

WILLS AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN THE ARCHDEACONRY OF STAFFORD,
1532 - 1580

by

JENNIFER DAVIES

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PHILOSOPHY

Department of (Medieval) History
School of History and Cultures
College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
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ABSTRACT

The entire complement of wills from the deanery of Leek probated between 1532 and 1580, about 1,300, have been examined to assess response of the testators to religious change through the first fifty years of the Reformation, by detailing the impact on their religious sentiments and bequests. While change in this backward agricultural community was late and driven from above, unexpectedly, once initiated, it took hold rapidly. It is suggested that this was due to the actions of the Protestant Bishop Thomas Bentham, anxious to mitigate fears voiced by critics of his weak implementation of government edicts in his diocese. He advanced change through monitoring and resolute control of his clergy. A transition from traditional religious sentiments is observed in the will-writing output of individual clergy: as priests appointed during earlier, Catholic regimes died or resigned, and they were replaced by men supporting the Elizabethan Settlement. However, change lagged behind by about fifteen years in parishes with powerful Catholic landowners such as the Draycotts.

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Second, my research has required lengthy access to the collections held at Lichfield Record Office. I would like to record my thanks to the good-humoured and professional assistance of the search room staff, under Andrew George, principal archivist. In particular the staff retrieved about one and half thousand wills for me, batches of which were without fail put ready for my visits to Lichfield, despite heavy public use of the search room at a time when services were being reduced.

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1503 Geoffrey Blythe bishop of Coventry and Lichfield
- 1509 HENRY VIII
Married Catherine of Aragon
- 1516 Birth of Princess Mary
- 1529 Trial of Henry's marriage adjourned by the Pope
Start of the 'Reformation Parliament', initially acting against clerical abuses of power
Wolsey fell and was succeeded by More as Lord Chancellor and Cromwell as first minister
- 1531 Death of Geoffrey Blythe
- 1532 'Submission of the clergy' ceding power to the King More resigned in protest
Wareham died and was succeeded as Archbishop of Canterbury by Cranmer
- 1533 Henry VIII married Anne Boleyn
Act in Restraint of Appeals stated that England was an empire 'governed by one Supreme Head and King', so that adhering to papal rulings became illegal
Cranmer stated Henry's marriage to Catherine was null and void
Birth of Princess Elizabeth
- 1534 Act of Succession passed excluding Princess Mary
Act of Supremacy passed stating that Henry VIII was Supreme Head of the Church, and repudiating foreign authority
Rowland Lee bishop of Coventry and Lichfield
- 1535 Executions of Fisher, bishop of Rochester, and More, both supporters of Catherine and Mary
'Valor Ecclesiasticus', a survey of clerical incomes, to facilitate taxing of the clergy
Cromwell 'Vicegerent in spirituals', manager of the church, abolished holy days which were damaging the economy
- 1536 First Suppression Act; dissolution of smaller monasteries
Death of Catherine of Aragon
Anne Boleyn executed as a traitor
Cranmer pronounced Henry's marriage to Anne invalid
Henry VIII married Jane Seymour
Act of Ten Articles (written by Cranmer) and Cromwellian Injunctions
Act of Succession passed in favour of Henry's children by Jane
Rebellion in the North
- 1537 Birth of Prince Edward
Death of Jane Seymour
- 1538 Action against noble families who had supported Catherine
Injunctions stating that a bible in English should be provided in all churches and railing against the cult of images
- 1539 Act of Six Articles, reaffirming Catholic doctrines
Second Suppression Act to confirm surrender of surviving monasteries
- 1540 Henry VIII married Anne of Cleves
The marriage was declared unlawful

- Fall of Cromwell
- Henry VIII married Katherine Howard
- Both heretics, and supporters of Catherine of Aragon and Mary, executed
- 1542 Katherine Howard executed
- 1543 Henry VIII married Katherine Parr
- Act for the Advancement of True Religion forbade bible-reading by many of the lower orders
- Death of Rowland Lee; Richard Sampson translated from Chichester to Coventry and Lichfield
- 1544 Act of Succession reinstating Mary and Elizabeth in the line of succession
- 1546 Plot against Katherine Parr; Anne Askew tortured and burnt at the stake
- Survey of the wealth of the chantries
- 1547 Death of Henry VIII

