented and re-issued by Samuel Palmer.

⁵ J. Walker, *An Attempt towards recovering an Account of the Numbers and Sufferings of the Clergy of the Church of England* (London: J. Nicholson, 1714).

⁶ M. Vivers, *The Saints testimony finishing through sufferings: or, The Proceedings of the Court against the Servants of Jesus* (1655); Anon, *For the King and both Houses of Parliament, being a brief, plain and true relation of some of the late sad sufferings of the people of God called Quakers* (1663).

1640s and 1660s, they unintentionally obfuscated other aspects of the church in the revolution, particularly during the 1650s.⁷ They failed, however, to extinguish Baxter's praise as the epithet that would be forever associated with the Triers.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts of the Cromwellian church were more indicative of their authors' religious sympathies than of new historical evidence. Even Daniel Neal's impressive *History of the Puritans* concentrated on the process of the Triers and Ejectors, and drew largely on Baxter, Walker and his close contemporary Edmund Calamy. A Congregationalist minister, Neal interpreted the church as being religiously tolerant, as did S. R. Gardiner, a century later, whose non-conformist liberalism allowed him to describe the Triers' policies as 'broad and generous'.⁸ High Anglicans such as Henry Wakeman, however, viewed the Committee as 'absolute in the authority it wielded and irresponsible in its exercise of it'.⁹

In 1900, William Shaw published the first - and only - major institutional history of the church in the revolution, which remains the standard reference work for this subject.¹⁰ Primarily concerned with the presbyterian experiment of the

⁷ Walker did include 1650s ejections, but the vast majority of his accounts concerned the 1640s.

⁸ D. Neal, *History of the Puritans from the Reformation of 1517 to the Revolution in 1688* (London: W. Baynes and Son, 1822), vol.4, 99-103; S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, 1649-1660*, vol.3, 24.

⁹ H. Wakeman, *The Church and the Puritans, 1570-1660* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1890), 180.

¹⁰ W. Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and Under the Commonwealth, 1640-1660* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900).

1640s, he discussed the operation of the Trustees but made little comment on the achievements of the Triers and Ejectors or on the Cromwellian church itself. Equally important for scholarship in this field were the mid-twentieth-century revisions to the work of Calamy and Walker undertaken by A. G. Matthews.¹¹ Matthews checked and expanded both lists of ejected clergymen, drawing on the Commonwealth records alongside much else. These two volumes are the standard reference work for studying the *personnel* of the clergy during the revolution.

There is no modern monograph of the national church under the republic and Protectorate. Most recent (and indeed older) accounts of the development of post-reformation religion, or of the Interregnum itself, cover the 1650s church superficially, often noting only the key legislation and the establishment of the Triers and Ejectors. Drawing probably on Baxter's praise, the general consensus in these works is summed up by Ronald Hutton: 'The system of Triers and Ejectors had solved the problem of the provision of clergy'.¹²

Scholars seeking more detail on the Cromwellian church are best served by a number of important essays - by Claire Cross (1972, 1987), John Morrill (1982),

¹¹ A. G. Matthews, *Walker Revised* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948) and *Calamy Revised* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934).

¹² R. Hutton, *The British Republic 1649-1660* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1990), 92.

Anthony Fletcher (1990), Jeffrey Collins (2002) and Ann Hughes (2006).¹³ Cross argues for an increase in lay control of the church in the revolution, whilst Collins claims that the period was the extreme example of erastianism in the national church. Morrill, Hughes and Fletcher draw important and balanced summaries of the regime's religious policies, but all of these accounts have been forced to focus upon what the regime wished to do, rather than assessing what it achieved. Colin Davis and Blair Worden have provided ground-breaking insights into Cromwell's personal religion, but have been hampered by lack of evidence when gauging his role in the creation of the church.¹⁴ Numerous county studies have included geographical snapshots of the Cromwellian church, such as Harold Smith on Essex or Mary Coate on Cornwall, whilst Ann Hughes and Rosemary O'Day have produced an important essay on augmentations in Warwickshire and Derbyshire.¹⁵

¹³ C. Cross, 'The Church in England' in G. Aylmer (ed.), *The Interregnum: the Quest for Settlement 1646-1660* (London: Macmillan, 1972) (rev. ed. 1974); C. Cross, *Church and people: England, 1450-1660* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) (2nd ed.); J. Morrill, 'The Church in England' in J. Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War 1642 - 1649* (London: Macmillan, 1982); A. Fletcher, 'Oliver Cromwell and the Godly Nation' in J. Morrill (ed.), *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (London: Longman, 1990); J. Collins, 'The Church Settlement of Oliver Cromwell' in *History* (2002), vol.87; A. Hughes, 'The Public Profession of these Nations': the National Church in Interregnum England' in C. Durston and J. Maltby (eds.), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester: MUP, 2006).

¹⁴ B. Worden, 'Oliver Cromwell and the Sin of Achan' in D. Beales and G. West (eds.), *History, society and the churches: essays in honour of Owen Chadwick* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985) and 'Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England' in *Past and Present* (1985), vol.109; J. C. Davis, 'Cromwell's Religion' in Morrill (ed.), *Cromwell and the English Revolution*.

¹⁵ H. Smith, *The Ecclesiastical History of Essex under the Long Parliament and Commonwealth* (Colchester: Benham and Company, nd.); M. Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War* (Truro: 1963); T. Richards, *Religious developments in Wales (1654-1662)* (London: NEA, 1923); A. Hughes and R. O'Day 'Augmentation and Amalgamation: was there a systematic approach to the reform of parochial finance, 1640-1660?' in F. Heal and R. O'Day (eds.), *Princes and Paupers in the English church 1500-1800* (New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1981).

Only two studies, both unpublished, have taken direct approaches to the Cromwellian church. John Murphy's detailed research into the Triers concentrated on the clerical patronage of Cromwell and various 'state bodies', highlighting the 'ecumenical' nature of the resulting appointments. Building on Morrill and Hutton's research into churchwardens' accounts, he also sought to test the 'success' Cromwell's appointees achieved in subduing aspects of episcopalian worship, concluding that 'Cromwell succeeded in incorporating different denominational views within a broad-based national church'.¹⁶ Martin Winstone presented a thoughtful, but necessarily brief, analysis of the Triers' work in Yorkshire and Essex, alongside short examinations of the Committees for Propagating the Gospel and the rise of the Voluntary Associations.¹⁷ Both studies revealed important insights, but limitations in their scope and extent prevented them from offering a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

There are many other modern explorations of aspects of religion in the revolution, but all of these focus on topics other than the national church. The emergence of the radical sects, especially the Quakers, has received sustained attention, including full length studies by Christopher Hill, Barry Reay, Bernard

¹⁶ J. Murphy, 'Oliver Cromwell's Church: State and Clergy during the Protectorate' (University of Wisconsin-Madison: unpublished PhD thesis, 1997), 258.

¹⁷ M. Winstone, 'The Church in Cromwellian England: Initiatives for Reform of the Ministry during the Interregnum' (Oxford University: unpublished MA thesis, 1995).

Capp and Anne Hughes in particular, besides numerous articles.¹⁸ Recent examinations of other religious themes during the Protectorate include an important collection of essays concerning toleration, presbyterianism, baptists, and anglicanism amongst others.¹⁹ Investigations into the survival of episcopalianism, the practice of congregationalism and the threat of the Socinians have also finally begun to illuminate previously hidden facets of the period whose religious landscape was once dismissed as ‘simply a record of confusion’.²⁰ Moreover, with the calendaring and editing of the voluminous *Minutes of the Westminster Assembly*, a first important insight has been given into the clerical approvals carried out by the precursor to the Triers.²¹

And yet, despite this collective body of work, the Cromwellian church has remained indistinct, and fundamental questions about the extent and nature of the reformation of the ministry remain unanswered. In 2012, in the light of the work

¹⁸ C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1972); B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1985); J. McGregor and B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford: OUP, 1984); B. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: a Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972); R. Acheson, *Radical Puritans in England, 1550-1660* (London: Longman, 1990); A. Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford: OUP, 2004) and many others.

¹⁹ Durston and Maltby, *Religion in Revolutionary England*.

²⁰ W. Shaw, quoted in R. Bosher, *The Making of the Restoration Settlement 1649-1662* (London: 1951), 6; K. Fincham and S. Taylor, ‘Vital Statistics: Episcopal Ordination and Ordinands in England, 1646–60’ in *EHR* (2011), vol.126(519); J. Halcomb, ‘A Social History of Congregational Religious Practice during the Puritan Revolution’, (University of Cambridge: unpublished PhD thesis, 2009); S. Mortimer, *Reason and religion in the English Revolution: the Challenge of Socinianism*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2011).

²¹ C. Van Dixhoorn (ed.), *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652*, 5 vols., (Oxford: OUP, 2012).

done on the clerical examinations of the Westminster Assembly, Joel Halcomb commented, ‘A full study of ecclesiastical appointments for the civil wars is needed’.²² This thesis seeks to address at least some of those fundamental questions on ecclesiastical reforms, and to answer, at least in part, the need for work on clerical appointments in the revolution, by providing an entirely new and comprehensive analysis of the whole Triers’ archive. It argues that this archive provides the fullest and most systematically documented evidence of the construction and development of the Protectorate ministry, offering unparalleled evidence of the processes and personnel employed by the Cromwellians to establish a godly national church in England.

The central focus of this thesis is the reform of the ministry during the Protectorate, and its impact on the nature of the Cromwellian church more broadly. At the same time, however, the results of this study have significant implications for several other related historiographical debates. They begin to fill a significant gap in the current understanding of the experience of the clerical profession in the mid-seventeenth-century. They provide new information on Cromwell’s personal involvement in the creation of his church and his practice of ecclesiastical patronage. They contextualise and supplement recent work on underground episcopalianism during the 1650s. They supply new information on clerical movements at the Restoration, and add to the debate on the long-term

²² *ibid.*, 225.

influence of the Protectorate on post-Restoration history. Finally, this research has demonstrated that the Registers themselves, and the accompanying study of individuals within them, are able to correct and amend many of the *lacunae* which are found in the standard reference works on the clergy during the seventeenth-century, including the registers of university alumni, A. G. Matthews' compendia of clerical ejections, and the *Clergy of the Church of England database*.

The Sources

The Triers' archive is an extensive but problematic source, the reasons for which originated with the religious reforms of the revolution that created it. During the civil war in the 1640s, virtually the entire pre-war diocesan administration, including the church courts, was abolished. This resulted in the almost total cessation of the record-keeping that had underpinned the church since the Reformation. Bishops' registers, visitation records, and other diocesan records fell into abeyance for nearly two decades. Even the continuation of parochial records was variable and, in some cases, parish registers ceased to be kept.²³ In others, Interregnum records were intentionally destroyed after the Restoration.²⁴

²³ At Maids Moreton in Buckinghamshire, the Restoration incumbent, Matthew Bate noted, 'Among other things, the Register was hid, and fore that cause is not absolutely perfect for divers years: though I have used my best diligence to record as many particulars as I could come by': PR 139/1/1. I owe this reference to K. Fincham. Andrew Foster has highlighted the need for continued research into parish registers in the 1650s: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/myparish/posts/fosterregisters/

²⁴ Calamy noted that John Shaw, who took part in ejecting scandalous ministers, 'upon the turn of the times, burnt all the papers': E. Calamy, S. Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (1778), (2nd ed.) vol.2, 591.

Occasionally, records from the 1650s were copied from old books into new, or gathered by word-of-mouth and inserted into post-1660 registers, but often their accuracy is difficult to substantiate.²⁵ Some losses were, of course, the result of later negligence.

The defunct diocesan administration was eventually replaced by an entirely different framework for regulating the church. In 1654, the new Protectorate established three commissions dedicated to ensuring the provision of a godly preaching ministry, whose primary duties were to control the quality and competence of ministers who wished to take up, or continue in, a publicly-funded living and to improve parochial incomes. Commissions for the Ejection of Scandalous, Ignorant, and Insufficient Ministers and Schoolmasters (the ‘Ejectors’) were established in most counties of England and Wales, with responsibility for removing existing ministers found to be religiously, politically or morally delinquent. Virtually no self-generated records of their activities have survived. The Trustees for the Maintenance of the Preaching Ministry (the ‘Trustees’) were based in London and were charged with improving clerical incomes. They left a more extensive, if difficult, archive, including grants of financial augmentations and the available sources of income on which they drew.

²⁵ Thomas Ernle, rector of Everleigh, Wiltshire, writing after 1660, noted, ‘Much in this register is disordered, scattered in confusion without any order of system ... [it] was begun in the days of the king’s exile when Oliver Cromwell usurped the authority of this Realme under the title of Protector: It is most confused till the year 1660 ...’ in S. Hobbs (ed.), *Gleanings from Wiltshire Parish Registers* (Chippenham: WRS, 2010), 100.

The third agency, the Commission for the Approbation of Public Preachers (the ‘Triers’), was also based in London and was responsible for interviewing and approving all ministers who wished to take up, or change, a living, or to receive a financial augmentation from the Trustees. The Triers’ approvals were recorded in five Registers - all of which have survived - covering the period 1654 to 1659. The considerable scale of their archive, but its narrow range of detail, has not endeared it to historians, and this is undoubtedly the single most important reason why the Cromwellian church has remained largely unexplored. Until the development of digital technology, the multiple roles and relationships of so many individuals were impossible to record and handle.²⁶ This has meant that, until now, only small samples of the Registers have been examined, as part of regional studies or for specific groups of ministers.²⁷ These snapshots have offered valuable insights into the activities of the Triers, but are too numerically or geographically limited to demonstrate the nature of the Cromwellian church as a whole.

To investigate the Registers thoroughly requires the use of digital technology; without this, they are virtually impenetrable. The research underpinning this thesis has therefore involved the building of a relational database into which all the entries in the Registers have been entered. The resulting database is not

²⁶ The extensive hand-written attempts in the notebooks of Claude Jenkins at Lambeth Palace Library are testament to the impossibility of this task: LPL, MSS. 1656-64 (Jenkins Papers).

²⁷ Eg: Smith, *Essex*; B. Nightingale, *The Ejected of 1662 in Cumberland & Westmorland* (Manchester: MUP, 1911); S. Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims: New World Settlers and the Call of Home* (New Haven: YUP, 2007).

submitted as part of this thesis - it is a tool for handling extensive data - but it has enabled the numbers, chronology, relationships and networks they contain to be exposed for analysis, which in turn has provided significant new insights into the Cromwellian church.

The database contains approximately 24 000 names of ministers, patrons and referees, approximately 3000 parishes, and all the additional accompanying information, including multiple dates, recorded by the Triers' clerks. The sheer number of individuals recorded and the chronological coverage of six years make analyses of the information in the Registers statistically robust and nationally significant. They provide evidence of sequential clerical turnover and they cover the whole of England and Wales. They offer, therefore, an unparalleled wealth of detail on clerical personnel and networks, and they clarify much that was previously unknown about ecclesiastical patronage during the Protectorate. This includes important evidence on the involvement of both Protectors and exposes something of the extent of lay participation in the church. Furthermore, they reveal the framework of the Cromwellian ministry and how far some diocesan structures and practices remained in operation.

The entry of the Registers into a database also unlocks the potential for new avenues of research, by the addition of data that is not contained within them. For the most part, this thesis has only briefly tapped into this potential by assigning religious denominations to some men where these are clear, and by adding the

decisions made by ministers when they had to choose whether to leave - or join - the Restoration church. Even these modest explorations, however, have illustrated the enormous value of transferring the Registers into the database; they now form a bedrock of information onto which additional layers of information can be built and analysed.

Despite these obvious strengths, however, the Registers have inherent weaknesses as a means of examining the Cromwellian church. In the first place, the information they contain is essentially a long list of names and dates, with almost no additional information. This is not an archive that bares its soul easily, and it steers any analysis towards a quantitative, rather than a qualitative, assessment. This quantitative approach can be mitigated by prosopographical investigation, but many of the individuals cannot, in fact, be definitively identified. Furthermore, the Registers include only those ministers approved by the Triers; there is no robust corpus of material on who was rejected. This risks over-emphasising the number of successful interviews and focusing on who and what the Triers considered acceptable for the ministry, without adequate contextual information on the overall proportion of interviews and ministers that these records represent. After all, the influence and importance of the Triers' work depends, in part, on whether they approved ten per cent or ninety per cent of the serving clergy. Moreover, in focusing only on those who took up livings or sought augmentations, it is easy to pay insufficient attention to those who simply remained in livings where they were already settled by 1654. And yet, so long as

these men avoided removal by the Ejectors, by implication they too formed part of the 'Cromwellian ministry'.

The Registers also provide no direct evidence of the theological, intellectual and polemical ideas and debates that accompanied the Cromwellian drive for a godly state. The Protectorate church could, for example, be studied through an examination of ecclesiological texts, but that is not possible from this archive. Nevertheless, the historiography of this church is currently at its weakest in the area of its administration, structure and clergy. This thesis maintains that a detailed understanding of the operation of the church provides the context and practice against which the intellectual and polemical discourse that accompanied it took place. Indeed, it was often ecclesiological practices - for example, the appointment of unordained ministers - that were the catalysts for intellectual debate. In the light of this argument, therefore, this study does not attempt to investigate the ecclesiological and theological character of the Cromwellian church.

Although the subject of this thesis is broader than a straightforward examination of the Triers, their Registers nevertheless form the core of the study. It is, therefore, helpful to summarise the differences between the information they contain and that contained within the diocesan records which preceded them. Before the civil war, the names of new clergy, their patrons and their dates of institution were recorded in bishops' registers. The names of those providing testimonials for new ministers were generally included in their ordination papers,

although few of these survive pre-1640. Furthermore, the details of ministers' ordination and their education may have been entered in Exhibit Books, *Libri Cleri* or other visitation records.²⁸ Many of these recorded the ecclesiastical policies and requirements enforced during bishops' or archdeacons' visitations, and evidence of the degree to which each parish and minister conformed to, or deviated from, such matters. Behavioural delinquency by parishioners was heard - and recorded - in the church courts. Baptisms, marriages and deaths were entered in parish registers and copied into bishops' transcripts. Churchwardens' accounts recorded most, if not all, parish expenditure.

Most of this record-keeping was swept away in the 1640s, so how did the records of the 1650s compare with their predecessors? Ecclesiological conformity was largely unregulated by the state, other than through the policing of blasphemy and scandalous behaviour by the Ejectors or the Major-Generals, of which little evidence has survived. Some instances of behavioural delinquency, however, were occasionally recorded in the vestry books of individual churches, and some moral or financial transgressions, especially tithe disputes, came under the jurisdiction of the secular courts and can sometimes be found in their records. County Committees periodically disciplined non-conformity, but the minutes of those still active in the 1650s have generally not survived.

²⁸ This summary is a broad generalisation of the wide variation in administrative records of different dioceses.

Since the former institution and induction of ministers by the diocesan hierarchy now equated to approval by the Triers, their Registers are the closest equivalents to bishops' registers. Approvals were also given to existing ministers deemed suitable to receive augmentations to their incomes and thus the Registers capture at least a small additional number of ministers already in benefices by 1653. This information is supplemented by that in the church surveys undertaken in 1649-51, 1654 and 1657 which, although incomplete in coverage, offer snapshots of parochial incomes and incumbents. The Triers' Registers also systematically record the names of those providing testimonials for ministers gaining approval. Finally, parish registers and churchwardens' accounts continued, in theory, to be maintained, although by no means all these records were kept or have survived.

Synopsis

At the heart of this thesis is the argument that the religious landscape of England and Wales after 1654 was significantly shaped by the activities of the Triers, Trustees and Ejectors. These agencies worked in close if sometimes contradictory partnership, overseen by the Protector and his Council. The research presented here suggests that the current understanding of the agencies involved in the construction of the Cromwellian ministry is inaccurate. This thesis offers a reconceptualisation of the regime's religious programme, which in turn suggests a re-interpretation of the Cromwellian church itself.

To develop this argument, the role and activities of all three agencies are considered in detail, but the main focus is the work of the Triers, in their role as ‘gatekeepers’ to the ministry. Part One discusses the tensions and weaknesses in the church in the early 1650s. It argues that the Cromwellian religious programme was drawn up not only against a backdrop of exceptional public concern over the recent changes to the *nature* of the church but also in the light of its decay under the Rump Parliament. It exposes for the first time the true extent of this decay, and impact of the rise of the independents.

Part Two examines the constitutional and legislative basis behind the Triers, Trustees and Ejectors. It analyses the basis for the religious programme in the Instrument of Government and discusses the roles and scope of the activities of each of the three resulting agencies. These discussions demonstrate that the relative influence and autonomy of each agency has been misunderstood and incorrectly weighted. It then deconstructs the Triers’ Registers themselves, arguing that a close-reading of this archive reveals the nature of the ministry that the Cromwellians wished to create.

Part Three delves deeply into the contents of the Registers through detailed interrogations of the database. It demonstrates for the first time the overall extent of the Triers’ work, illustrated by the geographical and chronological patterns of their approvals, and discusses the factors which may have shaped their activities. This is followed by detailed examinations of the range of ministers approved by the Triers, their patrons and the referees who provided testimonials for them.

Building on the detailed investigations in Part Three, Part Four widens the perspective of the thesis to explore the impact and legacy of the Triers. It re-interprets the genesis of the *Humble Proposals*, which provided the model for the Cromwellian church, and it offers a reconceptualisation of the regime's resulting religious programme. It concludes by assessing the importance of the key findings on the Triers and the religious programme in reaching a broader understanding of the church in the 1650s and in opening up new avenues for research into the Restoration church. It sets this within the wider context of the varied attempts to solve the administrative problems of the church that faced both revolutionary and monarchical governments in the seventeenth-century. Finally, in the light of all these discussions, it considers whether the Cromwellian church remained, in fact, the 'national church' at all.

Part 1 **The Church in the 1650s: the Need for Reform**

1.1 The Ecclesiological Tensions in the Church of the Republic

The process of religious change that took place in England and Wales during the 1640s is already well-documented elsewhere.¹ Beyond a short resumé of this process, this section focuses on the religious tensions of the early 1650s, which partly shaped the Cromwellian's religious programme in 1654. It argues that between 1648 and 1653, disagreements over the need for a Confession of Faith, over the nature of the national ministry, and over mechanisms for enforcing parochial discipline brought about a stagnation in the functioning of the church. This was aggravated by the inertia of the Rump Parliament in making provision for new forms of ecclesiastical management and by the ascendancy of the independents. These factors, and the dissolution of the Rump in April 1653, resulted in the near collapse of the administration of the church and in particular, the provision of a parochial ministry.

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The religious landscape of the 1630s, the period of Charles I's personal rule, was characterised by a gradual polarisation between godly puritanism and anti-

¹ For example: J. Spurr, *The Post-Reformation 1603-1714* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006), 101-8; Durston and Maltby (eds.), *Religion in Revolutionary England*; J. Morrill, 'Church in England'; Shaw, vols.1 and 2.

Calvinist Laudianism. The crown's support for religious ceremonialism, church decoration and the elevation of the clergy alienated hard-line Calvinists, and the king's perceived mis-use of his prerogative powers to enforce religious conformity became a rallying point for his opponents.² After the calling of the Long Parliament in 1640, the Laudian programme was one of the first elements of the personal rule to be removed. By 1646, almost the entire episcopalian hierarchy had been demolished, and the Book of Common Prayer had been proscribed and replaced by the presbyterian Directory for Public Worship.

Pressure from the Scots to secure a presbyterian settlement in England through the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643-4, combined with a large presbyterian presence in the House of Commons, came close to establishing a presbyterian national church in England in the 1640s. Distrust of the Scots, however, combined with suspicions that English presbyterians would reach an accommodation with the king and impose a conservative religious settlement, antagonised many within the Army, who feared a clamp-down on the numerous separated congregations and expressions of radicalism within its ranks. This fear resulted in an Army-backed purge of most presbyterians from the House of Commons in 1648, which effectively halted the drive to create a presbyterian national church. Instead, the magisterial independents, who argued that the state had a role in religious affairs, took political control. With the installation of

² For example: J. Canne, *A Necessitie of Separation from the Church of England, Proved by the Nonconformists' Principles* (1634), 144; Anon, *The Fall of Babylon in Usurping Ecclesiastical Power and Offices* (Amsterdam: 1634), 22.

Oliver Cromwell in December 1653, this ensured that the national church would be moulded along their lines.

In April 1653, days before the dissolution of the Rump Parliament by Cromwell, the House of Commons received a petition from ‘neer 8000 of the Gentry, Freeholders, and other Inhabitants’ of the ‘county of South-Hampton’, expressing their support for a godly church and its ministry, and their fear of those who sought its ‘discouragement and destruction’.³ The petition listed four key requests: that the universities should be nurtured for their role in promoting religion and learning; that ministers should be encouraged and tithes continued, at least until an alternative form of maintenance could be found; that scandalous ministers should be removed; and that a ‘setled order’ should be established to admit ‘orthodox and fitly qualified’ ministers. This petition was accompanied by one from Wiltshire, which concurred with its demands, adding the request that ‘pastors and teachers for the work of the Ministry’ should also be encouraged.⁴

These and other similar petitions exemplified the widespread disquiet about the immediate threats to the church from a range of hostile opponents and forces. For many people, these threats were inextricably linked to the breakdown of social unity. Blair Worden has noted that ‘religious division [was] the great anxiety of early modern Europe, as keen a stimulus to thought and guilt as class division in

³ *The Cryes of England to the Parliament* (1653), 6-8.

⁴ *ibid.*, 4.

modern Europe'.⁵ In this context, those who demanded the right to worship separately from their parishes, the removal of compulsory tithes and 'toleration' were seen to be launching a dangerous attack on the unity of the church and thus on the very fabric and cohesion of society.⁶

Fears over separatism were closely linked to wide-spread concern over the anarchic views thought to be promoted by antinomians and the anti-trinitarian teachings of the Socinians. Equally alarming was the apparent increase in the spread of radical sects, such as the Ranters, Quakers and other 'anabaptists'.⁷ And always, of course, there was the underlying threat to English protestantism posed by 'the Popish, Arminian and other Adversaries', identified by the inhabitants of Southampton. The answer, for the petitioners at least, was to reinforce the role of the magistrate in the church and to nurture and increase the orthodox godly ministry.

By the early 1650s, the deluge of publications arguing over theological issues, which had flooded the press since the collapse of censorship in 1640, was being augmented by more straightforward pleas for positive action by the government

⁵ B. Worden, *God's Instruments* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 71.

⁶ Zakai notes the negative connotations of 'toleration' in the seventeenth century: A. Zakai, 'Religious Toleration and its Enemies: The Independent Divines and the Issue of Toleration during the English Civil War' in *Albion*, (1989), vol.21(1), 3.

⁷ 'Anabaptist' encompassed a range of radical groups in England. Many county testimonies condemned the proliferation of blasphemy and heresies: Anon, *A Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ [...] subscribed by the ministers of Christ within the Province of London* (1647); Anon, *The Concurrent Testimony of the Ministers in the County of Wiltes* (1648); F. Higginson, *A Brief Relation of the Irreligion of the Northern Quakers* (1653).

to mend what was seen to be a fragmenting national church and, especially, to support its beleaguered clergy.⁸ Although many of the concerns expressed in these publications shared a common root - whether the magistrate should have a role in the church - they highlighted a variety of different fears. To understand why some kind of religious settlement was necessary in 1654, and why it took the form it did, it is helpful to tease out these fears and their origins.

Perhaps the most alarming challenge for many people was the debate over whether, or how much, liberty of conscience should be allowed to individuals. Liberty of conscience *was* a difficult concept in the seventeenth-century; it ran counter to the desire for religious unity, the propriety of the hierarchical organisation of society, and the duty of governments to protect their people from harm, including danger to their souls. After all, liberty of conscience, if granted, was a door through which people might wander into scepticism, atheism and damnation. This was bad enough, but equally frightening was the fear that the governor who allowed his people to slide into heresy might bring down the wrath of God upon not only himself but on the rest of his nation.⁹

The concept of liberty of conscience stemmed from the godly dependence on scripture as the ultimate guide of thought and action. Scripture might be unambiguous on certain points, but many of the godly acknowledged that it was

⁸ For example: *The Wiltshire Petition for Tithes Explained* (1653).

⁹ B. Worden, 'Oliver Cromwell and the Sin of Achan' in D. Beales and G. Best, (eds.), *History, Society and the Churches* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), 42, 58.

less clear on others, and that a variety of practices might legitimately fall within the definition of orthodoxy.¹⁰ In the early 1640s, arguments over such interpretive differences mattered less than the immediate demolition of the Laudian church. By the mid-1640s, however, it was becoming apparent that the removal of episcopal authority, including the prerogative courts of High Commission and Star Chamber, was encouraging the proliferation of more or less radical religious groups. This focused attention more urgently on the implications of liberty of conscience.¹¹

In 1643, five ‘dissenting brethren’ within parliament’s committee on religion, the Westminster Assembly, published *An Apologetical Narration*, in which they expressed their commitment to the right of self-governance for individual congregations.¹² This statement was at odds with the state-backed presbyterianism being formulated by the Assembly and it signalled a breach in the unity of the orthodox godly. From this point on, the debate on liberty of conscience would take an increasingly prominent role in the formulation of

¹⁰ For example: W. Prynne, *Twelve Considerable, Serious Questions Touching Church Government* (1644); J. Goodwin, *Certaine Briefe Observations and Antiqueries on Master Prin’s Twelve Questions about Church Government* (1644); H. Burton, *An Answer to Mr William Prynne’s Twelve Questions Concerning Church Government* (1644); J. Saltmarsh, *The Smoke in the Temple* (1646), 4.

¹¹ For example: SP 16/476 f.243 (*Petition of [...] the county of Bedford to Parliament*).

¹² T. Goodwin, P. Nye, S. Simpson, W. Burroughs, W. Bridge, *An Apologetical Narration* (1643).

religious policy. Outside Westminster, the arguments for and against continued to be fought out in the press and through the pulpit.¹³

One of the main problems with liberty of conscience was that it was hard to contain. The purge of presbyterian MPs from parliament in 1648 may have saved the independents from an anti-tolerationist presbyterian regime, but it left them with a different problem: how to hold an acceptable line that allowed relatively orthodox groups to worship peacefully, if separately, whilst not allowing heretical and transgressive sects to flourish.¹⁴ Attempts to impose legislation against blasphemy and heresy, which should have eased this dilemma, aroused furious debate over the problems of definition, especially when some people argued that, logically, liberty of conscience should also include episcopalians, catholics and even Jews.¹⁵

Furthermore, by the late 1640s religious and social radicalism was deeply entrenched in the army regiments and the preservation of liberty of conscience had become a non-negotiable position amongst the troops. Moreover, it was supported, both pragmatically and on principle, by influential army leaders,

¹³ For example: H. Danvers, *Certain Quæries concerning Liberty of Conscience* (1649); [H. Vane], *Zeal Examined* (1652); Anon, *The Examiner Examined* (1652); R. Williams *The Examiner Defended* (1652).

¹⁴ For expression of this, see 'To the Supreme Authority of the Nation' (n.d), in J. Nickolls, *Original Letters and Papers of State addressed to Oliver Cromwell* (London: 1743), 129-30.

¹⁵ J. Vernon, *The Sword's Abuse Asserted* (1648), 13.

including Oliver Cromwell.¹⁶ With such heavyweight political and military backing, liberty of conscience moved from being an ecclesiological dilemma to a political reality. Even so, it continued to be condemned by presbyterians and episcopalians, whilst many of the magisterial independents close to power in Westminster sought to impose tight restrictions upon its extent.¹⁷

In 1651-2 a group of leading independent ministers, including John Owen and three of the 'dissenting brethren' of 1643, produced a draft framework for the church - the *Humble Proposals*.¹⁸ One of the most controversial aspects of these Proposals was the requirement that new ministers must be approved not only by other ministers but also by laymen. The principle of lay control over the appointment of clergy was intrinsically inflammatory, and this clause effectively gave the orthodox clergy the right to veto the appointments of those whom separated congregations had chosen to preach. This not only restricted their exercise of choice but also struck at the core tenet of many separated churches - that any individual might be chosen by God to minister. The other flashpoint in the *Proposals* was the requirement that ministers should subscribe to a set of 'fundamentals' drawn up by Owen and his colleagues. Both these clauses demonstrated that, if enacted, the *Humble Proposals* would deny separated

¹⁶ Cromwell's speeches frequently include exhortations for broad toleration among the godly: W.C. Abbott, *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1947), vol.3(1), 57, 62.

¹⁷ See, for example, *An Attestation to the Testimony of our Reverend Brethren of the Province of London to the Truth of Jesus Christ* (1648), 4;

¹⁸ J. Owen *et al*, *The Humble Proposals of Mr. Owen, Mr. Tho. Goodwin, Mr. Nye, Mr. Sympson* (1652). Owen and his colleagues were advisors to the parliamentary Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel.

congregations the freedom to hold their own communion with God unmediated by state control and external assumptions on orthodoxy.

The publication of the early versions of the *Humble Proposals* in 1652 resulted in outcry from the sects and, in particular, a lasting breach between some baptist groups and the magisterial independents.¹⁹ The outcry was escalated in October that year by a group of army officers, who also rejected the *Proposals*' restrictiveness.²⁰ By the end of December, Cromwell too had intervened in support of the army's insistence on liberty of conscience and the final version, which went before parliament in early 1653, was significantly modified to accommodate their demands. In the event, the dismissal of the Rump Parliament two months later meant that the matter was postponed and it remained unresolved throughout the rest of the year.

The demand for liberty of conscience, which so frightened conservatives, was inextricably linked with widespread fears over other subversive aspects of the radical sects. Not only did groups such as the Quakers, Brownists and Ranters withdraw from parish communion into small cliques, where they were believed to adhere to blasphemous - even heretical - doctrinal positions and even indulge in morally dubious practices, but they also called for the removal of tithes.²¹

¹⁹ C. Polizotto, 'The Campaign against the Humble Proposals' in *JEH* (1987), vol.38(4), 570-2, 576, 581.

²⁰ T. Pride, *The Beacons Quenched* (1652) in Polizotto, 'Campaign', 580.

²¹ For the panoply of radical groups, see Hill, *World Turned Upside down*. For a contemporary enumeration, see T. Edwards, *Gangraena* (1646); Anon, *A Catalogue of the Several Sects and Opinions in England and Other Nations* (1647); Anon, *Hell Broke Loose* (1646).

Tithes were a contentious issue for many radical groups, who rejected the requirement to support a national ministry from which they wished to exclude themselves. Their calls for the abolition of universal and obligatory clerical maintenance, however, threatened the very existence of the national church.

In the early 1640s, even as parliament upheld the right of the clergy to tithes, the replacement of episcopalian ministers with godly clergy, whose titles to their livings were deemed by some to be illegitimate, increased hostility to tithe payment.²² As the sects proliferated, their calls for the removal of tithes became more vocal. Although the *Humble Proposals* carefully avoided the issue of clerical maintenance, the early 1650s saw demands for the abolition of tithes appearing in many of the pamphlets and petitions on church reform from radical groups and from others.²³ Equally emphatic, however, were the counter-calls to maintain the existing means of clerical support, although in many cases this was tempered by the recognition that an alternative form of state maintenance might be acceptable.²⁴

²² Shaw, vol.2, 255-7.

²³ For example: Anon, *To the Supreame Authoritie of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England the Humble Petition of the Officers of the Army* (1652); Anon, *To the Supreme Authority of the Nation* in Nickolls, 129; Anon, *To the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England, the humble Petition of divers well-affected persons of this Nation* (1653); Anon, *To the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England the Humble Petition [...] of the County of Kent* (1653).

²⁴ *The Civill Right of Tythes* (1653), 1-18; Anon, *The Cryes of England to the Parliament* (1653), 5. Even sectarians were divided on their demands, however: Samuel Herring, of the radical London parish of St Stephens, Coleman Street, petitioned the Nominated Assembly in 1653 for liberty of conscience and freedom to preach without ordination and yet also for state maintenance for the clergy: Nickolls, 99-102.

In late 1653, demands for the removal of tithes moved from the sphere of public debate to that of political action, when a radical majority in the Nominated Assembly rejected the report for church reform submitted by its own Committee on Tithes, which included a commitment to the continuation of tithes.²⁵ Coming close on the heels of their successful vote to table a bill to abolish private ecclesiastical patronage, it was clear that the radical MPs had these two fundamentals of the national church in their sights. Since both tithes and rights of advowson were regarded as property, such moves were seen by the land-owning classes as assaults on the natural order of society, adding to the anger against the perpetrators.²⁶ Moreover, outside the Assembly chamber, fear of radical preachers elicited sometimes violent public reactions: in October 1653, a separated congregation in London, listening to the Fifth Monarchist Edmund Chillenden, was attacked by a group of apprentices, resulting in a serious riot.²⁷ It was against this charged background that General John Lambert was already privately drafting the Instrument of Government, in which the principle of maintenance by tithe was enshrined until an alternative could be found.

Despite the hostilities that sometimes arose from the intrusion of godly ministers into parishes, there were still frequent calls for the continued removal of scandalous ministers. It was feared that the doctrine and practices of such

²⁵ *CJ*, vol.7, 361-3.

²⁶ *Epistola Medio-Saxonica, or, Middlesex first letter to His Excellency, the Lord General Cromwell* (1653), 3-6.

²⁷ A. Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 334-5.

ministers were an ongoing danger to the population, and that they kept godly preachers out of the parish pulpit. Thus a petition from York of March 1653, requested, '[...] that scandalous Ministers may be removed, and former superstitions and corruptions still tenaciously retained by many [...] may be reformed', whilst a petition to Cromwell from 'several ministers' of roughly the same period was more explicit:

[...] old corruptions are kept in vigour, ignorant, prophane, and scandalouse Ministers, for the most part, take up the place and mayntenance of the godly, soe that many of them are little set by. The Common Prayer-book is much in use still; the superstitious observation of Saint's dayes kept alive, the blood of Christ profusely spilt in the Lord's supper [...]²⁸

How far such complaints were accurate reflections of the situation or how far they were rhetorical devices used for effect is hard to assess, but evidence of the continued use of the Prayer Book throughout the 1650s, for example, suggests that these complaints had some basis, at least, in fact.²⁹

The removal of scandalous ministers on the grounds of political or religious (as well as moral) delinquency had begun late in 1640. After this date a series of

²⁸ *Petition and representation of the Grand Juries at Yorke Assizes* (1653) and *Letter from Several Ministers* (n.d) in Nickolls, 105-6, 128-9. No origin is given for the 'several ministers' but some were active in Herefordshire. See also *Mercurius Politicus* (29 Sept - 6 Oct 1653), 2774-5.

²⁹ See also Sections 2.4, 130 and 3.3, 304.

ordinances had attempted to keep up with the *de facto* sequestrations and ejections undertaken by various individuals, soldiers, regional committees and national bodies, including parliament.³⁰ Nevertheless, scandalous ministers were still widely seen as a problem in the early 1650s, and their removal formed an important part of the *Humble Proposals*.³¹ This was followed up, very obliquely, in the Instrument of Government, which contained a provision ‘for discovery and confutation of error, hereby, and whatever is contrary to sound doctrine’.³²

The ejection of delinquent ministers, however, could not solve another of the tensions of the early 1650s that damaged attempts to achieve religious unity. Both presbyterians and many independents agreed that there was an overwhelming need for a central doctrine to which all subscribed; not only would it form the bedrock on which the re-establishment of parochial discipline could be founded but, equally importantly, it would enable the identification and exclusion of heretics. In the mid-1640s, the Westminster Assembly drew up guidelines for the exclusion of ‘scandalous persons’ from the Lord’s Supper. These included a list of core beliefs required for admission to the sacrament, which formed part of the ‘Ordinance Concerning Suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper,’ issued in 1645.³³ The ratification of this ordinance by

³⁰ See Section 2.4, 121-2. A. McCampbell, ‘Incumbents and Patronage in London’ in *JCS* (1983), vol.25(2), 301-6.

³¹ *HP*, 3-4.

³² ‘IoG’, 416.

³³ ‘An Ordinance concerning Church Government, with rules and directions concerning suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper [...]’, in *LJ*, vol.7, 649–652; *A&O*, vol.1, 789. This was re-issued to MPs in 1654.

parliament meant that these core beliefs were the only official statement of a church doctrine to emerge from the governments of the English Revolution until the last months of the Protectorate.³⁴ Since this statement of beliefs was only included in the ordinance in order to guide decisions on who could receive the sacrament, which many ministers chose to avoid offering anyway, it played no wider part in the definition of the national church.

The guidelines above made the case for a formal Confession of Faith even more pressing. In spring 1645, the Westminster Assembly began work on revisions to the Thirty Nine Articles, a process which took several years to finish. In fact, these revisions were never completed and by the time Parliament insisted on publishing the Confession in June 1648, it was already too late; within months, the purge of most presbyterian MPs from parliament under Colonel Pride resulted in the sidelining of the Confession, which had to wait until February 1660 for parliamentary ratification.³⁵

Owen and his associates saw a Confession as a tool in the fight against heresy, but the idea was bitterly opposed by all those groups who rejected the authority of the magistrate over the church or the right of the magisterial independents to impose *their* 'orthodoxy' on others. Eventually, unable to overcome this

³⁴ C. van Dixhoorn, *Reforming the Reformation : Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652* (University of Cambridge: unpublished PhD thesis, 2005), 68.

³⁵ Shaw, vol.2, 357-67; Dixhoorn, 'Reformation', 78-9; The Confession was published for parliamentary circulation only as *The Humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines [...] concerning A Confession of Faith* (1647), and published publicly as *Articles of Christian Religion* (1648).

intransigent opposition, even Owen accepted that this issue would undermine any attempt to settle the church and the matter was shelved.³⁶ When the Instrument of Government was published, it weakly required only the possession of ‘faith in God by Jesus Christ’ as the mandatory requirement of those who wished to benefit from protection under the its religious clauses.³⁷

The absence of a Confession of Faith made the enforcement of parochial discipline problematic. Without the church courts, which were finally abolished in 1646, doctrinal and religious delinquency in both clergy and parishioners was hard to censure effectively.³⁸ Some offences were transferred to the civil courts but much of the time it was left to individual ministers to coerce acceptable behaviour through a limited range of penalties, including exclusion from the sacraments, admonitions and, at worst, excommunication.³⁹ Although several ordinances authorised presbyterian elders to exclude the ignorant and scandalous from Communion, they were largely ineffective because presbyterianism was only patchily established across the country, leaving many ministers to struggle on alone, without the support of a local *classis*.⁴⁰ The situation worsened after 1648, when presbyterianism was no longer officially promoted by government.

³⁶ Polizotto, ‘Campaign’, 574.

³⁷ ‘IoG’, 416.

³⁸ High Commission was abolished in 1641. *A&O*, vol.1, 879-883.

³⁹ For example: E. H. Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter Sessions Records: Commonwealth* (London: Somerset Record Society, 1912), vol.28, xxxix-xliv.

⁴⁰ For example: *A Solemn Exhortation made and published to the several Churches of Christ within this province of Lancaster* (1649), 9-11; *A&O*, vol.1, 789-797, 833-8.

Parishioners, of course, had even fewer options if faced with an inadequate minister, a situation that was no doubt behind the numerous petitions asking the state to continue its policies of ejections.⁴¹

Furthermore, although ministers could choose to exercise the disciplinary tool of exclusion from the sacraments, it was highly contentious.⁴² For some, it was a matter of conscience: were the sacraments only for the truly worthy and truly prepared? Abraham Pinchbecke believed they were. Writing to Baxter in 1654, he described his future parishioners at Mashbury in Essex as ‘very ignorant great profaners of the Sabbath’, adding, ‘I cannot give to any the Lords Supper [...]’⁴³ This could be a dangerous path, though: Richard Swayne of Clyrow slowly gathered a congregation around him who wished to take Communion together, ‘having not received the lords supper of 8 or 9 yeares before’, only to find himself accused of separation from the church.⁴⁴

For others, however, there were more pragmatic issues at stake. Whilst the threat of exclusion might bribe god-fearing if weak parishioners into good behaviour, it also risked alienating them from the church, the very opposite to the pastoral

⁴¹ *Mercurius Politicus* (15 September - 22 September 1653), 2747.

⁴² For example: D. Cawdrey, *A Sober Answer to a Serious Question ... Whether the Ministers of England are Bound ... to Baptise the Children of All Such Parents* (1652); T. Bakewell, *A Plea for Mr Strong's Church-Members* (1650); ‘The Minute Book of St Stephen’s, Coleman Street’ in E. Freshfield (ed.), *The Vestry Minute Books of the Parish of St Bartholomew Exchange in the City of London 1567-1676* (London: Rixon and Arnold, 1890), xxviii.

⁴³ *CCRB*, vol.1, 137-8 (letter 178).

⁴⁴ *CCRB*, vol.1, 91 (letter 107).

mission that many ministers sought to provide. Worse still, excluded parishioners could, and did, retaliate by withholding tithes. For some ministers, the situation was too problematic and they simply refused to hold communion at all.⁴⁵ After all, in congregations divided by royalist and parliamentary sympathies, conscience-driven ministers must have wondered whether it would *ever* be possible for parishioners to fulfil the basic requirement for communion, of being ‘in charity’ with their neighbours again?

In 1647, the Westminster Assembly had stated that the ‘ignorant and wicked’ should not receive the Lords Supper and that exclusion should be used as a means of discipline.⁴⁶ In 1652, the *Humble Proposals* said simply that, ‘no person sent forth to preach [...] be compelled to administer the sacrament to any, but such as he shall approve of, as fit for the same’.⁴⁷ The Instrument of Government carefully avoided the matter altogether. By 1654, therefore, the matter of maintaining parochial discipline was still unsettled and unsatisfactory.

Ordination was even more contentious. The emergence of groups who rejected the need for clerical intervention between God and man argued that to deny that the individual could directly experience God’s call to minister was, effectively, to

⁴⁵ D. Hirst, ‘The Failure of Godly Rule in the English Republic’ in *Past and Present* (1991), vol. 132, 39-40; A. Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), 323; Shaw, vol.2, 142.

⁴⁶ Anon, *The Humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines [...] concerning A Confession of Faith* (1647), 52-3.

⁴⁷ *HP*, 5.

deny divine authority.⁴⁸ Radicals, especially the Quakers, argued that logically this made the ‘setting apart’ of clergy through ordination unnecessary and unacceptable. Less radical groups, however, recognised that the unfettered proliferation of unordained preachers had the potential to lead to religious and political anarchy and that, therefore, some form of control, which did not interfere with the working of God’s call but offered an element of regulation of such preachers, was desirable.

For orthodox presbyterians, ordination was an essential qualification, but one that should be undertaken by elders of a *classis*, singled out for such work. They also accepted the validity of episcopalian ordination, regarding bishops as equivalent to the presbyters of their own church.⁴⁹ Religious conservatives, however, regarded even presbyterian ordination as invalid, sometimes referring scathingly to ministers as being ‘not in orders’ when, in fact, they meant ‘not *episcopally* ordained’.⁵⁰

Between 1644 and 1646, three temporary Ordinances for the Ordination of Ministers, which had been drawn up by the Assembly, were issued, confirming

⁴⁸ Amongst others, see R. Greaves, ‘The Ordination Controversy and the Spirit of Reform in Puritan History’ in *JEH* (1970), vol.21(3), 226-7; W. Hartley, *The Priests Patent Cancelled* (1649), 9-10.

⁴⁹ Episcopalians rarely accorded the same respect to presbyterian ordination, although in the 1650s there were signs of a softening amongst some in this regard: *CCRB*, vol.1, 105 (letter 130).

⁵⁰ William Mitchell called his intruded successor, Thomas Archer, ‘a layman and anabaptist’: Smith, *Essex*, 361.

the legitimacy of presbyterian ordination.⁵¹ Meanwhile, in 1645, parliament passed an ordinance prohibiting unordained ministers from preaching.⁵² Whilst the legislative framework was in place, however, a fully-functioning system for ordination proved harder to establish; the availability of *classes* that would perform ordinations was very limited and would-be ministers often had to travel to London to find presbyterian ordination.⁵³ Meanwhile former bishops, including Robert Skinner and Thomas Fulwar, were covertly carrying out episcopalian ordinations under the radar of the authorities, a function they continued to offer throughout the Interregnum.⁵⁴ In 1653, a pragmatic declaration by parliament allowed unordained men to preach, if sufficiently godly and educated, in a bid to increase the numbers of preaching parish ministers.⁵⁵

The essential principle of ordination was the recognition of a man's particular calling and abilities to be able to minister the word of God to others, but there was a second strand, which became a major concern throughout the 1640s and early 1650s. Part of the divine mission given to a minister was to educate his congregation, for which he must be adequately learned himself. Since at least as far back as the Reformation, there had been calls for a better educated clergy, both academically and vocationally and, over the century from 1540, the

⁵¹ *A&O*, vol.1, 521-6, 865-70; *LJ*, vol.7, 683-5; Dixhoorn, *Reformation*, 61; Shaw, vol.1, 336-7.

⁵² *A&O*, vol.1, 579, 677.

⁵³ H. Smith, 'Ordinations by the Fourth Classis of London', in *EHR* (1926), vol.41, 103-4; *CR*, 370 (Osland).

⁵⁴ Fincham, and Taylor, 'Vital Statistics', 319-344.

⁵⁵ *CJ*, vol.7, 264.

proportion of graduate ministers had gradually increased.⁵⁶ After 1640, however, the sects' repudiation of the need for ordination challenged, by implication, the need for clerical education.⁵⁷ In response, the old arguments for a graduate clergy were re-visited. In 1645, Richard Byfield, member of the Westminster Assembly, made the connection between learning and clerical competence clear, noting,

I say not that Learning gives Ministeriall gifts, much lesse Grace; but without Learning the Ministry would be but lame in many respects: therefore the enemies of a learned Ministry are the friends of Popery, and all Heresies, of ignorance and blindness, and the enemies of the truth and Gospell, of the light and comfort of the Church of Iesus Christ.⁵⁸

Learning, and the ability to disseminate such learning, were regarded as essential, in order to awaken souls to the meaning of salvation and to stem the drift into radicalism.⁵⁹ Thus calls for support for clerical education at university and for greater catechising by clergy in their parishes were, for many people, inextricably linked to the arguments upholding clerical ordination. These became

⁵⁶ O'Day, *Clergy*, 132-143.

⁵⁷ In 1647, the presbyterian Robert Baillie noted, '[...] the Sectaries ... declared rage against Universities and all Societies of Learning [...]' in Greaves, 'Ordination Controversy', 234.

⁵⁸ R. Byfield, *Temple-defilers Defiled* (1645), 27.

⁵⁹ O'Day, *Clergy*, 211-213.

more urgent, once it became clear that the independents were intent on defending the right of godly, if unordained, men to preach the Gospel.⁶⁰

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So by 1654, the character of the church was heavily disputed. There was widespread, but not universal, revulsion at the idea of unordained ministers, and equally widespread problems accessing a means of godly ordination. The result was a perceived shortage of godly ministers, resulting in insufficient catechising and godly teaching. Furthermore, deep divisions over the enforcement of parochial discipline and, most alarmingly, over the exercise of liberty of conscience, were exacerbated by the lack of an agreed Confession of Faith around which a new church could be built. This seemed to leave the church open to complex theological and ecclesiological challenges, such as anti-trinitarianism and debates on the necessity of infant baptism. And all these problems appeared to be driving parishioners away, into separated congregations or into the arms of the radical sects, with their calls for the abolition of tithes and the removal of private patronage. The fears articulated in the petitions from Southampton and Wiltshire could be heard across the country in 1653 and left the incoming regime with little option but to take some form of action.

⁶⁰ *HP*, 3.

1.2 The Decay of Ecclesiastical Administration in the Church of the Republic

The tensions generated by arguments over matters such as liberty of conscience, infant baptism and radicalism undoubtedly threatened the cohesion of the national church in the 1640s and early 1650s, but perhaps the most serious threat of all was the insidious damage done to its administration and operation by over ten years of civil war and regime change. By 1654 there were serious deficiencies in the provision of parochial clergy, not least due to the absence of a clear and uncontentious means for the appointment of ministers, and disagreement about lay powers *over* such appointments. This situation was compounded by the abolition of the bishops and the monarchy, and the sequestration of political delinquents, which had resulted in the largest transfer of ecclesiastical patronage since the Reformation of the 1530s.¹ Furthermore, the collapse of the diocesan structure and the still-birth of national presbytery meant that there was no longer a national framework for ministerial supervision and support, which - had it existed - might have helped to offset the impact of these changes. And in the meantime, many parishes were suffering from worsening dilapidations to their churches and church property, in the face of which there was little external help for beleaguered ministers or impoverished parishioners.

This section exposes the range of administrative deficiencies in the national church that faced the Cromwellian regime when it came to power. It argues that

¹ See Section 3.2.

the extent of the near-collapse of the system has been missed in assessments of the Interregnum church, and that the negative impact on the functioning of the church that resulted from the ascendancy of the independents after 1649 has been underplayed.

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Perhaps the most pressing problem of all by 1654 was that of vacant livings. Without a settled minister, parishes and congregations lost a central unifying influence. Instead, some people ‘gadded’ to other parishes, formed ‘separated’ churches or attended sectarian meetings; others, no doubt, simply abandoned regular worship, especially after the repeal in 1650 of the legal requirement to attend church.² In a few parishes, vacancies arising from the ejections of the 1640s were quietly filled by the return of previously ejected incumbents, who took advantage of the Act of Oblivion (1652) and the subsequent breakdown in ecclesiastical oversight during the commonwealth to return to their former livings.³ Elsewhere, temporary or itinerant preachers sometimes officiated, paid informally by local patrons or, if popular, by parishioners; such men probably offered a diversity of preaching, from the educated and orthodox to the ignorant

² ‘Act for the relief of the religious and peaceable from the Rigour of former Acts of Parliament, in matters of Religion’ in *A&O*, vol.2, 423-5.

³ For example, John Allington: *WR*, 301. The prevalence of such returns was noted in ‘Additional Ordinance to the Ordinances of 20 March, 1653–4, appointing Commissioners for approbation of Publique Preachers’ in *A&O*, vol.2, 1025-6; ‘Act of General Pardon and Oblivion’ in *A&O*, vol.2, 565-577.

or radical.⁴ All too often, however, the complaints came in that parishes had simply had no minister at all for several years.

Vacant livings were not unique to the Interregnum. In response to a parliamentary request for information on the state of the parish ministry, the ‘Certificate from Northamptonshire’ of 1641 lamented the lack of clergy in the county, noting, ‘*de facto* there are not sufficient Preachers for every parish, whereto adde that there is not sufficient maintenance in many parishes to maintaine a Preacher ...’⁵ The problem, the petition added, was not related to pluralism, but to impropriations, lack of adequate maintenance and lack of clerical supply from the universities. Nevertheless, pluralism *was* a *bête noire* for the godly - it resulted too often in non-residence, which deprived parishioners of the word of God - and on principle, therefore, parliament had passed an ordinance against it in 1643, after which ministers were faced with the prospect of giving up their second livings or losing both.⁶

By the early 1650s, there was widespread concern about empty pulpits and the absence of spiritual guidance for parishioners. In 1650 the Rump Parliament made a half-hearted attempt to improve the provision of preaching in the north of

⁴ At the sequestered living of Manuden, Essex, in 1650, the parishioners paid a temporary preacher Paul Clement 10s a week ‘in lieu of tithes’: Comm. XIIa/8, f.495; Coate, *Cornwall*, 336-7.

⁵ Anon, *A Certificate from Northamptonshire* (1641), 2.

⁶ The prohibition against pluralism was passed by the House of Lords in 1642 but subsequently underwent a labyrinthine series of considerations until finally rejected by the King in 1648, although it was in *de facto* operation throughout the decade: *LJ*, vol.5, 41-3; *A&O*, vol.1, 82-3, vol.2, 342-8.

England and in Wales by passing the Propagation Acts, with sweeping powers for the appointment and removal of ministers given to selected Commissioners.⁷ Attempts to do the same for the rest of England, however, became mired in disagreement and were incomplete by the time it was expelled. Furthermore, the Welsh Commission soon aroused hostility and despair. In May 1651, parliament received a petition highlighting the pitiful state of the ministry in South Wales:

[...] since the passing of the Act [for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales], all or most of the Ministers of South Wales and county of Monmouth, have beene and stand Ejected from their Benefices.⁸

The petition claimed that the Propagation Commissioners had ejected 237 ministers from 682 parishes in south Wales, leaving only 101 ministers in post. This suggests that, by 1654, seventy per cent of the previously settled ministers in South Wales had been recently ejected, from a region where only half the parishes had had ministers anyway.⁹ The accuracy of the petition's figures is hard to assess, not least because it is unclear whether they included the many chapels

⁷ 'Act for the better Propagation and Preaching of the Gospel in Wales' in *A&O*, vol.2, 342-8; *CJ*, vol.6, 374; Shaw, vol.2, 226-7. For some unclear reason, the Act for the North does not appear in either *A&O* or in H. Scobell, *A Collection of Acts and Ordinances of General Use* (London: 1657).

⁸ 'Act for the better Propagation and Preaching of the Gospel in Wales' in *A&O*, vol.2, 342-8; A. Griffith, *A True and Perfect Relation of the Whole Transaction Concerning the Petition of the Six Counties of South Wales* (1654), 2.

⁹ Griffith, *Six Counties*, 19-22. Elsewhere it claims the virtually all the region's ministers had been ejected, which, if true, would suggest that prior to these ejections, c.445 livings were already vacant.

that may have had resident incumbents.¹⁰ More recent work on the sources, however, suggests that the Commission made 196 ejections in South Wales, and eighty-two in North Wales, which broadly confirms the petition's assertion.¹¹ Moreover, the Commissioners did not seem to be replacing these ejected ministers with new incumbents. In 1652, Richard Swayne, minister of Clyrow, Radnorshire, was still lamenting to Richard Baxter that there were, 'very few settled Ministers at all, but myself, in the County'.¹²

Wales was by no means the only area to suffer from the rapid removal of ministers through ejection. In the 1640s, the ejection or sequestration of over 2000 royalist and episcopalian clergy from their livings had created a huge turnover of parochial clergy.¹³ Equally, as war moved across the country, godly ministers also found themselves forced out of their livings by the royalists, creating a pool of un-beneficed ministers, which the Committee for Plundered Ministers was established to help in 1643. Ian Green, working from Matthews' figure of 2425 sequestrated livings, has noted that levels of sequestrations varied dramatically by region in the 1640s, from eighty-six per cent in London to between fourteen and twenty-three per cent in some counties, including

¹⁰ A petition against the continuation of the CPGW claimed that there were 700 parishes in South Wales 'besides Chappels of ease', 600 of which were vacant: *Certain seasonable considerations and reasons humbly offered against reviving the Act, intituled An Act for the better propagation and preaching of the gospel in Wales* (1654), 7; Valerie Hitchman's figures suggest there may have been as many as 2-300 such chapels: V. Hitchman, pers. comm. from 'The Churchwardens' Accounts of England and Wales' at <http://warwick.ac.uk/cwad>.

¹¹ Winstone, 46-7.

¹² *CCRB*, vol.1, 91 (letter 107).

¹³ Matthews calculated 2425 benefices affected by ejection/sequestration: *WR*, xv.

Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire.¹⁴ Even in livings from which the minister had been ejected in the early 1640s, the effects might continue to be felt years afterwards: parishes were destabilised, clerical turnover increased in frequency and many benefices remained unfilled.¹⁵ After 1654, the Protectorate Council continued to receive multiple requests for augmentations to parish incomes, in order to fill vacant benefices, many of which suggested that the vacancies were long term, not recent:

[...] the parish of Houghton Regis [...] which hath bin with out a preaching minister this hundred years [...] Dunstable [...] hath bin alsoe void almost this fourteen years.¹⁶

Thus it appears that despite the unmistakable use of rhetoric in the reporting of parochial vacancies, by 1654 there *was* a clear deficiency in the supply of clergy across Britain, especially to poorer and more remote benefices.

For the Cromwellian regime in late 1653, therefore, the problem itself was straightforward: there was widespread concern about the number of vacant

¹⁴ Green, and many others, use ‘sequestered’ and ‘ejected’ interchangeably. Although sequestration did usually lead to a vacancy, the process and implications were different to ejection: I. Green, ‘The Persecution of ‘scandalous’ and ‘malignant’ Parish Clergy during the English Civil War’ in *EHR* (1979), vol.94(372), 522; *WR*, xiv; F. McCall, *Baal’s Priests: the Loyalist Clergy and the English Revolution* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 6.

¹⁵ For the impact of ejections, see Section 2.4; Section 3.1, 188-9.

¹⁶ SP 18/127 f.101 (Dunstable), SP 18/129 f.30 (Buckarell), SP 18/96 f.2 (Prestwold). The term ‘preaching’ minister was ambiguous, however, sometimes meaning ‘any’ minister, elsewhere meaning a ‘licensed’ preacher.

livings and the resultant lack of preaching, a concern which the new government was expected to remedy. What was less straightforward was the scale of the problem. Not only was basic information on the church unreliable - although it is arguable that the regime may not have known *how* uncertain the available figures actually were - but the dramatic changes that had overtaken the clergy since 1640 - war, ejection, sequestration, intrusion, the abolition of pluralities and cathedral positions - had made pre-war statistics virtually meaningless. How many parochial livings did the regime think there were? Archbishop Whitgift's ecclesiastical survey of 1603-4 gave the precise figure of 9244, but in 1613 the lawyer Henry Spelman had put forward a total of 9284 English and Welsh benefices, whilst a statistical digest in Laud's Register of 1634 provided the figure of 8803 English benefices.¹⁷ The *Moderate Intelligencer* suggested 'above 9000 parishes' in 1645 and in 1652 an anonymous petition against tithes stated with unmerited precision that there were 9725.¹⁸

Other lists that the regime might have consulted would probably have been equally divergent, usually being subject to selective compilation: very poor parishes, for example, were generally exempt from taxation, so might be left off

¹⁷ BL, Harleian MS. 280, f.157, though Foster suggests Whitgift's survey total may have been deliberately low: A. Foster, 'Churchwarden's Accounts of Early Modern England and Wales' in K. French, G. Gibbs, B. Kumin, (eds.), *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600* (Manchester: MUP, 1997), 77, n.15. But see also BL, Add. MS. 38139, ff.254v-5 for a total of 9044; H. Spelman, *De non temerandis ecclesiis: a Tract of the Rights and Respect due unto the Churches* (1613) in E. Gibson, *The English Works of Sir Henry Spelman Kt* (1723), vol.1, 35; SP 16/279 f.9 (nd: ?1634).

¹⁸ *Moderate Intelligencer* (18-25 December), 229; Anon, *An answer to the severall petitions of late exhibited to the High Court of Parliament and to His Excellency the Lord General Cromwell* (1652), 24.

diocesan taxation lists, as were perpetual curacies.¹⁹ Peculiars may also have been omitted, being outside the control of the bishop for whom such lists were compiled, or geographically in a different county.²⁰ Moreover, there were many anomalies within the parochial landscape. What actually constituted a parish? Large parishes, especially those in the north, often had chapels of ease: Stretford, in the huge parish of Manchester, had its own registrar, constables and wardens by the 1640s, functioning effectively as an independent unit.²¹ Elsewhere, however, there were decayed parishes, such as Stonar in Kent, which was noted by Leland as ruined in the mid-sixteenth-century and which had neither households nor communicants in 1569 or 1640, yet it still had a rector in 1752.²² Other oddities included adjacent parishes, such as Thames Ditton and Long

¹⁹ I. Green, 'Career Prospects and Clerical Conformity in the Early Stuart Church' in *Past and Present* (1981), vol.90, 83. The 1562-3 subsidy tax, for example, had a £5 threshold and poor parishes were usually exempted from First Fruits and Tenths.

²⁰ Tredington, for example, was geographically within Warwickshire but administratively part of Worcestershire: *A History of the County of Worcester* (London: VCH, 1913), vol.3, 541. Administrative incompetence, corruption and changes to administration procedures may also have led to the omission of livings from lists: F. Heal, 'Clerical Taxation under the Tudors' in F. Heal and R. O'Day (eds.), *Continuity and Change: Personnel and Administration of the Church of England 1500-1642* (Leicester: LUP, 1976), 113.

²¹ N. Pounds, *A History of the English Parish: the Culture of Religion from Augustine to Victoria* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 282. See also M. Zell, 'Economic Problems of the Parochial Clergy' in F. Heal and R. O'Day (eds.), *Princes and Paupers in the English Church 1500-1800* (Leicester: LUP, 1981), 21.

²² E. Hasted, 'Parishes: Stonar' in *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (Canterbury: 1800), vol.10, 406-424.

Ditton, which functioned effectively as a single parish with one incumbent.²³

Were such places to be counted separately in lists of ‘livings’ or not?

Thus interpretations have differed, but the recent historiography has tended to settle on the figure of c.9200 parochial benefices in England and Wales. This figure, however, does not allow for the considerable number of perpetual curacies or semi-independent chapels of ease. Whilst the former certainly required a curate, it is impossible to know how many of the latter did too, but both Ian Green and Andrew Foster suggest that the figure could have been substantial.²⁴ An estimate, therefore, of the number of livings served by an incumbent (or,

²³ Both were chapels of Kingston in Surrey; in the seventeenth-century, Thames Ditton had no minister and the church at Long Ditton was ruined, so Richard Byfield, minister of the latter, served both chapelries from the church at Thames Ditton. Both parishes were recommended for amalgamation in 1657-8: Comm XIIa/21, ff.6-8. See also ‘Thames Ditton’ in H. E. Malden (ed.), *A History of the County of Surrey* (Westminster: A. Constable & Co., 1911), vol.3, 462-7; also Comm. XIIa/20, f.19 (Harrowden Magna and Parva.)

²⁴ The matter is further complicated because Green’s statistics come from figures assembled in the early 1700s, whilst the number of chapels which were only established after 1660 is unclear. He suggests, however, at least an additional 1700 curacies and chapels, whilst Foster offers a more modest c.800: Green, ‘Career Prospects’, 82-4; Foster, ‘Churchwardens’ Accounts’, 77-8.

pertinently for this thesis, numbers of livings requiring ministers in order to staff fully the church in the 1650s) could be as high as 10,000 - 10,500.²⁵

This total is further complicated, however, by the attacks on pluralities and cathedral posts. By 1650, pluralism had largely been abolished, which should have increased the number of livings to be filled. This theoretical increase, however, was offset by the removal of most cathedral posts during the 1640s, many of which were held in plurality with parochial benefices.²⁶ Drawing on Usher's study of the reconstruction of the church, Mark Curtis suggested that in 1603, 1000 clergymen were holding (besides their first parochial benefice) another 1500 'non-parochial church livings' in plurality, of which 674 were 'cathedral or collegiate church' positions.²⁷ If, as he suggested, *all* these non-parochial livings had been held in plurality with a parochial living, the total

²⁵ Recent work by Valerie Hitchman, based on John Ecton's *Liber Valorem et Decimarum* (1754) and figures taken from *CCEd*, however, revises the figure of 10 500 down somewhat: Hitchman, 'Churchwardens' Accounts', pers. comm. Browne Willis, based on personal research in, or contact with, each diocese, gave a total of 11,866 'church places' in 1742: B. Willis, *A Survey of the Cathedrals* quoted in D. R. Hirschberg, 'The Government and Church Patronage in England, 1660-1760' in *JBS* (1980), vol.20(1), 111-112. The earliest nationwide source from which a total number of benefices might be drawn is the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 - from this, Christopher Hill suggested a total of 8838 parishes, although Hill's derivation of this figure is unclear. Jeremy Collier in 1852 used Laud's total of 8803 but Roland Usher in 1910 opted for Whitgift's total of 9244. In more recent historiography, figures for English benefices are usually given as c. 8500-8600, and for English and Welsh as c.9200: C. Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (London: Panther, 1971), 144-5; J. Collier, *An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain* (London: 1852), vol.9, 362-3; R. G. Usher, *The Reconstruction of the English Church* (London: D. Appleton, 1910), vol.1, 241-2; Green, 'Scandalous Ministers', 522; Pounds, *English Parish*, 84; M. Curtis, 'The Alienated Intellectuals of Early Stuart England' in *Past and Present* (1962) vol.23, 301-3; O'Day, *Clergy*, 172-3. Foster, 'Churchwardens' Accounts', 76-8.

²⁶ Hill suggests that in 1640 at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of cathedral clergy and $\frac{1}{4}$ of university clergy held parochial livings besides their first livings: Hill, *Economic Problems*, 230.

²⁷ Curtis's non-parochial livings were 'cathedral, university or college' livings. He notes that pluralities seemed to be increasing in the first half of the C17th: Curtis, 'Intellectuals', 302.

number of parochial ‘livings’ to be filled would have remained relatively unchanged by the abolition of these cathedral positions. In fact, many pluralists held two or more *parochial* livings (the abolition of pluralities would not have abolished these now-vacant second livings), so Curtis’s findings are difficult to incorporate.²⁸

If establishing the exact number of livings is difficult, assessing the number of *vacant* livings that faced the Cromwellian government is more so; the available sources are sparse and the terminology is inconsistent and imprecise. Probably for these reasons, the matter of vacancies, although recognised, has received no detailed investigation by scholars.²⁹ Indeed, there is no clear evidence that the regime itself was much concerned with an *exact* total either, although the drive to identify impoverished livings through a programme of surveys in 1650 indicates that the problem was recognised. Nevertheless, since an assessment of Cromwellian religious policy is partly governed by understanding the scale of the problem and of the regime’s responses, it is important to explore something at least of the complexities and figures here.

Given the difficulties above, historians have focused on estimating the number of ejections or sequestrations that took place, as more quantifiable evidence of the

²⁸ Usher notes the frequent occurrence of adjacent parishes held in plurality: Usher, 211; Curtis, ‘Intellectuals’, 302-3. Hill, *Economic Problems*, 225-7. See also Green ‘Scandalous Ministers’, 508.

²⁹ The problem of vacant livings was not unique to the revolution. O’Day suggests that, at the return of Protestantism in 1558, following the flu epidemic, 10-15% of livings were vacant: O’Day, *Clergy*, 128.

uneasy state of the ministry than that of vacant livings. Even here, however, the figures are imprecise. Ian Green has estimated that from Matthews' figure of 2425 benefices under sequestration, there may have been approximately 2780 clergy 'sufferers', including pluralists, curates and non-parochial clergy.³⁰ An earlier estimate from Boshier, however, suggested that the total number of 'ejected' clergy, including those harassed into departure, was perhaps 3600.³¹

The matter is further complicated by common assumptions in the historiography that the number of ejected or sequestered ministers exactly correlates with the number of available livings: for example, from a statement that the sequestration of 2425 benefices represented 28% of all English benefices and that 2780 clergy were ejected, one commentator has concluded: 'Between 1641 and 1660, some 2,780 clergy in England, *around a third*, were ejected from their livings or sequestered' (my italics). This muddles the number of clergy with the number of English livings.³² If 2780 *were* a third of the clergy, there would have been c. 8300 serving ministers in England. Contemporary complaints and survey evidence discussed below, however, suggest that at any one time there were considerably fewer than 8300 ministers in the church in this period; thus 2780 ejections, if correct, represents a greater depletion of the actual number of

³⁰ Green, 'Scandalous Ministers', 508

³¹ Boshier, *Restoration Settlement*, 5.

³² L. Bowen, 'Review of Baal's Priests' in *PH* (2015), vol.34(2), 258. The original text in *Baal's Priests* reads: '... between 1641 and 1660 around 2,425 benefices were sequestered, 28% of the 8,600 in England; around 2,780 men were ejected or seriously harrassed.' See also N. Keeble (ed.), 'Introduction' in *Settling the Peace of the Church: 1662 Revisited* (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 19.

serving clergy than has been previously recognised.³³ This confusion means that the scale of the problem facing the commonwealth and Cromwellian regimes has been underestimated.

If the extent of the problem was unknown, the negative impact of ejections and poverty on the provision of ministers *was* recognised. In an attempt to tackle the problem of impoverished livings, the Rump had ordered a countrywide survey of parishes in 1649-50, to establish the values and conditions of parish livings, with a view to unification or division as one means of improving clerical provision.³⁴ Not all of these surveys note whether there was a serving incumbent, but they still provide probably the best systematic evidence available to historians for this period.³⁵ That said, they are a problematic source for assessing vacancies in 1654, particularly because the Propagation Commissions for Wales and the North carried out most of their ejections *after* the surveys were carried out, while any number of livings may have been both filled or emptied between 1650 and 1654.

Even so, a broad-brush sampling exercise of twenty-five geographically random areas suggests that in 1650 roughly twenty per cent of English and Welsh livings may have been vacant. This figure, however, conceals very considerable

³³ At the height of the 1640s ejections, the *Moderate Intelligencer* had complained there were 'hardly in England 3000 conscientious and learned Ministers': *Moderate Intelligencer* (18-25 December, 1645), 229.

³⁴ They were subsequently used to assess applications for augmentations: Hughes and O'Day, 'Augmentation', 181.

³⁵ Comm. XIIa/1-22. Earlier surveys from 1646-8 were undertaken as part of the sale of bishops' and dean and chapters' lands and do not include information on incumbents. See also BL, Lansdowne MS. 459/1, discussed in *Appendix E*.

variations.³⁶ In the Hundred of Lexden in Essex, for example, fifteen per cent of the livings were vacant, whilst six of the eleven churches (54%) in Colchester had no minister, probably due partly to the extensive physical damage resulting from the siege of 1648. In urban York, too, the vacancy rate was high: west of the river Ouse, only five of eight livings (62.5%) were filled, whilst to the east, seventeen of the total eighteen churches (89%) were vacant.³⁷

On Anglesey the situation was critical: the Hundreds of Tyndaetgwy, Talybolian and Llyvon all had vacancy rates of over eighty per cent, that of Malltraeth was forty-four per cent.³⁸ In Lancashire, thirty-eight livings out of 181 (20%) were vacant in 1650 but, within that figure, Lonsdale Hundred had a vacancy rate of twelve and a half per cent whilst in Leyland Hundred it was roughly forty-five per cent.³⁹ In Cornwall, for which there is no 1650 survey, a brief examination of other sources suggests that eight out of twenty-one livings (38%) in the Hundred of Pydar were vacant in the early 1650s, within which five of the eight livings (62%) of the former peculiar of the Bishop of Exeter were vacant.⁴⁰ Such

³⁶ Twenty per cent has been rounded up from the actual total of eighteen per cent: See *Appendix G*.

³⁷ Comm. XIIa/18.

³⁸ Comm. XIIa/1.

³⁹ Comm. XIIa/11; H. Fishwick (ed.), *Lancashire and Cheshire Church Surveys, 1649-1655* (London: Record Society, 1879), xx. Fishwick's total, however, is at odds with that used later in this thesis: see *Appendix G*.

⁴⁰ Although Coate relied on Walker's *Sufferings* and *WR* only notes vacancies for some livings: Coate, *Cornwall*, 336-7; *WR*, 94-102. From the brief surveys done for this study, there is no overwhelming evidence that former peculiars had fewer or more vacancies than other ecclesiastical units.

alarming figures, however, were often offset elsewhere: none of the twenty-four livings in Stockton Ward in County Durham, for example, were vacant in 1650.⁴¹

Sequestrations and wartime devastation do not in themselves entirely account for the levels of parochial vacancies, so what other factors led to empty pulpits? By far the most frequently cited reason was inadequate clerical maintenance and parochial poverty. In 1645 the Committee for Plundered Ministers had set a benchmark for ministers' incomes of £50 a year but, in the Act establishing the Trustees for the Maintenance of Preaching Ministers of 1649, this had been increased to £100 a year.⁴² The 1650 surveys and other sources, however, are littered with livings valued at much less: Caldecot in Leicestershire, for example, had an income of only £20 a year, whilst the parishioners of New Malton in Yorkshire claimed they could only offer a minister £10 a year. At Drax in Yorkshire in 1650, Thomas Smith had to survive on £3, 16s, 8d and 'parishioners' benevolences'.⁴³

From 1645 a systematic attempt had been made to address inadequate maintenance through the grant of augmentations to ministers' incomes. This was

⁴¹ Comm. XIIa/4. Furthermore, the Propagation Commission for the Northern Counties was thought to have been fairly successful in filling the vacancies it created through ejections: *Weekly Intelligencer* (11-18 October 1653), 18; Winstone, 56-8.

⁴² 'Recommendations of the Plundered Ministers' Committee, 1644-45, on the Method of Augmenting Poor Livings,' in Shaw, vol.2, 601; 'Act for Maintenance for Preaching Ministers, and other Pious Uses' in *A&O*, vol.2, 142-8. A proposal by parliament in 1642 had suggested that ministers' stipends should be set at £60 *pa*, augmented from impropriations: Shaw, vol.1, 202, n. 2.

⁴³ SP 18/73 f.52; SP 25/75 f.445; Comm. XIIa/18, f.236-8.

initially done through the Committee for Plundered Ministers (CPM) but after 1649, it was taken on by the new Trustees for the Maintenance of Preaching Ministers, working with both the CPM and then the short-lived Committee for the Reformation of the Universities.⁴⁴ It was a serious attempt to improve clerical income, but it had many flaws and the sums due were frequently in arrears or simply unpaid. Thomas Smith's pitiful income at Drax had earned him an augmentation of £50 a year but, by 1650, this had only been paid once, before the prebend from which the funds were to come had been sold to a lay purchaser.⁴⁵

The causes of clerical poverty were several. Some parishes were genuinely poor, especially those with small populations and unproductive land, or covering tiny urban areas. In others, however, the problem was political: at Shankton, in Northamptonshire, in 1646 the royalist delinquent, Sir John Isham, faced both official and personal complaints that he, as impropiator of the benefice, was keeping the profits of the living for his own use and refusing to pay for a minister to serve the cure:

[...] complaint is made unto us ... that since Mr Noxe the late parson of the said place was cast out and his parsonage sequestered, which is the space almost of two yeares you have appropriated to your owne use and disposing all the dues and revenues belonging to the said parsonage of Lamport and have refused from time to time to pay any thing at all

⁴⁴ For more detail see Section 2.3, 105-7.

⁴⁵ Hughes and O'Day, 'Augmentation', 171, 177-80, 184-6, 190; Comm. XIIa/18, f.236-8.

to the said curate of faxton who is to be maintained out of the said parsonage of Lamport.⁴⁶

Faxton and Lamport, like so many other benefices, were impropriated and this arrangement lay behind a large proportion of the impoverished livings that struggled to support a minister. At Topsham in Devon, the inhabitants were paying tithes of £140 a year to the impropiator, after which they claimed they could only offer twenty marks a year to a minister.⁴⁷ Cransley in Northamptonshire also had an impropriated parsonage worth £100 a year, but the surveyors noted in 1655 that ‘the profit payed out of the same is but £8 [and it] has been vacant for last 8 years.’⁴⁸ Moreover, where a living was sequestrated, the former minister’s family might be claiming a fifth of the profits too. The scale of impropriations nationally is beyond the scope of this study, but early seventeenth-century estimates put the figure at c.3850 livings.⁴⁹ Whilst not all impropriations resulted in impoverished benefices, the arrangement was so often cited as the cause of inadequate clerical income that, even allowing for its usefulness as an excuse, it must be seen as a very significant contributory factor.

⁴⁶ NRO, IL5396, also NRO, IC252, IC254, IC264, IL5325, IL5331, IL3819, IL3771. The offence was continued by John’s son Sir Justinian in the 1650s: NRO, IL3781. The problems provoked a recommendation to split the livings in 1655: Comm. XIIa/20, f.18.

⁴⁷ SP 18/73 f.52.

⁴⁸ SP 18/73 f.52; Comm. XIIa/20, f.18.

⁴⁹ Hill, *Economic Problems*, 144.

Many parishes were also suffering from extensive dilapidations to church property. The division of responsibilities between clerics and congregations for maintenance of the church had long resulted in partial disrepair, but war and the destruction of church furnishings by the zealous godly, especially soldiers, had led to much higher levels of physical damage to churches during the revolution. The parishioners of Oswestry, for example, highlighted the effect of dilapidations dating from the early 1650s, when they petitioned Cromwell in 1657 that their church,

[...] in the time of the late warre standing without the walls and neere unto the sayd towne, then a guarison for the parliament, was pulled downe and totally ruined for the safety and preservation of the sayd guarison. [And] that the sayd petitioners are poore and utterly unable of themselves to erect a new church without some charitable assistance.⁵⁰

At Long Ditton, Richard Byfield accused the royalist Sir Thomas Evelyn of withholding money collected fifteen years earlier to rebuild their church, which had finally collapsed in 1650, ‘to the ruine of the chancel by wind and weather, so long lying open and exposed...’⁵¹ Moreover, the removal of the diocesan administration meant that there were no longer regular visitations to witness and settle disputed dilapidations. Instead, the government or the civil courts were the only sources of authority to which parishioners could turn, when in need of help.

⁵⁰ SP 18/155 f.189.

⁵¹ SP 18/155 f.80.

Disputes between ministers and parishioners, especially those which arose when godly ministers excluded unrighteous parishioners from the sacraments or gathered independent congregations, could also lead to the long-term neglect of church fabric.

In other parishes, however, the dilapidations were to the minister's house and property. This problem was particularly acute when succeeding ministers were openly hostile to each others' churchmanship. Where livings were seen to be impermanent, titles open to challenge and when any successor might be a political or religious opponent, there was little incentive for insecure or temporary incumbents to maintain and invest in the fabric of church property.

Inadequate maintenance and dilapidations made livings difficult to fill but even more catastrophic for the church was the collapse in arrangements for appointing new clergy. During the early 1640s, the diocesan system of clerical appointment gradually petered out. It was replaced by the activities of numerous national and local bodies, including both Houses of Parliament, who appointed ministers *ad hoc* until 1653, and the Committee for Plundered Ministers, who dealt increasingly with the resettlement of ejected godly clergy in the later 1640s, often in partnership with the Westminster Assembly.⁵² Furthermore, various County Committees and even individuals also appointed ministers within their

⁵² The House of Commons passed ministerial examinations over to parliamentary committees and the Westminster Assembly after 1644, although the Lords continued to act independently beyond this date. After 1646, nominations for livings were required to be presented to parliament instead of the bishops: J. Halcomb, 'The Examination of Ministers' in *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), vol.1, 225.

areas, as did some presbyterian classes.⁵³ There was little coordination, however, and at no point did any single body have a monopoly, which undoubtedly added to the confusion.⁵⁴

The role of the Westminster Assembly in this capacity was particularly important and its significance has been largely missed. The Assembly's initial remit, from its inception in 1643, was to carry out a programme of thorough-going ecclesiastical reforms, but it rapidly became involved also in the examination of ministers wishing to take up sequestered and - later - other livings, examining many prospective clergy on behalf of the CPM. After the purge of parliament in 1648, however, the Assembly, which had been dominated by presbyterians, lost much of its intellectual momentum and many of its members. In its reduced form, it remained active for the next three years, focusing almost entirely on the examination of ministers.

The role of the Assembly in approving ministers has been recognised by historians but the impact of its work has remained shadowy, probably because until the recent calendaring of the records of the Assembly, the number of approvals carried out by its members has been buried within the very extensive Minutes. As a result, the scale of their appointments has been uncertain. The recently published analysis of the Minutes, however, suggests that between 1643 and 1653 the Assembly may have carried out an astonishing five thousand

⁵³ Sir William Brereton, for example, made personal appointments in Cheshire.

⁵⁴ For example: R. Turner, *A Great Fight in the Church at Thaxted* (1647).

interviews of prospective ministers, schoolmasters or academics, an average of five hundred every year.⁵⁵ This level of activity is significant for any understanding of the religious problems facing the Cromwellians in 1654.

