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The minister is much disheartened: clergy and their communities in Interregnum legal records

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ABSTRACT

Many questions remain to be answered about the parish clergy who served in England's churches between 1640 and 1660, due to the difficulties of interrogating the complex, ever-changing, singular and often deficient ecclesiastical records of the time. But much can be learned about religious policy and the relationships of clergy with their communities from the legal records of the time. As well as being useful for linking transient clergy to particular locations, assize, quarter and borough sessions reveal clergy's interventions to influence local religious practice or morality, their complaints against parishioners, as well as the objections parishioners made against them in their turn. With evidence of violence and verbal abuse on all sides, disrupted church services, factional struggles within parishes, resistance to Godliness and a continuing propensity of parishioners to denounce their ministers' political opinions, religious practices, drinking, swearing or sexual misbehaviour, these sources show that clergy had a challenging task in negotiating the divided religious landscape of the times.

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'They were very Inquisitive into the Lives and Conversacion of the Regular clergy' wrote Cumbrian Hugh Todd, of the parliamentary committees for religion of the 1640s and 1650s.¹ Devonshire minister John Trosse met 'scores of questions both impertinent and imperious', according to his daughter Elizabeth.² Candidates for the ministry faced punishing examination by Presbyterian classes.³ Yet despite this intense scrutiny at the time, many questions remain to be answered about the parish clergy of this period, mainly due to problems of sources. After 1640, when the Church of England's diocesan structure began to be dismantled, until 1660, when it began to be restored, the methods of organising and admission to the national church changed radically and, with the lack of political stability or religious consensus, kept changing; some records were deliberately destroyed after 1660 by those involved. What survives is a patchwork of national and local sources which, as Andrew Foster has argued, can 'only be filled by the painstaking work by hundreds of local historians'.⁴ Recognising the need for further research into

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¹Bodleian Library, MS J. Walker (hence WMS) C1, fo. 68r.

²WMS C2, fo. 340r.

³See M.H. Lee (ed.), *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry* (London, 1882), 34–7.

⁴A. Foster, 'What happened in English and Welsh parishes c.1642–62?: a research agenda', in F.M. McCall (ed.), *Church and People in Interregnum Britain* (London: Palgrave, 2021), 27.

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interregnum religion, historians are beginning to find different ways to interrogate these sources to discover more about the clergy who served in parishes during this period. The authors of chapters in my edited volume *Church and People in Interregnum Britain* investigated the interregnum clergy from a number of different angles: via the records of Cromwell's clerical patronage, via the Commonwealth surveys of church livings, and via local studies of Dorset, Sussex, Warwickshire, and Wales, focusing on topography, probate records, memory and loyalism respectively.⁵

Surviving legal records are another type of source evocative of the local context for religious practice and policy. During the interregnum, with the church hierarchy and the church courts abolished, how were authorities to monitor clergy or to deal with problematic parishioners who failed to adhere to the expectations for Protestant worship newly articulated by central legislation? Presbyterian classes for a while exerted oversight over the clergy, but were not set up everywhere, and encountered problems when they attempted to involve or censure the laity; their powers declined with the rise of gathered churches.⁶ The county ejectors, set up in August 1654, were ineffective in overseeing the clergy and the evidence that survives for their activities is anecdotal rather than systematic.⁷ Given the increasingly Erastian nature of church governance in this period, an expanded role emerged for judges and justices in interpreting religious policy, and policing the boundaries of acceptable religious practice or behaviour for both clergy and laity: county ejectors, according to Christopher Durston, were often also justices of the peace.⁸ This essay will consider what can be discovered by looking at the legal records of assizes, quarter and borough sessions which, as well as being useful for linking names to locations, reveal the problems the interregnum clergy faced. It will review the different ways in which clergy interacted with the interregnum justice system: the sorts of complaints they made against parishioners and parish officers as well as interventions made to influence local religious practice or morality. This is balanced against the ways in which the clergy themselves reportedly transgressed against the law or Godly ideals, via outspoken political conservatism, violence, inappropriate behaviour, or continuing traditionalism.

The evidence used comes from over four thousand cases from assize, quarter and borough sessions records for several counties, all relating to religious practice or belief, incidents in church or churchyards or involving clergy or church officers (Table 1).

Over a thousand clergy are cited, often providing unique information on an individual clergyman's presence in a parish at a particular date. To give a few examples: at Stockport St Mary no incumbents are listed in either the Clergy of the Church of England Database or *Walker Revised* after the death of Edmund Shalcross in August 1644 and before

⁵McCall (ed.), *Church and People*.

⁶W.A. Shaw, *Minutes of the Manchester Presbyterian Classis* (3 vols., Chetham Soc. 1890-91); *Minutes of the Bury Presbyterian Classis 1647-1657* (2 vols., Chetham Soc., 1896); J.C. Cox (ed), 'Minute Book of the Wirksworth Classis 1651-1685', *Derbyshire Archaeological & Natural History Society Journal*, 2 (1880), 135-222; B. Coulton, 'The Fourth Shropshire Presbyterian Classis 1647-62', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 73 (1998), 33-43.

⁷C. Durston, 'Policing the Cromwellian Church: The Activities of the County Ejection Committees, 1654-1659', in P. Little (ed.), *The Cromwellian Protectorate* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 188-206.

⁸*Ibid.*, 190.

Table 1. Legal Records Analysed, 1645-1660⁹.

County	Quarter Sessions	Borough Sessions	Assize	Total
Yorkshire	502	111 ¹⁰	105	718
Cheshire	519		151	670
Devonshire	229	369 ¹¹	8	606
Essex	513		52	565
Somerset	250		10	260
Sussex	244		15	259
Shropshire		184 ¹²	1	185
Hertfordshire	185			185
Wiltshire	134		8	142
Hampshire	126	10 ¹³	2	138
Middlesex	128			128
Staffordshire	115		3	118
Lancashire	92		5	97
Kent			57	57
Nottinghamshire	41	14		55
Northamptonshire	44			44
Gloucestershire		32 ¹⁴	2	34
North Wales	34			34
Suffolk		33 ¹⁵		33
Cambridgeshire			29	29
Derbyshire	29			29
Bedfordshire	12			12
Worcestershire	5	1	1	7
Dorset	1		3	4
London	3			3
Other Oxford Circuit			10	10
Other Northern Circuit			14	14