- 1547 EDWARD VI (European powers believed that Mary was the rightful heir)
- Edward Seymour Lord Protector
- Injunctions ordering the destruction of 'abused' images; banning processions, ringing of bells, use of rosary beads and the lighting of candles except on the high altar
- Provision of a 'poor man's box' for bequests from the dying
- The Book of Homilies* written by Cranmer to be read in every church;
- Erasmus's *Paraphrases* to be placed in every church; each parish to possess a bible in English
- Repeal of the Act of Six Articles
- Second Chantry Act
- 1549 Act of Uniformity - Book of Common Prayer only acceptable form of worship
- Priests allowed to marry
- Rebellions put down in Devon, Norfolk and elsewhere in Southern England
- Somerset charged with treason, Northumberland assumed power
- 1552 Second Book of Common Prayer
- Forty-two Articles
- Altars removed and images whitewashed in churches
- 1553 Death of Edward VI
- Lady Jane Grey proclaimed Queen

- 1553 MARY
- Execution of Northumberland
- Pope appointed Reginald Pole as papal legate
- Parliament declared marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon valid
- While ignoring the position of the Pope, repealed legislation on the Prayer Book, sacraments and married priests
- 1554 Articles emphasising return to Catholic worship
- Wyatt conspiracy to overthrow Mary and prevent her marriage to Philip of Spain resisted
- Lady Jane Grey and her husband executed
- Princess Elizabeth under suspicion
- Marriage of Mary to Philip of Spain
- Repeal of the Act of Supremacy
- Cardinal Pole readmitted to England - reconciliation with Rome

- Death of Richard Sampson; Ralph Baynes bishop of Coventry and Lichfield
- 1555 Burning of heretics including John Rogers, canon of St Paul's and Hooper, bishop of Worcester and Gloucester Public resentment
- 1556 Cranmer burnt
- 1558 Death of Mary

- 1558 ELIZABETH I
- 1559 Act of Supremacy reinstated; Elizabeth Supreme Governor of the Church of England
Act of Uniformity
Elizabethan Prayer Book
Ralph Baynes deprived of Coventry and Lichfield; Thomas Bentham bishop of Coventry and Lichfield
- 1563 Thirty-nine Articles, establishing the doctrinal position of the Church of England
- 1565 Injunctions of Bishop Bentham to enforce acceptable religious practice
- 1568 Mary Queen of Scots fled to England
- 1569 Mary moved to Tutbury Castle, Staffordshire, under the custody of the Earl of Shrewsbury
- 1570 Elizabeth excommunicated by the Pope
- 1571 Ridolfi Plot to replace Elizabeth with Mary uncovered
- 1578 Death of Thomas Bentham
- 1580 William Overton bishop of Coventry and Lichfield

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis assesses the impact of and responses to religious change between 1532 and 1580, a dynamic and complex period of English history, in one of the four deaneries of the archdeaconry of Stafford, the deanery of Leek. The method used was a micro-study taking wills as evidence. A general account of the process of will-making in the sixteenth century follows a brief description of the deanery. This introduction then concludes with a justification of the issues deemed relevant to the investigation.

The Area

The geography of the area is illustrated on page 21 in figure 1.3, a copy of a portion of Robert Morden's map of Staffordshire of 1695.¹ The land had not then undergone large-scale changes, such as canal-building, which occurred during the industrial revolution. Whilst lacking the precision of an ordnance survey, the map does demonstrate the topography of the district fairly accurately. However, it omits roads, and the areas of forest would probably have been larger before monastery property was acquired by profiteers following the Dissolution. The deanery consisted largely of the Staffordshire Moorlands, situated at the southern end of the Pennines and 800 feet above sea-level. They were described by William Camden in 1586 as mountainous and infertile in comparison with the area to the south at lower altitude, along the valleys of the Churnet and Tean, tributaries of the Dove, and the Blithe;² both the Dove and the Blithe are tributaries of the Trent. The eastern Moorlands were mainly limestone pasture, with some arable cultivation on the better soils, the latter

¹ Robert Morden's map of Staffordshire, published in the 1695 edition of Camden's *Britannia* by Awnsham and John Churchill with Abel Swalle.