The published analysis did not break down the conjectural 5000 examinations into approvals and rejections. Moreover, only a small percentage of them actually appear in the Minutes. Nevertheless, a rough sampling exercise (for this study) of those entries that *do* appear in the Minutes, over six years of their operation, *has* attempted to do break down these figures further. This exercise suggests that sixty-three per cent of the examinations sampled were approved. Applying a multiplier of sixty-three per cent to the hypothesised number of examinations, would mean that - very approximately - the Assembly may have approved c.3150 candidates over ten years.⁵⁶

Beyond the purview of the Assembly, the fledgling establishment of Presbyterian *classes* in London and several other counties in the mid-1640s, also briefly provided an alternative route for the appointment of ministers, through procedures that involved some form of examination by the *classis* elders and personal recommendations.⁵⁷ The failure of the Presbyterian system to become

⁵⁵ Halcomb, 'Examinations', 225-6.

⁵⁶ The Assembly also examined schoolmasters, to accommodate which the figure has been reduced by a notional 10%, based on the sampling exercise noted in *Appendix J*.

⁵⁷ The number of 'functioning' classes is disputed, but Shaw and Surman suggest that 10-11 counties had at least partially active *classes*, whilst a further 6-7 may have had inactive classical structures: Shaw, vol.2, 373-440; C. E. Surman, 'Classical Presbyterianism in England, 1643-1660' (Manchester University: unpublished MA thesis, 1949), 35-59, 101d, 121.

universally established, however, and then the cessation of the Assembly in 1652, meant that from this point onwards, there was no longer a central body in control of the examination and appointment of ministers. Instead, most of this work was undertaken *ad hoc* in the House of Commons, or by Cromwell himself and the Council of State.

Examination and approval were only part of the process for appointing clergymen. Without the diocesan administration, the ceremonies of institution and induction also entered a state of flux. It is difficult to be categorical about this transition period but, in 1643 - partly in response to Archbishop Laud's refusal to institute godly ministers within his diocese and partly owing to the legal uncertainties surrounding the exercise of patronage by imprisoned bishops awaiting trial - two ordinances were passed, which began the process of transferring powers of institution and induction from the bishops to their diocesan officers, until a better arrangement could be established.⁵⁸ Sir Nathaniel Brent, Vicar-General under Archbishop Laud, carried out many institutions, but elsewhere the work fell to other diocesan chancellors and officers.⁵⁹ This practice modelled itself presumably on the Vicars-General's assumption of similar duties in cases of *sede vacante* in pre-war years. Evidence of the activities of two such

⁵⁸ Shaw, vol.2, 181-2, 282-3; 'Ordinance concerning the Arch-Bishop of Canterbury, who by reason of many great and weighty businesses, cannot as yet be brought to his Tryall' in *A&O*, vol. 1, 157-8; 'Ordinance that all the Temporal Livings, Dignities and Ecclesiastical promotions belonging unto William Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, be forthwith Sequestered by and unto the Parliament' in *A&O*, vol.1, 176.

⁵⁹ Dr Heath (possibly Thomas: see J. Bliss (ed.) *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud, D.D.* (Oxford: 1853), vol.3, 248, n.0 [sic]) and Dr Aylett, Master of Faculties were especially active in the Diocese of Canterbury. In Norfolk, Clement Corbet, Vicar General to the Bishop of Norwich, instituted John Clubb in 1650: NRO, DN/VSC/3/6 in *CCEd* (PID: 101249).

officials, Doctors Heath and Aylett, is found throughout the parliamentary journals of the 1640s, including in the Assembly's request in 1647 that they must stop insisting on subscription to the 39 Articles during their institutions.⁶⁰

In 1648, parliament proposed that the *classes* should undertake institutions, but this proposal, along with more general proposals drawn up to facilitate the admission process, failed to re-emerge from the relevant parliamentary committees.⁶¹ Nevertheless Dr Aylett, at least, continued to institute ministers at parliament's request until 20th January, 1649.⁶² In July 1649, an Act for 'granting institutions and inductions' (which was probably that of 1648) was read twice in the Commons, but disappeared from the records thereafter; however, it referred to the need to consider regulating institution fees, which suggests that the process was expected to continue in some way.⁶³ In fact, whilst the terminology of 'institution and induction' persisted into the 1650s, the actual practice seems to have been rapidly subsumed into the emerging approval process.

So where did this leave the matter of clerical appointment by 1654? Certainly the lack of a formal procedure for appointments had become both contentious and problematic. In June 1653, for example, the Council of State had ordered Christopher Nuttall to pay Thomas Summerton, minister of Rossendale, a sum

⁶⁰ *LJ*, vol.9, 491.

⁶¹ Shaw, vol.1, 283.

⁶² *LJ*, vol.9, 491; *LJ*, vol.10, 646-7.

⁶³ 'Ministers of Religion' in *CJ*, vol.6, 263-4. It is unclear whether the query over fees also related to Aylett's practice after 1646 or to fees to be charged in the future.

for his maintenance despite Nuttall's claim that Summerton was not 'inducted or established by lawful authority'.⁶⁴ Nuttall may have been protesting about a non-episcopalian form of appointment rather than simply *any* recognised appointment but, whatever his exact objection, the uncertain procedure for settling ministers made them especially vulnerable to such attacks. In February 1654, the inhabitants of Cole-Overton, Leicestershire, were simply confused about how to settle their intended minister, whom they had elected in 1653. They turned eventually to Cromwell for help:

Wee your petitioners electing Mr Samuel Oldershawe for our minister about the beginning of April last paste, immediately whereupon the Committee of Parliament for placing ministers dissolved soe that noe order could be obtained for his settlement amongst us [...]⁶⁵

At the same date, Sir Edward Harley was commenting that lawyers now considered all benefices to be 'cures donative', in the absence of bishops to receive presentations or undertake institutions.⁶⁶ The godly of Herefordshire and Gloucestershire meanwhile, with few procedural alternatives open to them, applied directly to parliament for permission, through Cromwell's influence, to appoint ten preachers to serve their locality, to offset the 'disaffection of ministers who still retaine their old principles, though to keep their places they

⁶⁴ SP 25/69 f.463.

⁶⁵ SP 18/66 f.74.

⁶⁶ J. Cliffe, *Puritans in Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1988), 185.

seemingly conforme'.⁶⁷ To all intents and purposes, the appointment procedure for clergy had broken down.

The cessation of the Westminster Assembly in 1652 and the Propagation Commissions a year later, the rapid regime changes of 1653, and the uncertain status of newly installed ministers had all undermined efforts to establish a robust process for entry into the national ministry.⁶⁸ There was a *de facto* recognition that some combination of examination and recommendation by godly men could provide a suitable method for appointing ministers, but it lacked standardisation and an agreed rationale. Claims that ministers had been approved by local godly men were often made, but there was no certain way of validating such claims, nor any national yardstick to bring cohesion to disparate regional procedures - and indeed, sometimes there was no clear procedure at all. And beneath the practical confusion remained the contentious matter of whether the magistrate should have ultimate control of the choice of ministers and, thus, over the church. So the need for a clear appointment procedure also featured in the petitions to parliament for some kind of remedial action:

⁶⁷ Nickolls, 123.

⁶⁸ In fact, the CPGW and the CPGN continued to operate informally, the CPGW at least on Cromwell's instruction: *CSPD (Commonwealth)* (December 1652-June 1653), vol.5, 293; Comm. V/4, f.81; Comm. V/5, f.45.

We do earnestly desire [...] there by a settled Order established according to the Word of God, for admitting of persons Orthodox, and fitly qualified, into that work of the Ministry.⁶⁹

Finally, the problems of appointment aside, there was a wide-spread perception that there were simply too few available clergy to take the places of those ministers who had been ejected and sequestered.⁷⁰ Petitions and appeals to parliament often asked for greater support to be provided for Oxford and Cambridge, ‘that there may be a meet supply of Labourers for the continuation of the Gospel’.⁷¹ As with so much else in this field, it is difficult to know how justified these claims really were. Certainly, if approximately two and a half thousand ministers had been removed from the church in the 1640s and early 50s on top of the normal level of turnover, the pre-war rate of output of new clergy from Oxford and Cambridge would have struggled to fill the resulting vacancies, even before the impact of the war and the university purges disrupted teaching and reduced the output of new ministers.

It is also worth considering also how many newly-trained ministers leaving university may have found their vocation amongst the army ranks rather than in

⁶⁹ *Cryes of England*, 7-8.

⁷⁰ Although most of the purging of college members took place in the 1640s, the requirement to subscribe to the Engagement in 1650 saw a second round of dismissals, disrupting the traditional education of the clergy: B. Worden, ‘Cromwellian Oxford’ in N. Tyacke (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 735, 750; J. Twigg, *A History of Queens’ College, Cambridge* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1987), 52-4; K. Fincham, ‘A Protestant College’ in J. Catto (ed.), *Oriel College: A History* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 154-5.

⁷¹ Anon, *The Humble Petition of Worcestershire* (1652), 7.

the parishes. The presbyterian Edmund Hall left his studies in Oxford to fight the royalists before returning in 1647 to take his MA, as the Army began to turn against presbyterianism.⁷² As his views evolved during the 1650s, he became a private chaplain, was rejected by the Triers and only entered the parochial ministry in 1662. How many other graduates found other non-parochial positions, like Hall, depleting still further the available pool of ministers? Or how many, having begun their studies in the final days of episcopacy, found themselves unable - doctrinally or politically - to take up parochial benefices by the time they were ready to do so? In April 1654, the *Weekly Intelligencer* was still commenting,

An extraordinary number of Preachers are continually attending upon these Commissioners [the Triers] to receive their Tryal and yet there will be want of thousands.⁷³

A sign of the Rump's recognition of the desperate straits in which the ministry was floundering is evident from the resolution of March 1653 allowing 'persons of Godliness, and Gifts, of the Universities, and others though not ordained' to become ministers.⁷⁴ How far did this much-derided cohort of preachers take up the slack in the ministry? Some of the answers are tackled in the rest of this

⁷² E. C. Vernon, 'Edmund Hall', *ODNB*. See also Section 3.3, 327.

⁷³ *The Weekly Intelligencer of the Commonwealth* (April 18th - 25th, 1654), 229; Anon, *A Dispute betwixt two Clergie-men upon the Roade* (1651), 2.

⁷⁴ *CJ*, vol.7, 264.

thesis but, for the Cromwellian regime, the public sense of calamity mattered at least as much as the figures that underlay their claims, when it came to deciding how to act.

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Although the evidence examined for the numbers of ejections and sequestrations, and for parochial vacancies, is complex, confusing and sometimes misrepresented, it is reasonable to suggest that the scale of decay within the national ministry was significant. Furthermore, the exacerbating role of the dominance of the independents in the late 1640s and early 1650s has been underplayed - and yet this was almost certainly an important contributing factor to the problems experienced in the church in this period. Had presbyterianism been widely accepted as the state church, the combination of the mechanisms of the Westminster Assembly and the development of widespread provincial *classes* would have produced a standard means of appointing clergy. Ordination would have remained a mandatory requirement for all new ministers and been available through the *classes*, providing greater legitimacy for new ministers' titles. Similarly, the *classes* would have provided support for ministers whose augmentations were unpaid and for helping to remedy disputes over dilapidations. The *classes* would also have been well-placed for settling disputes over tithes, and for re-establishing a coordinated approach to parochial discipline.

The ascendancy of the independents and their determination to accommodate a variety of semi-autonomous congregations stripped away the opportunity for re-erecting a universal administration to replace that of the episcopalian church or the semi-defunct presbyterian *classes*. Many of the problems discussed above were aggravated by the sensitivities of the independents, in particular those of the separatist congregationalists, many of whom rejected any form of umbrella organisation overseeing their activities. In accommodating this rejection, even the more magisterial independents, who *did* seek membership of a loose national church and *did* eschew outright separatism, were weakening their own capacity to stem the challenges to parochial discipline, the decline in ministerial incomes and the lure of the radical sects. Moreover, the battle over the role of the magistrate in clerical appointments slowed up the process of establishing a robust admissions procedure, whilst the purges of the universities and the imposition of the Engagement disrupted again the education of clergy in colleges still struggling with the impact of the wars.

Independency undoubtedly opened up the clerical estate to a wider range of churchmen, but this in itself did nothing to reassure the majority of conservative patrons and parishioners, who paid their ministers through clerical stipends or tithes, and thus had considerable control over the pulpit. Independent ministers who created elite 'separated churches' within their parishes and excluded other parishioners from the sacraments could quickly find that there was little parochial appetite for maintaining the fabric of the church or indeed for their continued

ministry.⁷⁵ When the Cromwellian regime took power in late 1653, the challenge was to win the hearts and minds of the population to a broad, godly, national church; a key part of this objective was to stabilise and reverse the decay of the parochial ministry, upon which the regime's vision of a new Jerusalem could be built.

⁷⁵ The independent minister Mr Loder at Bartholomew Exchange, in 1657, was refused his tithes by parishioners, for being excluded from the sacraments unless a member of his separated church: Freshfield, *Bartholomew Exchange*, xxviii, xxxii.

Part 2 The Cromwellian Religious Programme: Creating a New Ministry

The need for some level of response to the religious demands and administrative crisis of the early 1650s was recognised by powerful Cromwellians even before the Nominated Assembly had drawn to a close, but the problems they faced were immense. Virtually the entire administrative framework for managing the church had recently been removed or broken down, including its means of appointing ministers. Moreover, mass ejections of parochial clergy had been accompanied by the complete transfer of crown and episcopal patronage, moves which had swept away years of experience in the processes of church management.¹ Indeed, the Cromwellian regime faced the same kind of problems of clerical supply that had faced the Elizabethan episcopate in 1559 and had remained stubbornly intractable in the century since. On top of these, the 1640s had brought in a series of half-completed legislative attempts at ecclesiastical reformation, many of which had been subsequently abandoned or overturned.

In the face of these enormous challenges, the Instrument of Government, the written constitution produced at the outset of the Protectorate, included several clauses encapsulating the broad thrust of the new regime's religious vision. Whether contemporaries would have considered these clauses a 'settlement', as Collins has suggested, is unclear.² The transformation of these clauses into the

¹ See Section 3.2.

² Collins, 'Church Settlement', 18.

religious programme was a staged process during the first year of the regime's government and it incorporated a number of existing practices.

This section examines the religious programme of the Protectorate that emerged from the Instrument of Government in early 1654. It focuses in depth on the Triers' Commission, covering its initial legislative framework and the subsequent refinements that were made over time, in response to changing political circumstances. It also examines the personnel, and the nature and scope, of the Commission's operations, but it does not analyse the *results* of their activities, which are covered in detail in Sections 3.1 and 3.3. It concludes with an examination of the Commission's sister agencies - the Trustees for the Maintenance of a Preaching Ministry and the Ejectors Commissions.

Besides exposing the workings of the Cromwellian commissions, this section argues two main points: firstly, that the Cromwellian religious programme has been consistently mis-represented, focusing too heavily on the Triers and Ejectors and missing the crucial role of the Trustees. Secondly, that despite the loose and unoriginal nature of the policies in the Instrument of Government, they did enable the regime to bring some order to the chaotic administration of the commonwealth church and to impose broad ecclesiological parameters that could accommodate a range of the godly.

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2.1 The Instrument of Government and the Religious Programme³

The Instrument of Government, drawn up secretly during the weeks before the transfer of power from the Assembly to Cromwell in December 1653, included five statements setting out the main planks of the regime's religious programme. The 'Christian religion, as contained in the Scriptures,' was to be the accepted faith of the nation (clause 35); there were to be new measures ('a provision') for improving the supply of clergy, spreading the gospel and eradicating heresy (clause 35); liberty of conscience was to be granted to most godly Christians (37); tithes were to continue until the new 'provision' for the church had been achieved (35); and conformity to the godly church would be encouraged, but not compelled (36).⁴

The drafting of these clauses was ambiguous and repetitive. Undoubtedly it was difficult to find a form of words which would be able to accommodate the likely demands of both moderate and radical elements of the godly, but the clumsy way in which fundamental religious principles and policies were expressed adds weight to the attribution of the Instrument's drafting to Lambert and his military colleagues. It is hard to imagine John Owen, Thomas Goodwin or their fellow

³ For the relevant clauses in the Instrument, see *Appendix C*.

⁴ The importance of the tithes issue is confirmed in the versions of the Instrument that reached the press in the days before its official publication on 2nd January, 1654, which reported only the Instrument's commitment to maintain the gospel ministry and to retain tithes until an alternative was found: *Mercurius Politicus* (15th-22nd December), 3053; *Great Britain's Post* (1st-28th December, 1653), 251. See also B. Worden, 'Oliver Cromwell and the Instrument of Government' in S. Taylor and G. Tapsell (eds.), *The Nature of the English Revolution Revisited* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013), 141-2.

divines allowing such crucial statements to be expressed with such awkward and repetitive ambiguity.⁵ Clause 38 (repealing all former legislation conflicting with clauses 35 - 37) essentially negated the need for most of clauses 36 and 37, whilst clause 35 was loose in its definition of a new 'provision' for the ministry. Worden suggests that clause 35 committed the regime to replacing tithes as soon as possible:

as soon as may be, a provision ... be made for the encouragement and maintenance of able and painful teachers, for the instructing the people, and for discovery and confutation of error, hereby, and whatever is contrary to sound doctrine; and until such provision be made, the present maintenance shall not be taken away or impeached.⁶

It is equally arguable, however, that this clause allowed the regime to sideline the replacement of tithes for an indefinite period of time, since the matter was dependent on the completion of the other aspects of its religious provision and no attempt was made to quantify the extent of this 'provision', nor the time within which it must be completed.⁷

⁵ For discussion on the date of drafting of the Instrument, see Worden, 'Instrument of Government', 125.

⁶ 'IoG', 416.

⁷ Worden, 'Instrument of Government', 145-6. For example, the exact nature of the 'public profession' was not clarified until the submission of *A New Confession of Faith* to parliament in December, 1654. Since parliament was dissolved early, however, the Instrument was never adopted, which postponed the matter of tithes: J. Owen, T. Goodwin et al, *A New Confession of Faith* (1654).

Furthermore, it is instructive to consider what was not in the Instrument: there was no commitment to a set doctrine, no suggestion that the regime would enforce requirements over the provision of the sacraments, no statement on ministerial ordination, nor on the matter of an ecclesiastical framework to support the parochial clergy. These omissions, which reflected the tenor of the *Humble Proposals*, ensured the support of some independents, but they were a bitter disappointment for many others, including, of course, the presbyterians.⁸

The loose wording of the Instrument gave the regime considerable latitude in responding to the various pressures on the church.⁹ The principles of granting liberty of conscience and retaining tithes *pro-tem* set out the regime's position on two points that were highly contentious. Liberty of conscience was accorded to all Christians, except papists, episcopalians and the 'licentious', provided they caused no civil disturbance or injury to others.¹⁰ In fact, this grant effectively formalised the existing situation. The Elizabethan penalties against non-attendance at church had been repealed in 1650; the definition of blasphemy had been softened in the revised Blasphemy Act of 1650 from the strict enumeration

⁸ *HP*, 3, 5. In fact, much legislation in the 1640s promoting presbyterianism technically remained in force: for example, 'Ordinance [...] concerning Suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in cases of Ignorance and Scandall' in *A&O*, vol.1, 789-797.

⁹ Discussions in the First Protectorate Parliament show that many MPs interpreted the commitment to the 'confutation of error' as allowing them to push for a Confession of Faith, despite the fact that it would probably conflict with the commitment to liberty of conscience, which Cromwell considered to be an inalienable fundamental of his government. The attempt resulted in the Protector's early dismissal of parliament, before the Confession could be completed: P. Little and D. Smith, *Parliaments and Politics during the Cromwellian Protectorate* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 199-202; *CJ*, vol.7, 370-1, 524.

¹⁰ See also D. F., *A Letter of Adresse to the Protector* (1657), 10, for an ingenious argument that the Triers' mandate to reject ministers contravened this clause.

given in the Act of 1648; and the cessation of episcopal visitations and closure of church courts (and the former monarchical prerogative courts) meant there was no longer a central machinery to censure moderate religious delinquency.¹¹ The reality was that almost all of those intended to benefit from the clause on liberty of conscience were already effectively able to worship without persecution.¹² Nevertheless, the Instrument ensured that it became a central component of Cromwellian religious policy and it remained in force, albeit in a more restricted form after the adoption of the Humble Petition and Advice in 1657, until the transfer of power to Richard Cromwell in 1658.¹³

Clause 35 recognised the divisive nature of tithes, especially for those of the godly who favoured separation, by promising to find an alternative means of support for the ministry, as part of the wider package of the new ‘provision’ for encouraging godliness. For many people, however, tithes played a vital role in maintaining a national church; without them, the unity of the church would collapse as parishioners, freed from the parochial relationship, separated into independent congregations, encouraging the proliferation of radical sects. In the end, despite Cromwell’s apparent assurance that tithes would be removed, they remained throughout the Protectorate and beyond.¹⁴

¹¹ The 1650 Blasphemy Act avoided naming anti-Trinitarians, baptists and Arminians within the list of those to be included: J. Coffey, *Persecution and toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 149.

¹² Indeed the only groups who really fell within the scope of this clause were the various baptist congregations.

¹³ Little and Smith, *Parliaments*, 216-218.

¹⁴ Anon, *The Protector (So called) In Part Unveiled* (1655), 51.

The key clause in the Instrument of Government giving the regime a mandate to construct its own administration for the supervision and regulation of the church, was the promise of a ‘provision’

[...] for the encouragement and maintenance of able and painful teachers, for the instructing the people, and for discovery and confutation of error, hereby, and whatever is contrary to sound doctrine.¹⁵

This was translated into the three key agencies of the Cromwellian church: the Triers, the Trustees and the Ejectors. How far the exact form of these three agents of the regime’s religious programme had been finalised when the Instrument was drafted in 1653 is unclear, but the concepts of Commissions of both Triers and Ejectors had been outlined in the *Humble Proposals* of 1652, which itself drew on existing practices, and an earlier version of the Trustees had been established in 1649. Moreover, Cromwell’s personal support for the Propagation Commissions - evidenced through his instruction to the Welsh Commission to continue their work despite the cessation of their Act of Parliament - and his frustration with the Rump’s delay in establishing an English Propagation Commission, all suggest that for him at least, the Propagation Commissions were the blueprint for the religious programme established in 1654.

¹⁵ ‘IoG’, 416.

The three agencies that emerged in this religious programme were dedicated to the improvement of the national ministry. The Triers were to act as gatekeepers, vetting the godliness and abilities of aspiring clergy and of ministers wishing to receive additional maintenance authorised by the state. Those existing clergy who were outside the control of the Triers, fell within the jurisdiction of the Ejectors, who were empowered to remove scandalous ministers from their livings. Between these two bodies, therefore, the regime exercised a considerable measure of control over the entirety of the clergy serving the state church. Finally, the powers of the Trustees, which had been part of the machinery for administering augmentations to ministers' incomes since 1649, were widened and re-invigorated. The role of the Trustees was to increase the overall number of livings able to support those godly ministers who now found themselves under the theoretical control of the Triers and Ejectors.

2.2 The Commission for the Approbation of Public Preachers (the Triers)

The Triers' Commission was established by ordinance on 20 March 1654, following discussions between Cromwell and a group of leading independent divines, including John Owen, Nicholas Lockier, Philip Nye and Sydrach Simpson, and some of the members of the Council of State.¹ The rapidity of the discussions and the resulting legislation show the degree of concern felt at the highest levels over the failings in the ministry. Thirty eight commissioners were appointed initially, to which five more names were added in September.² Based at Whitehall, they met several times a week throughout the Protectorate until at least May 1659, and considered ministers' applications by interview and, more rarely, through the submission of appropriate documents.

The establishment of the Triers' Commission was clearly intended to answer the desperate need for a standardised mechanism for entry into the ministry, through which clerical orthodoxy could be enforced, and public demands met for an increase in the number of clergy to fill vacancies and offset the removal of

¹ *Severall Proceedings of State Affaires* (2 - 9 March, 1654), 3675. The Councillors included Humphrey Mackworth, Francis Rous, Gilbert Pickering and William Sydenham, and subsequently Philip, Viscount Lisle, Anthony Ashley Cooper and Charles Wolseley. Their report was then sent to Judge Matthew Hale for legal consideration. During 1653 a series of resolutions by the House of Commons had paved the way for the ordinance, including those of 4th and 18th of March and 1st April, accepting the principle of unordained ministers holding livings, of ministerial testimonials and of regional bodies for trying ministers: *CJ*, 7, 264, 269, 274. See also earlier discussions in 1653 in Winstone, 78-80.

² 'Ordinance for Appointing Commissioners for Approbation of Publique Preachers' and 'Additional Ordinance for Appointing Commissioners for Approbation of Publique Preachers' in *A&O*, vol.2, 855-8, 1025-6.

scandalous ministers. The powers of the Commission, however, were expressly restricted to parochial benefices and public lectures; there was no attempt to extend state control over those separated churches that had sprung up over the last fifteen years, which the *Humble Proposals* had recommended, nor to control the activities of the radical sects.³ Furthermore, the preamble to the ordinance noted that the lack of an appointment mechanism had ‘prejudiced...the Rights and Titles of Patrons’, the acknowledgement of which fired a clear warning shot across the bows of the radicals whose attempt to abolish private patronage during the Nominated Assembly had so nearly succeeded.⁴

The whole thrust of the Triers’ ordinance was to promote a godly preaching ministry.⁵ To achieve this, it imposed three restrictions on the clergy. It required all ministers, new and existing, who wished to receive tithes or state-sanctioned augmentations, to meet acceptable standards of godly orthodoxy and learning. Specifically, they had to satisfy the Triers that they were fit to preach the Gospel, owing to their possession of the Grace of God, their ‘holy and unblameable conversation’ and their knowledge of, and ability to teach, scripture.

³ Only the Blasphemy Act of 1650 exerted control over the sects.

⁴ *A&O*, vol.2, 856.

⁵ This distinction was important, especially to stricter independents such as Thomas Weld, who noted in his own defence in 1658 that, ‘The Commissioners at White hall, doe not send men to give the Sacraments; but onely to Preach:’ [T. Weld], *A vindication of Mr. Weld wherein, the Case between him and his Opposers, is truly stated* (1658) in S. Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims: New World Settlers and the Call of Home* (London, New Haven: YUP, 2010), 134.

The Triers were not required, or perhaps allowed, to ask for proof of ordination or formal educational attainment, nor could they insist upon subscription to the 39 Articles.⁶ Later critics robustly pointed out that the tests given in the ordinance contravened clause 37 of the Instrument of Government, which guaranteed freedom in ‘the profession of the faith and exercise of their religion,’ even for those who differed ‘in judgment from the doctrine, worship or discipline publicly held forth.’⁷ It was another unhappy example of the problems accruing from the hurried drafting of legislation by different hands and under different circumstances.⁸ Furthermore, the ordinance prevented the use of a Triers’ certificate of approval to revive any episcopal benefices or offices that had been abolished, nor could it apply to university lectures. And lastly, although approval by the Triers carried the same weight as if a minister ‘had been instituted and inducted according to the Laws of this Realm’, the ordinance specifically noted that possessing such an approval did not give ministers any special office or status in the ministry.⁹

In a tacit acknowledgement of the breakdown in ecclesiastical administration after the dismissal of the Rump, the provisions of the ordinance were backdated

⁶ This last point hammered home the rejection of the episcopalian church, which had centred around subscription to the 39 Articles under ‘An Act to Refourme certayn Dysorders touching Ministers of the Churche’ (1571) in *Statutes of the Realm* (1819), vol.4, pt.1, 546-7.

⁷ *Letter of Adresse*, 10.

⁸ Interestingly, although the rights of the clergy to practise their profession, despite differing ‘in matters of worship and discipline,’ were unambiguously spelt out in the Humble Petition and Advice of 1657, the Triers’ ordinance and instructions were not amended to reflect this: Anon, *The Humble Petition and Advice presented unto His Highnes the Lord Protector* (1657), 454.

⁹ *A&O*, vol.2, 858.

to 1 April 1653, a move that imposed its standards retrospectively over all those appointments made since the cessation of the CPM and the Propagation Committees in Wales and the North. Ministers who fell into this category had to be approved by the Triers before the 24 June 1654, failing which the patron would be free to present an alternative candidate. This deadline was subsequently extended to July, to accommodate the large number of ministers still awaiting approval by the end of June. This suggests that the regime had underestimated the numbers of ministers appointed in 1653, adding weight to the premise that ecclesiastical administration had foundered under the Nominated Assembly.

Crucially, the ordinance required each aspiring minister to submit a certificate of his fitness for the ministry signed by at least three referees, one of whom should be a beneficed minister ‘of known godliness and integrity’.¹⁰ The wording of the certificates and the choice of referees was critical. An open letter from the Commissioners, published in the press two weeks after the ordinance, exhorted would-be referees to restrict their recommendations to those of whose abilities they had ‘personal knowledge and experience’.¹¹ Besides knowing the aspiring minister personally, referees themselves also had to be known personally to the Commissioners.¹² These stipulations enabled the Triers in London effectively to ‘extend’ their personal knowledge of applicants across the country by the use of

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 857.

¹¹ *To All the Faithful Servants of Jesus Christ* (1654), 2; *Mercurius Politicus* (13 - 20 April, 1654), 3416.

¹² *Weekly Intelligencer* (18 - 25 April, 1654); [J. Nye], *Mr Sadler Re-examined* (1654), 7.

proxies. In turn, the names of these proxies were retained by the government, drawing them into an enduring network of mutual responsibility.

There was no novelty in the use of personal testimonials, which was already a well-established tradition for ensuring the integrity of men applying for positions in the church or universities.¹³ A similar process was used by the Commissioners of the Great Seal, when they took over the patronage of former church livings after 1649.¹⁴ Indeed, its familiarity probably endowed the process with legitimacy in the public eye. It could, however, be a disadvantage: in 1657 Edward Butterfield, an obscure country minister of episcopalian sympathies, associated with the royalist Verney family in Buckinghamshire, struggled to find suitably godly referees, which resulted in the informal rejection of his first certificate by John Nye, who stated that the referees were ‘unknown to the Commissioners’.¹⁵

Butterfield’s case, in fact, illustrates some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Triers’ process: in enforcing the requirement for godly testimonials, ministers whose sympathies lay with the episcopalian church were automatically disadvantaged, or even prevented from applying, thus fulfilling the purpose of the legislation. On the other hand, faced with the rejection of his certificates,

¹³ M. H. Lee (ed.), *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry* (London: Trench, 1882), 14; Bodl., MS. Tanner 52, f.6r.

¹⁴ BL, Add. MS. 36792 ff.8r, 18v. See Section 3.2.

¹⁵ F. P. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family: The Commonwealth 1650-1660* (London: Longmans, Green, 1892), vol.3, 396-7.

Butterfield finally begged testimonials from some London ministers with whom he was only passingly acquainted, and a contact of his patron sent a letter to one of the Triers asking for his favour at his interview, indicating the ease with which the process could be subverted.¹⁶ No doubt some ministers were prepared to certify for others purely on the basis that the ordinance required them to confirm the applicant to be religiously orthodox and pastorally competent, a relatively low bar to clear. Probably some referees accepted payment: around 1650, the forerunners to the Cromwellian Trustees for the Maintenance of the Preaching Ministry had advised ‘that caution may be had of such ministers whose certificates are easily gained for unworthy ministers’.¹⁷

The insistence that ministers’ certificates should follow the exact wording given in the ordinance was also essential, meaning that the certificates were closer to an oath or bond than to a modern-day reference. Incorrect wording could result in failure: Sebastian Pitfield of Caundle Bishop, helping a fellow minister through the process in the 1650s, noted that ‘we are to send up a certificate penned more suitable to the words of the ordinance,’ whilst Sir John Fitzjames, seeking approval for an augmentation for his minister James Munden, wrote to a London contact for

a copy of the certificates that are usually returned by the
Commissioners that approve and examine, for there are some certeine

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 396-7.

¹⁷ LPL, MS. 1104, f.31

sentences which are used as a forme without which I understand the persons will not pass the Pikes above.¹⁸

Even men of county standing like Fitzjames, however, could struggle to find referees who would satisfy the exacting requirements of the Triers:

Mr Gower does as it were certifie [...] in regard Mr Munden (who lives farre from him) is not knowne unto him: But I hope the certificate of the other three above [...] wilbe sufficient: and I pray tell Mr P[eters] that if he thinkes fitting, that of Mr Gowers may be cutt of, because it was written rather to certifie the godlines of the subscribers, to satisfie Mr Peters himselfe, then any other of the commissioners.¹⁹

If the Triers were minded to approve a minister, however, he was usually allowed to revise any minor defects in his certificates and re-submit them for approval.²⁰

The ordinance required that the Triers should ‘judge and take knowledge of the ability and fitness of ministers’, which was usually undertaken by interview in Whitehall.²¹ Naturally, the distance to be travelled by provincial ministers, and

¹⁸ Letter from Sebastian Pitfield, undated but 1650s, quoted in A. Bayley, *The Great Civil War in Dorset, 1642-1660* (Taunton: Barnicott and Pearce, 1910), 439 (the original manuscript of this letter appears to be lost); DNP, MS. 551, f.26v.

¹⁹ DNP, MS. 551, f35r.

²⁰ *Sadler Re-examined*, 10.

²¹ *A&O*, vol.2, 856.

the expense of lodging in London until a decision was reached led to complaints. John Goodwin's hostile attack on the Triers berated the need for ministers to go to London, which made it 'a matter of doubtfull disputation whether the sweet of the enjoyment of a good Benefice, or the sowre of getting access to it, be preponderant'.²²

In fact, the process was sometimes more flexible than the criticism suggests. Some ministers seem to have submitted only their documentation, including their presentations and certificates, for an initial response. Occasionally, if the Triers were already convinced by a candidate, it appears that they may have approved him on his papers alone. Thomas Larkham sent in his paperwork, expecting 'an easie and speedy pass', only to find himself summoned to Whitehall in person to answer articles sent in to the Commission against him.²³ Neither the grant of approval on documentation only, nor the insistence on correctly worded testimonials, however, were new; examples of these practices appear frequently in the minutes of the Westminster Assembly.²⁴

The Triers were also prepared to offload some of their interviews onto men informally appointed for this work in the provinces, although this was not

²² J. Goodwin, *Basanista'i* (1657), 28; J. Harrison, *A Glimpse of Divine Light breaking through a Cloud of Errors* (1655), [3].

²³ S. Hardman Moore, *The Diary of Thomas Larkham, 1647-1669* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), 313.

²⁴ There are multiple instances of decisions deferred until 'a better testimonial' was provided: C. Van Dixhoorn (ed.), *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), vol.4, 515.

specifically allowed for in the ordinance.²⁵ The Yorkshire minister Edward Bowles apologised to Lord Wharton in late 1654 for declining to interview [Matthew] Hill, one of Wharton's incumbents, saying 'we found the commissioners above devolving almost the whole worke of this county upon us' and he added that they could not 'without partiality proceed in the approbation of Mr Hill which we must be careful of, for we have refused sixe or seven whose references were dated before his'.²⁶

Richard Baxter, too, acted in that capacity, writing later,

This assembly of Triers examined themselves, all that were able to come up to London; but if any were unable, or were of doubtful qualifications between worthy and unworthy, they used to refer them to some ministers in the county where they lived and to approve them if *they* approved them.²⁷

Moreover, he noted elsewhere,

When the Commissioners for trying Ministers cast upon me some of their work, I disclaimed it, till the angry importunity of many episcopal

²⁵ Walker referred to 'a sort of Sub-Commissioners in the Country; but by what authority I know not:' Walker, *Sufferings*, 174.

²⁶ Bodl., MS. Rawlinson Letters 52, f.219r.

²⁷ *RB*, 72.

divines, that were referred to my Examination [...] prevailed with me to keep them in.²⁸

The evidence on local Triers must be treated with caution, however, not least because the Triers and Ejectors were (and are) frequently confused with each other in contemporary and secondary sources.²⁹ Furthermore, it can be difficult to distinguish when a man was being questioned *in place* of an interview with the Triers, or when it was an informal investigation on their behalf, following an unsatisfactory interview in Whitehall.³⁰ In 1657, Marchamont Nedham defended the decision to establish a single Commission in London against an attack by John Goodwin, adding that,

[...] if any man who is presented to a living be weak or poor, or otherwise not able to take a journey without much prejudice, then the Commissioners here [in Whitehall] are wont to make a special Reference to three or four able and godly Ministers, neighbours in the County, and according to the return made, the Commissioners use to determine the business.³¹

²⁸ R. Baxter, *An Apology for the Non-Conformists Ministry* (1681), 84.

²⁹ For example: W. Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts* (London: Hazel, Watson and Viney Ltd., 1884), 607, 629, where ministers who were assistants to the local ejectors are called 'Triers'. Bremer seems to make the same confusion: F. Bremer, *Congregational Communion* (Boston: NUP, 1994), 184.

³⁰ For example: SP 18/156 f.5.

³¹ M. Nedham, *The Great Accuser Cast Down* (1657), 106. This echoed John Nye's claim in *Mr Sadler Re-examined*, see Section 2.5, 163-4.

It is impossible to quantify the proportion of interviews that took place in the provinces, as no records of this process have survived. Bowles' comments (above) suggest that the workload may have been significant. Walker's collection included the papers of Mr Newte, which noted that he appeared in front of 'the commission and Tryers of Publicke Preachers in Tiverton'.³² Other comments, however, imply that such examinations were a rarity. Sebastian Pitfield, writing in the mid-1650s, sought to organise a local interview for another minister, noting that it

must be done in the country by a letter of reference to some here from the Commissioner for approbation above; a favour of the largest size, obtained by special favour of some eminent men.³³

Perhaps Dorset did not have a recognised group of local triers? Sir John Fitzjames also tried to arrange a one-off interview for James Munden, who needed an approval in order to receive his augmentation. In 1655, he wrote to Hugh Peters,

Now Sir, I knowing and hereby certifying the poverty and in some other respects the inability of the man, to take soe great a journey doe humbly desire that by your favour there may bee an order obtained for

³² Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c.8, f.28r.

³³ Bayley, *Dorset*, 439. Pitfield's letter, however, is laced with a heavy irony, which might account for some of his language in this extract.

his examinacon and approbation by some worthy persons in the county of dorsett whereby you shall do a charitable act and for ever obleidg.³⁴

In any event, the process of local trying was certainly not new. The presbyterian *classes* of the 1640s involved internal triers, and members of the Propagation Commissions to Wales and the North in the early 1650s consistently ‘tried’ ministers for livings within their regions. The *Humble Proposals* of 1652 had proposed regional Triers’ commissions and, a year later, a petition to Cromwell from Yorkshire specifically requested such a facility.³⁵

It is unclear why the suggestion in the Yorkshire petition was ignored, but it may be that both John Owen and Thomas Goodwin, key architects behind the Triers’ and Ejectors’ Commissions, wished to keep very tight control over who was deemed fit for the ministry. Both men had become increasingly alarmed by the rapid spread of Socinian ideas in the early 1650s, which challenged the fundamental Calvinist concept of justification by faith alone. This fear was aggravated by the alternative vision for the church being developed by Richard Baxter through the Voluntary Association movement, which advocated a less rigid godly communion, focused on an inclusive, pastoral ministry and the importance of good works.³⁶

³⁴ DNP, MS. 551, f.22r.

³⁵ Nickolls, 106.

³⁶ Mortimer, 208-212, 220-2, 225-30.

Owen and Goodwin's response had been to develop and press for a set of religious fundamentals to which universal subscription would be required. Failure to get their proposal past the more radical godly and the Rump Parliament in 1653, however, was a major setback in their fight against the Socinian threat, and it may be that the decision to keep grants of admission to the ministry in the hands of a single Commission based in London, of which they were both members, represented their concern to exercise strict control over the spread of anti-Trinitarianism. Multiple provincial commissions, far from Whitehall or Oxford, where Owen and Goodwin held university positions, may have been regarded as too difficult to oversee or too easy to subvert. It is also possible that Cromwell himself may have wished to keep the process in London, given his extensive personal involvement in the exercise of ecclesiastical patronage during his Protectorate.³⁷ In the event, it seems that their concerns were outweighed by the impracticality of complete centralisation, resulting in the informal establishment of provincial 'Triers'.

The most inflammatory aspect of the Triers' practices, however, was the content of the interviews. Scorn was poured on the manner in which candidates were required to prove their possession of the 'Grace of God'.³⁸ Worse still, it was widely felt that such questions could lead very quickly into the murky waters of testing for Arminianism. Records of Triers' interviews are extremely scarce, but those that survive suggest that these situations did arise. Sadler, at his interview

³⁷ See Section 3.2, 242-261.

³⁸ Goodwin, *Basanista'i*, 10.

for Compton Highway in 1654, recorded being probed initially on his understanding of orthodox Calvinist terms including ‘regeneration’, ‘sin’, ‘justification’, followed by questions about his experience of possessing the ‘Grace of God’. His examination then moved on to some of the key indicators of Arminianism: did he owe his election to his faith or his faith to his election? Did he believe in universal atonement? Did he believe God could withdraw salvation from the Elect?³⁹

Other men recorded questioning which also suggests that the Triers were clearly concerned to distinguish between orthodox Calvinists and Arminians. Francis Duncomb, at his interview for Great Gaddesdon, was asked whether he believed, ‘Election was *ex praevisa fide*?’⁴⁰ Joseph Harrison, however, recorded that, at his interview, ‘no query [was] proposed to me to try my knowledge and utterance, or discover whether the Grace of God was in me of a truth’; he was asked only to account for some alleged antinomian references in a sermon he was said to have preached three years earlier.⁴¹

The Triers’ interviews provoked both anger and derision from hostile commentators and failed candidates and yet they actually replicated tests already in use by other institutions. The admission process operated by the presbyterian

³⁹ A. Sadler, *Inquisitio Anglicana* (1654), 8, 11-13.

⁴⁰ Ie, a result of God’s foreknowledge of a man’s faith: Sadler, 8-14; Bodl., MS. J.Walker, c.1, f. 327r.

⁴¹ Harrison, *Divine Light*, [3].

classes asked an almost identical set of questions, and the separated churches in New England required proof of God's Grace in new members who wished to enter their close communion.⁴² Sadler, however, presented their questions as hectoring and intended to trip him up and, because his account is virtually unique, it has been perhaps too influential over the subsequent historiography. In fact, it is reasonable to suggest that the Triers were actually testing whether he was able to do more than just parrot answers to questions, and whether he had the mental agility to think through the implications of his responses. Was he, in other words, competent to join the preaching ministry?

The evidence that the Triers questioned ministers about their politics is even thinner, but there are indications that it was not unknown. In seeking to establish whether men were of 'unblameable conversation', it would have been a short step into enquiries about a man's politics. George Bate, Cromwell's physician, wrote after the Restoration that the Triers were known to question ministers on civil matters:

[The Triers] especially interrogated their evidence of possessing the Grace of God, as often as they were asked about civil matters, or, perhaps, as the political state pleased them.⁴³

⁴² A. McCampbell, 'Incumbents and Patronage in London' in *JCS* (1983), vol.25(2), 308-9; Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims*, 5, 42-3.

⁴³ G. Bate, *Elenchi Motuum Nuperorum in Anglia* (1663), 294-5 (my translation). Bate was, however, a 'hostile witness'.

Moreover, Cromwell himself seems to have acknowledged publicly that the Commissioners might have ‘meddled with civil matters, in their operations as Triers’.⁴⁴

So much, of course, depended on the individual Commissioners who were present at each interview. Of the approximately forty men theoretically available, thirty-two were ministers and eleven were laymen with political and military experience or commercial careers, whilst eight of the Commissioners also held important university positions at Oxford and Cambridge.⁴⁵ There is no evidence of the rationale behind the choice of commissioners, although the historiography has favoured a crude assumption that achieving a broad mix of denominational beliefs was the ruling factor. Certainly, despite the pitfalls of attempting to categorise religious sympathies, there were roughly nineteen independents, nine presbyterians and four or five baptists.⁴⁶ Moreover, fourteen of the Triers had been members of the Westminster Assembly and nine were, or had been, chaplains to Cromwell.

This diversity of religious sympathies may well have been intended to prevent bias, either in their decision-making itself or in its public perception, an approach

⁴⁴ T. Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, 4 vols., (London: Ward, Lock & Bowden, 1892), (2nd rev. ed.), 119. Carlyle recorded Cromwell admitting the Triers had ‘[...] meddled with civil matters, in their operations as Triers’. Carlyle’s reliability is unclear; Abbott’s version of this speech (21 April, 1657) is less explicit on this point. The forthcoming edition of Cromwell’s speeches may settle his words on this point.

⁴⁵ Six were, or had been, MPs. Some of the Triers remain obscure. See *Appendix B*.

⁴⁶ William Packer was a baptist in the 1640s, but moved towards the 5th Monarchist movement briefly in the early 1650s.

that would have accorded with Cromwell's personal dislike of religious formalism.⁴⁷ Murphy has suggested, however, that denominational diversity may have been less important than the preaching abilities of many of the members, and their proven commitment to working with others towards religious unity.⁴⁸ Many of the Triers were indeed noted preachers and had also demonstrated a willingness to collaborate with other godly brethren, but they were by no means the only men to exhibit these preferences, so clearly there were other political or personal factors, which would explain the absence of influential men such as Edmund Calamy and the inclusion of relative non-entities, such as Nathaniel Campfield and Godfrey Bosvile.⁴⁹

In concentrating on the denominational breadth of the Commission, the historiography has often also missed the important qualifier that only some of the Triers appear to have been active in the process.⁵⁰ The ordinance required only five members to be present to approve a candidate and nine to be present in cases of rejection, so it is quite likely that often only a handful of men carried out most

⁴⁷ Thomas Grove, MP, informed Richard Baxter that 'it was thought fitt to have men of severall interests and judgements' in the committee selected to advise Cromwell on the religious aspects of the Instrument in autumn 1654, suggesting that a mix of sympathies was actively favoured by the regime: *CCRB*, vol.1, 156 (letter 204).

⁴⁸ Murphy, 'Cromwell's Church', 140.1

⁴⁹ Cromwell's personal role in choosing commissioners is suggested by the later inclusion of Martin Holbeach, who taught the Protector's sons in Essex before the Civil War: J. T. Rutt, *Diary of Thomas Burton* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), 524. There are no formal records of subsequent Triers after those admitted in September 1654, but another may have been Randolph Yearwood, former chaplain to Robert Titchborne: SP 18/181 f.13.

⁵⁰ Murphy has recognised this point: Murphy, 'Cromwell's Church', 171-8.

of the work.⁵¹ There is no conclusive evidence on levels of participation, but the few records of interviews that *do* exist, along with other miscellaneous references in the sources, suggest that the bulk of the work was undertaken by an ‘inner circle’ of ministers. This group comprised Philip Nye, Joseph Caryl, Hugh Peters, Nicholas Lockier, William Cooper and Thomas Manton.

This premise is supported by the fact that it was not unusual for the Council of State to instruct one or two of the Triers to question ministers informally, before or after facing the formal panel; again, the names which recur in these instances were predominantly Nye, Caryl, Peters, Lockier and Sterry.⁵² The dominance of these men reflects the central roles they had played, along with Owen, Goodwin and Simpson, in the ascendancy of the magisterial independents after 1649 and, for some, in the construction of the *Humble Proposals*.⁵³ The consistent attendance of the presbyterians Cooper and Manton may have resulted from a determination to offset the dominance of the independents. Manton was recorded as saying that he ‘very seldom absented himself from that service, that he might

⁵¹ The only record of what may be the likely compliment of commissioners at an interview comes from Walker’s copy of Francis Duncomb’s record of his second interview by the Triers, at which Caryl, Carter, Cooper, Manton, Dyke and Roe were present. It also noted that Nye had not attended his first interview: Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c.1, f.327r.

⁵² SP 25/78 f.533; SP 30/3/58; SP 5/10/54; NRO, D(CA) 908,

⁵³ Nye, Simpson and Goodwin had been part of the Dissenting Brethren establishing the independent position in the Westminster Assembly in 1644 and participated consistently in committees and debates thereafter. Peter had been active on the Welsh Propagation Commission in the early 1650s and close to the centre of religious debate thereafter: T. Richards, *A History of the Puritan Movement in Wales 1639-1653* (London: NEA, 1920), 165-6; P. Toon, *God’s Statesman* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1971), 90-2; Bremer, 192-4; Polizzotto, ‘Campaign’, 574-5.

[...] keep matters from running into extremes'.⁵⁴ The *Weekly Intelligencer*, however, claimed - rather glibly - that there was

no difference at all among the Commissioners themselves, though they be of diverse judgements about Church-matters, all minding the advancement of the Gospel.⁵⁵

Beyond this small circle of men, a number of other Commissioners are recorded as participating: Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, Samuel Fairclough, William Carter, John Tombes, Daniel Dyke, Thankful Owen, John Rowe and John Bond, whilst George Griffith, apparently, 'took special interest' in ministers destined for Welsh livings.⁵⁶ The extent of their participation is more hazy; both John Owen and Thomas Goodwin, for example, had heavy commitments to other matters in Oxford and London, whilst John Tombes spent long periods in his parish in Herefordshire.⁵⁷

Of those members for whom evidence of participation has *not* been found, it is likely that they attended only sporadically, or not at all: Goffe and Packer had

⁵⁴ W. Harris, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, D.D.* (London: J. Nisbet and Co., 1870), vol.1, xiii.

⁵⁵ *Weekly Intelligencer* (18 - 25 April 1654), 229.

⁵⁶ Of two possible John Bonds, it remains unclear which sat as a Trier: CR, 63; Hardman Moore, *Larkham*, 331; R. Greaves, 'George Griffiths', ODNB. Thankful Owen approved an interim minister for St Botolphs without Bishopsgate with Hugh Peters, but is wrongly calendared as Thomas Owen: SP 18/70 f.122.

⁵⁷ J. Smith, 'John Tombes' in ODNB.

extensive military and parliamentary duties, especially as Major-Generals for south-east and central England in 1655-6.⁵⁸ Arrowsmith, Tuckney, Horton and Sadler were all active in their university positions at Cambridge and Oxford, whilst Cradock spent long periods, when possible, attending to his pastoral duties in Wales.⁵⁹ Several lay members of the Commission, including Sadler, St Nicholas, Rous, Goffe, Packer and Titchborne were also MPs, and held, along with Hildesley, multiple political and professional offices;⁶⁰ Edward Cresset was an active member of the Trustees but seems not to have participated as a Trier. Finally, William Strong died in 1654, Simpson and Marshall died in 1655, Bond died in 1657 and Sedgewick retired to Wiltshire in 1656 and died in 1658.

In the absence of other extensive and consistent evidence, it is probably safe to say that the Commission was dominated by a core of independents, with substantial input from two presbyterians and from Dyke, a moderate baptist. Of this group, Nye and Peters were regarded as most central, and it seems that Peters was often used as an informal channel of communication between ministers and the Triers or the Council of State.⁶¹ How far, however, did they represent the

⁵⁸ The Major-Generals in fact often became involved, as a function of their office, in interviewing ministers in their regions: SP 18/156 f.5.

⁵⁹ Richards, *Religious Developments*, 136.

⁶⁰ For example: Titchborne and Hildesley were Trustees for the Sale of Dean and Chapter Lands, Rous was on the Council of State: SP 18/67 f.15. Curiously, in *A Second Narrative*, Rous, Goffe and Titchborne have short biographies, and Sterry, Thomas Goodwin and Nye are also mentioned, but only Nye is specifically associated with the Triers: *A Second Narrative of the Late Parliament* (1658), 15, 23, 25, 39.

⁶¹ For example: *CCRB*, vol.1, 334 (letter 485); *Protector So-called* (1655), 51; *Nineteen Cases of Conscience Submissively Tendr'd to Mr Hugh Peters* (1659); *Peter's Patern* (1659). For Peters' role in communicating, see DNP, MS. 551 f.22r; Bodl., MS. J. Walker c.4, f.39.

Cromwellian regime? This is difficult to say, since the regime itself, as a political body, incorporated men with different priorities. Certainly, there was considerable divergence in opinion both within the Triers, and between them and Cromwell. Manton's presbyterian leanings were unlikely to have been shared by the baptist Daniel Dyke, and John Owen's support for a confession of faith was not shared by Cromwell. Yet Cromwell was content to allow the Triers to construct the ministry without much apparent interference, which suggests that there was a broad vision shared by both the Commission and the Protector at least. Moreover, in concentrating largely on the godliness of ministers, it may be that political differences between the Commissioners and the regime were able to be sidestepped in the shared goal of a broad godly church.

Initially the Commissioners were divided into three groups, sitting for a month in turn and were reported to be meeting three times a week, considering applications from new ministers on Mondays and Wednesdays and from those seeking augmentations on Fridays.⁶² This arrangement appears to have broken down very rapidly, however, probably as a result of the large number of men applying for retrospective approval before the deadline of June 1654.⁶³ In fact, this group of ministers was so large that, at the last minute, the cut-off date was extended to the 23 July.⁶⁴ This resulted in a back-log in the newer applications so that, by autumn 1654, John Nye was explaining that the Triers 'sate constantly

⁶² *Mercurius Politicus* (20 April, 1654), 3429.

⁶³ *Weekly Intelligencer* (18 - 25 April 1654), 229; Nye, *Sadler Re-examined*, 4.

⁶⁴ *A&O*, vol.2, 922.

every day, fore-noon and afternoon,' having already noted that, 'in those first three months, the business was so much and great upon their hands as it was impossible to give that dispatch [...] as each desired'.⁶⁵

Beyond the confines of their 1654 ordinance, the Commissioners also seem to have recommended ministers to serve abroad, in particular in non-parochial livings. In August 1654, for example, they were asked to suggest a minister to join the new Protectoral Council in Ireland and in early 1655, they approved Joseph Teate as fit to serve in Ireland.⁶⁶ In particular, they seem to have played an important role in supplying ministers to the forces.⁶⁷ In 1655, the Admiralty commissioners reported the difficulty of recruiting clergy and asked the Triers to put forward twenty ministers, of whom they approved, for service in the navy.⁶⁸ A year later, first Joseph Caryl then John Rowe were asked to examine 'Mr Hampton' for the fleet and a draft certificate in the State Papers for naval approvals suggests that vetting naval ministers became a regular duty for the Triers.⁶⁹ Neither Teate nor Hampton, however, appear in the Registers, so the number of such non-parochial and naval approvals is impossible to gauge. Furthermore, in 1658 an order from the Council requesting that a Mr Loe should be examined for service in the newly established garrison at Dunkirk was sent to

⁶⁵ Nye, *Sadler re-examined*, 3.

⁶⁶ SP 25/75 f.473; SP 25/75 f.679; T. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 19-20; T. Venning, 'William Lockhart' in *ODNB*.

⁶⁷ SP 25/78 f.555.

⁶⁸ SP 18/102 f.108.

⁶⁹ SP 18/102 f.152; SP 18/131, f.182.

William Hook, John Howe and Peter Sterry; all three men were chaplains to Cromwell, but only Sterry appears to have also been a Trier, suggesting again that ministerial vetting for the forces may also have taken place informally, beyond the sphere of the Commission itself.⁷⁰ The omission in the Registers of approvals for naval and overseas positions suggests that the Triers undertaking these examinations may have been doing so in response to personal requests from the Admiralty or Council of State, rather than in their official capacity as Commissioners. It also demonstrates that their Registers were kept strictly to record tithe-funded ministers, as specified in the ordinance, rather than to record the whole extent of the Triers' activities.

The Triers' Commission was the first of the three agencies of the religious programme to be put in place, probably because the re-stocking of the ministry depended first and foremost on the provision of a means of clerical appointment. Moreover, being small and centrally-based, the Commission was relatively simple to set up. Just before the opening of parliament in September 1654, a supplement was issued appointing a further five Commissioners and prohibiting the approval of formerly ejected ministers who had not been approved by the Council and/or Protector.⁷¹ Like the other religious ordinances passed before the opening of the First Protectorate Parliament, it was recognised that the Triers'

⁷⁰ SP 18/182 f.125. It is possible that Hook and Howe were later appointments to the Triers' Commission but there is no evidence of this.

⁷¹ 'Additional Ordinance to the Ordinance appointing Commissioners for approbation of Publique Preachers' in *A&O*, 1025-1026. The impact of this is discussed in Section 2.4, 128-130 and Section 3.3, 342-4.

ordinance would be scrutinised by MPs, as a result of clause thirty in the Instrument of Government.⁷² In fact, it was referred to the Committee on Religion, and MPs did not debate it further, concentrating instead on concerns about the Ejectors and other matters.⁷³

The sudden dissolution of parliament in January 1655 prevented any changes to either Commission, but the following year, two Protectoral proclamations were issued, in the wake of the political uprisings of spring 1655. The first removed previously ejected clergy from livings to which they had subsequently returned without authorisation, and removed any ministers who had taken up livings since April 1654 without approval from the Triers. The second prohibited political delinquents from employing formerly ejected ministers as chaplains or teachers, and prevented previously ejected ministers from teaching or undertaking ministerial duties, unless they had subsequently been granted approval by the Triers.⁷⁴

In 1657, the Second Protectorate Parliament renewed all three ordinances of the religious programme. MPs' concerns were focused on concerns over ejections, clerical maintenance and the control of blasphemy and heresy, and the Triers'

⁷² P. Gaunt, 'To Create a Little World out of Chaos': The Protectoral Ordinances of 1653-1654 Reconsidered' in P. Little (ed.), *The Cromwellian Protectorate* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 108.

⁷³ *CJ*, vol.7, 371.

⁷⁴ O. Cromwell, *By His Highness a proclamation for relief of godly ministers against suits and molestations by persons sequestred, ejected, or not approved* (1655); *Orders of the Protector and Council for Securing the Peace of the Commonwealth* (1655) in SP 18/100 ff.310-11.

ordinance was amended only by the requirement that additional commissioners should be approved by parliament.⁷⁵ In fact, the Triers continued to sit until at least May 1659, when Richard Cromwell resigned, after which, at some point during the months of chaotic regime change that followed, the Commission ceased to function. The last entry in their Registers is for 7 May 1659, and it may be that the Triers did not survive Richard's fall. In its place, however, a smaller group of ministers who held lectureships at Westminster Abbey continued some of the earlier Commission's functions. This new Commission included the former Triers Philip Nye, Joseph Caryl, Thomas Manton, William Cooper, John Rowe and George Griffith, besides John Loder, Thomas Gouldstone, Seth Wood and Edward Pearse, who are not recorded as having been Triers previously.⁷⁶ This group operated only briefly during 1659-60 and was superseded by a new body of presbyterian Triers, established by an Act of 4 March, 1660, under the restored Rump Parliament.⁷⁷

The provisions in the Act of March 1660 differed from those in the first Triers' ordinance in several key areas: unfilled livings would lapse to the universities of Oxford or Cambridge rather than the head of state, presumably reflecting the uncertainty of that role; patrons had the same rights of appeal against the Triers as they had possessed against the bishops, but only against the Commission

⁷⁵ *CJ*, vol.7, 524 (28 April, 1657).

⁷⁶ Richards, *Puritan Movement*, 17-19. It is possible some of these men had latterly joined the Commission unrecorded.

⁷⁷ 'Act for Approbation and Admission of Ministers of the Gospel to Benefices and Publick Lectures' in *A&O*, vol.2, 1459-1462.

itself, not its individual members; four regional Triers could be appointed in each county by the London Commissioners; and the Triers could fund a temporary minister from the profits of the living during a vacancy. Particularly important was the power given to ordained Triers and ordained Heads of University colleges to undertake ordinations themselves, demonstrating the presbyterian determination to restrict the ministry to the care of ordained preachers, whilst acknowledging the existing absence of a nationwide framework for carrying out ordinations. This same presbyterian drive was expressed by the requirement for JPs and University Heads to divide up their counties and colleges into new presbyterian *classes*.

Although the new Triers' Act clearly indicates the direction in which the Rump would have gone to re-shape the national church, the registers of the new Triers, if any were ever kept, have not survived, so how far they put any of these intentions into practice during this politically turbulent period is unrecorded. In the event, the Commission seems to have collapsed within weeks of its inception, as the restoration of the monarchy took place. The last known record of their activities is the admission certificate for John Collins, signed by the new registrar John Booth, for the rectory of Titchmarsh in Northamptonshire, dated 30 April, 1660.⁷⁸

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⁷⁸ NRO, YZ1350; Samuel Annesley was approved by them two days previously: Calamy, *Continuation*, 47. Booth had previously worked in some capacity for the original Triers' commission.

This section has summarised the duties and personnel of the Triers' Commission until 1659, briefly considering some of the claims and counterclaims made about its processes. The focus now turns to the work of the Trustees and the Ejectors, arguing that by re-considering the role of these two agencies and their interactions with the Triers, a new picture of the Cromwellian religious programme emerges. It suggests that the autocratical powers of the Triers have been overstated and, instead, their activities should be seen as part of a series of interdependent relationships, all of which played essential roles in the programme of re-shaping the national ministry.

2.3 The Trustees for the Maintenance of the Preaching Ministry

The Trustees for the Maintenance of the Preaching Ministry (the Trustees) were first established in 1649 by the Rump Parliament, to oversee the payment of financial augmentations to supplement clerical incomes in livings too impoverished to support a minister.¹ The correlation between inadequate parochial incomes and vacant livings had long been recognised but, during the first civil war, it was only slowly addressed, using revenue from impropriations belonging to delinquents on an *ad hoc* basis to support godly plundered ministers.² By 1646, however, a more considered approach had begun to emerge. Impropriations belonging to the recently abolished bishops, deans and chapters were excluded from the forced sales of their lands ordered by parliament, and the revenues from these lands were ring-fenced from appropriation and use by the Exchequer.³ This ring-fenced income was added to that coming in from delinquents' impropriations to fund augmentations for impoverished ministers, and its use was administered and authorised by the Committee for Plundered Ministers.⁴

¹ 'Act for Maintenance of Preaching Ministers and other Pious uses' (1649) in *A&O*, vol.2, 142-8.

² Hughes and O'Day, 'Augmentation', 169-171.

³ 'Ordinance for the setting of the Lands of all the Bishops in the Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales' in *A&O*, vol.1, 887-904; 'Ordinance for explanation and better putting in execution the late Ordinance, Entituled, An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, for appointing the sale of Bishops Lands for the use of the Commonwealth' in *A&O*, vol.2, 904-5; Shaw, vol.2, 212-213.

⁴ The administration was complex and also involved the Committees for Compounding, and for the 'Sales of Bishops' Lands' and the County Committees.

As the sources of funding thus gradually increased, the need for a legally secure way of safeguarding the income became necessary, before its redistribution to individuals. This resulted in the creation of the Trustees for the Maintenance of the Preaching Ministry in 1649, in whom the funds were vested, from which they were legally bound to pay out clerical augmentations.⁵ The Trustees were given control not only of the revenue from all former ecclesiastical impropriations, but also the income from clerical First Fruits and Tenths, underwritten by a sum of £20,000 from former crown rents.⁶ Of this aspirational income, £18,000 was to be dedicated to improving clerical and schoolmasters' incomes, and £2000 was reserved for augmenting the incomes of the heads of university colleges, in recognition of the critical role of the universities in supporting the ministry.

In 1650, the establishment of the Committees for Propagation of the Gospel in Wales and the four northern English counties resulted in the exemption of these areas - a third of the country's counties - from the authority of the Trustees.⁷ At the same time, the Trustees took over the revenue arising from delinquents' impropriations, formerly in the hands of the CPM, who continued to authorise

⁵ The thirteen trustees named in the ordinance formed a legal entity which, being distinct from parliament, survived the Rump's dissolution in 1653. The use of private Trustees was presumably considered the safest depository for a large fund, from which to draw on as necessary. In the event, the Trustees seem rarely to have had more funds than they were spending, so their role as a deposit bank was perhaps more honoured in the breach than the observance.

⁶ Shaw, vol.2, 215. First Fruits and Tenths were gathered by the Exchequer and theoretically returned to the Trustees, although Hughes and O'Day note that the Trustees may not have had access to the First Fruits until the later Act of 1654: Hughes and O'Day, 'Augmentation', 188; Comm V/4, 6. Ministers were instructed to go to the Trustees to compound for their First Fruits in early 1655: Comm. V/4, f.136.

⁷ 'Act for the better Propagation and Preaching of the Gospel in Wales, and redress of some Grievances' in *A&O*, vol.2, 342-8.

the Trustees' grants from both delinquents' and ecclesiastical sources until its own cessation in 1653.⁸ After this, there was no recognised system for authorisation and the Council of State became the *de facto* conduit for approving augmentation requests. In June 1654, moreover, the Cromwellian regime's attempt to simplify the administration of public finance required all income sequestered from delinquents to be paid into the Treasury, to whom the Trustees would have to apply for the release of funds from which to pay augmentations.⁹

By the summer of 1654, there was widespread recognition that inadequate maintenance was a root cause of the parlous state of the church, confirmed by the flood of petitions to the Council appealing for augmentations.¹⁰ Some parishes even found themselves unable to resolve their maintenance owing to changes in the structure of government: in 1654, Ralph Mason petitioned Cromwell to continue an order for his augmentation, which had stopped, 'through want of a review of the said order by the Committee for the Universities'.¹¹ This committee had been wound down in 1652, creating a problem which also affected John Watson, minister of Eastham in Cheshire, whose parishioners petitioned Cromwell for help recovering his augmentation:

⁸ 'Act for the better payment of Augmentations out of The Improprate Rectories, Vicarages and Tythes sequestered from Papists or Delinquents in *A&O*, vol.2, 391. Authorisation moved briefly into the hands of the CRU from 1650-52, before returning to the CPM: Hughes and O'Day, 'Augmentation', 180; Shaw, vol.2, 217.

⁹ 'Ordinance for bringing the Publique Revenues of this Commonwealth into one Treasury' in *A&O*, vol.2, 918-921.

¹⁰ For example: SP 25/75 f.457.

¹¹ SP 18/72, f.141.

[..] he cannot receive the said Augmentation with the said Arrears for that his former orders were not reviewed by the Committee for Regulating Universities, our said Minister or we not knowing the said review requisite until after dissolution of that Committee.¹²

This led the regime to revise the role, powers and personnel of the Trustees in a new ordinance of 2 September 1654, published less than a week after that establishing the Ejectors' Commission.¹³ That this ordinance was rushed into print the day before the opening of the First Protectorate Parliament is further evidence that, like the already established Triers and Ejectors, the Trustees were regarded by the regime as an indispensable part of its religious programme.

Under its new ordinance, the Trustees' remit was simplified and strengthened. They were given full control of the funding from all the local and national sources allocated for augmentations over the previous decade, thus enabling them to make new grants without recourse to other committees. In particular, they were given the funds of clerical first fruits and tenths upon which to draw.¹⁴ This power had clear parameters, however, a limit of £100 a year being set for the total income (from augmentations and/or tithes) in any benefice, except those

¹² SP 18/76, f.29.

¹³ 'Ordinance for the better maintenance and encouragement of Preaching Ministers, and for uniting of Parishes' in *A&O*, vol.2, 1000-6.

¹⁴ The Trustees minutes record instructions to Nye that, after approval, ministers must attend the Trustees to compound for their first fruits. This probably accounts for the hitherto unexplained absence of a first fruits composition book for 1654-56, in the E334 series of Exchequer Composition Accounts at the National Archives: Comm. V/4, ff.136, 140.

serving larger towns and cities. The Trustees were also authorised to recover impropriated income that delinquents sought to conceal from the government by vesting it in their own trustees.¹⁵

Furthermore, a determined attempt to rationalise the workload of the ministry was made by instructing the Trustees to re-invigorate the process of unification of adjacent small and impoverished parishes in order to provide fewer, larger parishes with sufficient income. In such cases, the Trustees had the power to demolish redundant churches and re-invest the sums recovered in the remaining parish. Similarly they were to recommend the division of parishes that were unmanageably large or populous into two or more livings, if appropriate.¹⁶ To aid their decisions on all aspects of their work, they were authorised to draw on the nationwide parochial surveys that had been carried out in 1650 and lodged in Chancery, and they also made use of John Speed's maps of the counties and cities of Britain.¹⁷ Moreover they were authorised to re-survey parishes for which the existing information was inadequate, and to commission new surveys of livings 'without cure of souls' - none of which had been surveyed in 1650. Finally, the number of Trustees was reduced from thirteen to ten.¹⁸

¹⁵ Reducing larger augmentations authorised by Cromwell down to £100 *pa* was expressly denied, however, unless agreed by Cromwell and/or the Council: *A&O*, vol.2, 1005.

¹⁶ *Comm. V/4*, f.57.

¹⁷ *Comm. V/4*, f.6.

¹⁸ Only five of the earlier Trustees were retained: John Thorowgood, William Steele, George Cooper, Richard Young and John Pocock. The new Trustees were Ralph Hall, Richard Sydenham, John Humfrey, Edward Hopkins and Edward Cressett.

Like their sister agencies, they became involved in a wider range of work than the ordinance of 1654 recites, but most of their time involved managing the assignment of the income from the many leases of tithes and other revenue streams that provided much of the money available to them, and responding to pleas from parishes for augmentations. It is in this area that the influence and significance of the Trustees has been generally overlooked.

Under the Protectorate's religious programme, new ministers could only be appointed after approval from the Triers. This Commission, however, had no official remit or mechanism to supply proactively ministers to empty livings, although they were sometimes asked for such recommendations.¹⁹ Since the Triers were not proactive, the only sure way to increase actively the number of serving ministers was to increase the incomes of impoverished livings, to enable them to support a minister. Thus, wherever existing parochial maintenance was inadequate, the Triers' approval became only one part of an informal, two-stage process for settling a minister, of which the other part was the grant of additional funds. Very occasionally this was done privately but in the overwhelming majority of cases, the parish had to apply to the Trustees to assign sufficient funding.²⁰ If the application for funding was successful *and* approval was gained, the appointment was likely to proceed.

¹⁹ SP 18/74 f.50; B. Nightingale, *The Ejected of 1662 in Cumberland & Westmorland, their Predecessors and Successors* (Manchester: MUP, 1911), vol.1, 759.

²⁰ Hughes and O'Day, 'Augmentation', 173.

In the choice of where to allocate augmentations, the Trustees, like the Triers, were essentially reactive, responding to requests as they were sent in, and usually if they were able to find available local funds.²¹ That said, they did make frequent, proactive attempts to establish how much revenue was, or might soon become, available to them in the provinces.²² Requests for augmentations were sometimes made before approval had been sought from the Triers, but many grants from the Trustees were made on condition of subsequent approval from the Triers. Thus, although the approval process of the Triers was independent of the Trustees, the grant of an augmentation by the Trustees was, in most cases, *dependent* on approval by the Triers. On the other hand, approval by the Triers was of little value if the approved minister's future living was too poor to support him. Thus there were numerous occasions when the Trustees and the Triers were reliant upon each other for the success of their efforts to implement the regime's religious programme.

Analysis of the Trustees' actions reveals that their role in the process took three distinct forms. In the first place, they responded to petitions for augmentations from, or for, ministers already in livings. Sometimes such ministers were petitioning after a former augmentation had ceased, as happened to Ambrose Sparry and Richard Cleyton, serving the several chapels in Wolverhampton, whose inhabitants appealed on their behalf in January 1656:

²¹ Hughes and O'Day demonstrate that there was a presumption in favour of local funds for augmentations: Hughes and O'Day, 'Augmentation', 176-7.

²² Comm. V/4, f.261.

It pleased the honourable Committee for Plundered Ministers upon the dissolution of Dean and Chapter, to assigne 100*l.* per annum for a minister and 50*l.* per annum for an assistant, to be payd out of the Sequestred Impropriation of Col. Levison, [...] The said Col. Levison being dead, the estate coming to his heir and widdow, the sequestration thereof being taken off, and there is at the present no settled maintenance at all for the minister or his assistant.²³

Others may have been affected by personal circumstances, including increasing family size, or by difficulties collecting tithes or salaries.²⁴ In 1654, Francis Cheynell appealed on behalf of a local minister, Nehemiah Beaton, of Wiston, Sussex:

The Earl of Thanet receives 120*l.* a year by virtue of a lease of tithes impropriate, and is bound by the same lease to give sufficient maintenance to the minister of the place, [...] but the Parliament being dissolved, he refuses to pay anything, so that this precious man (unless you take compassion on him) must be either starved or removed.²⁵

²³ SP 18/123 f.237; augmentations from delinquents' estates ceased when the delinquent died or compounded for his delinquency.

²⁴ The problem of tithe collection was widely recognised: BL, Add. MS. 32 093, f. 387.

²⁵ SP 18/66 ff.145-6, 152.

For those already-beneficed ministers whose religious or political views might not find favour with the Triers, however, the decision to apply for an augmentation was laced with the danger of exposing their views to the Cromwellian authorities, and risking ejection.

A slightly different situation facing the Trustees were petitions from private patrons who sought to fill livings which had insufficient maintenance, as illustrated by a petition from Sir John Coplestone and Francis Rolle, patrons of two Exeter churches, who explained to the Trustees in 1658,

Wee are willing to present Increase Mather and Thos. Powell, men eminent for their holy lives, abilities, and faithfullnesse to preach the Gospell, but these parishes have not both of them above 50*l* yearly to maintayne ministers...²⁶

In the two situations above, the Trustees were essentially a secondary, if important, part of the settlement process: the living, patron and minister were already present, only the income was missing. In the third scenario, however, they played an even more fundamental role. Many of the petitions they received came not from the legal patron of the living but from ‘parishioners,’ who had identified a willing minister but were unable to provide his maintenance. Sometimes, moreover, the Trustees were also asked not only to grant an augmentation but also to find and approve a minister for them, despite this being

²⁶ SP 18/181 f.186.

beyond their remit. In 1657, for example, they received an appeal from Dersingham in Norfolk, explaining,

That your Petitioners are distitute of a minister in regarde of the inconsiderablenes of our vicrage tythes not exceeding the yearely value of sixteene pounds [...] May it please your honours [...] to order that the sixteene pounds formerly payd to the Bishope of Norwich with what other augmentation your honers shall adiudge a compentancy may be confirmed and satled on such worthey minister as shall be approved by your Honers as will undertake the charge of our soules.²⁷

The request that the Trustees approve a minister for the parish suggests that the petitioners had, understandably, only a hazy understanding of the new ecclesiastical administration in London. In fact, from their minutes it appears that the Trustees did routinely send ministers to the Triers for approval but, in such cases, they were effectively acting as patrons to these livings and they are usually described as such in the Triers' Registers.²⁸ The legal basis for this role was highly questionable, since both the Act abolishing deans and chapters of April 1649 and the update of 1650 to the Act establishing the Trustees had transferred any advowsons attached to dean and chapter *and* bishops' lands to the new purchasers of such lands, even whilst divesting them of all other forms of

²⁷ NRO, PD 603/37.

²⁸ For example: Comm. V/4, f.206; For analysis of the Registers' terminology see Section 2.5.

ecclesiastical income.²⁹ Nevertheless, the amount of *de facto* patronage wielded by the Trustees was very substantial indeed and, buried within the Triers' Registers, it has been largely missed in discussions of the Interregnum church.³⁰

In their efforts to match up impoverished ministers with sources of new income, however, the Trustees were hampered by inadequate information about the clergy with whom they were dealing. To counter this, they sent John Nye, the Triers' registrar, increasingly terse demands for lists of Triers' approvals, presumably to inform their handling of augmentation requests.³¹ In turn, in April 1654, the Triers asked the Trustees for a list of those augmentations that they had retracted, following the discovery of scandal in the recipients.³² Although both Commissions clearly relied upon aspects of each other's work to further their own, the repeated nature of these requests to the Triers suggests that the relationships between the Commissions may have been, at best, lukewarm. Relations between the Trustees and the Ejectors seem to have been equally cool, given the repeated requests for information from the Ejectors of those who had been ejected and how much revenue such ejections freed up.³³

²⁹ 'Act for providing Maintenance for Ministers and other Pious uses' in *A&O*, vol.2, 369-378. It is possible that some of these livings may have been unsold at the point of their parishioners' petitions.

³⁰ For the extent and pattern of their patronage, see Section 3.2, 270-8.

³¹ Comm. V/4, ff.6, 136, 269, 316.

³² Comm. V/2, f.243.

³³ Comm. V/4, ff.140, 331, 332, 348-351, 426.

Furthermore, there were times when the boundary between their areas of responsibility seem to have become blurred. In August 1654, the Trustees undertook investigations into allegations of drunkenness in a ‘Mr Lord,’ whom they noted as having been approved by the Triers for South Marston in Wiltshire. Lord does not appear in the Registers, so it may be that his approval was challenged by the Trustees and then revoked, before it had been entered in Nye’s Register, indicating that Triers’ decisions could be overturned by the Trustees, if necessary.³⁴

Interestingly, there was virtually no cross-over in personnel between the Triers and Trustees, even though it was common for the political and administrative elite to hold down numerous administrative posts simultaneously. Only Edward Cresset sat on both Commissions, but he appears to have been inactive as a Trier.³⁵ This separation in membership may have been a principled move to ensure that those who granted funds could not also approve future recipients, in order to avoid accusations of favouritism. Or it may have been a recognition of the different skills required for each role. Probably the most active and influential of the Trustees was Sir John Thoroughgood, a political and religious moderate who had served on two Militia commissions in the 1640s. His appointment as a Trustee, however, may have reflected an interest, and perhaps some experience,

³⁴ Comm. V/3, f.88; Comm. V/4, ff.18, 23-4.

³⁵ Cresset was and Ejector for Middlesex and Master of Sutton’s Hospital, Charterhouse in the 1650s and a London alderman: ‘Ordinance for Ejecting Scandalous, Ignorant and Insufficient Ministers and Schoolmasters’ in *A&O*, vol.2, 968-9; S. Porter, *The London Charterhouse* (Stroud: Amberley, 2009), 41-2.

in ecclesiastical administration, gained through his father, who had been commissary to the Bishop of Norwich in the 1590s and beyond.³⁶ Of the other nine Trustees, William Steele, Edward Hopkins, George Cooper and Richard Sydenham were the most senior figures. Steele, an ardent independent and a high-ranking judge, acted in several important legal and parliamentary roles, before becoming Lord Chancellor of Ireland in 1656, where he supported the novel policy of the state paying salaries to ministers.³⁷ Hopkins was a former New Englander, sometime governor of Connecticut and navy commissioner in England after 1652, and George Cooper (Cowper) was a west country MP, who held multiple positions on various state commissions. Sydenham was the brother of William Sydenham, MP, who was a leading member of the Council of State.³⁸ If they did not, as a group, form an obvious hotbed of political talent, they offered a range of administrative experience, religious commitment and a willingness to serve.

Two months after the re-establishment of the Rump Parliament in May 1659, the CPM was briefly revived and took on some aspects of the Trustees' work, although the division of responsibilities is unclear.³⁹ The Trustees appear to have

³⁶ G. Aylmer, *The State's Servants: the Civil Service of the English Republic, 1649-1660* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 268-9; R. O'Day, 'Sir John Thoroughgood' in *ODNB*.

³⁷ A. Clarke, 'William Steele' in *ODNB*.

³⁸ Aylmer, *Servants*, 415; M. Helms, J. Ferris, 'George Gooper' in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1660-1690* (1983); S. Kelsey, 'William Sydenham' in *ODNB*; J. Walsh, 'Edward Hopkins' in *ODNB*; Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims*, 114-15.

³⁹ For example: the CPM approved Thomas Broadethicke (and perhaps William Stanley) in the complex dispute over Merston, Kent, in September 1659: Bodl., MS. J. Walker c.1, ff. 368r, 376r.

remained in operation until early 1660; the last record of an augmentation by them is dated 2 March 1660, although this entry is cut short in the volume and clearly does not represent the end of their work.⁴⁰

The influence of the Trustees on the Cromwellian church was profound. A close examination of their activities suggests that they were at least as important in the settlement of clergy as the Triers. Although the latter body could prevent a minister from taking up a living, the Trustees were actively involved in the giving out of presentations, the allocating of positions, and the granting or withholding of the necessary finance to enable a minister to settle or remain in a parish. Indeed, they also carried out extensive investigations into ministers' suitability for the ministry. These enquiries seem to have been sometimes instead of the Triers, at others in advance of them.⁴¹ In this aspect of their work, they were a more proactive force for shaping the ministry than the Triers. Through them, connections were made between ministers, parishes and funds, enabling long-term relationships to be formed and cemented.

This role is illustrated by the case of Richard Meggot, whose presentation to West Tarring by Cromwell had been approved by the Triers in early November 1654. He received a further order shortly afterwards from the Trustees, to take up the adjacent living of Ferring, following a satisfactory month's probation, although he is not recorded as approved by the Triers for this living. Similar

⁴⁰ Comm. III/2, f.177. The final page is f.180.

⁴¹ Comm. V/5, ff.147-8.

orders were issued to John Cary for Happisburgh and Walcott, in Norfolk, and Robert Pell, for Codicott in Hertfordshire. They also settled schoolmasters, a function also carried out by the Ejectors, but not undertaken by the Triers.⁴² Thus it seems that the Trustees could and did act autonomously in the settlement of both ministers and teachers, influencing the shape of the ministry to an as yet unquantified degree.

⁴² Comm. V/4, ff. 373, 380-1, 419.

2.4 The Commission for the Ejection of Scandalous, Ignorant and Insufficient Ministers and Schoolmasters

The Commissions of Ejectors were established on 28 August 1654, a week before the Trustees, and were responsible for removing from the ministry those clergy who did not reach acceptable standards of godliness and moral rectitude. They formed the third agency tasked with shaping the Cromwellian ministry and, like the Triers, they dealt only with ministers settled in benefices or public lectures supported by ‘any stipend or salary legally annexed’. They had no authority over ministers serving separated churches but, unlike the Triers, they did exercise control over schoolmasters.¹

The process of removing scandalous ministers had been taking place since 1640, when the backlash against the Laudian regime had resulted in the rapid ejection of ‘ungodly’ ministers, both informally by local individuals and, more formally, by a series of parliamentary committees. The most important of these was the Committee for Plundered Ministers, set up in December 1642, but other agencies also played a part; indeed, as Matthews notes, ‘The Puritan purgation was carried out by committees, central and local, in no closely defined relation to one another.’²

¹ *A&O*, vol.2, 968-990.

² *WR*, xxi.

After the dissolution of the Rump in 1653, the ejection of ministers largely devolved upon Cromwell and the Council of State, and various semi-autonomous local commissions, until the establishment of the Cromwellian Ejectors' Commissions in September 1654.³

The Ejectors' ordinance built on ideas in the *Humble Proposals*, but dropped the Proposal's suggestion of six 'circuits' served by temporary committees in favour of permanent county committees, comprising lay commissioners assisted by local ministers. Even so, there was considerable continuity between the Cromwellian Commissions and their predecessors: in Norfolk, of the nine Commissioners for the Examination of Scandalous Ministers who ordered that William Righton should serve the vacant cures of Brunstead and East Ruston in 1652, four became Cromwellian Ejectors in 1654.⁴

The Ejectors' ordinance was a complex piece of legislation which attempted to solve several distinct problems. Its primary objective was to enable the removal of ministers and schoolmasters found guilty of moral, religious and political delinquency, such as swearing, drunkenness, sabbath-breaking, using the Prayer Book and promoting popery or disaffection towards the government. Moreover, in an attempt perhaps to fill the void left by the removal of the church courts, ministers were also made responsible for ensuring that neither their families nor

³ For example: a Committee for the Examination of Scandalous Ministers operated in Norfolk in 1652: NRO, MC99/64.