21 September 1660 when Henry Warren was instituted.¹⁶ Cheshire quarter sessions mention four: a Mr Bardsley named in articles against ‘delinquent’ John Bretland on 3 May 1648, a Thomas Joneson, ‘preacher’, presented at Michaelmas 1650 for not observing a thanksgiving day; he was buried on 26 August 1655, according to the parish register.¹⁷ On 8 April 1657 a Mr Johnson was described as ‘late parson’ there after christening an illegitimate child from another parish; this was probably Thomas’s son Francis Johnson, described as rector there in November 1657.¹⁸ In the same record the Congregationalist Samuel Eaton, who may have replaced Johnson, disputed or shared the right to the living with him, was described as ‘pastor’ and ‘Preacher of gods word’ at Stockport.¹⁹ Any claim by Eaton to the living did not last: Thomas Paget, a Presbyterian,

⁹These counties represent the majority of counties whose records have been published or calendared in print or online, or which have substantial runs of surviving archives of legal records for this period, as identified using Jeremy Gibson, *Quarter Sessions Records for Family Historians*, 5th edition, (Bury: Family History Partnership, 2007), National Archives Discovery and the online catalogues for the county archives. As few of the archival records are calendared, this should be seen as a large sample, rather than a definitive list of everything which survives relating to religion.

¹⁰Scarborough.

¹¹Exeter.

¹²Shrewsbury; Ludlow; Wenlock.

¹³Portsmouth.

¹⁴Bristol.

¹⁵Ipswich.

¹⁶A.G. Matthews, *Walker Revised* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948, hence *WR*), 93; The Clergy of the Church of England Database (hence *CCEd*), www.theclergydatabase.org.uk, location ID 5138.

¹⁷Cheshire Archives (hence *CA*): QJF 76/1, fo. 41; QJF 78/3, fo. 13; H. Heginbotham, *Stockport: Ancient and Modern* (London, 1882), i. 305.

¹⁸*CA*: QJF 85/1, fo. 93; QJF 84/4, fos 70-72.

¹⁹*ODNB*, S.J. Guscott, ‘Samuel Eaton’.

was recorded there by Henry Newcombe in 1658 and died as rector in June 1660.²⁰ A Robert Sandford is recorded on the CCED as appointed to Tollesbury in Essex on 17 March 1671; however an Essex quarter sessions record dated 16 July 1650 states that a Mr. Sandford, parson of Tollesbury, holds the impropriation and that he has been admonished for failing to repair the chancel, suggesting that Sandford (or a relation) served the parish much earlier, although he is not listed by A.G. Mathews amongst the intruding ministers there.²¹ At Kingsdon in Somerset, the *Victoria County History* records Alexander Westerdale as incumbent throughout the interregnum, acting as parish registrar in 1654.²² But a Somerset quarter sessions information dated 22 July 1655 records a John Evans, ‘clerke’, there suffering verbal abuse from a female parishioner who claimed he had ‘cozened a man of his liveing’.²³ Legal records provide evidence of a clergyman’s presence in a parish, degree of official recognition and visibility to the parishioners at a particular time, a situation on the ground that may be different from that stated in central records.²⁴

The legal records where clergy are involved form only around a quarter of the indexed records related to religion. ‘Both the Rump and Cromwell were determined to keep the church firmly under state control’, writes Bernard Capp; monitoring of religious behaviour was now primarily the preserve of the laity.²⁵ In only around a tenth of these cases did clergy accuse others or act as a witness. The two most commonly-cited religious offences in this period, profanation of the Sabbath, and profane swearing, were very rarely prosecuted by clergy: of over five hundred cases related to swearing and cursing, in only seven, dating between 1653 and 1658, is there any obvious clerical participation. Of over six hundred cases related to sabbath-day observance, only twelve were prosecuted by clergy, all except one related to sabbath-day drinking; half date from the initial years of the Godly reformation, 1645-1647. There are over two hundred witchcraft cases and nearly three hundred adultery cases in these records. But only four cases of adultery involve local clergy, in two of which they are prodded to action by others. In the only witchcraft case where a clergyman is involved, he supported the accused woman.²⁶

More usually, clergy complained about behaviour directly affecting themselves: theft of property, violence or verbal abuse and disruption of church services for example. Thefts from clergy or churches were sporadic, suggesting that most of the time churches were still well managed, and clergy property respected, although they were reported at a higher rate between 1649 and 1656 than before or after, with peaks occurring in 1649, 1654 and 1656. Items stolen from clergy included trees, field crops and farm animals, weapons, money, bedding and clothing; victims included the Sussex diarist Giles Moore

²⁰ODNB, K.L. Sprunger, ‘John Paget’; R. Parkinson (ed.), *The Autobiography of Henry Newcombe* (Manchester, Chetham Soc., 26, 1852), 103; a Thomas Case was also presented to the living in 1645, see Heginbotham, *Stockport*, i. 303, 307.

²¹Essex Record Office (hence ERO), Q/SR 345/44; WR, 144-5.

²²A.P. Baggs, R.J.E. Bush and Margaret Tomlinson, ‘Parishes: Kingsdon’, in *A History of the County of Somerset: Volume 3*, ed. R.W. Dunning (London, 1974), 111-120. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/som/vol3/pp111-120> [accessed 21 February 2023].

²³Somerset Heritage Centre (hence SHC), Q/SR/96/113.

²⁴See fns. 29, 43, 51, 54, 61, 67, 81, 91, 95, 100, 105 for further examples of ministers appearing in interregnum legal records, who are not listed in other sources.

²⁵Bernard Capp, *England’s Culture Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 110.

²⁶CA, QJF 86/3, fo. 144.

and Dr John Gauden, author of *Eikon Basilike*.²⁷ Violence or threats to clergy or their wives were frequently reported, from 1645-8, when there was widespread resistance to clerical ejections and changes in the forms of worship, continuing into the 1650s: the peak years were 1653 and 1655. This was probably a reflection of the increased political tensions in those years, with three different forms of central government in 1653; in 1655 local communities were subject to increased scrutiny by the Major-Generals. In 2 February 1653, for example, John Fisher, clerk, of Bradfield in Essex made oath before a justice of the peace that Samuel Killingworth had assaulted and beaten him; Killingworth was forced to give sureties to keep the peace to Fisher and his wife.²⁸ On 25 September 1655 Thomas Saunders, esquire, was presented to Hertfordshire Quarter Sessions for assaulting Nathaniel Hogan, clerk, at Flamstead, so that, it was claimed, in the legal formula of time, Hogan's life was despaired of.²⁹ There was another side to many stories, and there were nearly fifty reported cases of violence committed by clergy or their wives during this period, often abetted by others, with 1653 again the worst year.