² Quoted in D.M. Palliser, *The Making of the English Landscape: The Staffordshire Landscape* (London, 1975), p. 33.

situated in several deeply cut dales, with sheep-farming predominating on the poor millstone grit uplands of the western Moorlands. In the south, and particularly around Uttoxeter and the fertile lower reaches of the Dove, dairy-farming contributed significantly to the prosperity of the local economy.³ Indeed, in 1524, among the lay subsidy populations of taxpayers,⁴ Uttoxeter and Mayfield supported the highest of all parishes in Leek Deanery, at 1 to 1.5 taxpayers per 100 acres. For the majority of parishes the value was below 0.5 taxpayer per acre, making the deanery the most poorly populated segment of Staffordshire; and the density of population in Staffordshire as a whole was only three-quarters of the national average.⁵

There were only two small towns in the deanery, each with less than one thousand inhabitants: Uttoxeter and Leek, and in both occupations were almost entirely associated with agriculture.⁶ The area contained a major road built by the Romans from Derby to Cheshire and passing east to west through Rocester, north east of Combridge on the Derbyshire border. Another Roman road passed north to south from Buxton through Leek and Stafford to join the Watling Street at Penkridge.⁷ A third significant, medieval, passage called the Earl's Way after reaching Leek from Cheshire to the north travelled south east towards Ashbourne on the Derbyshire border, through Waterfall.⁸ However, most 'roads' were narrow tracks for packhorses and wagons, traversing between scattered settlements. Rivers were usually crossed by means of fords, and bridge-building or maintenance at locations where travellers

³ Ibid., p. 86.

⁴ All men, and women who were heads of households, aged sixteen and over worth £1 or more. A.D.M. Phillips and C.B. Phillips (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Staffordshire* (Manchester, 2011), p. 38.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 38-9.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 46-7.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 26-7.

⁸ M.W. Greenslade, *A History of Leek*, an extract from *The Victoria County History of Staffordshire*, Volume VII (London, 1995), p. 98.

were especially vulnerable was a major community concern, often sustained through charitable donations.

Will-making

Until reform in the mid-nineteenth century, when legal affairs concerning the laity became the province solely of the secular courts, English people who needed recourse to the law might well have ended up in one of several hundred ecclesiastical courts, subject to canon law. In Staffordshire in the sixteenth century the lowest tier and most frequently used ecclesiastical court would have been that of the archdeacon; although Staffordshire is known to have possessed many peculiar jurisdictions, outside the bishop's control,⁹ and each peculiar too would have held its own courts. Above the archdeacon's court was the bishop's consistory court covering the entire diocese, based at Lichfield; and above that was the court for the province of Canterbury. The bishop or archdeacon would probably not have appeared in person, instead an appointed official would have presided.¹⁰

The church courts dealt with a variety of business, including acting as boards of 'verification and record'. A significant proportion of that work, and indeed their work as a whole, involved proving or validating wills, and this would have been a source of a sizeable amount of court revenue. Probate was granted upon the oath of the executor that it was the true will of the testator.¹¹ It gave permission to the executor to administer the estate of the deceased, and, in

⁹ W.N. Landor, 'Staffordshire incumbents and parochial records (1530-1680)', *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, The William Salt Archaeological Society (1915), pp. 397,399.

¹⁰ R.B. Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts, 1500 - 1860* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 1-14,35-9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

the sixteenth century, was confirmed by a record in the act book of the probate court. In Lichfield diocese, the actual will was stored in church archives, as well as an inventory of the deceased person's goods and chattels, with copies given to the executors.¹² Whereas, from 1532, the diocesan courts in Staffordshire have retained significant numbers of wills and inventories, the peculiar courts on the other hand have been remiss in failing to preserve the documents for which they were the guardians, as virtually none have survived from the sixteenth century.