⁴ Robert Wood, Henry King, Thomas Garrett and John Tofte. This may have been a sub-committee of the County Committee: NRO, MC 99/64, 543X2.

servants nor even their parishioners indulged in such behaviour either. The ordinance also required the Ejectors to identify any unapproved incumbents serving in benefices, public lectures and schools, who had been appointed since April 1653, and to send them to the Triers in Whitehall.

Beyond these primary objectives, the ordinance sought to ensure preaching provision through several additional powers. It protected intruded ministers by confirming their titles, a move intended to block legal challenges to previous ejections, *and* to prevent challenges to future ones. It also confirmed existing patrons' rights to present to their livings after an ejection or sequestration, perhaps to avoid legal challenges. Finally, detailed arrangements were put in place to secure the income of vacated livings, either to fund a temporary minister or schoolmaster or for the benefit of any new incumbent, and to ensure that the buildings themselves were kept in good repair. Ejected ministers' families were also compensated by granting them up to one fifth of the living's income annually and to enforce its payment by the new minister, provided the ejected family left the parish quickly. This had the underlying benefit of coercing ejected incumbents to comply with the legislation. Finally, the Commissions were to enforce the payment of tithe arrears to those who were entitled to them.

The success of the ordinance, of course, depended on the calibre of men serving on the Commissions. Based regionally, and drawn from local society, Ejectors faced the task of examining and removing ministers or schoolmasters from their own communities. This in itself could be deeply divisive but, to make matters

worse, the process was also vulnerable to abuse by malicious trouble-makers or hostile factions. Thomas Grantham's complaint highlighted one of the inherent weaknesses in the system, whereby only two or even one witness was required for a conviction, complaining that,

[...] the other [witness] confessed he went to speak against me in heat of blood, because I would not take such a one for my Curate [...]⁵

John Henson, minister of Terrington, Norfolk, accused the parishioner who had denounced him to the Ejectors of paying a witness to testify against him:

Was he not a wicked man to proffer one ten shillings to swear unto that which his conscience told him was an untruth?⁶

The unpopular nature of the process meant that recruiting Commissioners was an ongoing problem. When the Major-Generals were instructed to increase the number of ejections in 1655, they informed John Thurlow that they had difficulties assembling a quorum of Ejectors or appointing new men to the Commissions. Charles Worsley, for example, noted that, as it stood, 'they [the Commissioners] can not give five specified in the ordinance.'⁷ It is unclear,

⁵ T. Grantham, *A complaint to the Lord Protector* (1656), 12-13.

⁶ J. Henson, *Ho Hiereus Katadynasteuomenos* (1659), 29.

⁷ Bodl., MS. Rawlinson A, ff.34, 591.

however, whether these difficulties had existed from the outset, or whether they arose as a result of the increasing association of the Ejectors' Commissions with the deeply unpopular regimes of the Major-Generals from 1655.⁸

Reconstructing the individual Commissions to understand the tenor of their activities or decisions, is hampered by lack of evidence. Virtually no self-generated administrative records survive, and the accusations in anecdotal reports of their activities can rarely be tested against other independent evidence. Moreover, it is usually difficult to build a reliable picture of which men were consistently active as Ejectors, although evidence can be pieced together in some counties.⁹ From the lists of commissioners included in the 1654 ordinance, however, it is clear that most Commissions included two or three very high-ranking political or military figures: the army grandees Thomas Fairfax and John Lambert, for example, headed all three Yorkshire commissions, accompanied by one of the Lords Commissioners of the Great Seal, Sir Thomas Widdrington. Most of the future Major-Generals were also on at least one of the other Commissions. Generally these senior men were appointed to areas where they

⁸ The Ordinance required at least five lay commissioners *and* five or more ministers to decide a case but, by 1656, the Council was becoming more pragmatic: in 1656 they instructed Major-General Haynes and any five Commissioners 'of whom two are to be ministers' to examine John Boatman in Norwich: SP 25/77 f.637; C. S. Egloff, 'John Hobson of Norwich and the Politics of the Cromwellian Protectorate' in *Norfolk Archaeology* (1997), vol.42, 38-56.

⁹ Walter Bushnell's complaint, for example, listed William Blisset, Thomas Hunt, Thomas Bailey, James Hely, William Ludlow and, perhaps, William Shute and the ministers Humphrey Chambers, Adoniram Byfield, Thomas Bayley and William Hughes of Marlborough: W. Bushnell, *A narrative of the proceedings of the commissioners appointed by O. Cromwell, for ejecting scandalous and ignorant ministers* (1660), 2-9. Grantham's complaint includes his ejectors names also, as do numerous manuscripts in John Walker's papers: Grantham, 9; Bodl., MS. J. Walker c.2, f.316r.

had some personal or professional links: Sir Gilbert Pickering sat on the Commission for Middlesex and Westminster, where he was a member of the Council of State, and for Northamptonshire, where his estates lay. His colleague William Boteler, later Major-General for the area, also had family and property in Northamptonshire. Although such men probably rarely took part in hearings, their appointments not only gave the Commissions political backing but also, perhaps, provided a mechanism for senior Cromwellians to tap into their own personal networks, if it was felt expedient for the regime to be directly involved in a minister's case.

It was widely recognised that there were both nominal and active Ejectors. Lionel Gatford complained in 1655 that some Commissioners, 'and they of the Best rank from whom ministers might hope and expect to receive the most justice and legall favour', would prefer not to be associated with 'those other Commissioners that are most inferiour, and known to be very active and violent against Ministers'.¹⁰ He pointed out that the inclusion of men who were part of the government in London or were on multiple Commissions meant that the actual work of ejection devolved upon lesser individuals, 'whose justice and moderation, the best Ministers have reason to suspect.'¹¹

¹⁰ L. Gatford, *A Petition for the Vindication of the Publique use of the Book of Common-Prayer* (1654), 36-7.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 38; Bodl., Tanner MS. 52, f.113.

The Commissions included men from a range of denominations but, predictably, this did not prevent them from being seen as partisan by all parties. In Tavistock, the independent minister Thomas Larkham, having survived one examination by the Devon Commissioners in 1657, resorted to publishing details of his disputes with parishioners when faced with a second, for which the Commissioners were ‘now rumoured to be presbyterians and so against him.’¹² In fact, Durston and Underdown suggest that the overriding factors in the appointment of Commissioners were the possession of godly credentials and a willingness to serve, qualities which perforce outweighed any idealistic preference for denominational balance or, indeed, for members of the county elite.¹³ Moreover, the panels of assistant ministers appointed to the Commissions comprised both independents and presbyterians: in Oxfordshire these included John Owen, Thomas Goodwin and Thankful Owen, all magisterial independents, and Ralph Button and Edmund Staunton, who were presbyterians.

The Ejectors had considerable powers over the lives of individual ministers, but how significant a role did they play in the Cromwellian religious programme? This thesis argues that historians have overstated their importance and contribution, influenced perhaps by the very name of the Commission and the complexity of the contradictory evidence. Durston and Hughes have rightly

¹² Hardman Moore (ed.), *Larkham*, 24; Bodl., MS. J. Walker c.2, f.294r.

¹³ C. Durston, ‘Policing the Cromwellian Church’ in P. Little (ed.), *The Cromwellian Protectorate* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 190-1; D. Underdown, ‘Settlement in the Counties, 1653-58’ in G. Aylmer (ed.), *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1972), 173.

suggested that only a small number of ejections were carried out by the Commissions during the Protectorate, compared to over two thousand carried out in the 1640s.¹⁴ Durston's analysis, primarily of *Walker Revised*, found that only three counties ejected more than fifteen ministers - the highest number being thirty in Devon - whilst the majority ejected fewer than five, and that the total did not exceed two hundred.¹⁵ Closer investigation, however, suggests that these figures hide a more complex situation.

It is clear that most of the Cromwellian ejections took place in 1655-6 but, whilst it has been assumed that most of these were the result of the Ejectors' activities, the evidence does not bear this out. The Ejectors worked on an *ad hoc* basis, reacting to information which was presented to them about individuals. Only briefly, in 1655, under pressure from the Council did one or two Commissions proactively put out public calls for information on scandalous ministers.¹⁶ In July 1655, however, Cromwell issued a proclamation reinforcing the clause in the supplement to the Triers' ordinance of September 1654 that banned the re-appointment of ejected or sequestered ministers, unless they had an approval from the Protector or Council of State.¹⁷ This resulted in a flurry of deprivations

¹⁴ Durston, 'Policing', 195; Hughes, 'Public Profession', 99.

¹⁵ Durston, 'Policing', 195.

¹⁶ *Perfect Proceedings of State-affaires* (17th-24th May 1655), 4682.

¹⁷ The proclamation of 3 July 1655 was re-issued 1 November 1655, but did not come into force until 1 January 1656: O. Cromwell, 'Proclamation' (1655).

on the technicality of a former ejection, rather than for current delinquency.¹⁸ Michael Jermin's case was typical: vicar of St Martin, Ludgate in London and Edburton, Sussex in the 1630s, he was sequestered from Ludgate for pluralism in 1643, only to find himself also ejected from Edburton in 1655 as a result of the recent proclamation.¹⁹

The 1655 proclamation was followed shortly afterwards by an instruction to the Major-Generals to remove previously ejected ministers from royalist households.²⁰ This too resulted in a rise in ejected ministers as the Major-Generals implemented their instructions. Thus the peak in ejections - of 1655-6 - coincides with these two Protectoral instructions, a conclusion reinforced by the fact that after the dismissal of the Major-Generals in 1656, ejections rapidly reduced. Matthews' figures seem to bear this out: in Lancashire the only recorded ejection after 1654 was in 1656; in Nottinghamshire there were probably two and in Staffordshire perhaps three ejections in 1655-6, but neither county saw any later activity; in Wiltshire, perhaps eight men were ejected in 1655-6, but only

¹⁸ These orders particularly affected those ejected ministers who had become schoolmasters but, until 1655, managed to avoid ejection for scandal. Records of schoolmasters' ejections before this date are virtually non-existent.

¹⁹ Jermin was allowed to continue preaching by the Council: SP 25/78 f.882; J. McElligott, 'Michael Jermin' in *ODNB*.

²⁰ *Orders for Securing the Peace of the Commonwealth* (SP 18/100 f.310-11); SP 25/76, ff.46-7.

four after 1656.²¹ Nationally, after 1657, ejection activity seems virtually to have ground to a halt.

Durston concluded that the Ejectors' impact was 'severely limited', but it seems that in failing to differentiate between ejections for delinquency and those resulting from the legislation described above, even his estimate of their efficacy was over-generous.²² Attributing responsibility for all ejections to the Ejectors wrongly assigns to them greater efficacy than is justified. Moreover, there is good evidence that some ejections took place without the formal involvement of the Ejectors at all: John Allington was sequestered from Wardly, Rutland, in 1646, but managed to return in 1650. In 1654 he was indicted at Oakham Assizes for using the Prayer Book and bowing to the altar, which led to his ejection in 1655 by Major-General Boteler. At no point did the Ejectors seem to have been formally involved, even though they had been established for over six months by the time of Allington's ejection.²³ William Belke was both removed from

²¹ Many assumptions have had to be made to reach these figures, as Matthews' information is frequently unclear or tentative: *WR*, 228-231, 275-287, 291-291, 322-325, 369-383; Durston, 'Policing', 194-5. I modify Hughes' figure (and methodology) of 17 ejections in Wiltshire in the mid-1650s. Ejections in *Walker Revised* are often given as happening 'by a certain date', when a new incumbent is known to have taken up the living, but in such cases the previous incumbent may have been ejected many years before: for example, Matthews notes Robert Oldinge of Fonthill Bishop, who appeared in front of the County Commission in 1646, was still in his living in 1650 'but R. King in 1655'. It cannot be assumed his ejection was in 1655, since it may have occurred any time after 1650: *WR*, 378; Hughes, 'Public Profession', 101.

²² Durston, 'Policing', 195.

²³ Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c.4, f.62r; J. Allington, 'In Nomine Crucifixi', 1-2, in *The Reform'd Samaritan* (1678).

Chilham and then re-instated, by the Commissioners for Securing the Peace of the Nation.²⁴

In fact, the role of the Major-Generals and the Commissioners for Securing the Peace of the Nation has been widely overlooked in this area. Although their formal duty was to fine and imprison offenders, they were often used by the Council of State to investigate and implement clerical ejections. The Hertfordshire commissioners, for example, were instructed to remove Richard Farrer from Ware, after he ignored his ejection order in 1656, whilst Major-General Haynes and his commissioners were responsible for examining and reinstating Nehemiah Rogers in Essex, in 1656.²⁵ This frequent recourse to the Major-Generals suggests that the regime had, for good reasons, greater confidence in the Major-Generals than the Ejection Commissions, especially in the light of the reports received by Thurlow of the difficulties they had in recruiting. Moreover, there was considerable duplication in the personnel of the Ejection and Major-Generals' commissions.²⁶

Furthermore, the Council of State itself sometimes undertook ejections, bypassing the authority of the Ejectors. In 1655, the parishioners of Manuden, Essex, petitioned the Council for help in removing Samuel Sowthen, whom they

²⁴ SP 18/130 f.144.

²⁵ SP 18/127 f.2; SP 18/130 f.73.

²⁶ Twelve of the thirty-two Kent Commissioners for Securing the Peace were also Ejectors: P. Bloomfield, 'The Cromwellian Commission in Kent, 1655-57' in A. Detsicas and N. Yates (eds.), *Studies in Modern Kentish History* (Maidstone: KAS, 1983), 22.

said had been ejected in 1643 but had now returned to take up the living again, having turned out the current minister.²⁷ There is no mention of the Ejectors, either in the petition or in the Council's response, yet they should have been the parishioners' first recourse for help. Instead it appears that the parish turned naturally to the Council of State as the most powerful arbiter in their dilemma. The Council sometimes overturned Commissions' decisions too: Hugh Roberts of Wandsworth successfully petitioned the government for exemption from the 1655 ban by claiming that his ejection had been personally motivated. In this case, the Council itself concluded that his original sequestration had only occurred 'because 3 or 4 refractory fellows were against him' and that he should be re-appointed.²⁸

The evidence above suggests that the Ejectors were far less influential than the Triers in shaping the ministry. Their activities were, nevertheless, important to the Triers, since they were expected to identify unapproved ministers in livings who would be sent to the Triers for approval. They also mattered to the Trustees, who frequently requested lists of ejections from the Commissions, presumably both to check on the ministers asking for augmentations and to identify possible sources of income for new augmentations.²⁹

²⁷ Probably Paul Clement: *WR*, 163; *SP* 18/98 f.131 .

²⁸ *SP* 18/102 f.135; *SP* 18/102 f.135a; It is unclear whether or not Durston included those ejections that were then overturned by the government, in his figure of 200 ejections: Durston, 'Policing', 195.

²⁹ *COMM* V/4, ff.125-6, 331-2, 338 *et passim*.

There were also occasions when the Triers and Ejectors overturned each other's decisions, but these usually appear to have been legitimate responses to changes in circumstances or the emergence of new evidence about individuals. In such cases, the apparently contradictory decisions of the Ejectors and Triers resulted simply from their implementation of the procedure required by the legislation. In fact, most examples of the reversal of decisions followed the involvement of the Council of State, to whom appeals were routinely sent. Thomas Fitch's ejection by the Berkshire Ejectors in 1656-7, for example, was appealed to the Council, who upheld his complaint.³⁰ Only after the Ejectors had been ordered by Cromwell to reconsider his case was he then sent back to the Triers for approval.³¹

The absence of records makes it difficult to assess accurately the activities of the Ejectors Commissions, but what has survived suggests considerable geographical variation: Alice McCampbell's study of London patronage noted that the capital's Ejectors appeared to have been inactive; elsewhere, Wiltshire, Devon and Yorkshire at least removed more than a handful of ministers.³²

The evidence also suggests that the key reason behind the overestimation of the efficacy of the Ejectors has been the failure to recognise the distinctions in the reasons for ejection and the wide range of other authorities involved, especially

³⁰ See Section 4.1, 383-4 for the Council's role in appeals.

³¹ SP 18/157A ff.139-41.

³² McCampbell, 'Incumbents', 319, n.79.

the Major-Generals and the Commissioners for Securing the Peace. If the numbers of ejections resulting from the implementation of the legislation of July and September 1655 and the activities of the Major-Generals are removed from the Ejectors' activities, their achievements were considerably smaller than has been believed, although the line separating the activities of each agency was probably blurred at times. This finding, however, should be set in the context of what appears to be an underestimate of the total number of 'clerical removals' which occurred during the Protectorate. Tom Reid's study of the Diocese of Canterbury found significantly more changes in clergy between 1654 and 1660 than had been previously recognised. Besides the ten formal ejections in *Walker Revised*, Reid found a further sixty-nine unexplained 'changes in minister' between 1654 and 1659.³³ Some of these were probably unrecorded resignations, deaths or even forced removals by parishioners, but equally it is possible that they represent greater activity by the Kent Ejectors than is recorded in *Walker Revised*. On balance, however, it seems more likely that the impact of the Ejectors on the clergy of the later 1650s was relatively small and less significant than that of the Triers or the Trustees.

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This section has argued that existing assessments of the Protectorate church have misunderstood the agencies of the Cromwellian religious programme. In the first place, the autonomy of the Triers Commission has been over-inflated. Too much

³³ T. Reid, 'The Clergy of the Diocese of Canterbury in the Seventeenth-Century' (University of Kent: unpublished PhD thesis, 2011), 197-8.

emphasis has been given to the image put forward by hostile contemporary witnesses, that the Triers' Commission was a dictatorial agency, functioning in isolation from other influences and agencies. John Goodwin accused them of being a 'lawless Consistory, [...] auto-critical and sacred' but, in fact, they were neither as powerful nor as independent of other bodies as contemporary complaints implied.³⁴ Furthermore, very little of their practice was new; even the examination of ministers by hand-picked Commissioners - for which the Triers were so heavily criticised - was a continuation of the informal interviews by the former Lord Keeper's chaplains, who had vetted clerics for presentations to crown livings. It also mirrored presbyterian practices.³⁵

The Triers undoubtedly had considerable powers of veto over individuals, but they, like the Trustees and the Ejectors, were still essentially reactive bodies, their workload dictated by external factors and individuals, and all subject to scrutiny and interference from the Council of State and Cromwell himself. Most importantly perhaps, although each of the three commissions had separate areas of responsibility, they also depended on each other for the successful realisation of the Cromwellian vision of a national preaching ministry. Existing interpretations of the Cromwellian 'settlement' have wrongly characterised it as a bi-lateral operation between the Triers and Ejectors, giving the Triers greater power and influence than they possessed, missing the crucial and proactive role of the Trustees, and according the Ejectors a level of influence that they largely

³⁴ Goodwin, *Basanista'i*, 15.

³⁵ O'Day, *Clergy*, 118. See also Section 4.1, 362-3.

failed to exercise. This thesis suggests that this interpretation can now be re-written in favour of a more evidence-based interdependent partnership between the three agencies.

2.5 Deconstructing the Triers' Registers

This section deconstructs the Registers to demonstrate that much of the nature and scope of the Triers' work can be learnt from a close-reading of their contents. It confines its focus strictly to analysing the *types* of evidence in the Registers, considering in detail the extent and limits of each aspect of their information. It starts by investigating the Registers as material evidence, before moving on to examine their reliability as a record of clerical appointments during the Protectorate, demonstrating how some men seem to have taken up livings without approval. This is followed by a short explanation of the geographical coverage of the Registers, before offering an analysis of what is to be learnt of the vision and scope of the Cromwellian church from the positions for which they approved candidates. The focus then moves to the dates in Registers, suggesting that this information may reveal which men were considered problematic by the Triers. The dates also allow a chronological analysis of the Triers' approvals and the factors which may have effected the pattern of approvals. From these analyses, it argues that despite their limitations of scope and content, the Registers actually reveal much about the aspirations and implementation of the Cromwellian religious programme that has, until now, been opaque or unconsidered.

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The only systematic evidence of the Triers' achievements is the series of five 'fair copy' Registers kept by their registrar, John Nye. No rough registers or

minute books of their work have survived, nor any of the lists of approvals which the Trustees so despairingly demanded from them. Furthermore, only a handful of original approval certificates remain, scattered across collections in local record offices and at the British library.¹ Some of the other Commonwealth records also note clerical appointments, but these collections are neither as detailed nor as chronologically or geographically comprehensive as the Triers' Registers.²

Besides the Commonwealth records, some diocesan registers created after the Restoration also contain backdated evidence of clerical appointments for the 1650s. Most of these records have been incorporated into the *Clergy of the Church of England Database*, an analysis of which shows that only Norwich and Lincoln have more than a handful of 1650s' records.³ These backdated entries have a high correlation with the Triers' records: 88% of the entries in the Lincoln Exhibition Book and 77% of those in the Norwich Consignation Book are also in

¹ SP 18/183 f.198 (Thomas Audley); BL, Add. Ch. 5178 (Richard Bryan).

² Comm. II has a series of presentation deeds addressed to the Triers, sampling of which suggests they all appear in the Registers. Comm. III/1 records approvals by the Triers for use in the provision of augmentations; this is a subset of entries in the Registers. Comm. III/2 has presentations and nominations by the Trustees, most but not all of which appear in the Registers. Comm. XIIa and b are 'Surveys of Livings', all of which supply intermittent evidence of appointments.

³ Norwich has c.95, Lincoln has c.68. The next highest is Coventry & Lichfield with c.16. Some undated appointment records on *CCEd* may represent additional Protectorate appointments: *CCEd*, last viewed 03/2016.

the Triers' Registers.⁴ This implies that the Registers are relatively comprehensive.⁵

Other records compiled after the Restoration should be treated with caution. The anecdotal evidence of clerical appointments in Calamy's *Account* and *Continuation*, for example, and the evidence in Walker's manuscripts and *Sufferings* were mostly compiled from hearsay or secondhand accounts, forty years after the Interregnum. Records of clerical appointments are also found in miscellaneous personal accounts, but these are neither consistent nor extensive. *Walker Revised* and *Calamy Revised* and other regional secondary studies of the period take most of their evidence from the sources noted above.⁶ Thus it is reasonable to state that, despite their limitations (discussed below), the Registers are the most comprehensive and reliable single source for studying the creation of the Cromwellian ministry.

⁴ LA, L.C.V., ff.22-221, NRO, DN/VSC/3/5 both in *CCEd* (viewed 03/2016). John Hacket's *Liber Cleri* for Coventry and Lichfield has a 94% correlation with the Triers' Registers: LRO, B/V/1/67.

⁵ But see this Section, 136-145 for ministers who avoided the Triers

⁶ For example: Nightingale, and Smith, *Essex*.

An Overview of the Registers

The Registers record the interviews of those ministers whom the Commissioners approved for benefices and publicly-funded lectureships in England and Wales, during a continuous period from 12 April 1654 to 7 May 1659. This was backdated to attempt to include those ministers who had taken up livings since 1 April 1653, after the Rump's dismissal. They also record the interviews of already-beneficed ministers whom they approved as suitable to receive an augmentation to their parochial incomes. The Registers make no distinction between these two groups of approvals, but in 1654 the Trustees were instructed to review and amend all augmentation grants, as they saw fit.⁷ This, combined with their perpetual struggle to find sufficient funding, resulted in a reduction in the number of augmentations. Sampling for this thesis suggests that perhaps, very approximately, fifteen to twenty per cent of the entries may have been approvals for augmentations.⁸

The Registers were written up under the supervision of John Nye, and were almost certainly copied from rough minutes and certificates compiled during the approval proceedings. This is evident from the several entries with marginalia noting that the certificates were 'to be brought later,' or from entries which have muddled the details of adjacent entries.⁹ Although the Registers were written up

⁷ 'Ordinance for Maintenance' in *A&O*, vol.2, 1004.

⁸ This figure is a very tentative suggestion and may have been very variable over time and extent. See *Appendix K* for methodology and caveats.

⁹ Comm. III/5, ff.195 (Biscathorp), 112 (Bicker).

after the interviews, they were still clearly contemporaneous with the events they record. Updates and corrections appended to entries indicate that they were in active use and that their accuracy was important.

The Registers are catalogued as LPL Comm. III/3 - III/7 and follow each other consecutively, starting in March or April of each year. The first Register (Comm. III/3) is divided into three 'books' (*liber*) which are bound together. There is no clear reason for the divisions between the books: *liber* 1 runs from 12 April to 22 June 1654; *liber* 2 from 22 June to 3 November, and *liber* 3 from 3 November to 23 March 1655.¹⁰ The final Register in the series (Comm. III/7) is divided into two parts, and has been incorrectly bound. The first section (pp1-233) represents III/7 (1658). After the index to this section, three more groups of entries have been bound into the volume, which record approvals on thirty two days during April and May 1659; logically these should have been bound separately to form a putative III/8. A reading of the entries by following the modern page numbers provides a chronologically correct reading of the admissions, but the three sections have not been *bound* in correct order, so that the modern page numbers are currently not consecutive.¹¹ There is no index for the entries relating to III/8.

¹⁰ The final two entries in *liber* 3 are out of sequence, recording entries from June 1654.

¹¹ In [III/8] (1659) 'section 1' (pp328-349) covers 8/4/59 - 30/4/59; 'section 2' (pp322-7) covers 25/3/59 - 30/3/59; 'section 3' (pp350-9) covers 4/5/59 - 7/5/59. Contemporary page numbering shows that pp322-7 (section 2) originally came immediately before pp328-349 (section 1), although they are now bound *after* this section.

The current boards are modern and it is unclear when (or how often) the Registers were rebound. The chaotic nature of the last sections (III/8) suggest that there could have been additional pages which were not included, so it is unsafe to assume that the last entry represents the last activity of the Commission.¹² Furthermore, a gloss dated '1661' on the approval of Hugh Davis for Dunmer in Hampshire in 1656, implies that the Registers continued to be actively used at least into the spring of 1660 and possibly beyond.¹³

Despite the chaotic binding of III/7, the information in the Registers is formulaic. Almost every entry records the details of a Triers' interview that ended in an approval, of which there are two slightly different versions, both standard in form and content.¹⁴ Occasionally they differ in minor details, such as scribal omissions, or one-off memoranda. Very rarely, entries record details of an atypical event or appointment, such as a revocation.¹⁵ The standard approvals for livings include a reference number; the name of the approved minister; the living and/or position to which he was presented and its county; the name of the patron; the names of his referees (if present); and one or more dates associated with the granting of approval (discussed below). Many entries also note the degree or title held by the approved minister; the seal under which the presentation was given, if Cromwell was the patron; the referees' addresses and sometimes whether the

¹² The same assessment applies to Comm. III/2.

¹³ Comm. III/5, f.126.

¹⁴ *Appendix A*.

¹⁵ Comm. III/4, f.611.

living was vacant. Rarely, marginalia include subsequent comments, such as whether the approval was subsequently revoked or not taken up; corroborative presentations of the same minister to the same living, under a different patron; and whether the presentation was delivered under a 'bond to save harmless'.¹⁶

The entries which record approvals of ministers for sequestered livings take a slightly different form. With a few exceptions, these entries only give the date of admission, the fact of the sequestration and, sometimes, the name of the former incumbent. No patrons' names are given - a tacit acknowledgement that such appointments were usually circumventing an existing patron or, indeed, that the patronage of such livings was under sequestration as well as the incumbent.¹⁷ The presentation is usually recorded as a 'nomination' or 'order'.

The Personnel in the Registers

All ministers who wished to take up a living or receive an augmentation during the Protectorate should have appeared in the Registers. There is, nevertheless, administrative and anecdotal evidence of ministers who served parochial livings unapproved, or unregistered, by the Triers.¹⁸ Such omissions are difficult to identify, not least because intentional avoidance of the Triers was, by its very nature, a matter to keep hidden. Even so, it is necessary to unpick what can be known of this subject, because it informs two of the most important questions

¹⁶ Comm. III/4, f.99; Comm. III/7, ff.71, 179.

¹⁷ See Section 3.2, 233.

¹⁸ For example: Bodl., MS. Rawlinson A 26, f.434; Bodl., MS. J. Walker c.4, f.79.

about the Triers and their archive: how thorough was the Triers' system, and how accurate were their Registers ?

The potential difficulties ensuing from not having a Triers' certificate told against large numbers of ministers evading the Commission. Without such an approval, ministers had no security of tenure and risked summary replacement by a more favoured candidate or, possibly, a former incumbent, or being reported to the Ejectors. Unapproved ministers were thus at the mercy of their parishioners, and must have found their capacity for enforcing discipline or collecting tithes compromised by the need to avoid being reported.¹⁹ It seems, nevertheless, that a number of ministers did serve in livings but were not in the Registers, although they were not all necessarily unapproved or 'unapprovable'.

One group of serving ministers who were omitted from the Registers were those who were the victims of poor record keeping by the Triers' clerks, perhaps aggravated by the problems they faced in maintaining reliable communications with the provinces, from which documentation was dispatched. Thomas Smallwood was probably one such. Smallwood took up the living of Batley in Yorkshire in May 1654, by which time he was already well-known in godly political circles. A fiery independent, he had been chaplain to both Sir Thomas Fairfax and General John Lambert in the 1640s and he would become an

¹⁹ This was not just a theoretical threat. In 1658 at Lincoln Assizes, Judge Windham supported the non-payment of tithes by parishioners to Thomas Palmer, minister of Aston on Trent, who withheld the sacraments from them: SP 18/183 ff.234, 236-7.

assistant minister to the Yorkshire Ejection Committee after 1654.²⁰ His appointment to Batley is not in the Registers, although it does appear in a sister register, Comm. III/1.²¹ The implication is that in the chaotic days of May and June 1654, when the Triers were swamped with ministers appointed in 1653 and clamouring for last minute approval, Smallwood was either waived from attending the Triers, or his details were simply lost before reaching the formal Registers. It is impossible, unfortunately, to estimate how many similar cases may have occurred.²²

Furthermore at Bartholomew Exchange in London, only one approval for a lecturer was recorded in the Triers' Registers - that of John Crosse, who took up the annual tenure of the Wednesday Lecture in July 1654. The Vestry Minute Book at Bartholomew also records that Crosse was reappointed in September 1655, along with Zachary Crofton, who was to fill the Friday lecture. In fact, the Minute Book records three different men being appointed to the two lectures for every year of the Protectorate, even though the Triers recorded only one entry in total.²³

²⁰ WR, 389; A. Hopper, *Black Tom: Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution* (Manchester: MUP, 2007), 122.

²¹ Comm. III/1, f.18.

²² Richards gives a sobering account of ministers in Wales missing from the Registers but apparently recorded as appointed to livings in various other sources: Richards, *Religious Developments*, 29-34.

²³ The parish was widely referred to as 'Bartholomew Exchange'. The lectureships were filled by three ministers in this period: Freshfield, *Bartholomew Exchange*, xxxii-xxxiii, 50-1, 53.

St Bartholomew, adjacent to the Royal Exchange, was an influential city parish, in which the Trier, Philip Nye, ministered to a separated church, alongside the parochial incumbent, John Loder.²⁴ Did this failure to approve the lectureships there reflect a general laxity in the Triers' approach to such positions? Or did Nye's close involvement allow the Triers to relax their watch over the position? Such an approach would seem surprising given that Crofton, at least, was a notoriously disruptive figure, and had moved through five livings in the preceding decade. Just before his election to the lectureship in 1655, he had taken up the living of Botolph's, Aldgate, where his rigid presbyterianism brought him into frequent conflict with the Fifth Monarchist preacher there, John Simpson, resulting eventually in Cromwell's intervention on Simpson's behalf. Although Crofton was not approved by the Triers for the Friday lecture, his appointment to Botolph's *had* been approved and he had received the presentation from Cromwell.²⁵

So, the situation at Bartholomew Exchange suggests that not all appointments to public lectureships were subject to approval, which implies that lectureships were of lesser importance to the Triers than parochial benefices. Alternatively, where a minister had recently been approved for another, perhaps proximate, position, the Triers may have waived the need to re-examine him. There was no legislative support for such action, but it might have had a pragmatic appeal. It is tempting to speculate that this situation might have been a hang-over from the

²⁴ B. Donagan, 'Philip Nye' in *ODNB*.

²⁵ E. C. Vernon, 'Zachary Crofton' in *ODNB*.

Laudian practice of controlling lecturers by insisting that they also held parochial livings, but this seems unlikely given that there was no need for such control under the Interregnum regimes. Moreover, Cromwell, the Council of State and the Trustees all appear to have insisted on adherence to the formal process of approval and many other ministers were approved by the Triers for *all* of their changes in livings.²⁶ If waivers happened at all, it seems likely that the numbers were very small.

Some ministers, however, intentionally avoided examination or ignored the need for approval. Richard Farrer fell into the latter group. Farrer had been rejected by the Triers at his interview for the living of Ware in Hertfordshire sometime in 1655 but he continued to preach in the town until eventually he was brought before the local Ejectors Commission to answer allegations of moral delinquency.²⁷ This led to his removal from Ware by William Packer, the deputy Major-General for Hertfordshire, but his story indicates that not all ministers were prepared to accept the Triers' decision as binding. It is unlikely, however, that such men were able to evade the authorities for long, so this group was probably numerically insignificant.

For other men, however, their political and religious views or their past histories led them to anticipate refusal by the Triers. Even so, they remained committed - for pastoral or practical reasons - to serving in the church. Some probably

²⁶ For example: SP 25/75 ff.405, 607; SP 25/78 f.257.

²⁷ SP 18/127 ff.1-2, 5.

eschewed the Commission out of principle, others out of fear of rejection. The future Bishop of Ely, Simon Patrick, only dared to face the Triers after assurances from a friendly minister ‘that he would dispose the triers to be very favourable in their examination of me [...]’²⁸ John Walker related the experience of Francis Nation, who had been chaplain to the royalist Stawells during the 1640s, but was forced out of his living in Devon in the mid-1650s for his active royalism in the wars. Eventually he found a small parish to support him, out of sight of the authorities, where he remained until 1660:

[...] he was admitted by the connivance of those good people unto a small vicaridge [...] called Lawannick in Cornwall where he was not found out but continued til the restauration.²⁹

If this story is correct, Nation feared that identification by the authorities would lead to ejection, even imprisonment. The implication of the anecdote is that he was able to avoid both the Triers and Ejectors because of the poverty and remoteness of the parish, situated between Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor, and the

²⁸ S. Patrick, A. Taylor, *The Works of Symon Patrick: including his Autobiography* (Oxford: OUP, 1858), vol.9, 428.

²⁹ Bodl., MS. J. Walker c.2 ff.267, 371.

protection of the parishioners.³⁰ Was his kind of experience part of the inspiration behind the accusation that the Triers were only interested in wealthy livings?³¹

How many other ministers found similarly ‘safe’ livings is unclear, not least because while some, like Nation, may have served such parishes for several years, others may have moved fairly frequently. At what stage might they even be classed as ‘incumbents’? Without a Triers’ approval, perhaps the only way to distinguish between ‘settled’ ministers, as Nation appears to have been, and those who preached temporarily in vacant parishes, may have been whether they received maintenance by tithes or *ad hoc* payment for their services - but this, too, is a problematic and artificially rigid distinction, since some parishes paid their ministers on a piecemeal basis over long periods.³²

How numerous, then, were unrecorded, or unapproved, ministers serving cures? Necessarily, there are no easy sources from which to quantify a situation which flouted the legislation and would have been kept hidden. In the absence of official records, therefore, two different methods of sampling have been used to attempt to gauge the potential scale of avoidance: investigation of individual ministers, and comparisons with backdated entries in post-Restoration episcopal registers.

³⁰ The parish was medium-sized in scale, so the ‘small vicarage’ probably refers to its value: even in 1754, it was valued at only £7, 18s, 9d: J. Ecton, B. Willis, *Liber Valorum et Decimarum* (London: 1754) (2nd ed.), 126.

³¹ See also account of John Thornborough: Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c.4, 79. This point is addressed in Section 3.1, 200-05 and Section 3.3. 302-5.

³² See Section 4.1, 379-382.

The first method involved a brief investigation of the histories of random individual ministers in secondary sources. This revealed several appointments that are not in the Registers. Neither Richard Kilby's tenure in Padstow, Cornwall (1658), nor Christopher Faucett's move to Whitbeck, Cumbria (1654), nor Charles Kipling's incumbency at Troutbeck (1656) nor James Greenwood's at Old Hutton (1657), both in Westmoreland, are recorded in the Registers.³³ Had these men intentionally avoided the Triers? Or was Whitehall so far away that its strictures were simply ignored at times? It was much harder to find unapproved appointments in a similarly brief survey of Essex livings, so much closer to London.³⁴

A more systematic approach to quantifying omissions was undertaken using the *CCEd*. This test compared the 307 clerical appointments that were recorded (backdated) for the years 1654-59 in post-1660 episcopal registers, against the Triers' Registers.³⁵ The exercise found that roughly ninety per cent of the appointments that were claimed to have taken place in the 1650s were indeed also recorded in the Triers' Registers. Although the national coverage of bishops' registers in *CCEd* is incomplete, it is large enough to be indicative nationally, and therefore this exercise suggests that approximately ten per cent of clerical appointments may not have been entered into the Registers. On the other hand,

³³ *WR*, 99; Nightingale, vol.2, 867, 998, 1199. This assumes that Matthews and Nightingale had access to reliable sources.

³⁴ *WR*, 144-171; Smith, *Essex*, 358-406.

³⁵ See *Appendix I*.

only those ministers who stayed in the church at the Restoration entered their 1650's appointments into these post-1660 bishop's registers, so this result is biased. How many ministers may have served unapproved by the Triers and *left* the church after 1660 cannot be assessed through this methodology, but this figure would, if known, probably increase the percentage of unrecorded ministers during the 1650s.

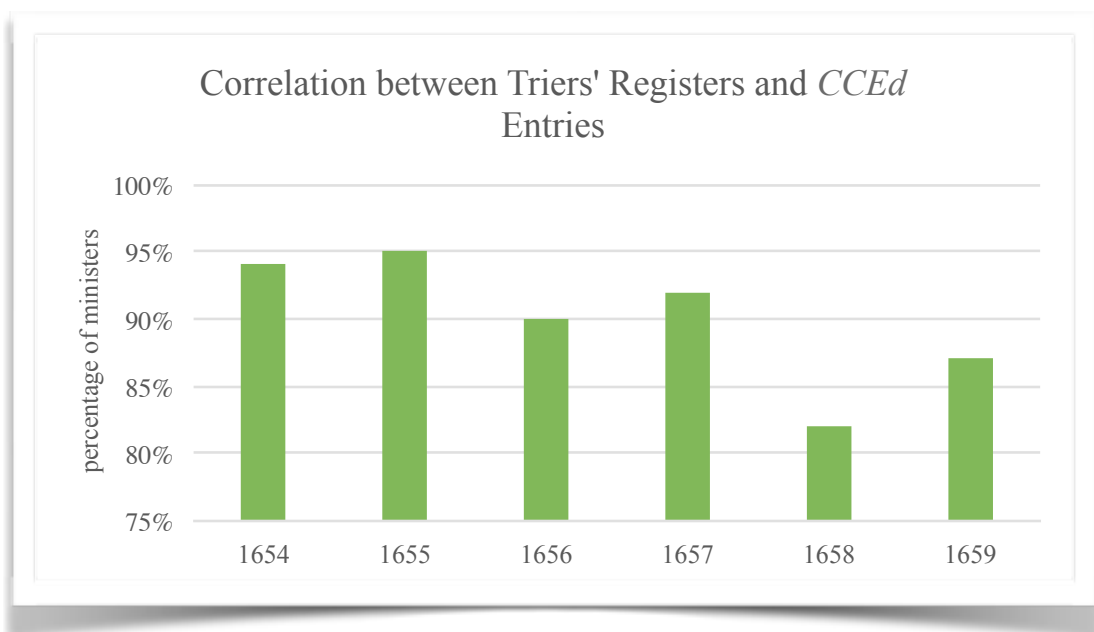


fig. 1 Percentage of 1650s' appointments recorded in CCEd that also appear in the Registers³⁶

Furthermore, *figure 1* indicates a gradual rise in unrecorded appointments over time, which may suggest a decrease in the Triers' efficiency or an increase in

³⁶ Eg: in 1656, 90% of ministers' appointments in the 1650s that were recorded in post-1660 registers in CCEd also appear in the Triers' Registers.

ministers entering the church whose episcopalian sympathies led them to avoid the Triers but allowed them to record their incumbencies after 1660.

It is arguable, then, that a minimum of ten per cent of ministers who entered the church after 1653 may have been unrecorded or unapproved by the Triers, but the figure was perhaps higher. Maybe the best that can be said is that the majority of those appointments that were recorded in official lists or have been noted in modern local studies, *were* approved by the Triers; but how many other appointments simply do not appear in any sources, is unknowable. Certainly, it is not particularly difficult to find evidence of unapproved ‘incumbents’ who served, virtually unrecorded, in benefices during the Protectorate. The parish register of Shipbourne in Kent for 1657 noted,

November 24 William Diker and Mary Pulham were married By
me George Bradshaw Minister.³⁷

And yet Bradshaw was curate of Downe during the 1650s; he was not approved by the Triers for Shipbourne and his role there appears in no other lists of parish incumbents that have been found.

Two main conclusions can be drawn from this analysis of the Registers’ coverage of clerical appointments. In the first place, a small proportion of approvals were probably omitted from the Registers due to clerical error, and a very much

³⁷ F. A. Crisp, *Registers of Shipbourne, co. Kent* (n.d.), 66.

smaller proportion may have been due to existing approvals. Secondly, some men did serve, to all intents and purposes, as resident parish ministers without official approval, reflecting a deliberate intention to avoid the Triers. The most telling point of these findings is that it challenges the implication of the Triers' ordinance, and thus the current assumption, that all clerical appointments were preceded by an approval from the Triers.

The Geographical Coverage of the Registers

One of the most important results emerging from this analysis of the Registers is that the Triers approved ministers for every English and Welsh county.

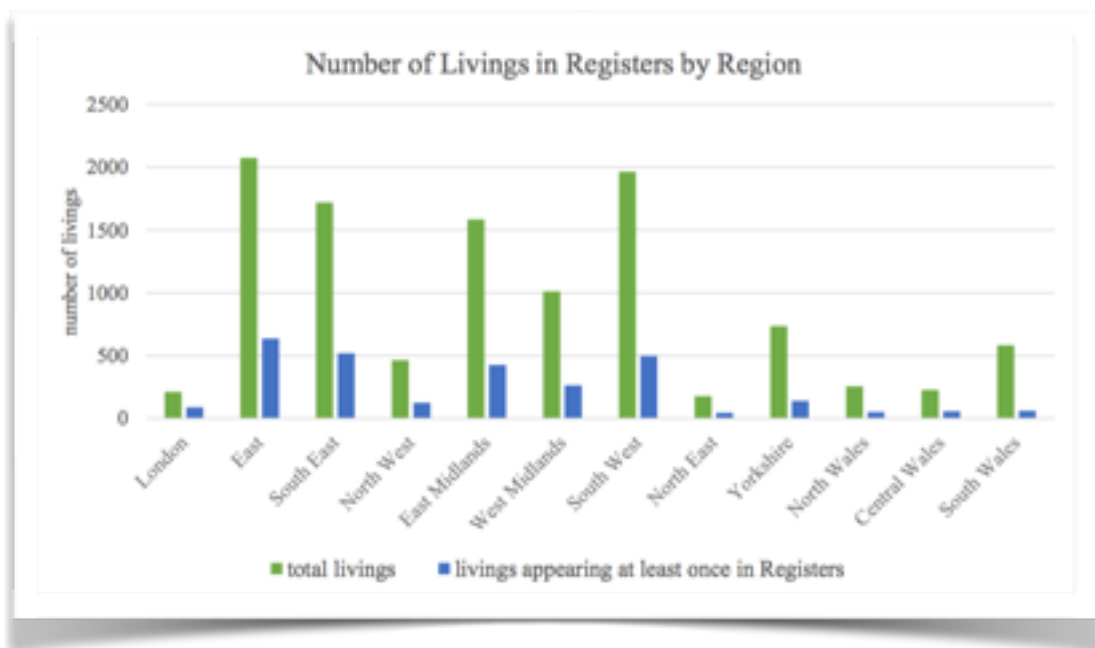


fig. 2 *Number of livings in Registers by region*³⁸

³⁸ See *Appendix F* for constituent counties. Each living is counted here only once, even though some appeared several times in the Registers.

Uncertainty over the total number of livings in the seventeenth-century means that the approvals can only be represented as approximate proportions of each region's livings. Nevertheless, since the impact of the Cromwellian religious programme depends in part upon the scale of the Triers' approvals, a tentative interpretation of these percentages is given in *figure 3*.

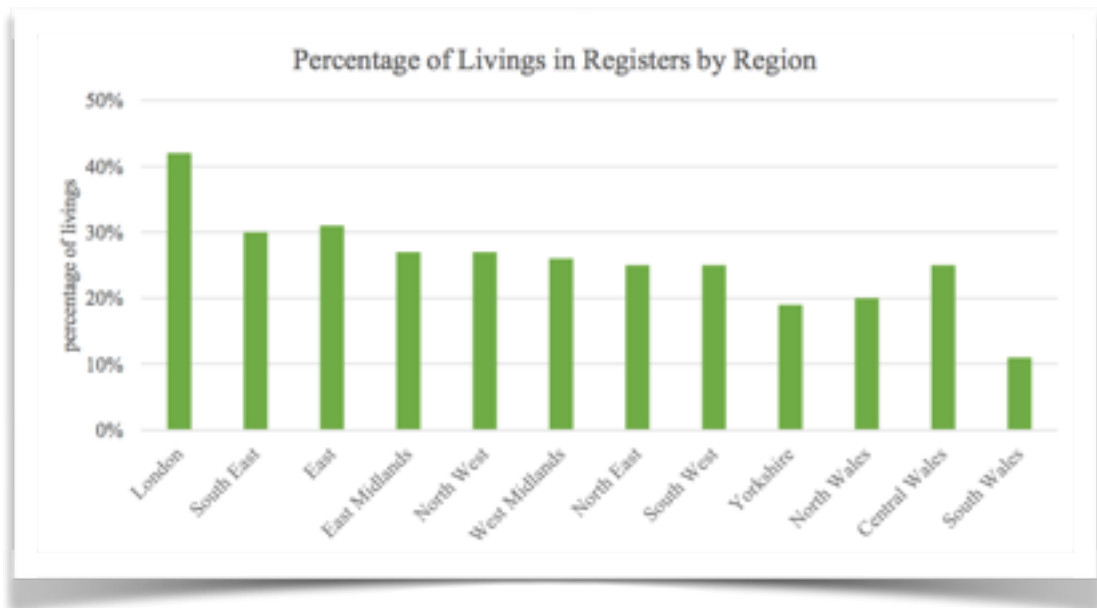


fig. 3 Percentage of livings in Registers by region

This breakdown suggests that London, the East and South-East had the highest proportion of approved changes in minister or augmentations. The possible explanations for this and the geographical distribution of approvals are discussed fully in Section 3.1.

The Clerical Positions in the Registers

The range of positions in the Registers for which the Triers gave their approval provides good evidence of the remodelling of the structure of the church by the Cromwellian regime. After the abolition of the diocesan units of administration and their replacement with counties reflected the significant shift in the administrative identity of the national church during the revolution, from being largely distinct from secular government to one that was much more in line with it. This shift was evident in other areas too: cases that would have been heard in the church courts generally went now to the secular courts; after 1653 marriages were removed from the hands of ministers to those of JPs; and most other agencies that exercised control or influence over the running of the church - for example, the CPM, the Propagation Committees, the Ejection Commissions, the Trustees and the Major-Generals - were, or had been, appointed by the government and organised by county and region.³⁹ Furthermore, previously anomalous jurisdictions, such as bishops' and royal peculiars, had been abolished.

This radical streamlining of ecclesiastical organisation is reflected in the Registers. Since virtually all of the higher cathedral offices - including deans, archdeacons, prebendaries and canons - had been abolished, the vast majority of

³⁹ The clause, in the Marriage Act of 1653, invalidating marriages in church was repealed in 1657, after which both JPs and ministers could legally conduct marriages: *A&O*, vol.2, 1131.

the Triers' approvals were for parochial livings.⁴⁰ Less than three per cent of the Triers' approvals were for non-ministerial livings. The Registers record forty-two lectureships, twenty-seven curacies, three hospital chaplaincies and ten 'public preachers,' all of which positions were clearly deemed to form part of the preaching ministry.⁴¹ These positions are discussed below.

Positions: Lecturers

The number of public lectureships had increased rapidly in the early 1640s, when legislation forced settled ministers to share their parish pulpits with new lecturers, if congregations demanded. As Laudian ministers were removed, however, these lectureships became harder to fill, as many of the godly took up the now-vacated parochial benefices, which offered better security and higher incomes. Furthermore, such lectureships became less necessary for spreading the Gospel, once godly ministers had been intruded into sequestered livings. Thus, during the later 1640s and 1650s, many lectureships were subsumed within the general duties of the parish minister, who benefited from the additional salary.⁴² There are no reliable records of the number of lectureships still in operation during the 1650s.

⁴⁰ Despite the abolition, it is clear that occasionally men in such positions continued to play a role in the church. In early 1656, the Trustees agreed an augmentation for two preachers in Carlisle, 'the same being from time to time supplied by the dean and prebends of Carlisle aforesaid': Comm. V/4, ff.38-9. Two approvals for 'rectory or prebend' also appear in the Registers, but probably the term 'prebend' is used as an identifier only: Comm. II/497, II/28, III/7, f.221, III/5, f.99.

⁴¹ Curacies here are not counted as 'ministerial' positions. Some interpretation has been necessary to arrive at these figures. See Section 2.2, 100-1 for other non-parochial approvals.

⁴² P. Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships* (Stanford: SUP, 1970), 268-9, 274-5.

Roughly half the lectureships approved by the Triers were in small towns or villages outside London, such as Stonden Massey in Essex. A further fifteen were in London, of which ten were for positions in either Westminster Abbey and School, or St Paul's cathedral. The example of Bartholomew Exchange, discussed above, however, demonstrates that not all appointments made to lectureships were recorded in the Registers.⁴³

The term 'lecturer' seems to have been sometimes interchangeable with 'public preacher,' for which the Triers also made several approvals. At Gloucester, for example, both terms were used for what appears to have been the same role. In 1657, Cromwell was petitioned by James Forbes' separated congregation to confirm his role as public preacher at the cathedral, noting that they feared his title might be challenged by 'those bearing Evill will towards ZION.'⁴⁴

Your Highnes and Councell were pleased some years since to send the said Mr Forbes to preach as a *lecturer* in Gloucester, he having ever since continued as a publique preacher att the College in the said City [...] May it please your Highness [...] to vouchsafe [...] his settlement as *publique preacher* in the cathedrall.⁴⁵ [my italics]

⁴³ This is aggravated by the fact that not all lectureships in the Registers were termed thus, although it is clear that some were, indeed, approvals as a lecturer: eg, Comm. III/7, f.50 (Colchester).

⁴⁴ SP 18/156 f.125.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

Of the approvals specifically noted as ‘public preachers’, six were associated with cathedrals, five of which were nominated by Cromwell. The sixth, Jon Bowles, was appointed by the mayor and jurats of York to be one of the four public preachers there and to preach in the cathedral and other city churches as required.⁴⁶ The mayor and jurats of Sandwich, too, appointed three ‘public preachers,’ one of only three such entries for smaller towns. This unusual form of appointment reflected a creative decision made by the Corporation of Sandwich, in late 1653, to divide up the available maintenance between the town’s three ministers, in order to try to provide each with the recommended £100 a year.⁴⁷

The Triers also approved ministers for two hospital chaplaincies - St Cross in Winchester and Mr Conisbye’s Hospital in Herefordshire - and the mastership of the hospital of St John the Baptist in Bedford, to which was attached the rectory of the attached church.⁴⁸ Semi-public positions, such as almshouse and hospital chaplaincies, were clearly considered to form part of the Preaching Ministry but, as with the lectureships, the very low numbers in the Registers indicate that not all such positions came before the Triers.

⁴⁶ Comm. III/6, f.180.

⁴⁷ From Sandwich Corporation Records, vol.8, f.105 in W. Boys, *Collections for an History of Sandwich in Kent* (Canterbury: 1792), 294, n.†.

⁴⁸ H. A. Doubleday and W. Page (eds.), *Victoria County History of Bedfordshire* (London: A. Constable and Co., 1904), vol.1, 396-8.

Positions: Curacies

Twenty six approvals for curacies were also recorded in the Registers. Curacies are notoriously shadowy in assessments of the early modern church, not least because the exact form of the curacy was rarely noted in ecclesiastical records. Although some perpetual or donative curacies represented permanent incumbencies with adequate incomes, others were lowly, badly paid positions assisting beneficed ministers; their lesser status meant that they were often excluded from official registers or taxation lists. Thus the total number of curacies in the mid-seventeenth-century is unknown and indeed it was constantly in flux, as ministers took on, or discarded, their assistants. Ian Green suggests, however, that there were over one hundred curacies of some sort in the diocese of Lincoln alone, which implies that the twenty-six entries in the Registers cannot represent all the clerical movements in and out of such positions during the Protectorate.⁴⁹

This conjecture is supported by evidence in Kent: the Registers include only four approvals for curacies in the county, and yet Tom Reid has identified a further eleven (perhaps twelve), for which the tenures appear to start between 1653 and 1659.⁵⁰ Two of these approvals - Loose and Nackington - were curacies but appear in the Registers as if benefices, but none of the other nine (or ten) appear

⁴⁹ Green, 'Career Prospects', 84-5.

⁵⁰ Of the twelve curates probably appointed after 1654 in Reid's survey, one dates from 1659, so might have been appointed after the Registers cease: Reid, 'Diocese of Canterbury', Appendix 8.1.

in any form in the Registers.⁵¹ Even so, where it has been possible to identify curacies securely, it seems that those which came before the Triers were perpetual or donative, whose relative security of tenure and maintenance made them analogous to incumbencies. Assistant curates, being salaried and insecure posts, were unlikely to have come within the Triers' remit.

The evidence above shows that the range of clerical positions within the Triers' authority was much narrower than that of the former episcopalian church. Nor were the Triers responsible for schoolmasters or physicians, who had formerly required a bishop's licence and were thus also recorded in episcopal registers. Since they were not part of the preaching ministry, the Triers did not oversee their appointments, but schoolmasters, at least, *were* subject to regulation by the Ejectors' Commissions. This reflected the wider remit of the Ejectors, who were responsible for enforcing godliness throughout their communities.

University fellowships were also excluded from the Triers' control. Prior to the civil war, fellowships had generally been subject to approval by the college Visitors, which, in the case of many of the Oxford colleges, and three of those at Cambridge, had traditionally been bishops. Under the Protectorate, fellowship elections continued to be overseen by the college Visitors, but these roles had been transferred to a range of puritan divines and to Cromwell himself, obviating the involvement of the Triers.⁵²

⁵¹ Comm. III/7, ff.203, 266; Reid, 'Diocese of Canterbury', 223-4.

⁵² Worden, 'Cromwellian Oxford', 741.

The Dates in the Registers

The *process* of approval recorded in the Triers' Registers remained constant over the period of their compilation, but the dates associated with this process varied across the five volumes. Usually, Registers III/3 and III/4 record 'exhibition,' 'registration' and, sometimes, 'presentation' dates, whilst III/5 - III/7 record only 'exhibition' and 'admission' dates.⁵³ All volumes sometimes include 'nomination' and/or 'order' dates, where relevant. Clarifying the terminology of the dates is important, however. 'Exhibition' dates record when the minister was seen by the Triers. The other dates are impossible to interpret with certainty, since there are contradictions in the evidence, but it is likely that 'admission' dates were the dates of approval, rather than entry into the Registers. For ease of comparison, this thesis has standardised the dates used, to *presentation* (where given), *exhibition*, and *admission* (which corresponds to both approval and/or entry into the register).⁵⁴

All the Registers contain many entries where both exhibition and admission occurred on the same date. Some of these may have been quick interviews with godly ministers, well-known to the Triers and with good testimonials. Others may record approvals already carried out in the provinces, for which the documentation was simply passing across the Triers' desk for confirmation.⁵⁵

⁵³ Very occasionally, presentation dates are included in some of these too. Inverted commas here indicate the exact terminology used in the Registers.

⁵⁴ See *Appendix A* for sample entries in the Registers.

⁵⁵ See Section 2.2, 86-7.

Many were presentations from Cromwell, whose patronage might be assumed to have resulted invariably in immediate approval. In fact, this was not always the case; fifteen per cent of the 198 presentations made by Cromwell in 1656, for example, were not admitted on the same day as they were exhibited. Without the Triers' minute books, it is impossible to explain why some of his presentations were not automatically confirmed, but they may have required cross-checking with the Trustees or other interested bodies, or involved queries over the possession of the advowson.⁵⁶

Simultaneous exhibitions and approvals seem to have become gradually more common over the years. In early April 1654, the very beginning of the Commission's operations, sampling suggests that roughly thirteen per cent of applicants were approved on the day of their exhibition, whilst nearly half waited up to three weeks and nearly a third waited over a month.⁵⁷ This probably reflected caution in the approval procedure, and initial rejections of inadequate documentation, before the requirements for approval were widely understood.⁵⁸ Two and half months later, however, as large numbers of ministers from 1653 sought approval before the cut-off date of 24 June, sixty per cent were rushed through on the same day. In samples taken in March 1655, early April 1658 and

⁵⁶ It is possible that the 'admission' dates in these Registers actually referred to the date of writing up the entry, and thus the delays were the result of clerical delay, but this explanation does not always seem to be applicable.

⁵⁷ All samples were of fifteen ministers approved within periods of 1 and 2 weeks; exactly equal periods are impossible as approvals were not made every day.

⁵⁸ The Triers sought to lessen such rejections by publishing an open letter advising on the requirements: *Mercurius Politicus* (13-20 April, 1654), 3429.

early February 1659, the figures were ninety-three, seventy-three and sixty per cent respectively. These higher levels probably resulted from increasing awareness in ministers of the exact requirements necessary for an approval, but it might suggest that more ministers were being approved on the submission of their papers alone, or were being interviewed in the provinces and their papers sent up to London for confirmation and registration.

Where exhibition and admission were not simultaneous, the interval between the two could vary widely but, again, conclusions from these intervals must be tentative.⁵⁹ Clerical delays in writing up the Registers probably explain some of these, but it is unlikely that administrative factors accounted for all of them, given Nye's close supervision of the system. It is more likely that many of the delays reflected periods of time during which either the applicants or the Triers were accruing further information before reaching a decision. Defending the system from Anthony Sadler's attack in 1654, Nye had pointed out that if some aspect of an applicant's certificate was unacceptable but he did well in interview, he could submit an improved certificate later.⁶⁰ Furthermore,

If a man be in any respect doubtfull, they [the Triers] take the trouble of enquiry upon themselves [...] for having the advantage of frequent

⁵⁹ There was no certainty that an approval unfailingly resulted in a minister's installation in his living, but since Nye amended entries in the Registers that failed to result in appointment, the term 'appointment' is assumed applicable to most entries and used hereafter. It has not been possible to check every entry to confirm the Triers' amendments.

⁶⁰ Nye, *Sadler Re-examined*, 5.

Posts in the compasse of a Week or ten daies they can understand from any part of England, and know of what repute the man is.⁶¹

If these delays did reflect further enquiries or amendments, this suggests that the ministers involved were those who, for various reasons, were perhaps problematic to the regime. It is hard to test this, as whatever concerns might have existed were clearly not sufficiently notable to preclude ultimate approval and thus rarely remain in the historical record. Nevertheless, the delay experienced by Edward Butterfield between his initial rejection and final admission may have been representative of many ministers, who, like him, had to find additional referees before finally satisfying the Triers.⁶² On the other hand, an analysis of a larger group of men who might have been expected to arouse the suspicion of the Triers - that is, those ministers who had chosen to be ordained in secret by former bishops - shows that many of these men too were exhibited and admitted on the same day.⁶³

A few men, however, experienced spectacular delays between exhibition and approval: Hugh Humphreys' application for Llanigrade on Anglesey, for example, was considered by the Triers on 21 December 1654, but he was only admitted on 21 April 1658.⁶⁴ At least seven other men experienced long intervals,

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² Section 2.2, 83-4.

⁶³ Of course, such ordinations were probably kept hidden from the Triers.

⁶⁴ Comm. III/7, f.11.

from fourteen months to over three years; three of these were for Welsh livings. Why these delays occurred is frustratingly unclear; did they represent difficult cases? Henry Hall, who would become Bishop of Killaloe and Achorny in 1661 and was Dean of Cork and chaplain to the royalist Marquis of Ormonde in Ireland in the 1640s, waited twenty-six months for his admission to Harwell in Berkshire in 1656, after accepting a presentation for the living in July 1654.⁶⁵ Whilst *his* background might have caused concerns amongst the Triers, such an explanation is unlikely to account for the long delays for Andrew Savage and William Prytherch, who both held presentations from the Protector.⁶⁶ Clerical error is a more credible explanation, and might explain why some of these late dates are underlined in the Registers. Perhaps there were dusty corners in a Whitehall back office where mislaid certificates lay unnoticed for months on end, only to be hastily written up when re-discovered, their dates underlined at some later auditing. Or were these men approved in the provinces, their papers only reaching the Triers when questions were later asked?

A further complexity in interpreting the dates in the Registers surrounds those approvals where several entries relate to essentially the same appointment. In many cases, a second entry is recorded for the same minister and living but under a different patron. Sometimes these were entries where Oliver or Richard

⁶⁵ Comm. III/5, f.170.

⁶⁶ Comm. III/5, f.188, III/7, f.185; Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, 821. Richards has no explanations for the Welsh examples: Richards, *Religious Developments*, 20-1, 29, 37, 375.

Cromwell were corroborating the first entry, but not always.⁶⁷ In others, the duplication indicates the ministers' take up of different portions of a living. In 1655, for example, William Smallwood was approved in three separate entries from two private patrons and Cromwell, to the vicarage and then the rectory of Bucklebury and the associated chapel of Marlston. The sequence of approvals, however, is unclear.⁶⁸

The dates in the Registers also provide important information on the long-term rhythm and volume of the Triers' work. The Triers made roughly 3500 approvals, for which an annual breakdown is given below.⁶⁹

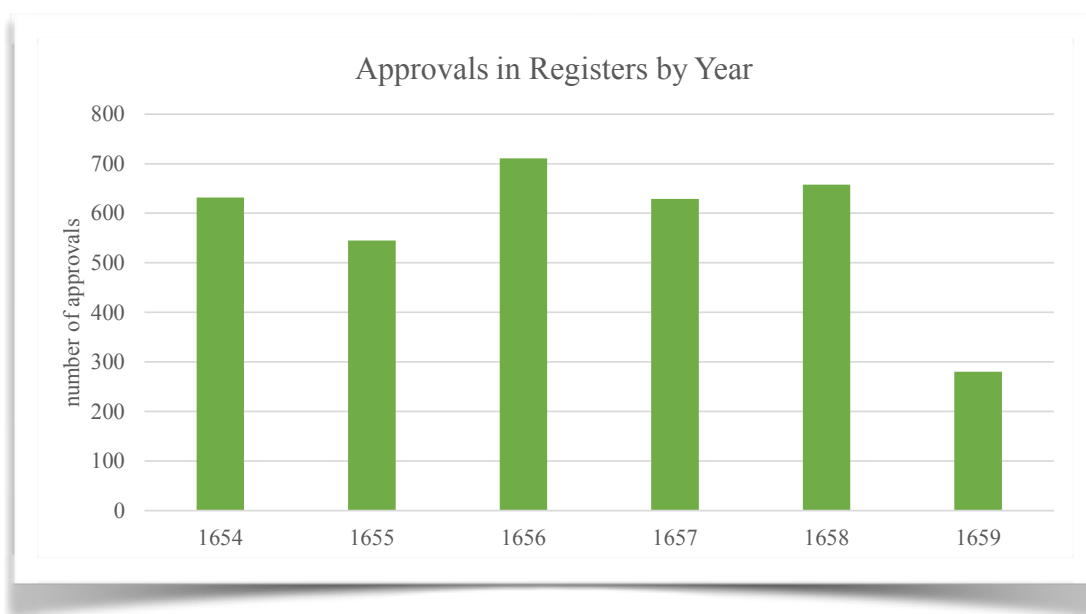


fig. 4 Approvals in the Registers 1654-59⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See Section 3.2, 242-61 for further detail on Cromwell.

⁶⁸ COMM III/4, f.389.

⁶⁹ This figure includes sequential approvals, revocations and corroborative approvals.

⁷⁰ Years start 1 January.

Since the approvals of 1654 included some, perhaps most, of the ministers appointed since April 1653, however, the 1654 total should be notionally split between the two years, to present a more accurate chronology (*fig. 5*).

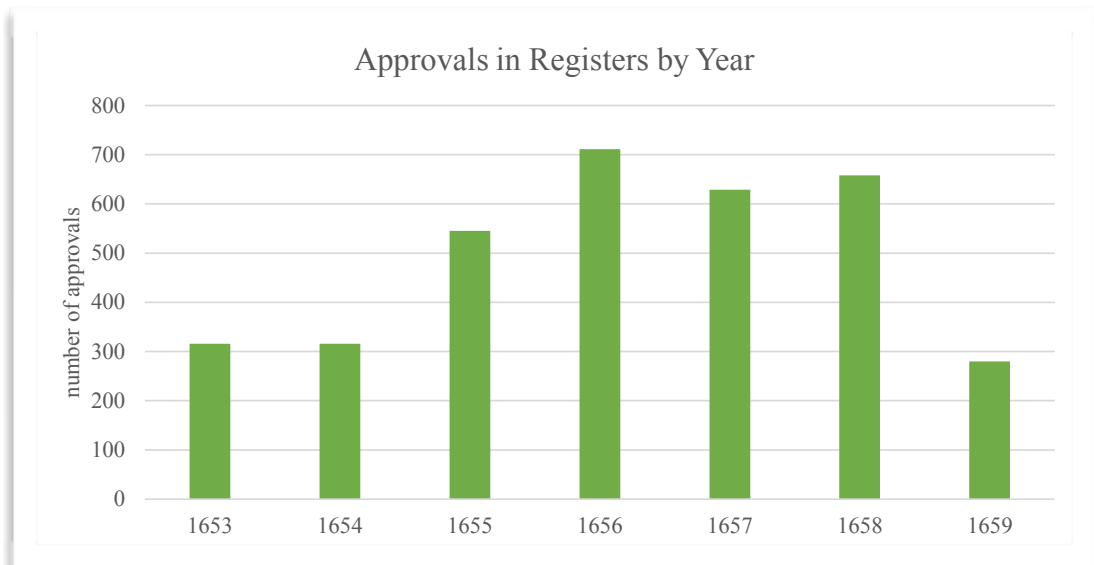


fig. 5 Adjusted approvals in the Registers 1653-59⁷¹

The notional total for 1653 covers only eight months' activity.⁷² Moreover, approvals in 1659 took place only until April, which means that there were proportionally more appointments in 1659 than in any previous year. Did this mark a renewed attempt to increase the number of presbyterian ministers, backed by the new Protector Richard Cromwell, himself a presbyterian? The figures are, at least, suggestive.⁷³

⁷¹ Based on the justifiable premise that almost all approvals led to appointments.

⁷² Although the Commission only approved from April 1654, this thesis starts each year from 1 January; thus 1654 here includes a notional 12 months' of appointments (January-December 1654) and 1653 a notional 8 months, April-December 1653.

⁷³ See discussion in Section 3.2, 259-60.

The high volume of approvals in 1656 probably reflects the re-admittance to the church of ministers affected by Cromwell's Proclamation of July 1655, which had ejected all previously-ejected serving ministers who had not been subsequently approved by the Triers.⁷⁴ The lower figure for 1655 is harder to explain. The unsettled political events, including several unsuccessful royalist uprisings in the spring and the regime's response by establishing the regional rule of the Major-Generals in September, may have deterred movement amongst the clergy, but this must remain supposition.

At a more detailed level, most years showed variations in rates of approvals across the months. The low numbers in summer probably reflected a general concentration on harvest. Most years also show peaks in appointments around May and November, which perhaps also reflected the rhythm of the agricultural year. Clerical movement may have been more popular once the tithes of young stock (spring) and grain (later August) had been assessed and gathered; if so, a delay of four to six weeks, during which the process of presentation, probation and approval took place, would have resulted in such men being appointed to new livings in about May and November.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ For example: Comm. III/5, f.236 (Stephen Bound).

⁷⁵ D. Appleby, *Black Bartholomew's Day: Preaching, Polemic and Restoration Nonconformity* (Manchester: MUP, 2007), 39.

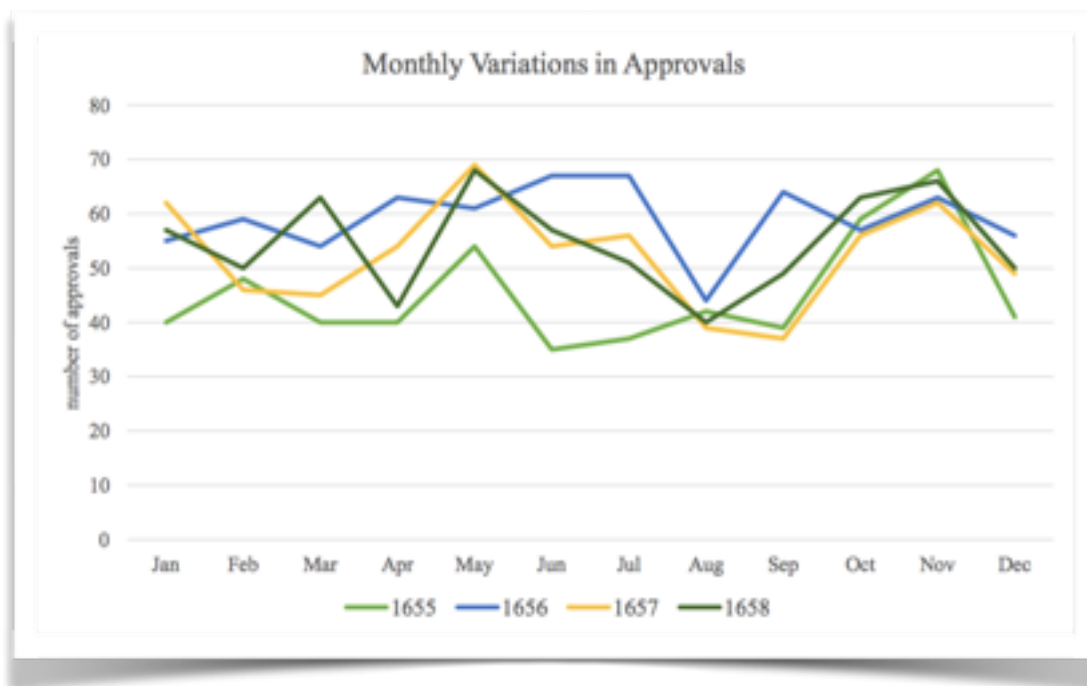


fig. 6 Monthly fluctuations in approvals by the Triers⁷⁶

The peaks may also have been related in some way to the key dates of Lady Day and Michaelmas, when new periods of employment were traditionally arranged.⁷⁷ There appears, however, to have been no continuing correlation with the calendar which had governed the episcopalian church year. Ember weeks, during which ordinations formerly took place, were not obviously continued as periods of activity for appointments.⁷⁸

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⁷⁶ Note: 1654 is omitted as incorporation of the abnormally high totals for June and July render the chart unreadable. 1659 is omitted as approvals cease in May.

⁷⁷ Lady Day was 25 March, Michaelmas was 11 October (in the Julian calendar) until 1752.

⁷⁸ Ember weeks were roughly mid-June, mid-September and mid-December, and early March.

This section has discussed the scope of the Registers, arguing that from this alone, it is possible to understand something of the Cromwellian vision for the national church. The analysis of the positions appearing in the Registers confirms that the higher clerical offices of the episcopalian church had been extinguished. Instead, the regime focused its attention on creating a preaching ministry, for which objective the Triers' role was limited to approving ministers to fill a narrow range of clerical positions, most of which were attached to parochial benefices. It also appears that 'secondary' positions - curacies and lectureships - may have been less rigorously monitored. Such posts *were* subject to approval, but in such low numbers as to imply that not all appointments to these positions came before the Commission.

These findings suggest an important refinement to the current understanding of the Triers and the Cromwellian church. Logically, curacies and lectureships should have been treated as important a part of the provision of a preaching ministry as parochial benefices, since they were often able to augment the supply of preaching for those areas that were difficult to fill, owing to their geographical extent, large populations or poverty. Indeed, this was recognised by the continued employment of itinerant ministers in Wales and other 'dark corners' of the land.⁷⁹ The Commission's apparent focus, therefore, on tithe-maintained benefices demonstrates two important points. In the first place, the Triers' Registers record only those positions that drew on public maintenance. Secondly, it seems that

⁷⁹ Itinerant positions are not noted as such in the Registers but appear in the Augmentation records: Richards, *Religious Developments*, 136.

within the objective of building a preaching ministry, the provision of preaching itself was not enough. The second, unstated task was the reinforcement of the *parochial* landscape. This may have been a direct response to the petitions of the early 1650s, most of which were conservative in their vision of a national church and, indeed, it would have been in line with the conservative nature of much Protectorate policy. It certainly demonstrates that whilst the regime was prepared to accept the presence of separated churches, the preservation of a settled parochial ministry was deemed at least necessary, probably ideal.

Analysis of the Registers and related Commonwealth papers has also demonstrated that an unknown number of men served formally or informally as parish incumbents without appearing in the Triers' records or gaining their approval. Although some were victims of clerical oversight, some others, probably those who held episcopalian and royalist sympathies, intentionally avoided the Triers. This was almost certainly more prevalent in remote and poor parishes. Since such ministers depended upon the protection of their parishioners, this confirms existing evidence and the historiographical consensus that, even after 1654, the godly reformation was by no means universally welcome and that covert episcopalianism continued to flourish. The fact that these ministers could evade the authorities illustrates the continued struggle faced by the regime to extend its control over areas where the local population was unwilling to comply with its strictures and its vision.

Finally it seems that it may be possible to identify some of those ministers whose approvals were initially rejected, through an analysis of the dates of their appearances in front of the Triers. Delays between exhibition and approval may indicate those whose credentials and referees were initially rejected. At a broader scale, the dates of approvals also reveal fluctuations in the overall chronology of approvals. These appear to reflect national events, whilst patterns in annual levels of approvals suggest that rhythms of the agricultural year still affected the annual recruitment of clergy. All of these points are analysed more fully in the following sections.

Part 3 The Activities and Achievements of the Triers

3.1 Understanding the Approach of the Triers: the National Impact of their Work

This section focuses on the geographical and chronological extent of the Triers' activities, in their role as gatekeepers to the Cromwellian ministry. It demonstrates that the highest levels of clerical turnover were in the home counties and the east of England. In seeking to explain this result, it tests a series of contemporary accusations and modern hypotheses, but concludes that it is impossible to ascribe the results to any single economic, political or social factor. In light of this, it suggests that whilst a variety of national and local circumstances may have influenced the extent of the Triers' approvals, there was also a legacy of deep, structural problems in the administration of the church continuing from the pre-war diocesan system and that of the 1640s, which the Triers themselves were unable to solve.

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The Registers offer a detailed insight into the Triers' role in the construction of the Cromwellian ministry, but they were essentially a reactive body, unable to choose who came before them. Contemporary accusations, however, often suggested otherwise, and these accusations have influenced subsequent attempts to understand the Commission's work. In fact, there was no mechanism in the

Triers' ordinance to enable them to choose which ministers they interviewed. There *is* evidence that they were sometimes asked to recommend ministers for vacant livings, as were the Trustees, but most of their work was approving or rejecting such ministers as were presented to them.¹ This means that the key to understanding their work is not to ask 'why' they approved a certain number of ministers in certain areas, but to ascertain the reasons why certain areas experienced greater or lesser degrees of clerical turnover, or requests for augmentations, which were then subsequently approved by the Triers.

The inclusion of dates and locations for every interview suggests that the Triers' work can be analysed with absolute accuracy and clarity, but this is not the case. Inadequate information on how many parishes there were in England and Wales, the absence of sources recording how many Triers' interviews ended in rejection, and complex uncertainties in the Registers, make an apparently straightforward exercise highly problematic. Even comparing rates of approval *between* different counties is fraught with methodological difficulties, in particular the absence of reliable sources for establishing exactly how many parishes existed in the seventeenth-century.² In particular, the problems of translating sources based on the administrative unit of the diocese into accurate totals for counties (the unit used by the Triers) renders the contextualisation of their approvals even more complex.

¹ For example: SP 18/74 f.50.

² See the analysis in Section 1.2, 46-53.

During the course of this research, nevertheless, extensive attempts *have* been made to verify the accuracy of existing parish lists and to construct a new, reliable methodology for counting the number of parishes. All such exercises have highlighted that *exact* totals for every county are unachievable. Instead a methodology has been constructed to produce as robust a set of figures as possible, but these figures remain approximate, as are the statistical conclusions based upon them.³ Furthermore, irreconcilable contradictions in the available evidence mean that although totals for Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire are indicated on the maps below, these must be considered relatively unsafe and are, therefore, not considered in detail in the subsequent analysis.

The Triers also approved ministers for ‘livings’ rather than ‘parishes,’ so it is important to note that the analysis here is concerned with ‘livings.’ This is particularly important for those counties, such as Lancashire, which had few parishes but many more chapels, for which the Triers approved ministers and are thus included as ‘livings’. Moreover, the numbers of livings in Wales, which had numerous chapels, are *so* uncertain as to make detailed analysis impossible. Taking all these points into account, on the basis of the methodology in *Appendix E*, the analyses in this thesis assume there to have been c.10,000 livings in England and Wales in the mid-seventeenth-century.

³ See *Appendix E*.

The numbers of approvals in the Registers provide good evidence of minimum clerical turnover, but this is not secure evidence of *total* turnover, since some livings may have lost a minister but found no replacement. This ‘turnover’ would not, of course, appear in the Registers.⁴ Moreover, a small percentage of the approvals in the Registers were for already-settled ministers seeking approvals in order to qualify for an augmentation. It is likely that this figure diminished gradually over time, as ministers only needed to be approved once for an augmentation, assuming they remained in the same living, and the regime slowly reduced the number of augmentations it awarded.⁵ The ensuing figures in this section, however, cannot and do not build in an allowance for this unquantifiable figure.⁶

Despite these problems, the most important and unambiguous conclusions that emerge from the Registers are, firstly, that nearly thirty per cent of all English livings were subject to at least one approval by the Triers; and secondly, that the Triers approved ministers in *every* county in England and Wales.

The four counties with most livings subject to a Triers’ approval were ‘London and Middlesex’ (42% of the county’s livings), Essex (37%) and

⁴ See Section 2.5, 144-9 for unrecorded clerical turnover.

⁵ See Section 2.5, 140.

⁶ See *Appendix K*.

Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire (both 36%), whilst Rutland and Yorkshire had fewest (19%).⁷

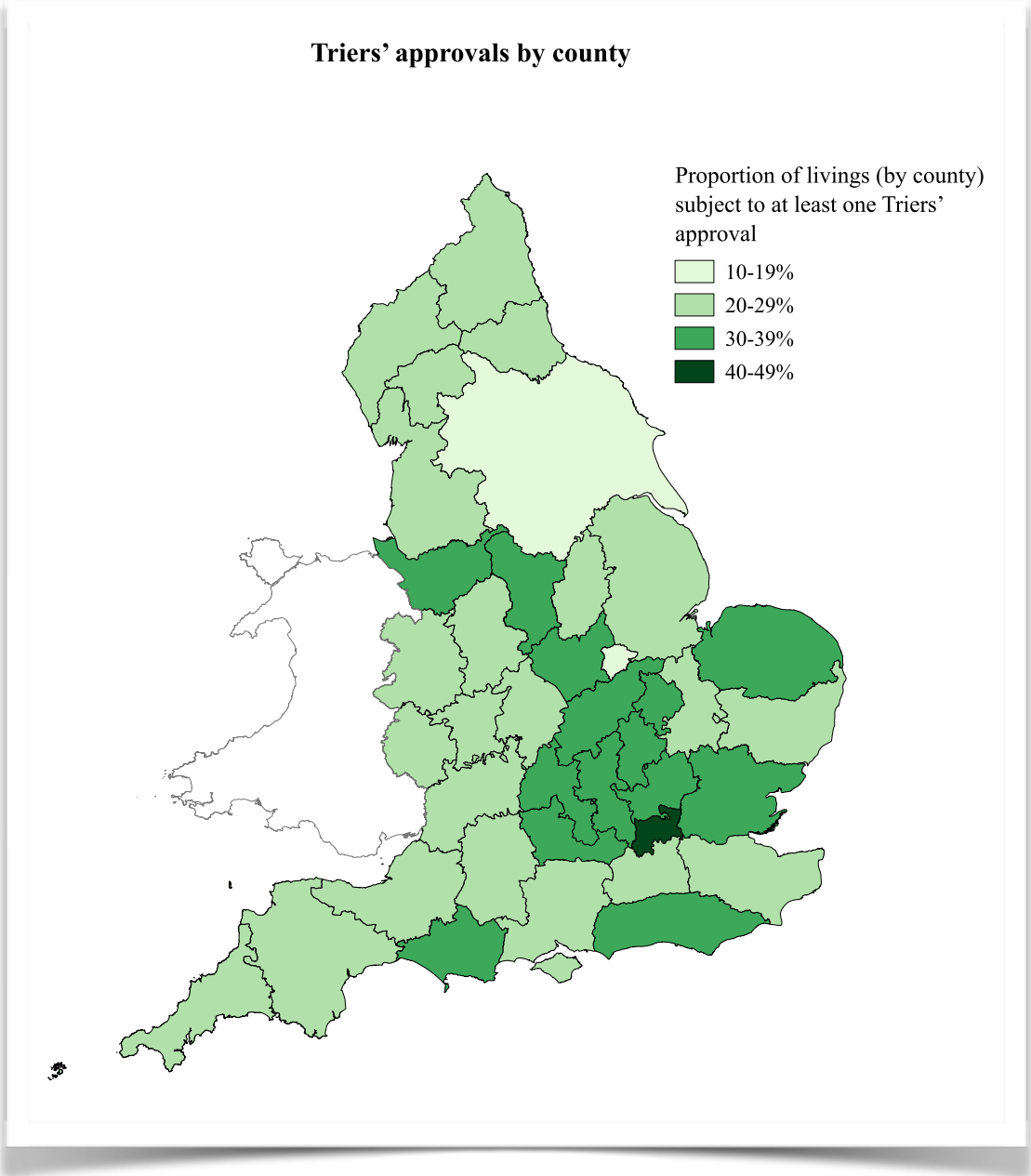


fig. 7 Proportion of livings (by county) subject to at least one Triers' approval, as a percentage of the total livings in the county

⁷ For this and all subsequent analyses, see caveats in *Appendix E*.

When the approvals are mapped by region, it is clear that the impact of the Triers was at its greatest in the central home counties.