Verbal abuse was frequently reported. Some consisted of generalised antipathy to godliness and its professors. As Christopher Haigh has argued, verbal hostility towards puritanism had been prevalent since the movement emerged in the Elizabethan period; in the 1640s the spread of Godly practices to parishes previously less familiar with them can only have heightened it.³⁰ At Michaelmas sessions in 1645 Randle Proudlowe of Sandbach in Cheshire was described as being of 'an evill life and conversation' a drunkard and an 'idle person, a prophaner of the sabboth, an abuser of Ministers, and of good people professing the word of god'.³¹ In May 1653 Exeter taylor Henry Callendar reportedly complained that the ministers of the city 'doe nothing but goe upp into the pulpit to poppe and prate for their owne ends.' Other abusers targeted particular intruding clergy. A later account in the Walker archive related how the people at Brixham in Devon, perhaps discountenanced by its sequestration from the unworldly John Travers, had 'small esteem' for the preaching of his interregnum replacement John Kempster.³² Quarter sessions records reveal yeoman William Langdon presented in 1656 for 'abusing Mr Kempster minister'.³³ Other parishioners judged their ministers deficient in Godly fervour. In July 1657 a husbandman expressed the view that Josiah Hunter, minister at Little Ouseburn in West Yorkshire, 'was not worth a turd or a toft', that he preached nothing but other men's works, and gave the sacrament to whoremasters and drunkards.³⁴ As with anticlerical violence, reports of abuse peaked in the mid-1650s, but continued thereafter at a higher rate of incidence than before this peak throughout the 1650s, as ministers faced an onslaught of defamatory affronts from sectarians, as 'false prophets', 'blind guides', liars and hirelings, slanderers, deceivers or deluders, thieves and robbers, murderers of souls (Yorkshire,

²⁷TNA, ASSI 35/98/9; ERO, Q/SR 379/82.

²⁸Fisher is not recorded there in CCEd, or WR; see A.G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, hence CR), 199: possibly John Fisher, rector of Ashington from 1655.

²⁹Hogan is not recorded there in CCEd, WR or CR.

³⁰Christopher Haigh, *The Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40, 45-57, 216.

³¹CA, QJF 73/3.

³²WMS C8, fos 48-9.

³³Devon Heritage Centre (hence DHC), QS/4/62; CR, 304, John Kempster, vicar of Brixham 1651-1662, deprived 3 October 1662.

³⁴West Yorkshire Archive Service (hence WYAS), Quarter Sessions Indictments, 6 October 1657, fo. 48; CCEd ID 144612: Josiah Hunter, instituted rector of St Michael Spurriergate, York, 13 June 1662, conformed 23 August 1662.

1654); the Antichrist (Yorkshire, 1654; Sussex, 1655), the devil's seed (Sussex, 1655), or 'a son of perdition' (Cheshire, 1654).³⁵

Sectarians were responsible for many of the disruptions to church services or conflicts in churchyards recorded, with the number of incidents increasing annually from 1654 to a peak in 1658. But disturbances were prevalent well before the sectarian campaign got into its stride. Before 1654, when a third of such incidents took place, only a handful can be clearly attributed to Quakers or other sectarians, and only around a third altogether, although in another third of cases there is little indication of the circumstances behind the 'molestation' of the minister.

Incidents which had almost certainly had other causes include a number of aggressive or violent seating disputes, evidence that the secular courts were now taking on the type of cases which before the civil wars had usually been dealt with by the church courts.³⁶ There were cases where the church was used to abuse political rivals, and where the instigators were drunk. A September 1658 disturbance in 'East Peters Church', as Exeter Cathedral was then called, related to youths 'Playing and sporting' during the sermon.³⁷ The obscene language used by William Davy in interrupting Phillip Goddard's preaching at Exeter's St Sidwell's church on 'Easter Eve' 1653 hardly suggests separatist ways, although the timing might indicate objection to traditionalist worship, as could a disturbance of a Christmas Eve communion by Walter Rogers at Twerton near Bath. Rogers, who was said to have attempted the chastity of a married woman and slighted the sacrament as 'three pints of wine and a peny loaf', had been admonished to 'forebeare the sacrament and depart out of the Congregation' when he turned up unexpectedly to receive communion after three months' absence from church.³⁸

Other incidents related to factional struggles within parishes. At Grappenhall in Cheshire on 8 October 1650, a parishioner commented that 'some good people' in the parish 'love' their minister Mr. Zachary Taylor, 'and some doe not'; a few months later, it was reported that there had been physical violence between Taylor and some of his parishioners.³⁹ At Wombourne in Staffordshire a disturbance in the church on 28 December 1650 related to disagreements between a group of modernisers led by churchwarden John Marsh, who had removed the ancient pulpit, and a group led by the minister, Ithiel Smart, opposing it, in which the preacher appointed by Smart was kept out of the pulpit, and 'many high words were given, and blowes'.⁴⁰ Richard Bathoe, the minister at Pattshull in the same county, had been chosen in 1640 by three freeholders, two of whom, by January 1652, had turned against him, and were accused of importing a 'lewd huswife' to disturb him repeatedly in church and churchyard, 'thinkeinge thereby to drive him away'.⁴¹

³⁵West Sussex Record Office (hence WSRO), QR/W84; East Sussex Record Office, QR/108, fo. 108; J. Raine, *Depositions from the Castle of York* (Surtees Soc., London, 1861), 78; WYAS, Quarter Sessions Orders, 6 October 1657, 84; CA, QJF 82/4.

³⁶Christopher Marsh, 'Sacred Space in England, 1560-1640, the View from the Pew', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 53 (2, April 2002), 300.

³⁷DHC, ECQ/1/3/4, fo. 422v.

³⁸Ibid., fos 208v, 219v; SHC Q/SR/90/35.

³⁹CA: QJF 78/4, fo. 1; QJF 79/2 Trinity 1651, fo. 100; CR, 479-80, Zachary Taylor, rector of Grappenhall, 1649, held posts at Gorton, 1651, Cockey Chapel 1653-7, Bolton, 1653, Rochdale, 1662; evidently nonconformist after 1662 but not deprived, see below, pages 1017-1018.

⁴⁰Staffordshire Record Office (hence SRO), Q/SR/271/5; CCEd ID 29511, Ithiel Smart, instituted vicar of Wombourne, 27 August 1632, d. 10 May 1662.

⁴¹SRO, Q/SR/275/18; CCEd ID 39791, Richard Bathoe or Batha, conformed at Pattshull 21 August 1662, d. 28 September 1663.