Customarily, the wills of most testators were proved at the archdeacon's court, the wills of those with goods in more than one archdeaconry were proved at the consistory court, and the wills of those with goods in more than one diocese were proved at the prerogative court of Canterbury. However, in practice sometimes arrangements were more *ad hoc* than that, for instance the wills of some wealthy Staffordshire noblemen who owned land in other dioceses, were proved in the bishop's court. One example was Francis Meverell of Throwley, who owned land in Nottinghamshire as well as Staffordshire and Derbyshire, who asked for his body to be buried, 'Amongeste my anncestors at Tyddiswall'.¹³ In the diocese of Lichfield before the eighteenth century a peripatetic arrangement was in force, with courts being held on

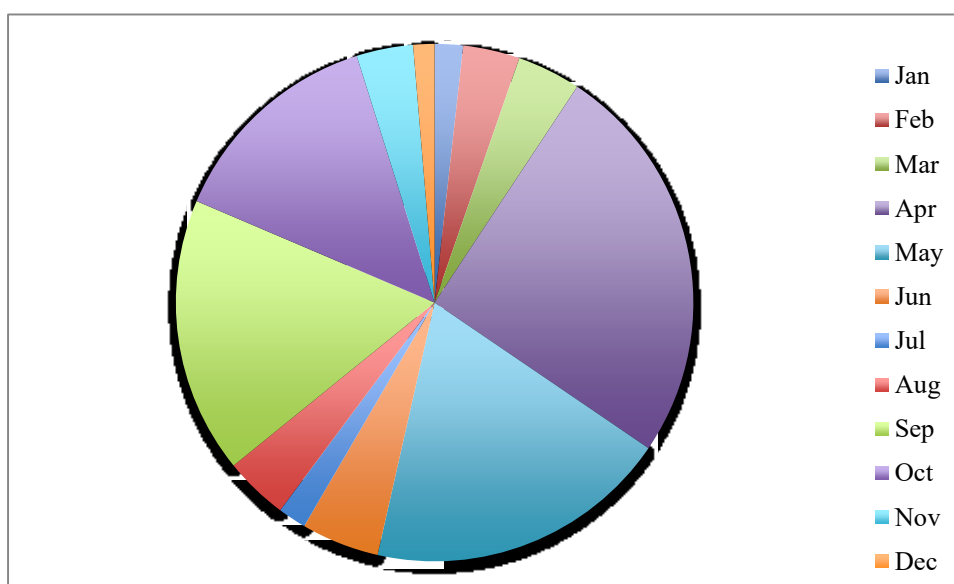
The correct title was will and testament, the will referring to real estate and the testament to personal goods. In the Middle Ages they were two separate entities. However, by the mid-sixteenth century the terms were used interchangeably. The wording was noted in 790 cases in this research. From 1533 to 1580 about half used 'will and testament', twelve percent used 'testament and will', with sixteen percent using 'will' on its own. However, the term 'testament' on its own, chosen by six percent of testators, was only in use from 1533 to 1559, ostensibly replaced from 1548 to 1579 by 'testament containing my will', used in eleven percent of cases. Although apparently there was a distinction in the mind of the will-writers, there was no detectable difference in the religious functions of the documents so classified.

¹² A. Tarver, *Church Court Records: An Introduction for Family and Local Historians* (Chichester, 1995), pp. 56, 127.

¹³ LRO, B/C/11 Francis Meverell, Ilam, 14 Feb 1565. A.D.K. Hawkyard, *Meverell, Francis (1514/15-64), of Throwley, Staffs.* (History of Parliament Online) at: <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/meverell-francis-151415-64>> [accessed 19 June 2015]

regular routes including two towns in each archdeaconry twice a year.¹⁴ Examination of the wills of 222 testators from the nine parishes for which contemporary burial records have survived from the deanery of Leek, revealed that wills were proved at sessions within the archdeaconry which took place throughout the year mainly in the largest relatively accessible town, Uttoxeter, although dates in April/May and September/October predominated, effectively forming a rolling programme, see figure 1.1. It should be borne in mind that the timing of courts would have been subject to the vagaries of the weather, especially in an area like the Staffordshire Moorlands, where roads would have been impassable for weeks in a severe winter, and could be waterlogged in a wet summer. Also courts might have been disrupted if plague was prevalent.