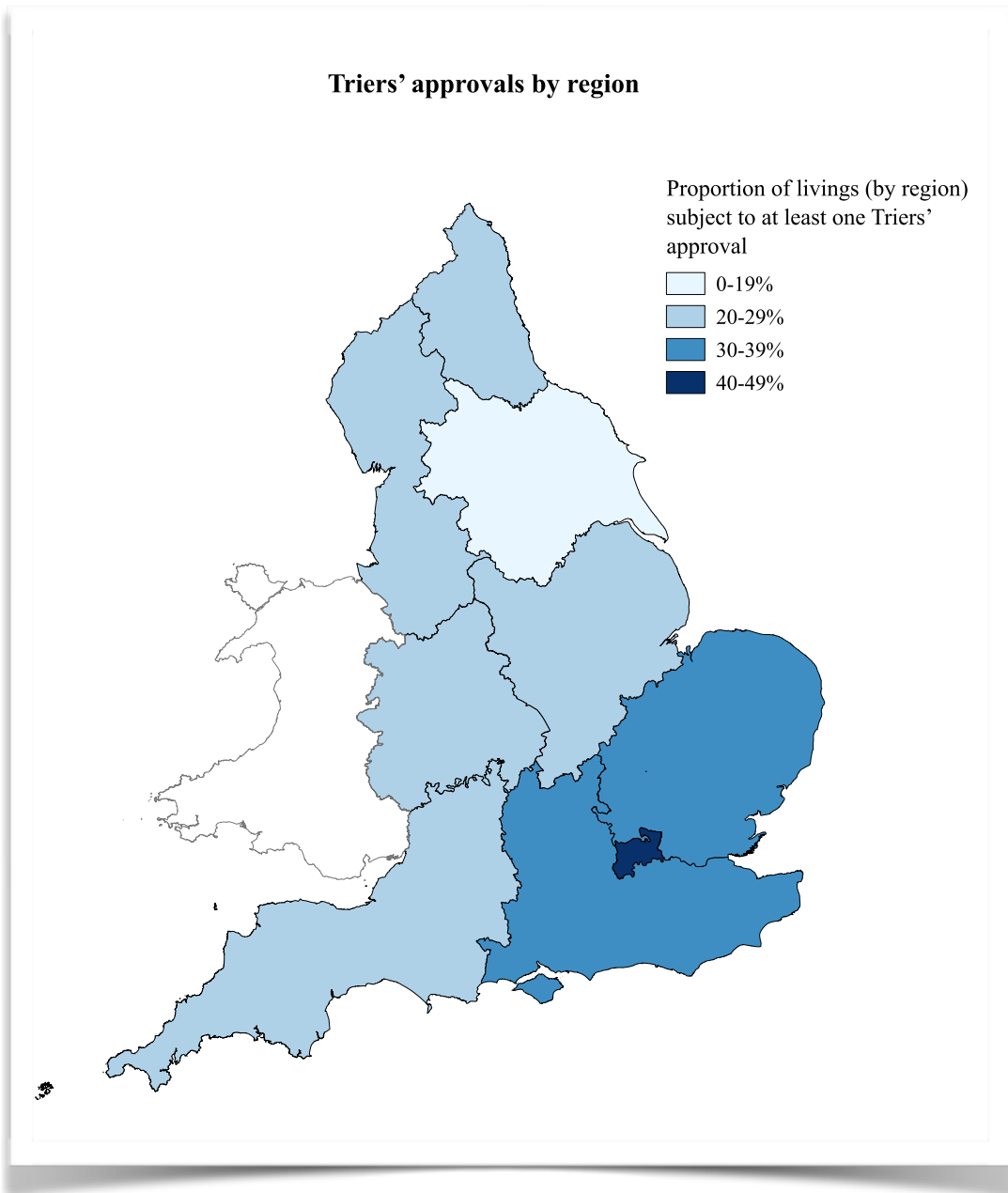


fig. 8 Proportion of livings (by region) subject to at least one Triers' approval, as a percentage of the total livings in the region

Regionally, London, the south-east and east of England accounted for forty-five per cent of all the livings for which the Triers' approved a minister, and forty-six per cent of all the approvals that they granted. In fact, whilst c.2750 English livings experienced at least one Triers' approval, the total number of approvals granted was c.3260, indicating that a significant number of parishes experienced a succession of clerical appointments (multiple turnover).⁸ In no county, however, did multiple turnover affect more than nine per cent of its total number of livings.

[*cont.*]

⁸ Approvals for augmentations would not affect this figure, since those ministers approved by the Triers to take up a living would not have needed a second approval in order to receive an augmentation.

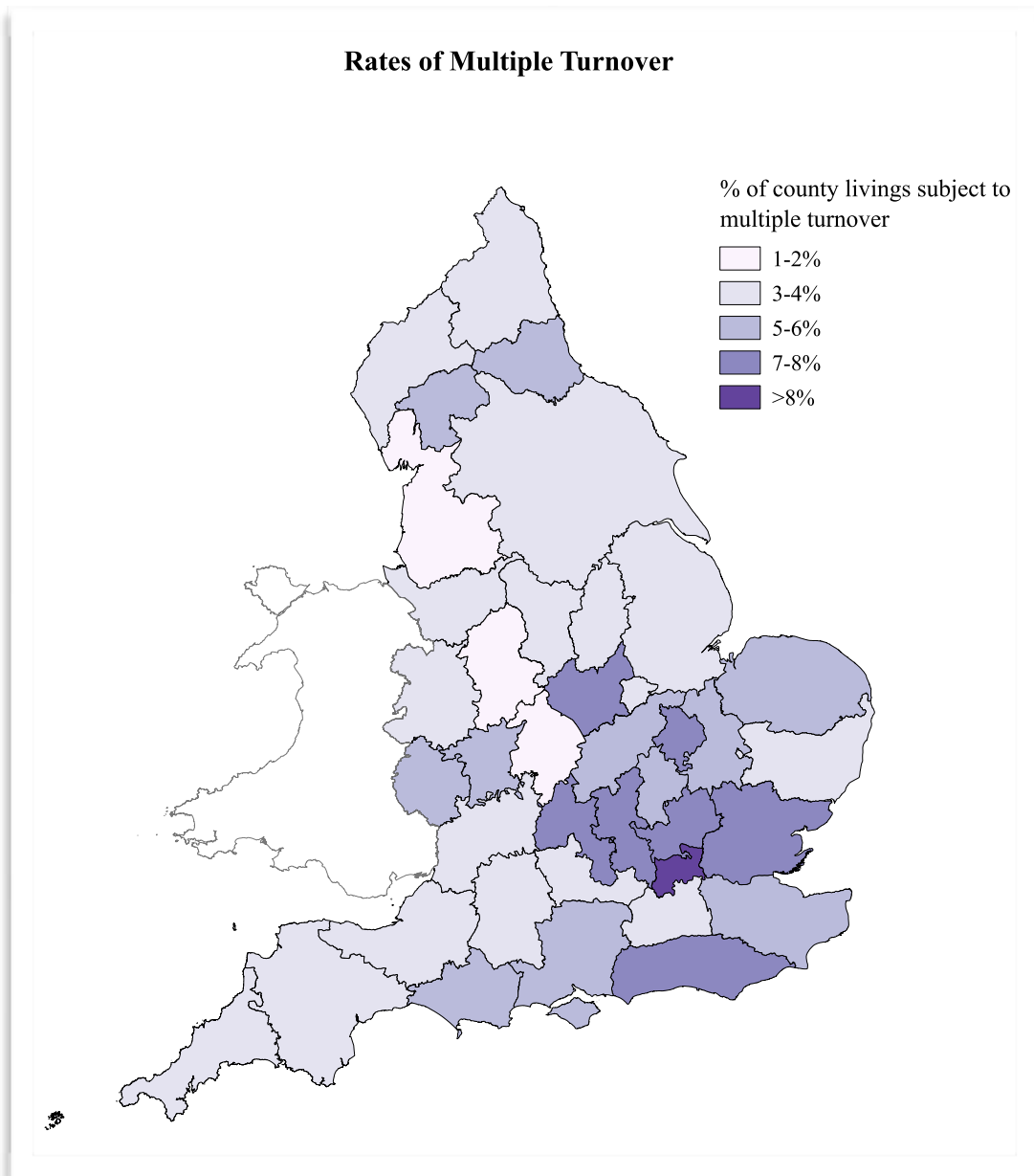


fig. 9 Rates of multiple turnover of livings, as percentage of county livings

Figure 9 shows that those counties experiencing significant ‘multiple turnover’ (over 5%) tended to be located in the central, south-east and east regions. Moreover, by correlating these counties with those where over thirty per

cent of the total parishes appeared at least once in the Registers, *and* with those counties where at least five per cent or more of their *approved* livings experienced multiple turnover, *and* with those which had at least three parishes where the incumbency turned over three or more times, it is possible to identify the counties which had the most ‘unstable’ ministries.⁹ These, too, were concentrated in the south and east of England (*fig. 10*).

[*cont.*]

⁹ ‘Unstable’ is not necessarily a negative quality here.

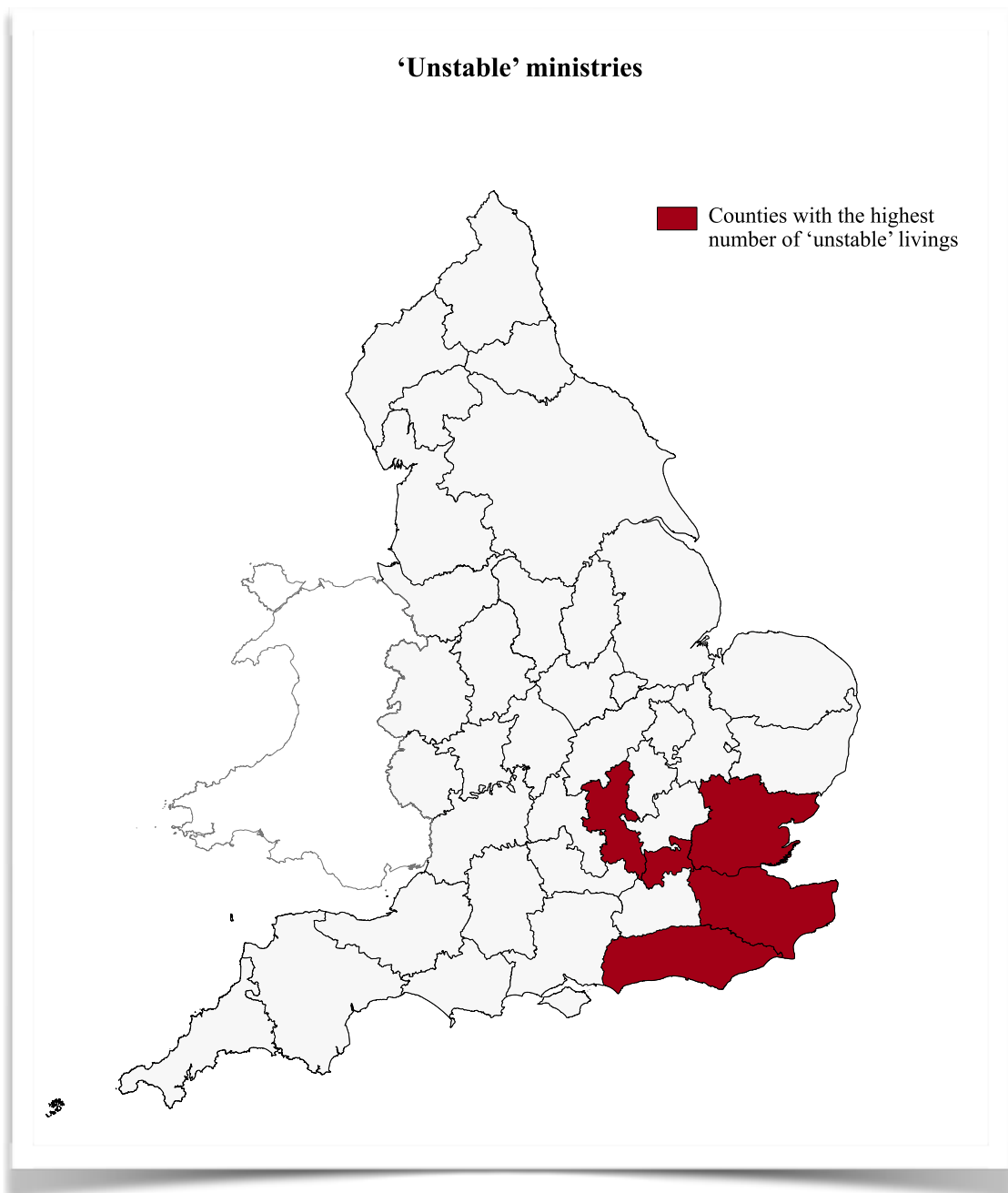


fig. 10 Counties with the most ‘unstable’ ministries

How are these findings to be explained?

In the first place, ‘randomness’ can be discounted, owing to a close correlation between the counties which meet two or more of the four individual criteria (above) for instability. Moreover, several alternative explorations of the data in the Registers have returned the same broad distribution patterns across the country, weighted towards most activity in the central south and east. So what else may have been behind the extent of the turnover and instability in some counties?

Applications for approval to receive an augmentation must account for *some* of those parishes that experienced a single approval, as must death or career progression. This means that a certain proportion of each county’s approvals can be ‘written off’ as normal clerical turnover.¹⁰ Identifying *what* this proportion was, however, is complex. To try to ascertain where the Triers’ rates of approval sat within the scale of clerical appointments across the seventeenth-century, this study has compared the Triers’ approvals with figures in *CCEd* to extract national statistics on rates of clerical appointments before and after the revolution. There are extensive caveats associated with the use of *CCEd* for this topic, in particular the absence of information for some geographical areas, but it nevertheless provides unique access to valuable information.

As far as possible, all the entries in *CCEd* that indicate a new clerical appointment for the periods 1620-1624, 1630-34, 1670-74, 1680-84, have been collated for this study, and a summary of the results, together with the Triers’

¹⁰ Or, in the case of augmentations, not indicative of turnover at all.

approvals, is given below, along with figures for the diocese of Canterbury, to provide an example of a more detailed breakdown.

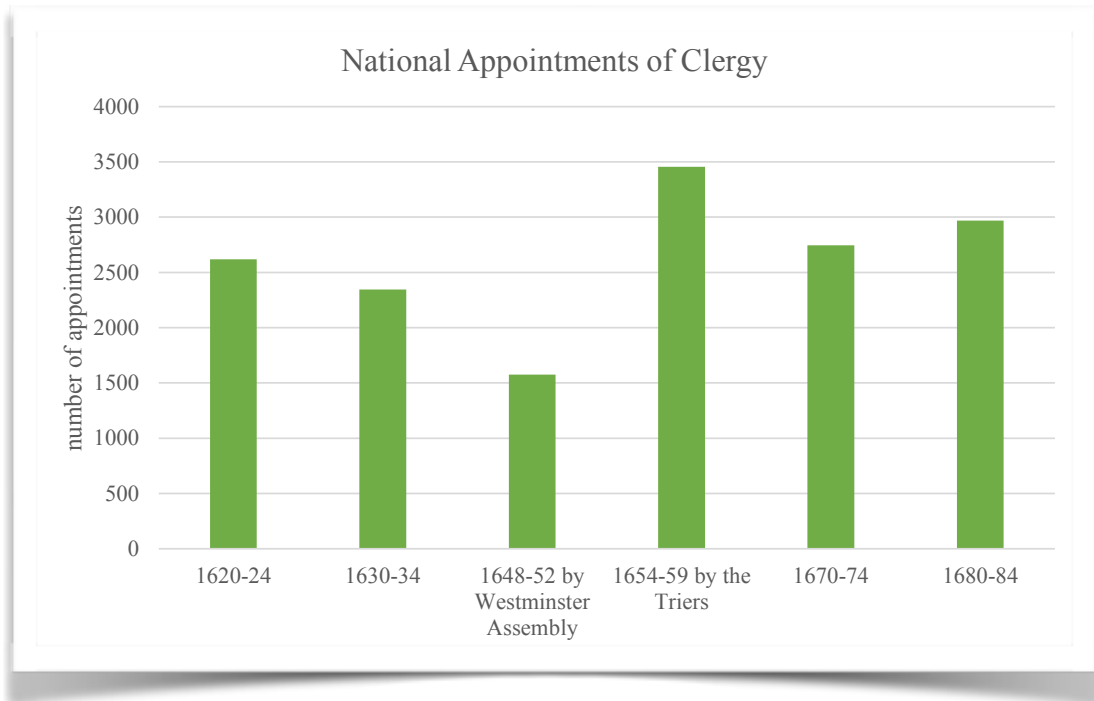


fig. 11 National appointments of clergy¹¹

Figures 11 and 12 show that in the busiest decade nationally and in the diocese (1680s), the episcopalian regimes appointed only eighty-five per cent of the number of ministers that were approved by the Triers both nationally and in the diocese of Canterbury. In the least busy period nationally (1630s), the episcopalian regimes appointed only sixty-eight per cent of the number approved by the Triers and, in the least busy period in the diocese (1620s), the Archbishop appointed only sixty-two per cent of the number approved by the Triers.

¹¹ Since the Triers worked from April 1654 to May 1659, the number of months is almost exactly the same as in the other 5 year periods used here for comparison.

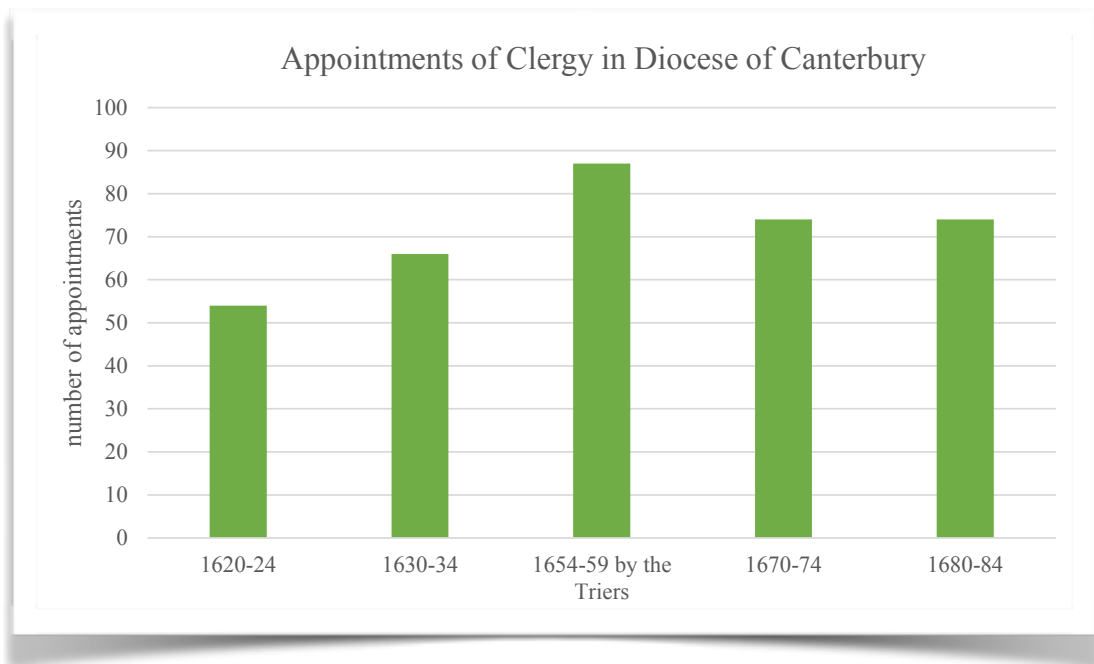


fig. 12 Appointments of clergy in the diocese of Canterbury¹²

Moreover, the Triers approved more than twice the estimated number of ministers approved by the Westminster Assembly in any comparable 5 year period between 1643 and 1653.¹³

So were the higher levels of approvals by the Triers extraordinary, given the events of the revolution? After all, it seems likely that turnover *would* have been higher in these circumstances. Ian Green has suggested that average clerical tenure in the first half of the seventeenth-century might be estimated at roughly

¹² Westminster Assembly figures not illustrated.

¹³ This figure was reached by dividing the total c.2835 Assembly approvals equally into 2 x 5 year blocks for parity of comparison. See Section 1.2, 60-1 and *Appendix J* for calculating Assembly figures.

twenty years, but this is difficult to adapt to the disturbed social climate of the Interregnum and the aftermath of mass clerical ejections.¹⁴ A comparison with D. Hirschberg's figures for the decades after 1660, however, can help to move this forward. From his survey of six dioceses during the period 1671-1690, he concluded that appointments were made to only five per cent of livings in any five year period.¹⁵ Lowering the percentage of livings experiencing a Triers' approval by five per cent in each county to accommodate natural turnover, however, still leaves significant additional clerical approvals and appointments made by the Triers across the whole country; these higher levels of approval, therefore, *were* extraordinary and beg an explanation.

There is considerable evidence that poverty and parochial conflict were common reasons for clerical turnover. Petitions to the Council of State contain numerous complaints about inadequate maintenance, friction between incumbent, parishioners and patron, and ongoing clerical ejections. These problems also featured frequently in the accounts of clerical dislocation and turnover collected by John Walker. In 1657, moreover, an anonymous 'Letter of Address' to Cromwell was published, criticising both Triers and Ejectors, and noting that,

At the change of every Minister the parish takes sides, some are for him, some against him. [...] This causes discord and dissension among

¹⁴ Green, 'Career Prospects', 97-8.

¹⁵ Hirschberg, 'Church Patronage', 117.

neighbours, and the kindling [of] that fire of jealousie and discontent that will not be quenched.¹⁶

But turnover could also have resulted from clerical ambition, in pursuit of which some livings may have served as useful rungs on the ladder to success. It may no longer have been possible to aspire to the position of archdeacon or even bishop, but it is inconceivable that some clergy did not still actively seek wealthier livings or those with more influence and status. So how closely might these factors relate to the approvals recorded in the Registers?

Much of the area that had higher levels of turnover to the north-west of London had been in the ‘front-line’ of the fighting between royalist and parliamentary armies during the civil war. Perhaps the conflict and divisions that affected communities in such areas left deep-seated resentments that continued to find outlets in disputes over parochial worship well into the next decade? Moreover, the legacy of the wars may not have been confined to these front-line areas. Mapping the Triers’ approvals against those areas more sympathetic to royalism in the 1640s possibly suggests a tenuous connection between royalism and low rates of turnover or clerical approvals, especially in the north and west.

¹⁶ *Letter of Adresse*, 20.

Greatest extent of royalist dominance during the civil wars

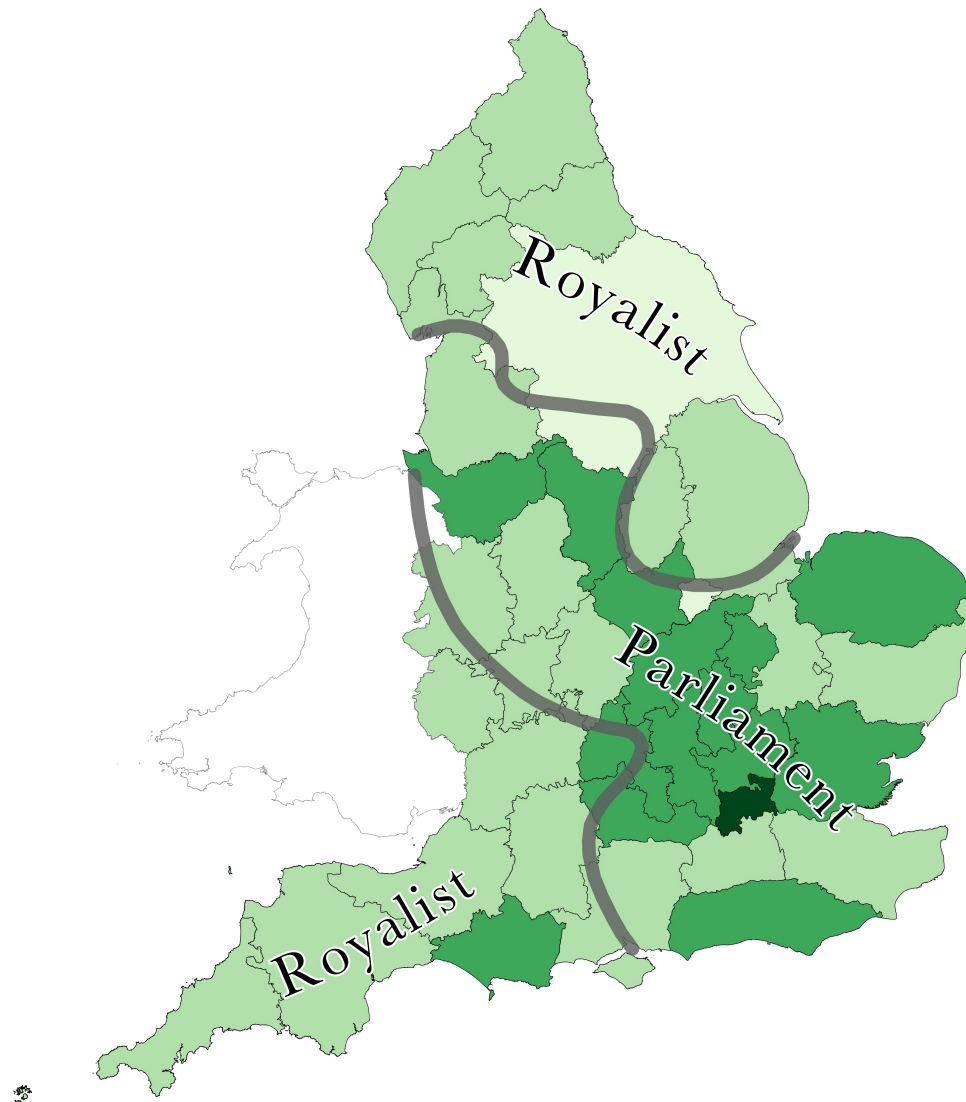


fig. 13 Comparison of former royalist influence with rates of Triers' approvals¹⁷

¹⁷ See *fig. 7* for key to shading. Note caveat on Dorset, this Section, 176.

If such a connection existed, there could have been several reasons behind it. It is possible that godly ministers were not eager to settle in areas which had been predominantly royalist, especially when these were in poorer and remote locations, such as Cornwall. Indeed, those royalist patrons who had retained their patronage, or their congregations, may actively have sought to avoid the imposition of godly ministers, if necessary supplying a preferred preacher more informally.¹⁸ In both cases, the Registers would have recorded few approvals.

Furthermore, the royalist heartlands and disputed counties west of London, such as Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire, may have been subject to a more rapid and rigorous policy of ejections of royalist clergy in the 1640s than elsewhere, as the parliamentarians gained control of these areas and intruded more acceptable ministers into their parishes. Certainly the peak of clerical ejections in the 1640s took place from 1644-46, as the parliamentary victory became clear.¹⁹ If the settlement of such intruders was reasonably successful, this might account for lower clerical turnover in the 1650s. Yet there is considerable evidence that numbers of godly clergy faced ongoing friction with parishioners loyal to the Prayer Book and crown, to the extent that some found it impossible to continue their ministries and chose to move on. Thomas Jessop, minister of Luton,

¹⁸ These generalisations are not intended to suggest that royalism was universally supported in these areas, nor that it remained the predominant force in all political and clerical decision-making.

¹⁹ For Ely diocese ejections, see G. Hart, 'The Parish Clergy of the Diocese of Ely and their Parishioners, c.1630-1650' (University of Essex: unpublished PhD thesis, 2015), 142; *WR*, 275-287; McCall, *Baal's Priests*, 6; Green, 'Scandalous Ministers', 523: As Green notes, in many areas ejections increased once administrative structures such as the County Committees had been established.

petitioned Cromwell in despair in 1658, explaining that his parishioners rejected him for not having been episcopally ordained and that

[...] finding that they strike at [your petitioner's] ministerial function and that the work of the Gospel is retarded and prejudiced by their withdrawing divers of his parishioners from holding communion with him in publique ordinances and do exercise worship in prelaticall meetings and formes as they have had oportunities, He falleth under a necessity to surrender up his charg unless some readdress be afforded.²⁰

Jessop was not the only such sufferer. Edward Fletcher, taking up the living of Bagendon, Gloucestershire in November 1658, petitioned the Council of State for support against physical and verbal intimidation by local royalists. He claimed that during his first Sunday service they

made a noyse, rapping att the windowes when I was in prayer. Att whych time alsoe one threwe a great Stone in att the windowe neare the pulpitt where I was on purpose to hit mee.

He added that they were now trying to issue him with a *quaere impedit*, and had said, 'now his freind [Cromwell] is dead wee will have him out'.²¹

²⁰ SP 18/181 f.101.

²¹ SP 18/183 f.209. Fletcher had been presented by Cromwell.

It is impossible to quantify how widespread such cases were and how many led to ministers actually leaving their cures, for which replacements were approved by the Triers. Some probably struggled on: Jessop had already served for eight years under these difficult conditions and may have remained there until 1660, when Thomas Pomfret was instituted to the living.²² Other ministers simply abandoned their parishes. One such was John Smith, minister of Barthomley in Cheshire. Smith had already changed parishes several times when his then parishioners, in seeking to be rid of him, claimed that,

without giving the congregation [of his former parish] any notice at all of his departure, he left them destitute, being invited to better preferment at Audley, his native place.²³

Smith, however, counter-claimed that,

[your petitioner] being in Cavaleers places the sayd Cavaliers and their parties have combined against him, And entred unlawfully his house and layne in his way and assaulted and strucken him [...].²⁴

His experience of antagonism may have been extreme but, as Jessop and Fletcher's accounts suggest, it was not unique.

²² Jessop does not appear again in the Registers,

²³ SP 18/100 f.233.

²⁴ *ibid.*

Less attention-grabbing, but almost certainly more widespread, was the impact of grinding poverty and dilapidation. The serious nature of inadequate maintenance is confirmed by the active programme of augmentations during the commonwealth and Protectorate - but the correlation between clerical poverty and turnover is not straightforward. Certainly very poor livings often struggled to attract or retain a minister, but the complexities of tithe income make it hard to identify which livings these may have been on more than an individual basis.²⁵ Livings in areas of low agricultural productivity, for example, may in fact have drawn tithes from industries such as mining, whilst the impropriation of livings meant that theoretically adequate tithe income was, of itself, no guarantee of a 'living wage' for the incumbent.²⁶

Other factors, including the damage and after-effects of war, enclosure and climatic disaster, could also affect parochial incomes, even in otherwise prosperous areas. In 1654, for example, the inhabitants of Topsham, the port at Exeter, claimed that they had only 'the small pittance of twentie markes per annum for the mayntenance of a minister,' although the impropriator, William Brewton, received £140 a year in tithes. They added that the town had

²⁵ R. Howell, *Newcastle upon Tyne and the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 219.

²⁶ For example: the lead mines owned by Lord Wharton in his upland parish of Helaugh, North Yorkshire: M. C. Gill, 'The AD Lead Mines in Swaledale, Yorkshire' in *Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Association* (1991), vol.11(4), 14-15.

many poore people in it, who live upon the releife of a monethly rate, and hath of late beene much impoverishd by reason of the late warrs (the inhabitants ... haveing a dependence for their livelyhoods upon the successe of sea affaires).²⁷

Even so, it might be presumed that clerical turnover would have been high in those regions with significant areas of upland, where agricultural conditions could be harsh, populations sparse, and many livings large and relatively poor. Moreover, applications for augmentations might also have been higher, from those who were struggling on in such areas. In fact, the evidence in the Registers is ambiguous. Of those counties with large areas of upland, especially the Cheviots, Pennines, Peak District, Exmoor and Dartmoor, only Derbyshire and Cumberland may have had around thirty per cent of their livings in the Registers.²⁸ In comparison, it was precisely those counties where agricultural conditions were generally more productive, in the east and south, that experienced the highest levels of approvals. Thus 'regional prosperity' is too broad and inconsistent a factor for explaining the geographical spread of the Triers' activities.

It is still likely, however, that there *was* a link between lower parochial income and higher clerical turnover, even if it is difficult to discern on a county basis. This may have been, in part, a result of impropriations, which were notoriously

²⁷ SP 18/73 f.52.

²⁸ Note caveat in this Section, 176.

blamed for inadequate incomes.²⁹ Certainly, clerical instability does seem to have been a feature of many impropriated parishes, as demonstrated in Leicestershire, where thirty per cent of the livings appeared in the Registers, and which had one of the highest number of parishes with multiple turnover in England.

The village of Rotherby lay north-east of Leicester, in an area that was heavily contested during the first civil war.³⁰ The pre-war incumbent, Francis Needham, fled temporarily in 1640, an action for which he was examined by the County Committee in 1646. Whilst he battled with the Committee, Needham employed in his place another ejected minister, Francis Chamberlain, until his [Needham's] eventual ejection in 1649. Thereafter, Rotherby was administered by lay sequestrators, who supplied an unknown preacher off and on until 1651.³¹ By 1652, Thomas Silverwood had been presented to Rotherby, but he did not settle there and by 1655 he had moved to the impropriated parish of Codicote in Hertfordshire. In April 1655, Cromwell presented William Vicars to Rotherby but, within the year, Vicars had gone and Rotherby had acquired a new minister, Robert Reading. By September 1658, he too had moved on and in January 1659,

²⁹ Anon, *Certaine aduertisements for the good of the church and common-wealth well worthy the serious consideration of the most honourable High Court of Parliament late assembled, and hereafter to be assembled againe* (1624), 48-9; Anon, *The countreys plea against tythes* (1646), 5-6. Although impropriations were not the only cause of inadequate clerical stipends; other arrangements, especially donative advowsons, could have the same result: Smith, *Essex*, 299-300.

³⁰ Rotherby's parochial experience in the civil war was poignantly expressed in the parish registers; after 1642, a note was inserted: 'Bellu[m], Bellum: Anno Domini: 1643, 1644, 1645 Bellum'. 'Interruption, prosecution, prohibition, sequestration by John Musson yeoman; and John Yates, sometime Taylor. Sequestration, sequestration, sequestra[tion] 1649, 1650, 1651, 1652, 1653, 1654 John Musson. John Yates, aforesaid, sequestrators. Thomas Silverwood, intrud.' in W. Phillimore, T. Blagg (eds.), *Leicestershire Parish Registers* (London: 1909), vol.2, 47.

³¹ Chamberlain may sometimes have served during this period too.

Gilbert Woodward became minister, remaining there until after the Restoration. So this small village had at least seven different ministers between 1649 and 1660.³²

The Triers' Registers show that Hertfordshire had an equally high level of clerical turnover and there, Thomas Silverwood's one-time parish of Codicote fared little better than Rotherby.³³ Thomas Rookes served as minister for forty-three years, until his death in 1652, although the church survey noted that there was no settled minister in 1650 and the parishioners sometimes employed a preacher.³⁴ Perhaps, aged about 70, Rookes had become too infirm to preach?³⁵ In 1652, John Lightfoot took over the parish but stayed only until Silverwood's intrusion in 1654. Silverwood did not serve the parish himself, but employed a temporary preacher there until he had moved to Nottinghamshire by the spring of 1656, when Robert Pecke was approved for Codicote by the Triers. Pecke stayed until just after the Restoration. Thus Codicote experienced at least five different ministers in the 1650s.

Unfortunately, it is not clear why the incumbents at Rotherby or Codicote moved on so frequently, other than the sequestrations of the early incumbents and the failing health of Silverwood's wife, which had prevented his settlement at

³² *WR*, 233, 240; *Comm.* V/4, ff.42, 319; *Comm.* III/5, f.105; *Comm.* III/7, f.176.

³³ 33% of Hertfordshire livings appeared in the Registers.

³⁴ *Comm.* XIIa/10, ff.270-80; *BL*, Lansdowne MS. 459/1, ff.100v-101r; *Urwick, Herts*, 272.

³⁵ *Venn*, vol.3, 485.

Rotherby in 1652.³⁶ Tellingly, however, both parishes were impropriated; in the 1650 church survey, Rotherby was valued at only £30 a year (but only £8 in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* and in the 1680 *Valuations of Preferments*), whilst Codicote was worth only £20 (only £7 in the *Valor* and *Valuations*).³⁷ Other similar examples exist: back in Leicestershire, six miles from Rotherby, another impropriated living, Ab Kettleby, had five, possibly six, incumbents between 1652 and 1660, and it was valued at £15 a year.³⁸

These high levels of clerical turnover in the 1650s have hitherto scarcely been recognised and even the Triers' Registers, which have helped to reveal the changes above, almost certainly under-record the degree of clerical movement and parochial turmoil during the 1650s.³⁹ Only Reid's analysis of Canterbury diocese has begun to uncover the potential scale of unrecorded turnover, suggesting considerably higher changes of minister in the 1650s in the diocese than are recorded in the modern sources, such as *Walker Revised*.⁴⁰ If Reid's findings are applicable beyond Kent, this means that the turnover in Rotherby,

³⁶ Urwick, *Herts*, 274.

³⁷ Comm. XIIa/12, f.280 (Codicote). In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (and those valuations which drew on it both before and after the revolution), Rotherby was worth £8 pa, Ab Kettleby £15 pa and Codicot £7 pa. It is hard to reconcile the valuations in 1650 with those in the *Valor*. Note: there are two Codicot/Coticot/Caldecots in Hertfordshire: Urwick, *Herts*, 782; Ecton, 236, 243; Anon, *A Book of the Valuations of all the Ecclesiasticall Preferments in England and Wales* (1680), 122, 137, 155, 158.

³⁸ Ecton, 236; S. Lewis (ed.), *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (London: 1845) (5th ed.), vol.1, 7-8.

³⁹ Everitt briefly remarked on high clerical turnover: A. Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion* (Leicester: LUP, 1966), 300. Evidence produced here for the Midlands and for the north in Section 4.1, 373 demonstrates that this was not a purely Kentish phenomenon.

⁴⁰ Reid, 'Diocese of Canterbury', 197-9.

Codicote, Ab Kettleby and elsewhere could have been even higher than the figures given here. Uncertainties in the narratives - such as at Codicot, where one source suggests that Thomas Rookes served until 1652, whilst another notes that there was no settled minister in 1650 - allow for additional changes in ministers to have taken place that are as yet unrecognised.

Was there a firm link between impropriations and clerical turnover? It seems likely that impropriated parishes with small stipends were unpopular with ministers unless subject to an augmentation, and there is evidence of very critical consideration by prospective ministers of the financial arrangements of vacant livings. Struggling to find an incumbent for one of his North Yorkshire impropriations, Lord Wharton finally received word from friends of a potential candidate, but who

disired us more distinctly to enquire after the renews of the place (which as we remember yr lordship told us was £70 p/a) and further which way it arisith, whether by tithes or by composition and payment of money. And whether the place be a sequestration or no ...⁴¹

Elsewhere, the 1650 survey of Theydon Bois in Essex had noted that the impropiator, Edward Elrington, refused to pay for a minister and the parish could afford only £20 a year, 'which Allowance is so small that noe godly able

⁴¹ Bodl., MS. Rawlinson Letters 52, f.273r.

minister will accept it'.⁴² Furthermore ministers in impropriated livings could find it difficult to actually get hold of the income they were entitled to receive. In 1655, William Hill, minister of Helaugh in Yorkshire, wrote to Lord Wharton, the impropiator, for payment of his augmentation, saying, 'I have not received the least penny upon that account since my sitting downe here which is now more then 2 yeares [...]'.⁴³ Four years later, Hill was still writing to Wharton, 'in refference to the arrears off augmentation due to mee synce my being at Helaugh', demonstrating the weak position of the clergy who served impropriated parishes.⁴⁴

The lack of reliable statistics on impropriations, however, makes it impossible to prove a clear connection with levels of turnover. Figures taken from the 1650 survey of Essex suggest that only seven per cent of the county's livings were impropriated and yet Essex had one of the highest levels of clerical turnover in the country, so clearly other factors were more significant there.⁴⁵ Furthermore, a tentative comparison between the livings in the Registers and impropriations recorded in a partial survey undertaken sometime in the 1650s, BL. Lansdowne MS. 459/1, shows no obvious correlation.⁴⁶

⁴² Comm. XIIa/8, f.40-1.

⁴³ Bodl., MS. Rawlinson Letters 52, f.247r.

⁴⁴ Bodl., MS. Rawlinson Letters 52, ff.55r, 104.

⁴⁵ Smith, *Essex*, 236-321.

⁴⁶ For discussion of the interpretative problems surrounding Lansdowne MS. 459/1, and other sources see *Appendix E*.

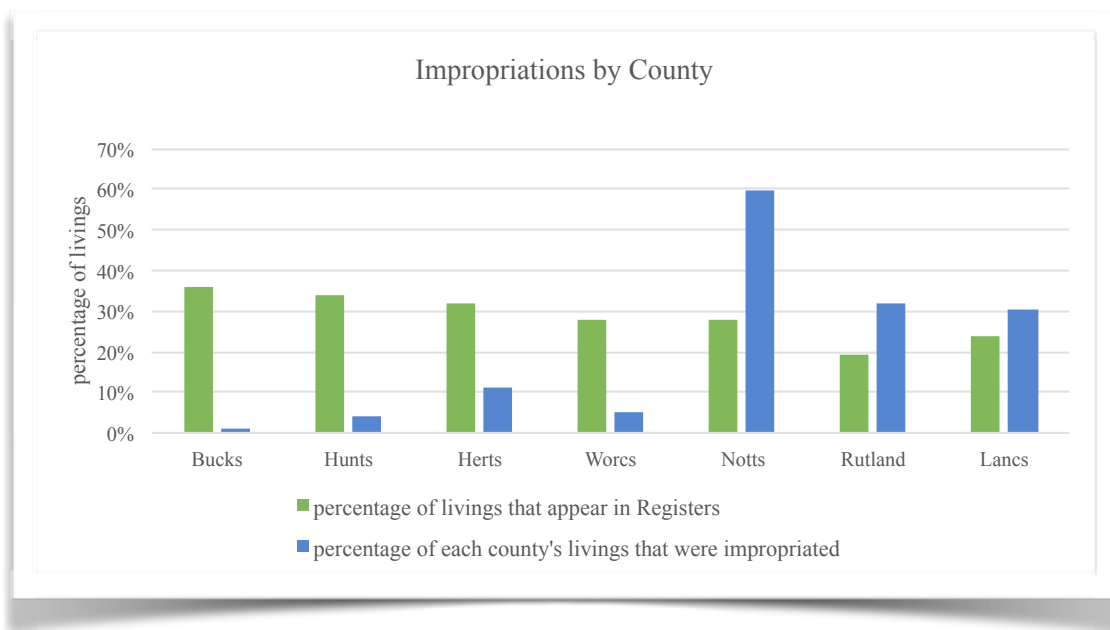


fig. 14 Comparison of percentages of livings in the Registers with percentages of impropriated livings⁴⁷

The problematic nature of the figures (see n. 47 below) may mean that this chart is too uncertain to be helpful, or it may be that there was no simple relationship between livings in the Registers and impropriations. So, despite the suggestive nature of the evidence in Rotherby, Codicot and elsewhere, the extent of the link between impropriations, impoverished parishes and clerical turnover remains

⁴⁷ The counties used in this chart are those for which the Lansdowne MS 459/1 parish totals are close to the total parishes in the parish list used for this thesis. It seems unlikely, however, that the very low numbers of impropriations in the first four counties can be correct. For example: BL, Harley MS. 280/29 (c.1603) gives 76 impropriations for the total 241 parishes in Worcester diocese, which included south Warwickshire. The parish totals used in this thesis and Lansdowne MS. 459/1 suggest that Worcestershire had c.200 livings, (20% fewer than the diocese). Reducing the Harleian MS. 280/29 diocesan total *and* its impropriation figure by 20% suggests there should have been c.61 impropriations in Worcestershire, but Lansdowne MS. 459/1 only gives 10.

unclear. Thus it, too, is an inadequate model for fully explaining the distribution of the Triers' approvals.⁴⁸

Clerical poverty, deep-seated royalism and perhaps unrecorded appointments by local triers, which may have contributed to regional variations in approvals, still do not fully account for the concentration of activity in the central south and east of England. In these areas, located within easy reach of London, ministers were unlikely to have been allowed to attend local Triers. Latent royalism was also unlikely; puritanism had found an early foothold in the east of England at least, despite (or perhaps because of) the harsh Laudianism of Matthew Wren, Bishop of Norwich, in the later 1630s. Moreover, East Anglia had formed the parliamentary heartlands during the civil war and an extensive godly reformation of its ministry had been carried out during the 1640s under the Earl of Manchester and the Committee for Plundered Ministers. Tellingly, only one of the approximately 150 sequestrations/ejections carried out in Essex, for example, can definitely be ascribed to the 1650s.⁴⁹ There may have been more approvals for augmentations, but this cannot account for sustained higher levels of approvals throughout the Protectorate. So it seems that other more localised influences, perhaps in combination with some of the factors above, must have been responsible for the high levels of activity in the south and east.

⁴⁸ For a less negative, if earlier, assessment of impropriations, see L. Kaufmann, 'Ecclesiastical Improvements, Lay Impropriations, and the Building of a Post-reformation Church in England, 1560–1600' in *The Historical Journal* (2015), vol.58, 20-1.

⁴⁹ *WR*, 154 (Holbeach); Smith, *Essex*, 124.

One such factor might have related to the values of benefices. It was widely said by critics that the Triers 'cherry-picked' wealthy livings to reward their own favourites, a view articulated in James Heath's vituperative commentary on the Commission: 'not a Living of value but what a Friend or the best Purchaser was admitted into'.⁵⁰ If even partly true, this might help to account for the higher levels of turnover in counties nearer London, where valuable livings located conveniently near the capital may have been used as political currency, passing between favoured incumbents more often than elsewhere. But is there evidence for this hypothesis?

A closer look at one county - Essex - throws some light on the situation for this region. Close to London and home to numerous respected circles of godly clerics, Essex must have been an attractive prospect for many ministers. If accusations of bias by the Triers were true, Essex should reveal compelling evidence.⁵¹ The 1650 surveys recorded that out of roughly 400 livings in Essex, c.286 (72%) were worth less than £100 a year, whilst c.111 (28%) were worth £100 or more. Of the 150 livings that appeared in the Registers at least once, eighty-two (55%) were worth less than £100 a year, whilst only thirty-six (24%) were worth more than £100 a year.⁵² This means that a third of Essex's richer livings were subject to a Triers' approval, but so were a third of its poorer livings.

⁵⁰ J. Heath, *A Chronicle of the Late Intestine War in the Three Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London: 1676), 359.

⁵¹ See also Section 3.3, 296-8, 305-11 for accusations of lack of ordination and education.

⁵² Some did not appear in the survey: Smith, *Essex*, 236-321.

And indeed, the bottom line was that, numerically, the majority of the Triers' approvals in Essex were for poorer livings. This begins to challenge the accusation that the Triers 'concentrated on' wealthier livings, and indeed, Gillian Ignjatijevic reached a similar conclusion in her study of the diocese of Canterbury.⁵³

Some of the approvals in Essex, of course, probably related to approvals for augmentations, but overall the percentage was low. Only seven of the livings receiving augmentations (in a list of twenty-one grants of augmentations compiled by the Trustees in the middle of the Protectorate) also appear in the Registers. As a proportion of the 186 total entries for Essex in the Registers, this is less than four percent.⁵⁴ Moreover, not all of those seven entries in the Registers were necessarily triggered by an application for an augmentation, even though the living did receive one at some point. For example, the Registers record three approvals of ministers for Wanstead, which had been receiving an augmentation since at least 1650. Paul Amyraut was approved in 1654, followed by Leonard Hoare in 1656 and corroborated by Cromwell.⁵⁵ Both men were new incumbents to the living so all three entries were approvals for 'new' incumbencies (at Wanstead) rather than indicating the granting of approvals to

⁵³ G. Ignjatijevic, 'The Parish Clergy in the Diocese of Canterbury and Archdeaconry of Bedford in the reign of Charles I and under the Commonwealth' (University of Sheffield: unpublished PhD, 1986), 181.

⁵⁴ A similar list compiled at the end of 1659 shows a total of 55 livings receiving augmentations, 18 of which appear in the Registers, or 10% of the total entries for Essex in the Registers. This includes, however, some augmentations granted after the cessation of the Registers: Smith, *Essex*, 211-13.

⁵⁵ Comm. III/3, *lib.1*, f.70; Comm. III/5, f.22.

sitting incumbents applying for augmentations. Thus it cannot be assumed that where livings were in receipt of an augmentation, a corresponding entry in the Registers related to an application for that augmentation. Indeed, overall it seems that the great majority of entries in the Registers for Essex at least, did indicate new incumbencies and, thus, clerical turnover. Further county studies are needed to confirm or overturn these findings.⁵⁶

The evidence discussed above on the values of benefices and on augmentations does not satisfactorily explain the higher levels of turnover in Essex. Can aggregating information on several aspects of the county's livings lead to more useful conclusions? 121 (30%) of all Essex livings appeared *once* in the Registers, but a further twenty-nine (7%) appeared twice or three times. These twenty-nine parishes, however, were spread apparently randomly across the county from Littlebury in the north, to Wivenhoe in the east and East Ham in the west. Mapping the parishes experiencing multiple turnover in Durham, Oxfordshire, Kent, Cumberland, Cornwall, Sussex and Cheshire has also revealed that the distribution of such parishes was geographically random, suggesting that this 'randomness' applied nationally.

Back in Essex, of the four parishes experiencing most turnover, three were worth *less* than £100 a year: Childerditch was an impropriation, whilst Littlebury and Layer Breton were sequestrations. The fourth, Purleigh, was also under

⁵⁶ Ignjatijevic, 181.

sequestration but it was valued at £218 a year.⁵⁷ In fact, of the 150 Essex livings in the Registers, nearly half (70) had been sequestrated in the 1640s, proportionally rather more than the thirty-seven per cent sequestration rate across all the county's livings.⁵⁸ Less than a third (27%) of these sequestrations, however, were worth over £100 a year. Finally, thirty (7%) of the county's livings were impropriations, ten of which appeared in the Registers, but only three of these appeared more than once.⁵⁹ This information is summarised below:

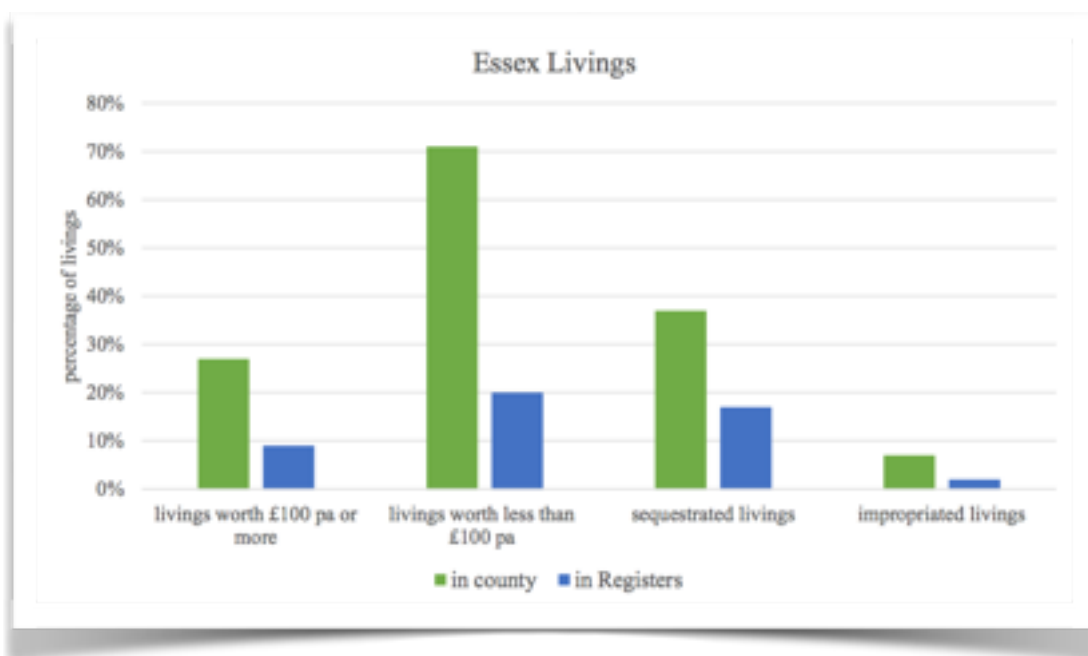


fig. 15 Values and status of Essex livings

The evidence above shows that the Triers approved ministers for - or in - more poorer livings than richer, and that a somewhat higher proportion of their approvals were for sequestrated livings than the proportion of sequestrations in

⁵⁷ Smith, *Essex*, 127, 246, 264, 286.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 125-8.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 236-321; BL, Lansdowne MS. 459/1 gives 13%.

the county as a whole. Both findings suggest that clerical poverty and parochial conflict could indeed have been significant factors in ministerial turnover. The random and dispersed occurrence of livings experiencing multiple turnover, however, implies that the causes for such instability related to individual parishes, rather than across a wider area. Parochial poverty and conflict would be consistent with this hypothesis too, but other factors, including the patronage and location of such livings were probably also important.

Even so, the influence of poverty and conflict on turnover in Essex cannot definitely explain the higher numbers of approvals in the south and east compared with other regions, without numerous comparative studies. Moreover, alternative explanations might also apply, particularly those which relate more closely to the approvals practice itself. The evidence for the existence of provincial Triers has already been discussed, but the extent of their operations is unclear.⁶⁰ Such groups may have settled a significant number of ministers, however, particularly in areas far from Whitehall, where trusted cliques of godly men formed a political and religious elite, such as Newcastle on Tyne.⁶¹

Administrative records may not have survived for local Triers, but there is some indirect evidence which supports the theory of unrecorded appointments; for example, although the Registers do include some approvals for 'public preachers', they do not record any of the complex movements of ministers into

⁶⁰ See Section 2.2, 82-6.

⁶¹ Bodl., MS. Rawlinson Letters 52, f.219r; Howell, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, 272.

and between public preaching positions in Newcastle during the Protectorate.⁶² Thus, whilst at face value the lower rates of approvals in areas far from London seem to suggest that such areas saw lower clerical turnover and appointments, it may be that there were higher levels of formal or informal provincial approvals, the records of which did not reach Whitehall.⁶³

The patchy recording of town preachers in Newcastle nevertheless suggests that it might be worth looking more closely at the rates of approvals generally in city parishes. Were the Triers more actively involved in settling ministers in major urban centres, particularly those which had formerly supported the king? Were urban parishes inherently more threatening to the regime, given the fluid social interactions possible in such areas? The Registers suggest not. *Figure 16* indicates the levels of approvals in a selection of ‘cities’ that had numerous livings:

[*cont.*]

⁶² Howell, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, 241-244.

⁶³ Subject to caveats over parish totals: see *Appendix E*.

settlement	approximate minimum no. of livings/parishes	Triers' approvals (including to preaching positions)
Canterbury	24	3
Cambridge	12	0
Colchester	12	2
Exeter	23	7
Lincoln*	9	1
Norwich	30	2
Oxford*	20	1
York*	22	3

fig. 16 Approvals in urban settlements (earlier royalist sympathies)*

Some of these towns, such as Colchester, had suffered considerable damage during the wars, resulting in ruined, vacant churches.⁶⁴ In others, the physical and economic effects of war pushed tiny urban parishes into financial collapse and, indeed, the surveys of the 1650s recommended some should be united with neighbouring parishes to provide a more adequate income.⁶⁵ There is no evidence from *figure 16*, however, that the regime had a policy of proactively engineering presentations or approvals to fill empty urban livings; indeed the random and reactive nature of the Triers' work seems to be confirmed by this evidence.

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⁶⁴ See Section 1.2, 54. The higher figure for Exeter is discussed in Section 3.1, 225-6.

⁶⁵ See, for example, recommendation for uniting St Peter's and St Bennet's, Paul's Wharf, London: Comm. XIIa/20.

If geographic and economic factors do not seem to account for the extent of the Triers' approvals, does the chronology of their work provide an alternative way of understanding it? The chronological patterns of the Triers' approvals have been briefly outlined in Section 3.1, but can a more detailed analysis shed light on the regional variations in the Registers? Unfortunately, comparisons between counties suggest that, as with the geographical analysis, the evidence is ambiguous and variable.

The chronologies of approvals for each region are given in *figure 17* below, and show peaks in approvals in 1656 and 1658 in most regions.⁶⁶

[*cont.*]

⁶⁶ Note: on all following charts, the almost universal downward trend in 1659 arises only from the cessation of records in May. Moreover, the approvals in 1654 aggregate appointments from 1653 and 1654.

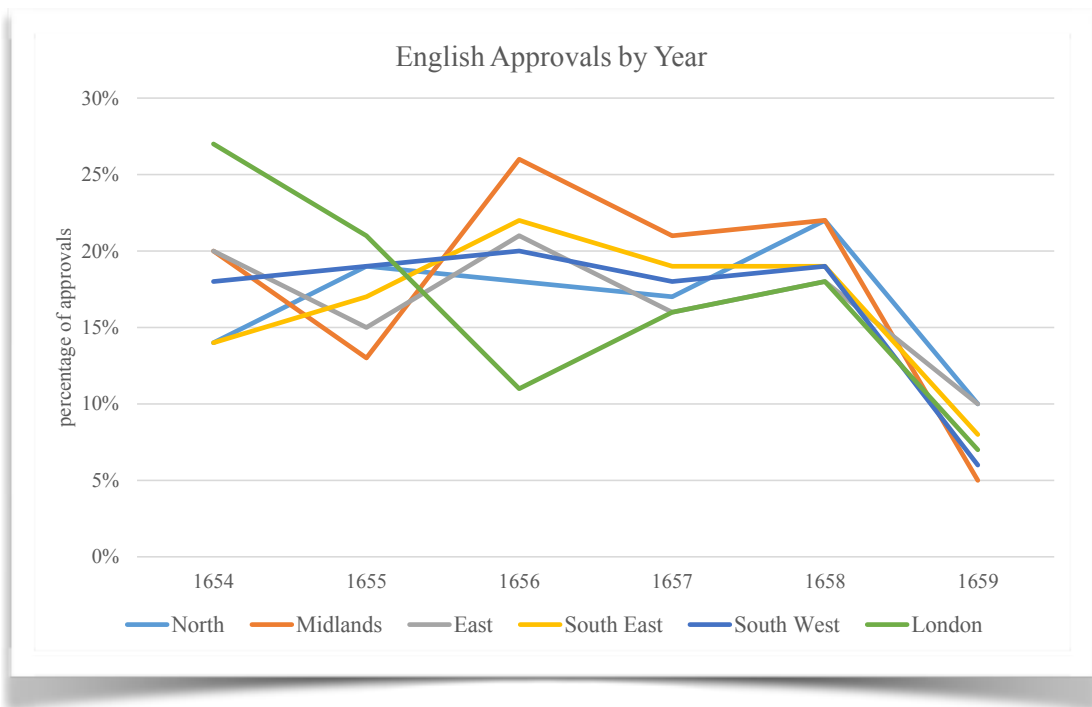


fig. 17 Chronology of all English approvals, as a percentage of each region's approvals⁶⁷

[cont.]

⁶⁷ Thus 26% of the total Triers' approvals in the Midlands occurred in 1656. For constituent counties, see *Appendix F*.

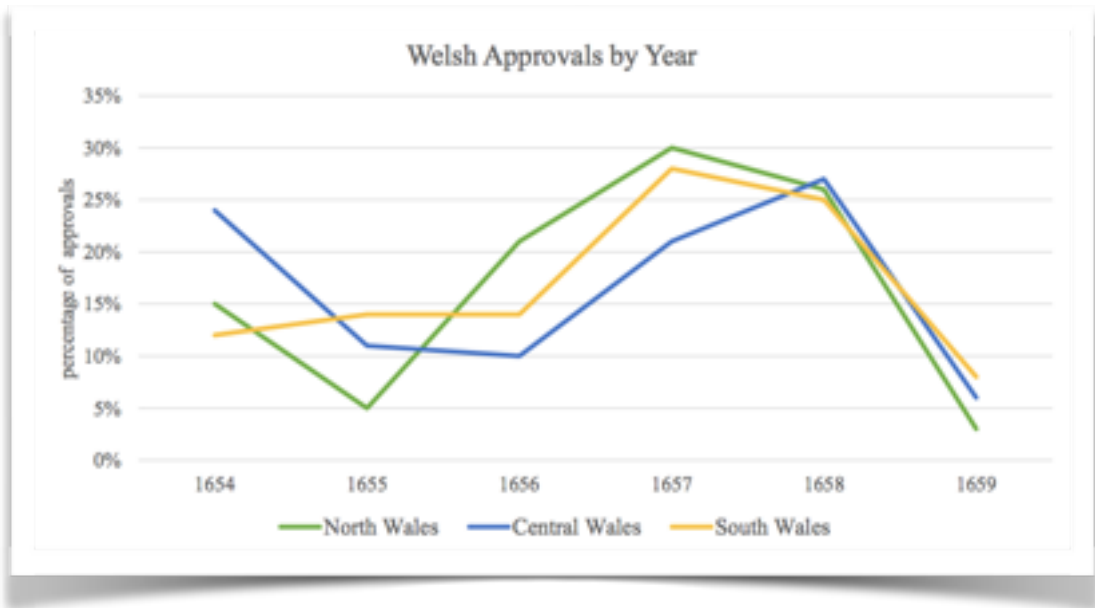


fig. 18 Chronology of all Welsh approvals, as a percentage of each region's approvals

A more detailed breakdown of these regions, however, demonstrates that by no means all counties followed this pattern.

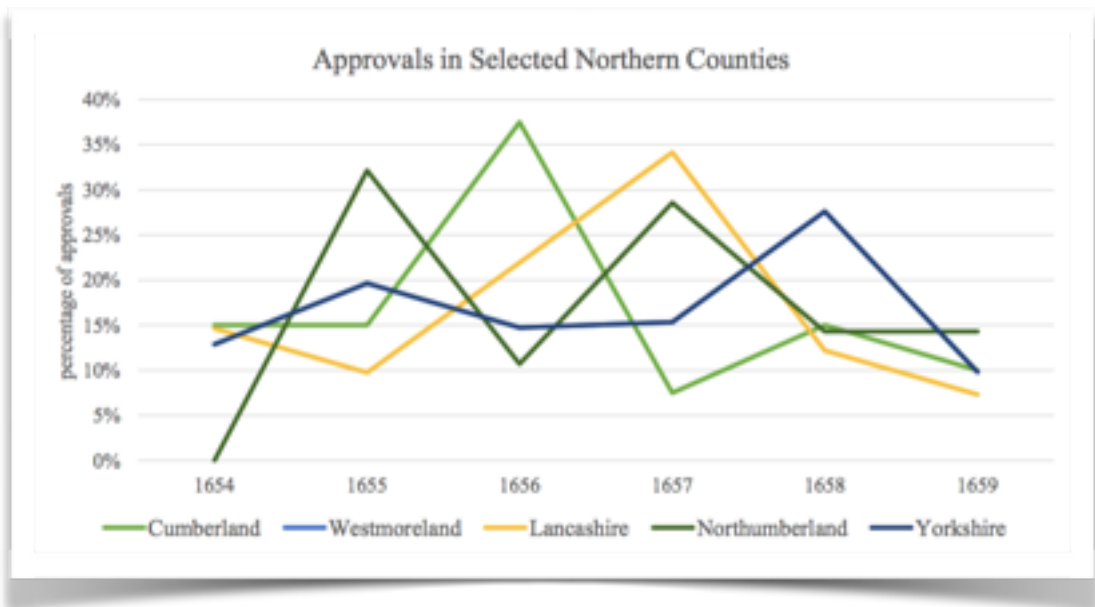


fig. 19 Chronology of selected northern counties' approvals

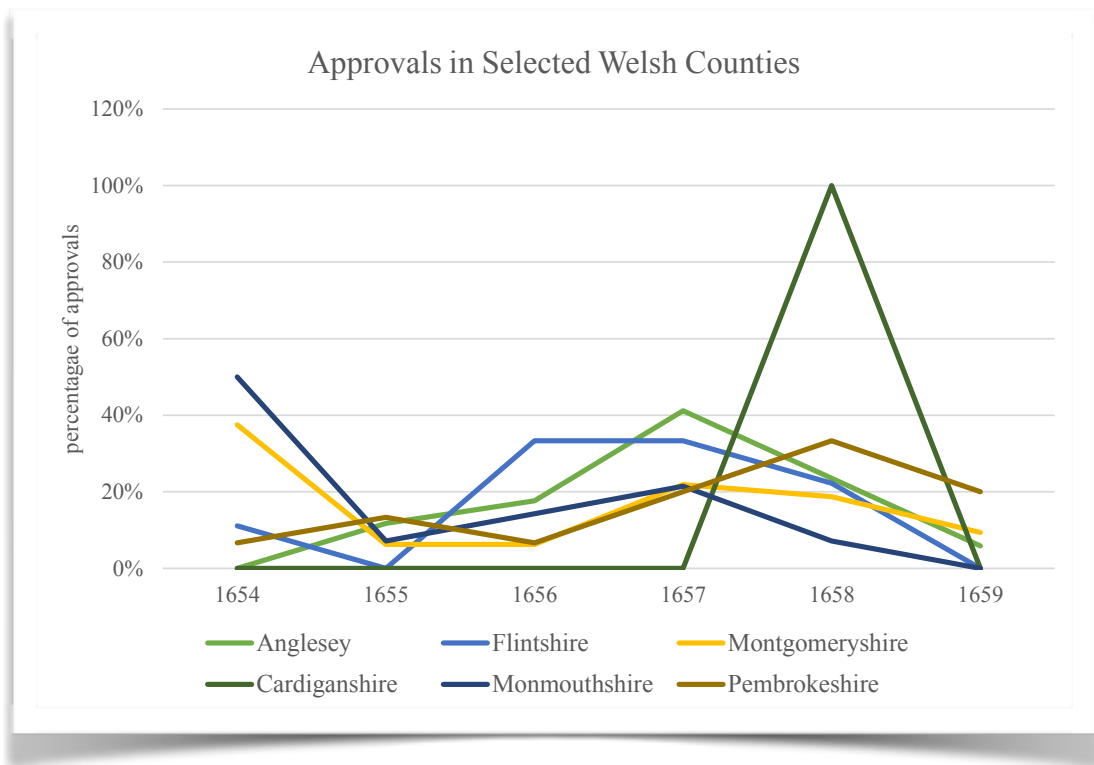


fig. 20 Chronology of selected Welsh counties' approvals

Despite the diversity in the rates of approvals for different counties, certain trends are worth comment. The notable increase in approvals in many counties, from lows in 1655 to higher levels in 1656, coincided with the period of rule by the Major-Generals, from November 1655 - January 1657. Although not tasked with reforming the ministry itself, they spearheaded the regime's drive to enforce godliness and to tighten up on security, in the wake of the royalist uprisings of March 1655. A key aspect of this was to implement Cromwell's proclamation of July 1655, reinforcing an earlier ban on previously ejected ministers taking up incumbencies without prior approval by the Protector or Council of State and reasserting the authority of the Triers over appointments to benefices.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ *A&O*, vol.2, 1025-6.

As part of this drive, many of the Major-Generals also attempted to galvanise greater activity from their local Ejectors' Commissions, and in September they received direct instructions to prevent royalists from supporting or employing ministers who had previously been ejected for 'delinquency or scandal' and authorising them to imprison any previously ejected minister who sought to teach or preach or administer the sacraments, unless he could prove his reformation.⁶⁹ Although the implementation of this second instruction was delayed until early 1656, the effect of these orders was to flush out a number of unapproved ministers during the autumn and winter of 1655-6, many of whom subsequently sought re-admittance to the church; some, though not all, were then approved by the Triers over the following months.⁷⁰

Thus it might be tentatively suggested that the peaks in approvals in 1656 might indicate greater efficacy by some of the Major-Generals in enforcing these proclamations than others. This hypothesis rests on the causal relationship between the removal of an unapproved minister and a subsequent Triers' approval, either of a new incumbent for the now-empty living, or of the unapproved minister wishing to *retain* his living. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that not *every* removal of a minister would have resulted in an

⁶⁹ SP 18/100 ff.310-11; SP 18/123 f.63.

⁷⁰ Durston argues that the proclamations were not widely enforced, but the evidence in the Registers and petitions to the Council suggest that the overall affect was probably more significant than he recognised. A detailed study of all the ministers approved nationally in 1656, which might confirm this suggestion, is beyond the scope of this thesis: C. Durston, *Cromwell's Major-Generals: Godly Government during the English Revolution* (Manchester: MUP, 2001), 166.

approval. Even so, it is worth a closer investigation of the chronology of approvals, to see if there were similarities between areas under particular Major-Generals.

Figures 21-23 show the approvals in the Associations governed by Major-Generals Boteler and Goffe, Packer and his deputy, Fleetwood:

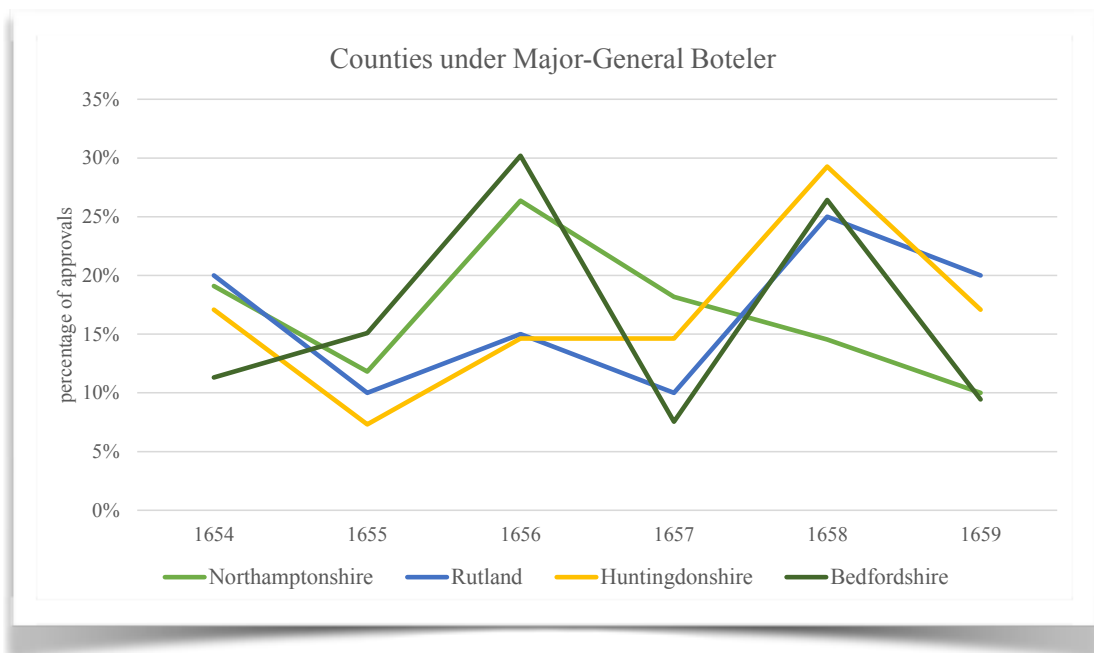


fig. 21 Approvals in counties under Major-General Boteler's rule⁷¹

⁷¹ In *figures 21-23*, the chronologies are shown before, during and after the regime of the Major-Generals, for the counties within each Major-General's authority.

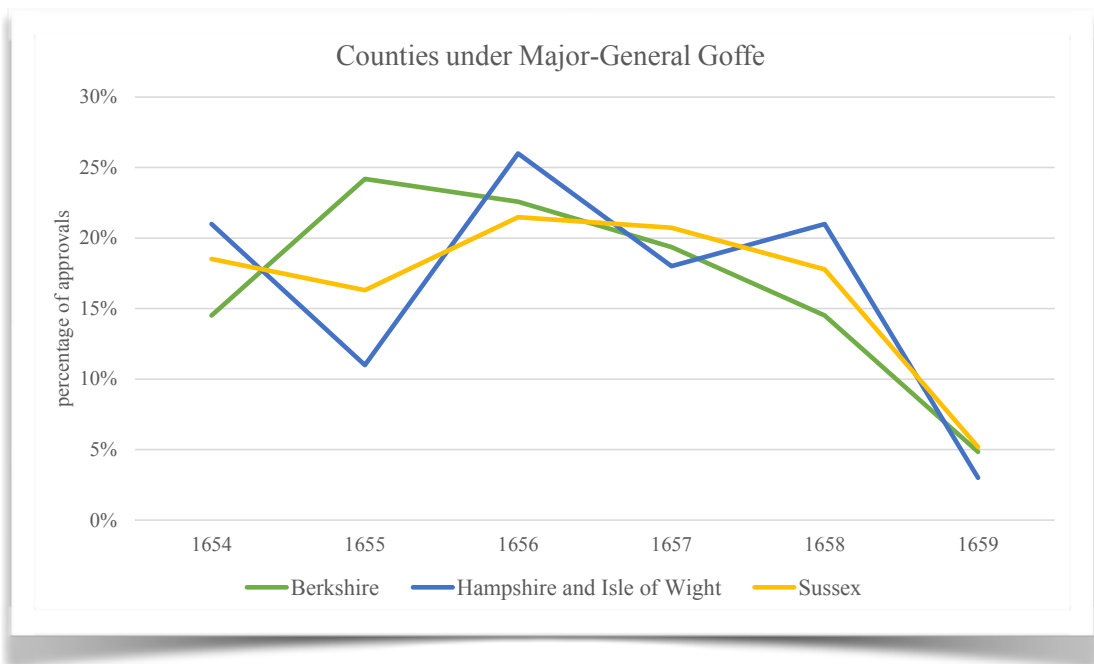


fig. 22 Approvals in counties under Major-General Goffe's rule

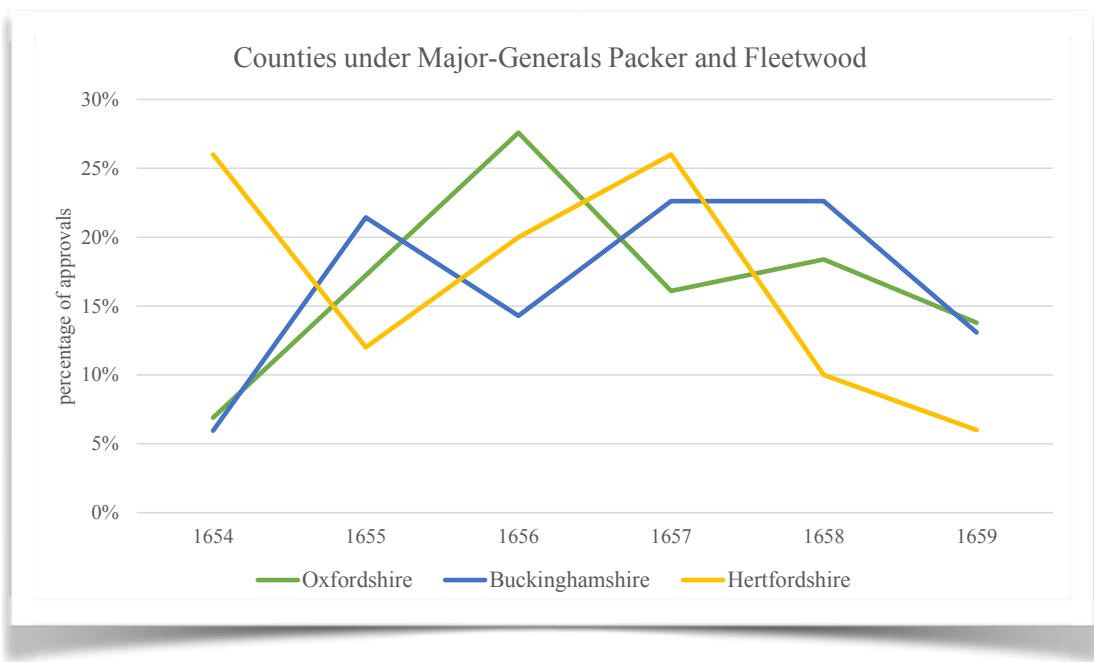


fig. 23 Approvals in counties under Major-Generals Packer and Fleetwood's rule

These graphs demonstrate that whilst Boteler's counties show the typical increase from the low level of 1655 to a higher level in 1656, Berkshire under Goffe and Buckinghamshire under Fleetwood (Packer's deputy) did not. Did this reflect less effective strategies by Goffe and Fleetwood in removing scandalous ministers, in comparison with Boteler and Packer, or were there other county circumstances which led to these different patterns? The peak in Berkshire in 1655, for example, might have been the result of the relatively high number of ejections in 1654 by the enthusiastic and hardline county Ejectors, leaving a number of empty livings to be filled over the following year (1655).⁷² This might have left few unapproved ministers in the county to be affected by the proclamations later that year.

Why Buckinghamshire experienced a dip in approvals between 1655 and 1657 is unclear.⁷³ Lying between London and Oxford, it should have been a popular location for the clergy, yet it had one of the least stable ministries: over thirty-six per cent of its total livings were subject to at least one approval and seven per cent of the county's total livings experienced multiple turnover. Under the Major-Generals, its governorship was deputed from the Councillor of State Charles Fleetwood, to Charles' own relative, the MP George Fleetwood, who lived in the county, but there is no evidence to explain the reasons for the increase then the decrease in approvals there from 1655 to 1656.

⁷² Hughes, 'Public Profession', 106.

⁷³ Although the caveats over total county livings and percentages of augmentation approvals must always be borne in mind.

The approval rates in some other counties including Northumberland, Pembrokeshire, Cornwall and London (see *fig. 24*) also remained similar to 1655 or fell.

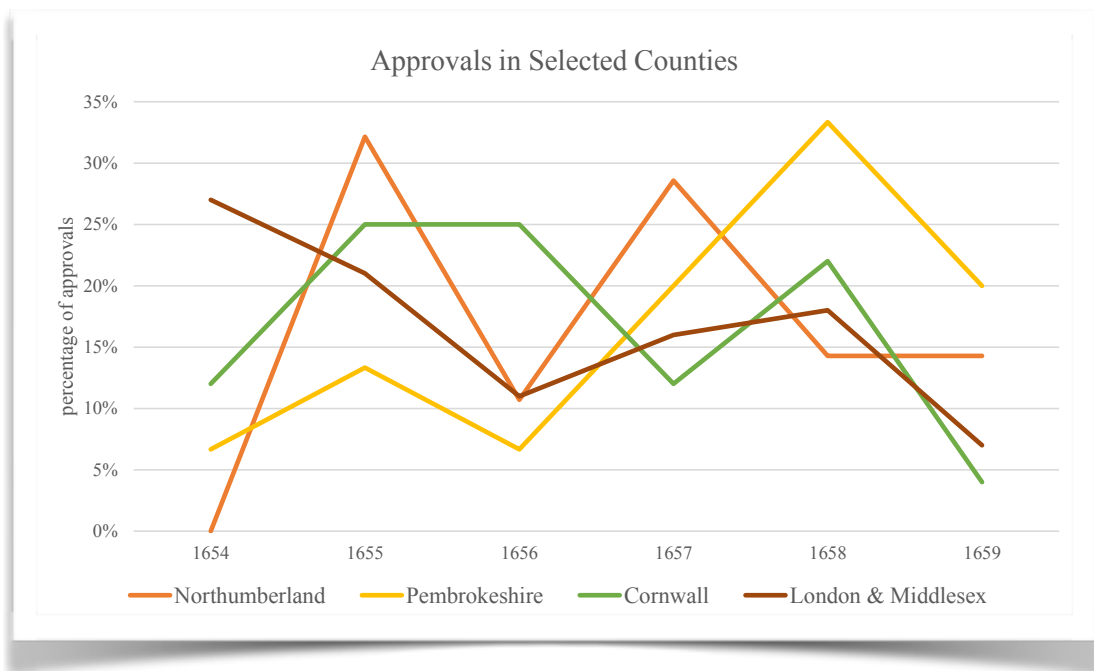


fig. 24 Approvals in counties that do not show decreases and increases in 1655 and 1656

In London, the city's parishes were largely emptied of their incumbents in the early 1640s, after which most experienced several changes in minister before 1654. Whilst there were undoubtedly parishes which favoured episcopalianism throughout the Interregnum - for example, St Peters, Paul's Wharf, St Botolph's, Aldgate and St Leonard, Eastcheap - on the whole the London ministry was radically reshaped during the 1640s. In 1654, moreover, it experienced one of the

highest percentages of Triers' approvals of any county. It is tempting to suggest that by 1655, therefore, there may have been few unapproved or royalist ministers to be affected by the proclamations, which might explain the consequently low number of approvals in 1656. The situation was probably more complex, however. At St Margarets, Westminster, for example, the incumbent Richard Vyner was a known royalist and yet he preached actively, even to MPs, until 1657, when he, and one of the parish lecturers, Thomas Warmestry, who also had episcopalian sympathies, were replaced by the more godly Seth Ward and Edward Pearce.⁷⁴ This suggests that other factors must also have affected the chronology of approvals in London.

The uneven pattern of approvals in the northern counties far from London (*fig. 19*), on the other hand, may reflect in part the difficulties experienced by some patrons in finding ministers willing to settle in remote and/or poor livings. The Nottinghamshire ministers John Whitlock and William Reynolds informed Lord Wharton in 1658,

We made the utmost enquiry with which our short stay at Cambridge permitted for a fitt person to recommend to yr lordship, for yr living in the north but we could not meet with any person whilst we were there that would undertake the place being in such a remote part of the nation.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ J. Merritt, *Westminster 1640-60* (Manchester: MUP, 2013), 246-7.

⁷⁵ Bodl., MS. Rawlinson Letters 52, f.273r

Thus the lower and more variable rates of approval in distant counties may partly reflect these problems of recruitment, besides suggesting that some patrons - or local Triers - may have been forced (or chosen) to settle men temporarily without recourse to the Commission in London. These general hypotheses are impossible to substantiate as being directly responsible for different rates of approval, so does a more detailed breakdown of the chronology of approvals offer a clearer explanation? Rates of approvals by month in some counties are given below.