Clergy sometimes reported church officials they believed to be leading factions against them. In 1645 at East Tilbury in Essex, vicar James Huddleston complained that churchwarden Thomas Hammond opposed reformation, drinking in the 'Signe of the Ship' alehouse instead of attending sermons and arguing that the Sabbath was not a time to 'restrayne' servants of their 'libertyes'.⁴² In 1647 at Heslington in Yorkshire, minister John Garthwayt accused churchwarden Herbert Cook of detaining the parish register from him and threatening to burn it.⁴³ At Staplegrove in Somerset in 1655 minister John Gardner and twenty others petitioned against William Pummery, a 'desperate malignant' chosen as parish registrar.⁴⁴

Factional disputes sometimes led to ministers being physically excluded from preaching. At Calverleigh in Devon in mid-summer 1647, Simon Quick locked the doors against the minister Mr Birch and the congregation for three successive Sundays.⁴⁵ In May 1650 the churchwarden at Fugglestone in Wiltshire demanded the church keys from the parish clerk, declaring that neither Mr Pinckney the minister nor his curate Mr Fawconer should enter until they had taken the Engagement.⁴⁶ Feelings ran high in Tavistock against the Congregationalist Thomas Larkham: on 27 June 1652 members of one faction broke open the church doors in a 'riotous manner' with an iron bar.⁴⁷ At Ashcomb in the same county Edward Hunt, a 'godly' minister appointed by the Committee, was constantly interrupted in exercising his ministry by 'disaffected persons' of the parish; the churchwardens were ordered on 12 July 1653 to give him the key or be bound over.⁴⁸

Cases of ministers or lay preachers disrupting each other's services were reported at Paignton in 1647; Wombourne in Staffordshire in 1650; Aldford in Cheshire in 1651, Newcastle upon Tyne in 1652, and at Rothwell in Yorkshire in 1658.⁴⁹ At Wraxall church in Somerset on the 25 July 1652, the disturbance involved vocal objections to Joseph Hayne preaching instead of a minister brought there to preach by a local committee member.⁵⁰ A similar stand-off reportedly took place at Dunster in the same county three

⁴²ERO, Q/SBa 2/58; CCEd ID 173108, James Huddleston, presented to East Tilbury 27 August 1632; Samuel Castleton instituted there 21 June 1661; Harold Smith, *The Ecclesiastical History of Essex* (Colchester, 1933), 58, 241: Huddleston himself had been admonished and briefly suspended in November 1637 for neglecting the cure, but was described in the Commonwealth Survey of 1650 as an 'able godly minister'.

⁴³TNA, ASSI 45/2/1; Garthwayt is not recorded there in CCEd, *WR* or *CR*.

⁴⁴SHC, Q/SPET/1/108; *WR*, 309, sequestered from Thomas Blanchflower; *CR*, 217, John Gardiner rector there from 1654; CCEd: replaced in 1662 by Thomas New.

⁴⁵J.S. Cockburn (ed.), *Western Circuit Assize Orders 1629–1648*, (Camden Fourth Series, 17, London, 1976), 265; *WR*, 109-10: Nicholas Burch was presented in 1646 but failed to get possession until 1660, rector there 1660-77.

⁴⁶Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre (hence WSHC), A1/110 1650 T 147; *CR*, 390: John Pinckney, rector of Fugglestone 1655, removed to Longstock, Hampshire, where he was ejected in 1662.

⁴⁷DHC, QS/4/57; Larkham's controversies at Tavistock are well-documented in *The Diary of Thomas Larkham, 1647–1669*, ed. S. Hardman Moore (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011); Devon loyalists later characterised him as 'of a very invective and bitter spirit, violently passionate, peevishly proud, and an unaccounted railer in all his sermons' as well as sexually incontinent, see WMS: C2.294; C5.139v, C8.14r; during his earlier sojourn in New England, John Winthrop found him quarrelsome, 'not savoring the right way of church discipline' and reported that he had fathered a bastard, see *Winthrop's Journal, 1630-49*, ed. J.K. Hosmer (New York, 1908) ii, 27-8, 88-9.

⁴⁸DHC, QS/1/9; *CR*, 285: presumed to be Edward Hunt, rector of Dunchideock, Devon, 1655-1662, deprived 23 September 1662.

⁴⁹DHC, QS/4/54; SRO, Q/SR/271/5; TNA, CHES 21/4, fos 261r, 264v; J. Sykes, *Local Records* (Newcastle, 1866), 106-7; WYAS: Quarter Sessions Indictments, 7 October 1658, fo. 132; Quarter Sessions Order Book, 7 October 1658, 331.

⁵⁰SHC, Q/SR/85/68; *WR*, 317-8: the living was sequestered from Ezekiel Pownall who was present at the time; for further details of this incident see Fiona McCall, 'Outrages in the church': Religious violence in English and Welsh parishes after the Civil Wars', in N. Hodgson, J. MacCallum, N. Morton, A. Fuller (eds.), *Religion and Conflict in Medieval and Early Modern Worlds: Identities, Communities and Authorities* (Routledge, 2020), 114-132, at 125.

months later, when two military officers objected to Mr Dunsterfield, the minister scheduled to preach, because he had not been appointed by the county commissioners.⁵¹

In around a third of cases more than one person raised the disturbance; eight were described as riots or mutinies. After an incident at Northallerton on 27 December 1657 the congregation were described as ‘much disordered’; an interruption by Mrs Barbara Siddall at Tadcaster in Yorkshire in July 1654, led to great ‘uproar’.⁵² In Essex between 1645 and 1647 several ministers faced organised group protesters, sometimes singing psalms at cross-purposes to the intended proceedings.⁵³ At Bedminster church, which had been burnt and ruined during the siege of Bristol, in 1655 boys and youths threw the remaining church masonry at the minister, John Moon, in the churchyard, after the churchwarden had tried to prevent them playing there on a Sunday. The incident, which had begun with a weaver and his wife taunting Moon, ended with both minister and churchwarden abandoning the scene, fearful of the large ‘unruly’ and tumultuous crowd which had gathered about them; Moon was described as ‘late minister’ in the examination.⁵⁴