Figure 1.1



Months when wills from the deanery of Leek were proved within the diocese, 1532 to 1580, working clockwise from the top

¹⁴ Tarver, *Church court records*, p. 56.

Most wills were proved at the next court session within the deanery after burial of the testator, see figure 1.2; this data concurs with figures cited by Houlbrooke, for wills proved in local courts.¹⁵ However, the first opportunity for the executors of a testator buried in October, such as John Bagnalde of Alstonefield who was interred on 3 October 1575, could be as much as seven months later. John Bagnalde's will was proved at Uttoxeter, about sixteen miles from Alstonefield, on 4 May 1576 by his sons Richard and William, the executors. However, the mode for a will to be proved was about two months following the death of the testator, but many were proved within days of burial, with two after only two days.¹⁶ Three wills were proved two years or more after burial, with delays probably due to clarification sought by the church courts. Sir Philip Draycott's lengthy will, dated 6 September 1558 during the reign of Mary, was proved on 8 January 1563, almost three years after his burial in Elizabeth's reign on 25 February 1559. He may have run counter to the church authorities in the details for his sumptuous Catholic funeral held at Lichfield Cathedral. However, his bequest to his cousin Sir Thomas Fitzherbert, a notorious recusant, of a 'bygger chalys to use of hopton chapell from whence yt came tyll suche tyme yt may be [put] ther quietly', may well have warranted explanation.¹⁷ The other two wills were probably delayed for more mundane reasons. The widower Richard Naden's will, in which he left all his goods to his sister to bring up his children, had no witnesses and gave only the year as a date. In his will Roger Hardey of

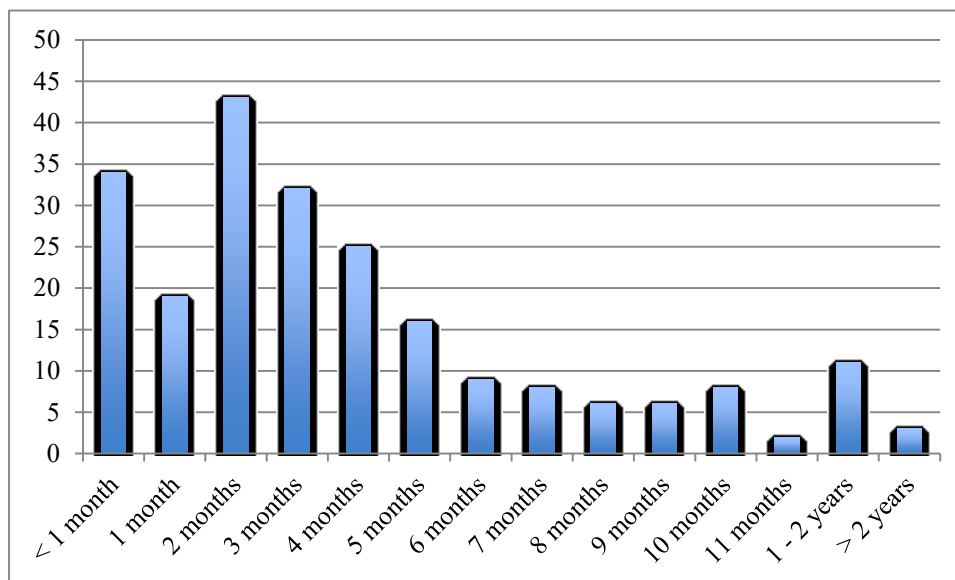
¹⁵ R. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford, 1998), p. 98. R. Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation, 1520-1570* (Oxford, 1979), p. 96.