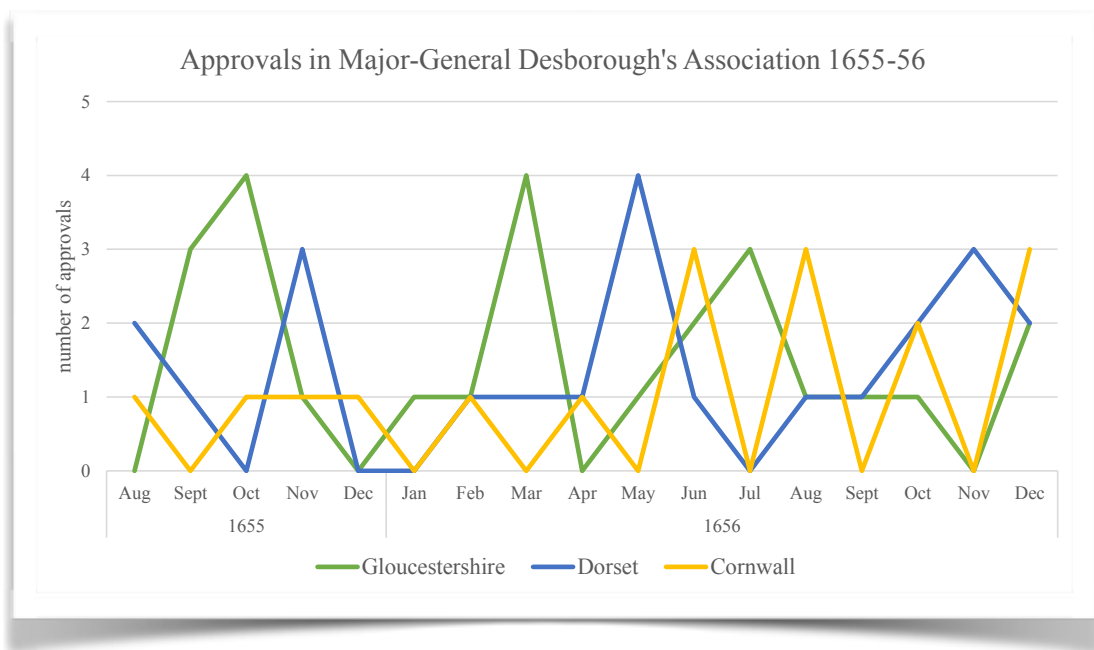


fig. 25 Monthly approvals in counties under Major-General Desborough, 1655-56⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Note caveat on Dorset, this Section, 176

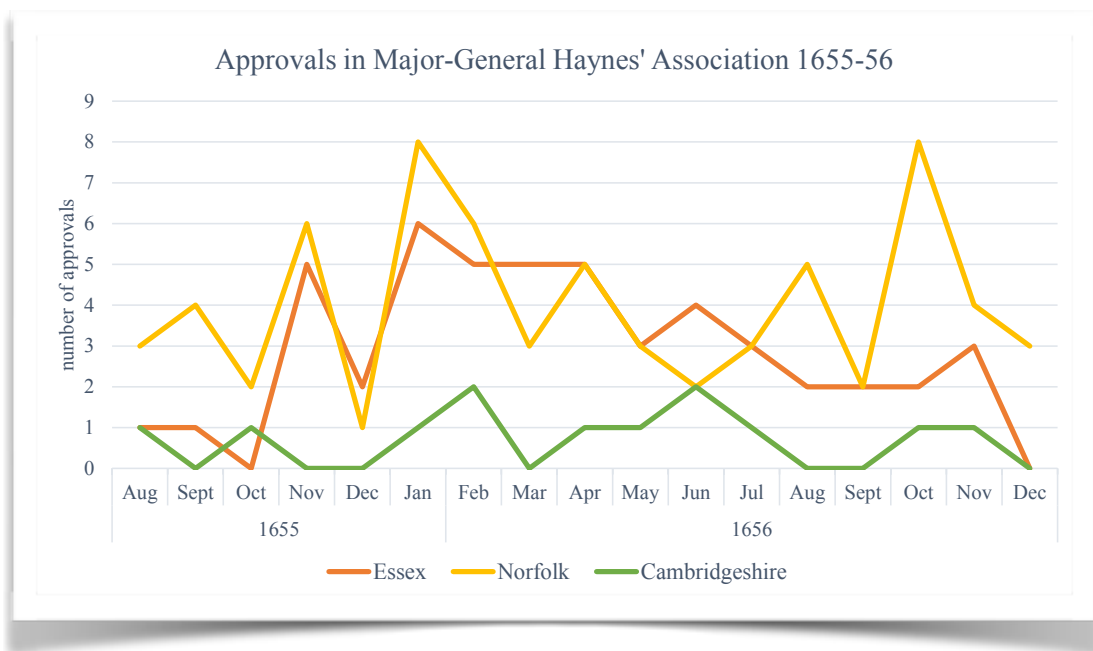


fig. 26 Monthly approvals in counties under Major-General Haynes, 1655-56

These charts show that whilst some counties under Desborough and Haynes did experiences slight peaks following the two Proclamations of 1655-56, the variable rates in approvals are, on the whole, statistically insignificant. Broken down by month, many of the peaks and troughs are created by the approvals of only one or two ministers, from which it is unsafe to draw comparative conclusions. Moreover, the rates are notably different even between counties under the same Major General.

The chronology of approvals across the Protectorate (*fig. 17*) also shows a general dip and rise in approvals of 1657-58. This too is difficult to explain. The regime did not enact any punitive legislation in 1657 which might naturally have

led to higher levels of clerical turnover. The case of the Quaker, James Naylor, in 1656 provoked heated political debate over the limits of toleration in the Second Protectorate Parliament, but it is unlikely that the increase in approvals related to this concern. Nor is it easy to ascribe the increase to the issuing of the Humble Petition and Advice in 1657; nevertheless, the peak is significant enough that a detailed examination of the rates of approvals over these two years is worthwhile.

The monthly breakdowns below show that although there were some minor peaks in the autumn of 1657 and spring 1658, which may reflect the traditional rhythms of the agriculture year, the differences are too minor and too varied to be statistically robust.⁷⁷

[*cont.*]

⁷⁷ See Section 2.5, 168-9.

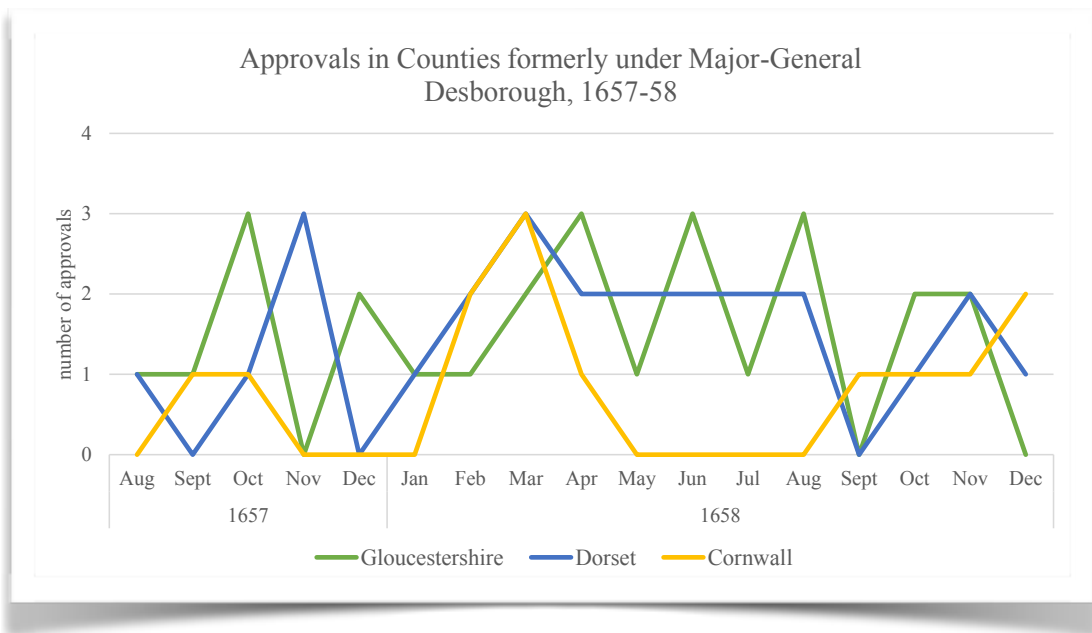


fig. 27 Monthly approvals in counties formerly under Major-General Desborough, 1657-58

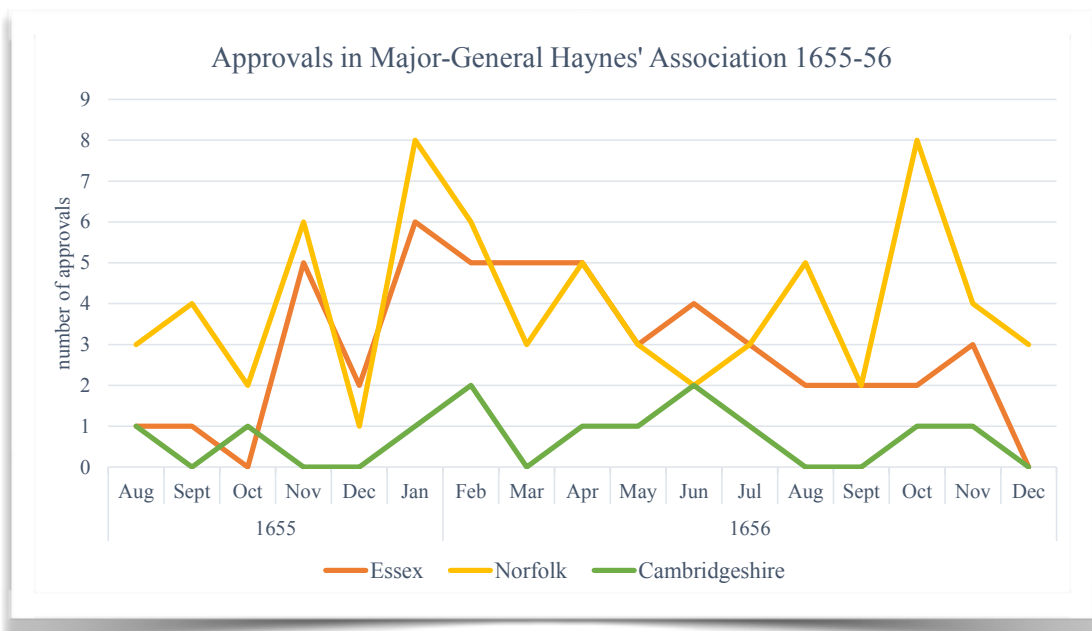


fig. 28 Monthly approvals in counties formerly under Major-General Haynes, 1657-58

It seems, therefore, that any lessons to be learnt from the chronology of the Triers' approvals are most apparent at a regional and national level over a six year period, suggesting that the catalysts for the spikes in approvals in 1656 and 1658 were also likely to be national or at least regional. When broken down to a county level and analysed monthly, the patterns of approvals become less uniform and less reliable: even the low level of approvals that is nationally prominent in 1655 and, in many areas, in 1657, does not maintain a strong presence when the figures are broken down further.

Even so, several hypotheses for the variations in rates of approval can be put forward. In the first place, it seems unlikely that the dip in approvals in 1655 and the unrest surrounding the royalist rebellions and the regime's increased security measures that same year are purely coincidence. Furthermore, assuming there was probably a constant (if not necessarily consistent) level of clerical movement in any single year, a slow-down in approvals in 1655 would have resulted in a small backlog of ministers awaiting the chance to move on once the 'crisis' had passed. This might account for the higher levels of approval in 1656.

Secondly, it is possible that the dip in approvals in many areas in 1657 followed by an increase in 1658 may have been linked to the passing of the 'Act for Quiet Enjoying of Sequestred Parsonages and Vicarages by the Present Incumbent' in June 1657, which gave greater security of tenure to ministers in sequestered livings. The same year, the repeal of a clause in the Marriage Act of 1653 authorised the clergy to carry out marriages in church again, and this too may

have bolstered faith in the ministry as a profession.⁷⁸ The time lag between the passing of legislation and ministers changing livings, might have resulted in this second rise in approvals six to nine months later in 1658. If these pieces of legislation did encourage ministers to enter or move parishes, however, the evidence remains ambiguous. Of the counties which probably had the highest number of sequestrations and where the Act for Sequestred Parsonages might be expected to have had the most impact, not all experienced increases in approvals in late 1657-58.

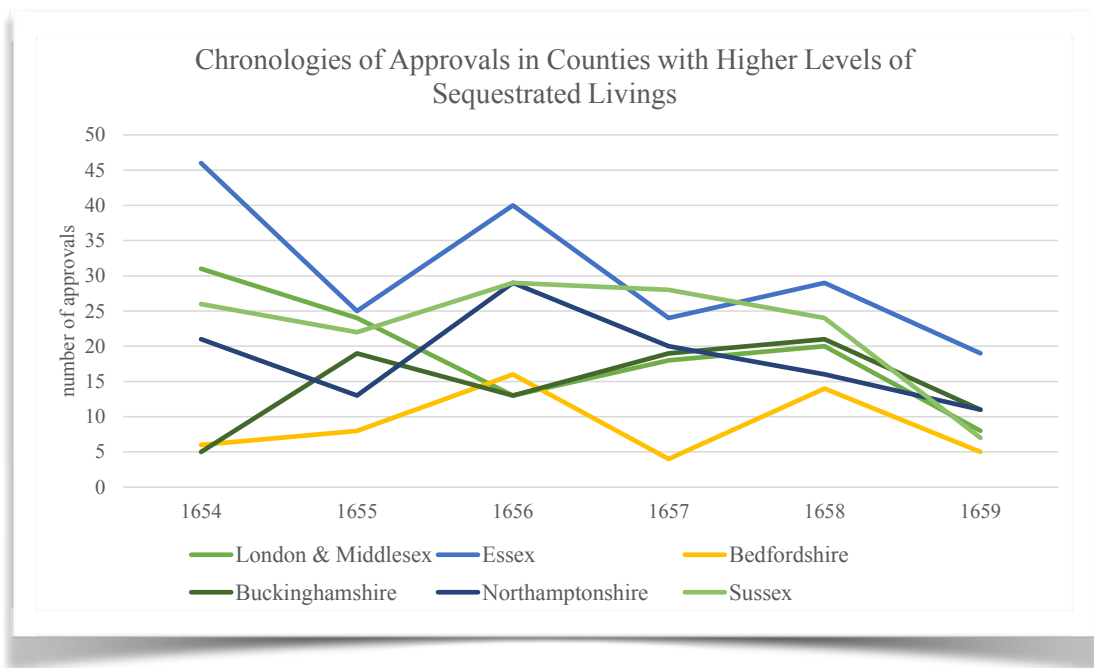


fig. 29 Approvals for English counties where 35% or more of the livings had been sequestrated or experienced clerical ejection since 1642⁷⁹

⁷⁸ A&O, vol.2, 1131, 1266-8.

⁷⁹ The sequestration figures here are from *Walker Revised*, xiv.

It is also possible that the increase in approvals in 1658 may have reflected slowly improving levels of confidence in lay patrons in the provinces, after the removal of the Major-Generals and cessation of the Decimation Tax. Perhaps the return to parliamentary government, followed by Cromwell's adoption of the Humble Petition and Advice in spring 1657, and the return of previously secluded MPs and administrators to both national and local government, encouraged a renewed sense of engagement in the localities by the gentry and county elite?⁸⁰ Even so, there is no conclusive evidence that this led directly to more clerical approvals.

It might also be thought that the establishment of county Voluntary Associations - providing mutual support and guidance for parish ministers - would also have encouraged more ministers to enter the church. In fact, the evidence suggests not. In Worcestershire, Cornwall and Devon, for example, where active Associations were founded between 1653 - 1655, there is little sign of increasing numbers of clergy in the later years of the Protectorate (*fig. 30*).

[*cont.*]

⁸⁰ C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, (Lincoln: HLC, 1980), 216.

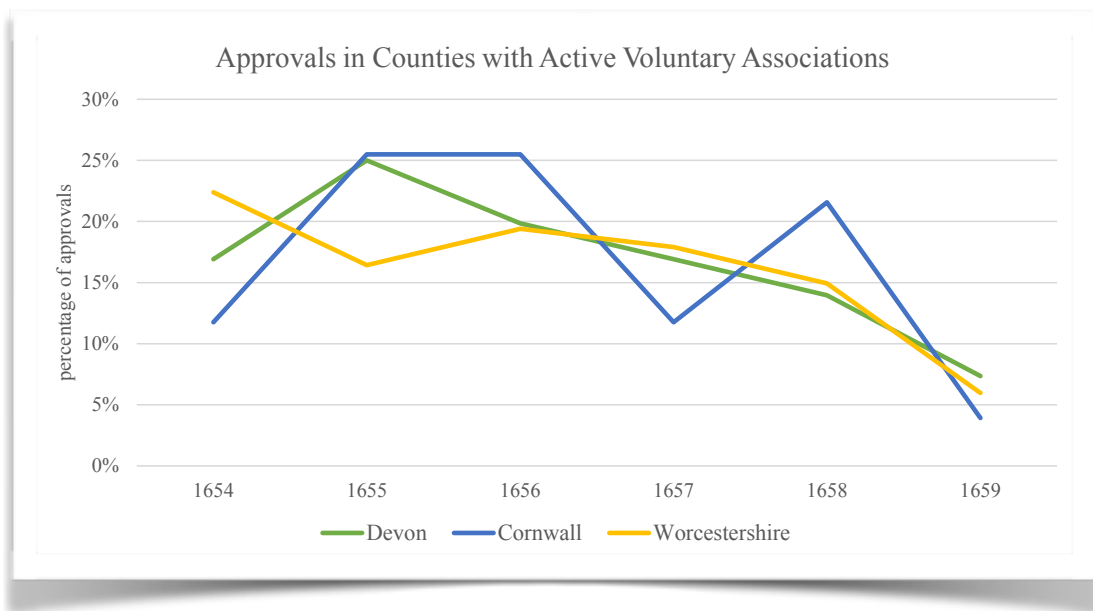


fig. 30 Approvals in Counties with Voluntary Associations

Although it seems likely that the annual variations in approvals resulted from national rather than local factors, this was not always the case. In Northumberland, for example, the local Ejectors' Commission recorded at least nineteen ejections in 1654-5 - most for scandal, but two as unapproved by the Triers - which created a substantial number of new vacancies; the Registers record subsequent approvals for only nine of these.⁸¹ In Exeter, moreover, a bitter conflict erupted in 1657 between representatives of the Commonalty and the mayor and council. In a heavy-handed attempt to enforce godly worship in the city and rationalise its provision, a parliamentary Act was passed requiring the

⁸¹ Bodl., MS. Rawlinson A31, f.276. This case highlights the disparity between clerical turnover and Triers' approvals, noted in this Section, 212-3.

closure of thirteen city churches and the physical division of the cathedral.⁸² At the same time, five new ministers were approved by the Triers for remaining city churches. This means that five of the seventeen approvals recorded in Devon for 1657 resulted from this single event, demonstrating how local circumstances could lie behind the fluctuations in approvals. The large number of parishes in Devon, however, means that this event does not affect the downward trend in approvals in the county as a whole (*fig. 30*), illustrating how difficult it is to locate and identify local causes for the rates of approvals by the Triers.

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This section has demonstrated that compared to the episcopalian regimes before and after the revolution, the Triers approved a significantly higher number of ministers for the church. This suggests both that a substantial number of acceptable men were coming forward to enter the Cromwellian church, and that the Triers were actively allowing many of them into the ministry, despite the Commission's fearsome and negative reputation. In particular it has demonstrated how much more successful the Cromwellian church was at recruiting ministers than the Westminster Assembly which preceded it.

Underneath the total numbers of approved ministers, however, lies a more complex situation. It has been impossible to ascribe with certainty particular

⁸² ERO, ECA Book 10 [1652-63], ff.89v-90v; Bodl., MS. J. Walker c.4, ff.273-5; 'Act for the promoting and more frequent Preaching of the Gospel and maintenance of Ministers in the City of Exeter' in *C.J.*, vol.7, 553.

factors which caused the variable levels of clerical turnover and Triers' approvals in different areas, although a variety of influences - economic, administrative, social, legislative - were probably all involved. The absence of any clear underlying cause for the number and rate of approvals in fact seems to confirm the assertion at the beginning of this section, that the Triers dealt with a series of what appear to be largely random presentations. Moreover, this section has demonstrated the importance of distinguishing between the approvals made by the Triers and the clerical turnover in which their approvals played a role: the two processes were clearly linked but were not identical.

This research has also exposed high levels of turnover in some individual parishes throughout the 1650s, which probably resulted mainly from parochial discord and poverty. The significance of this is that it reveals the inadequacy of the regime's religious programme, when it came to solving the long-term, structural weaknesses in the parochial ministry. Unsupported by fundamental and radical legislative change to the funding and organisation of the parochial system, the three agencies of the religious programme were seriously limited in the degree of improvement they could bring to the parish ministry and to the church.

3.2 The Reform of Church Patronage: the Patrons in the Registers

This section investigates ecclesiastical patronage during the Protectorate, arguing that the radical changes to who was able to wield patronage in the 1650s played a critical role in shaping the ministry. It argues further that the Registers provide compelling evidence of the complete transfer of patronage from the former Crown and church into the hands of the Protector and some key government committees. This prevented large numbers of politically or religiously delinquent ministers from ever reaching the Triers at Whitehall, whilst simplifying and streamlining the process of ecclesiastical recruitment. The patronage of both Protectors is considered in detail, revealing Oliver Cromwell's deliberate patronage of ministers who held a range of religious views, but suggesting that Richard Cromwell's patronage may reflect his intentional sponsorship of presbyterians and a growing confidence in the national ministry held by episcopalians. The Trustees are revealed as the second most active single patron after Oliver Cromwell, and a temporary increase in the patronage exercised by both parishioners and urban corporations is explored. Finally evidence of undercurrents of active episcopalianism that escaped the censure of the Triers are exposed through an analysis of the patronage networks within university circles and those of some private patrons.

Unlike Elizabethan and early Stuart ecclesiastical patronage, the principles of which have been explored by historians in detail, patronage during the civil war

and Interregnum has received little scholarly attention.¹ And yet, the wholesale transfer of Crown, church and some royalist patronage to Cromwell and various government offices ranks alongside the redistribution of monastic livings at the Reformation as the most radical change to the character of ecclesiastical patronage between the Norman Conquest and the modern era.

The paucity of detailed research probably results from the difficulty of collating and interpreting the sources, and from the fact that, unlike the permanent changes made at the dissolution, those that occurred during the revolution were largely reversed after 1660. Nevertheless, the temporary take-over of swathes of patronage by the Cromwellian regime, allied with the activities of the Triers, brought about a fundamental change in the character of the beneficed clergy as a unit, many of whom remained in the church after 1662. This not only influenced the character of the Restoration ministry but it also fuelled pressure for religious pluralism, which the Restoration regimes never managed to suppress entirely.²

If modern historians have been relatively uninterested in ecclesiastical patronage in the 1640s and 50s, this was not the case for contemporaries. The strengths and

¹ For pre-1640 patronage, see 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* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977), 137-155; R. O'Day, 'The Law of Ecclesiastical Patronage in Early Modern England' in *JEH* (1975), vol.26(3), 247-260; R. O'Day, 'The Ecclesiastical Patronage of the Lord Keeper, 1558-1642' in *TRHS* (1973), vol.23, 89-109; F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales: 1500-1700* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 322-333; C. Cross, *Patronage and Recruitment in the Tudor and Early Stuart Church* (York: BIHR, 1996); Hill, *Economic Problems*, 50-73. The standard work for 1640-60 patronage remains Shaw, 175-286, but see also McCampbell, 'Incumbents', 299-301. For post-1660, see Hirschberg, 'Church Patronage', 109-139.

² Cross, *Church and People*, 195.

weaknesses of the system had been explored and debated widely in the previous decades, not least because the labyrinthine arrangements affecting some livings, and the difficulties of verifying claims to titles, resulted in countless legal challenges.³ After 1640, however, the rapidly changing form of religious practice raised new questions about the nature of patronage and incumbency: in *Jus Patronatus* (1654), for example, William Prynne joyfully accommodated the removal of episcopacy by arguing that it allowed patrons to regain the independence of action once exercised in the primitive church.⁴

Debates about patronage were inextricably bound up with those on the principle of maintenance by tithe, which elicited a stream of publications for both sides of the argument.⁵ For the more radical godly and sectarians, tithes usually took centre stage in such discussions, but the principle of patronage was also problematic. Not only was it seen as a ‘popish relic’ but also it constituted part of the administrative system which forced the strictures of the national church upon them, and deprived them of the chance to elect their own pastors. Walter Postlethwaite voiced these continuing fears in 1655:

³ For example: SRO, DD\SF/16/27/5, DD\SF/16/27/6; J. Doderidge, *A Compleat Parson*, (1602-3, repr. 1641); R. Brownlow, *Reports of Diverse Choice Cases in Law taken by those Late and Most Judicious Prothonotaries of the Common Pleas*, Richard Brownlow & John Goldesborough (1651).

⁴ W. Prynne, *Jus Patronatus* (1654), 16-17.

⁵ For the connection between tithes and patronage, see Anon, *A Brief Discourse of Changing Ministers Tithes into Stipends* (1654), 22; A. Boun, *The Pride and Avarice of the Clergie* (1650), 112, 130.

Durst Paul and Barnabas exercise such tyranny as to impose a minister on the people, as these [patrons] do with the helpe of the Bishop formerly, of the Commissioners for tryal of ministers now?⁶

The system of ecclesiastical patronage, however, had ancient roots, stemming from the earliest years of western Christianity. From around the sixth and seventh centuries across Europe, investment in the construction of churches by lords for their dependents far from the oversight of regional bishops resulted in the principle that the control of such churches lay with their founders. This control included the right to choose the priest, a tenet which, despite the English church's eventual insistence on approving and admitting those chosen, remained at the heart of western ecclesiology.⁷ Based on this ancient principle, in the seventeenth-century advowsons were regarded as pieces of property, material assets with a monetary value, many of which were now in the hands of laymen following the break up of the monastic estates. This meant that disputes over patronage came under civil, rather than solely ecclesiastical, jurisdiction.⁸ Moreover, advowsons also conferred a level of social status on the holder and

⁶ W. Postlethwaite, *A Voice from Heaven* (1655), 72, and response to this, E. Chark, *A Pretended Voice from Heaven, Proved to be the Voice of Man, and Not of God* (1659), 84-6.

⁷ P. Smith, 'The Advowson: the History and Development of a Most Peculiar Property' in *ELJ* (2000), vol.5, 320-5.

⁸ Exemplified by Sheppard's compendium of laws concerning religion, published for the regime, which does not include legislation on patronage or patrons: W. Sheppard, *A View of all the Laws and Statutes of this Nation concerning the Service of God or Religion* (1655). Only disputes over church fabric remained within the jurisdiction of the church courts: Heal and Holmes, *Gentry*, 330.

provided a means to show favour to friends or clients.⁹ Such assets were not given up lightly.

The exercise of private patronage, however, had its problematic aspects. The value of advowsons prevented much-needed remodelling of the parochial landscape, since few patrons were prepared to relinquish their income, even if the church in question was ruined and the congregation worshipped elsewhere. The Cromwellian attempt to rationalise parish boundaries encountered this problem in the 1650s.¹⁰ Furthermore, there were concerns in the earlier decades of the century that private patronage offered the opportunity for particular forms of churchmanship to be disseminated, or subversive preachers to be fostered. In actual fact, the potential for such activity was not widely exploited. A few aristocratic patrons, such as the Earls of Leicester and Warwick, or circles of godly laymen, such as that around the Knightleys, Drydens, Mildmays and Montagues in Northamptonshire, did use their patronage to support godly preachers, but the impact was limited by the modest number of advowsons that such patrons controlled.¹¹ The ffeoffees for Impropriations had greater potential significance in the early years of Charles I's reign, through their programme of purchasing impropriations and reassigning the incomes to support puritan

⁹ Heal and Holmes, *Gentry*, 332.

¹⁰ For example: objection by New College, Oxford, patron of Stratton St Michael, Norfolk, to its union with Tharston: Comm. XIIc/2, ff.378, 405, 428.

¹¹ J. Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts: The Diocese of Peterborough 1603-1642' (University of Birmingham: unpublished PhD. thesis, 1989), 13-20; O'Day, 'Who Controlled the Church?', 147-8.

ministers. In 1633, however, after only seven years' activity, they had been suppressed and their patronage taken over by the Crown.¹²

With the outbreak of war in 1642, many parishes experienced a *de facto* change of patron, owing to the sequestration of livings or desertion by former incumbents. At first, both the House of Lords and the Commons chose and appointed ministers to such livings as need arose, no matter where the original patronage lay.¹³ Indeed the role of 'patron' was effectively side-lined, as many of these early changes in minister were achieved by parliamentary orders sequestering the profits of such livings to new, godly ministers. Sequestration made the involvement of the patron superfluous, as the removed minister was not legally ejected from the living.¹⁴ As the removal of royalist or scandalous incumbents escalated, the process became conflated with the need to install replacements and this was handled increasingly by the Committee for Plundered Ministers (CPM). This committee also stepped in to nominate ministers when royalist patrons were unable to present, as the sequestration of royalist estates also resulted in the forfeit of the appendant rights of patronage.¹⁵

¹² V. Larminie, 'Feoffees for Improvements' in *ODNB*; D. J. Lamburn, 'The Influence of the Laity in Appointments of Clergy in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth-century' in Cross (ed.), *Patronage*, 111.

¹³ Shaw, vol.2, 184-8; *LJ*, vol.5, 38 (recommendation of John Clarke).

¹⁴ *CJ*, vol.3, 50-1.

¹⁵ Shaw, vol.2, 197.

Thereafter, the removal of the episcopal hierarchy and then the Crown resulted in a piecemeal transfer of their patronage that defies absolute categorisation. Even William Shaw found it impossible to summarise the situation without prefacing it with his highest level of caution:

[...] generally speaking, and with every mental reserve, it may perhaps be stated [...]¹⁶

The available evidence indicates that after the abolition of episcopacy in 1646, and the deans and chapters in 1649, patronage formerly in the gift of the church was mainly administered by parliament and its committees, the Commissioners of the Great Seal (CGS), or individual parishes.¹⁷ Crown livings too went largely to the CGS. Whereas before 1640, the Lord Keeper had presented to those worth less than £20 a year and the Crown to those worth more, the CGS and parliament patronised both values of livings after 1649, in a muddled sharing of rights and responsibilities.¹⁸

Private patronage, however, fared differently. Unsequestered lay patrons retained their presentation rights, as did most educational establishments; presumably the

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 277.

¹⁷ Surman notes that although presbyterian *classes* were supposed to ordain only to a specific livings, after 1646 they increasingly appointed ministers to parishes other than those at which they had been ordained: Surman, 'Classical Presbyterianism', 101d, 121.

¹⁸ Shaw, vol.2, 268-275. Former Crown livings later in the hands of the CGS were West Tilbury, Essex (1646) and Bladon, Oxfordshire (1648). Up to 1649, when the CGS presented to wealthier livings, the House of Lords usually also sanctioned their presentations, thus asserting their authority over richer livings: Shaw, vol.2, n.2, 273.

purge of the universities in 1649-50 reassured the authorities that the colleges would appoint only godly incumbents.¹⁹ The concept of private patronage, however, and its close association with tithes, remained highly contentious, so much so that it was the attack by radical MPs on the rights of private patrons and on maintenance by tithes that split the Nominated Assembly and brought about the final collapse of parliamentary government in late 1653.²⁰

The gradual assimilation of church, Crown and delinquents' patronage into the hands of government bodies constituted part of a centralising tendency in the control of the church under the Protectorate.²¹ Although the filling of Crown livings had always been handled in London through the Lord Keeper or the monarch, ministers for both church and delinquents' livings had formerly been decided in the dioceses of the livings themselves, within the jurisdictions of individual bishops.²² During the 1640s, the choice of clergy for livings in private hands, or those taken over by parishioners or various county committees, generally remained a provincial affair, but the *vetting* of their choices was removed to London. The devolution of significant numbers of livings to the CGS marked another step, after the activities of the CPM and alongside the examining work of the Westminster Assembly, in the apparently inexorable concentration of clerical oversight in London. This culminated in the immense amount of

¹⁹ See this Section, 265-6.

²⁰ *CJ*, vol.3, 352; Anon, *The True State of the Case of the Nation* (1654), 19.

²¹ Holmes notes a similar pattern in royalist sequestrations and other elements of control: Holmes, *Lincolnshire*, 206, 212.

²² Except those that devolved to the Crown by lapse.

patronage controlled personally by Cromwell, and in the establishment of the Whitehall-based Triers and the re-formulated Trustees.

Paradoxically, this centralisation of control did not prevent the regime from also taking full advantage of local initiatives to fill livings, and local resources to help to maintain them.²³ Indeed, having removed the intermediate tier of controls formerly exercised by the episcopal hierarchy, the new regime effectively polarised ecclesiastical management either to the centre, or to the localities, from where local sources of income were derived for redistribution as augmentations, and from where it received parishioners' nominations to empty livings and upheld the right of individual churches to manage their own affairs.²⁴ This division of responsibilities enabled the regime to exercise its authority as magistrate in controlling the character of the ministry, whilst acknowledging the principle, so dear to many independents, of parish autonomy.

But how numerically significant was this transfer of livings? Little research has been done on the quantification of patronage before 1640, and even less for the decades after. Usher estimated that approximately half the advowsons in England and Wales were owned by private individuals at the start of the seventeenth-century.²⁵ The other half belonged largely to the Crown, the church, educational establishments or a few urban corporations, whilst a small number of parishes

²³ See Section 2.3, 106-7.

²⁴ Hughes and O'Day, 'Augmentation', 176-7.

²⁵ Usher, *Reconstruction*, vol.1, 111-12, 232.

either owned their own advowsons or traditionally assumed the right to present. As with parish totals, however, the proportions are uncertain and different interpretations exist; indeed Usher himself noted of his figures, ‘there is great divergence evident in all directions’.²⁶ Hirschberg’s more recent breakdown of ecclesiastical patronage in 1742, taken from Browne Willis’s figures, arrived at the following set of proportions, indicated below:

Patron type	Percentage of livings in England and Wales
Crown	9.6%
Church	26%
Laity (including peers)	53.4%
Educational establishments	6.7%
Inhabitants	0.8%
Other	3.4%

fig. 31 Estimate of patronage holders in 1742²⁷

Although these totals represent the position a hundred years after the Interregnum, it is reasonable to suggest that the proportions were similar to those in the 1630s. Since many advowsons were attached to landholdings, they were

²⁶ In Usher’s three attempts to quantify the proportions, the percentage owned by the laity ranged from 43-56%, for the clergy 9-22% and for the Crown 12-28%; these were reached by sampling seven dioceses and three archdeaconries. Furthermore, the lowest figures for each category allow for an additional 31% of the total livings to be counted separately as ‘impropriations,’ and were thus unassigned to any of the three groups: Usher, *Reconstruction*, vol.1, 111-12.

²⁷ From Hirschberg, ‘Church Patronage’, 112-13, but note: Hirschberg’s original table shows an additional 12% of livings patronised by ‘Peers’, resulting in a total of 112%. In *fig. 31* above, this 12% has been subsumed into ‘Private’ rather than given as distinct from it, in order to reach a total of 100%. Note also: Hirschberg’s assessment of total ‘church livings’ in 1742 is 11 866.

affected by the confiscation and forced sales of delinquents' lands during the 1640s. Unfortunately the Acts that dealt with the abolition of the bishops, deans and chapters, and monarchy, and the sales of their assets, were woefully unclear as to how appendant patronage was to be handled. Both the Acts for the sales of bishops' (1646) and dean and chapters' lands (1649) initially excluded advowsons from passing with their lands to the Trustees for Sales, although this severance was subsequently revoked in 1650.²⁸ The intended fate of delinquents' and Crown patronage remained either unstated or unclear.²⁹ This imprecision in the legislation almost certainly helped to account for the chaotic situation during the Commonwealth.

At the Restoration, in principle, confiscated lands were generally returned to the previous owners, whilst private land sales held good, but in practice the matter was far more complex.³⁰ The fate of appendant patronage was probably often decided on a case by case basis, since there seems to have been no clear

²⁸ 'Act for providing Maintenance for Ministers and other Pious uses' in *A&O*, vol.2, 369.

²⁹ 'Ordinance for sequestring notorious Delinquents Estates' (1646) in *A&O*, vol.1, 106; 'Ordinance for the abolishing of Archbishops and Bishops' (1646) in *A&O*, vol.1, 879-883; 'Ordinance for the settling of the Lands of all the Bishops' (1646) in *A&O*, vol.1, 887-904; 'Act for abolishing of Deans, Deans and Chapters, Canons' (1649) in *A&O*, vol.2, 81-2; 'Act for further Instructions [...] for the Sale of the Lands and Possessions of the late Deans, Sub-deans, Deans and Chapters' (1649) in *A&O*, vol.2, 200-5; 'Act for Sale of the [...] Lands heretofore belonging to the late King, Queen and Prince' (1649) in *A&O*, vol.2, 160-8. Even Shaw abandoned the attempt to trace the legislative fate of patronage, but he suggested that on the abolition of the Trustees for Land Sales, the income of the lands still in their possession went to the Trustees and that the patronage rights were, perhaps, taken over by the CPM: Shaw, vol.2, 212-215, 217, 221.

³⁰ 'Act for Confirmation of Judicial Proceedings' (1660) in J. Raithby (ed.) *Statutes of the Realm* (London: 1819), vol.5, 234-6. See also H. J. Habakkuk, 'The Land Settlement and the Restoration of Charles II' in *TRHS* (1978), vol.28, 201-222; J. Thirsk, 'The Restoration Land Settlement' in *JMH* (1954), vol.26, 323, 327-8.

legislative statement clarifying the matter. It is likely, however, that most privately held advowsons remained within the control of private patrons, whether those were former delinquents who had reacquired their estates, or Interregnum purchasers whose acquisitions had subsequently been confirmed. Former church and Crown patronage was generally returned to these two estates.³¹

The bulk of the settlements concerning Interregnum land sales had probably been concluded by the mid-1660s, and the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did not witness any further significant transfers of patronage either by Crown or church.³² This summary suggests that Hirschberg's categories of patronage for 1742 can probably be taken as broadly indicative of the situation as it stood before 1640. So what do the Triers' Registers reveal about the changes that took place during the Protectorate?

Every entry in the Registers gives the name of the patron of the living in question; thus they provide an excellent source for analysing patronage during the Protectorate. That said, it is unclear whether the patrons named were the 'true patrons' who held the original advowson, or temporary – such as *pro hac vice* – patrons, or one of the many other arrangements by which other individuals might present. Even before the disruption of the civil wars, the propensity for selling or leasing out next rights of presentation could lead to great uncertainty over where

³¹ Thirsk, 'Land Settlement', 326-7; Habakkuk, 'Land Settlement', 211, 217.

³² Although probably some private court cases continued for many years: Thirsk 'Land Settlement', 320.

patronage lay. Tracing the true patron could be so difficult that some bishops insured themselves against challenges to their own presentations by requiring ministers to take out bonds to 'save harmless'. The Registers also show the occasional use of such bonds, perhaps indicating where the patronage was particularly uncertain.³³ Thus the patrons in the Registers represent only those who possessed the next right of presentation, who may or may not have been the true patrons. Moreover, the Registers show only those patrons for whom the opportunity to present arose during the five years of their coverage, *and* whose presentations were deemed acceptable by the Triers. They cannot be used to assess accurately absolute - theoretical - amounts of patronage.

Despite these cautions, the Registers have much to reveal. Most striking, perhaps, are the changes in the proportions of those who exercised ecclesiastical patronage. These changes are summarised below (*fig. 32*), in comparison with Hirschberg's proportions, above (*fig. 31*).³⁴

³³ For example: Comm. III/7, f.346.

³⁴ In the absence of figures recording absolute (theoretical) patronage during the Protectorate, it is assumed here that the relative differences between the proportions of each class of patron given in the Registers are broadly correct, even if the total numbers which underpin these proportions are less than the absolutes recorded by Hirschberg. In other words, even if every class of patron had, theoretically, 20% more patronage than appeared in the Registers, the *relative difference* between the classes would have been roughly the same.

Patron Type (from Hirschberg, <i>fig. 31</i>)	Percentage of livings in England and Wales (from Hirschberg, <i>fig. 31</i>) ³⁵	Patron type (from Registers)	Percentage of livings in England and Wales that appear in Registers ³⁶
Crown	9.6%	Lord Protectors	38%
Church	26%	Church	0%
Laity (including peers)	53.4%	Laity	44%
Educational establishments	6.7%	Educational establishments	5%
Inhabitants/ Urban governments	0.8%	Inhabitants	1.4%
Other	3.4%	Other ³⁷	<1%
		Urban governments ³⁸	1.2%
		National government ³⁹	9%
		Hospitals	<1%

fig. 32 Comparison of patronage holders in 1654-60 and 1742

³⁵ Hirschberg's total was 11,866.

³⁶ As percentage of the 10,000 estimated livings in England and Wales used in this thesis.

³⁷ Livery Companies.

³⁸ Mayor, Corporations, Aldermen of provincial towns.

³⁹ Parliament and Committees of Commonwealth and Protectorate.

The difference between Hirschberg's theoretical patronage and the Registers' 'exercised' patronage means that the comparison in *figure 32* must be treated with care. Even so, this table exposes some significant findings. In crude terms, it is possible to say that the big 'winners' were the two Protectors, central government and its committees and, to a much lesser extent, local government, and 'parishioners'. The 'losers' were the now-defunct Crown, the church and, to a lesser extent, private patrons. Even where the differences between the two sets of figures are smaller (and thus more sensitive to errors arising from the mismatched data type), useful conclusions can still be drawn. Only for 'educational establishments' and 'other', where the Protectorate figure was slightly *lower* than Hirschberg's, might the explanation be that very few livings came up for a change of minister. For the other classes, where the Protectorate figure was *higher* than Hirschberg's, this *must* indicate an increase in the absolute levels of patronage.

One of the most prominent findings to emerge is the extent to which patronage devolved to the Protector. Jeffrey Collins' sampling of the Triers' Registers led him to suggest that roughly forty per cent of the Triers' approvals were for presentations made by Cromwell.⁴⁰ In fact, his estimate was generous: the Registers show that he was responsible for approximately eleven hundred (32%) of the total approvals. Richard Cromwell made approximately 153 presentations (4.5% of the total) over the nine months of his Protectorate.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Collins, 'Church Settlement', 31.

⁴¹ Both Protectors' figures exclude their corroborative presentations.

On the other hand, the patronage recorded in the Registers reflects only those livings that became vacant between 1653-4 and 1659. The Protectors' 'theoretical' patronage would have been higher, a fact most clearly illustrated by Richard Cromwell's presentations: as Protector he must have theoretically controlled at least a thousand livings, as his father had, and yet he presented to less than two hundred. The number of presentations made by the Protectors is higher than the number of actual livings (places) to which they presented, because some livings reappeared several times in the Registers. If the actual livings in the Registers to which both Protectors presented are counted just once, it appears that the office of 'Protector' actively patronised, at least temporarily, thirty-eight per cent of all the livings appearing in the Registers, or eleven per cent of all the livings in England and Wales.⁴²

[*cont.*]

⁴² Thus Collins reached nearly the correct total, but by the wrong route.

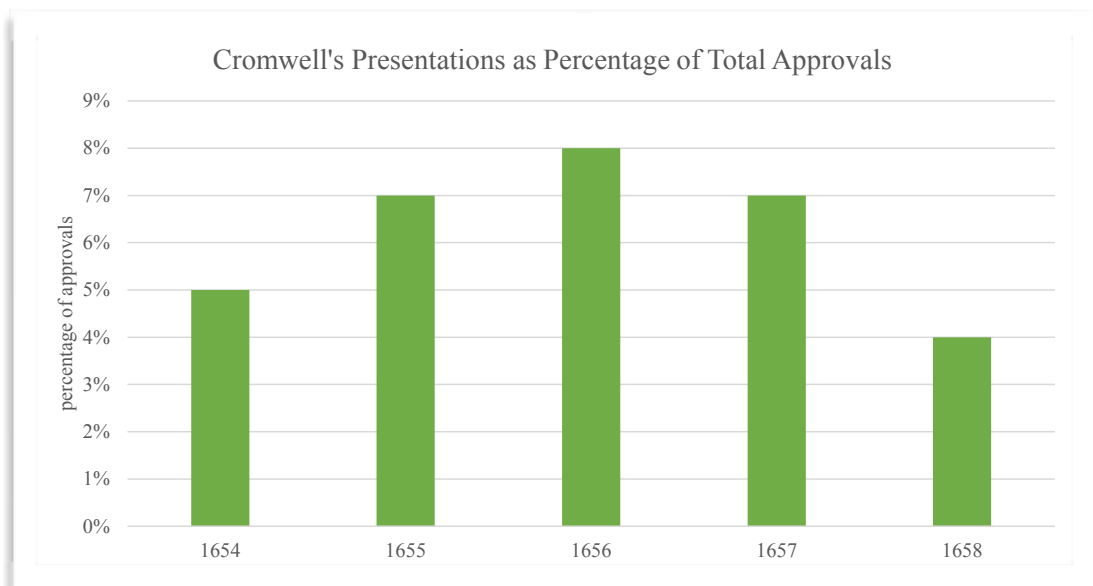


fig. 33 Oliver Cromwell's presentations⁴³

The bulk of the Protectors' patronage seems to have derived from two main sources: either the transfer of presentation rights from the Commissioners of the Great Seal, through Clause III of the Instrument of Government, or from the vesting of delinquents' lands in the Protectors' hands through Clause XXXI. It requires some creative interpretation of this clause, however, to conclude that the vesting of delinquents' lands automatically transferred their ecclesiastical patronage too.⁴⁴ Oliver Cromwell also nominated to very many sequestered livings, although the legislative backing for this is unclear unless they devolved to him through lapse, as did some of his other presentations.⁴⁵

⁴³ 1654 includes 1653; 1658 covers only eight months.

⁴⁴ Shaw, too, struggled to explain the transfer legally: Shaw, vol.2, 276-8; Gardiner, *Constitutional Documents*, 406, 414-15.

⁴⁵ For example: Comm. II/301.

The Registers also demonstrate how rapidly the transfer took place. The CGS appear as patron under that title only once, in 1656.⁴⁶ Instead, they exercised their patronage as the Keepers of the Liberty of England (KLE), the name chosen in 1649 to replace the term ‘king’ in new legislation and other administrative situations.⁴⁷ Clause III of the Instrument of Government, however, devolved ‘writs, processes, commissions, patents, grants, and other things’ from the KLE to the Protector and this can clearly be traced in the Registers: in 1654, the KLE made forty one presentations, just seven in 1655 and thereafter only one in 1657 and in 1658.⁴⁸ Twelve of those livings subsequently reappeared in the Registers, and for each, Cromwell was named as patron.⁴⁹

Cromwell’s patronage in the Registers was, nevertheless, far from straightforward. Besides his own eleven hundred presentations, he was also patron for fifty-seven other entries that already had approvals under a different patron, or for which he used a different seal. In many of these cases it seems that his authority was sought to reinforce an earlier approval, although only a handful of entries use the specific terminology ‘to corroborate the title.’⁵⁰ This search for

⁴⁶ Comm. III/5, f.47: this was a second presentation to Francis Standish besides that given to him by the parliamentarian William, 2nd Baron Fitzwilliam.

⁴⁷ ‘Act of this present Parliament for the Alteration of several Names and Forms heretofore used in Courts, Writs, Grants, Patents’ in *A&O*, vol.2, 1262-3.

⁴⁸ Although the legislation of 1649 substituted the title KLE for ‘king,’ the CGS used that title for the whole panoply of their inherited patronage, not just former Crown patronage: 43% of their patronage in the Registers was from private delinquents, 19% was former church livings and only 13% was former Crown livings. (4% was university livings and 21% is unknown).

⁴⁹ For example: Comm. III/3, *lib.1*, f.50, Comm. III/4, f.346.

⁵⁰ Three under Oliver and seven under Richard Cromwell: for example, Comm. III/4, f.294, Comm. III/7, f.202.

additional security can be seen in numerous petitions from intruded ministers, begging for support in the face of challenges from earlier incumbents. In the protracted dispute over the living of Crayford in Kent, for example, David Clarkson received a presentation from the CPM in 1653, which the Triers confirmed in May 1654. Nevertheless, Clarkson was then challenged in court by Edward May, who claimed to have been lawfully presented to the living in the early 1640s. In August 1655, the Council decided in Clarkson's favour and three months later the Triers recorded another approval for him, in which Cromwell appeared as patron.⁵¹

More confusingly, a few entries show Cromwell's presentation as approved *in advance* of an approval for the same place for a presentation from a private patron. At Ickburgh in Norfolk, Cromwell's presentation of Richard Harvey was approved five months before Hervey's second presentation from Thomas Jermyn and Robert Bellond.⁵² Ickburgh was a sequestration, but Exton in Hampshire, which shows a similar pattern, was not.⁵³ Perhaps such cases also conceal confusion or dispute over the patronage, of which the details have now been lost?

Anxiety amongst intruded ministers over the security of their new titles was often well-founded. It was not uncommon for the validity of their appointments

⁵¹ Comm. III/3, *lib.1*, f.18; Comm. III/6, f.161; SP 18/99 f.200; SP 18/10 ff.10, 14; SP 25/76 f. 241.

⁵² Comm. III/3, *lib.1*, f.163, Comm. III/3, *lib.3*, f.24.

⁵³ Comm. III/5, ff.75-6.

to be questioned on the basis of the implied illegality of the new system of admissions or patronage. When Edward Fletcher arrived to take up the living at Bagendon, Gloucestershire, in 1658, he found his title disputed:

I shewed [...] my authority under his late highnesse broad Seale, testified by the Commissioners for Approbacion of Ministers under the Seal of their office. Att which tyme Mr James Doule, Richard Eyckett, churchwarden, and Mr. Broad, their pretended minister, very much sleighted my authority, saying I was noe Minister.⁵⁴

Worse still, the local commissioners and magistrates refused to help him gain entry, ‘because they conceived the law would not beare them out in so doing’.⁵⁵ In fact, Fletcher’s experience highlighted the on-going tension between the legislation underpinning the regime’s religious programme and the existing civil law; it was not always clear which area of law should prevail.⁵⁶ This tension was recognised, but only partially eased, by the proclamation of July 1655, which stated the rights of intruded ministers to be protected from civil actions against

⁵⁴ SP 18/183, f.209.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ The episcopalian minister Lionel Gatford put his finger on the problem: ‘Quaere 21: Whether the making Adultery in a Minister to be punished with ejection shall free him from suffering the other punishment of death inflicted by a former Act: or must a Minister be punished with both [...] as that ’tis a question whether it will make men more fearfull or more secure in the committing it [...]’: Gatford, *Vindication*, 50.

them.⁵⁷ It was clearly a response to the numbers of petitions to the Council from such ministers, begging relief from being sued for re-possession by the deprived minister, as occurred when William Hunt sued John Yaxley for Kibworth rectory in 1654.⁵⁸

As a patron, Cromwell made extensive use of both the Great Seal and his own Seal Manual: fifty five per cent of his presentations were issued under the Great Seal, forty per cent under his Seal Manual.⁵⁹ After his death, however, the legitimacy of Triers' appointments, even with the Protector's backing, was increasingly challenged. In November 1659, for example, Timothy Baldwin petitioned the CGS for the rectory of Llandrillo, Denbighshire, noting,

Now in regard that some doubt had ben made of grants of this nature made in the tyme of ye said lord protector your petitioner humbly desires your lordshipp to give unto your petitioner a grant of ye said rectory under the present greate seale.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ 'His Highness, by like advice, doth further Declare, no sute, or plaint shall be brought, or entertained in any Court, contrary to the true intent, and meaning of the said Orders and Ordinances; And doth also require, That no Counsellors at Law, Attorneys, or other Officers be instrumental (at their peril) in any sute, intended to be forbidden as aforesaid.': *By His Highness: A Proclamation For Relief Of Godly Ministers against Suits and Molestations by Persons Sequestred, Ejected, or not Approved* (1655) (SP 18/99 f.5a).

⁵⁸ SP 18/72 f.55, SP 18/76 f.190.

⁵⁹ No seal is recorded for 5% of his presentations. A few entries in the Registers note corroboration from the Great Seal, sometimes under Letters Patent, from patrons other than Cromwell: Comm. III/4, f.310, Comm. III/3, *lib.1*, f.193.

⁶⁰ BL, Add. MS. 36792, f.1. Note: the rectory was separate to the vicarage of Llandrillo.

The CGS seem to have made strenuous efforts to reassert their authority as patrons after Cromwell's death, in particular where he had employed his Seal Manual. In an effort to sort out the disputed living at Bartholomew Exchange in London in April 1660, for example, they considered John Loder's claim, in support of which Philip Nye, one of the Triers, had produced a legal judgement which accredited the Seal Manual with equal authority in such matters with that of the Great Seal.

[...] but the Lords Commissioners denied it and said the Protector could not dispose of that, which was their right to bestowe And that Mr Loder's title [...] was voyde [...]⁶¹

This comment is significant. The denial of Cromwell's right to patronise livings under his Seal Manual that would once have been in the gift of the Commissioners raises questions as to the relationship between the CGS and the Protector in this matter. Was Cromwell's title of 'nominator' for some livings (rather than 'patron') a tacit recognition of his usurpation of CGS patronage? Or was it a criticism of Cromwell's use of his Seal Manual for presentations at all, especially for former Crown or church livings? In fact, the comment was somewhat disingenuous, since both Protectors had patently been presenting to livings technically belonging to the Commissioners for the past five years. Since the Commissioners who examined Loder's claim were Cromwellians, it must be

⁶¹ Freshfield, *Bartholomew Exchange*, 73-4. Bartholomew had been a Crown living: Shaw, vol.2, 268.

assumed that the comment did not reflect personal antipathy; rather they may have been attempting to distance themselves and their roles from the Protectorate, recognising the possible restoration of the Crown.⁶²

Broadly speaking, Cromwell's use of the Great Seal gradually increased during his Protectorate, whilst his use of his Seal Manual declined slightly.

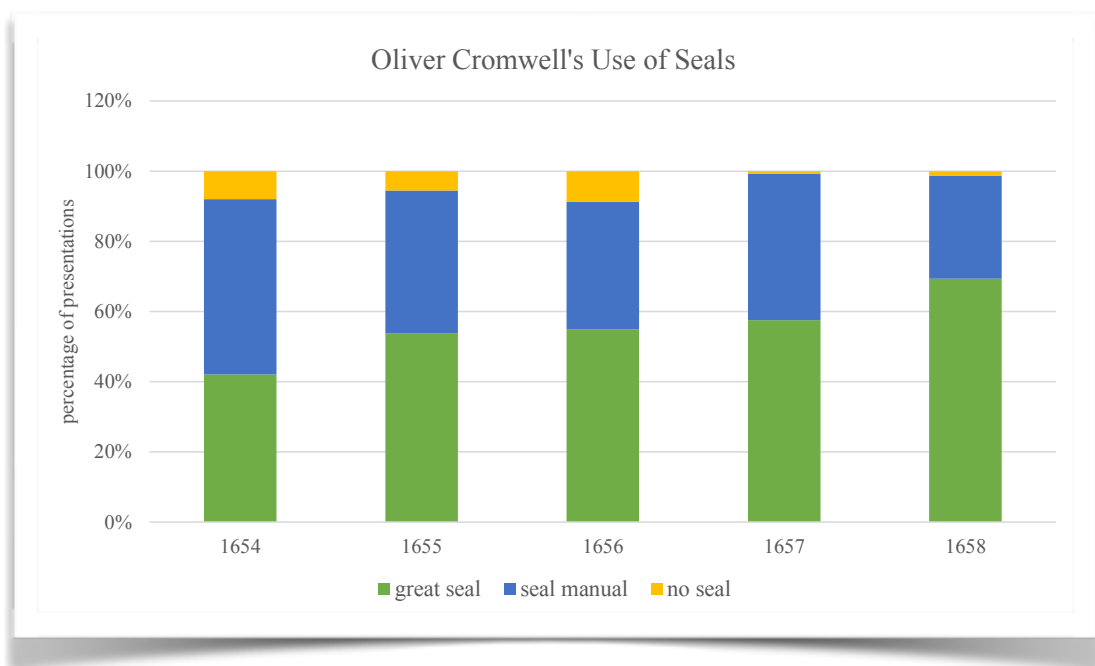


fig. 34 *Oliver Cromwell's use of seals*

This may indicate an intentional effort at severing the link between his personal support and the security of clerical tenure as the possibility of a change in

⁶² In April 1660, the Commissioners were Sir Thomas Widdrington, Thomas Tyrell and John Fountaine.

Protector drew closer, although there is no direct evidence of this. Moreover, in the course of his rule, Cromwell presented to seventy per cent of those livings recorded in the Registers as sequestrations and here, too, his use of the Great Seal increased dramatically; indeed, after 1657, he ceased using his Seal Manual altogether (*fig. 35*).⁶³

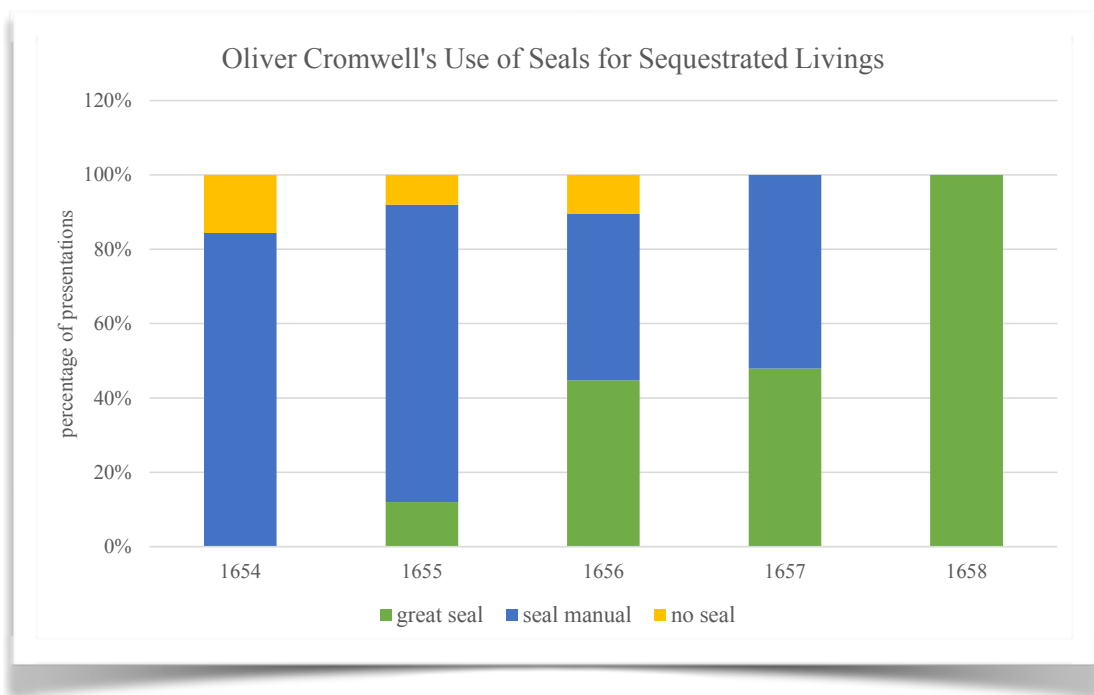


fig. 35 *Oliver Cromwell's use of seals in approvals to sequestrated livings*

It may be that Cromwell himself accepted that the Great Seal offered greater legitimacy to the settlement of intruded ministers. In 1657, he had presented

⁶³ These figures are based on those entries noted in the Registers as 'sequestrated' or that the previous incumbent was ejected. Since some entries noted that the living was simply 'vacant', it is unclear how accurate this 'sequestrations' figure is.

Abraham Drye to the living of Great Rissington in Gloucestershire, where the royalist patron, Sir Edmund Bray, seems to have been under sequestration. Drye's position cannot have been comfortable, since he was appointed after Bray's earlier failure to gain approvals for two candidates of his own choice.⁶⁴ His appointment in 1657 was confirmed by two presentations from Cromwell, several months apart, under his Seal Manual and then the Great Seal, suggesting that he [Drye] had sought additional authority to support a precarious title.⁶⁵

William Tray, too, one of a group of Gloucestershire independents, held presentations from Cromwell under both seals for Oddington, approved in 1656, after an initial settlement order from the CPM in 1646.⁶⁶ The intense lobbying for the living after 1660 by four rival claimants suggests that the competition for Oddington had deep roots, which might well account for Tray's desire for two certificates.⁶⁷ Certainly the passing of the 'Act for quiet enjoying of Sequestered Parsonages' in June 1657 indicates that settling intruded ministers beyond challenge was a continuous problem. If so, an increase in the use of the Great Seal may indicate public concerns about the legitimacy of the Protectorate itself.

Richard Cromwell's pattern of seal use was broadly similar to his father's. Fifty-five per cent of his presentations were under the Great Seal, forty-four per cent

⁶⁴ Walker, *Sufferings*, 174; SP 29/440 f.129; SP 29/36 ff.87, 90; 'Great Rissington' in C. R. Elrington (ed.), *A History of the County of Gloucester* (London: OUP, 1965), vol.6, 105.

⁶⁵ Comm. III/6, f.37, 174; D. Hayton, 'Lewis Atterbury' in *ODNB*; SP 29/36 f.90.

⁶⁶ Comm. III/4, f.374, III/5, f.79, III/7, f.340.

⁶⁷ Comm. III/5, f.79, III/4, f.374; SP 29/7 f.129; SP 29/25 ff.16, 19, 23.

under his Seal Manual and one per cent recorded no seal. He used both seals throughout his brief tenure, although he too increasingly turned to the Great Seal in preference to his own. None of his presentations were for recorded sequestrations.

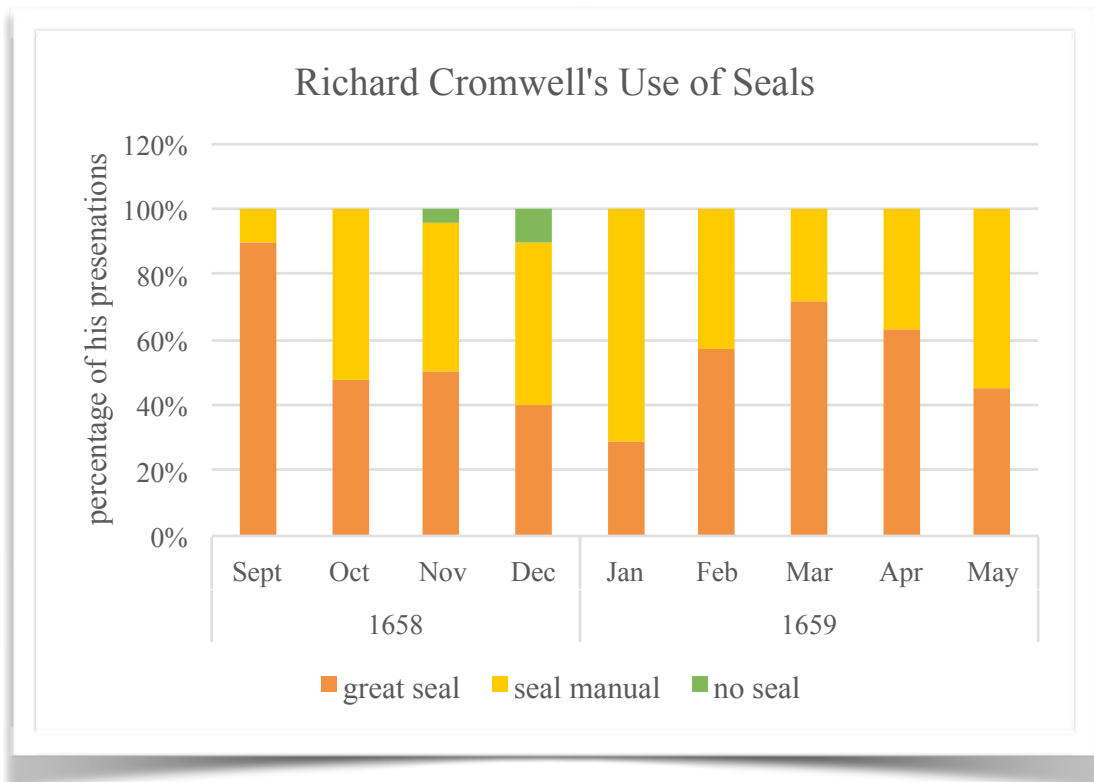


fig. 36 Richard Cromwell's use of seals for presentations

Given the amount of patronage wielded by Oliver Cromwell, there has been some debate about the degree of his personal involvement in the choice of his presentees. How far did he choose those ministers he presented and did he interview them before presenting? Ann Hughes suggests that Cromwell's presentations were 'most often' made in response to nominations from

parishioners of livings within his control.⁶⁸ Certainly, in April 1654, the parishioners of Mashbury in Essex petitioned Cromwell to present Abraham Pinchbecke, ‘whom [your petitioners] had unanimously made choyce of’ after a vacancy of two years. Cromwell approved and presented their nomination.⁶⁹ There are numerous examples of similar petitions in the State Papers and, indeed, on occasion he proactively suggested to congregations that they find themselves a minister.⁷⁰ Moreover he was not above moving beyond his own patronage: in 1654 he recommended a minister to the Lord Mayor of London for St Bartholomew’s Hospital.⁷¹ That said, the surviving petitions from parishioners do not begin to approach the number of presentations that Cromwell made. Thus, whilst it is tempting to assume that they represent a larger body of evidence, there is no concrete evidence of this. On the other hand, the sheer volume of his patronage suggests that he must have relied extensively on others to recommend suitable candidates.⁷²

Whilst the degree of his patronage is remarkable, however, the nature of its operation is not. The model of parishioners nominating a minister for presentation by their patron was by no means unusual, even before 1640. In

⁶⁸ Hughes, ‘Public Profession’, 105.

⁶⁹ SP 18/70 f.80; Comm. III/3, *lib.1*, f.42.

⁷⁰ SP 18/70 f.182. For Cromwell’s instruction to parishioners, see SP 18/70, f.122. Some parishes for which he appeared as patron (eg Botolphs, Aldgate) had long histories of finding their own ministers: Lamburn, ‘Influence,’ 106.

⁷¹ BL, Lansdowne MS. 1236/69, f.104; Murphy, ‘Cromwell’s Church’, 91-2.

⁷² For example: SHC, DD\SF/16/27/6.

1577, the parishioners of Lynn in Norfolk petitioned the Lord Keeper, Sir Nicholas Bacon, through an intermediary to accept their choice of minister for Wiggshall St Mary.⁷³ At other times, Bacon relied on his chaplains for recommendations.⁷⁴ Forty years later, the parishioners of Whissonsett, Norfolk, petitioned Bacon's son, Sir Nathaniel, to accept their nomination of minister over his own choice.⁷⁵ Similarly, in 1657, the parishioners of Croglin in Yorkshire petitioned Lord Wharton to present their choice of minister, Francis Palmer.⁷⁶

If the process was unexceptional, however, the degree of personal engagement by Cromwell may have been more so. Although there are no formal administrative archives recording his role in choosing ministers, there are references in more informal sources. Marchamont Nedham, the newspaper editor and political commentator, noted that,

[...] He seldom bestoweth any of them [his presentations] upon any man whom himself doth not first examine and make trial of in person; save only that at such times as his great affaires happen to be more urgent than ordinary, he useth to appoint some other to do it on his behalf.⁷⁷

⁷³ H. W. Saunders (ed.), *The Official Papers of Sir Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, Norfolk, as Justice of the Peace, 1580-1620* (London: RHS, 1915), 190; Lamburn, 'Influence', 106-7.

⁷⁴ O'Day, *English Clergy*, 114-15.

⁷⁵ Saunders, *Official Papers*, 191-2.

⁷⁶ Bodl., MS. Rawlinson Letters 104, f.20.

⁷⁷ Nedham, *Accuser*, 103.

Nedham's comment, it must be said, was not entirely unbiased, since it was made to support the regime's decision to base the Triers in London. Moreover, in the previous sentence, he allotted Cromwell control of nearly half the patronage in England, so the whole passage must be read with an eye to exaggeration and flattery, but his point about Cromwell interviewing candidates is not without corroboration. In the mid-1650s, Sebastian Pitfield, minister of Caundle Marsh in Dorset, tried to arrange for a fellow minister, whom Cromwell was presenting to a nearby living, to be examined locally in Dorset, instead of having to travel to London. Writing to a colleague, Pitfield noted that his request was

[...] a favour of the largest size obtained by special favour of some eminent men - for it is his Highnesses custom to examine whom he presents himself, before he presents them.⁷⁸

Pitfield's comments corroborate Nedham's assertion, that Cromwell was known, or believed, to interview most of his candidates for the ministry. Although there are no conclusive records that he actually did so, his willingness to converse with ministers of different religious views and to become personally involved in the settlement of ministers, do suggest that such a practice would have been in keeping with his character.⁷⁹ If this is correct, it resulted in a considerable

⁷⁸ Bayley, *Dorset*, 439.

⁷⁹ Murphy notes discussions with Peter Gunning, Richard Baxter, John Rogers and George Fox: Murphy, 'Cromwell's Church', 94. See SP 18/102 f.84, SP 25/76 f.422 and Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c.4, f.38r for Cromwell's involvement with the incumbency at Great Brickhill, Buckinghamshire; also SP 25/78 f.858 for Cromwell's intervention in the dispute between John Wells and George Hopkins in Worcestershire.

workload. Even the crudest calculation suggests that (without allowance for absences or illness) he must have presented approximately twenty ministers in every month of his Protectorate. If he personally interviewed most, and read over the nominations of others, he may easily have spent an average of at least half an hour on each presentation, which would suggest that he devoted a *minimum* of one to two solid days every month on his clerical presentations, perhaps very considerably more. The practical impact of his ecclesiastical patronage on his movements and activities has not hitherto been given sufficient weight in studies of the Protector.

The Registers show also that Cromwell patronised men of various different religious outlooks. His belief that essential godliness outweighed minor differences over its form and practice enabled him to present men from a range of religious backgrounds, including presbyterians, independents and sometimes men who had chosen episcopalian ordination after the abolition of episcopacy.⁸⁰ Indeed in 1652, he had held discussions with Ralph Brownrigg, former Bishop of Exeter, to explore the possibility of toleration for episcopalians.⁸¹ When he had dissolved his first parliament in early 1654, he had berated MPs for their refusal to tolerate

⁸⁰ B. Worden, 'Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England' in *P&P* (1985), vol.109, 93.

⁸¹ Brownrigg later told Sancroft that the matter was faltering, owing to presbyterian recalcitrance, although, 'the Independents are of a more moderate disposition': Boshier, *Restoration Settlement*, 9-10; H. Carey, *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England from 1646 to 1652* (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), vol.2, 415.

[...] Godly men of different judgements, men of the same faith with them that you call the Orthodox Ministry in England, as it is well known the Independents are, and many under the form of Baptism, who are sound in the Faith, only may perhaps be different in judgement in some lesser matters [...]⁸²

Unfortunately, there is little firm evidence of the churchmanship of many of those whom he presented. Moreover, it is often unsafe to straitjacket the views of ministers in this period into specific denominations. Personal preferences could be influenced by the necessity to conform at least outwardly, others specifically refused to be categorised, whilst rapid changes in circumstance and opportunity led yet others to change their views over time.⁸³ Even so, less than seven per cent of the presentations made by Cromwell have been identified as independents of some form.⁸⁴ Many, probably most, of the others were more aligned to presbyterianism, but at least forty-seven (4%) had been episcopally ordained

⁸² Abbott, *Writings*, vol.3(2), 586.

⁸³ For example: John Simpson moved from being a baptist and antinomian to Fifth Monarchist: P. Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships* (Stanford: SUP,1970), 283-5; also T. Venning, 'Sir Gilbert Pickering' in *ODNB*.

⁸⁴ *CR* gives 36, Murphy suggested possibly 86; there may well have been more: Murphy, 'Cromwell's Church', 435-441.

after 1646.⁸⁵ A few others represented those men whom the grant of liberty of conscience in the Instrument of Government was intended to protect: in 1656, for example, Cromwell presented John Skynner, who had been ‘teacher’ to a baptist congregation in 1653, to Hope Maunsell in Herefordshire.⁸⁶

Of the 153 ministers presented by Richard Cromwell only two (1%) are recorded in *Calamy Revised* as being independents.⁸⁷ Whether this very low figure is significant is debatable, given the brief period during which he was in office. It may simply reflect a lack of evidence or opportunity, but it may have reflected a deliberate policy of favouring presbyterians, in line with his own sympathies. More remarkably, in only nine months Richard presented fifteen to nineteen post-1646 episcopally ordained ministers, a third of the number of such men presented by his father over five years.⁸⁸ Was this intentional? It seems unlikely that Richard (or indeed Oliver) would necessarily have been aware of their covert ordinations. Although the regime almost certainly knew that episcopalian ordination was still taking place, and that some, maybe most, of the resulting

⁸⁵ This assertion rests on the evidence in the Registers, and on Matthew's interpretation of the make up of the Ministry as consisting of a small number of independents, episcopalians and baptists (confirmed by the identification of less than 120 in the Registers), after which the remaining members were ‘Presbyterians, or ordained by presbyters though not convincedly of that persuasion’ and ‘political presbyterians’, who eschewed rigid categorisation (see discussion in Section 4.1, 345): *CR*, x, lxvii. The identification of post-1646-1660 episcopal ordinations comes from a draft list drawn up by S. Taylor and K. Fincham, but it is likely that more such remain unidentified.

⁸⁶ *CR*, 444.

⁸⁷ *CR* has provided a single, reliable source for identifying independents, but it must be assumed that it has missed others, perhaps many others. Matthews actually uses the term ‘congregationalist’ rather than independent for the generic group, in *Calamy Revised*.

⁸⁸ Including Christopher Stocke, Comm. III/7, f.182 and Henry Edes, Comm. III/7, f.113.

ministers would seek to enter the church, the Triers themselves would not have questioned candidates on this point.⁸⁹ Furthermore, almost without exception, their referees are not known to have taken episcopalian ordination after 1646, so membership of obvious episcopalian networks would not have been apparent.⁹⁰ If deliberate promotion by Richard is unlikely, therefore, this trend suggests that the increase was driven by episcopalians themselves. It may be that such men viewed Richard's church as a more favourable place to exercise their ministries than that of his father. This interpretation, if correct, suggests that attempts at *rapprochement* in the mid- to later 1650s between the more moderate elements in both the episcopalian and presbyterian camps, which appeared to achieve little in any formal sense, may in fact have born some fruit within the parochial ministry.⁹¹ It should be noted, though, that three or four of Richard's illegally ordained presentees only took episcopalian ordination in the weeks before the Restoration, so their motivation and commitment may have had less to do with *rapprochement* and more to do with foresight.

⁸⁹ Fincham and Taylor, 'Episcopalian Conformity and Non-conformity 1646-60' in J. McElligott and D. Smith (eds.), *Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum* (Manchester: MUP, 2010), 31. Henry Tilson's biography claimed that he openly ordained Christian Binns in Emley church in 1650; whether such actions, if they also occurred after 1654, could be kept secret is debatable: C.L. Berry, 'Henry Tilson, Bishop of Elphin, and His Ministry during the Suppression of the Church' in *CQR*, (1941), vol.132, 60.

⁹⁰ Only William Glover, presented by Richard to Ampthell, Beds, included one known post-1646 episcopalian in his referees, Oliver Sell. Both men had been ordained in Lincoln, but by different former bishops and four years apart. Episcopalian ordination after 1646, however, was not always kept secret. William Sancroft noted in a letter the ordination of 'Mr Lucas', formerly a presbyterian, by Joseph Hall, 'the presbyterians of Norwich being in the meane time full of rage to have lost a brother': Bodl., MS. Tanner 53, f.97.

⁹¹ See Boshier, *Restoration Settlement*, 44-5; Fincham and Taylor, 'Episcopalian Conformity', 23-4.

The two Protectors presented ministers to every English and Welsh county and thus the devolution of so much patronage to them had a significant impact. Their presentations of so many men from across the godly spectrum means that they - and Oliver in particular - were personally involved in the creation of a national ministry that reflected something of the liberty of conscience promised in the Instrument of Government. Their sponsorship even of some episcopalians, however, is more puzzling, if they were aware of such loyalties. The antipathy to prelacy held by so many independents should have prevented their toleration in the godly ministry, which adds weight to the supposition that post-1646 episcopalian ordination usually remained private. That said, despite the anti-prelatical stance of the Instrument of Government, Oliver Cromwell showed a consistently paradoxical attitude towards episcopalians. His early attempt to arrange some form of indulgence for them within a godly church has already been noted and he was known to tolerate instances of episcopalian practice, including unobtrusive use of the Prayer Book. Yet such tolerance applied only to politically quiescent episcopalians. The equation of royalism and episcopalianism led him to permit soldiers to break up such services, where it was felt expedient, and to impose significant restrictions on episcopalian clergy in their practice of their ministry, especially in 1655 after the royalist uprisings.⁹²

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⁹² Cross, 'Church in England', 114; E. de Beer, *The Diary of John Evelyn* (London: Everyman, 2006), 349-50 (25 December, 1657).

An equally striking feature emerging from the Registers is the transformation of the church from an institution that controlled a quarter of the livings in the country before 1640, to one which had been completely stripped of all its advowsons and rights of presentation. Whilst some aspects of the old episcopalian regime - the covert use of the Book of Common Prayer and illicit ordinations by former bishops - lingered on in the shadows, the abolition of all the constituent offices of the church that had previously administered its patronage demonstrates, perhaps more tellingly than anything else, the success of the parliamentary demolition of the pre-war church. Unable to exercise that most essential function, the choice and appointment of its clergy, the national church was now not only fundamentally different in character but, as a single entity, it had lost all independence of action from the State. In fact, the changes to the church as an institution were so radical that it is legitimate to question whether there was a national church at all?⁹³

An initial reading of the Registers, however, suggests that one representative of the former church did continue to exercise patronage: the dean and chapter of Christ Church, Oxford, are recorded as presenting ministers eighteen times. Its survival as a body and an ecclesiastical patron, however, was the result of Henry VIII's elevation of Christ Church college chapel to be the cathedral for his new Diocese of Oxford in the 1540s, shortly after the college's establishment. Henry's death, before the statutes governing the joint college and cathedral foundation had been completed, seems to have allowed the college to formulate its own

⁹³ See Section 4.2, 412-13.

governing structures, for which the powers of the dean and chapter serving the cathedral were extended to govern the college also.⁹⁴ Thus, when the other cathedral deans and chapters were abolished, the collegiate role of the dean and chapter of Christ Church saved it from dissolution.

Furthermore, several key Cromwellians had been intruded into positions at Christ Church in the early 1650s: John Owen became Dean, after Edward Reynolds refused the Engagement in 1651, and Peter French, Cromwell's son-in-law, became a canon.⁹⁵ Powerful members, and a creative interpretation of its role in Oxford, thus ensured that the dean and chapter could continue to present ministers to its livings, ostensibly at least, in its role as governing body of an educational establishment rather than a representative of the church.⁹⁶ Of the eighteen ministers presented by the dean and chapter, only one may, possibly, have been illegally episcopally ordained.⁹⁷

As nurseries for the ministry, the universities were hot-houses of religious debate and tension during the Interregnum. Purged by the Commonwealth governments several times after 1642, especially with the imposition of the Engagement in 1649-51 and the reforming activities of new, godly Visitors, they provide an

⁹⁴ <http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/brief-history> [viewed 01/10/2016].

⁹⁵ Worden, 'Cromwellian Oxford', 736-8; Toon, *God's Statesman*, 53-4.

⁹⁶ The distinction between the 'dean and chapter' and 'Christ Church' as patrons in the Registers is not clear cut and may have been irrelevant. For example, the 'dean and chapter' and 'Christ Church' were given as patrons for 'South and Middle Littleton' in 1656 and 1657 respectively: Comm. III/5, f.119, Comm. III/6, f.15.

⁹⁷ Samuel Gardiner, although the name was common: Comm. III/6, f.45.

interesting illustration of patronage patterns in one sector of society. In fact, the universities and schools seem to have been less affected by the changes to patronage than any other category of patron and, in most cases, they continued to present to their livings unhindered.

The universities' level of patronage in the Registers is only slightly lower than that given by Hirschberg in 1742, and this may simply reflect the short period of time that they cover.⁹⁸ The university of Oxford made seventy-eight approved presentations, less than a fifth of whom left the church at the Restoration.⁹⁹ New College and Queen's were the two most active college patrons, presenting nearly twice as many ministers as the third most active, Magdalene. Collins suggested that Cromwell exercised the patronage of many Oxford University livings in his role as Chancellor of the University, but there is little evidence that this was so.¹⁰⁰ There was no legislation allowing or requiring the redistribution of university patronage to the Protector, nor is it easy to find presentations made by the Protector to livings otherwise held by the University. Exceptionally, he presented to one or two sequestrations: Wootton, Northamptonshire, was an Exeter College living, for which he nominated Lemuel Franklyn in 1656.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Queens' College, for example, had four advowsons, only two of which appear in the Registers: J. Roach (ed.) 'The colleges and halls: Queens' in *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely* (London: OUP, 1959), vol.3, 408-415. The dean and chapter of Christ Church also controlled Torrington, but this too does not appear in the Registers: SP 18/75 f.115.

⁹⁹ 18 of the 78 were nominated by the dean and chapter. See also Section 4.1, 391-4.

¹⁰⁰ Collins, 'Church Settlement', 31.

¹⁰¹ Comm. III/5, f.119.

The university of Cambridge made sixty approved presentations but, in contrast to the low levels at Oxford, nearly a third of those ministers left the church in 1662. It is tempting to ascribe these contrasting percentages to the broad assumption that Oxford was ‘more royalist’ whilst Cambridge was ‘more puritan’, but such categorisation ignores the radical changes in personnel experienced by both universities after 1642.¹⁰² There is, nevertheless, evidence that, despite these purges, some colleges in both universities retained undercurrents of royalist and episcopalian sympathy, and something of this may be evident in their ecclesiastical patronage.¹⁰³ The experience of Queens’ College, Cambridge offers an interesting illustration of this hypothesis, although it was not representative of all colleges.

Before 1640, under its master Edward Martin, Queens’ was recognised as one of the most Laudian colleges in the university.¹⁰⁴ Dowsing’s report of his iconoclasm in Queens’ chapel in 1644 related that they,

[...] beat downe about 110 Superstitious Pictures besides Cherubims & Ingravings [...] and brake down 10 or 12 Apostles and Saints in the Hall.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Such assumptions stem, perhaps, from Oxford’s role as Charles I’s headquarters in the 1640s and the establishment of the high profile puritan colleges of Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex at Cambridge in the sixteenth century.

¹⁰³ Worden, ‘Cromwellian Oxford’, 733-4, 740-4, 767.

¹⁰⁴ Twigg, *Queens’*, 45-7.

¹⁰⁵ Twigg, *Queens’*, 52. Martin had been one of Laud’s chaplains.

In 1644, the college was purged by the Earl of Manchester of its Master and most of the Fellows and students.¹⁰⁶ The new master was the presbyterian Herbert Palmer, and the intruded Fellows were all approved by the Westminster Assembly. On Palmer's death in 1647, he was replaced by the equally godly Thomas Horton, once a Fellow at Emmanuel, and a future Trier.¹⁰⁷

The Registers show that Queens' made only four presentations approved by the Triers, to two livings: Hockington Westweeke (now Oakington) and Little Eversden.¹⁰⁸ Both livings were traditionally filled by Fellows of the college and this continued throughout the revolution.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Queens' connections were important in securing the livings. When Oliver Sell (siz. St Catharines, Cantab.; Fell., Queens', Cantab.) was approved for Little Eversden in 1654, one of his three testimonials was provided by another Queens' Fellow, Philip Meadow.¹¹⁰ Two years later the living was taken up by James Spering (adm. St Catharine's, Cantab.; Fell., Queens', Cantab.), for whom another Fellow of Queens', John Nightingale, provided a testimonial, with George Barker, (probably Fell. St

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, 53-4.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰⁸ Queens' possessed two other advowsons as well and, as ever, the Registers may not reflect the total college activity. Twigg notes a Trinity college appointment in 1655 which does not appear in the Registers: J. Twigg, *History of the University of Cambridge*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1990), 190, n.214.

¹⁰⁹ Of the six ministers who served Little Eversden between 1639 and 1667, only Britten has not been certainly identified as a Queens' Fellow (Thomas Marley, Richard Britten, John Hoare, Oliver Sell, James Spering, Thomas Marley (restored), Edward Kempe: Venn, vols.1-4). At Oakington, of the five ministers between 1638 and 1662, only [?] Selby's college is uncertain (Daniel Chandler, [?] Selby, James Spering, Andrew Paschall, Edward Kempe: Venn, vols.1-4).

¹¹⁰ Comm. III/3, *lib.*2, f.200. Sell's other referees were Arthur Jackson (Trinity, Cantab.) and William Sandford, (possibly of Emmanuel or Clare.)