Repeated diverse problems in parishes where there had been a sequestration testify to the endemic in-fighting which followed in these places. At North Petherton in Somerset the continuing presence in the parish of the sequestered incumbent, former prebendary of Wells John Morley and his family throughout the interregnum probably aggravated this; a John Morley was bound over in both 1651 and 1654.⁵⁵ Five elderly parishioners attested in 1705 that there had been at least eight settled ministers at North Petherton during the interregnum, but the people did not ‘much affect’ them, ‘because of Mr Morleys living amongst them’.⁵⁶ In 1650 Anne Coxe, the new minister’s wife, accused a parishioner of sexual harassment.⁵⁷ In July 1654, when some of the parishioners attempted to get a Mr Hand to preach for them, claiming three hundred people wanted to hear him, the churchwardens locked them out.⁵⁸ Sampford Peverell in Devon had been sequestered from Thomas Collins in 1647, but Collins was still preaching there in 1650. In October 1655 Davy Huish and Henry Page were presented for ringing the bells while the minister was preaching. This may have been Stephen Coven, who was admitted rector in November 1655; the following year proved particularly turbulent for the parish.⁵⁹ In January Susan Welland was presented for disturbing the minister; in March Coven was indicted for beating and wounding John Osmond.⁶⁰ By August Coven, described in 1665 as a ‘wandering Seditious Seminary’, appears to have left because Agnes Dave was presented for claiming that Mrs Hopkins, the wife of the new minister, had been a leger (camp follower) in ‘Gorings Troope’.⁶¹ In July 1658 there was a disagreement between the (unnamed) minister and the churchwardens over giving the minister a key to the parish chest.⁶²

⁵¹SHC, Q/SR/85/33; Dunsterfield is not listed in CCEd, *WR* or *CR*.

⁵²North Yorkshire Record Office (hence NYRO), QSM 2/10, fo. 136v; TNA, ASSI 45/5/1.

⁵³ERO: T/A/465/2; Q/SR: 324/32, 110; 325/106; 328/6.

⁵⁴SHC, Q/SR/91/60; Moon is not listed in CCEd, *WR* or *CR*.

⁵⁵SHC, Q/SO/5, fos 301v, 454v; *WR*, 316-7; CCEd ID 58898: John Morley, vicar of North Petherton since 1613; died there in 1662.

⁵⁶WMS C1, fo. 261r.

⁵⁷SHC, Q/SO/5, fo. 238v.

⁵⁸SHC, Q/SR/90/44.

⁵⁹*WR*, 110-11; CCEd ID 95715: Thomas Collins: Collins was instituted there in 1633 and restored 1660-5.

⁶⁰DHC: QS/1/9; QS/4/62.

⁶¹DHC, QS/4/60, 61; *CR*, 139: Stephen Coven, admitted rector there 1655; Hopkins is not listed there in CCEd, *WR* or *CR*.

⁶²DHC, QS/1/9.

Nightmare parishioners reported by parish clergy included John Goring, gent, at Barlavington in Sussex, repeatedly in trouble between 1653 and 1658, although found not guilty of assaulting minister John Willis and his wife Mary, and Nicholas Luckis, cited in April 1657 for long-term absence from St Decuman's church in Somerset, Sabbath-day drinking, knocking over a font, abusing one minister and striking another.⁶³ He was said to walk around carrying a gun, and when a churchwarden came to take distress for unpaid tithes, chased after him with a corn-pike.⁶⁴ A long-running feud occurred at Bryan Walton's sequestered living at Sandon in Essex between minister Samuel Smith and the Barber family.⁶⁵ In 1651 Samuel Smith complained that Jane Barber railed against him, calling him a 'Blackmouthed knave'; in 1656 Smith pointed out that Martha Barber, spinster, remained unpunished for having an illegitimate child. Three years later Smith was said to have given false evidence against Edward Barber, and was later charged with assaulting him.⁶⁶

Clergy also concerned themselves in a variety of quarter sessions cases which did not directly impinge on themselves or the running of the church: bastardy orders, cases relating to apprentices or newly-erected cottages, certifying bridge or highway repairs, petitions from maimed soldiers, or interventions in support of parishioners appealing for charity or in trouble with the law or the military. They also sometimes reported parishioners they considered particularly vexatious to others and disturbing the peace of the community.

The clergy's traditional role of brokering a 'Christian peace' and reconciliation in disputes was sometimes evident although perhaps in decline, with signs of a preference for other types of mediators towards the 1650s. In January 1646 a land dispute in Caldbergh in Yorkshire was referred to the mediation of three clergy including Joshua Pulleyne, dean of Middleham.⁶⁷ But in October 1647 at Rotherham a protracted legal controversy was by the parties' consents referred to the minister of Sheffield, Mr Fisher, but also to Colonel John Bright.⁶⁸ At Basingstoke in Hampshire at Michaelmas 1649 differences relating to the spoiling of woods at Hackwood Park were initially referred to two ministers, John Brockett of Bentworth and Stephen Webb at Basingstoke, but were soon taken over by local JPs.⁶⁹ In a 1656 case from Cheadle the rector Peter Harrison sided with one of the parties while a Captain Milner was 'chosen Umpire' to settle the

⁶³CR, 532: probably John Willis, rector of the sequestered rectory of Woolavington, 1654, later a nonconformist; CCEd ID 59187: Robert Parsons, instituted to St Decuman's in 1611, conformed 22 August 1662, successor instituted 10 March 1663; Humphrey Wall, minister at Williton, but not listed there in CCEd, *WR* or *CR*.

⁶⁴SHC, Q/SR/95/201-202; WSRO: QR/W77, nos 1, 10, 23, 24, 76; QR/W79, nos 21, 22; there were also articles against Luckis in 1633 for breaking the windows of Williton church with a ball, see SHC, Q/SR/69/67.

⁶⁵For Smith, see *CR*, 449; *WR*, 61-2; Smith, *Ecclesiastical History*, 108, 172, 257, 393; Smith appears to have been a Congregationalist, as according to Philip Browne, incumbent there from 1694-1714, he refused the sacrament to any but his own congregation.

⁶⁶ERO: Q/SBa 2/76; Q/SR: 349/80; 367/28; 379/21, 69; 380/18.

⁶⁷J.C. Atkinson (ed.), *Quarter Sessions Records* (North Riding Record Soc., 9 vols., 1884-92), iv, 251; C. Pulein, *Pulleyns of Yorkshire* (Leeds, 1915), 325-7: Joshua Pulleyne was recorded as dean of Middleham in 1638, and was still living there when he died in 1657, requesting to be buried in the chancel; he is not listed in CCEd, *WR* or *CR*.