¹⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Alice Forster, Ellastone, 1 Sep 1569). Will written 27 Aug 1569, Alice buried 30 Aug 1569. Staffordshire Parish Registers Society, *Ellastone, St. Peter Part 1* (1907), p. 29. LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Yeate, Alstonefield, 10 Apr 1578. Will written 19 Mar 1578, Thomas buried 8 Apr 1578. Staffordshire Parish Records Society, *Alstonfield, St. Peter Part 1* (1902), p. 36.

¹⁷ Hopton chapel had belonged to Stafford collegiate church, but under Edward VI it lost its status as a chapel. Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 129.

Rocester emphatically left all his possessions to one of his four daughters and her husband, and disinherited the other three.¹⁸

Figure 1.2



Length of time from date of burial to that of proving the will within the deanery of Leek, 1532 to 1580

Despite the clergy, at the behest of reformers such as Bishop Hooper of Worcester, urging the laity to make timely wills,¹⁹ only a few testators made their will well in advance of their death but usually they waited until they feared that they would soon die. Roger Fowke a gentleman of Gunstone near Stafford made his will in 1575, the year before his death, explaining, 'all flesshe is subject unto deathe, so is the hower tyme and place thereof uncertteyne ofte approching certtyntlye as a theeffe in the night'.²⁰ For 187 testators it was possible to compare the date of burial with that of the will. The fact that in about five instances burial apparently preceded will writing by a few days suggests that either those wills at least were

¹⁸ LRO, B/C/11 Philip Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 8 Jan 1563. LRO, B/C/11 Roger Hardey, Rocester, 21 Sep 1576. LRO, B/C/11 Richard Naden thelder, Alstonefield, 30 Mar 1582.

¹⁹ Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England*, p. 82.

²⁰ PCC, PROB 11/58/297 f.171-2 Roger Fowke, Gunstone, 26 Jul 1576.

actually nuncupative, but their status was not acknowledged; or record keeping by the clergy of the Staffordshire Moorlands in the sixteenth century was not wholly accurate.²¹ In this sample about half of wills were written within a week of death with five testators making their will on the day they were buried, and the most testators, twenty-four, making their will the day before they were buried. Only eighteen testators made their last will more than a year before they died, with the greatest span of time being about five years. These proportions are in close agreement with those obtained by Stephen Coppel for testators of the Lincolnshire communities of Leverton and Grantham between 1562 and 1600.²² Of the ones from Staffordshire with a gap of several years just Agnes Naden of Alstonefield stated that at the time she was 'hole in bodye'; the remainder making the usual assertion of being, 'syke in bodye perfyte and hole in remembrance'.²³ This statement suggests that they may have made their wills fearing that they were about to die, but recovered, and never again embarked on the inconvenience and expense of rewriting them. Various reasons, such as superstition and personal ambition, have been cited for the tendency of testators of the early modern period to delay will-writing until death was imminent.²⁴ The most likely explanation in the majority of cases was that testators were mindful that their circumstances might change so that their will would need amendment, for instance their heir might die or enter an infertile marriage, or, if male, the testator might conceive another child.²⁵

²¹ Parish record keeping may have been the responsibility of a churchwarden. Will-writing, though, apart from Uttoxeter where there was a family of scribes, generally was performed by a priest. Most of the parishes were small, agricultural communities, see table 2.2, without any centres of population larger than a village, so the priest was probably the only man in the district who was sufficiently literate to be able to write a will.

²² S. Coppel, 'Willmaking on the deathbed', *Local Population Studies*, 40 (1988), p. 38.

²³ LRO, B/C/11 Agnes Naden, Alstonefield, 17 Sep 1565. LRO, B/C/11 Richard Mellor, Alstonefield, 27 Apr 1551.

²⁴ Coppel, *Willmaking*, p. 40. Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England*, pp. 92-3.

²⁵ Women made only approximately one sixth of the wills, and the ones who wrote wills appeared to be almost all widows or elderly spinsters. In this research testators generally will be referred to as 'he' for clarity.