Catharine's) and Thomas Woodcock (pens. St Catharine's; Fell. Jesus).¹¹¹ In 1657, when Spering moved to Oakington, he had testimonials from Thomas Woodcock and Oliver Sell.¹¹² When Andrew Paschall took up Oakington in 1658 on Spering's removal (probably to Colne Engaine), he also had two Queen's referees, Spering himself and Samuel Jacombe.¹¹³

Two interesting points emerge from this example of patronage at Queens. In the first place, whilst the college continued to award its livings to its own Fellows, there also appears to have been a connection with St Catharine's. These two colleges lost more members than any others in the university in the purges of the 1640s, confirming the pre-war anti-parliamentarian sympathies of both colleges - but whether this revealed, or created, a close relationship between the two colleges is hard to explain.¹¹⁴ In fact, Ralph Brownrigg, Master of St Catharine's until ejected in 1646, had been strongly opposed to Martin's Laudianism at Queens'.¹¹⁵

The second point of interest, however, might help to explain the first. Despite the wholesale removal of Queens' personnel, there may, nevertheless, have been a

¹¹¹ Also Jos. [sic] Hill (edu. uncertain): Comm. III/7, f.40.

¹¹² Also Thomas Church (Peterhouse): Comm. III/6, f.99.

¹¹³ Also George Smallwood (Pembroke) and William Williams (? Emmanuel): Comm. III/7, f. 130.

¹¹⁴ Twigg, *Cambridge*, 162.

¹¹⁵ Brownrigg was Bishop, then former Bishop after 1646, of Exeter 1642-59: M. Wolffe, 'Ralph Brownrigg' in *ODNB*.

thread of older episcopalian sympathies which continued to run through some of the college's Interregnum presentations. James Spering only joined the Fellowship in 1649, but his attendance at the college extended back to 1647, before the purges resulting from the Engagement. Oliver Sell had been at St Catharine's in 1642, moved to Queens' in 1644, and become a Fellow in 1647. Despite the virtual emptying of the college of former members in the 1640s, both Spering and Sell may well have made and maintained early connections and loyalties with 'pre-purge' members, who continued to influence them. Spering and Sell both received illegal episcopal ordination in 1654: Spering from Joseph Hall, former Bishop of Norwich, and Sell by Ralph Brownrigg, former Bishop of Exeter.¹¹⁶ Sell provided testimonials for Spering when he moved to Buckland Newton in Dorset in 1655, then to Oakington in 1657.¹¹⁷ He also did so for another five ministers, three of whom were also episcopally ordained after 1646 and had attended either St Catharine's or Queens'.¹¹⁸ Spering provided a testimonial for Sell when he moved to Hinxworth in 1659 and a further six ministers, three of whom were also episcopally ordained after 1646; two of whom had attended St Catharine's or Queens'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Spering was almost certainly one of the two unnamed ministers from Queens' with whom Simon Patrick recorded being ordained by Hall; the other remains unknown: Taylor, *Works of Symon Patrick*, vol.9, 423.

¹¹⁷ Comm. III/3, f.119.

¹¹⁸ Comm. III/4, f.427 (John Duckfield); Comm. III/ 5, f.128 (Charles Trenmell); Comm. III/7, f. 101 (William Glover).

¹¹⁹ The episcopally ordained ministers were Comm. III/7, f.347 (William Woolrich); Comm. III/7, f.75 (Joseph Sedgewicke); Comm. III/7, f.187 (George Barker). Barker was only ordained on the day Charles II reached England; he had provided a testimonial for Spering in 1656.

The only St Catharine's living in the Registers - Coton, near Cambridge - went to Gervase Fullwood in late 1657.¹²⁰ His referees included three Queens' men and four from St Catharine's, where Fullwood was a Fellow. A year after his appointment he was ordained illegally by Brownrigg.

The evidence of a network based on episcopalian sympathies underlying the patronage activities of Queens' College and St Catharine's is suggestive, although it is unsafe to say definitively that such sympathies always determined the college's choice of ministers for its livings. After all, for every minister mentioned in the networks above who *did* have episcopalian links, there were others who did not, so the evidence of episcopalianism should not be the only narrative in these examples. Nevertheless, that so many of those involved *were* covert episcopalians with connections in either St Catharine's or Queens' argues strongly that active networks of such men may well have been working with each other to further their positions in the church. These networks represented not just personal relationships between men sharing certain religious allegiances but also an intellectual continuity which has hitherto been obscured. At the very least, this confirms the premise that the puritan purges had not been as thorough as the Commonwealth regimes had intended. In fact, in failing to realign thoroughly the religious characters of at least some of the university colleges, space had been left for those with episcopalian sympathies to adapt to the changed circumstances without necessarily abandoning their less politically acceptable loyalties.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Comm. III/6, f.120.

¹²¹ See also Tyacke, *University of Oxford*, 596.

The religious and political changes which placed the ecclesiastical patronage of the church and Crown into the hands of the Protector also resulted in the emergence of several other significant patrons. The most important of these were the Trustees for the Maintenance of Preaching Ministers. The neglect by historians of the importance of the Trustees in the Cromwellian religious programme has meant that the extent of their ecclesiastical patronage has been missed. In fact, the Registers record them as the largest single patron after Oliver Cromwell, presenting 165 of the total approved ministers, and corroborating or duplicating the admissions of a further twelve. This was over three times the number of presentations by the next largest single patron, the Keepers of the Liberty of England (KLE).

The Trustees presented to livings in every county except for Cornwall, Northamptonshire, Shropshire and Suffolk.¹²² Only eighteen of their presentations were to identified curacies, most of which were in either Cheshire, Lancashire or Cumberland, one presentation was for a lectureship and one was for a sequestration.¹²³ Furthermore, their rapid emergence as a major state patron in place of the KLE is clear from *figure 37* (below), where their level of patronage moved rapidly from a very low level in 1654 to outstrip all other classes of patron, except for the Protectors and ‘private patrons’ by 1656.

¹²² Comm. III/2 notes the presentation by the Trustees of John Cateline to Laxton, Northamptonshire, but his corresponding entry in the Registers gives William Stafford as his patron: Comm. III/7, f.113.

¹²³ Comm. III/7, f.202 (Pocklington Lecture). Both the curacies and sequestration rely on identification given in the Registers, but there may have been more that were not recorded as such.

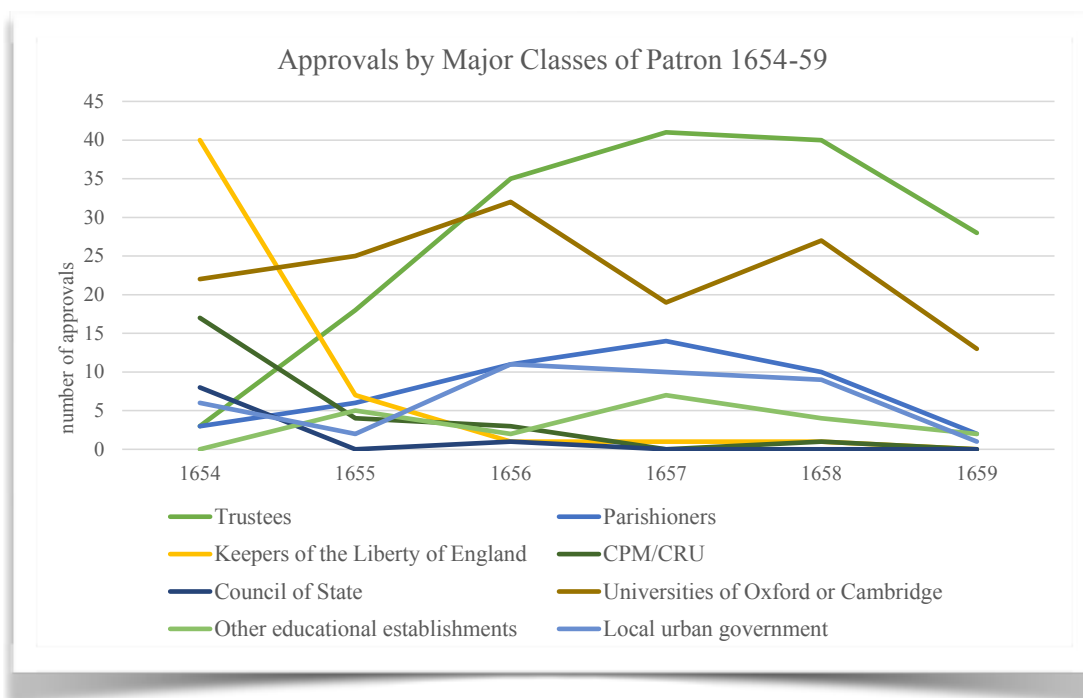


fig. 37 Main institutional patrons¹²⁴

Unexpectedly, however, the Trustees exercised very little influence in Wales, presenting only to six parishes in total, one of which was also patronised by Cromwell.¹²⁵ This is particularly curious because Hirschberg estimated that the church exercised very high levels of patronage in some of the Welsh dioceses: ninety per cent in Bangor and St Asaph, forty-five per cent in St David's.¹²⁶ A brief survey for this study, however, of fifty-eight livings in three deaneries in the Archdeaconries of Merioneth, Arudwy and Anglesey, shows that only eleven appeared in the Registers, but all of these had belonged to the Bishop of

¹²⁴ The patronage of the Protectors was too high, and of parliament and the Propagation Commissions too low, to be practicably incorporated in this chart.

¹²⁵ Comm. III/6, ff.133, 180; Comm. III/7, f.29.

¹²⁶ Hirschberg, 113.

Bangor.¹²⁷ After 1654, nine of these were controlled by the Protector.¹²⁸ It is unclear why the bishops' livings in Wales went so completely Cromwell, whereas in England many were in the hands of the Trustees, especially in the light of their acquisition of former bishops' and deans' and chapter lands under the 'Act for abolishing Deans and Chapters' of April 1649 and July 1649, which vested advowsons with the Trustees, until sold on with their lands under the Act of April 1650.¹²⁹

Thus the vast majority of the Trustees' presentations were for English parochial benefices. A random survey of forty of the English livings to which the Trustees presented ministers confirms that the majority had previously been controlled by either bishops or deans and chapters (*fig. 38*).¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Only eleven of the total 58 livings in the deaneries of Evionydd and Ardudwy in the archdeaconry of Merioneth, and in the deanery of Llivan and Talybolion in the archdeaconry of Anglesey, appeared in the Registers.

¹²⁸ Ecton, 496-9, 501-2.

¹²⁹ 'Act for Maintenance for Preaching Ministers' (June 1649) in *A&O*, vol.2, 142-8; 'Act for further Instructions to the Trustees' (July 1649) in *A&O*, vol.2, 200-5, which vested all remaining ecclesiastical rights, including advowsons, from deans, chapters and all remaining cathedral officers in the hands of the Trustees. An Act of 1650 passed these advowsons on to the new purchasers of these lands: 'Act for providing Maintenance for Ministers and other Pious uses' (April 1650) in *A&O*, vol.2, 369-378.

¹³⁰ The patrons have mostly been identified from Ecton and double-checked with pre-1640 records in *CCEd* where possible. Houston suggests that the Trustees also appointed to sequestrations, but the source for this claim is unclear and it cannot be entirely verified in the Registers: J. Houston, 'Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Records of the Commonwealth 1643-1660 in the Lambeth Palace Library' (Farnborough: Gregg, 1968), 65.

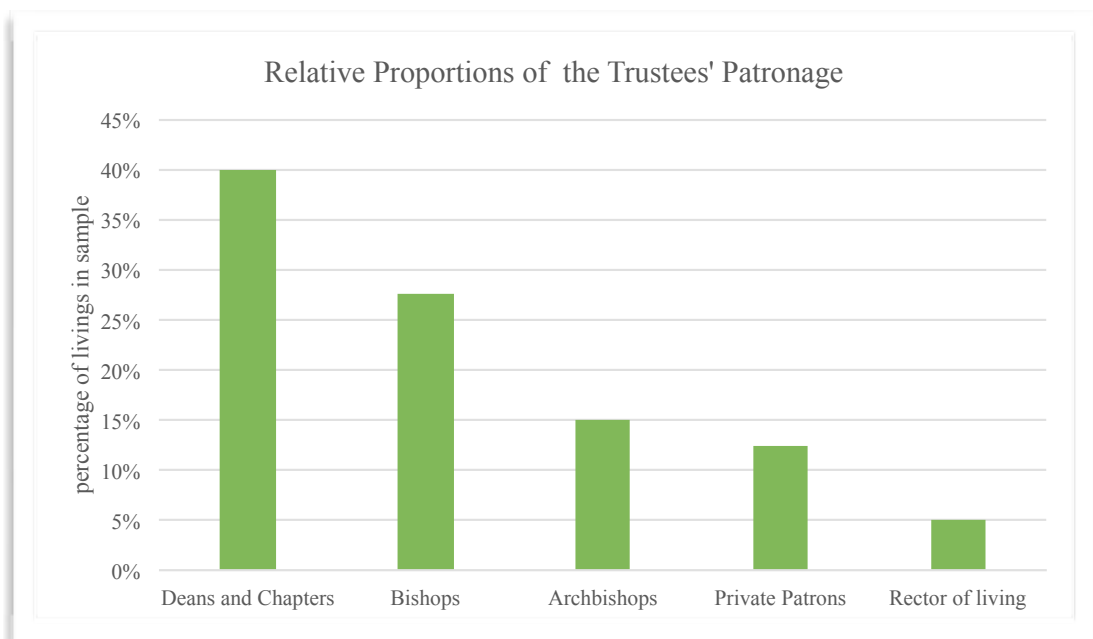


fig. 38 *Former patrons of those livings taken over by the Trustees*

It is also hard to explain how the Trustees retained control over these livings, in the light of the 1650 Act, which stated that rights of patronage went to the purchasers of those lands.¹³¹ Perhaps the livings controlled by the Trustees were attached to yet unsold lands, but further work would be needed to confirm this.

Like Cromwell, the Trustees seem to have been reactive in the exercise of their patronage. Their Minute Books show that they frequently responded to requests for presentations from individual ministers or their future parishioners. In October 1654, for example, the parishioners of Weeford in Staffordshire asked the Trustees to settle Richard Chantrye in the living, to which he was duly admitted by the Triers a month later.¹³² The former patron had been the Weeford

¹³¹ 'Act for providing Maintenance'(1650) in *A&O*, vol.2, 369-378.

¹³² *Comm. V/4*, f.25; *Comm. III/3*, *lib. 3*, f.7.

Prebendary at Lichfield cathedral, under the jurisdiction of the dean and chapter.¹³³ The following year, John Harrison applied personally for the vacant curacy of Ireby in Cumberland, and the Trustees accommodated this request on condition he was approved by the Triers.¹³⁴ Ireby was also a former dean and chapter living, this time in the old see of Carlisle. Both examples illustrate the Trustees' focus on former cathedral livings and their exercise of patronage as a response to petition.¹³⁵

The working relationship between Trustees and Triers is evident from the appointments to Weeford and Ireby, but sometimes their interdependency was even greater. In November, 1655, Richard Meggot was approved by the Triers for West Tarring in Sussex.¹³⁶ At the same time, the Trustees recorded that 'having received a good account of Richard Meggott', they had ordered him to preach at the adjacent parish of Ferring in Sussex for a month's probation after which, if successful, he should be settled there.¹³⁷ He was duly approved by the Triers in January, 1656.¹³⁸ Meggott's interview for Ferring, however, provides no referees, which suggests that the Triers *may* not have actually interviewed him for Ferring, but granted his instrument on the basis of their former approval for Tarring and

¹³³ Ecton, 70, 90.

¹³⁴ Comm. V/4, f.285; Comm. III/4, f.179.

¹³⁵ Ecton, 563.

¹³⁶ Comm. III/4, f.345.

¹³⁷ Comm. V/4, f.373.

¹³⁸ Comm. III/4, f.471. Ferring, too, was formerly in the hands of a Prebendal stall, this time at Chichester cathedral: Ecton, 54.

upon the Trustees' recommendation. This reliance on each others' activities is evident also from the frequent correspondence between both parties asking for information on ministers who had been refused approval or refused an augmentation.¹³⁹

Furthermore, a number of ministers who were accepted for settlement by the Trustees if approved by the Triers, are *not* found in the Registers. In 1655, Owen Eaton applied for the poor Welsh living of Commins, Denbigh, to which the Trustees agreed, if he was approved; but they also advised the Triers to vet him carefully. In fact, Eaton did not gain approval for Commins although he was approved a year later for Corwen, some fifty miles away.¹⁴⁰ The Minutes record a number of other ministers who were approved by the Trustees to receive an augmentation or whose future parishioners requested the Trustees to present them to their livings, but who were not then approved by the Triers. When Hugh Humphreys petitioned the Trustees for the cure of Amlwch on Anglesey, for example, the Trustees noted that they were 'not satisfied concerning him and therefore think not fitt to bestow the same upon him'.¹⁴¹ It seems, therefore, that in some cases the Trustees were effectively sidestepping the Triers role, by vetting ministers' suitability when operating their ecclesiastical patronage. The Trustees' decisions, moreover, were often based upon personal factors and were

¹³⁹ Comm. V/2, f.243.; Comm. V/4, 6.

¹⁴⁰ Also spelled Eyton: Comm. V/4, ff.203, 206. Comm. III/4, f.314. For rejections by the Triers, see Section 3.3, 322-36.

¹⁴¹ Comm. V/3, f.88. See also Comm. V/4, f.41, Comm. V/5, f.148.

not simply reflections of whether available finance existed.¹⁴² Such decisions occur often enough in their Minute books to become an important qualifier to the principle that the Triers always controlled access to the ministry.

There are other puzzles in the Trustees' patronage, in particular surrounding the twelve presentations that corroborated or duplicated Protectoral presentations. In February, 1659, for example, the Trustees corroborated the appointment of John Smith to Rickling in Essex. Smith had been presented by Oliver Cromwell, but his interview and admission by the Triers had taken place on 15 September 1658, twelve days after the Protector's death.¹⁴³ Given this, Smith's uneasiness about the security of his title is understandable, but it is unclear why the Trustees were the corroborating body. To reinforce his position, a second presentation from Richard Cromwell would have been logical. The answer may involve the poverty of the living, which in the 1650 survey was recorded as having been vacant for seven years, owing to its small income (£28 a year) and the advanced decay of the church, which might 'suddenly fall to ruine and be out of use'.¹⁴⁴ In 1659, Smith was recorded as having received, at some point, an augmentation of £60 at Rickling; perhaps the Trustee's corroboration of his appointment reflected this underlying financial transaction in some way.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Comm. V/4, 265.

¹⁴³ Comm. III/7, ff. 95, 205.

¹⁴⁴ Smith, *Essex*, 284.

¹⁴⁵ Comm. VIb/2, f.52.

In the case of John Warren, admitted to Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire, the interactions between Cromwell, the Trustees and the Triers were even more complex. After the sequestration of the minister John Taylor in 1642, the living had two more incumbents before Warren was intruded in 1646. In June 1654, he was approved by the Triers, with a presentation from Cromwell.¹⁴⁶ Two years later he successfully petitioned Cromwell to instruct the Trustees to grant him an augmentation out of the income of a local parsonage, which had lately come into their control.¹⁴⁷ Thereafter he received around £35 before he died in August 1657.¹⁴⁸ Within a few months both Cromwell and, four weeks later, the Trustees then presented Matthew Carre to Hemel Hempstead, where he continued to receive the augmentation, albeit at diminishing levels.¹⁴⁹ But, as in Smith's case, it is unclear why the second presentation from the Trustees was deemed necessary. Both Cromwell and the Trustees were effectively claiming the patronage of the living but, whereas the Trustee's presentation of Smith to Rickling explained that it was 'to corroborate' Cromwell's *pre-mortem* presentation, neither of Carre's two presentations did so.

Several other livings also experienced the same pattern of events, where both Cromwell and Trustees exercised the patronage.¹⁵⁰ Sometimes the patronage was

¹⁴⁶ Comm. III/3, *lib.1*, f.163.

¹⁴⁷ SP 18/128 f.172.

¹⁴⁸ Comm. VII/2, f.24.

¹⁴⁹ Comm. III/6, f.106; Comm. VII/2, f.110; Urwick, *Herts*, 435-7.

¹⁵⁰ For example: Comm. III/7, f.70 (Wighton) and Comm. III/7, f.213 (Brides, London).

simply uncertain, as at Bispham, Lancashire, which petitioned for an augmentation in 1658, noting that,

[...] the maintenance is but 6 pounce per annum or thereabouts, the Impropriacon there belonging to a Papist, the patron thereof not known.¹⁵¹

Perhaps in such cases, parishioners sometimes petitioned the Protector (by default), who presented their candidate, at - or after - which the Trustees became aware of the living's vacancy and, whilst accepting Cromwell's action, marked also their legal claim to the patronage with a separate presentation.

A striking feature of both Cromwell's and the Trustees' ecclesiastical patronage was their willingness to present ministers nominated by parishioners. In other cases, the Registers show parishioners presenting ministers in their own right. This was not unique to the Interregnum, of course: before the civil war, both urban corporations and parishioners had also presented ministers, sometimes funding lectureships, or having bought or acquired an advowson or right of presentation. The Corporation of Newcastle on Tyne, for example, held the rights to present to seven livings in the city, whilst that of Warwick controlled four.¹⁵²

The number of presentations by urban corporations and parishioners (as a single class) during the Protectorate rose to a level more than three times higher than

¹⁵¹ SP 18/180 f.33.

¹⁵² Lamburne, p112; Hill, *Economic Problems*, 57, n.2.

those in Hirschberg's analysis, albeit remaining a small proportion overall.¹⁵³ It is unfortunate, however, that Hirschberg combined the patronage of the urban corporations and parishioners, since this not only obscures the degree of patronage exercised by either group, but also it ignores the very significant differences between them. Where urban corporations usually had a formal right to present a minister, the legal basis for most of the parishioners' presentations seems far less clear. In some cases they appear not to have held the patronage formally but, rather, were exercising a choice against which there was no opposition. The Registers record exactly this situation for the parochial chapel of Bolton on Swale in Yorkshire, where a memorandum notes the parishioners as nominators, adding,

[...] and there being no patron that doth challenge interest therein.¹⁵⁴

Indeed, nearly half the approvals for parishioners' presentations were for chapels, and a further twenty per cent were for curacies. Another fifteen per cent were lectureships and yet another fifteen per cent are untraceable, suggesting that they were very small, probably appendant, chapels. In fact, of the forty-six approved parishioners' nominations, only five were definitely independent parochial livings.

¹⁵³ 2.6% of the Triers' approvals fell into this class.

¹⁵⁴ Comm. III/4, f.69.

By the mid-eighteenth century, however, of the twenty entries for which a patron has been identified, only two were still controlled by the parishioners, whilst most of the others were in the hands of the church or Crown.¹⁵⁵ This, too, suggests that in most of the livings where the parishioners had chosen the incumbent during the Interregnum, they had done so informally and had not legally acquired their own advowsons. Nevertheless, added to the large numbers of parishioners' nominations that were formally presented by Cromwell and the Trustees, this evidence adds weight to Claire Cross's identification of a significant increase in lay control of the ministry in the mid-seventeenth-century.¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, these parishioners seem to have been nominating largely to chapels and curacies of low economic value and little political importance, which implies that the vested interests of private and state patrons kept livings of greater significance firmly within their own hands.

The urban Corporations exercised their patronage more formally, both to lectureships and parish cures. In some cases, however, it is difficult to categorise the position that had been filled. When the mayor and council of Colchester presented Owen Stockton to 'Colchester', his role was

¹⁵⁵ The parishioners retained New Buckenham curacy, Norfolk, and Kinver curacy, Staffordshire. In a few cases, such as Claverley in Shropshire, the living was in private hands in 1742, although in their petition to the Triers and Trustees in 1656 for approval of Michael Izzard, they had noted that their church was 'presentative but elective by the parishioners': LPL, MS. 954/13; Comm. III/5, f.310.

¹⁵⁶ Cross, *Church and People*, 175, 187-9, 195.

to lecture every Sunday afternoon, Wednesday morning, every Michaelmas, Midsummer and Dennis day, and every fifth of November.¹⁵⁷

Was this an established lectureship, or was the Corporation seeking to add to the availability of preaching generally, in a city where so many of the parish churches were still in ruins? At Kendal, the Corporation was at least clear about their reason for funding the lectureship filled by James Marsden in 1658, alongside the cure of the parish church:

Upon consideration had of ye greatnesse of ye psh of Kendall [...] having within it eleaven Chappells Appendant [...] to which Chappells there belongs little or noe maintenance by reason whereof they are destitute of able ministers and ye people inhabiting within ye sd Chappelries cannot in regard of their distance resort to ye parish Church of Kendall aforesd.¹⁵⁸

In Sandwich, moreover, the Corporation adapted the usual patronage of individual parochial livings by redistributing available parish income to enable three ‘preachers’ for serve the town.¹⁵⁹ It seems, then, that the Interregnum saw some Corporations accommodating the changed circumstances and requirements

¹⁵⁷ Comm. III/7, f.50.

¹⁵⁸ Comm. III/7, f.329; Comm.VIa/11 f.124; Nightingale, vol.2, 959.

¹⁵⁹ See Section 2.5, 158.

of their citizens, and seeking to make good war time losses or the lack of willing ministers to fill poor, remote livings, even in the later 1650s. David Underdown has noted that after the political purges of 1648-9, numerous urban Corporations, perceiving no doubt the weaknesses in ecclesiastical administration, aggressively purchased church lands and revenue sources.¹⁶⁰ The evidence in the Registers now suggests that these Corporations may also have sought to extend their control further over the local religious establishment by the acquisition and exercise of rights of ecclesiastical patronage.

Hirschberg's amalgamation of the patronage of corporations and parishioners, however, means that it is unclear whether their higher levels of patronage in the Interregnum reflects a net gain in the number of advowsons they controlled or just more frequent turn over. Only further detailed research into individual towns could clarify this, but whatever increase the Corporations may have experienced during the 1650s was short-lived. At Sandwich, St Clement's and St Mary's were in the control of the Archdeacon of Canterbury by 1742, whilst the patronage of St Peter's was exercised by the Corporation and Crown in turn.¹⁶¹ In fact, a brief survey of a third of the Corporation livings in the Registers shows that seventy per cent of them were no longer in Corporation hands by the mid-eighteenth-century. It is possible, therefore, that the ecclesiastical developments of the Interregnum may have played a part in the gradual devolution of patronage from the Corporations to the Crown and church.

¹⁶⁰ D. Underdown, *Pride's Purge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 333-4.

¹⁶¹ Ecton, 12-13.

The Protectorate also saw the emergence of a new class of ecclesiastical patron. In sweeping away the episcopal hierarchy, the door had been opened for numerous provincial and national ‘government bodies’ to become involved, if only temporarily, in recruitment to the church.¹⁶² As a group, these bodies were responsible for nearly ten per cent of the appointments made through the Triers. Excluding those of the Trustees and the KLE (discussed above), most of their presentations were approved in 1654, which suggests that many were confirmations of appointments made before the Protectorate.

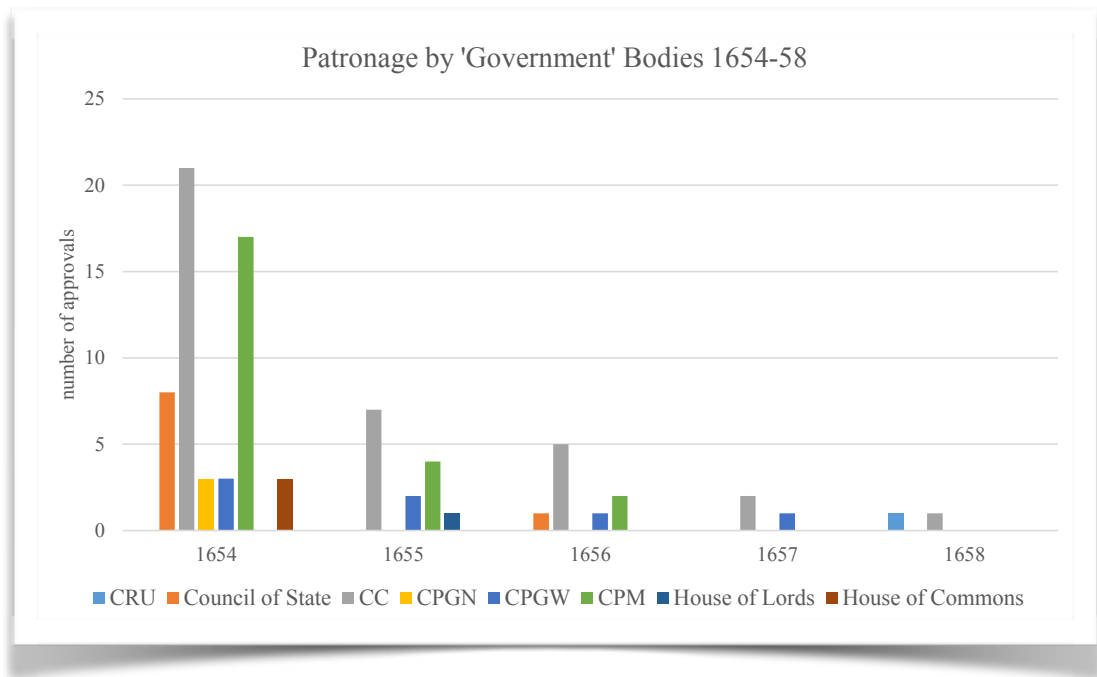


fig. 39 Patronage by ‘government bodies’¹⁶³

¹⁶² These were the TPM, KLE, CPM, CRU, CPGN, CPGW, various county committees, both Houses of Parliament and the Council of State: see *Abbreviations*.

¹⁶³ Note: none of these patrons was active after 1658.

Thereafter the numbers decreased rapidly, illustrating the fluidity of patronage in this period; it is little surprise that there was uncertainty amongst parishioners when it came to filling vacancies and that some resorted to electing their own ministers. A survey of sixty of the seventy-seven livings patronised by the ‘government bodies’ noted in *figure 39*, shows that nineteen reappeared in the Registers a second time. Cromwell presented to roughly eight of these, private patrons presented to another eight, two were in the hands of the Trustees, and Trinity College, Cambridge presented to one. Thus it appears that the temporary intervention of these ‘government bodies’ in ecclesiastical patronage was through necessity rather than as a long-term solution. More work would be needed to establish whether the fact that a third of those sixty livings changed minister at least twice within a few years was related to the temporary involvement of government bodies in their patronage.

The exact roles played by national and provincial ‘government bodies’ in ecclesiastical patronage is often not apparent from the sparse detail in the Registers. It is instructive, therefore, to follow one example through the later 1640s and 50s. In June 1654, Nathaniel Byfield petitioned Cromwell to settle a dispute over the sequestrated living of Silverton in Devon, where he had been settled by the County Committee and Westminster Assembly in the mid-1640s.¹⁶⁴ His appointment was confirmed by the CPM but, after the breakdown in ecclesiastical administration in 1653, his incumbency was sidelined by the County Committee, who offered the living to Richard Bryan. Bryan was

¹⁶⁴ SP 18/72 f.53; CR, 96.

approved by the Triers in May 1654, but Byfield won a legal ruling in the civil court and the Council of State confirmed his position.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the Triers claimed to be unable to revoke Bryan's approval without an order from Cromwell and the Council and, in 1657, after the death of the sequestered incumbent, William Cotton, Bryan was presented and approved a second time, as the legislation allowed.¹⁶⁶ His patron this time was the parliamentarian John Robartes, Earl of Radnor, but how and when Robartes had acquired the right of presentation is unclear, not least because Cotton left the 'next advowson and right of presentation' to his two sons-in-law.¹⁶⁷ Byfield never regained Silverton and the advowson moved through several private patrons' hands thereafter.¹⁶⁸

This example, although more complex than some, provides a paradigm for understanding the trajectories of the patronage of at least some of those livings that government bodies briefly controlled, through the revolution and into the Restoration period. The sequestration of pre-war ministers allowed government bodies to step in temporarily to secure continuity of preaching, but subsequent changes to the political regime and its administration, combined with failures in communication, resulted in confusion over patronage. This could trigger dispute, litigation and sometimes the sale of presentation rights, overriding the rights of the original patron.

¹⁶⁵ SP 18/72 f.53; Comm. III/3, *lib. I*, f.11.

¹⁶⁶ Comm. III/3, *lib. I*, f.11; Comm, III/5, f.214; SP 18/72 f.53.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, Prob/11/258.

¹⁶⁸ WR, 111 (Cotton); *CCEd* ID: 310811; Ecton, 112.

The County Committee of Devon seems to have been largely to blame for the dispute at Silverton, possibly because of changes in personnel.¹⁶⁹ In fact, after the Trustees and the KLE, County Committees were the most active class of 'government' patron. These Committees had been established by parliament in the 1640s to provide a form of local government in each county, although not all of them survived intact into the 1650s. Half of the ministers presented by County Committees in the Registers were approved in 1654, although they may have been settled in their livings before the Protectorate: Giles Collier was one, settled by order of the County Committee of Worcestershire at Blockley in 1646.¹⁷⁰

Intriguingly, only Committees from the west and south-west of England appear in the Registers (*fig. 40*). This may reflect the fact that many of the County Committees gradually collapsed after the political purges of 1648 and were superseded by Militia Commissions and other committees, but the striking bias towards the west of England is harder to explain.¹⁷¹ Since the livings to which they presented were not overwhelmingly former Crown, church or private livings, it may be that the explanation relates in some way to the latent influence of royalism, although this too begs more questions than it answers.

¹⁶⁹ SP 18/72 f.53.

¹⁷⁰ Comm. III/4, f.279.

¹⁷¹ Everitt, *Kent*, 286-297.

County Commissions appearing as ecclesiastical patrons

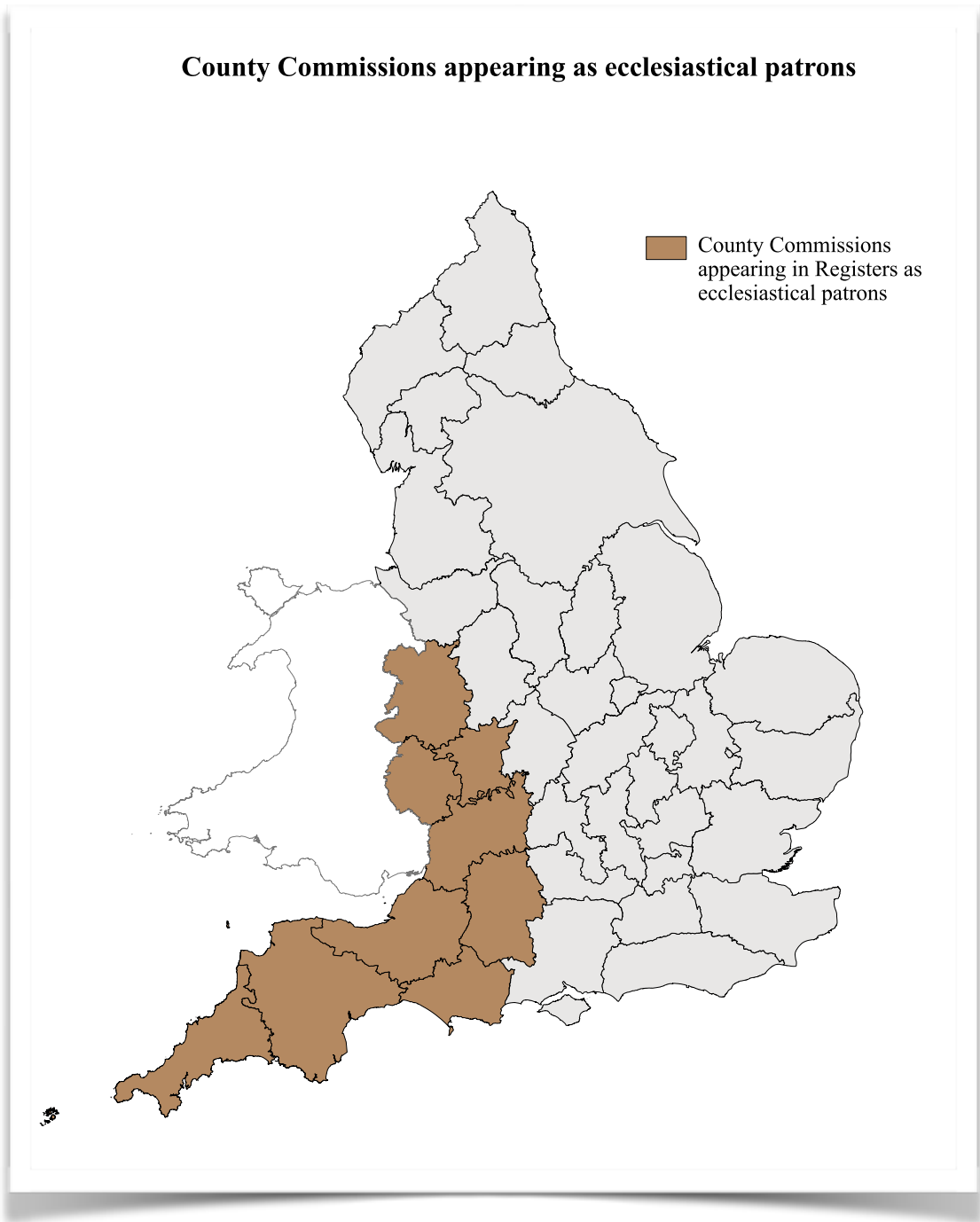


fig. 40 *Counties of which the County Commissions appeared as patrons
in the Registers*

Perhaps the category of ecclesiastical patrons least affected by the changes were the 'private patrons'. The principle of private patronage was retained throughout the Interregnum and, although the level decreased by nearly ten per cent during the Protectorate, as a *class* they remained the largest overall group of patrons. The decrease probably resulted from the sequestration of royalists and religious delinquents, as this process usually removed their presentation rights, although compounding often restored them.

The delinquency of a patron could have serious consequences for ministers serving their cures, even resulting in ejection. In 1654, Robert Frampton lost his living at Bryngwyn, Monmouthshire, when the estates of the catholic, royalist Marquis of Worcester were sequestrated, although Frampton was not himself delinquent.¹⁷² Nor was Frampton the only minister to suffer for his patron's delinquency. The royalist John Duncomb, who held the advowson of Brickhill in Buckinghamshire, failed to get two ministers into this living, the second of whom, Robert Hucknell, was recommended for an alternative benefice by the Triers themselves, in recognition of his personal acceptability.¹⁷³ He was subsequently presented to Brockdish in Norfolk in 1657 by Cromwell himself.¹⁷⁴ Samuel Broad, too, was rejected by the Triers after being presented by the

¹⁷² This was not Robert Frampton, future Bishop of Gloucester, who was in Dorset in 1654, then Aleppo in 1655: J. Knight, *Civil War and Restoration in Monmouthshire* (Logaston Press: Herefordshire, 2005), 132-3; R. Cornwall, 'Robert Frampton' in *ODNB*; Bodl., MS. Tanner 52, f. 83.

¹⁷³ Bodl., MS. J. Walker c.4, 39; *W.R.*, 74; Walker, *Sufferings*, 174; SP 25/76 f.422; SP 18/102 f. 83.

¹⁷⁴ Comm. III/6, f.153.

royalist Sir Edmund Bray to Great Rissington, in Gloucestershire. According to Walker's account, the Triers,

tore his presentation in pieces, with words to this effect: 'it will be a great trouble and vexation to the malignant party, to put them out of one hundred pounds per annum, and admit them into two'.¹⁷⁵

Broad himself seems to have had royalist sympathies, so it seems that he and Bray formed an unacceptably toxic combination for the Triers. In 1657, however, Bray then presented his chaplain, the moderate Presbyterian Edmund Hall, to the same living but he, too, was rejected. Hall's outspoken antipathy towards Cromwell undoubtedly contributed to his rejection, but Bray's delinquency was probably part of the cause.¹⁷⁶

Although private patrons were dominant as a class, few individuals presented more than a few ministers, other than the aristocrats indicated in *figure 41*.

[*cont.*]

¹⁷⁵ This sounds suspiciously vitriolic: Walker, *Sufferings*, 174.

¹⁷⁶ In particular, two anti-Commonwealth and anti-Cromwellian pamphlets were attributed to him by Anthony Wood: *Lingua testium* (1651) and *Manus testium movens* (1651): E. C. Vernon, 'E. Hall' in *ODNB*.

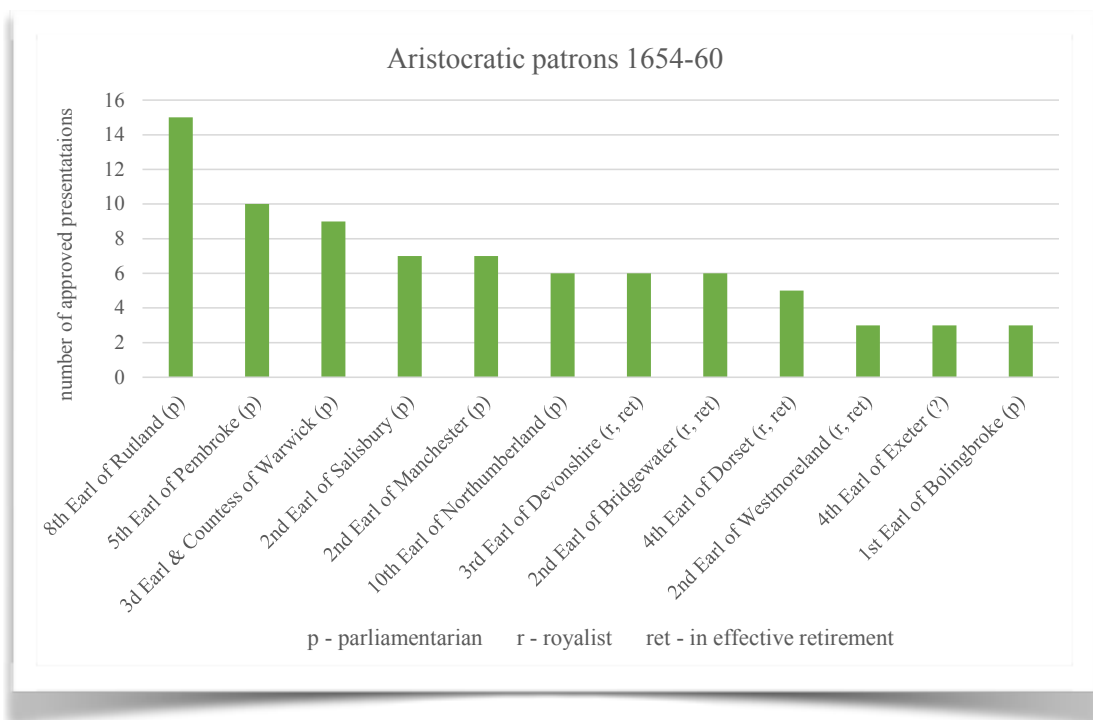


fig. 41 Major aristocratic patrons

Chief amongst these were the puritan elite, but the Registers also record a handful of presentations by known royalists, such as Mildmay Fane, 2nd Earl of Westmoreland and John Egerton, 2nd Earl of Bridgewater. Both men, however, kept low profiles in the 1650s, Westmoreland through choice, Bridgewater through financial necessity. Although Bridgewater presented six ministers after 1654, only one of them is known to have been episcopally ordained after 1646 (John Hitchcocke). Another, Joshua Richardson, was ejected in 1662 and yet another, Richard Lee, was the intruded godly minister of Hatfield, although he

later conformed.¹⁷⁷ Lee's presentation was corroborated, however, by Cromwell, and when it changed hands again in 1659, the patron was Richard Cromwell.¹⁷⁸ The other three have left no indication of their religious loyalties. Aubrey d'Veve, 20th Earl of Oxford, on the other hand, sequestered and twice imprisoned 'active' royalist, also managed to exercise some ecclesiastical patronage, presenting the episcopalian Oliver Sell to Hinxworth in 1657.¹⁷⁹ It is unclear how he was able to operate his patronage at all, given his political delinquency.

The same can be said for an overtly royalist circle around the Brudenell family in Northamptonshire, who co-owned the advowson of Thistleton in Rutland. This group presented Richard Garnons in 1653, approved in 1654, even though all but one of the patrons were known royalists, most of whom had fought in the civil war. Sir Thomas Brudenell and Peter Morlett had been imprisoned for their part in the fighting; James, 2nd Earl of Carlisle, had also fought and then fled to Barbados until 1652; Sir John Thimbleby was a crypto-catholic and married into the like-minded Savage family; Sir Robert Thorold belonged to a royalist family; only William Claughton remains unidentified.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ H. R. Wilton-Hall, 'Dr. Richard Lee, of Hatfield, and his son, Richard Lee, of Essendon' in *Transactions of the St. Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society* (1901), vol.1(4), 282-3; Venn, vol.3, 64. It is unlikely that he was the Richard Lee said to have been ordained by Matthew Wren in 1649, when the latter was in prison.

¹⁷⁸ Comm. III/4, ff.228, 431; Comm. III/7, f.335.

¹⁷⁹ Comm. III/6, f.136.

¹⁸⁰; G. Hodgett, 'Thorold family' in *ODNB; LJ*, vol.8, 60; L. Boothman and R. Hyde Parker (eds.), *Savage Fortune: An Aristocratic Family in the Early Seventeenth-century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, SRS, 2006), vol.49, 74, n.142; G. Robinson, *Horses, People and Parliament in the English Civil War* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 151-2.

Garnons himself had been ordained by Robert Maxwell, former Bishop of Kilmore, in 1649 but not one of his referees can be traced. The 1652 Act of Oblivion and subsequent political quiescence may have allowed some unlikely patrons (such as Bridgewater, above) to present, but it is difficult to account for the Triers' approval of any minister presented by the Brudenell group unless accompanied by some very impressive testimonials from trusted godly ministers. None of Garnon's referees fit this description, so were the Triers susceptible to bribery?

There are other hints of possible episcopalian networks operating below the radar of the authorities through less high profile private patrons. In East Anglia, the extensive Bacon family presented twelve, possibly thirteen, ministers during the Protectorate, of whom six (possibly seven) were illegally ordained after 1646 and four had already been ordained before 1646.¹⁸¹ Only two do not appear to have taken episcopalian ordination at all, one of whom - Samuel Sherman - conformed in 1662. The other, Nathaniel Norcrosse, an independent who had returned from New England in 1649, died in 1662.¹⁸² So was this really a circle of related patrons who actively favoured the episcopalian church? Or was it rather, as Sheils noted of some puritan patrons in the 1630s, that the Bacons simply took

¹⁸¹ Thomas Wilson was presented twice - he may or may not have been the same man: Comm. III/3, *lib.*3, f.97; Comm. III/7, f.23.

¹⁸² Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims*, 173; *CR*, 367.

up recommendations for acceptable ministers from friends and family, with whom they naturally shared the same broad social and religious sympathies?¹⁸³

*

*

The Registers demonstrate that ecclesiastical patronage was subject to radical change during the Interregnum. The multiplicity of participants in the process and the sense of confusion that characterised the 1640s and the Commonwealth can be seen in the range of patrons recorded in 1654 and in petitions to Cromwell, the Triers and the Trustees. The swift reduction in this range thereafter, however, shows that under the Protectorate, the process was streamlined and simplified by the simple expedient of concentrating much of the patronage in Cromwell's hands. Most significantly, the Registers confirm the eradication of the institution of the former church, witnessed by its loss of the power to choose parish ministers. This meant that both the choice and approval of ministers was now overwhelmingly in lay hands.

The transfer of patronage to 'government bodies' and the Protector, allied with the activities of the Triers and Trustees, meant that control over the personnel of the church was also largely in the hands of the state. The most important new state patrons were the two Protectors and the Trustees. This section argues that Oliver Cromwell was heavily personally involved in the choice of ministers, but that Richard's presbyterianism may have made the national church a more

¹⁸³ Quoted in O'Day, *Clergy*, 95.

attractive prospect for episcopalians. Moreover, the central role of the Trustees in the choice and settlement of ministers has become apparent. Not only did their control over sources of maintenance enable them to confirm or prevent appointments, but they also exercised considerable patronage in their own right. Furthermore, significant numbers of parishioners were able to take an active part in the choice of their own the clergy, by nominating ministers to Cromwell, the Trustees and in their own right.

The Registers also demonstrate that there was no clear pattern behind the geographical distribution of Triers' approvals. The patrons discussed here have exhibited a randomness to their activities which implies that if approvals for livings were manipulated, it was done at a low and localised level. That said, one or two interesting geographical anomalies have emerged: the negligible number of presentations by the Trustees in Wales, despite the high levels of pre-war church patronage in several dioceses and the concentration of County Commission presentations in the west of England. These are both points that would bear further research, but the focus of this thesis moves now to the ministers who were presented by the range of patrons discussed above, and the referees who provided them with the necessary testimonials.

3.3 The Approved Ministers and their Networks

The transfer of patronage was crucial to the process of reshaping of the church in the Interregnum, but equally important was the Cromwellian regime's scrutiny of individual ministers and those who provided testimonials for them. This section examines these ministers and their networks of referees from three different angles to build a picture of the personnel of the Protectorate church. It starts by exploring the contemporary accusations that the Triers manipulated the approval process to favour independents, especially by settling them in wealthy livings. It then examines the allegation that they deliberately appointed uneducated and 'mechanick' preachers over the ordained clergy. It discusses the possible origins of such allegations but argues that they exaggerated such bias as there may have been. The investigation then turns to the networks that underpinned the approvals process, examining the range of referees chosen by ministers in support of their applications. It argues that the role of the referees was central in gaining an approval, but demonstrates that many referees' networks represented complex relationships based on more than shared religious sympathies; indeed, political expediency means that these networks cannot be taken on face value.

Finally the focus moves to the shadowy evidence of those who were deemed unfit by the Triers, on the principle that identifying such men helps to define the limits to acceptability in ministers for the Cromwellian ministry. It demonstrates that the Triers were more flexible over the application process than their critics suggested. It also shows that the Council of State were central to much of the

decision-making over borderline cases for approval, which means that the Triers' influence in shaping the ministry was less significant than has been believed hitherto. Finally, it concludes that the current supposition that they rejected few ministers is probably an underestimation, although some may have been turned away before reaching the stage of a formal interview.

The Approved Ministers

The failure of the Cromwellian regime to achieve parliamentary approval for a Confession of Faith and the repeal of mandatory subscription to the Engagement meant that suitability for the ministry was entirely defined by the tests given to the Triers in their ordinance. These tests, however - the possession of the Grace of God, 'holy and unblameable conversation' and sufficient knowledge to be able to teach the scripture - were essentially subjective. This led to allegations that the Triers rejected some who were 'suitably' orthodox but approved others who were not. The ejected episcopalian minister, Lionel Gatford, for example, accused them of approving,

[...] those justly ignorant, insufficient Mechanicks and other illiterate Laicks that have lately either crept in or been thrust into severall Livings or cures of Souls.¹

Henry Gregory, writing in the 1680s, similarly declared that they had,

¹ Gatford, *Vindication*, 43.

[...] seldome admitted of any but who brought with them testimonialls from men of their own principles; and admitted as well laymen into the works of the ministry as those who had been brought up in the schools of learning.²

Some of the complaints can be seen as rhetoric based on popular tropes, employed for political or comedic value. The accusation that the Triers consistently let unordained preachers into the ministry, for example, lingered on well into the later seventeenth century, when memories were beginning to elide with folklore:

Sir Tim Yes, Mr Pedagog assoon as Mr Philpot is carried down into his grave, you shall ascend his pulpit; so you can but pass the Tryers, which you may the better do, having never taken orders.³

Furthermore, most of the criticism emanated, unsurprisingly, from enemies of the regime - royalists, republicans, ejected ministers - whose views were likely to have been coloured by their own experiences and articulated for a sympathetic

² BL, Add. MS. 19526, f.86 [f.39v].

³ Earl of Orrery, *Mr Anthony, a Comedy* (1690), 16. Another later example of the development of such folklore claimed 'Many good Livings were disburthened of their Pastours, and others of more Grace, and less Knowledge put in. I heard of one who had been Hebrew and Chaldee Reader, in Oxford, and knowing in all the Eastern Tongues, put out of a good living for insufficiency: He had it seems not Grace equal to his Learning, or his Living had more Grace than he'. The anecdote refers to Edward Pocock, Professor of Hebrew and Arabic at Oxford, who was threatened with ejection by the Oxfordshire Ejectors in 1655, but was saved by the intervention of John Owen, one of the Triers: T. May, *Epitome of English History* (1690), 111; L. Twells, *Lives of Dr. Edward Pocock, the Celebrated Orientalist* (London: 1816), vol.1, 174-5; G. Toomer, 'Edward Poccoke' in *ODNB*.

audience. Rhetorical usage and the coloured views of sufferers, however, do not negate the fact that some of the criticism could also have been based on firm evidence, and it is worth exploring these accusations further to test their plausibility.

Underlying virtually all the allegations was the assertion that presentations and approvals were manipulated by the independents on a large scale. It is hard to identify, however, either a mechanism, or a stage in the process, at or through which unspecified 'independents' could have brought pressure to bear on large numbers of patrons to free up livings for re-assignment, not least because the Triers did not choose who came before them. Most importantly, in approving only those men they believed to be godly - whether independent or presbyterian - they were doing exactly what their ordinance required of them.

Nevertheless, it was assumed that such manipulation *did* take place and one of the most frequent ways it was believed to manifest itself was in the allocation of the wealthiest benefices to independents. Sitting in the Convention Parliament of 1660, Seymour Bowman recorded the views of one of his fellow MPs:

Sir Thos Meeres [...] moved against the Tryers at Whitehall who put in persons of Anabaptisticall principalls sayinge that they would put in anybody into mean livings but none but those of their own humour into a great one.⁴

⁴ Bodl. MS. Dep. f9, f.104r.

John Nye's rebuttal, however, of Sadler's allegation - that the Triers refused to approve ministers for valuable livings in order to acquire the presentations for themselves and their associates - has a credible logic:

Is it probable a Patron will be so well pleased with the dis-approbation of his Clerk as thus to reward any of those that have done it?⁵

The protection of private patronage meant that the presentation rights of unsequestered individuals could not legally be confiscated or bypassed by agencies of the regime, including the Triers. It may be, therefore, that such accusations grew out of accounts of independents being presented to those livings where the patronage was already legitimately in the hands of the regime. Yet the records show that Cromwell himself presented only a low percentage of independents: in London, for example, McCampbell noted that of the twenty-nine presentations from both Protectors, only five were independents and that where a living had been held by a presbyterian, Cromwell tended to present presbyterian replacements.⁶ Moreover, not one of the TMPM's presentations has been identified (at present) as an independent.

In fact, it would have been difficult for the Triers to favour independents unduly, because the number of livings coming before the Commission far exceeded the

⁵ Nye, *Sadler Re-Examined*, 7-8.

⁶ McCampbell, 'Incumbents', 319-20. This total is close to that identified through *Calamy Revised*.

number of available independent ministers.⁷ It is notoriously difficult to identify the religious preferences of many of the clergy during this period, but there were *some* independents whose allegiances were clear and who were noted as such by Calamy and Matthews.⁸ Using their identification, it appears that of the nearly three thousand ministers approved in the Registers, only seventy-three (2½%) were independent.⁹ This figure is undoubtedly an under-recording because of the difficulty of identification but even if this figure is increased substantially, the numbers would still suggest that the vast majority of those approved by the Triers must have been presbyterians of some form.¹⁰

Some groups of independents, however, were clearly actively working with, or promoting, each other within the ministry. Gloucestershire had a significant number of independents and, there, William Tray, Carnsew Helme, Anthony Palmer and William Beale formed a close-knit group providing testimonials for ministers.¹¹ Six of the ten for whom they were joint referees were also independent and in total Tray, Beale and Palmer signed together on eight occasions.¹² Seven of the twelve ministers who signed the ‘Remonstrance from

⁷ Nowhere in the primary or secondary sources is there evidence or assertion that independents were ever in the majority nationally.

⁸ It is recognised here that totals derived purely from these sources are approximate, not least because some men, such as Sidrach Simpson, died before 1662.

⁹ Nuttall notes that in total only 171 independents were ejected from parochial livings after 1660: G. Nuttall, ‘Congregational Commonwealth Incumbents’ in *TCHS* (1943), vol.14(3), 155.

¹⁰ *CR*, lxviii.

¹¹ *ibid.* 158.

¹² Comm. III/4, ff.492, 571; Comm. III/5, ff.17, 231; Comm. III/6, ff.49, 67, 123; Comm. III/7, ff. 13, 17, 67, 125.

the Churches in Gloucestershire' against Cromwell becoming king were also part of this group of independent referees and applicants.¹³ It was understandable that such an active and prominent clique within a county might have lent strength to the sense that there was a policy of favouritism.

If there was an overt bias towards independents by the Triers and the regime, one area where it might be expected to have become apparent was if the Protectorate installed many of the Triers themselves into good livings in or close to London. In fact, only Sidrach Simpson, William Greenhill, Thomas Manton and William Cooper had approvals entered in the Registers, during their time on the Commission.¹⁴ Simpson and Greenhill were indeed committed independents. Simpson was presented by Cromwell to Bartholomew Exchange in 1654, possibly to assert his [Cromwell's] patronage rights over the living in response to the parishioners' election in 1653 of George Hall, future Bishop of Chester and son of Joseph Hall, former Bishop of Norwich, who may not have seemed sufficiently godly.¹⁵ Greenhill, however, had been appointed to Stepney in 1652, having been pastor of a separated congregation there from 1644, so his entry in the Registers was not a new appointment engineered by the Triers or the Council.¹⁶

¹³ 'Remonstrance from the Churches in Gloucestershire' in Nickolls, 125.

¹⁴ Those later Triers noted in Section 2.2, 95, n.49 have been excluded here, due to the late or uncertain nature of their appointments.

¹⁵ This was previously a Crown living: Comm. III/3, *lib.* 3, f.69; Freshfield, *Bartholomew Exchange*, xxx.

¹⁶ Simpson died in 1655; R. Greaves, 'William Greenhill' in *ODNB*; G. Nuttall, *Visible Saints* (Oswestry: Quinta Press, 2001), 27.

Manton and Cooper were both presbyterians. Manton was minister at Stoke Newington in the 1640s, taking up a Westminster Abbey lectureship in 1656, moving briefly to Lawrence, Old Jewry, before settling at Paul's, Covent Garden, to which he was probably presented by the 4th Earl of Bedford, on the resignation of his father-in-law, Obadiah Sedgwick.¹⁷ Cooper, too, was a lecturer at Westminster Abbey, and approved for Olaves, Southwarke, in 1654 - again, a formalisation of a position long-held, to which he had been appointed by the CPM.¹⁸ Thus, other than the single appointment of the elderly Simpson, there is little sign that the regime made much attempt to manoeuvre favoured clerics into high profile and/or wealthy livings in the capital.

It is likely, of course, that the accusations were really expressing a more complex grievance, close to that articulated by Thomas Meres (above) - a sense that the independents were, if not numerically dominant, then at least disproportionately benefiting from wealthier livings. These accusations were not entirely baseless. The dispute at Great Brickhill - which was valued in 1650 at £130 a year - where Cromwell's support for the independent Matthew Mead resulted in his gaining the living over the claims of the royalist John Duncomb's presentees, gives an indication of where such grievances may have originated.¹⁹

¹⁷ Manton's patron for Paul's, Covent Garden is unclear - owned by the Earls of Bedford, the presentation from the 4th Earl was crossed out, but an alternative patron was not supplied, although the the 4th Earl was not under sequestration in 1657, being a wavering parliamentarian: Comm. III/5, f.208; E. C. Vernon, 'Thomas Manton' in *ODNB*; B. Donagan, 'Obadiah Sedgwick' in *ODNB*.

¹⁸ Comm. III/3, *lib.* 2, f.216: S. Wright, 'William Cooper' in *ODNB*.

¹⁹ Comm. XIIa/3; SP 25/76 f.422.

In Devon, too, the wealthy living at Tiverton, which was divided in four portions, was also in the hands of independents: John Chishull had been settled in the portion of Pitt, worth £160 a year, before 1650, after the sequestration of George Pearce.²⁰ Lewis Stukeley had been settled in the portions of Tetcombe and Clare, worth £280 a year, after the sequestration of Richard Newte in 1650.²¹ Stukeley, however, was already leading a separated church in Exeter in the early 1650s and this may have led to his replacement by Theophilus Polwhele, presented by Cromwell in 1655.²² Chishull, Stukeley and Polwhele were all independents, but neither Chishull nor Stukeley were settled through the Triers but by the County Commission well before the Protectorate.

Although the accounts of the changes at Tiverton are slightly confused, Newte's son, John, drew one simple conclusion from them when he submitted his story to John Walker, focusing very clearly on the wealth of the living as crucial to his father's downfall:

Well though Mr Newte was ejected by the committee yet he was not adjudged by the Triers unfit to preach at all, only unfit for so great a place. It seems the revenue of the church, worth to him upwards of £250 pa, was the thing mainly aimed at [...]²³

²⁰ Comm. III/3, *lib.* 2, f.167; *WR*, 121; *CR*, 115.

²¹ The portion of Priors was impropriated to St John's College, Cambridge: Comm. XIIa/5 f.287; *WR*, 119, 121.

²² Comm. III/3, *lib.* 3, f.124.

²³ Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c.8, f.27.

Newte's allegation may well have been true; it would not have been unreasonable for the regime or the Triers to wish to see shining examples of congregationalism in such high profile livings, not least because Newte then imprudently added that his father 'apparently continued throughout to preach from or extemporise from the Book of Common Prayer'.²⁴ It was hardly behaviour guaranteed to keep him in a prime living and thus, in such cases, the accusations were probably correct.

It is easy to see how examples such as Brickhill and Tiverton fuelled the idea that the independents were favouring their own. This general accusation may also have drawn bitterly on the experiences of the 1640s, noted by McCall, when instances of sequestration increased in direct proportion to increases in the values of livings.²⁵ Nevertheless, it is hard to find hard evidence of persistent favouritism by the independents and the Triers after 1654. A small-scale survey of livings worth over £100 a year in three favourable home counties - Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Dorset - which also appeared in the Registers, found that none of the sixteen livings had identifiably independent incumbents approved by the Triers.²⁶ A similar survey of livings in three hundreds in Essex reveals that of the twenty-six parishes there worth over £100 a year, thirteen appeared in the Registers, for which sixteen men were approved,

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ McCall, *Baal's Priests*, 101.

²⁶ Only a small proportion of the livings sampled in the 1650 Surveys were over £100 *pa* and an even smaller number also appeared in the Registers: Comm. XIIa/3, ff.64-6, 76, 80, 88-9, 94, 100, 278; COMM XIIa/5, ff.1, 2, 4.

not one of whom has been identified as an independent.²⁷ Usefully close to London and in the puritan heartlands of East Anglia, which was already host to a number of separated churches, Essex was probably a popular location to which it would not have been hard to recruit men to rich livings, had that been the objective.²⁸

The accusation that the Triers were filling the ministry with unlearned men was also a commonplace. The Registers record higher degrees for nearly six hundred approved ministers but, since this was only twenty per cent of the total ministers approved, it seems there was significant under-recording of educational qualifications; it is not credible that eighty per cent of the Triers' approvals were for men who had no higher education. To confirm this, an analysis of a random block of fifty ministers, who were approved in June and July 1654, shows that although seven (14%) were recorded in the Registers as having degrees, a further nineteen (38%) had degrees that were unrecorded in the Registers, eleven of which were at MA level.²⁹ Moreover, ten more (20%) had attended university without graduating. That left thirteen ministers (26%) for whom it has been impossible to identify university attendance. There is no apparent reason why these proportions should have been radically different at other periods of the Triers' operations. After scaling up the percentages, therefore, it might be

²⁷ Hundreds of High Ongar, Lexden and Dengie: Smith, *Essex*, 263-273, 308-12.

²⁸ Norfolk and Suffolk had at least 40 separated churches in the 1640s-50s, Essex had 3 named, but up to 10 claimed by the baptist minister and Trier, Henry Jessey: Halcomb, 'Social History', 39, 263.

²⁹ This date was chosen to incorporate 25 approvals before the cut-off date for approval for those men appointed before the Protectorate and 25 from afterwards.

concluded that at least three quarters of the Triers' approvals were of university-educated men.

What of this remaining twenty-five per cent of ministers for whom no record of university education exists? Were these really the 'mechanick' preachers popularly feared and despised in the 1650s? It seems that some such men did take up livings through the Triers, but the evidence is far from clear. Many of the contemporary accusations were very general, whilst the more specific allegations against individuals tended to appear after the Restoration, when they seem to have been based on hearsay and vindictiveness, as much as accurate information. One of Walker's correspondents writing in the early eighteenth-century and recalling the troubles at Dunsford in Devon in the 1650s, described the intruded minister William Pearse:

This Pearse had been a trooper in Worcester-fight 1651[...] He was a man not immoral but wretchedly illiterate, of no university, never in episcopal orders, probably in no orders at all.³⁰

In fact, Pearse was a gentleman's son, had attended Exeter College, Oxford for three years and, after serving Dunsford for four years, had taken presbyterian ordination in 1659.³¹ It is easy to see, however, how in later years his unsuitability for the ministry was exaggerated and found wanting.

³⁰ Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c.2, f.235.

³¹ CR, 384.

Similarly Philip Stubs submitted an account of Grafton Regis in Northamptonshire, where it was noted,

[...] there is one Payne is [brought] into the living, tho he was but an horse-keeper to Mr James Vicar of Tiffield who did practise Physick and Payne kept his horse; and after the death of Mr James he got a license to read Prayers, under old Mr Markes parson of Gaiten, who did also practise Physick.³²

Detailed research suggests that William Payne probably did not have a university education, but it is impossible to establish just how widespread such ministers were. Although, for example, it has been impossible to find university records for the thirteen Essex ministers noted above (pp304-5), this is not watertight evidence.³³ There are numerous examples of men with common names in the Registers and men of the same name in the alumni lists of Oxford and Cambridge, for which there is insufficient detail to link the two securely. For example, there are four William Paynes in the Cambridge Alumni list, and three in that for Oxford, any of whom could, by date, be the William Payne noted above.³⁴

³² Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c.4, f.60r; H. Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500* (Northampton: Archer and Goodman, 1941), vol.10, 209.

³³ Besides the alumni lists, *Calamy Revised* and numerous secondary and antiquarian sources, the available diocesan records in *CCEd* have also been checked for each man, as university training was usually included in ministers' records.

³⁴ Venn, vol.3, 324; Foster, vol.3, 1130.

To make allowance for such men, an educated guess might reduce the total of ministers who were approved by the Triers but had not been to university, from approximately twenty-five per cent to perhaps twenty per cent. This makes an interesting comparison with the proportion of licensed ‘preaching ministers’ recorded in 1603 in England and Wales, nineteen per cent of whom were noted as not having had a university education.³⁵ Since those recorded in 1603 as ‘preaching ministers’ did not make up the entirety of parochial clergy, the total of uneducated ministers in 1603 was probably higher than nineteen per cent, since many of those non-preaching ministers would also have had no university education.

O’Day has noted that the proportion of graduate clergy was rising in the early Stuart period, but still found that thirty-four per cent of the ministers ordained in Gloucester from 1609 to 1621, and twenty per cent of those ordained in Lichfield from 1614 to 1632, had no university training.³⁶ Ignjatijevic, however, suggested that by 1633, ninety-three per cent of ministers in the Archdeaconry of Bedford had university experience, and ninety per cent of those in the diocese of Canterbury by 1637.³⁷ Although these comparators are only random snapshots, it does seem that the Triers may have been approving slightly more uneducated ministers to the church, at least in more favourable areas, than had been typical

³⁵ BL, Harley MS. 280, ff.157r - 172v; Usher, *Reconstruction*, vol.1, 241.

³⁶ O’Day, *Clergy*, 136.

³⁷ Ignjatijevic, 23.

just before the civil war, but probably not more than had been typical in the ministry a generation previously.

The Triers' approval of unordained clergy was even more contentious than that of the uneducated. Since the Triers' ordinance neither required nor allowed ordination to be demanded of ministers, the Registers give no indication of how many unordained clergy were approved. Moreover, the anecdotal sources are risky evidence. In 1656, Henry Langley, former minister of St Mary's, Lichfield, roundly criticised John Butler who replaced him, for lack of ordination:

What hath been spoken, extremely condemneeth the practise of those that durst be so bold and presumptuous as to take upon them the Ministerial Function, or exercise any part of it without lawful Ordination or deputation thereunto: Of this, some I finde guilty, as Master John Butler Minister of Stowe, who took upon him a publick charge of Souls at Lichfield [...]³⁸

Later in the pamphlet, however, Langley acknowledges that Butler had, in fact, been ordained by the 'First Classis'.³⁹ Langley's representation of Butler's presbyterian ordination as being 'no ordination' was not uncommon, which makes identifying those who really were unordained even more complex. So,

³⁸ H. Langley, *The Persecuted Minister in Defence of the Ministerie* (1656), 79.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 82.

too, does the fact that some men, almost certainly including Richard Baxter, were ordained deacon but not priest.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the Triers certainly did approve unordained men: Henry Sampson, for example, intruded minister of Framlingham, was rightly accused of being unordained by Richard Goltey, whom he had displaced in the living.⁴¹ Baldwyn Deacon, too, approved for Beercrocombe in 1657, could not bring himself to be ordained after several years' ministry in Somerset, and was ejected in 1661.⁴²

On the whole, however, it is futile to try to estimate the proportion of unordained ministers approved by the Triers, primarily because of the poor survival of the ordination records of the Westminster Assembly, the presbyterian classes and the Voluntary Associations, all of whom ordained. This means that whilst it is possible to identify a proportion of the ministers who worked in the Cromwellian ministry without *episcopalian* ordination - by cross-referencing entries in the Registers with records of those whose ordinations in 1660-62 were recorded in Restoration Exhibit Books - it is not possible to distinguish which of these men had previously been ordained by other bodies. Elias Pawson, for example, was approved for Yorkshire livings three times by the Triers: for Ryther in 1654, Kirk

⁴⁰ Also Thomas Manton: Harris, *Works of Thomas Manton*, vol.1, viii.

⁴¹ CHA, M32/9/8; Comm. III/3, *lib.* 2, f.139; D. Wykes, 'H. Sampson' in *ODNB*.

⁴² Comm. III/6, f.107; J. Fletcher, 'A Dorset Worthy, William Stone, Royalist and Divine' in H. Symonds (ed.), *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club*, (Dorchester: 1915), vol.36, 20. For other examples, see also, P. Seddon (ed.), *Letter Book of Sir Anthony Oldfield* (LRS: 2004), vol.91, 58-9; CR, 250 (Richard Harrison); Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c. 1, f.81r. (Mr Hibbert).

Smeaton in 1655 and Stonegrave in 1658.⁴³ In 1660, however, he chose to be ordained by Henry King, former Bishop of Chichester, despite having been ordained by the Fourth London *Classis* in November, 1649.⁴⁴ The records of this *classis* have survived, but many others have not. Thus the best that can be concluded is that whilst the Triers did approve ministers who had no ordination, the exact number of such men is unknowable. In 1660, however, on the eve of the Restoration, when the third Commission of Triers was established, one of their duties was to require ordination of those they approved. That they did so is evident from the approval certificate issued by them for Samuel Annesley, which specifically noted, ‘we find he is hereunto already ordained’.⁴⁵

The Referees and Clerical Networks

If ordination was irrelevant in winning the approval of the Triers, being able to prove ‘fitness for the ministry’ was crucial. To fulfil this condition, applicants had to provide the names of several ministers and laymen who could confirm that, to their personal knowledge, the applicant met the requirements of the Triers’ ordinance. The precedents and procedure for the use of referees, besides the antagonism the system aroused and the abuses that sometimes occurred have been discussed earlier.⁴⁶ Unintentionally, however, the insistence on the use of referees created an unparalleled archive of clerical networks in the Interregnum.

⁴³ Comm. III/3, *lib. 1*, f.65; Comm. III/4, f.295; Comm. III/7, f.125.

⁴⁴ ER. V/Exh.Bk.1, f.25, in W. Sheils, *Restoration Exhibit Books and the Northern Clergy, 1662-64* (York: BIHR, 1978), 79; Smith, ‘Ordinations’, 106.

⁴⁵ Calamy, *Continuation*, 70.

⁴⁶ Section 2.2.

In a thesis that sometimes seems to be dominated by the sheer scale of the archive and the complexity of its use, focusing on the individuals who knew and supported each other helps to re-balance the research in favour of the people behind the statistics.

That said, there are inherent difficulties in interpreting these clerical networks, the chief of which is that ministers necessarily turned to men whose testimonials would convince the Triers. For the well-connected godly, finding such referees amongst their friends and colleagues was easy, and their networks might, therefore, be interpreted as genuine reflections of their professional and social connections. For those like Edward Butterfield (discussed earlier) whose loyalties were less orthodox or who had few well-connected friends, the lists of referees must be treated with more care. In the case of Butterfield or of James Munden, for example, it is clear that their *patrons* were as pivotal in assembling their testimonials as they were themselves.⁴⁷ Moreover, it is impossible to know whether some referees simply sold their services, or provided support as part of the long-term chain of reciprocal favours that operated in patronage-based societies. Thus, frustratingly, it is perhaps the ministers whose approvals seem least likely and thus especially interesting, whose networks must be considered potentially the most misleading.

So who were the ministers approved by the Triers and to whom did they turn for support? The preceding sections of this thesis have already drawn some

⁴⁷ Section 2.2, 83-4.

conclusions about this cohort of men, which it is helpful to summarise briefly here, before exploring these individuals in more detail. The very fact that they had accepted presentations for livings in the Cromwellian church indicates that the vast majority were prepared to conform broadly either to the English form of presbyterianism developed during the 1640s or to forms of congregationalism within a national church. There is good anecdotal evidence that some ministers continued to use the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer in some way, but the degree to which this was done must remain conjectural.⁴⁸ Less than nine per cent of the approved ministers have been identified as having chosen illegal episcopalian ordination after 1646, but even fewer - less than three per cent - have been securely identified as independents. Perhaps twenty per cent of the cohort were already in their livings when they were approved, most of whom were probably applying for approval in order to secure an augmentation. Within these rough parameters, however, there was considerable variation in churchmanship, and it was to cope with this variation that the combination of interview, testimonial and, in many cases, preaching on probation was established.

The overwhelming majority of ministers supplied the Triers with more than the minimum three referees; most provided at least five or more, a few provided

⁴⁸ For example: Comm XIIa/20; BL, MS. Birch, 61; Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c.3, f.287r. Moreover, many later claims of these practices were made post-1660, when claims of such loyalty were advantageous.

nearly twenty.⁴⁹ This implies that the Triers' reputation of rejecting ministers if their referees were unknown was taken seriously. Some ministers, however, offered more than the minimum when this can hardly have been necessary: Peter St Hill was presented to the sequestration of Long Melford, Suffolk, by Cromwell in 1655. He included the Triers Joseph Caryl, Samuel Balmford and Hugh Peters in his list of referees. It is unclear why he felt the need to offer a further five names, including the high-profile presbyterians, Edmund Calamy and Simeon Ash.⁵⁰ It is worth considering, however, whether by asking important colleagues for a testimonial, ministers were bestowing favours as well as asking for them? In cementing alliances with respected individuals, they may have been effectively 'paying homage' to them, which bound both sides into a circle of obligation.

Some ministers, on the other hand, offered referees who seem, superficially, less well-connected and less impressive. Detailed investigation often reveals, in fact, that they already belonged to long-standing intellectual networks, based on professional associations and contacts. John Beverley, for example, was pastor of a separated church at Rothwell, Northamptonshire from 1655, becoming vicar there on Cromwell's nomination in 1656, when he also successfully applied for an augmentation.⁵¹ He was deeply involved in congregational networks in both

⁴⁹ Henry Walker offered 18, Henry Raymond offered 16: Comm. III/4, f.429, Comm. III/3, *lib.* 2, f.112.

⁵⁰ Comm. III/4, f.242. This was probably Calamy the elder. Balmford is aka Bamford.

⁵¹ Comm. III/1, f.54; Comm. III/5, f.134; Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, 38-9; J. Burgess, 'The Social Structure of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire 1524-1674' (University of York: unpublished PhD thesis, 1978), vol.1, 249.

Northamptonshire and Essex, and wrote several defences of the existence of separated churches in response to attacks from John Timson and William Morice, before his death in 1658.⁵² He was also instrumental in the appointment of Thomas Browning to the neighbouring parish of Desborough in 1657, through a mutual contact, the Essex minister John Sams. Browning had belonged to John Owen's church in Coggeshall, Essex, in the 1640s and he became pastor of the Rothwell congregation after his ejection in 1662.⁵³

Beverley's contact, Sams, whom he met at a degree ceremony at Cambridge, had succeeded John Owen as vicar of Coggeshall, probably in 1651. He was one of four independent ministers who wrote the posthumous and laudatory preface to Beverley's *Unio Reformantium*, the others being John Stalham, John Bulkley and William Sparrow, all of whom were also closely associated with John Owen.⁵⁴ Thus Beverley's membership of this circle must have been more than sufficient to ensure his approval. It also probably accounts for his choice of just three referees, the most high profile of whom was Major-General William Boteler. Besides his regional governorship of the central Midlands, Boteler was a committed independent, who hosted a separated church at his home in Oundle in Northamptonshire.⁵⁵

⁵² J. Beverley, *Unio Reformantium or The Presbyterian and Independent Vindicated* (1659); J. Timson, *The Bar to Free Admission to the Lord's Supper Removed* (1654); W. Morice, *Coena quasi Koinh: The New Inclosures Broken Down* (1657).

⁵³ CR, 81-2.

⁵⁴ Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, 38-9; J. Walter, 'John Stalham' in *ODNB*.

⁵⁵ I. Roots, 'William Boteler' in *ODNB*.

Boteler's political connections and congregationalism must have made him a fail-safe referee, but Beverley's other testimonials were provided by Robert West and Alexander Ekins. Neither West nor Ekins were apparently independents nor of national prominence and, indeed, Ekins had chosen to be episcopally ordained by Henry King, former Bishop of Chichester, in early 1656. Beverley, however, had been at Trinity, Cambridge, at exactly the same time as Ekins, both proceeding to MA in the early 1650s.⁵⁶ Ekins himself returned to his Northamptonshire roots in 1656 as minister of Orlingbury, six miles from Rothwell, for which move William Boteler provided him, too, with a testimonial. Perhaps they had local, social connections, since Boteler's brother Edward was an episcopalian clergyman.⁵⁷ Robert West, too, had some connection with Rothwell, and provided several testimonials as part of a network of Northamptonshire men, often alongside Nathaniel Bradshaw, a contemporary of his at Trinity.⁵⁸ Many of West and Bradshaw's co-referees for other ministers also provided testimonials with Boteler for yet other colleagues.⁵⁹ Indeed, like pulling at a loose thread, once the first link has been made, revealing the connections becomes unstoppable.

⁵⁶ Venn, vol.1, 91, 146.

⁵⁷ Comm. III/5, f.1; S. Trombley, 'Edward Boteler' in *ODNB*.

⁵⁸ West was buried at Rothwell. West and Bradshaw pre-dated Ekins at Trinity by ten years: Venn, vol.1, 202, vol.4, 370; M. Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 27.

⁵⁹ For shared testimonials, Comm. III/4, f.548; Comm. III/7, f.80.

William Boteler, in fact, offers some particularly interesting insights into how ministers could draw their referees from different circles of men, with whom they had different kinds of relationships. Boteler's congregationalism was well-known; in the early 1650s he called publicly for support for separated churches.⁶⁰ He had fought extensively in the civil war and later served on the Welsh Propagation Commission, rising to become an Ejector in 1654 and a Major-General in 1655. This clearly made him an influential referee for ministerial candidates and, within two months of his appointment in 1655, he was providing testimonials for John Gibson and Samuel Bagley.⁶¹ In all, between 1655 and 1658, he was a referee for twelve candidates.⁶² Of these, six were presented by Oliver Cromwell and a seventh, William Griffith, was presented by Edward Montague, but corroborated by Cromwell a month later. Two of those for whom he provided a testimonial, John Boddington and Alexander Ekins, were episcopally ordained in the mid-1650s, but none had signed the 1648 Testimony, which is often taken to indicate presbyterian sympathies.⁶³ Interestingly, however, only Beverley is definitely known to have been an independent.

Boteler was clearly part of loose circle of men deemed suitable as ministerial referees in Northamptonshire. The most active of these were Richard Resbury

⁶⁰ R. Williams, *The Fourth Paper presented by Maior Butler* (1652), 17; P. Hardacre, 'William Boteler: A Cromwellian Oligarch' in *HLQ* (1947), vol.11(1), 2 .

⁶¹ Comm. III/4, ff.480, 491.

⁶² John Gibson and Samuel Bagley (1655/6); Alexander Ekins, John Boddington, James Williams, John Beverley and John Smith (1656); William Griffith, John Dod, James Kirkham (1657); Thomas Dillingham and Edward Rainbow (1658).

⁶³ For discussion of the 1648 presbyterian testimony, see A. Hughes, 'Public Profession', 100.

and Edward Cawthorne. Resbury certified for six of the same candidates as Boteler, Cawthorne for five. Both men certified together for two others for whom Boteler did not. Richard Resbury was an independent, who joined the outcry in the early 1650s over John Goodwin's apparent 'Arminian and socinian' views expressed in his *Redemption Redeemed*.⁶⁴ He held the parochial living at Oundle from 1641 and a lectureship there, as did Edward Cawthorne, who was minister of Tansor, five miles away. Both men were assistants to the Northamptonshire Ejectors.⁶⁵

The other most frequent certifiers alongside Boteler were Robert Guy, John Browne and Thomas Ball, followed by John Maunsell, John Maydwell, William Hodges and Peter Whalley. A sense of how active some members of this circle were as referees is demonstrated in *figure 42*:

[*cont.*]

⁶⁴ R. Resbury, *Some stop to the gangrene of Arminianism* (1651) and *The lightless-starre* (1652).

⁶⁵ *CR*, 407, 106; W. Marshall, 'Nathaniel Resbury' in *ODNB*.

Referee	Layman or minister	Number of times as referee
Richard Resbury	m	26
William Boteler	l	19
Thomas Ball	m	14
Edward Cawthorne	m	12
John Maydwell	m	10
John Maunsell	l	8
William Hodges	m	7
Robert Guy	l	6
Peter Whalley	l	4

fig. 42 Northamptonshire referees⁶⁶

It seems very likely that they knew of each other's actions as referees and can therefore be regarded as a loose network, but there is no absolute proof that they did. The process of acquiring testimonials is unclear: did the applicant visit each prospective referee in person, offering a single certificate to which signatures were added, or did individuals sometimes supply certificates signed only by themselves? Marginal notes in the Registers suggest that approved ministers often supplied the Triers with several certificates, but whether from groups or individuals is unclear. Surviving referees' certificates are virtually unknown, but those produced by Thomas Audley show that he offered at least two separate

⁶⁶ It has not been possible to count testimonials from John Browne, as there are many of this name in the Registers.

certificates, each signed by several different men, so at least some of his referees must have known who else had signed.⁶⁷

The above sketch only skims the surface of the circle around William Boteler, but it reveals a network made up largely of ministers and members of the local political elite sympathetic to congregationalism. Interestingly, however, some ministers moved between notably different circles of contacts, even within short timescales and geographically small areas. One man for whom Boteler was a referee was John Boddington, Alexander Ekin's brother-in-law. In 1654, Boddington was approved for Earles Barton, Northamptonshire, for which he provided nine referees, many of whom also certified for each other in the mid-1650s.⁶⁸ These included John Courtman, minister of Thorpe Malsor, ejected in 1662, William Henschman, minister of Barton Seagrave, Henry Pheasant, vicar of Higham Ferrers, Thomas Andrew[s], vicar of Wellingborough and Andrew Perne, minister of Wilby, five miles from Earls Barton.⁶⁹ All five of Boddington's clerical referees had signed the 1648 Testimony and, with the possible exception of Courtman, seem to have been presbyterians.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ SP18/183, ff.202, 204-55.