⁶⁸WYAS, Quarter Sessions Orders, 12 October 1647, 84; *CR*, 198-9; Joseph Hunter, *Hallamshire: the History and Topography of the Parish of Sheffield* (1819), 153: James Fisher, there in 1646, following a sequestration; a Congregationalist, he did not conform in 1662; wahttps://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/cromwell-army-officers/surnames-b; Sheffield City Archives, WWM/D/643-672: Bright was a colonel in the parliamentary army, and Sheriff of Yorkshire, 1654-6.

⁶⁹Hampshire Record Office (hence HRO), Q1/3, 21, 27; CCEd ID 106153: probably John Brockett, rector of nearby Ellisfield, 1634-1642; Stephen Webb is not listed in CCEd, *WR* or *CR* but was presumably related to Ambrose Webb, vicar of Basingstoke, d. 1648, see *WR*, 191.

differences.⁷⁰ Settling domestic disputes were perhaps still seen as within the clergy's purlieu: at Broughton in Hampshire at the Easter Sessions of 1654 the differences between Edward Long and Mary his wife were referred by the court to the minister there, Anthony Hillary, even though he had only recently been appointed.⁷¹

Clergy might still be asked to mediate in moral cases. In January 1652 Christopher Jole, minister of Stratton St Margaret in Wiltshire, reported that scholar John Bufton, presented for an inmate at the last sessions at Marlborough, had now removed his mistress.⁷² The more enthusiastic clergy needed no encouragement to denounce to the courts those whose degenerate behaviour they deemed likely to provoke the retribution of God upon the community. Enoch Gray, minister of Wickham in Essex, complained in 1646 that John Goodale, who had been bound to good behaviour for incest, had put away and hidden his wife, so he could have 'recourse to her at his pleasure'. He required action to prevent the sin 'cleaving to my soul' and scandal to the town and his ministry.⁷³ At Rayleigh in Essex a year later, rector Abraham Caley reported that Nicholas Line had fathered a child with his wife's daughter, a 'Cryme of a High Nature', 'the hope of Impunity', he argued, 'Emboldens offenders . . . There having bin more Bastards with in our parish with in these twelve monthes then . . . in severall yeeres'.⁷⁴ In 1653 at South Ockenden in Essex minister William Rhett 'out of a deepe sense of prevailing sinne amongst us to the great dishonour of God and Scandall of Religion' reported that Mary Norman was a 'contemner of the meanes of grace', suspected of bodily uncleanness, and a curser.⁷⁵

Campaigning by clergy against drunkenness and disorderly alehouses was most determined in Cheshire, with disorder liable to be paired with suspect religious inclinations. In 1646, John Ford, minister at Over, having tried but failed to get alehouse-keeper Robert Ellems to take the Covenant, advised that his alehouse be suppressed, ending his letter sanctimoniously, 'I am yours in him who dyed for all his'.⁷⁶ At Goostrey chapelry in 1647, minister Zachary Crofton complained that the 'creatures of God' were suffering on account of the three alehouses there. The constables, he claimed, were drunkards, so it was unlikely any action would come from them. However such efforts frequently backfired.⁷⁷ Crofton, originally from Ireland and only twenty-one at the time, did not remain long at Goostrey.⁷⁸ The parish remained turbulent, suffering a disturbance on 13 May 1656 blamed on 'delinquents' opposing the election of two churchwardens.⁷⁹ After Mr Gilbert, parson of Cheadle, certified in 1647 that Hugh and Anne Hooley were unfit persons to run an alehouse, he and his wife were twice reported to the authorities,

⁷⁰CA, QJF 84/2, fo. 152v; CCEd ID 74822; *WR*, 90-91: Peter Harrison, rector of Cheadle 1651 – 1674.

⁷¹HRO, Q1/3, 292; *WR*, 182; CCEd ID 93557: Anthony Hillary, rector of Broughton in 1654 and 1663-1686.

⁷²WSHC, A1/110 1652 H 148; the taking in of inmates was a criminal offence under an Elizabethan statute, see Michael Dalton, *The Country Justice* (1746), 68; CCEd 80810: Christopher Jole, vicar of Stratton St Margaret 1635-71.

⁷³ERO: Q/Sba 2/59; Q/SR323/59: the marriage was considered incestuous because Goodale's new wife was his former wife's daughter; *CR*, 232 lists Enoch Gray as vicar of Wickham Bishops 1644-58.

⁷⁴ERO, Q/SBa 2/65; *CR*, 99: Abraham Caley, rector of Rayleigh 1644-1663.

⁷⁵ERO, Q/SBa 2/85; *WR*, 153: Rhett was recorded at South Ockendon in 1649, following a sequestration, but replaced by 1655.

⁷⁶CA, QJF 74/2, fo. 35v; CCEd ID 36144: a Ford is listed as curate there in 1635.

⁷⁷CA, QJF 75/1 fo. 102.

⁷⁸See I. Peck, *Recollection in the Republics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 142-4; *CR*, 144-5: Crofton was curate at Wrenbury in Cheshire in 1650, where in 1651 he was reported to the Committee for Compounding for refusing the Engagement. He then moved to London to continue his chequered career.

⁷⁹CA, QJF 84/1, fo. 104.

the second requiring a trip to London by Gilbert to clear himself of charges of sedition.⁸⁰ Responses could also be violent, as at Aber in Caernarfonshire in 1652 and Staple Fitzpaine in Somerset in 1655 where ministers were assaulted during attempts to restrain Sunday drinking at alehouses.⁸¹

Clergy occasionally took a stand against Sunday sports, wakes, revels or skimmingtons. Indeed, by an order dated 14 April 1656 made at the general sessions at Pontefract local ministers were instructed to do so, to report offenders against a ban on private clubbing for ale, pig or goose feasts and revelling at weddings.⁸² At Chiselborough in Somerset in 1652 minister John Tucker invited military intervention by addressing his complaint about sabbath-day pastimes to Major Bonner and Colonel Pyne.⁸³ When in October 1653 the churchwardens at Ashwater in Devon were fined by the justices for allowing a maypole to continue standing in the parish throughout the summer, parishioner Mr John Short apparently muttered to the effect that what had been erected was not a maypole and those that judged it so were 'fooles and knaves'. Minister Benedict More reported Short to quarter sessions for his remarks.⁸⁴ But such officiousness risked provoking a reaction. When John Jackson, minister at Lapley in Staffordshire, petitioned for the repression of wakes there in August 1655, one of those he accused verbally abused and physically threatened his wife and servant.⁸⁵ Gilbert's attempts at reformation at Cheadle gathered little traction: not only were the Hooleys still causing trouble in 1656 and 1658, but in November 1658 churchwarden John Morgan was presented for 'hyreing his Bull to be baited from Alehouse to Alehouse' on Cheadle Wake day to a 'great concourse' of people.⁸⁶

The initial enthusiasm in the 1640s of Godly ministers for social control seemed to melt away by the 1650s as most left reporting Sabbath breakers, swearers, revellers and alehouse-haunters to others. Clergy were probably well aware that parishes which had removed royalist incumbents during the 1640s, might prove ready to deal in the same kind with any successors who aggravated them. In the legal records investigated, clergy were as likely to have charges made against them as to accuse others.