⁶⁸ Two John Boddingtons served cures in Northamptonshire in the 1650s, the other was at Newton Blossomville: Longden, *Clergy of Northamptonshire*, vol.2, 139-141; Comm. III/3, *lib. I*, f.263.

⁶⁹ Courtman was a contemporary of Beverley and Ekins at Trinity, Cambridge: *CR*, 138; Perne died five months later: J. Fielding, 'Andrew Perne' in *ODNB*.

⁷⁰ *CR*, 556; P. Geldart, 'Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire' (University of Leicester: unpublished PhD thesis, 2006), 186-7, for the Testimony in Northamptonshire. It seems unlikely that Northamptonshire had either a functioning Presbyterian *classis* or a Voluntary Association, but if it did, the membership lists have not survived.

In 1655, Boddington chose to be ordained by Thomas Fulwar, former Bishop of Ardfert, and the following year he moved twenty miles south to Dingley. This time, however, his application was accompanied not only by testimonials from several different presbyterians - Thomas Ball, Daniel Rogers, Thomas Whitfield and Ben Austin - but also from some amongst Boteler's independent circle, including Browne, Maunsell, Whalley and Guy.⁷¹ It is unclear why Boddington chose to approach this group in 1656. Did he think that news of his recent illegal ordination may have escaped, in which case Boteler and Resbury's support may have been a politically prudent move? Or did it reflect a genuine evolution of acquaintances and sympathies over time? Equally, it is possible he was simply in their company when he needed to put together a list of suitable men, many of whom had already successfully provided testimonials for Ekins. Sometimes the prosaic explanation has the disappointing habit of being the correct one.

Boteler's role as a referee has one further point of interest. His last testimony was for Edward Rainbow, future Bishop of Carlisle, an unlikely candidate for his support. Dismissed as master of Magdalene, Cambridge, for refusing the Engagement in 1650, Rainbow had taken over the Essex parish of Little Chesterford in 1652, where he continued to show his episcopalian sympathies:

[...] tho he could not openly use the English Liturgy, yet he used some of those excellent Prayers of which it is compos'd; and that not only in

⁷¹ Comm. III/5, f.18.

his private Family, but also composed such Prayers as he used in the Church out of those in the Liturgy.⁷²

In early 1659, Rainbow was presented by the Earl of Warwick to the valuable living of Benefield, Northamptonshire, where he continued his former practices:

[...] he managed things there as he had done at Little Chesterford, composing all his Prayers for the Church out of the Liturgy [...] ⁷³

The idea of the zealous Cromwellian independent Boteler providing a testimonial for the episcopalian Rainbow is an intriguing one - it can hardly have been a meeting of minds - but there was a prosaic explanation: Rainbow and Boteler were related by marriage, and thus Boteler's support was probably based upon family loyalties, illustrating again the complexity of ties which underlay the networks of referees.⁷⁴ It also suggests that the denominational label attached to men in this period may have been less important to them than later analysis would like to suggest.

Although Boddington and Ekins both took episcopalian ordination in the mid-1650s, it seems likely that these decisions were either kept private or tacitly ignored by those who did not share their loyalties. But what of those ministers

⁷² J. Banks, *The Life of the Right Reverend Father in God, Edw. Rainbow, DD* (1688), 48-51.

⁷³ *ibid.*, 52.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 14.

whose allegiances were more difficult to conceal? To whom did they turn, when compiling a list of godly men who would support their entry into the church?

In 1657 William, 2nd Lord Maynard, presented Anthony Try to the living at Passenham, Northamptonshire.⁷⁵ Try had been educated at St Catharine's, Cambridge, and episcopally ordained in 1653 by Thomas Fulwar.⁷⁶ He remained at Passenham until his death in 1701, having chosen re-institution in 1660.⁷⁷ Try's choice of patron and living and his ordination by Fulwar suggest a strong commitment to the episcopalian church, supported by his subsequent choice to be re-instituted to the living in 1660, even though his position there was not challenged by a returning incumbent.⁷⁸

Try's patron Maynard was the son-in-law of the Arminian Sir Robert Bannastre of Passenham and although he was based in Essex, he may have acquired the right of presentation as part of his wife's dowry.⁷⁹ Certainly it had been in the gift of the Bannastres since the 1620s, at which time Sir Robert had substantially remodelled the interior of the church to reflect the Arminian preference for decorative church furnishings.⁸⁰ Maynard seems to have shared his father-in-

⁷⁵ Comm. III/5, f.229.

⁷⁶ It is frustratingly unclear what Try was doing in the years between his MA and his appointment to Passenham; was he a chaplain or schoolmaster?

⁷⁷ Venn, vol.4, 269.

⁷⁸ The previous incumbent John Harris died in 1658.

⁷⁹ Bannastre was under sequestration in 1648: CCC, vol.1, 98.

⁸⁰ K. Fincham and N. Tyacke, *Altars Restored, The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547 - c.1700* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 259-60.

law's Arminianism; and his own father, who died in 1640, had been a committed Laudian.⁸¹ Despite holding the Lord Lieutenancy of Cambridgeshire in the early 1640s, Maynard was impeached for high treason in 1647 along with six other lords, although the prosecution was dropped the following year.⁸² In 1655, he was imprisoned for involvement in royalist uprisings and around the same time became a member of the underground royalist Sealed Knot.⁸³ It is unclear how he was able to present Anthony Try to Passenham, since he should have been classed as a delinquent in the aftermath of his imprisonment. Since he does not appear to have been subject to the decimation tax in 1655, however, and was not included in the lists of delinquents under sequestration in the Committee for Compounding lists, it is possible, if puzzling, that he had escaped formal designation as a delinquent.⁸⁴

Maynard may have managed to cling on to his presentation rights despite his Arminianism and royalism, but the Triers must have known his history. Similarly they cannot have been unaware of the Laudian preferences of Robert Bannastre,

⁸¹ His father's memorial inscription at Little Easton church reads, 'In every respect indeed he was a man well calculated to supply the place of a prince, the defender of the peace, the laws and the Anglo-catholic faith. But when the madness of fanatics daily increased, when even religion itself was banished, then he bid adieu to a restless, rebellious and ungrateful country [...]' in D. Collier, *The People's History of Essex* (Chelmsford: Meggy and Chalk, 1861); N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism, ca.1590-1640* (Oxford: OUP, 1987), 192-5.

⁸² J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (1701), vol.2, 804.

⁸³ S. K. Roberts, 'Sealed Knot' in *ODNB*.

⁸⁴ The decimation tax was to be imposed on those 'whose estates had been sequestered for delinquency ... or who "have adhered to, assisted or abetted the Forces raised against the said Parliament" '. Maynard's brother Charles does appear in the Essex list; J. Cliffe (ed.), 'The Cromwellian Decimation Tax of 1655: The Assessment Lists' in *Camden Miscellany*, 5th series, (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), vol.7(33), 408, 464; *CCC*, vol.1, 88, 98-9.

the true patron of the living. So to whom did Try turn to confirm that he was a man of such godliness as to outweigh his patrons' reputations?

Anthony Try came from Gloucestershire and it seems he drew on acquaintances from there to provide his testimonials.⁸⁵ William Mewe was the rector of Eastington, a member of the Westminster Assembly and an assistant minister to the county Ejectors. His sole published sermon, which was preached before the Assembly in 1643, expressed anxiety at the proliferation of radicalism in London, and he seems to have been unsympathetic to liberty of conscience.⁸⁶ In 1649 he had signed a petition to secure an income from parliament for the former Bishop of Gloucester, Godfrey Goodman.⁸⁷ Thomas Thache was probably the minister named by Walker as intruded at Stonehouse, the adjacent parish to Eastington.⁸⁸ John Wade was a lay commissioner on the Gloucester Ejection Commission.⁸⁹ Samuel Fawcett was probably the intruded minister of Newland in the forest of Dean, having held the lecture there controlled by the Haberdashers Livery Company.⁹⁰ Hearne, Raymond and Hawkins are uncertain

⁸⁵ They were William Mew, Thomas Thache, Henry Hearne, Samuel Fawcett, John Wade, George Raymond and James Hawkins.

⁸⁶ W. Mew, *The robbing and spoiling of Jacob and Israel considered and bewailed* (1643); D. Smith, 'Oliver Cromwell, the First Protectorate Parliament and Religious Reform' in *PH* (2000), vol.19(1), 44.

⁸⁷ Anon, *To the supreme authority, the right honorable the Commons of England assembled in Parliament. The humble petition of Godfrey Goodman, late Bishop of Gloucester* (1649).

⁸⁸ *WR*, 175.

⁸⁹ 'Ordinance for Ejecting Scandalous [...] Ministers' in *A&O*, vol.2, 971.

⁹⁰ *WR*, 174; D. Whitney, 'London Puritanism: the Haberdashers' Company,' in *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* (1963), vol.32(3), 306.

and may have been laymen. None of these referees are known to have been episcopally ordained after 1646. It seems, then, that Try, sensibly, did not turn to others with identifiably episcopalian sympathies. Instead, he mustered a list of fairly minor figures from the provinces, suggesting that he did not move within the circles of mainstream godly ministers. Probably Mew and Wade carried enough weight with the Triers to ensure his approval, but it would be interesting to know how much *they* were aware of the episcopalian nature of the living at Passenham.

The evidence from Northamptonshire, both for networks around the independent Beverley and around the episcopalian Try, suggests that besides calling on those with whom they had professional connections, ministers often drew their referees from amongst their former university colleagues or from the communities in which they had family ties. These relationships show up in the Registers many times. Joseph Kettle, for example, graduated from Pembroke College in 1652 and was admitted by the Triers to Beoley in Worcestershire in 1654.⁹¹ He provided five referees, all of whom were closely associated with his college: Nathaniel Lane graduated MA in 1648 and became a Fellow, and Philip Potter took his MA in 1653, so both were close contemporaries of Kettle.⁹² Henry Hoy was Dean of Pembroke and Henry Langley was Master, besides being a canon of Christ Church, with close links to John Owen.⁹³

⁹¹ Comm. III/3, *lib.1*, f.29; Foster, vol.2, 847.

⁹² Foster, vol.3, 875, 1186.

⁹³ Kettle's patron, John Wildman, remains unidentified: Foster, vol.2, 758, vol.3, 878.

The most curious inclusion in the list, however, was Edmund Hall. Hall was another contemporary of Kettle's at Pembroke, although somewhat older, having returned to Oxford after several years in the parliamentary army in the 1640s. He became a Fellow in 1650 but was imprisoned for perhaps two years on account of his critiques of the republican government and Cromwell.⁹⁴ Although avowedly a presbyterian, his public dislike of the military regime and his moderate support for the monarchy cannot have endeared him to the authorities in London and his inclusion as a referee must surely have been of debatable benefit. Indeed, Hall was himself rejected by the Triers, when presented to Great Rissington in 1657, for which his own record probably played at least some part.⁹⁵ Why did Kettle risk putting him on the list? Langley and Hoy were men of sufficient standing and acquaintance to convince the Triers, so the addition of the problematic Hall is inexplicable.

In fact, three years later Edmund Hall provided another testimonial, again alongside Philip Potter, for Thomas Kentish, who was also a contemporary of theirs at Pembroke.⁹⁶ His co-referees included Langley and Hoy, as well as 'Jo' Hall, Henry Wyat and Thomas Risley. 'Jo' Hall could have been any of at least twelve men from Oxford or five from Cambridge, but the most likely was John Hall, Edmund Hall's nephew and, again, a contemporary of Potter and Kentish at

⁹⁴ A. a Wood and P. Bliss, *Athenae Oxonienses* (London: F. C. & J. Rivington, 1813-20), vol.4, 212-14; E. C. Vernon, 'Edmund Hall' in *ODNB*.

⁹⁵ See Section 3.2, 273-4.

⁹⁶ Comm. III/6, f.122; Foster, vol.2, 846.

Pembroke, as was Thomas Risley, his sixth referee.⁹⁷ His last testimonial came from Henry Wyat, who graduated MA from Pembroke just before them, in 1649.⁹⁸

Henry Greasely, on the other hand, who was presented to Severn Stoke in Worcestershire in 1653 and approved by the Triers in 1654, had been a Fellow at Christ Church, Oxford, from 1638 until removed in 1648 by the university Visitors.⁹⁹ He, like Kettle, produced a list of influential referees, almost all of whom were associated with his college: John Owen, Dean of the college, Chancellor of the university and Trier; John Wall, canon and sub-dean at Christ Church; 'Mr Button' (probably Ralph), also a canon and sub-dean of Christ Church; Peter French, Cromwell's brother-in-law, canon of Christ Church and rector of Cottenham; and Henry Wilkinson, probably canon of Christ Church, college visitor, and Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity until 1660.¹⁰⁰ Only Robert Bennet was not an Oxford graduate; as chaplain to Lord Wharton and rector of one portion of Wharton's living at Waddesdon in Buckinghamshire, his

⁹⁷ Hall became master of the college in the 1660s and Bishop of Bristol in the 1690s: W. Marshall, 'John Hall' in *ODNB*.

⁹⁸ Foster, vol.3, 1260, vol.4, 1690.

⁹⁹ Aka Gresley, or Greisley. Comm. III/3, *lib. 1*, f.6; R. Kennedy, 'Henry Greisley' in *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁰ 'Henry Wilkinson' may otherwise have been the principal of Magdelene Hall, active at the same time as his namesake; both men provided testimonials, although the Registers rarely specify which. Button is noted by Matthews as a congregationalist, by Curthoys as a presbyterian: *CR*, 95; J. H. Curthoys, 'Ralph Button' in *ODNB*.

connection was probably through Wilkinson, whose father was rector of Waddesdon until 1647.¹⁰¹

Greaseley's referees were thus representative of an active network of Oxford academics around John Owen, but these men were also part of a wider group who provided testimonials together. These included Henry Langley, Henry Cornish, Christopher Rogers, Edmund Staunton and John Conant. Owen himself was also the most active Trier as a referee, supporting thirty-six ministers, but other Triers also provided multiple testimonials. In Cambridge, the presbyterians Anthony Tuckney and Lazarus Seaman often acted as referees in collaboration with notable presbyterians, in particular Edmund Calamy (the elder) and Simeon Ashe, who provided eighty-one testimonials between them. It seems, then, that applicant ministers relied heavily on their university contacts to provide testimonials for the Triers. This was an important aspect of continuity with pre-war practice, when the same pattern was widespread amongst ministers seeking appointment by the bishops.

On the other hand, beyond London and the universities, numerous members of the provincial *classes* featured in loose presbyterian networks. In Lancashire, John Angier provided eight testimonials, all for presbyterians, as part of a network that included Richard Heyricke, William Meeke, John Harrison and Robert Constantine, all Lancashire *classes* members. Interestingly, all but Heyricke had refused the Engagement and many had found themselves, along

¹⁰¹ D. Wallace, 'Robert Bennet' in *ODNB*.

with several of their colleagues, in trouble with the authorities for suspected involvement in the presbyterian revolts following the regicide.¹⁰² Such dubious loyalties to the republic, however, do not appear to have prevented the Triers from accepting such men as referees or as ministers.

The inference from the evidence above is that, for many ministers, their college contacts were central to the process of passing the Triers. This would be logical, as senior university men were likely to know personally both students *and* members of the Triers' Commission. Indeed, many of the Triers themselves held university positions. Equally interesting, however, are the 'secondary' men, who were asked to provide testimonials. In Kettle and Kentish's cases, they drew on other young graduates who were unlikely to have personal connections with the Triers, but were probably simply personal friends. For others, especially those at a distance from Oxford and Cambridge, the natural contacts were those within their religious and intellectual networks, such as the presbyterian *classes*. In both cases, the Registers provide ample evidence of a culture of reciprocity operating between ministers, which can be seen working out in subsequent lists of referees.

Not surprisingly, women barely feature in the Registers, although some female patrons were relatively active; many of these were widows, or acting for minors within their care.¹⁰³ There were, however, three female referees: Joane Pember,

¹⁰² Heyricke had to take the Engagement to be released from prison: M. Mullett, 'Richard Heyrick' in *ODNB*.

¹⁰³ For example: Jane Prowse, guardian to Thomas South: Comm. III/6, f.91.

Mary Scott and Mary Cawley. Joane Pember has been impossible to trace. Mary Scott was a referee for George May, who was presented to Mersham in Kent by Richard Cromwell in 1658.¹⁰⁴ Mary was the widow of Edward Scott, MP, after a previous marriage to Sir Norton Knatchbull, MP, of Mersham and she provided her testimonial alongside her husband's son, Edward, and several local ministers.¹⁰⁵ She had previously signed a character reference in 1656 with many of the same men, for Knatchbull's chaplain, the sequestered minister Mirth Waferrer, when he petitioned Cromwell for permission to continue in the ministry after the Proclamation of 1655.¹⁰⁶ It seems, therefore, that she had considerable local influence. The same can be said for Mary Cawley, wife of the parliamentarian MP, William Cawley, who acted as both referee and patron for their son John, when he was approved for Rotherfield in Sussex.¹⁰⁷ It is impossible to draw any wider conclusions, however, from only three instances amongst the many thousands in which women did not feature, other than that women were rarely perceived as able to bear witness to clerical competence and godliness.

¹⁰⁴ It is unclear why Cromwell presented to this living, which was not apparently a sequestration: *WR*, 226; *Comm. III/7*, f.126.

¹⁰⁵ P. Lefevre and A. Thrush, 'Scott, Edward, of Scot's Hall, Smeeth, Kent' and A. Thrush and J. Ferris, 'Knatchbull, Sir Norton, of Mersham Hatch, Kent' in <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629> (viewed 21/04/16). Mary's husband was uncle of the first Baronet of the same name (1602-85).

¹⁰⁶ *SP 18/126* f.235-6.

¹⁰⁷ *Comm. III/7*, f.339.

There are numerous other examples of loose networks of contacts providing testimonials for each other. Susan Hardman Moore has identified several ministers who returned from New England to join the Cromwellian church. Such men called on both former contacts from home and those they had made whilst abroad and they usually brought back a strong preference for independent churchmanship.¹⁰⁸ Another example is William Ames, son of the puritan theologian of the same name. Ames (the younger) returned in the early 1640s and joined his uncle, John Phillip, as a preacher to the latter's separated church at Wrentham in Suffolk.¹⁰⁹ In 1656, Ames was approved for the adjacent parish of Frostenden.¹¹⁰ He provided eight referees, mostly local contacts, many of whom had associations with East Anglian independent churches, including (besides Phillip) Samuel Stoneham of Southwold and William Bridge of Great Yarmouth, one of the influential Dissenting Brethren of the 1640s. Of the others, John Dunne was probably pastor of the separated church at Pertenhall in Bedfordshire and Francis Brewster may have been the Suffolk MP, who lived at Wrentham.¹¹¹ In turn, some of Ames' referees provided testimonials for other independents or former New England colonists: William Bridge was a referee on at least thirteen occasions, for at least four independents and another former New Englander,

¹⁰⁸ Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims*, 83, 120-1.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 123; K. Sprunger, 'William Ames' in *ODNB*.

¹¹⁰ Comm. III/5, f.107.

¹¹¹ It is likely that Francis Brewster and another referee for Ames, Richard Brewster, were related to the New England ministers William and Nathaniel Brewster, the latter of whom returned to serve the cure of Alby in Norfolk, but the connection is as yet obscure: Venn, vol.1, 213; Halcomb, 'Social History', 261, 271; *CR*, 74, 167; Bremer, *Congregational Communion*, 181; Hardman Moore, 130.

Nathaniel Norcrosse.¹¹² It seems that the shared social and religious experiences amongst such men gave them a bond which they called on when seeking settlement in England. They may also have traded on the cachet of having spent time in New England. Nathaniel Mather, one of three brothers who returned to minister in England and Ireland after 1650, noted in a letter that, 'Tis incredible what an advantage to preferment it is to have been a New Englishman'.¹¹³ If Mather was right, this preferential treatment might have encouraged ministers from New England to support each other when seeking to enter the church.

Membership of a ministerial Voluntary Association also played a role in the selection of referees. In 1652, Richard Baxter established a 'Voluntary Association' of clergy in Worcestershire to provide the mutual support and advice for the county's clergy which they felt to be missing, especially after the failure of national presbytery.¹¹⁴ Baxter was not alone in taking this kind of positive action. In July 1653, William Mewe in Gloucestershire reminded Baxter that

Tis well knowne I Framed a Petition of the same Cloath with yours
some weeks before it, & that my designe of association &

¹¹² Comm. III/4, f.433; Halcomb, 'Social History', 26-8, 39-42.

¹¹³ CR, 343-4.

¹¹⁴ The value accorded by ministers to such mutual support is evident in a letter of 1657 from the minister John Oliver to the prominent London presbyterians William Spurstow and Thomas Manton, *inter alia*, in which he noted the 'comendable custome among you that when you ordaine any minister you doe also [preech] helpful to you afterwards, if in the course of their ministry they meet with any considerable difficulty wherein they need your advice, by giving them in writing your judgements on their questions propounded': SHC, DD/PH/205.

accommodation of Dissenting parties was on Foote certayne months if not years before I saw yours.¹¹⁵

The fact that several similar organisations took shape almost simultaneously, whilst others rapidly followed their lead, adds weight to the argument that by the early 1650s, the breakdown of the administration of the church was more critical and widespread than has been recognised. It is also likely that the contraction of the Westminster Assembly into an organisation simply appointing ministers until its eventual demise in 1652-3 was an important catalyst for the Association movement.

In 1653, the first Agreement of the Worcestershire Voluntary Association - *Christian Concord: or the Agreement of the Associated Pastors and Churches of Worcestershire* - was published.¹¹⁶ The Agreement was predicated on the principle that unity amongst ministers was paramount, and that the pursuit of maintaining a national church overrode ecclesiological differences. The articles of the Worcestershire Agreement reflected this drive:

We do agree and resolve not to addict or engage ourselves to any Party, nor to set up the Dictates of any as such [...]¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ *CCRB*, vol.1, 103 (letter 125).

¹¹⁶ *Christian Concord* (1653). Associations existed in at least sixteen other counties: Shaw, vol.2, 440-456.

¹¹⁷ *Christian Concord*, (A3).

This resolve was intended to mean that the Association did not operate under a denominational label, although Baxter recognised the need to include those who adhered to certain groups, so long as they could work with others who did not.¹¹⁸ In 1652, however, he noted that, at the initial meetings in Worcestershire

[...] not one of them (that Associated) [were] Presbyterian or Independant, and not past four or five of them Episcopal [...]¹¹⁹

Other Associations, however, were more openly mixed. Writing to Baxter on either the Dorset or Wiltshire Association in 1655 Henry Bartlett, minister of Fordingbridge, noted

The subscribers are some Episcopall, but eminently holy, and watchful over their flockes, others Presbiteriall, others of the Congregationall way [...]¹²⁰

If the Voluntary Associations, therefore, were predicated on non-denominational unity and mutual support, did their members rely on this network to promote each others' movements within the Cromwellian church?

¹¹⁸ '[...] in my Christian Concord, I had confessed that it was only the moderate ancient Episcopal Party which I had hoped for Agreement with': *RB*, 149.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, 148.

¹²⁰ *CCRB*, vol.1, 171 (letter 234).

Members of the Worcestershire Association appear as applicants, referees and sometimes patrons in the Registers. From these entries, it is possible to piece together some of the wider connections between Association members and those outside the organisation, to gain some understanding of relationships between Worcestershire clergy. Geoffrey Nuttall identified seventy-two members of the Association from the names given on the *Agreement*, from Association correspondence and from publications.¹²¹ Amongst those members who were the most active referees were Giles Collier (29 testimonials), Benjamin Baxter (23), Thomas Bromwich (18) and Henry Osland (15). Richard Baxter only provided ten testimonials.

The relationships between Association members and non-members were often complex and multi-layered. On 3 March, 1656, for example, the Triers approved both Thomas Wright, minister at Hartlebury, and Gervase Bryan, minister of Old Swinford.¹²² Both men produced testimonials from the same seven Association members, whilst Wright had an additional testimonial from John Spilsbury. Wright and Bryan had been settled in their livings since at least 1650 and were, therefore, probably seeking approvals in order to receive augmentations. The virtually identical lists of certifiers, and the identical date of admission, suggest that either they had been approved in Worcestershire and their paperwork sent up

¹²¹ G. F. Nuttall, 'The Worcestershire Association and its Membership' in *JEH* (1950), vol.1(2), 197-206.

¹²² Comm. III/4, ff.580, 581.

to London as a package, or that they undertook a joint journey as two colleagues backed by a tight-knit circle of referees.

In October 1656, a similar situation arose. On the 22nd, the Triers admitted Thomas Baldwin to Chaddesley Corbett and Simon Potter to Wolverley, two parishes within a few miles of Baxter's parish of Kidderminster.¹²³ Both men were presented by Cromwell and both had testimonials from Richard Baxter, Gervase Bryan, Henry Osland and Richard Serjeant. Baldwin also had testimonials from Joseph Baker and Richard Hin(c)ks, whilst he himself was a referee for his companion, Simon Potter.¹²⁴ Baldwin had been schoolmaster at Kidderminster in 1649, first appearing as a member of the Association in 1654, when minister of Wolverley, two years before he was admitted to the living of Chaddesley Corbett.¹²⁵

Of the above men, Simon Potter was the only non-member of the Association but, according to Matthews, he had been sent to study at Trinity, Cambridge by Richard Baxter in 1652, along with his friend Joseph Read.¹²⁶ Potter and Read returned in 1656 after graduating BA, Potter to take up Wolverley after Baldwin, Read to assist Baxter at Kidderminster, before becoming minister of Great Witley

¹²³ There were two Thomas Baldwins in the Association, the other of whom was minister at Clent: Nuttall, 'Worcestershire Association', 202.

¹²⁴ Comm. III/5, f.136 (Baldwin); Comm. III/5, f.170 (Potter).

¹²⁵ Nuttall, 'Worcestershire Association', 199.

¹²⁶ Baxter's ongoing concern in their progress is evident from his correspondence: *CCRB*, vol.1, 108 (letter 133) and 201 (letter 289).

in 1658. Both men were ejected in 1662.¹²⁷ It is difficult to explain why neither Potter nor Read, both clearly protégés of Baxter and well-regarded by other Association members, chose to join the Association once benefited in Worcestershire.¹²⁸

It appears from this (simplified) snapshot that many Association members looked to each other for support when applying to the Triers, but membership was clearly not a pre-requisite when choosing their referees. This conclusion is confirmed by an overall assessment of the Worcestershire entries in the Registers. Of the sixty-six interviews recorded, twenty-six contained roughly equal proportions of testimonials from both members *and* non-members of the Worcestershire Association, of which eighteen were interviews of men who were not themselves members.¹²⁹ Only thirteen ministerial applicants had testimonials exclusively from Association members, and a further seventeen applications had no referees who were Association members.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ *CR.*, 396, 406.

¹²⁸ It is possible that the membership lists are incomplete.

¹²⁹ Fifty-nine individuals appeared before the Triers, of whom five made multiple appearances. Occasionally ministers became Association members after admission to a living: Stephen Baxter, brother of Benjamin, may have been one such. Admitted by the Triers to Harvington in November 1654, his name only appears on the second edition of *The Agreement*, published in 1656. These cases have been included in the list of ‘members’, however, as it is impossible to know exactly when their membership started; Nuttall, ‘Worcestershire Association’, 202.

¹³⁰ The remaining ten entries were applications without any testimonials.

There were, however, eight Association members whose referees were also *all* Association members.¹³¹ John Willmot entered the Triers' records three times: at his interview for Feckenham in May 1654, he provided five referees, of which only Thomas Juice was a member, whilst at his interview in November 1654 for Holy Cross, Pershore, he was supported by six certifiers, of which only William Lole and Richard Dowley were members.¹³² In May 1655, however, he was approved for Pershore St Andrew's, for which all his referees were Association members.¹³³ Was this happenstance? Or did it represent a gradual tightening of the bonds between members? Only eleven out of the total seventy-two members of the Association make no appearance at all in the Registers.

The high number of Worcestershire ministers whose referees included both members and non-members suggests that membership of the Association, although important, was not the overriding factor determining mutual support amongst the county's clergy. Indeed, the nature of the Association itself argues against an exclusive approach. Since it actively attracted those ministers who eschewed denominational exclusion, it is not surprising that so many of them offered their support to, or alongside, those who were not part of its membership. The very existence of the Voluntary Associations, however, pointed to flaws in the Cromwellian church. By failing to insist upon a clear national doctrine,

¹³¹ John Hill appeared twice, making a total of nine interviews.

¹³² Comm. III/3, *lib.1*, f.74, *lib.3*, f.49.

¹³³ Comm. III/4, f.97; Willmot probably held the curacy of Holy Cross with the adjacent vicarage of St Andrews, as an amalgamation or possibly a pragmatic plurality: 'Parishes: Pershore, Holy Cross' in *History of the County of Worcester* (VCH), vol.4, 155-163.

ecclesiastical discipline and means of ordination, it was left to individuals to find alternative solutions.¹³⁴ The corollary was, however, that those who did work towards such solutions by joining an Association were able to pursue their aims without apparent prejudice.

Ministers Rejected by the Triers

The Triers' Registers only record those men approved by the Commissioners, but what of those who failed to gain entry to the ministry? Arguably, the nature of these men and their experiences is as important in understanding the parameters of the Cromwellian church as are those of the approved ministers. Unfortunately, there is no surviving corpus of evidence on how many or which candidates were rejected, nor on the official reasons for any rejections - although there is a small but colourful contemporary literature on why it was *believed* that the Triers refused some individuals.¹³⁵ Furthermore, there is very little historiography on rejections by the Triers. The lack of source material has led those few scholars who have considered the work of the Commission to rely largely upon the published accounts of Anthony Sadler and Joseph Harrison.¹³⁶ Murphy accepts the accusations that the Triers were primarily guilty of personal prejudice, and personal interest in the livings involved, and also claims that the Triers were

¹³⁴ Worcestershire was the only Association not to ordain.

¹³⁵ For example: 'Do they not use it [their power] to the making and maintaining of parties and factions, to the gaining [...] of disciples to themselves, to the avenging themselves upon their enemies [...]': Goodwin, *Basanista'i*, 15. Or: '[...] if they [the Triers] dislike the minister (and probably like the living) [...] then [...] he is disaffected. [...] that he carries his Hand by his side, and his elbow up; and therefore he is proud': Sadler, *Inquisitio Anglicana*, 3.

¹³⁶ Sadler, *Inquisitio Anglicana*; Harrison, *Divine Light*.

uninterested in the political views of applicants.¹³⁷ Winston takes a more thoughtful line, arguing that the Triers were most interested in the orthodoxy of candidates' Calvinism and that, in the case of Sadler, the reason for his rejection was 'his Arminianism.' He does note, however, that other Arminians, such as Laurence Womock, *were* able to gain the Commissioners' approval.¹³⁸ Collins suggests that the Triers did take into account political disaffection in ministers.¹³⁹

All secondary sources agree, however, that whilst it is impossible to quantify the numbers of rejected applicants, the figure was likely to have been small, citing the paucity of published complaints and the absence of appeals to the Council as evidence.¹⁴⁰ This conclusion is supported by John Nye's response to Sadler:

The Indulgence of the Commissioners is such [...] that Liberty is given to those that for present are disapproved, to return and be examined again even *toties quoties* [...] It is seldom any Person is disapproved, so long as any one Commissioner hath hopes, that possibly he may some other way, or at some other time give better satisfaction.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Murphy, 161-3, 168-9, 187.

¹³⁸ Sadler's views on free-will are debatable, however, and therefore Winstone's label of his 'Arminianism' is not entirely convincing: Winstone, 134-5, and see also J. McElligott, 'Anthony Sadler' in *ODNB*.

¹³⁹ J. Collins, 'Church Settlement', 32-4.

¹⁴⁰ Winstone, 134.

¹⁴¹ Nye, *Sadler Re-examined*, 10.

The absence of official records of rejection is itself interesting. Why did the registers of approvals survive, but not the evidence of rejections? John Nye noted that he recorded interviews and decisions in a book, quoting verbatim his entry for Sadler's interview.¹⁴² It might be that such 'minute books' were deliberately destroyed after May 1660, to conceal evidence of the Triers' work before the hand-over of records after the Restoration.¹⁴³ It seems, however, that - like the bishops - the Triers were not legally required to keep a record of their rejections. Winstone has argued that the very small number of appeals from ministers against rejection by the Triers suggests that such outcomes were rare. In fact, the bare figures hide more complex evidence, to make sense of which it is important to tease out the different mechanisms behind the rejection of ministers.

In 1654 and 1655, prohibitions were issued against previously ejected ministers serving in livings, unless or until they had satisfied the Council and Protector of their obedience to the state.¹⁴⁴ The supplementary ordinance of 1654 which first stated this prohibition was clearly part of the legislation creating the religious programme. The catalyst for the Proclamation of July 1655, however, was the royalist uprisings earlier that year, and its focus was enforcing political obedience on the clergy, illustrated by Thomas Audley's oath, given in 1658:

¹⁴² Nye's second entry in his minute book for Sadler's two interviews read, 'July 3d Mr Anthony Sadler who was examined in part in the morning, was this afternoon called in again, and further examined, and not approved': Nye, *Sadler Re-examined*, 9.

¹⁴³ Nye was ordered by the House of Commons to hand over all the records of ecclesiastical appointments in his possession on 20th Jan 1662: *CJ*, vol.8, 347.

¹⁴⁴ *A&O*, vol.2, 1025-6. See Section 2.4, 128-9 and Section 3.1, 211-12.

[...] I doe heartily acknowledge the lawfullnesse of this present government of these nations, as [sic] also that I shall with all readinesse of mynd to the utmost of my power endeavour to uphold and defend the same against all whatsoever opposition shall at any time be made, and by whomesoever. All which as I have now written with mine owne hand. [...]¹⁴⁵

The effect of the edicts of 1654 and 1655 was a series of appeals to the Council of State by ministers who found themselves suddenly ejected and banned from working, either on account of former sequestrations or their current employment by dissident royalists. A much smaller number of appeals, however, came from ministers who were *rejected* by the Triers for the same reason, presumably because they were unable to provide evidence of a dispensation to re-enter the ministry from the Council of State.¹⁴⁶ The small number of these appeals seems to result from the fact that most ministers affected by the edicts petitioned the Council proactively to have their bans lifted, before facing the Triers. These men were effectively forestalling a rejection. Thomas Bridge, for example, was sequestered from Malpas, Cheshire, in 1649, but recommended for re-admittance to the church after an appeal to the Council in October 1654, who instructed that he should be examined by Peter Sterry and Nicholas Lockyear.¹⁴⁷ He was

¹⁴⁵ SP18/183 f.206.

¹⁴⁶ For example: Christopher Newstead: SP25/77 f.245; *WR*, 160; S. Wright, 'Christopher Newstead' in *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁷ SP18/76 f.139. Both Sterry and Lockyer were Cromwell's chaplains. See also Hugh Roberts and William Belke: SP18/102 f.135; SP18/130 f.144; *WR*, 56; *WR*, 211.

subsequently took up the living at Tillington, adjacent to his patron the Earl of Northumberland's estate at Petworth in Sussex.¹⁴⁸ Less fortunate, however, was Kenelm Marwaring who does not appear to have been approved, despite confirmation of his good character from John Smith, Mayor of Gravesend, and Baron John Parker, and an instruction from the Council of State that the Triers should appoint him to a suitable living or give him an augmentation if appropriate.¹⁴⁹ This may have been simply an omission from the Registers but there is no other evidence that he re-joined the church.

Mainwaring's experience was not atypical. Not all of those recommended as suitable to re-enter the church are recorded in the Registers as having done so. Typically, their petitions triggered further enquiries into the minister's case: Manwaring's testimonials from Smith and Parker, for example, were the result of such investigations. Many other petitioners were given a private interview with two or three individuals, usually Triers, after which they might be recommended for re-admission *if* they were approved at another Triers' interview. John Halke was interviewed privately by William Cooper, Thomas Manton and Hugh Peters, who reported his fitness, after which the Council of State recommended he should be

¹⁴⁸ Comm. III/3, *lib.*2, f.244.

¹⁴⁹ SP 18/181 f.73; SP 29/10 f.21; SP 25/78 f.628-9; WR, 221.

[...] restored to his liberty of exercising his ministeriall Guifts in such place as he shall be presented to, being first approved by the Commission for approbacon of publique Preachers.¹⁵⁰

And yet Halke, like several others, does not appear in the Registers. It seems illogical for him to have failed a formal Triers' interview having already gained the support of three key members of the Commission, so was this simply an administrative error, or did such men not undergo another interview, despite the Council's very clear instructions? Or did the Triers, in full sitting, continue to reject some men, despite the informal reports they had received? If so, this would add a considerable number of rejections to the few other records, some of which are discussed below. Without evidence on how or why such men failed to be re-admitted, it is frustratingly difficult to draw conclusions about their experiences.

Good evidence on rejections by the Triers for reasons other than government prohibitions against ejected ministers is rare but illuminating. Some candidates simply appear to have fallen below the required standards of godliness, education and moral probity. Richard Farrer was one: rejected by the Triers when he attended his interview for the living of Ware in Hertfordshire in 1655, he continued to preach in the town until eventually he was brought before the local Ejectors Commission to answer allegations of stealing, extortion, assault, lying, sexual indecency and swearing - all of which led, unsurprisingly, to his sequestration. Even so, he continued to preach in Ware, which resulted in an

¹⁵⁰ SP 25/78 f.569.

appeal to the Council by several parishioners, a formal certificate of rejection from the Triers and an examination by the local Major-General and the Commissioners for Securing the Peace.¹⁵¹

Farrer may have been an extreme example of behavioural delinquency, but there were probably others. In the records of clerical ejections, many ministers were simply recorded as ‘unfit’ or ‘malignant’, terms which probably aggregated political *and* doctrinal delinquency and this is likely to have been mirrored in cases of rejection, too.¹⁵² Richard Harrison was rejected by the Triers in November 1654, after complaints were submitted to them that he had officiated to the royalists at Lichfield in the 1640s, suggesting he was both politically and religiously delinquent.¹⁵³ In 1658, however, James Cockaine, minister of Frodsham in Cheshire, was rejected after a series of articles were submitted against him, stating that he denied the ministry as an office and believed that the sacraments were popery. He also rejected catechizing and denied the sanctity of the sabbath.¹⁵⁴ Given his extreme views, it is something of a mystery to explain how Cockaine had been holding down a parochial living at all? Certainly the allegations suggest that he was toying with the more extreme elements of baptist or quaker practice. Perhaps his views, like those of many others both clerical and

¹⁵¹ SP 18/127 ff.1-2, 5.

¹⁵² Bodl., MS. Rawlinson A, 26, f.432.

¹⁵³ SP 18/96 ff.50-1. Harrison may have been approved for Blithfield in 1658: Comm. III/7, f.78; *WR*, 323.

¹⁵⁴ SP 18/181 f.112.

lay, had been gradually evolving as new influences and ideas presented themselves to him.¹⁵⁵

The examples of Harrison and Cockaine illustrate something of the personal, religious and political parameters that delineated the boundaries of the Cromwellian church. They also show, however, that the Triers did not rely solely on their own questioning, but also took into account information and concerns supplied by others, when trying to assess men's suitability for the ministry. Whilst this may have given the Triers greater focus for their questions, it undoubtedly left the process open to abuse. Joseph Harrison complained that 'some Letters were written to a Brother, or Brethren in London' by members of the Lancashire *classis*, which resulted in his being questioned by the Triers over their allegations, and his subsequent rejection. Although he was given the option to be re-examined back in Lancashire, he turned this down because he believed that those whom the Triers would appoint to interview him there would be the same *classis* members who had written the original letters.¹⁵⁶

Evidence discussed earlier suggests that some approved ministers had ill-disguised episcopalian sympathies, at the very least.¹⁵⁷ There was clearly a point, however, at which acceptable levels of episcopalianism shaded into unacceptable

¹⁵⁵ J. Briggs, 'Captain John Garland, James Cockayne and the Staffordshire Baptists: A Note' in *BQ* (1973), vol.25(4), 164-6; B. White, 'Two Early Propagandists for Believers' Baptism' in *BQ* (1971), vol.24(4), 167-170.

¹⁵⁶ Harrison, *Divine Light*, 3-4.

¹⁵⁷ For example: Comm. III/3, *lib.* 2, f.236 (Lamplugh), *lib.* 3, f.119 (Spering).

levels of Laudianism or Arminianism. Unfortunately, without specific evidence of what constituted ‘unacceptable,’ it is difficult to identify exactly where this point was. It is important to note, in fact, that there was no specific legislation preventing royalists and episcopalians from being approved by the Triers. This is curious since episcopalians *were* specifically excluded from benefiting from the Cromwellian grant of liberty of conscience in the Instrument of Government. Yet the Triers were not required to reject them on principle. This left an ambiguity in the matter which was typical of the muddled thinking behind the religious legislation of the Interregnum.

In any case, it appears that the boundaries of acceptability were case-specific. Peter Samways, for example, was ejected from Trinity College, Cambridge, for refusing the Engagement in 1650. In 1655, he was ejected from Cheshunt for using the Book of Common Prayer, and when he attended another Triers’ interview in 1658, he was presented by the royalist Earl of Elgin.¹⁵⁸ As a known royalist and episcopalian himself, Samways appears to have been an unlikely candidate for approval, so how did he convince the Triers of his suitability?

It seems that for Samways, and probably others like him, much of the real decision-making happened outside the Triers’ interview. His petition to the Council for approval was accompanied by several positive testimonials from other Cromwellian grandees, including a lengthy report on him, written in 1652

¹⁵⁸ Comm. III/7, f.69.

by Thomas Goodwin.¹⁵⁹ Goodwin recounted a private interview he had held with Samways, during which he had become convinced of the latter's godliness and acceptability, writing,

and so really, as if ever I was, or any of you or any other I have ever known, converted, this man is... and it shall teach me whilst I live to search thoroughly into men, ere I deny them.¹⁶⁰

Goodwin's recommendation was probably pivotal in the decision over Samways, but so too, perhaps, was the less well-known comment by Jeremiah White, one of Cromwell's unofficial chaplains, who reported to the Council that he believed Samways to be 'a moderate man in those things in which hee differs from us'.¹⁶¹

Thus the experience of Peter Samways, whilst unique, provides some informative clues as to how and where the boundaries of acceptability were drawn by the regime as it rebuilt the ministry. It seems that the Triers and Council were prepared to take a pragmatic approach to approving some ministers, which led to flexible boundaries to conformity. If influential figures were convinced of the essential piety and godliness of a minister, then that conviction could overcome the disadvantages of mild episcopalianism and even

¹⁵⁹ SP 18/182 ff.3, 5-7. Those supporting Samways included also Bishop James Usher (his certificate dated 1654), Thomas Manton, Jeremiah White and Major-General William Packer.

¹⁶⁰ SP 18/182 f.6.

¹⁶¹ SP 18/182 f.10.

royalism. And an important factor in acquiring their good will was ‘moderation’: men who were thought to be moderate were unlikely to be a danger to the state.

The argument that religious and political moderation counted for more than absolute conformity is supported by record of a conversation between Cromwell and Peter Gunning, future Bishop of Ely, believed to have taken place sometime after 1656. Gunning was un-repentantly episcopalian; by the mid-1650s, he was openly holding Prayer Book services at Exeter House, in London. John Howe, one of Cromwell’s chaplains, reported that Cromwell had disputed the necessity of clerical ordination with Gunning, before adding,

As for your meetings, it is against my principle to persecute any for their religion but if they be stil affronting the government under which they have protection, I must and will look to it.¹⁶²

If accurate, this is an extraordinary insight into Cromwell’s personal views. The Instrument of Government specifically excluded ‘prelatists’ from having the right to worship, yet this anecdote suggests that Cromwell himself was prepared to allow Gunning’s episcopalian practices, so long as they did not openly ‘affront’ the government. It seems, therefore, that political *quiescence* was a key factor in his tolerance of religious diversity and this informed his decisions, when it came

¹⁶² BL, Birch MS. 4460, f.61.

to confirming or rejecting petitions from those seeking re-admittance into the church.

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The evidence discussed above suggests that the current view of rejections by the Triers is inadequate. Claims by both John Nye and later commentators that very few applicants were rejected, *may* be true but the case is unproven. Basing the claim, as Winstone does, on the fact that very few accounts of rejections were published, and on the absence of appeals to the Council of State, has possible flaws: rejected ministers may have preferred to keep their grievances to themselves. Since each presentation or application for an augmentation triggered a new Triers' interview, many men must have looked down the long years of their future careers and considered the merits of discretion about their experiences. Furthermore, analysis of the rejection and appeal procedure has also shown that a significant number of ministers facing the Triers after the proclamation of 1655, intentionally circumvented what would otherwise have been certain rejection by appealing beforehand.

It seems also that the boundaries defining who was acceptable within the Cromwellian ministry were flexible. The Triers sought to perceive the grace of God in ministers and to explore their beliefs in key areas, such as election and reprobation, but they also took into account a range of other factors. These may

sometimes have included their political views and even those of their patrons.¹⁶³ They seem to have operated a pragmatic policy towards religious and political delinquency, which tried to balance the constant need for preaching ministers against the need to prevent giving those who sought to undermine the regime a voice in the heart of local communities.

Importantly, the accusations that they were openly biased towards ministers who were uneducated and/or unordained and that they actively followed a universal policy of re-assigning good livings to fellow independents cannot currently be sustained from the available evidence. They may, however, have deliberately chosen to favour those whom they believed to be godly exemplars to high-profile livings where they were required either to recommend ministers or settle a disputed presentation. For some, at least, of the Triers, such exemplars would naturally have been independents. Moreover, Manton's later claim that he was active as a Trier to 'keep matters from running into extremes' suggests that some elements on the Commission may have been less fair-minded than others.¹⁶⁴ Cromwell's personal support for ministers who possessed Grace whether or not educated at university, however, must have been influential, if not instrumental in the Triers' decisions, when it came to approving men from all backgrounds.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Walker, *Attempt*, I, 174.

¹⁶⁴ Harris, *Works of Thomas Manton*, xiii. See Section 2.2, 96-7.

¹⁶⁵ O. Cromwell, 'Speech at the Opening of Parliament', 17 September, 1656' in Abbott, *Writings*, vol.4(1), 259.

Equally important is the argument that whilst the Triers were prepared to be more accommodating in the decision-making process than their critics suggested, they did in fact reject a reasonable number of ministers. This thesis does not argue that rejections numbered in the thousands, but it does refute one of Ann Hughes' interpretations, that the Triers may have been indifferent to the testimonials they considered and the care which they used in making approvals.¹⁶⁶ The evidence discussed above suggests that this was far from the case. In particular, a number of those who are recorded as having failed initially but returned with amended papers, may still have been rejected. This suggests that the Triers did have strict, if now opaque, limits to acceptability.¹⁶⁷

Even so, it seems that the Triers were not faced with substantial numbers of unacceptable candidates. This may have been, in part, a result of the transfer of patronage, but also because of the deterrent effect of their reputation. There is persuasive evidence that for some ministers the Triers' interview was regarded as an ordeal. Simon Patrick, for example, future Bishop of Ely, noted,

My chief reason was fear of being examined and rejected by the Triers. But several friends, urging me to accept of the presentation, and one London minister promising me that he would dispose the

¹⁶⁶ Hughes, 'Public Profession', 104.

¹⁶⁷ Walker, *Attempt*, 174.

Triers to be very favourable in their examination of me, I adventured upon it.’¹⁶⁸

Amongst those who did come before them, however, the Triers sought to achieve what Blair Worden has noted as the foundation of Cromwell’s religious policy: ‘the distinction between the precious and the vile’.¹⁶⁹ Allowed only to apply criteria which were subjective rather than objective, they created and operated a system which preferenced individual piety, godliness and Calvinism over absolute definitions of conformity, and which took a pragmatic approach even to moderate dissidence, in order to ensure that the preaching of the Gospel was as widely accessible as possible.

¹⁶⁸ Taylor, *Works of Symon Patrick*, 428. See also E. Calamy, *Memoirs of the life of the late Revd. Mr. John Howe* (1728), 20-1.

¹⁶⁹ B. Worden, ‘Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate’ in W. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 215.

Part 4 Conclusions

The Impact of the Religious Programme

4.1 The Significance of the Triers: Re-conceptualising the Cromwellian Religious Programme

This section considers the impact and legacy of the Triers. It argues that their early establishment was primarily the result of a fundamental breakdown in ecclesiastical administration in the early 1650s, which was recognised at the time but has been subsequently overlooked. It suggests, moreover, that the quantitative analysis of the Registers and the qualitative evidence which has accompanied it, have begun to draw a more positive picture of their achievements than that which circulated during their actual existence, and a more evidence-based one than that which has circulated subsequently. It argues, however, that whilst they were reasonably successful in bringing due process back to recruitment to the ministry and in supplying preachers to parochial livings, their importance has been overstated. Their ability to undertake much more than a limited vetting role on a cohort of ministers who were already largely conformable to the godly church was restricted by inadequate legislation and close oversight by the Protector and the Council of State. It demonstrates that the majority of ministers approved by the Triers chose to conform in 1660-62 and discusses whether it is, therefore, relevant to talk about a 'Cromwellian clergy'. Finally it suggests some avenues for future research using

the information in the Registers, which would shed new light on the current understanding of the Restoration church.

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The genesis of the regime's religious programme is usually taken to be the production of the *Humble Proposals* in 1652 by John Owen, Thomas Goodwin and their fellow independents.¹ Interest in the *Proposals*, however, has focused on their intellectual origins and the bitter fight which they engendered between the magisterial independents and the separatist congregationalists.² Moreover, the context of their production has been the Rump's failure to seize the religious initiative and the unproductive infighting between radical and moderate factions in the Nominated Assembly. Scholarly attention has thus concentrated on Owen and Goodwin's attempt to counter the threat from the Racovian catechism and anti-trinitarianism, to reconcile the proposed co-existence of separated churches and the national church and, later, to draw up a list of religious fundamentals.³

The actual condition of the church when the proposals were being drawn up has rarely been considered. This thesis suggests that there is an alternative narrative to the creation of the *Humble Proposals*, and thus to the origins of the

¹ The early influence of the Long Parliament's proposals in 1641 for erecting a system of lay control in place of episcopal church government has also been identified as a progenitor: Collins, 'Church Settlement', 37.

² Polizzotto, 'Campaign', 569-581.

³ Mortimer, 198-201.

Cromwellian religious programme, which is at least as important as the intellectual principles and factional disputes. It argues that the *Proposals* were produced in the context of the virtual collapse in ecclesiastical administration, a fact which the first three clauses highlight and seek to address, and which has been ignored in accounts of their formation.

The *Humble Proposals* were divided into three sections, addressing three distinct areas of concern in 1652: a means to recruit ministers; the desire to retain state control over the activities of separated ‘churches’; and the prevention of the spread of blasphemous beliefs and practices whilst allowing these separated churches to flourish.⁴ At the top of the list, therefore, was the clear acknowledgement that the ministry was desperately understocked and that there was a breakdown in the means of appointment. This point was addressed again at the top of Owen and Goodwin’s accompanying list of proposals for propagating the Gospel, where the recruitment of ministers formed the basis of the first three points.

The prime position of this matter was telling: if the concern had referred simply to the need to fill the ever-present dregs of financially unviable livings, it would not have been so prominently addressed; the church had *always* struggled to stock such parishes. In fact, it suggests that the matter was becoming critical,

⁴ *HP*, 1-3.

way beyond normal recruitment difficulties.⁵ Furthermore, when the Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel presented its revised form of the *Proposals* to parliament in February 1653, although some of the contentious elements had been removed, those concerning clerical recruitment remained at the top of the agenda.

There is considerable evidence of the inadequate nature of the Rump's attempt at ecclesiastical administration.⁶ The Commissions established in 1650 to make good the acknowledged lack of ministers in the north and in Wales had been the cause of widespread complaints at their conduct, and suspicion over their operations.⁷ Their Acts of establishment were not renewed when they ceased in 1653. An equivalent commission for the rest of England was so slowly discussed that parliament was dissolved before it was finalised. In the meantime, the approval and registration of pastors of separated churches - one of the central planks of the *Humble Proposals* - was devolved to the Committee for the Reformation of the Universities, even though this Committee had previously been involved only in reviewing augmentations. In fact, the CRU was almost immediately dissolved (April 1652) and its various powers were not re-assigned until February 1653, when its augmentation duties were handed to the

⁵ In part it may have been also a politically astute move to reassure the conservative majority that the magisterial independents supported a national church.

⁶ In 1652, Richard Baxter lamented to Thomas Hill, 'It's the grieffe of my soule, that now All's done, the Rulers do nothing for settling the church, nor the Ministers for Accommodation': *CCRB*, vol.1, 76.

⁷ *CJ*, vol.7, 448, 600; Shaw, vol.2, 227; Griffith, *Six Counties*; Richards, *Puritan Movement*, 255-269.

Committee for Plundered Ministers.⁸ The choice of the CRU for the putative approvals of pastors, however, indicates that there was no obvious authority in place that would logically have taken on this role. The CPM was perhaps too much a ‘creature’ of the national church and although the remains of the Westminster Assembly *was* limping on with its ministerial approvals, its presbyterian outlook made it unsuitable for approving and registering separated churches; and by 1653 at the latest, even the Assembly had ceased to meet.⁹

Owen’s struggle to find an obvious authority for approving separated churches was indicative that the existing administrative structure of the church was increasingly unfit for purpose in the political and religious climate of the early 1650s. Moreover when the Rump was dismissed, all parliamentary committees went with it, leaving ecclesiastical administration reduced to the 1649 incarnation of the Trustees for the Maintenance of the Preaching Ministry, whose powers covered only augmentations, but now had no authorising body, which function had been exercised by the recently dissolved CPM.

It seems, then, that the catalyst for the early establishment of a religious programme by the Cromwellian regime in 1654 was a serious breakdown in the administration of the church. The Cromwellians undoubtedly had their own religious vision and agenda, of course, but the extreme rapidity with which they

⁸ Shaw, vol.2, 217-21.

⁹ Baxter suggests the Assembly’s cessation was linked to the dissolution of the Rump, April 1653: *RB*, 72.

established the Triers indicates that they recognised the acute need to resolve the problems in the functioning of the existing church. This argument is underpinned by the agenda of the *Humble Proposals*, by the inadequacy and then cessation of virtually all the previous ecclesiastical committees in 1653, and by the individual and county petitions to Cromwell and parliament in 1653 and 1654, begging for a means to establish ministers in empty pulpits.¹⁰ It was notable, moreover, that when the regime constructed its religious programme, it was not simply a wholesale espousal of Owen's proposals. The policies for bolstering the national ministry were all included, with some minor amendments, as were those to prevent blasphemy, but the attempt to exert state control over separated churches was abandoned. This suggests that repairing the recent damage done to the national church was the most important objective, besides being less divisive than efforts to control the separated congregations.

So how novel was the religious programme constructed in 1654 to make good the damage of the previous decade? Probably the most radical difference between the Triers and all their predecessors - in theory at least - was that, through them, ministerial appointments could be made by laymen. The reality was that this rarely occurred, since the majority of the Triers, and certainly the most active, were all ordained clergy, but the principle remained. It was, perhaps, the overriding cause of antipathy towards the Commission and the system they operated.

¹⁰ See Section 1.1, 22.

Some other aspects of the Triers' procedure for granting approvals were also revolutionary, others were unusual, if not entirely new. They did not have to insist upon ministerial ordination, nor did their ordinance specify a minimum age for approvals, such as twenty-three or four, the requirement for ordination to deacon and priest.¹¹ This meant that, without the need to fulfil certain objective requirements, approvals were made by the Triers purely on subjective judgements, a fact which was criticised at the time. John Goodwin denounced the regime for giving the Triers the power to pass absolute judgement on ministers, saying that even Jesus Christ

[...] was not able, his Fathers will standing to the contrary, to give both infallibility of judgement, and intemerable Faithfulness, in matters of faith and supernatural concernment, to exercise any such dominion over the faith, judgements, or consciences of far greater numbers of men [...]¹²

But then, Goodwin had nothing good to say about the Triers. In fact, it may be an anachronism to assume that contemporaries generally, and the Triers specifically, thought that identifying the possession of the Grace of God was necessarily a subjective judgement. They may have believed that, in some cases at least, they could perceive its presence in each other with certainty.

¹¹ Bray, *Anglican Canons*, 315 (canon 34).

¹² Goodwin, *Basanista'i*, 2.

The Triers also had greater powers of discretion when rejecting ministers than their episcopal predecessors. Only in extreme cases of unacceptability, such as simony, heresy or excommunication, did bishops refuse to appoint ministers, since refusals on the basis of more subjective matters, such as scriptural knowledge or moral delinquency, could be, and were, contested in the courts.¹³ In contrast, the Triers seem to have been enjoyed immunity from legal action against their decisions. Certainly no evidence has yet been found of their being taken to court over a refusal, which must have given them greater freedom in their decision-making. On the other hand, this study has demonstrated that they were open to informal appeals and revised applications, whilst the Council of State and Cromwell provided an avenue for appeal over ejections resulting from the legislation.

In almost all other aspects of their work, however, the Triers' ordinance drew heavily on existing practices and established principles, incorporating not just procedures from the 1640s but also aspects of diocesan management from before the civil war. The processes of interviewing candidates and requiring testimonials of scriptural knowledge and 'good conversation' were, and had been, employed in a variety of situations. Frequent reliance on university contacts as referees was a tradition that continued from the 1630s into the 1650s, whilst under the canons of 1603, similar tests to those applied by the Triers were undertaken before episcopalian institutions.¹⁴ The principle of 'trying' before admission was widely

¹³ O'Day, *Clergy*, 131.

¹⁴ Bray, *Anglican Canons*, 315 (canon 34), 323 (canon 39).

established in many organisations, including congregational and baptist churches.¹⁵ Moreover, presbyterian ordinations and entry into university fellowships both relied on similar tests. Simon Patrick's presbyterian ordination certificate for his admission to a fellowship at Queens', Cambridge in 1653, recorded,

[...] he is called to the work of the ministry as a fellow of Queens College in Cambridge. And hath exhibited unto the presbytery sufficient testimoniall (now remaining in their custody) of his competent age, of his unblameable life and conversation, of his diligence and proficiency in his studies, and of his fair and direct calling unto the forementioned place.¹⁶

This testimony was signed by six prominent presbyterians, including Simeon Ashe and Edmund Calamy.

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Did the Triers' system succeed in implementing the religious clauses of the Instrument of Government, which had promised to promote 'the Christian religion, as contained in the Scriptures [...] as the public profession of these

¹⁵ Congregational Churches in New England, Cambridge Synod, *A Platform of Church-discipline* (1652), 10, 16.

¹⁶ Bodl., MS. Tanner 52, f.6.

nations'? What was the composition of the ministry that they created through their approvals and how closely did it relate to the Instrument's intentions? This thesis has - regretfully - avoided anything more than the crudest classification of ministers by denomination, deeming that when dealing with several thousand men, the uncertainty of reaching secure judgements on churchmanship, added to the difficulties of distinguishing ministers with identical names, defeat attempts to compile detailed statistics. It has demonstrated, however, that the Triers approved men with a range of religious preferences, of which only a minority were independents.¹⁷ Many were presbyterians, but many others were those identified by Matthews as,

popularly called Presbyterians and rightly so in the political sense that name had acquired, but not in any other. These were the men whom Baxter preferred to describe as 'meer Catholics.'¹⁸

More rarely, the Triers also approved ministers whose histories suggested less orthodox allegiances. In April 1656, for example, Robert Lancaster, then rector of Quarley in Hampshire, was approved for the adjacent living of Amport. Two months later he provided a testimonial for Robert Town to take over at Quarley, for which move Town's patron was John Pitman, who had been one of Lancaster's referees.¹⁹ Both men's first fruits were guaranteed by two members

¹⁷ Section 3.3, 300.

¹⁸ *CR*, x.

¹⁹ *Comm. III/5*, ff.20, 58.

of the Merchant Taylors' livery company, Thomas Mirrall and Silvester Dennis, who had also provided him with a testimonial alongside one of his relations, William Dennis.²⁰ Lancaster, however, had been refused entry to the ministry by the Westminster Assembly in 1648 because of his antinomian beliefs.²¹ Town, moreover, was probably the son of the Lancashire antinomian, Nathaniel, and a member of the wider Town family, of whom Oliver Heywood noted, 'all of them are accounted Antinomians'.²² It is unclear whether Lancaster and Town still actively held antinomian views at the time of their approvals - and indeed the nature of their 'antinomianism', which was sometimes simply a term of abuse, is unclear - but they illustrate a wider phenomenon.²³ The Triers, the Trustees and the Council of State were prepared to approve ministers whose religious or political histories were, or were thought to be, compromised.

This was particularly clear after the 1655 Proclamation against previously ejected ministers flushed out many who had either been purged from the universities in the 1640s or had refused the Engagement in 1649-50.²⁴ Despite these early suggestions of political and religious delinquency, both the Triers and the

²⁰ TNA, E334/22, f.11v. Town's sister Hester probably married into the Mirrall family: *CR*, 490.

²¹ *CR*, 313.

²² J. Horsfall Turner (ed.), *The Reverend Oliver Heywood, BA, 1630-1702, his Autobiography* (Brighouse: 1882), vol.3, 192.

²³ For discussion on the meaning of antinomianism, see T. Cooper, 'The Antinomians Redeemed: Removing some of the Radical from Mid-Seventeenth-century English Religion' in *JRH* (2000), vol.24(3).

²⁴ See G. Burgess, 'Usurpation, Obligation and Obedience in the Thought of the Engagement Controversy' in *HJ* (1986), vol.29(3), 516.

Council of State were prepared to readmit some of these men into the church after 1654.²⁵ Care was certainly taken to ascertain their subsequent ‘reformatations’: William Belke’s sequestration in 1644, for example, was investigated by Major-General Kelsey, who reported his current ‘conformity to the parliament soundnes and orthodoxnes in Doctrine and unblameable conversation [...]’.²⁶ Thomas Audley, who sought admission in 1658, pleaded that his sequestration in 1646 by the Gloucester County Committee was ‘not for Scandall [...] but for differing in judgement and opinion’ and that the same Committee had licensed him to preach elsewhere.²⁷ Audley was not the only minister to argue that ‘differing in judgement’ was a lesser crime than ‘scandall’, although it is unclear whether he referred to religious or political ‘judgement’.²⁸ Either way, it implies that political and religious delinquency were not necessarily deemed irreversible; in this way, too, the Triers’ system was more open to ‘appeal’ than its critics allowed. Most importantly, it confirms that the Triers were implementing the promise of a broad church that was offered in the Instrument of Government.

The Triers operated some flexibility on pluralism. They almost always avoided appointing to livings more than thirty miles from each other, as defined in the

²⁵ J. Parkin, ‘Humphrey Babington’ in *ODNB*; *WR*, 25 (Markham), 38 (Molle).

²⁶ SP 18/130 f.144.

²⁷ SP 18/183 f.198. The frequency of ejected clergy subsequently allowed to continue to preach in the 1640s would bear further investigation, although the term ‘license’ here is probably a generic reference to a permission - preaching licenses as such do not appear to have continued after the collapse of the diocesan system.

²⁸ For example: Samways: SP 18/182 f.5.

Canons of 1603, although a rare exception was James Bromwell, whom they inexplicably approved for Bixley in Norfolk in January 1656 and, two days later, for his father's former living of Polestead in Suffolk, fifty miles away.²⁹ More pragmatically, however, they sometimes approved ministers to hold neighbouring parishes: Nicholas Anderson was appointed to both Birkby and Long Cowton in North Yorkshire in 1655, and George Beck was appointed to Allington and the moiety of Sedgebrook in Lincolnshire in June 1656.³⁰ The adjacency of these livings might suggest that these arrangements were made in expectation that the parishes would be amalgamated by the Trustees.

The Triers sometimes approved men to hold a living alongside other forms of parochial or ecclesiastical position. Matthew Poole, for example, was approved for the weekly lecture at Mary Magdalen, Milk Street, in London whilst also serving the cure of Michael le Querne near St Paul's Cathedral.³¹ The Milk Street lectureship had in fact been set up under a private benefaction from Lady Camden in the early 1640s, so was probably not in receipt of public

²⁹ Pluralism was defined as more than thirty miles apart: Bray, *Anglican Canons*, 327-9; O'Day, *Clergy*, 77. Bromwell's referees were similar for both, but his appointment to Polestead followed his father's sequestration from there, the causes of which are unknown: Comm. III/5, ff.145, 189, 190.

³⁰ Long Cowton may now be either South, North or East Cowton; it is unclear to which Anderson was appointed: L.A.S. Butler (ed.), *The Archdeaconry of Richmond in the Eighteenth Century: Bishop Gastrell's 'Notitia'* (Leeds: YAS, 1990), 119; Comm. III/3, lib. 3, f.106; Comm. III/4, f. 75; Comm. III/5, ff.65, 66.

³¹ Comm. III/7, f.133. Whether Poole actually served the lectureship is unclear. Seaver lists the lecturers there without Poole: Seaver, *Lectureships*, 279.

maintenance.³² John Flavell, on the other hand, was joint minister at Dartmouth with Allen Geare, besides holding the adjacent publicly-maintained lectureship at Townstall on Sundays.³³ Lectureships, however, did not include the ‘cure of souls’, one of the definitions of ‘pluralism’ under the canons of 1603, and this qualification seems to have been continued into the revolution.³⁴

Most of those who simultaneously held positions within and outside the maintained church were independents. These men usually held lectureships or preaching positions alongside their roles as pastors of separated churches, rather than parochial incumbencies. Samuel Basnet, for example, was pastor to a separated congregation at Coventry, but preached three town lectures in the parish churches of the city, having been appointed by the mayor and corporation.³⁵ Since lectureships and preaching positions were less dependent on election by private, often lay, patrons or on maintenance by tithe, they were easier to reconcile with a personal commitment to the principle of congregationalism.³⁶ Moreover, it helped to avoid the potential for conflicts of conscience, as articulated by James Forbes, pastor of the separated church at Gloucester, who noted that he

³² *The Endowed Charities of the City of London* (London: 1829), 159; T. Liu, *Puritan London: A Study of Religion and Society in the City Parishes* (Newark: DUP, 1986), 78.

³³ Comm. III/5, f.181; J. Kelly, ‘John Flavell’ in *ODNB*; *CR*, 200.

³⁴ Bray, 327.

³⁵ *CR*, 33.

³⁶ Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, 24.

could not accept the Call to be a Parochial Minister, for if I received the Parish Maintenance at all, All would expect to have me baptize their Children and to administer the Lords Supper to all [...]³⁷

Forbes was happier to take up the lectureship at the cathedral, which he explained was funded ‘from the State’, presumably through the Trustees, but would not require parochial duties such as baptism. Some ministers, however, did serve parochial cures as well as positions as pastors of separated churches. Nuttall has noted that this occurred most frequently in East Anglia, but other examples exist: Simon Moore was both pastor of an independent congregation and vicar of St Peters, Worcester, besides lecturing at the cathedral.³⁸ Indeed, several of the Triers, including Philip Nye, William Strong and John Rowe, also moved between parochial cure and separated church during the 1640s and 1650s.³⁹ This flexibility in ministerial employment allowed to those who served in the Cromwellian church adds weight to the suggestion that the provision of preaching was the bottom line for the regime; beyond that, ministers were not constrained in the practice of their calling, so long as their churchmanship kept them within the category of those who maintained the ‘faith in God by Jesus Christ’.

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³⁷ J. Forbes, *Pastoral Instruction* (1713) in Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, 139-40.

³⁸ Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, 22, 154; Halcomb, ‘Social History’, 271.

³⁹ Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, 25; Donagan, ‘Nye’ in *ODNB*.

The Triers' pragmatism and flexibility suggest that they should have been an effective solution to the decline in the provision of preaching in the early 1650s and the collapse in the clerical appointments procedure. Were they? Did they increase the numbers of preaching ministers nationally? Comparisons with the pre- and post-war episcopalian regimes suggest that, proportionally, the Triers appointed roughly thirty per cent more clergy than the bishops.⁴⁰ This figure justifies something of Cromwell's claim, 'and truly we have settled very much of the business of the Ministry', that the Triers were part of an effective system for clerical appointments.⁴¹

On the other hand, the nadir in the fortunes of the ministry by 1652-3 argues that there were more empty parishes to be filled by 1654 than was typical before and after the revolution. So the fact that the Triers appointed proportionally so many more ministers either confirms that there *were* more vacant livings or it suggests that during the Protectorate the ministry was subject to higher levels of turnover than under the episcopalian regime.⁴² Nevertheless, it is reasonable to contend that whilst it is impossible to be certain that the Cromwellian regime increased

⁴⁰ This assumes that the fluctuations in appointments for the pre- and post-revolution periods are smoothed out to c.2500 for each five year period: Section 3.1, 185-6.

⁴¹ Abbott, *Writings*, vol.4(1), 495.

⁴² This thesis does not engage in detail with the debate between Curtis and Green on pre-war clerical turnover, but the figures produced here do add to that debate, by quantifying clerical turnover nationally for two pre-war periods. If Green's estimate of an average 550 vacancies a year for this period is correct, then he may have been right to suggest that clerical appointments broadly kept pace with vacancies in the 1620s and 30s, although his figures are based on theoretical not actual vacancies: Section 3.1, 177-8; Green, 'Career Prospects', 98; Curtis, 'Intellectuals', 302-3.

the overall number of settled livings, the Triers were at least *as* effective, and probably better, at filling the ministry than their episcopalian predecessors.

Equally importantly, the Triers were significantly more effective at appointing clergy than their immediate forerunners, the Westminster Assembly.⁴³ The role of the Assembly in clerical appointments has been largely overlooked, but it is an essential comparator for understanding the importance of the Triers.⁴⁴ On average, the Assembly probably made roughly four hundred approvals a year, which is in stark comparison to the nearly seven hundred approvals per year made by the Triers.⁴⁵ There were, of course, many extenuating circumstances for the Assembly's figures, including the unquantifiable impact of civil war on clerical recruitment and the descent into administrative confusion discussed earlier in this section. Nevertheless, on the figures alone, the Triers were nearly twice as successful in carrying out clerical appointments than the Assembly.

It is worth bearing in mind, however, that whilst the Triers and Trustees were appointing ministers, ejections were still taking place, although this thesis has suggested that the Ejectors removed only a small number of clergy. A more significant number of ministers lost their positions after the Proclamation of 1655, but a proportion of these men subsequently rejoined the church on appeal.

⁴³ A more detailed comparison with the Assembly's appointments would be rewarding but is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁴⁴ The exception is Joel Halcomb's tantalising initial findings: Halcomb, 'Examinations'.

⁴⁵ See *Appendix J*.

All told, it seems unlikely that the regime itself created more than perhaps three hundred vacancies. Even so, there is evidence that some areas in the country continued to experience difficulties finding ministers throughout the decade. In 1655, for example, the Trustees noted the ‘great scarcity of able ministers in the Isle of Ely’ whilst Ann Hughes noted that three quarters of the livings within the Second London *classis* had no settled minister during the Protectorate.⁴⁶ Even in the city of Westminster - astonishingly - only one church, St Martins, had a serving minister for the entire Interregnum.⁴⁷ In 1656, the parishioners of Ruscombe, Berkshire, begged Cromwell to present a minister to their parish, noting that ‘Mr Manning [their minister] hath left them soe that they are utterly destitute’.⁴⁸ Two years later the parishioners of Bramham in Yorkshire were also struggling to find a minister after a year’s vacancy.⁴⁹ The deep-seated economic problems of the tithe-funded church, however, meant that some benefices would always be difficult to fill; evidence that some remained vacant despite the religious programme does not necessarily negate the achievements of the Triers.

A refinement to the use of the number of approvals as an indication of success is the prevalence of repeated clerical turnover in parishes for which the Triers approved a new minister. Did such turnover represent a systemic failure to settle ministers? In fact, the Triers generally did not choose whom they interviewed,

⁴⁶ Comm. VIa/11, f.3; A. Hughes, ‘The Frustrations of the Godly’ in J. Morrill (ed.), *Revolution and Restoration* (London: Collins and Brown, 1992), 80.

⁴⁷ Gabriel Sangar, an active ministerial referee: Merrit, *Westminster*, 226.

⁴⁸ SP 18/129 f.111.

⁴⁹ SP 18/183 f.92.

and often would not have known the parishes to which such men were going, it would have been impossible for them to make informed judgements on personal suitability. Moreover, their remit was to test ministers' godliness and aptitude for the ministry; they were not required or authorised to decide whether minister and living were mutually suited.

Nevertheless, the evidence from Leicestershire shows that some parishes did experience high levels of turnover, and other examples can be found. In Sussex, West Tarring experienced three changes in minister in three years, Ferring had four changes in two years. Torpenhow in Cumberland had probably seven ministers between 1646 and 1660 and at Lamplugh, fifteen miles south, there were at least four, perhaps six, changes between 1652 and 1660.⁵⁰ Clerical turnover on this scale must have been deeply alien to the parishioners of both parishes: the pre-war incumbent at Torpenhow, Bernard Robinson, had served there for fourteen years, and his father for twenty years before him. At Lamplugh, John Braithwaite had been minister for seventeen years, and *his* predecessor, Lancelot Fletcher, had been serving the parish since 1596.⁵¹ Some parishioners may have welcomed the greater freedom to engineer the removal of an incumbent than had been possible under the bishops but for most, the overriding experience must have been one of impermanence and upheaval, leading perhaps to parochial division and dispute.

⁵⁰ Reid notes that in Kent, Pluckley and Eastry at Worth had 8 changes between 1640 and 1660: Reid, 'Diocese of Canterbury', 195.

⁵¹ Nightingale, vol.1, 575, 579-80, 770-5; Comm. III/4, f.44, Comm. III/5, f.77, Comm. III/6, f. 85; *WR* 104.

The Triers faced an impossible situation, however, given that much parochial friction resulted from the imposition of godly ministers onto parishes that still leant towards episcopalianism. Their whole *raison d'être* was to settle godly preachers so, in some parishes, antagonism was almost inevitable. Thomas Jessop, struggling with deep-rooted episcopalianism at Luton, was called a 'Scoundrall, a Jacke and a Clowne' for refusing to allow use of the Book of Common Prayer at a funeral, 'some saying farther that your Highnesse did allow the use of the Common Prayer in London'.⁵² In Norfolk, on the other hand, Henry Watts noted in his parish register,

Christopher Milne my predecessour I buried nov 30th 1657. I, Henry Watts was immediatly presented and entred but by three Anabaptists viz Francis Manclark, Michael Burrough, Will King ejected, all parishioners of W[heatacre] St P[eters].⁵³

To which he added, philosophically, 'God gives and God takes away'.⁵⁴

Both Jessop and Watts had found themselves in livings where entrenched views - at both ends of the religious spectrum - made long-term settlement extremely difficult. On the other hand, many other ministers settled by the Triers remained in their livings at least until the Restoration and, in the majority of cases,

⁵² SP 18/181 f.101.

⁵³ Bodl., MS. J. Walker, c.3, f.179r.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

beyond.⁵⁵ The Registers also show that many parishes that claimed to have been without a minister for many years did find solutions through the Triers and the Council of State. At Mashbury, Stratton St Michael and Tasborough, Mansfield, Prestwold, Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Ruscombe, for example, appeals to the Council for help in funding and settling a minister did indeed result in appointments made through the Triers and the Trustees.⁵⁶

In any event, it is worth considering whether the regime was actually concerned about providing a stable ministry, or was frequent clerical turnover deemed acceptable, so long as preaching was consistently offered? Unfortunately, there is little evidence on this. Numerous seventeenth-century clerics wrote about the moral, intellectual and pastoral standards to which individual parochial ministers should aspire, but it has been impossible to find a statement on the Cromwellian regime's ideal for clerical tenure.⁵⁷

In fact, repeated ministerial turnover had disadvantages, although the Exchequer benefited from more frequent payments of first fruits. In the first place, it usually resulted either from inadequate clerical income or a breakdown in the relationship between incumbents and parishioners, both of which implied that the

⁵⁵ See this Section, 394.

⁵⁶ SP 18/70 f.80; Comm. III/3, *lib.I*, ff.41, 42, 97; SP 18/71 f.124; Comm. III/5, ff. 59, 100, 127, 152, 175; Comm. III/6, 171; SP 25/75 f.457; SP 18/96 f.2; SP 18/127 f.101; SP 25/77 ff.155, 283; SP 18/129 f.111.

⁵⁷ *CJ*, vol.7, 482; *Christian Concorde* (1656), 4-5; A. Burgesse, *Paul's last farewell* (1658); S. Ainsworth, *A sermon preached Decemb. 16. 1654. At the funerall of Mr Andrew Pern* (1655). See also N. Enssle, 'Patterns of Godly Life: The Ideal Parish Minister in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century English Thought' in *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (1997), vol.28(1), 3-4.

speedy replacement of preaching might be problematic. Moreover, frequent turnover also broke the bonds that were expected to exist between minister and congregation. The ideal of such bonds was most visible in the separated churches, both in England and in Massachusetts, which required pastors and congregations to covenant themselves to each other.⁵⁸ Even where formal covenants did not exist, presbyterian and baptist ministers were usually ordained to particular parishes.⁵⁹ John Spurr has also noted the pastoral ideals that bound many ministers to their parishioners, citing Simon Patrick, for example, who refused to leave his London parish during the plague year of 1665.⁶⁰ Not all parishes conformed to this close-knit ideal, of course, and indeed the indiscriminating inclusion of parishioners in the sacraments led some people to seek the formal covenant of a separated church.⁶¹ John Dolphin, minister of Honeybourne in Worcestershire, faced pressure from some of his parishioners who wished to separate, since they ‘desire only those to be baptised “that joyne in speciall Communion”’.⁶²

⁵⁸ Church covenants were widespread in Massachusetts and brought back to England by those who returned after 1640: Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims*, 80, 96.

⁵⁹ For example: WSHC D1/14/1/1a/59 (Heskins, 1659). Baptist churches did likewise.

⁶⁰ J. Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, London: YUP, 1991), 13-14.

⁶¹ Postlethwaite, *Voice*, 5-8.

⁶² *CCRB*, vol.1, 163 (letter 216).

Frequent clerical turnover might also cause or aggravate parochial tensions. In a funeral sermon for John Frost, whose death cut short his ministry at Olave's, Hart Street in London in 1656, Zachary Crofton noted,

the sad divisions, and smarting distractions into which you [the parishioners] fell on a Ministers relinquishing his work among you: God was pleased to cement all, and settle you in peace and unity, and good tendency to order, by your now deceased Pastor; by whose death you are again liable to the like danger.⁶³

He added that a change in minister left the congregation 'a people without a Pastor, your shepherd is smitten, and you must needs be scattered [...]'. Moreover, he noted the difficulty of finding a replacement of equal quality and emphasised that,

It is not with souls as with calves, that change of pasture should make them fat; [...] the word preached doth not profit, because the hearer keeps not fixed to the preacher: another must study your temper and disposition, lay foundation work for Catechising and principling in Religion, before he proceed to edifying dispensations.⁶⁴

⁶³ Frost's predecessor had died within three months of his appointment: Z. Crofton, *The People's Need of a Living Pastor* (1657), A3: I owe this reference to Elliot Vernon.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 36-7.

It seems, then, that from a practical, as well as a principled, standpoint, frequent changes in minister were undesirable and that the ‘godly ideal’ was probably that a minister should forge a long-term, close commitment to his parishioners, even within the parochial ministry.⁶⁵ The evidence in the Registers, however, suggests that not only was this not the experience of some parishes, but also of some ministers. Thomas Silverwood, for example, who was appointed to Rotherby in 1652, in fact served six parishes in sixteen years, whilst William Vicars, who replaced him at Rotherby, served four parishes in nine years. Richard Meggot in Sussex served four parishes in three years. Such experiences were not unique and they must have posed a real challenge to the godly ideal of an abiding bond between parish and minister.

The most compelling statistic regarding the Triers’ work, nevertheless, is that in every English and Welsh county, at least ninety per cent and often more of those ministers approved by the Triers remained in post for the rest of the Protectorate.⁶⁶ Added to the higher levels of appointments made by the Triers than pre- and post-revolution regimes, this is an important piece of evidence in any assessment the success of the Triers. Furthermore, they did bring clarity and order to the chaos of the clerical appointment ‘system’ that had preceded their establishment. After their establishment, it rapidly became known that there was a single, mandatory system for clerical appointments, which gave legal tenure to

⁶⁵ The Triers John Owen, Philip Nye, Henry Jessey, Thomas Goodwin, Sidrach Simpson, Walter Craddock, Nicholas Lockyer, William Strong, John Rowe, Joseph Caryl and William Greenhill were all sometime pastors of separated churches.

⁶⁶ Or, if they left their parishes, were not replaced.

new incumbents. Although there is evidence that not all those who entered the church *did* face the Triers and that such tenure was sometimes challenged, comments on the Commission do suggest that such avoidance was probably relatively minimal.⁶⁷ Sir John Fitzjames, for example, noted in correspondence with Josias Cooth in 1654,

I find itt still impossible to receive a settled maintenance on any place
with outt an approbacon first pass'd on the incumbent.⁶⁸

Moreover, the pragmatic provision of provincial Triers meant that a functioning system for approving and appointing ministers was reasonably accessible throughout the country.⁶⁹

On the other hand, the Triers did not - and could not - provide a comprehensive solution to the deficit in preaching, because they were seriously hampered by the inadequacy of their legislation. There is considerable evidence that some ministers were able to settle in small, poor or isolated livings without attending either the Commission in Whitehall or regional Triers. This suggests that neither the approval system nor the religious legislation, nor indeed the policing mechanisms of the church, were flexible or reactive enough to accommodate or control some of the *ad hoc* solutions that sometimes existed: the temporary hired

⁶⁷ Section 2.5, 152.

⁶⁸ DNP, MS. 551, f.12r.

⁶⁹ Section 2.2, 86-90.

preaching, the use of personal chaplains as occasional ministers, the short-term, rapid-turnover incumbencies. John Walker, for example, recorded that after 1655, the living of Virginstowe, Devon, experienced such impermanent arrangements:

[...] the tythes were received by Anthony Thomas and Laurence Hall [...] as sequestrators and under them the cure served sometimes by Mr Anthony Asford and one Taylor both episcopall ministers and sometime by divers other preachers of what opinion university or country they [the parishioners] know not, but commonly one John Bond one that kept an alehouse read prayers in the parish church and both the one and other paid and turned out at the pleasures of the aforesaid Hall and Thomas and a great part of the time the parish was kept without any minister at all.⁷⁰

The absence of episcopal and archidiaconal visitations meant that there was no systematic means for checking ministers' status. Instead, the regime's policing relied largely on hearsay and denunciation.⁷¹ So although some 'unofficial' incumbents could, and did, find themselves reported to the authorities if they were disliked by parishioners, others survived undetected. Moreover, the Triers were expected to approve all those who were to draw their maintenance from

⁷⁰ Bodl., MS. J. Walker c.2, 244.

⁷¹ For example, Francis Holbeach told William Sancroft that 'you say very right if my sequestration had not been taken notice of I might have adventured to have gone on: but the malice of some made that knowne soon enough to cut the threat of any such purpose.': Bodl., MS. Tanner 52, f.113.

tithes, but what happened if ministers or curates were hired privately by a local patron or were supported by 'contributions' from parishioners? Technically, they needed no approval, even though such men might serve a living for months or even years. In 1656, the inhabitants of Heapy in Lancashire had petitioned for an augmentation, noting the long unpaid service of Mr Booker at their chapel, which was four miles from Leyland parish church

[...] in which parish there is but £40 belonging to the Minister, soe that the petitioners have at their owne Charge for severall yeares mayntayned him who officiates at the sayd Chappell, and being not able to allow a Competency Mr Booker, a Godly Minister of the Gospell, who hath Contynued with them 2 yeares, is ready to leave them.⁷²

Other livings were served for long periods by salaried curates, often sharing the inadequate income received by the parochial minister. At Oakham, in 1658, the minister was able to collect less than fifty pounds a year in petty tithes, after he had paid for three curates to serve the dependent chapels.⁷³ Still others were entirely dependent on payments from hostile impropiators. The income of these curates may, theoretically, have derived from impropiated tithes but, as the parishioners of Lamport had found, forcing impropiators to maintain such curates could be very difficult and it is debatable whether, in practice, they even

⁷² SP 25/77 f.511.

⁷³ SP 18/181 f.121.

came within the Triers' jurisdiction anyway.⁷⁴ Certainly the very low numbers of curacies in the Registers suggest that such men were not always recognised as publicly maintained and found themselves hovering at the edge of official sanction.⁷⁵

It seems, then, that the legislation governing the Triers' work was inadequate. Designed to deliver a simple process, it was unable to accommodate the myriad ways in which preaching was provided - or denied - in parishes that were unable or unwilling to meet the ideal conditions upon which it was predicated. With this inbuilt weakness, the success of the Triers could only ever be partial.

The Triers, Ejectors and Trustees operated essentially independently of each other but they also relied on each others' input, if their efforts were to result in a godly preaching ministry. There were, moreover, considerable areas of overlap in the work of the Triers and the Trustees. In theory, augmentations could only be assigned to those approved by the Triers, although the evidence suggests that the Trustees might have undertaken some approvals of their own, turning to the Triers only to 'rubber-stamp' their decisions. Moreover the Trustees were responsible for presenting a significant number of the ministers who came before the Triers. In any event, the Triers' approvals were irrelevant if the livings of approved ministers were too impoverished to support them. The Trustees were also heavily reliant on the Ejectors to ascertain when benefices became void; in

⁷⁴ See Section 1.2, 56-7.

⁷⁵ For a useful discussion on this, see Reid, 'Diocese of Canterbury', 186-7.

some cases they were able to re-assign the income as an augmentation elsewhere.⁷⁶ Both Triers *and* Ejectors, however, were mutually responsible for ensuring that the Cromwellian ministry was stocked with suitable godly ministers and a level of coordination must have been necessary to prevent either agency from contradicting each other's decisions. The Triers did occasionally revoke approvals but the process seems to have been difficult and required external authorisation.⁷⁷

So the Triers, Trustees and Ejectors together formed a coordinated response to the crisis in the church in 1653, but they were not entirely self-contained. The supplementary ordinance of September 1654 and the Proclamation of July 1655 placed the responsibility for approvals of formerly sequestered ministers firmly in the hands of Cromwell or the Council of State. Ministers who satisfied them over their conformity were usually then directed back to the Triers for formal approval, if they saw fit.⁷⁸ This was a heavy burden on the Council, who faced numerous appeals from ministers disabled by the legislation and keen to re-enter the church and it must demonstrate how important the regime considered the clergy to be, both for their role in building a godly ministry, but also for their potential in spreading political disaffection.

⁷⁶ Comm. V/4, f.332.

⁷⁷ SP 18/72 f.53.

⁷⁸ SP 25/78 f.569. Collins' incorrect assertion that they heard also appeals against the Triers is based on a single, misunderstood instruction: Collins, 'Church Settlement', 30, n.81.

Even so, the arrangement was a curious one. It may be that the Council felt that they were better able at spotting political delinquency than the Triers, but many of those who appealed to the Council were ministers previously ejected for *religious* delinquency, whom the Triers were surely qualified to assess? Moreover, the Council's 'approval process' frequently involved referring ministers to small groups of men for further examination, most of whom were Triers. It is extremely unlikely that the Council did not trust the Triers, so it must betray a deep-seated insecurity, which drove the regime to micro-manage the rebuilding of the ministry and to ensure that there were several opportunities for checking the conformity of those whom it allowed to preach. The paradox is the existence of this level of caution in a regime which, for much of its existence, knowingly allowed episcopalian practices to continue in parishes across the country.⁷⁹

The Triers seem to have had little formal contact with Cromwell in their work; this was certainly the case according to Nye.⁸⁰ Shaw suggested that the Protector did secretly interfere with their decisions, citing Anthony Sadler, but his interpretation of Sadler's comments is unconvincing.⁸¹ On the other hand, Cromwell had direct and constant informal access to their activities through his

⁷⁹ Merritt, *Westminster*, 245-252. Evidence of the continuation of episcopalian worship occurs sporadically throughout John Evelyn's diary. Although frequenting a variety of godly parish services, Evelyn also sought out opportunities for episcopalian worship - sometimes this was clearly private, but on other occasions it was semi-public: de Beer, *Diary*, 296, 325, 349 *et passim*.

⁸⁰ Probably Philip Nye: *Letter of Adresse*, 17.

⁸¹ Shaw, vol.2, 285, n.2; Sadler, *Inquisitio Anglicana*, 17.

official and unofficial chaplains, many of whom, including John Owen, Peter Sterry and Hugh Peter, were also Triers. It is possible, even likely, that he would have discussed individual ministers with these men, if they were of concern or interest. Moreover, like the Council, he was deeply involved in formally approving or rejecting appeals from previously ejected ministers and, as the events at Brickhill showed, he was prepared to step in personally to settle disputed livings.⁸² Despite this level of engagement, however, it seems that, officially at least, he wished to distance himself from the formal approval process, and to let it be seen that the Triers had an important role in their own right.

Jeffrey Collins has argued that Cromwell and the Council of State formed a ‘virtual third arm of the settlement’ but this is somewhat misleading terminology. In the first place, it presents the Triers and Ejectors as the key agencies of the ‘settlement’, without recognising the equally important role of the Trustees. Secondly, it conflates two different elements in the regime’s control of the church.⁸³ The Triers, Trustees and Ejectors were established purely for the purpose of managing aspects of the ministry; the Protectorship and the Council of State were not. They did play a critical role in the approval process, but this was by no means their sole function, and the Triers, Trustees and Ejectors were subordinate to them.

⁸² Section 3.3, 286-7; SP 25/76 f.422. See also his intervention at Tewkesbury: SP 25/78 f.858.

⁸³ Collins, ‘Church Settlement’, 30.

The Triers, Trustees and Ejectors also worked collaboratively with the Major-Generals and their Commissioners for Securing the Peace of the Nation. They too were not part of the 'religious programme' established by the regime, but they assisted in policing some of its objectives, specifically the prohibitions against ejected clergy in the 1655 Proclamation. As with all legislation, however, the prohibitions were only as good as their enforcement, and in this the Major-Generals - for the period of their existence - fulfilled a key role, especially in light of the poor performances of most of the Ejectors' Commissions. Even these arrangements were subject to an ambiguity in the legislation, however, since the requirement that ejected ministers be approved by the Triers before being re-admitted to the church directly contravened the supplementary ordinance of September 1654 which required all ejected ministers to be approved by the Protector or Council. In the event, it seems to have been understood that ejected ministers should be approved by the Council, after which they should proceed to the Triers for further examination and, if successful, for receipt of their Instruments of Approval.

The role of the Council of State and the Protector ensured that the decisions over suspect clergy re-entering the church were taken only at the highest level. The Triers thus depended on the active input of the Major-Generals, the Council and the Protector to carry out their work within the terms of the legislation, but this also meant that they only exercised their independent authority over ministers who were already likely to be acceptable, or those whose delinquency had actually been discovered. Moreover, their role in granting approvals was

essentially reactive, which argues further that their powers were not as extensive or dominant as has been believed.

Given the limitations on their activities, and the derivative nature of most of their practices (which was not in itself necessarily a weakness), the Triers should be seen not, as has tended to be the case, as a final settlement of the ecclesiastical confusion of the previous decade, but rather as one more in a series of experiments in ‘managing’ the clergy undertaken during the revolution. Moreover, in contrast to the more proactive efforts of the Committee for Plundered Ministers in the 1640s to re-settle ministers in vacant livings, the Cromwellian experiment was essentially a more reactive initiative, concerned with regulating the procedures and personnel of the national church through Triers and Trustees. Some aspects of their work were moderately successful, but they were ultimately unable to address the deep-seated failures and structural problems which persisted throughout the period and into the Restoration.

The End of the System

During the breakdown in government in 1659-60, the Triers’ Commission and its two short-lived replacements collapsed.⁸⁴ One result of this was that, at the Restoration, approximately three thousand ministers in England and Wales found themselves in livings for which their legal rights now originated in a widely

⁸⁴ Section 2.2, 103.

discredited and, many believed, illegal system.⁸⁵ The undercurrent of anxiety over the validity of Commonwealth titles, which had haunted the clergy of the 1650s, proved to be prescient.⁸⁶ Almost immediately, some parishes sought to remove Cromwellian ministers from their livings and former incumbents returned to reclaim their pulpits. Five days before Charles II landed in Dover on 25th May 1660, Lewis James returned to Bedwellty in Monmouthshire to take back his former curacy, 'Edmund Rosser having given oer the place ye Sunday before ye 13th Maij 1660'.⁸⁷ In Devon, the troubled minister of Tavistock, Thomas Larkham, recorded in his diary that, on 21st October 1660, 'I left mine imployment of preaching in feare & upon demand of the Patron'.⁸⁸ At Newton Ferrers in early 1661, John Hill was articulated against by his parishioners, who accused him, amongst other things, of praying for Oliver Cromwell and being 'an affectour of the Anabaptist partie'.⁸⁹

In the scramble to secure a future within the new church or to make the move into nonconformity, many ministers were forced to reconsider their histories. For some, this led to a reassessment of their compliance with the Cromwellian

⁸⁵ 'But the Oliverian title, notwithstanding the Act for Confirmation, is neither approved by others, nor myselfe': LRO, DDKE HMC 225, f.1

⁸⁶ Section 3.2, 245, 276.

⁸⁷ Knight, *Monmouthshire*, 153.

⁸⁸ Hardman Moore, *Larkham*, 25. It is also likely that the complaint heard by the House of Lords on 30 May 1660 from the minister of Chipping Norton, Stephen Ford, of his assault by men who 'fell violently upon him, pulled him by the Neck and Throat, and by the Hair of the Head, and wounded him, and pulled him out of the Church, calling him "Rogue and Rascal"', referred to a very recent incident: *LJ*, vol.11, 49.

⁸⁹ These articles were part of a long-running struggle which began in July 1660: SP 29/30 f. 104-5; SP 29/8 f.111.

regime, and the strength of their principles. Thomas Danson, for example, told Anthony Wood that his ejection from Sandwich in 1660 had been the result of his patronage by Cromwell, despite his taking up ‘a vacancy by the death of the former incumbent’:⁹⁰

[...] he [Danson] was presented to the church by Oliver the protector an illegal patron, which Mr Danson could not help, for he having usurped the power of chief magistrate, he presented to that place having no patron [...]⁹¹

In fact, Danson’s claim is slightly at odds with the evidence of the Registers, which record that he was presented not by Cromwell, but by the mayor and jurats of the town to be one of the three town preachers ‘in the place of’ Nathaniel Mather, who had moved to Devon.⁹² Danson’s misrepresentation of the circumstances is intriguing: he can hardly have been unaware that Mather had moved rather than died, having been approved for Sandwich only five weeks after Mather’s own approval for Harberton in Devon.⁹³ Moreover he seems to have claimed that he had been appointed to one of the churches in Sandwich, rather than a town preaching position. Was this an attempt to re-interpret his position during the Interregnum as one of being in the safer post of a *parish*,

⁹⁰ Wood, *Athenae*, vol.4, 591-2.

⁹¹ Danson also claimed that the dead (‘or at least silenced’) patron of the living was the ‘dean’ of Canterbury, after which ‘there was no other [...] till the return of king Charles II’: *ibid.*, 591-2.

⁹² Comm. III/5, f.43, and see Section 2.5, 158.

⁹³ Comm. III/4, f.563.

which he strengthened by presenting himself as a victim of the times, rather than a willing participant?⁹⁴

Danson's assertion that Cromwell's patronage had been 'illegal' had both emotional and legal resonances, in light of the repudiation of Interregnum legislation in 1660.⁹⁵ To offset this problem some ministers, such as Anthony Try at Passenham, chose to be re-instituted to secure their titles.⁹⁶ Many others agonised over whether to leave or conform to the new church and some subsequently overturned their initial decisions in the months or years after making them. Danson, who was undeniably part of the 'Cromwellian' clergy but not remarkable in any particular respect, provides a good example. Growing up in revolutionary London and graduating from Magdalene, Oxford in the early 1650s, he briefly preached in Berwick in 1654, before moving to Sandwich in 1656, where he also became an assistant minister to the Kent Ejectors.⁹⁷ In 1661, however, he left the town, possibly ejected, but he attempted to remain within the church, moving to Sibton in Suffolk. In 1662, however, he finally decided that he

⁹⁴ Matthews notes Danson as vicar of St Mary's, Sandwich from 1656, but his source for this is unclear: *CR*, 156-7. There is a considerable literature on memories of the revolution, including McCall, *Baal's Priests*; M. Neufeld, *The Civil Wars after 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013); A. Laurence, "'This Sad and Deplorable Condition': An Attempt Towards Recovering an Account of the Sufferings of Northern Clergy Families in the 1640s and 1650s" in D. Wood (ed.), *Life and Thought in the Northern Church c. 1000-c. 1700* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999).

⁹⁵ The invalidity of Interregnum legislation was alluded to rather than stated by the Convention parliament, best indicated in 'An Act for Confirmation of Judicial Proceedings' (12^o Car II, c12) in *Statutes of the Realm* (London: Dawsons, 1819), vol.5, 234-6.

⁹⁶ See Section 3.3, 323.

⁹⁷ *CR*, 156-7.

could not comply with the Act of Uniformity and thereafter remained outside the church, ministering as a nonconformist.⁹⁸

Charting the experiences of ‘Cromwellian clergy’ such as Danson during the restoration of the Anglican church is beyond the scope of this thesis, but their actions during the 1650s must have informed their choices in 1662 and beyond. The detail in the Registers, therefore, adds previously inaccessible information to the current understanding of the Restoration settlement. Approximately three thousand ministers had tacitly sanctioned the Cromwellian church by accepting a Triers’ approval between 1653-1660; perhaps as many as six hundred (20%) of these men had entered the church before 1653, but chosen to continue their ministry within it.⁹⁹ How many of this cohort chose to remain after the Restoration? Did some areas of the country have higher levels of conformity than others and, if so, why? And how did these relate to the earlier analyses of the Triers’ activities during the Protectorate?

A brief sampling exercise for this thesis suggests that the rates of conformity amongst the clergy approved by the Triers varied considerably. In County Durham, for example, approximately fifty per cent chose to leave the church in 1660-62. Of the twenty-six approved ministers, nine left in 1660-61 - two of whom conformed later - and four more probably left in 1662, of whom one

⁹⁸ W. Lamont, ‘T. Danson’ in *ODNB*; *CCEd.*, PersonID 124109, 99291.

⁹⁹ See Section 2.5, 140.

conformed later.¹⁰⁰ In Cornwall, sixteen of the total fifty-one approved clergy refused to conform, seven left in 1660-1 - one of whom conformed later - and nine probably left in 1662; only one of these conformed later. In Huntingdonshire, however, the rates were very different. Out of forty approved ministers, only six left the church in 1660-2, of which one left in 1660, and five probably left in 1662. Only one of these, Richard Kidder, subsequently conformed, going on to become Bishop of Bath and Wells.

These comparative figures are illustrated in *figure 43*, with a breakdown of whether the approved ministers had taken up their first benefices under the Protectorate, or had already begun their ministries under a different political regime. It should be noted, of course, that the taking up of a first benefice usually came some years after the first step towards entering the church, which was generally made at the beginning of a university career.

[*cont.*]

¹⁰⁰ All the figures used in this analysis are subject to the usual cautions over identification of individuals and dates. Where the date of ejection is uncertain, they have been included in '1662'.

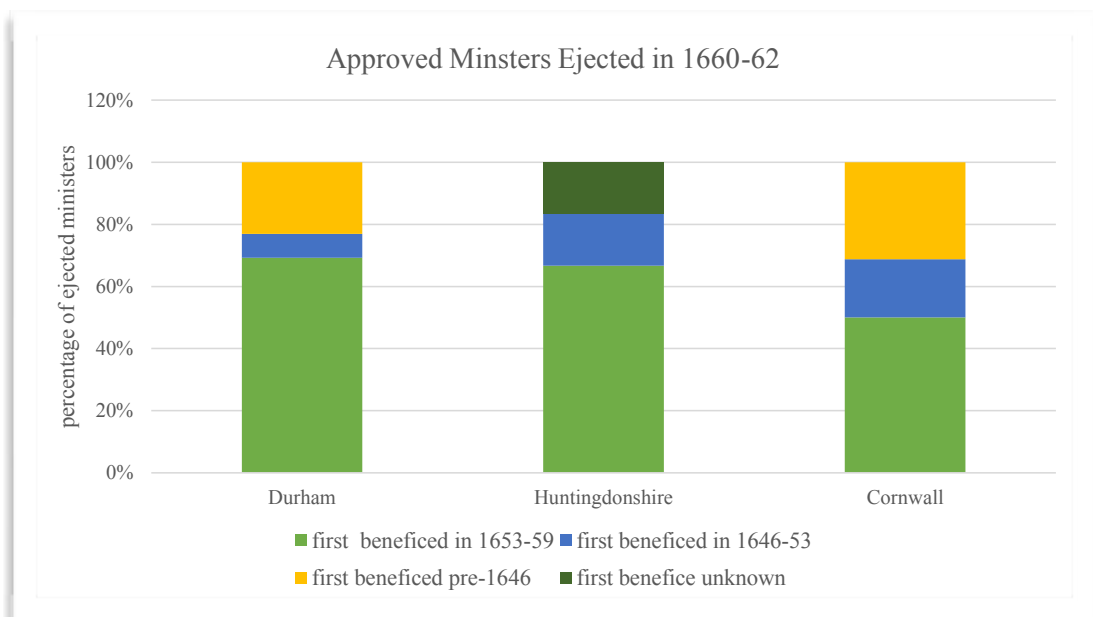


fig. 43 *Approved ministers who were ejected in 1660-62, with their dates of first known benefice¹⁰¹*

Are these variations between counties entirely random or the result of previously unrecognised factors? During the 1650s, Huntingdonshire, for example, experienced greater clerical disruption than either Durham or Cornwall, although both it and Durham had similar percentages of livings which appeared in the Registers multiple times. Durham and Cornwall, on the other hand, were within the ‘broadly royalist’ areas during the early 1640s.¹⁰² There may well have been some link between these factors and the lower numbers of ejections in 1660-2 in Huntingdonshire, but this would require further research to substantiate.

¹⁰¹ This chart is intended to provide an example of how the data in the Registers can be interrogated to improve the understanding of the restoration process. Dates of benefices were taken primarily from *CR*, *WR*, *Venn*, *Foster* and the Registers. ‘1653-59’ includes ministers both ‘definitely’ and ‘probably’ first beneficed in this period. These sample counties were chosen simply as being geographically distant.

¹⁰² See *figure 13*.

Comparing the information in the Registers with the most comprehensive list of Restoration ejections (*Calamy Revised*), it is now possible to say that just under three quarters of the approved clergy chose to stay in the church at the Restoration. Drawing on the tentative attempt to quantify the total number of English and Welsh benefices in Section 1.2, this suggests that perhaps a quarter of the parishes in England and Wales in the 1660s and beyond would have been served by former ‘Cromwellian’ clergy.¹⁰³ Less than ten per cent of those approved ministers who left at the Restoration subsequently re-joined the church. This means that roughly 2500 clergy took their experiences of being appointed to, and serving in, a church largely regulated by laymen into the restored episcopalian church.

The immediate question that is crystallised in this figure is whether it is justifiable to talk about a ‘Cromwellian clergy’ at all? This thesis has brought to light something of the range of loyalties and backgrounds deemed acceptable in ministers approved by the Triers. For many of these men, the Cromwellian church was their first and only experience of active clerical life. Others had entered their first livings during the civil war or republic, and a further percentage had first embarked on their ministries under the pre-war episcopalian regime. The only unifying factor between such men might be seen as their willingness to work within the Cromwellian vision of the church, overseen by laymen, eschewing set prayers and worship, requiring individual and extempore

¹⁰³ This assumes c.10,000 livings (not including cathedral offices), and the unlikely scenario that all the available benefices were filled; without further research, it is impossible to estimate the post-1662 levels of vacancy.

preaching and a minimum subscription to the 'faith in God by Jesus Christ', rather than the Thirty Nine Articles.

Did the espousal of this kind of churchmanship fall away at the Restoration, leaving this cohort of men to fracture into multiple smaller groups? Or did the majority carry many of the principles they had accepted in the 1650s with them into the new church? Would it have been possible to recognise the 'Cromwellian clergy' in the Restoration church of 1665 or 1670? Most intriguing of all, perhaps, is how many of these men grasped at the chance to legitimate their once - perhaps still - ambivalent views towards episcopacy by taking out nonconformist licences in 1672? The information in the Registers now makes it possible to follow up some of these questions, in the expectation that they have much to add to the current understanding of the Restoration church.

4.2 Reassessing the Cromwellian Church

This thesis set out to investigate the activities of the Triers. It was predicated on the idea that their Registers provided an extensive and robust contemporary source on one aspect of the Cromwellian church, rich in detail on clerical networks and offering a complete chronology of their work. Moreover, the Registers were largely unexplored, partly owing to the sheer scale of the archive. The investigation started also with the principle, widely assumed in the historiography of the 1650s, that the Triers - and their sister Commission, the Ejectors - were the main features of the Cromwellian 'church settlement'. This idea is so prevalent that it clouded the initial stages of the analysis of the Registers. Gradually, however, it became clear that the Triers were less important and less influential than current interpretations suggest. Moreover, the real value of their Registers was revealed to exist not just in the details they contain about individuals but, equally, in the broad horizons they reveal of the still barely understood 'national church' in the 1650s. Thus it became essential not only to rethink the existing interpretations of the Cromwellian 'settlement' but also to undertake an exploration of the Cromwellian church itself.

So, this thesis has become an investigation of the administration of the church in the mid- to late 1650s, seen through the lens of the activities of the Triers, but not confined purely to the *minutiae* of their activities. Limitations of practicality, however, have meant that it has not been possible to do more than an initial investigation of both the Trustees and the Ejectors. These investigations have

been sufficiently detailed to demand a reconceptualisation of the Cromwellian religious programme, but they are by no means complete analyses of their operations.

The core of the research presented here has been a detailed and thorough investigation of the Registers themselves. Dense, administrative archives such as these do not reveal their riches lightly, and, without care, they can offer a dangerously misleading vision of reliability and comprehensiveness. Moreover, historians do not always recognise or ask the harder questions of such archives and this study has deliberately sought to avoid that failing. It has interrogated their format and contents meticulously to demonstrate their many strengths but also to reveal their limitations. In part, this has been a necessary exercise in order to transfer their contents into the database, a process which has required absolute rigour in the interpretation and understanding of their information. Thus the Registers themselves have become as much a 'character' within the thesis as Cromwell, or the Triers, or the Trustees.

Finally, the evolution of the focus of this thesis means that its findings are multi-layered. The conclusions arising from the investigations into the Triers themselves have been discussed in the previous section. This final conclusion moves beyond those investigations to discuss the new light which has been shed on the Cromwellian religious programme and, more generally, on the church in the 1650s.

The Registers have been critical in revealing the Triers' roles in the Cromwellian religious programme, and thus it is valuable to draw together the lessons learnt from these records as an archive. In the first place, they form a rich and detailed source on the personnel and construction of the Cromwellian ministry. Their sheer scale means that conclusions drawn from them can be considered statistically valid, and their national coverage means that the pitfalls of geographical selectivity can be avoided. Moreover, set within the wider archive of the Commonwealth papers at Lambeth Palace Library, they form an integral part of a complex and extensive record of ecclesiastical administration during a period for which other comparable sources are very poor.

It is clear, nevertheless, that the Registers do not record all those ministers who took up positions in the church in the Protectorate. Whether this is because those 'missing' ministers did not actually come before the Triers in Whitehall or because the clerks did not record all those who did, is uncertain. Whatever the reason, there was an unquantifiable number of men who took up positions within the Cromwellian ministry who do not appear in the Registers.

Furthermore, despite their apparently straightforward contents, the Registers will never reveal an exact total for the number of men approved by the Triers or of those who acted as referees. Distinguishing between men of the same name and identifying with certainty many of those included will remain impossible and therefore simple counts taken from the Registers can only ever be indicative of approximate numbers and should be treated with extreme care. Moreover, whilst

the Registers can reveal who was *approved*, it cannot be assumed that every approval inevitably resulted in an appointment. Some were revoked, some not taken up and some, of course, were for augmentations. Nor - in the absence of information on Triers' rejections - can the number of approvals reveal anything other than a minimum figure for how many ministers the Triers actually interviewed.

The Registers also provide an unparalleled archive of connections and networks amongst the seventeenth-century clergy, but these networks do not necessarily indicate men who knew each other well and shared the same values. The Registers *may* reveal such shared sympathies and previously hidden relationships but political expediency also resulted in unlikely groups of men providing testimonials, for reasons now invisible to scholars. The Registers cannot, of themselves, distinguish between the sympathetic and the expedient.

Thus the impenetrability of the Registers and the ambiguities of their contents have deterred scholars for over three hundred years. Instead, the Cromwellian church has been reduced down to the 'popular' concept of the 'Triers and Ejectors'. This simple gloss on a much more complex subject has very long antecedents. Indeed, they were singled out for joint condemnation even by contemporaries when they sought to attack the regime, almost certainly because the two Commissions were the most prominent exponents of two of the most reviled features of the Protectorate: the exercise of secular power over the church, and the willingness to appoint unordained ministers. Moreover, they

could make or break men's careers without apparent redress and, worse, they seemed to represent only a small sector of the society over which they had such leverage. The Ejectors, in particular, typified the unpopular eclipse of the county elite from their traditional positions of local power. It was a toxic cocktail of reasons for focusing on just two aspects of the regime's religious policies and the results have reverberated down the succeeding years, leading to a misrepresentation of the Cromwellian religious programme.

In fact, the Triers were neither as powerful nor as important as has been believed, and the impact of the Ejectors was even less significant than hitherto portrayed, although they undertook a wider range of duties than has been recognised. Indeed, the Triers and Ejectors were arguably no more nor less influential in the creation of the Cromwellian ministry than the Trustees, who also presented, financed and rejected and perhaps even effectively approved ministers, both with *and* sometimes without the backing of the Triers.

It is interesting to speculate *why* the Trustees did not come in for similar levels of criticism and vitriol, because nowhere in the literature of complaint were they attacked or even mentioned. There might have been several reasons for this. In the first place, they may not have been viewed as 'creations' of the regime in the way that the Triers and Ejectors were. Yet fewer than half the original 1649 Trustees were reappointed to the reformulated Trustees of 1654, and their original powers were revised in several important areas. Perhaps also, the Trustees were the 'faceless men' of ecclesiastical administration, bureaucrats not

divines, and mostly of only moderate standing and influence. They may have been regarded primarily as financial managers, playing no part in the judgement of godliness or Grace in those who came before them. Most importantly, perhaps, they also controlled access to funding; these were not men to upset. All these reasons seem to have resulted in the neglect of their powers to settle or reject ministers who sought their support. Perhaps very few people realised how active they were as patrons and how much judgement over men they exercised in settling ministers by allocating augmentations.

Thus the Cromwellian ‘settlement’ has usually been reduced to the Triers and Ejectors. More thoughtful studies *have* also recognised the regime’s efforts to augment clerical incomes and reorganise parochial boundaries, to provide a more equitable distribution of preaching provision, but these have rarely been investigated.¹ When Jeffrey Collins sought to analyse the ‘Cromwellian church settlement’ in 2002, he added the retention of tithes and the guarantee of liberty of conscience, to the establishment of the Triers and Ejectors as its defining features.² In fact, neither view is quite correct and the term ‘settlement’ itself has misleading overtones. The Triers, Ejectors and reformulated Trustees were all established by ordinance before the First Protectorate Parliament. It was not in

¹ Exceptions are Hughes and O’Day, ‘Augmentation’. Lancashire augmentations primarily under the republic but some also after 1654 have been considered in A. Craven, ‘Ministers of State: The Established Church in Lancashire during the English Revolution, 1642-1660’ in *NH* (2008), vol. 45, 51-69. See also, Smith, *Essex*, 200-14; E. Fry, ‘The Augmentation Books in Lambeth Palace Library’ in H. Symonds, *Proceedings of the Dorset [...] Field Club*, (Dorchester: 1915), vol.36, 48-55, 85-105.

² Collins, ‘Church Settlement’.

doubt that all three ordinances would later be considered by MPs and, if necessary, altered. In the event, revisions discussed by the First Protectorate Parliament were only prevented from being agreed and implemented by its early dissolution. In the Second Protectorate Parliament, doubts about the Triers' and Ejectors' ordinances were evident when they were only renewed for another three years. Furthermore, the regime's commitment to liberty of conscience was deeply unpopular with many MPs, who in 1654-5 sought to modify it by granting themselves the power to decide on what constituted blasphemy and heresy, and preventing Cromwell from having the power to veto their decision.³ The matter of tithes was equally contentious. Here the regime and parliament agreed on the need to improve funding for the ministry, but Cromwell's commitment to keep tithes *only* until a better alternative could be found - a stance crucial for keeping Army support - alienated the conservative majority, who saw them as an essential part of the institution of the church. This meant that clerical maintenance remained a running sore between the Protectoral regime and parliament.

The term 'settlement' is therefore unhelpful. Cromwell and some of his associates may have felt some aspects of ecclesiastical management to have been settled but this was not a common sentiment. Moreover, assessments of the components of the 'settlement' have failed to recognise the scale and importance of the transfer of patronage to the Protector, and yet this devolution of so much ecclesiastical control out of the hands of parliamentary committees and into those of the head of state was radically different to that which had gone before, and

³ *CJ*, vol.7, 401.

formed a key part of the regime's ecclesiastical policy. And the role of the Trustees was at least as important as those of the Triers and Ejectors. It is thus more accurate and more helpful to re-conceptualise the Cromwellian regime's 'settlement' as an ongoing 'religious programme', which involved setting up three 'agencies' to establish, control and fund a preaching ministry, re-allocating swathes of ecclesiastical patronage, upholding freedom of worship to the godly, and tithes as a temporary form of maintenance

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The re-conceptualisation of the Cromwellian religious programme is only one of a series of new insights into the church of the 1650s that have resulted from this study of the Triers. It also offers a fresh perspective on the church of the republic from which the Protectorate church emerged, exposing the virtual collapse in ecclesiastical administration under, and after, the Rump Parliament. Accounts of the republic usually focus on its politics, and assessments of the Rump's ecclesiastical policies have generally been restricted to recognising the efforts made to survey and improve clerical incomes, and to propagate the Gospel in the 'dark corners of the land'. Nowhere has the impact on the church of the breakdown in parliamentary government been seriously addressed.

This thesis argues that evidence of the acute nature of this collapse is present in the *Humble Proposals*, but has been overlooked in favour of their intellectual novelty in promoting freedom of worship. Furthermore, it suggests that the

catalyst for the production of the *Humble Proposals* was as much the decay in the national church as the ideological attempt to provide a framework for incorporating liberty of conscience into a future ecclesiastical settlement. It also argues that there was a clear connection between the emergence of the independents as the dominant political force after 1649 and the rapid decay in the institutions of the national church. In-fighting amongst the independents over the degree of control that the state should exercise over the church, coupled with the Rump's inability to take robust decisions on religious policy, prevented the formulation of new mechanisms to halt this decay.

This study has also begun to set the Westminster Assembly's considerable achievements in examining ministers into a wider context by refining the initial findings published in the recently published *Minutes*. The percentage of approvals made by the Assembly has been tentatively calculated and compared to the appointments and approvals by the episcopalian regimes of the 1620s, 1630s, 1670s and 1680s, *and* those of the Triers. It has demonstrated that, despite the significant and largely unrecognised number of interviews they undertook, the Assembly was, numerically at least, far less successful in re-stocking the ministry than the episcopalian regimes and even less successful than the Triers. Besides reconceptualising the Cromwellian religious programme, therefore, this thesis also sheds new light on the national church of the republic and the Westminster Assembly.

Equally, the research into the Triers has begun to fill in many of the gaps in the poorly-understood nature of the Cromwellian church itself. Twenty five years ago, Anthony Fletcher suggested that,

Cromwell's personal interest in the local ministry [...] deserves fuller investigation so that we can assess the extent of his involvement in establishing his kind of evangelising ministry at the grass roots.⁴

An initial, brief exploration of the Protector's patronage has demonstrated that Oliver Cromwell was heavily and personally involved in the choice and sponsorship of parochial ministers, such that he may have spent a considerable amount of his own time participating in this work. It has also argued that during the short Protectorate of Richard Cromwell, the character of the national church may have begun to change quite rapidly.

Cromwell's patronage was only one aspect of the substantial and significant transfer of patronage from the crown and church not only to the Protector but also to their committees, and to parishioners and urban corporations. This was one of the many ways in which the Cromwellian church was radically different to the episcopalian church, which included allowing unordained men to become ministers and sometimes refusing universal baptism or admission to the Lord's Supper. Perhaps the most fundamental difference, however, was its relentless laicisation and centralisation of ecclesiastical management. The Cromwellians

⁴ Fletcher, 'Godly Nation', 223; Colin Davis made a similar plea in the same volume, 197.

recognised that they could not rely on universal support for their religious programme; centralising its operations enabled them to be closely involved in the implementation of its policies, through which they probably hoped to ensure better compliance. It also, theoretically at least, facilitated more efficient and seamless interactions between the agencies dealing with the appointment of clergy. Equally, the pragmatism that appears throughout the Triers' work allowed the regime to accept that central control and financing could, and must, be augmented by local initiatives.

Despite its practical advantages, the laicisation of ecclesiastical management seems at odds with the intense religiosity of the regime. It may well have resulted, however, from the recognition that passing over ecclesiastical control to members of the church, whoever they may have been, would lead to deep divisions within the godly, of the same type as those triggered by the publication of the *Humble Proposals* in 1652. The Triers' Commission included not just presbyterians, independents and baptists, but also - at least nominally - laymen. Moreover, ministers had only an advisory role to the lay Ejectors' Commissions, and the Trustees were all laymen, as were the Council of State and Cromwell himself, all of whom were closely involved in ecclesiastical administration. The predominance of the laity in the management in the Cromwellian ministry argues for a determined attempt to avoid giving absolute authority to one religious group over another. Ironically, it was the imposition of lay influence over the church that divided the regime from many of the godly.

The church under Oliver Cromwell was, in fact, full of glorious paradoxes and intractable problems. In the first place, Cromwell's vision was that of a broad godly unity which overcame minor differences in ecclesiology - but the godly were frustratingly unable to agree just what constituted a 'minor difference'. This tension defeated efforts to construct a central doctrine and it ensured that the Triers would rarely be able to make decisions that did not elicit complaint from someone.

The same tension also revealed a more fundamental paradox that haunted the Cromwellians *and* their opponents throughout the Protectorate: how could the existence of a comprehensive national church, as promoted through the publicly-maintained ministry, be reconciled with the promise of liberty of conscience, even if that liberty was only ever intended for 'the saints'?⁵ In the *Humble Proposals*, Owen had tentatively grappled with this problem by recommending that separated churches and their pastors should at least be registered. This suggestion was never followed through, but the idea was still circulating in 1659, when Richard Baxter urged Richard Cromwell to establish a system for issuing 'instruments of toleration' for 'the Tolerated' similar to those for the clergy approved by the Triers.⁶ The Cromwellian religious programme as it stood, however, was neither designed nor able to solve this tension. The Triers' authority covered only the tithe-maintained ministry, but excluded those who might, in fact, be the most problematic in society more generally - the sects, the

⁵ Worden, *God's Instruments*, 73.

⁶ R. Baxter, *A Key for Catholicks* (1659), (Epistle Dedicatory, b2).

separated churches or simply the many temporary or itinerant ministers who served in the parishes but were not publicly maintained.

A further paradox originated in the stripping away of the former structures and hierarchy of the episcopalian church during the 1640s and early 1650s, which had led to the near collapse of the institution itself. Once the doctrine, liturgy, ceremonies and structures of the national church had gone, it is arguable that the church itself had ceased to exist. As Spurr has noted,

since the abolition of the Church of England and the failure to impose a Presbyterian church, there was no national church but simply the parishes, their clergy and their congregations.⁷

The Cromwellians responded by attempting to create a godly church simply through the appointment of godly ministers. They found, however, that this necessitated the construction of a series of robust administrative structures. The Triers were one of those structures, essential to the fulfilment of the Cromwellian experiment. Yet in this, they began to resemble the ecclesiastical hierarchy that the godly had finally abolished. The nature of their examinations into ministers' experiences of salvation implied that they held a spiritual authority similar to, if not the same as, that of the bishops; thus their work seemed to transcend the administrative role they had been allotted. And yet theirs *was* intended to be a purely administrative job. They were clearly never intended to be more than a

⁷ Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, 133.

bureaucratic institution, a point evidenced not least by their founding ordinance which stated ‘approbation [...] is not intended [...] to be any Solemn or Sacred setting apart of a person to any particular office in the ministry’ [sic].⁸ The Triers specifically did not wield a spiritual authority and yet to do their job, they had to pronounce on the spiritual depths of a man’s soul.

Cromwell and some of his closest advisors were heavily influenced by a strong belief in providentialism, which led them to eschew ‘set forms’ in religion and to mistrust human agencies. The paradox was that they were forced to construct an administrative framework for managing the church and to rely on the human agency of the Triers, the small body of men in whose hands the rebuilding of the ministry was concentrated. The unfortunate result was that the Triers, in particular, were derided by some for being a secular body which sought to pronounce judgement on the clergy, but by others for wielding a spiritual authority to which they were not entitled. It was an insoluble problem not only for them, but for Cromwell himself, who faced frequent accusations of personal hypocrisy.

There were other paradoxes too. One such was that in seeking to build a new national church, the Cromwellians drew heavily on many of the procedures of the old church. The principle and practice of ecclesiastical patronage remained virtually unaltered, even if the personnel were different; maintenance by tithe was retained, if grudgingly and temporarily; and the process of approving and

⁸ ‘Ordinance for Approbation’ in *A&O*, vol.2, 858.

appointing ministers under the Triers was similar in principle, at least, to that of the bishops, both in some of the tests imposed on ministers, and in the reliance on local nominations for presentation by formal patrons. The Cromwellian church also incorporated many of the ecclesiastical initiatives from the 1640s, not least because it allowed presbyterian practices to continue unmodified. Thus the Cromwellians sought both to break with the past and yet to continue with many of its conventions. In actual fact, the continuities with the pre-war church that they accepted gave strength and credibility to the fledgling church they sought to construct. Moreover, they imply that the Cromwellian church should not be regarded simply as an aberration in the development of the protestant church of the seventeenth-century, without reference to that which preceded it, or relevance to that which came after.

So how successful was the Cromwellian attempt to create a godly national church? It is fair to say that the regime was faced with some insoluble problems. Some of the issues that divided the godly, far from being *adiaphora* - or 'things indifferent' - were fundamentally important to the character of the church and fundamentally irreconcilable. Indeed, it was naive of the regime to believe that their vision of a unified godly church could overcome the competing and irreconcilable demands held by the various religious groups that flourished during the Protectorate. Equally, the more conservative views held by many MPs, who wished to impose a stricter vision of a national church on the country, were also naive. It should have been clear that it would not be possible to stamp out the demands for religious plurality, which the regime had promised to allow in

the Instrument of Government, and which had been enthusiastically exercised over the last fifteen years. The proof of this, although invisible to MPs in the 1650s, was in the failure of the Restoration churches to re-establish the kind of national church that had existed before the revolution. Indeed, attempts to solve the matter through either comprehension or toleration were evidence of exactly the same kind of questioning by opposing religious groups that had faced the regime during the 1650s. Both Cromwell and parliament had, in fact, been struggling to solve a problem in the six years of the Protectorate that the whole weight of the authority of the restored monarchy would fail to solve in the thirty years between 1660 and 1689.

Even so, the Cromwellian church did have some successes. In the first place, it was a more tolerant and flexible institution than its episcopalian precursor or successor. The refusal to impose mandatory subscription to narrow doctrinal statements, and the championship of 'godliness in the individual' over 'set forms', allowed for an unusual latitude in the creation and provision of the pastoral ministry. Indeed it seems likely that the years of the Protectorate began to redefine what it meant to be a parochial minister, a process which would continue into the 1660s and beyond. Furthermore, the remarkably few credible complaints over the Triers' practices could almost certainly have been countered by an equal or greater number of supportive testimonies from those for whom the process had been a positive meeting of minds.

Secondly, the Triers did maintain an effective process for admitting competent ministers, which appears to have increased levels of clerical appointment compared to those of their predecessors, and brought stability at least to the fragmenting national ministry. The Trustees continued to facilitate the Triers' work by rationalising and administering the grant of augmentations where possible, albeit severely hobbled by problems of demand and supply. Furthermore, they did begin to reform the parochial landscape to address some of the worst anomalies, in the face of very considerable vested interests in maintaining the *status quo*.

So did the church for which the Triers interviewed so many ministers still qualify as a 'national church'? It had no formal, central doctrine, no unifying liturgy and no uniform structure of ecclesiastical discipline. Attendance at its services was not mandatory and it accepted the existence of other forms of worship. Even at the time, opinion was sharply divided. Cromwell himself praised the achievements of the religious programme and celebrated the creation of 'a godly Ministry [...] one as, without vanity be it spoken, the world has not'.⁹ Cromwell's critics, however, thought otherwise: the episcopalian Herbert Thorndike dismissed it as 'not a Church, but a conventicle of schismatics'.¹⁰

In fact, the debate over whether the Cromwellians maintained a 'national church' or not is perhaps unhelpful. Definitions of a 'national church' are imprecise and

⁹ Abbott, *Writings*, vol.4(2), 707.

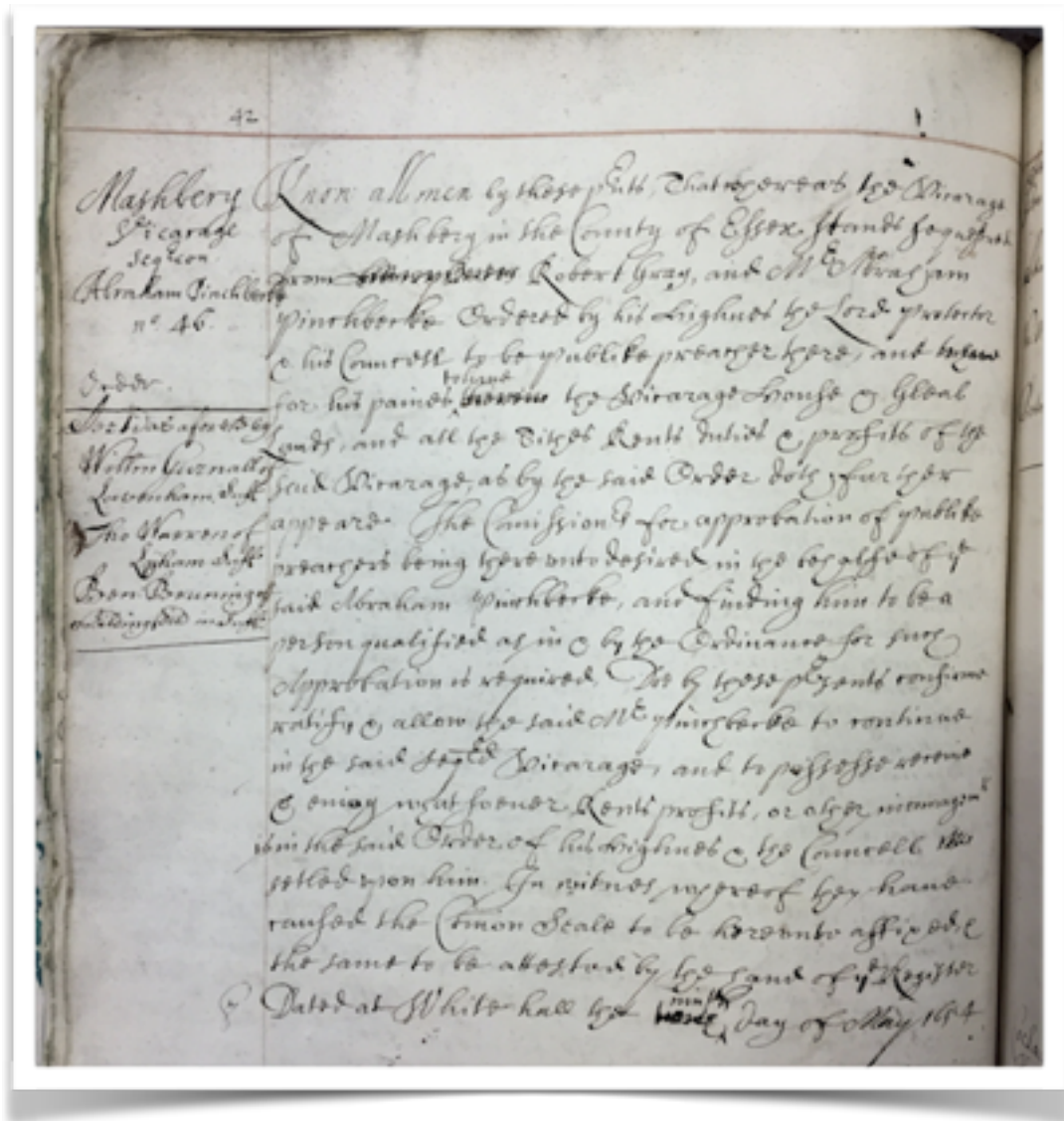
¹⁰ Quoted in Bosher, *Restoration Settlement*, 35.

contested. This research has furthered the debate on the ecclesiastical achievements of the Cromwellian regime but it stops short of reaching a definitive conclusion on the status of the resulting church. It seems clear that Cromwell's vision was a nation of godly protestants, united by their toleration of each others' differences and their rejection of outright heresy. This vision may never have existed in the manner that he wanted but the compromise that was established did form, perhaps, the prototype of the established church that would be put in place with the Act of Toleration in 1689. And the Triers were a key part of the religious programme which made that possible.

Appendices

Appendix A

Examples of Entries in the Triers' Registers



Approval of Abraham Pinchbecke to the sequestrated living of Mashbury, Essex:

9 May, 1654 (Comm. III/3, lib. I, f. 42)

Appendix B
Members of the Triers' Commission

Members named in the Ordinance for Appointing Commissioners for Approbation of Publique Preachers of 20 March, 1654, and in the Additional Ordinance of 2 September, 1654.

All the Triers were ministers, except for those in *italics*, who were lay members.

<u>Congregationalists</u>	<u>Presbyterians</u>	<u>Non-denominational</u>
Thomas Goodwin	John Arrowsmith	Walter Cradock
John Owen	Anthony Tuckney	Samuel Fairclough
Thankful Owen	Thomas Horton	
Joseph Caryl	Samuel Bamford	
Philip Nye	Thomas Valentine	
Sidrach Simpson	Thomas Manton	<u>Unknown</u>
William Greenhill	William Cooper	<u>denominational</u>
William Strong	Stephen Marshal	<u>sympathies</u>
Samuel Slater	Obadiah Sedgewick	<i>Nathaniel Campfield</i>
Hugh Peter		<i>Thomas Wood</i>
Peter Sterry		<i>Edward Cresset</i>
Nicholas Lockier		
William Carter	<u>Baptists</u>	
<i>William Goffe</i>	John Tombes	
<i>Thomas St Nicholas</i>	Henry Jesse	
<i>William Packer</i>	Daniel Dyke	
<i>Francis Rous</i>		
<i>John Sadler</i>		
<i>James Russell</i>		
<i>Mark Hildesley</i>		
<i>Robert Tichborne</i>		

Additional Triers appointed Sept. 1654

John Row [cong.]

George Griffith [cong.]

John Bond [? presb]¹¹

John Turner [unknown]

Godfrey Bosvile [unknown]

¹¹ There were two John Bonds active in this period. In most sources these men are confused with each other. It is likely that Bond the Trier was also Master of the Savoy, but not the Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. His religious affiliations are unclear but he may have favoured presbyterianism: S. Wright, 'John Bond', *ODNB*.

Appendix C

Religious Provisions in the Instrument of Government

From: *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan revolution, 1625-1660* by S. R. Gardiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), (3rd rev. ed.), 416.

XXXV. That the Christian religion, as contained in the Scriptures, be held forth and recommended as the public profession of these nations; and that, as soon as may be, a provision, less subject to scruple and contention, and more certain than the present, be made for the encouragement and maintenance of able and painful teachers, for the instructing the people, and for discovery and confutation of error, hereby, and whatever is contrary to sound doctrine; and until such provision be made, the present maintenance shall not be taken away or impeached.

XXXVI. That to the public profession held forth none shall be compelled by penalties or otherwise; but that endeavours be used to win them by sound doctrine and the example of a good conversation.

XXXVII. That such as profess faith in God by Jesus Christ (though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship or discipline publicly held forth) shall not be restrained from, but shall be protected in, the profession of the faith and exercise of their religion; so as they abuse not this liberty to the civil injury of others and to the actual disturbance of the public peace on their parts: provided this liberty be not extended to Popery or Prelacy, nor to such as, under the profession of Christ, hold forth and practise licentiousness.

XXXVIII. That all laws, statutes and ordinances, and clauses in any law, statute or ordinance to the contrary of the aforesaid liberty, shall be esteemed as null and void.

Appendix D

Database Methodology

Database Rationale

The information in the Triers' Registers is best expressed as '3 dimensional', in other words, single elements in the Registers, whether people or places, may have many different relationships with others. John Smith may be an applicant in one Triers' interview, but a patron in another and a referee in several others. His own referees may themselves also be referees, applicants or patrons, either in interviews alongside Smith or quite separately to him. Some livings may have many different participants over several years, any or all of whom will have played different roles in other interviews too.

Use of a relational database makes it possible to handle the complex interrelationships noted above clearly and without repetition. Furthermore, it enables very specific, complicated or conditional queries to be constructed and answered. The Triers' database was constructed using Microsoft Access 2013.

Principles of the Database

The database was constructed to retain the essential format of the Registers: that is, the information was recorded based on individual interviews. All decisions taken were predicated on the principle that it should be possible to re-create the Registers from the database alone. The information relating to each interview was divided into three Tables:

- Interview Table: this recorded all the information about the interview except for that relating to the personnel; ie, the name and county of the living and its position, the dates of the appointment process, the reason for the vacancy/

appointment; the Seal under which the new minister was appointed (where relevant), a unique identification number for each interview and ‘miscellaneous notes’ to capture non-standard information in the registers. This non-standard information included subsequent contemporaneous additions made to the registers (such as whether the approval was made subject to a ‘bond to save harmless’), besides alternative place names or original spellings. Subsequent revocations were also noted, some in the form of unique entries in the Registers, some in the ‘miscellaneous notes’ for an existing approval, depending on the original format of the revocation information.

- **Person Table:** this recorded the names and titles of all the individuals who appeared in an interview recorded in the Registers, which included institutions that were patrons. It also recorded individuals’ addresses where given and their educational titles. Secondary information, which did not appear in the Registers but was important to the research was also entered here, including the details of their post-1646 episcopal ordination where relevant, whether they were known royalists, whether they were ejected in 1660-62 and whether they conformed to the Restoration church after 1662. It also included their religious denomination where known, and whether they had been in New England in the previous decades. All secondary information remained identifiably such, and could be distinguished from the information originating in the Registers.
- **Role Table:** this recorded the role played by every man or institution who appeared in an interview. The roles reflect whether they were the applicant, the patron (or variants of patronage), or a referee.

The Process of Populating the Database - general principles

In order to function, databases require information to be as standardised as possible. Therefore, in the course of populating the database, many decisions had to be made about how to translate the information in the Registers into a standardised, database-friendly form. The only substantive information in the Registers to be omitted in the transfer into the database was the contemporary interview number.

Prior to and during data-entry, the following judgements were made and followed, in order to comply with the requirements of the technology:

The Process of Populating the Database - The Interview Table

Places

There are two categories of place in the Registers: the name of the living and its county, which were entered into the Interview Table, and the addresses of the referees, which were entered into the People Table (see below). Approximately 3500 ecclesiastical livings and their counties were entered in the database (some of which were multiple entries of a single living). Every living was then located and checked in secondary sources, in order to standardise spellings; this ensured that queries about livings would return every occurrence of a place. Where livings were located in counties different to those of today, the original county was kept. Original spellings were retained in the 'miscellaneous notes'.

Dates

All the dates given in the Registers were entered. Since the types of date varied between different Registers, a standard 'appointment' date was also given to each interview and most queries on chronology of approvals/appointments were undertaken using this date. Years were standardised to start on 1 January.

Positions

Positions were standardised; the default position was parish minister, but where alternatives were given these were curacies, lectureships, public preachers. Variants on these were standardised to the above terms, but the details of the variant (such as 'Friday lecturer' or 'preacher in the room of J. Smith') was entered into the 'miscellaneous notes'.

Other information

Where information was given on the status of the living prior to the interview, this was recorded as 'sequestered' or 'vacant'. Individual details of sequestrations, previous ejections or reasons for the vacancy were entered in the 'miscellaneous notes'.

Marginal notes (eg, 'this instrument not delivered' or 'delivered out on a bond to save harmless') were entered into 'miscellaneous notes'.

Marginal notes which provided corroborative approvals were entered as separate approvals, but marked as 'duplicating' another approval. In subsequent analyses of the numbers of approvals in the Registers, allowance was made as appropriate for these corroborative entries.

The Process of Populating the Database - The People Table

Personal Names

Approximately 24 000 names were entered in the database. Of these, approximately c.2900 were the names of *applicant* ministers, each one of which was then individually researched and given a global identification number (GID), linking him with every other appearance he made in the Registers, where possible. Some of the patrons and referees were also individually researched, linked and given GID numbers. In many instances, however, lack of evidence

meant that it was impossible to securely link men of the same name, who may or may not have been the same person. Use of a GID meant that standardising the spelling of personal names was not always necessary. Thus the original spellings of names in the Registers were almost always retained, either in the main entry or in the ‘miscellaneous notes’ field.¹²

Aristocratic, educational and professional titles were retained, as were marital status for women (widows/dowagers) or legal status, for guardians.

Approximately 8000 referees’ addresses were entered into the database, although many more referees did not have addresses. The addresses were usually entered unaltered in spelling, because queries were not undertaken on referees’ addresses; the sporadic nature of their recording in the Registers meant that they could not be relied on to provide reliable results.

Secondary source information (given above), not present in the Registers, was also added to this table, to facilitate advanced querying.

The Process of Populating the Database - The Role Table

This table recorded only the roles of each person in the Registers, standardised to applicant, patron, nominator or referee. Any other individuals mentioned (eg, sequestrated incumbents) were entered in the ‘miscellaneous notes’ and were not given roles in this Table. Institutions (eg, the Trustees) were treated as ‘people’ and also assigned roles.

¹² Very occasionally, the spellings of clearly identical names were standardised; eg Gabriel *Sangar*/Gabriel *Sanger*.

Appendix E

Estimating total county livings: Sources and Methodology

To assess the extent of the Triers' activities, it was necessary to know the number of livings in each county, on which to base subsequent statistical analyses.

There are no accurate and comprehensive lists of the number of parishes or ecclesiastical livings in England and Wales in the seventeenth-century, either contemporary or modern. Moreover, this thesis is concerned with ecclesiastical 'livings' - positions to which the Triers' may have appointed a minister - which required the inclusion of chapelries as well as parochial benefices in counts of 'livings'.

In the course of this research, numerous different methodologies were constructed to reach accurate county and national totals, all using some element(s) of contemporary source material, besides later sources. The key problems encountered in using these sources to reach plausible totals were:

- Lack of, or inadequate, detail on which parishes were included in, and which excluded from, contemporary lists
- Incomplete geographical coverage
- Difficulties in translating 'diocese-based' lists into 'county-based' lists
- Widely-differing totals between contemporary lists
- Impractically large and complex data sets

Sources

Of the several contemporary 'parish lists' drawn up in the early modern period, the most well-known and comprehensive are discussed below, with a short

summary of their strengths and weaknesses for this thesis. This discussion is not, however, intended to provide an in-depth study of each manuscript.

1. BL, MS. Stowe 570/3, f.91: ‘The number of Churches within everie shire, as they are in the booke of first fruites’.

This manuscript is undated but the collection is catalogued as belonging to the second half of the sixteenth-century, and includes numerous other items dated to the 1570s. It records the number of ‘churches’ for each of 42 English ‘shires’ and 4 Welsh dioceses, reaching a total of 9210. Its strengths are that it appears to provide a simple snapshot of the number of parishes across almost all of England and Wales, and for this reason is used as a basis on which to construct further studies.¹³ Moreover, the use of ‘shires’ rather than dioceses, for the English count, is unusual but very helpful for studies which are not based upon episcopal units.

There are many drawbacks, however, with Stowe MS. 570/3. In the first place, it is unclear what the definition of ‘church’ was in this manuscript, in particular there is no indication of whether chapels are included in the totals. Secondly, there are several anomalies in the list of ‘shires’, which do not exactly replicate counties. In particular, ‘Bristol’ is given a separate total. It seems possible that Bristol was given as a separate unit to reflect the fact that, although geographically separate, it was part of the diocese of Gloucester. Why this [hypothetical] element of ‘blurring’ between secular and ecclesiastical units was given in the manuscript is unclear, especially since other diocesan boundaries that do not mirror counties were not accorded the same treatment.

Furthermore, the Welsh totals in Stowe 570/3 are given by diocese, but there is no indication of whether these were the ‘geographical’ or ‘jurisdictional’ dioceses, or whether they included peculiars.

¹³ eg, F. McCall, *Baal’s Priests*, 130-1.

Comparison with other sources suggest that for some counties, Stowe 570/3 may be reasonably ‘accurate’, whilst for others it is not. For example, it gives 396 ‘churches’ for Essex, a total which is very close to the 407 given in R. Newcourt, *Repertorium ecclesiasticum parochiale Londinense* (1710). This suggests that the Stowe totals were relatively accurate, and it also suggests that Essex had a relatively stable parochial landscape in the seventeenth-century. Moreover, a fairly dense population, small parishes and benign topography avoided the proliferation of chapels of ease, which in some other areas became independent livings. All of this accords with what is already known of the county’s history.

The totals given for many of the northern counties, however, are greatly at odds with other sources and what is known of the religious landscape of these counties. For example, Stowe 570/3 gives 36 ‘churches’ for Lancashire, and 24 in Westmoreland. Lansdowne MS. 459/1 (see below), however, indicates that in the mid-seventeenth-century, Lancashire had nearly 200 livings. The Hearth Tax returns of the 1670s suggest that Westmoreland had c.125 parishes. Thus, it seems that the figures in Stowe 570/3 underestimate the total livings very significantly in some counties, especially those which, by the mid-seventeenth-century at least, had developed numerous chapels, supplied with their own incumbents and functioning as ecclesiastical livings.

2. BL, Harleian MS. 280/29 ff.157-172: ‘A brief somme of all ye Parishes, Impropiations, Preachers, Communicantes and Recusantes certified within the severall Dioceses of both the Provinces of Canterburie and Yorke. Anno Domini 1603’.

This manuscript provides a digest of several surveys, listing the numbers of each of the classes given in the title for each English and Welsh diocese. The surveys were carried out for Archbishop Whitgift, probably as a response to Puritan pressure for reform. It has been suggested that the number of livings in the 1603

surveys may have been intentionally under-recorded, to counter accusations of insufficient preaching.¹⁴ The strengths of these lists are, in the first place, that they are closer in date to the 1650s, and also that they include several different kinds of information for each diocese. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the difficulties of transposing diocesan information into relatively accurate county totals means that the totals in Harleian MS. 280/29 are not suitable as a basis for further analysis.

Despite the problems noted above, where it is possible to make comparisons between Stowe MS. 570/3 and Harleian MS. 280/29, the two sets of figures often corroborate each other's broad totals. For example: Harleian MS. 280/29 gives a total of 1121 parishes for the diocese of Norwich, which roughly corroborates the 1094 parishes for Norfolk and Suffolk given in Stowe MS. 570/3. In Harleian MS. 280/29, however, Exeter diocese is recorded as having 604 parishes, whilst Devon and Cornwall are recorded as having jointly 559 parishes in Stowe MS. 570/3. These figures demonstrate something of the relationship between the two manuscripts and show that although in some cases they corroborate each other closely, in others they are further adrift.

3. BL, Lansdowne MS. 459/1: 'A register of all the church-livings in the counties of Lancaster, Dorset, Derby, Gloucester, York, west-riding, Huntingdon, Hertford, Rutland, Essex, Cambridge, Wilts, Nottingham, Bucks, Worcester, Devon, late of Wight, and Middlesex'.

This manuscript is dated c.1654 in the catalogue and it offers contemporary evidence of numbers of parishes. It is not clear why the survey was undertaken, although it may have been produced for the use of the Trustees. For each parish it includes the name, the value of the rectory presentative if relevant, the

¹⁴ A. Foster, 'Churchwarden's Accounts of Early Modern England and Wales', in K. French, G. Gibbs, B. Kumin (eds.) *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600* (Manchester: MUP, 1997), 77, n. 15.

incumbent, the patron, the value of the impropriation if relevant, the 'possession', the 'possessor', the value of the vicarage if relevant, any chapelries and their incumbents and patrons where relevant, and any augmentations, who was to pay them and from which funds they were to come. 'Possession' and 'possessor' seem to refer to whether the living was under sequestration and who was serving the cure in such cases. It also contains comments on the merits of the minister, if there is one.

Lansdowne MS. 459/1 thus provides detailed information but it only covers certain counties. Although many entries contain only a few of the possible details noted above, and some give no more than the name of the parish, the level of detail in the manuscript as a whole means that a count of its livings provides a secure *minimum* figure for the counties it covers. Only comparison with another source, however, would establish whether Lansdowne MS. 459/1 omits additional livings.

Comparing the figures in Lansdowne MS. 459/1 with those in Harleian MS. 280/29 and Stowe MS. 570/3, however, add a further layer of complication, not least because for no county do figures exist in all three manuscripts. The only counties that can be found or deduced with confidence in all three sources are Devon and Cornwall, which are contiguous with Exeter diocese. Even here, however, there are problems reconciling the figures in the three manuscripts:

In Harleian MS. 280/29, Exeter diocese is recorded as having 604 parishes, whilst in Stowe MS. 570/3 Devon has 400 parishes, and Cornwall has 159. Lansdowne MS. 459/1 gives a total for Devon of 385, which is fairly close to that drawn from the two counties in Stowe MS. 570/3. However, if the Lansdowne MS. 459/1 total of 385 for Devon is subtracted from the Exeter diocese total of 604 in Harleian MS. 280/29, this suggests that Cornwall should have had 219 parishes. This is 60 more than the total 159 given in Stowe MS. 570/3.

Lansdowne 459/1 includes chapels with incumbents, which is probably an important factor in the higher totals that it gives for some counties over the other two manuscripts. Thus Lansdowne MS. 459/1 gives 191 livings for Derbyshire, but Stowe MS. 570/3 only gives 109; Lansdowne MS. 459/1 gives c.190 livings for Lancashire, but Stowe MS. 570/3 only gives 36.

4. Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticarum

Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Being an Account of the Valuations of all the Ecclesiastical Benefices in the several Dioceses in England by J. Ecton and B. Willis, (1754) (2nd ed.)

This is a comprehensive list of benefices with values and patrons dating from c. 100 years after the revolution. It is arranged by diocese and archdeaconry but also records the counties and it covers more than 600 pages. It provides extensive but complex details on livings, the complexity of which results in problems in interpretation. The example below is from the diocese of Exeter:

- Ewny *alias* Ewny Lalant, V St Ewny; *cum* St Jesse *alias* St Ives. St Jia *Capella*.
- St Ewny near Redruth R. *alias* Uny.¹⁵

Chapels are listed in this volume, but it is not always clear whether they have incumbents. The extent and complexity of distinguishing livings in the *Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticarum* make it an overwhelmingly large source from which to compile county totals of parishes. Moreover, the rise in non-conformist churches during the eighteenth-century complicates the reliability of the totals for the 1650s.

¹⁵ Ecton, *Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticarum*, 129.

5. The Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers

The Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers by C. Humphery-Smith (2003) (3rd ed.)

This atlas is a modern source on parochial data, compiled primarily for genealogical research. It contains maps of pre-1834 English, Welsh and Scottish counties, with parish boundaries, archdeaconries and peculiars. The maps have accompanying lists of parishes, with the dates covered by their surviving parish registers. The strength of the *Atlas* as a source for total numbers of parishes is firstly, that it provides a list of virtually all known parishes arranged by historic county and, secondly, that those parishes for which it records that the registers commenced before 1660, almost certainly existed in the 1650s. This means that the Atlas provides a *definite minimum* number of parishes per county for the 1650s.

The disadvantage of the Atlas is that each of c.12 550 parishes must be counted individually, checking the dates of its registers. Moreover, parishes for which the registers are only recorded as commencing post-1660 may, nevertheless, have been in existence earlier. For example, Manningtree in Essex was built in the early seventeenth-century but the registers only survive from 1695. Thus an element of ‘missing’ parishes must be accommodated in any methodology.

Methodology used for Parish Totals in this Thesis

In view of the strengths and weaknesses associated with the above sources for establishing the total numbers of parishes in mid-seventeenth-century England and Wales, the methodology described below was developed. It is not claimed here that it can produce anything other than a good, evidence-based estimate. Furthermore, problems reconciling the evidence means that even using this methodology, some counties remained subject to such variations (ie, disparities

of more than 30 parishes) across the available sources that they were considered unsafe for detailed statistical analysis. These counties are: Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and all the Welsh counties.

The final methodology developed was based on the *Phillimore Atlas* lists of 12 550 parishes, all of which had to be counted and date-checked individually. From this exercise:

1. All those which had extant registers dated before 1660 were recorded.
2. Sample pages for each county were checked to establish approximately how many parishes with registers from 1660-1689 (when non-conformist worship was legalised) were actually in existence before 1660. An average figure per page was derived from this sampling exercise to accommodate these additional parishes, which figure was then added to each page of that county.
3. Systematic checking of several further counties, including Kent, Lincolnshire, and Westmoreland, established that a multiplier of 5% was necessary to make up for entirely missing registers for the seventeenth-century. This was found to correspond closely to independent counting of all parishes with extant registers that were recorded as beginning any date before 1730. The totals were thus reached by counting all those parishes for which registers are recorded as in existence by 1730.

For over half the counties, these totals also corresponded relatively closely to evidence in the primary sources discussed above. In Cumberland, Lancashire, Westmoreland, Northumberland and Yorkshire, however, this methodology was not able to accommodate the disparity between parish churches and chapels. These counties were found to have such low totals up to 1730 that a cross-checking exercise was carried out for every parish in Westmoreland (as an example of a county with multiple chapels), using a variety of secondary sources,

including Nightingale's *The Ejected of 1662 in Cumberland & Westmorland*, and *Walker Revised*, *Calamy Revised* and *CCEd*. From this exercise, a multiplier of 50% was found necessary to bring the totals of these counties into line with secondary evidence on the existence of parishes in the 1650s, although cross-checking the status of chapels for Lancashire suggested that a 50% multiplier was probably too high. This perhaps resulted from the unclear status of many of the county's chapels.

In summary: the process and decisions which informed the parish totals reached for this thesis were, therefore, as follows:

1. A comparison of the existing primary and secondary sources
2. A count of the most reliable source to reach a verifiable *minimum* number of parishes
3. The inclusion of later data (registers starting before 1730) to bring some of the totals up to those suggested by extensive checking of other secondary sources and against the primary sources.
4. The decision as to whether to apply the 1730 totals to *every* county, or whether to use them selectively, to attempt to accommodate those counties which are not deemed to be accurately reflected by this process.

The totals in this thesis were reached on the principle that a standard rule for counting parishes would be applied to every English county, despite the fact that this resulted in some county totals being somewhat higher or lower than other sources suggested they should be. This methodology was felt to be more rigorous than the selective application of different principles for different counties. It is accepted here that this means that some county totals will not be as reliable as

others and that some of the results in the analyses in the thesis will be affected by this.

Appendix F

Constituent Counties of English and Welsh Regions

ENGLAND	East Midlands	London
	Derbyshire	London
South-East	Leicestershire	Middlesex
Berkshire	Lincolnshire	
Buckinghamshire	Northamptonshire	
Hampshire	Nottinghamshire	
Kent	Rutland	
Oxfordshire		WALES
Surrey	West Midlands	
Sussex	Herefordshire	North Wales
	Shropshire	Anglesey
South-West	Staffordshire	Carnarvonshire
Cornwall	Warwickshire	Denbighshire
Devon	Worcestershire	Flintshire
Dorset		
Gloucestershire	East	Central Wales
Somerset	Bedfordshire	Cardiganshire
Wiltshire	Cambridgeshire	Merioneth
	Essex	Montgomeryshire
North-West	Hertfordshire	Radnorshire
Cheshire	Huntingdonshire	
Cumberland	Norfolk	South Wales
Lancashire	Suffolk	Brecon
Westmoreland		Carmarthenshire
	North-East	Glamorganshire
Yorkshire	Durham	Monmouthshire
Yorkshire	Northumberland	Pembrokeshire

Appendix G

Vacant Livings in 1650

The table below gives abstracts derived from a selection of the Church Surveys undertaken in 1650, held at Lambeth Palace Library in series COMM. XIIa/1-20.

The areas were chosen to provide geographical variation, but the choices were dependent on the existence of suitably complete survey information for an identifiable geographical unit: the 'hundred', 'wapentake' or former 'peculiar'.

This is a snap-shot survey, largely dependent on available information, and does not claim to be comprehensive or 'random'.

Definitions and Terminology

Definition of a 'vacant living' is itself problematic. Many, if not most, vacancies during the revolution resulted from death, ejection or sequestration, and therefore the vacancy could not necessarily be predicted in advance. Thus some livings noted in the Surveys or other sources as 'vacant' may have been only briefly so, whilst the patron found a new incumbent. Others may, as many petitions claimed, have been without an incumbent for several years.

Equally problematic is the terminology of the Surveys, which sometimes note that there is an incumbent serving the cure, in others that the incumbent does not serve the cure but takes the profits, and in still others, simply that there is an incumbent. In this latter case, it is impossible to know whether the cure was, in fact, being served at all or was vacant under this 'incumbent'.

Unit	Total Livings	Total Vacancies	Vacancies as Percentage
Devon: Shebbear Hundred	31	0	0%
Devon: Braunton Hundred	25	2	8%
Devon: Shirwell Hundred	12	0	0%
Devon: Fremington Hundred	13	0	0%
Devon: South Molton Hundred	31	1	3%
Devon: Witheredge Hundred	20	2	10%
Dorset: Tollerford Hundred	95	9	9%
Dorset: George Hundred	8	1	12.5%
Dorset: Puddletown Hundred	61	4	6.5%
Durham: Easington Ward	16	5	31%
Durham: Stockton Ward	24	0	0%
Rutland: all peculiars	9	5	55%
Middlesex: peculiar of Dean and Chapter of St Pauls	6	0	0%
Nottinghamshire: Southwell peculiar	26	7	27%
Nottinghamshire: Bassetlaw Wapentake	22	3	14%
Essex: Lexden Hundred	54	7	13%
Essex: Tendring Hundred	45	8	18%

Essex: Freshwell Hundred	17	1	6%
Yorkshire West Riding: Barkstone Ash Hundred	20	5	25%
York City: West of River Ouse	8	5	62.5%
York City: East of River Ouse	18	17	89%
Anglesey: Tyndaetgwy Hundred	9	7	89%
Anglesey: Talybolian Hundred	13	11	85%
Anglesey: Llyvon Hundred	6	5	83%
Anglesey: Malltraeth Hundred	9	4	44%
TOTALS	598	109	18%

Appendix H

Methodology for assessing the turnover of benefices for pre and post-revolution periods, nationally and for the diocese of Canterbury

Note: This exercise used the information incorporated into the *CCEd*, accessed through an early form of search engine (the ‘Old Search Engine’) which is no longer publicly accessible.

All data from *CCEd* has the caveat that, whilst geographical coverage is good, not all dioceses are fully represented owing to loss of original documentation; this applies particularly to the dioceses of Hereford and Exeter after 1660. Moreover, the extensive ‘peculiars’ were generally omitted from the original bishops’ registers and *libri cleri* used in *CCEd* for the period before 1640. To compensate for both these omissions, after consultation, the total appointments for 1620-25 and 1630-35 were increased by 10%, and those for 1670-75 and 1680-85 were increased by 15%.

As a result of these, and other, uncertainties surrounding the sources available for *CCEd*, the figures produced by this exercise are necessarily indicative only.

Methodology

As far as possible, this exercise counted all the evidence of appointments to benefices for four sample periods of 6 years duration: 1620-25, 1630-35, 1670-75, 1680-85. The 1640s and 1660s were deemed too unsettled to be helpful and were, therefore, not included.

In compiling the samples of national turnover of benefices, taken from evidence in *CCEd*, the following methodology was used:

- All data was collected from the ‘Appointments’ section of the Old Search Engine.
- The exercise counted benefices, not ministers.
- Indications of ‘turnover’ were confined to firm evidence of the beginning of a new tenure. Evidence of the end of an existing tenure was not used.
- Where duplicate entries occurred, only one entry was counted, providing always the same minister was involved. (ie: if a presentation *and* an institution were recorded for John Smith to take up Newtown parish, only the institution was counted.)
- The following categories of data were included or excluded as evidence of clerical appointments:

Category Inclusions

Entries falling into the following categories were randomly checked to ensure that they applied to ministerial livings, and were thereafter incorporated consistently, as reliable evidence:

Institutions

Collations

Case by Case Inclusions

Entries falling into the following categories were individually checked and incorporated *only* where they did not duplicate another reliable entry *and* where they referred to clerical livings:

Presentations

Subscriptions on Appointment

Admissions

Appointments

Entries labelled '*other*' or unlabelled

Institution Bonds were incorporated where they were not duplicates of another entry.

Revocations were individually checked and used to delete the relevant institution, where applicable.

Category Exclusions

All *cathedral, collegiate church, archdeaconry, preacher* and *private chaplaincy, school* evidence was excluded.

All *curacies, schoolmasterships* and *surgeons* were excluded.

Case by Case Exclusions

Dispensations to succeed father were individually checked, but were usually duplicates of institutions or were considered insufficiently secure as evidence of actual turnover, and thus were excluded.

Licenses were randomly checked but applied to curates/schoolmasters and were excluded.

All the following *CCEd* categories were randomly checked to establish whether they might indicate previously unrecorded appointments, but, on determining that they did not, they were also excluded:

admissions to Lambeth degree, assents to consecration, approvals as sea chaplain, burial certificates, burials, commissions, commissions to collate, commissions to consecrate, commissions to exercise jurisdiction sede vacante, commissions to confirm elections, confirmations of election, consecrations, deaths, dispensations, discharged, dispensations for non-residence, elections, enthronements, expulsions, induction mandates, inhibitions, installations, installation mandates, in

posts, letters testimonial, letters dimissory, licences to institute, licences for non-residence, mandates to consecrate, nominations, perpetuateds, resignations, refusals to institute, reassignments, removals, sequestrations, suspensions, tolleratios and translations

Appendix I

Methodology for a comparison of appointments claimed to have taken place in the 1650s (and recorded as such after 1660 in bishops' registers) with appointments appearing in the Triers' Registers¹⁶

- CCEd was queried using the 'Old Search Engine' which is no longer publicly accessible but enabled events to be collated by date, from diverse geographical areas.
- All events which signified appointments were counted for the years 1654-9 inclusive.
- The following terms were deemed to signify appointments (with caveats as given below):
 - Admission*
 - Appointment*
 - Institution*
 - Licensing*
 - Presentation*
- Events that duplicated each other were counted only once: for example, where both a *presentation* and an *institution* to a living was recorded, only the *institution* was counted.
- In the case of duplications, *institutions* were preferenced over all other terms, as denoting an appointment.
- Some *presentations*, although they do not of themselves indicate a definite appointment, were found to be the only records of appointments which took place, even though no subsequent *institution* was also given. These presentations were thus also counted as 'appointments'.
- Licensing seems to have been an imprecise term for this period, but *usually* reflected an appointment (as confirmed in the Registers).

¹⁶ This exercise was correct as of November 2013.

- Some inaccuracies were found in the *CCEd* sources, so these results can only be indicative. For example: *CCEd* includes an entry for John Rewse, instituted to Bentley in Hampshire in 1655. The source given is the Norwich Consignation book, but it was noted on the *CCEd* entry that he was instituted by ‘Samuel, Bishop of Norwich’. Rewse was in fact instituted to Bentley by Samuel Harsnett, Bishop of Norwich, in 1625, suggesting a transcription error.

Note: *CCEd* offers good, but not complete, geographical coverage, owing to missing episcopal registers.

Percentages of appointments recorded in bishops’ registers in *CCEd*, which were also recorded in the Triers’ Registers, by year, were found to be as follows:

Year	Percentage
1654	94%
1655	95%
1656	90%
1657	92%
1658	84%
1659	87%

Appendix J

Methodology for Estimating Westminster Assembly Clerical Approvals

This exercise used the records of clerical interviews undertaken by the Westminster Assembly, calendared in: *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), vol. 4.

The calculations below are based upon Halcomb's estimation that the Assembly may have undertaken 5000 examinations between 1643 and 1653, taking into account the points made in his Appendix 15, 'The examination of ministers', especially pp217-8, 225-6, in Vol. 1. of the *Minutes and Papers*.

Explanatory Notes for the Table below:

Range

The Assembly examined both ministers and schoolmasters. An estimate for this thesis suggests that 10% of the examinations were for schoolmasters, and thus a 10% reduction was made to the figures in the Table to reflect this.

Dates

The Table below records the outcomes of examinations in three month samples for each year for a six year period, from 1647 - 1652 inclusive (January - March). The Assembly examined only university fellows in 1645, which have not been included here. 1646 was not sampled (on grounds of practicality).

Terminology

Personal judgement has been necessary to reach the figures in this table, especially with regard to interpretations of the terminology.

The terminology used to record their decisions was variable, so the following interpretations were made for this thesis:

The following 'decisions' were taken to represent approvals:

'approved'

'to have his certificate'

The following 'decisions' were taken to represent rejections:

'insufficient'

'not examined'

The following 'decisions' were taken to represent deferrals:

'to be examined again'

'referred into the country'

'deferred'

'respited'

'better testimony *or* testimonial'

'better certificate'

Some ministers were granted temporary approvals 'on probation'.

Some examinations resulted in 'other' decisions, too various to represent here as individual classes.

Very occasionally, some ministers appear in the Minutes for more than one examination (for example, Richard Burney, who was rejected three times). These

multiple appearances have been retained in the figures, so that the totals in the thesis (and Table below) represent ‘examinations’ rather than ‘ministers’.

Note

This survey does not claim to be more than an initial and approximate attempt at quantifying the approvals and appointments of the Assembly. More detailed research into the workings of the Assembly would undoubtedly refine these findings.

Sample of Westminster Assembly Examinations

	total examinations	approvals	rejections	temporary approvals, deferrals, misc., etc	approvals as % of total examinations
<i>Jan-Mar 1647</i>	68	61	7	0	90%
<i>Jan-Mar 1648</i>	113	51	7	55	45%
<i>Jan-Mar 1649</i>	50	30	2	18	60%
<i>Jan-Mar 1650</i>	48	28	5	16	58%
<i>Jan-Mar 1651</i>	65	50	0	15	77%
<i>Jan-Mar 1652</i>	70	39	0	32	56%
totals	414	259	21	136	63%

Appendix K

Methodology for assessing the percentage of entries in the Registers of ministers already in benefices who were seeking approvals in order to receive augmentations

The difficulties of accurately establishing when ministers began their incumbencies in their livings during the revolution are considerable; although for some men, the evidence is clear, for many others it is not. This makes any attempt to reach an accurate percentage of how many ministers appeared in the Registers to take up a living, and how many were already in their livings when they sought an approval (in order to qualify for an augmentation) necessarily very approximate.

For this thesis a very broad sampling exercise was undertaken on four geographically distant counties: Cheshire, Cumberland, Devon and Essex. Twenty per cent of the livings in each county that appear in the Triers' Registers were randomly sampled, to identify whether the candidate for the living was already in post before attending the Triers. To achieve a random group, the number of livings that formed the twenty per cent were taken at equal increments from the total livings in the Registers, after being sorted into an alphabetical list (eg: in Cumberland, 40 livings appeared in the Registers. Twenty per cent of forty is eight, so every fifth living was sampled from an alphabetically-sorted list of the entries.

The results for these English counties and a sample of Welsh counties are given in the tables below:

County	% of probable approvals for a new incumbency	% of probable approvals of ministers already in their livings	% of ministers of unknown status
Cumberland	87%	12%	0%
Cheshire	75%	12%	12%
Essex	70%	30%	16%
Devon	39%	28%	32%

County	% of probable approvals for a new incumbency	% of probable approvals of ministers already in their livings
Anglesey	47%	53%
Carmarthenshire	88%	12%
Brecon	55%	45%
Denbighshire	92%	8%
Glamorganshire	93%	7%
Pembrokeshire	73%	27%

In Wales, the difficulty of identifying individuals, coupled with the absence of Welsh coverage in both *Calamy Revised* and *Walker Revised*, made this task especially complex. Thomas Richards provides a list of men identified by Thomas Shankland in 1901 as having been approved for livings in Wales, from which he [Richards] removed all those whom he believed to have been earlier appointments.¹⁷ Comparing this list with the totals in the Registers, it is possible to reach tentative percentages of ministers already in livings for some Welsh counties. There are, however, certain inconsistencies between Richards' list and the information from the Registers in the database. This may be because Richards and Shankland seem to have drawn on some of the Trustees' records as

¹⁷ T. Richards, *Religious Developments in Wales 1654-1662* (London: N.E.A., 1923), 20-24.

well as the Triers' Registers to reach their list of appointments. In other cases, confusions over individuals and places may also be responsible. Richards himself also noted a number of inaccuracies in Shankland's list. Furthermore, Richards' list does not breakdown the information as presented in the table above.

For these reasons, the percentages of ministers already in livings for several Welsh counties have been derived from Richards' list and the information in the database, but the anomalies in the background information mean that this is supplied for indicative purposes only.

Conclusion

Two key points arise from this sampling exercise, which are critical for understanding this thesis.

- The wide variations in the percentages in different counties means that it is impossible to reach an accurate figure of the proportion of approvals in the Registers of ministers seeking wishing to receive an augmentation that can be universally applied to all counties. An estimate of twenty per cent has been used here as a 'best guess', but this is undoubtedly too low in some areas and too high in others.
- The figures and percentages of approvals in the Registers used throughout this thesis have *not* been adjusted to accommodate a notional percentage of ministers applying for augmentations. The complexities of applying an uncertain multiplier to various different queries of the Registers, where sometimes approvals are taken to equate broadly to appointments, but not in all cases, made this too complex to be reliable. This means that the maps and their accompanying analyses reflect *all* the Triers' approvals, not just those deemed to relate to new incumbencies.

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