Charges of sedition appear frequently in interregnum legal records: some clergy were cited, for seditious speeches or preaching, often at assizes, since this was a serious offence. Sometimes a number of parishioners were prepared to testify to what they had heard. In other cases, particular individuals denounced clergy, while other congregants shrank from accusation or gave signs of being in sympathy with the preacher's sentiments: that the government were 'drawing us to perdition' (Winkle, Cheshire, 1650) or 'that none ought to put their king to death' although he were a tyrant, and 'that this land was ruled by fooles' (Colchester, 1654).⁸⁷ In Cheshire several complaints of seditious preaching or opposing parliamentary fasts, thanksgiving feasts or the Engagement seem to have been a pretext to remove unpopular Presbyterian ministers in sequestered livings, as at

⁸⁰WR, 92: Cheadle was sequestered from William Nicolls, Gilbert is not listed there in CCEd, WR or CR.

⁸¹Gwynedd Archives, XQS 1652/32-3; SHC, Q/SR/92/4026.

⁸²WYAS, Quarter Sessions Orders, 15 April 1656, 185-6.

⁸³SHC, Q/SR/84/3; WR, 313, 320, Chiselborough was sequestered from Thomas Gauler, who was restored in 1660; a John Tucker was recorded there in 1652-6.

⁸⁴DHC, QS/1/9 1652-1661; see British Library, Add. 29319, fo. 124: More (Benedict). Rector of Ashwater v. A. Short, 1655: it was in More's interest to emphasise Short's delinquency as Short claimed the right to present his son Ames to the living instead of More.

⁸⁵SRO: Q/SR/292/8, 22; Q/SR/293/9; WR, 323: Lapley was sequestered from Robert Hilton, who was restored in 1660.

⁸⁶CRO: QJF 84/1, fo. 4; QJF 84/2, fos 215, 217; QJF 86/3, fo. 11; TNA, CHES 21/4, fo. 392v.

⁸⁷CA, QJF 78/1, fo. 41, ERO, T/A/465/2.

Grappenhall in January 1650/1 where Zachary Taylor had only recently replaced William Seddon after Seddon's sequestration in 1648 and, it was claimed, there was scarcely a neighbour 'but have good cause' against him.⁸⁸ In 1652, at Doultling in Somerset, the puritan-named Gracious Franklyn seemed an unlikely candidate to face charges of haunting alehouses in preference to observing a parliamentary thanksgiving.⁸⁹ But claims of drinking or swearing had been a tactic of proven efficacy in removing clergy, and continued to be so. John Colefax of Wettenhall in Cheshire, who was presented in 1655 for performing illegal marriages, haunting alehouses and incontinence with several women, protested that the charges were promoted by another clergyman, John Ashbrooke, with whom he had fallen out.⁹⁰

The possibility of clerical sexual misbehaviour continued to be of special concern to the authorities, and charges of this nature were reported in lurid detail: in 1652 accusations of rape against Philip Morris, curate of Stambourne in Essex; in 1653 complaints that Essex minister Robert Percivall had battered down the door of the woman who rejected his marriage proposal.⁹¹ Perhaps more questionable were the complaints against James Beach at Egg Buckland in Devon, which a later loyalist account insisted were cooked up to secure his removal. The charges were (perhaps conveniently) remembered as alehouse haunting but the contemporary record reveals that Beach was actually accused of fornicating with one Joane Pringe.⁹²

Authorities concerned themselves when female servants gave birth to illegitimate children in parsonages, for example at the house of Thomas Oresbie, clerk, at Hawkwell in Essex in August 1647, where Alice King was accused of smothering her child in her bedding and, although she pleaded not guilty, hanged for it.⁹³ In 1655 at Widford in the same county, when Susan Osborne was indicted for infanticide after carrying her child for eleven miles without nourishment, Nicholas King, clerk, was charged with fornicating with her, and abetting the murder, but both were found not guilty.⁹⁴ But the prurient detail of John Musgrove's early-morning discovery at Wembdon in Somerset in 1650 with the maidservant who had recently given birth to his child was more than enough to remove him. Even under the intense clerical scrutiny of the early 1640s, Musgrove had somehow avoided ejection, despite being 'commonly reported' to have fathered at least two other 'base' children with female servants.⁹⁵ It was not so much the truth about clergy's misbehaviour, but whether they had enemies keen to exploit it, or connections with powerful individuals willing to suppress it, that was critical. Rape charges against John Wallace, minister at Grasmere in Westmorland, shocked the parish in 1655, and forced to him to lie low for a while. Yet despite his maidservant's detailed depositions against him, protected by local Independent John

⁸⁸CA, QJF 79/2, 3; see page 9.

⁸⁹SHC, Q/SR/84/36-41; CR, 212: Gracious Franklyn, vicar of Doultling, 1647-1662, did not conform.

⁹⁰CA, QJF 83/3, fo. 127; neither is listed in CCEd, CR or WR.

⁹¹ERO: Q/SBa 2/80, 85; Q/SR: 353/88, 115-7, 68, 126, 135, 149; 358/44, 64, 100; WMS, C1, fo. 27r. WR, 161; CCEd ID 165683: Robert Percival held Wickford for a short time in 1649, then joined the royalist army; he was restored 1660-4.

⁹²WMS C2, fo. 237r; DHC, QS/4/61; WR, 107; CCEd ID 93575, as James Bache, vicar of Egg Buckland in 1622; restored, but d. 1661.

⁹³ERO, T/A 418/131/20; TNA, ASSI 35/89/10; Smith, *Ecclesiastical History*, 107, 260: Thomas Orseby or Oresby, a Presbyterian, described as 'very well approved of' and an 'Able Preacher' in the Commonwealth Survey of 1650; CCEd: successor conformed 15 August 1662.

⁹⁴ERO: T/A 418/147/6; Q/SR 367/63-5; TNA, ASSI 35/97/3/2, 3, 6; King is not listed in CCEd, CR or WR.

⁹⁵SHC: Q/SR/82/154, 156, 191-192; CCEd ID 13855; WR, 317: John Musgrove or Musgrave, instituted 1624, restored 1660-71.

Archer, Wallace was still a minister in September 1660, when he was prosecuted for failure to read Common Prayer.⁹⁶

Prosecution of clergy for religious offences was infrequent and temporally and regionally variable. Of two dozen indictments for using the prayer book, half were from Yorkshire; several Sussex ministers were presented for this between 1653 and 1655.⁹⁷ More common were prosecutions against clergy for conducting marriage services illegally; these peaked in 1655-6 under the Major-Generals. There were occasional prosecutions for illicit baptisms: York minister Richard Dunwell for baptising with the prayer book in August 1647; clergy at Reed in Essex in May 1651 and in Shrewsbury in September 1656 for baptising infants privately.⁹⁸ There were also presentations of ministers for refusing to baptise at all at Heyshott in Sussex in October 1653, and of two Staffordshire clergy for refusing to baptise illegitimate children in 1659.⁹⁹

Failure to maintain chancels was a more common complaint; clergy presented included John Syms at the poet Robert Herrick's former living at Dean Prior in Devonshire in 1647, and Matthew Robinson at Burneston in Yorkshire.¹⁰⁰ John Wall, minister of Broadwas in Worcestershire, was cited to assizes in August 1658 for his neglect.¹⁰¹ Those accused were quite often described as improprators, like Francis Beaumont at Sutton-on-the-Forest in North Yorkshire, in July 1649. Beaumont reported to assizes problems collecting tithes in July 1654, which perhaps explained his neglect.¹⁰² Yet clergy were less commonly found negligent than lay improprators, and sometimes joined other parishioners in petitioning against those defaulting on their financial obligations towards churches, particularly in former civil war zones. Josias Clarke, minister at Tattenhall in Cheshire, complained in January 1650/1 that the churchwarden George Edge refused to raise funds to repair the 'much broken' church exposed to unseasonable weather; to the discouragement of those that 'do not Come' and the 'prejudice of the health' of those that did.¹⁰³ With widespread resistance towards paying church rates, it might be necessary to petition for sequestration money or the benevolence of neighbouring parishes, as at Uplyme in Devon, which had been embroiled in the siege of Lyme Regis. In 1647 the minister Bernard Smith appealed for external funding to

⁹⁶M.L. Armitt, *The Church of Grasmere: A History* (Kendal, 1912), 84-5; TNA, ASSI 45/5/2; *WR*, 367; *CR*, 508: Wallis or Wallace was presented to the sequestered living of Grasmere in 1653, he was vicar of Heversham in 1659, curate at Killington in 1662, to which the sequestered vicar was restored.

⁹⁷It is difficult to know why there are so many cases from Yorkshire; there is a substantial set of surviving records from this county, and it was an area of religious conservatism, but there were also prosecutions in Cheshire, Hampshire, Essex, Shropshire, and Wiltshire.

⁹⁸TNA, ASSI 45/2/1; ERO, Q/SBa 2/76; SA, 3365/2246/63; CCEd 116704; *WR*, 392: Richard Dunwell, vicar of Strensall, Yorkshire in 1642 and 1644, curate of Wetherby in 1650.

⁹⁹WSRO, QR/78, nos 5-6; SRO: Q/SR/308/6; Q/SR/306/57; CCEd; *WR*, 357; *CR*, 218: Richard Garret, rector of Heyshott in Sussex 1647-1662; the sequestered rector was restored by 1662; *CR*, 267: Richard Hincks, Congregationalist, curate of Tipton in Staffordshire 1652-1660, deprived by 1663; William Puller at Berkswich in Staffordshire, not listed in CCEd, *CR* or *WR*.

¹⁰⁰DHC, QS/4/54; NYRO, QSM 2/10, fo. 155r; *CR*, 442: John Syms, minister at Sheepstor 1623-1643, ejected from Dean Prior in 1660 on the restoration of Herrick, d. 1661; for Robinson see J.E.B. Mayor, (ed.), *The Autobiography of Matthew Robinson* (Cambridge, 1856).

¹⁰¹TNA, ASSI 2/1; NYRO, QSM 2/9, fo. 106v; *CR*, 507; *WR*, 387, John Wall, rector of Broadwas, 1646-60, sequestered from Nathaniel Tomkins, who was restored in 1660.

¹⁰²NYRO: QSM 2/8, fos 149r, 163v, 168r; QSM 2/9, fos 71r, 83v, 92r; TNA, ASSI 45/5/1; CCEd ID 77932; J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922) i, 118: Francis Beaumont or Bemont, vicar of Sutton on the Forest, 1646-1669.

¹⁰³CA, QJF 78/4, fos 35-7; *WR*, 230: Josias Clarke, rector in 1648, left by 1659.

repair a decayed tower and a chancel which had fallen down, breaking the seats, communion table and the pulpit.¹⁰⁴

We will never truly comprehend the religious changes of the mid-seventeenth century unless we have a more complete picture of the clergy involved. There is no lack of sources available for study, if we have the determination, the knowledge and the energy to do so. The surprisingly-abundant surviving legal records of the Commonwealth are amongst them. These reveal the often short-lived and otherwise unrecorded presence of clergy serving parishes, sometimes resorted to in ordinary ways that suggested a degree of acceptance and respect. They also reveal ministers who were combatant, abused, even beleaguered. Young Godly enthusiasts like Zachary Crofton, initially optimistic about the possibility of reform, broke their swords against parish factions politically, spiritually or morally opposed to them. With the authorities already primed to seek out potential clerical misbehaviour, charges of sedition, incontinency or lack of religious compliance continued to be a useful tool for moving disliked incumbents on and out of the parish. Legal sources are, of course, biased towards identifying breaches of social discipline, so we may question how typical these cases were. The legal records provide too many examples to suggest that these were outliers: although sequestered parishes appear to have experienced more problems than most, all was not necessarily well elsewhere and problems might be experienced by longstanding clergy in other parishes as well. It took a brave parson to publicise their parishioners' animosity towards them to the whole county. More likely difficulties elsewhere were patiently endured, solved by migrating away, or by informal means, which have left behind no evidence. Clergy needed to be astute and adroit to negotiate the divided religious landscape of the times, following the advice of Yorkshire incumbent Matthew Robinson, who kept his living throughout these times, by remaining 'cool calm and reserved, never mingling with the humours of men'.¹⁰⁵

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¹⁰⁵Mayor (ed.), *Autobiography of Matthew Robinson*, 52.

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