From witness statements taken during litigation arising from disputes over wills, it has been possible to determine a typical sequence of events.²⁶ A scribe was summoned to the dying man, who was probably either in bed or sitting by a fire. The testator declared his instructions to his scribe by word of mouth; the scribe then produced a written copy of the will, at most several days later. As can be seen from table 1.1, the majority of wills from the deanery of Leek were less than one page in length, with a further one third being less than two pages, so it would have been unusual for a will to have required significant redrafting. The agreed will was read back to the testator, who signalled their approval, usually, if very weak, by raising a hand. In very few cases did the testator sign and/or seal their will, or register their mark on the will: about thirty instances out of almost 1,300 wills from the deanery. The whole procedure, drafting and final agreement, took place in front of numerous witnesses; more than five 'w[i]th others' were listed on most wills from the Staffordshire Moorlands. A reasonable supposition, borne out by testamentary case evidence, is that the witnesses intervened and prompted the testator,²⁷ leading to the notion that most wills, apart from personal bequests to servants, neighbours and favourite godchildren, were influenced by and acceptable to the community.

Table 1.1

No. of pages (maximum)	1	2	3	>3	Total
No. of wills	433	255	64	39	791
% wills	55	32	8	5	100

Proportion of wills of varying lengths in the deanery of Leek, 1532 to 1580

²⁶ Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England*, pp. 90-4.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 93-4. C. Marsh, 'Attitudes to will-making in Early Modern England', in T. Arkell, N. Evans and N. Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 164-5.

Under Catholicism a priest was essential for a dying man to receive the sacraments of penance, communion and extreme unction, which could impact on the length of time his soul would spend in purgatory, or indeed whether his soul was condemned to hell. The spread of Protestantism during the sixteenth century, with denial of purgatory, belief in justification by faith alone, and rejection of the last rites and the ritual accompanying death, led to a reduced need for a priest at the deathbed.²⁸ However, priests were usually present and prominent as most dying parishioners dictated their wills in the Staffordshire Moorlands in the mid- and late-sixteenth century. Indeed, the will remained a quasi-religious document in which the testator attempted to settle their spiritual as well as their temporal estate. After the universal initial statement, 'In the name of God, amen', and declaration of the date and identification of the testator, the first bequest, however worded, was almost always committal of the soul to God (See Appendix 1). Margaret Spufford has argued that the scribe, very often a local priest, dictated parts of the will, including the religious preamble, so the religious content of a will may not truly reflect the views of the testator. However, a dying man would be unlikely to welcome the intervention of a priest whose religious opinions were at variance to his own.²⁹

Approaches to the English Reformation

From the early 1530s England experienced momentous government-led changes in religious policy and reversals until, it is generally believed, a stable form of Protestantism became accepted in most areas around 1580. Probably like most other children in post-war England, I first learnt about this 'Reformation' at primary school in the 1950s, from the perspective of its

²⁸ D. Tankard, 'The reformation of the deathbed in mid-sixteenth-century England', *Mortality: Promoting the interdisciplinary study of death and dying*, 8, 3 (2003), pp. 251-2,253-4.

²⁹ M. Spufford, 'Religious preambles and the scribes of villagers' wills in Cambridgeshire, 1570-1700', in T. Arkell, N. Evans & N Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), p. 157.

importance in creating the state religion, the Church of England. At secondary school in the sixties my view was broadened and deepened to encompass the acts of state that had led to the societal as well as the religious changes that had moulded the English nation.

Geoffrey Dickens's more modern standpoint incorporated the opinions of the masses and their influence on the spread of the Reformation, suggesting the notion of change encouraged from 'below' rather than dictated wholly from 'above'.³⁰ However, as well as ambiguity over defining the common people as distinct from, perhaps, the hegemonic class, Dickens has been criticised for tending to disregard the muscle of lingering Catholicism.³¹ The latter has been embraced by some proponents of the 'revisionist' school, such as Eamon Duffy, who posited that the population had been demonstrating, rather than whole-hearted conversion to Protestantism, reluctant compliance with government edicts.³² Indeed, according to the revisionists the 'man in the street', or more likely 'field' or 'barn', had probably been either averse or unreceptive to the Reformation.³³

More recently another important issue has been illuminated through the scholarship of Dairmaid MacCulloch.³⁴ Judging by the fervour with which money had been lavished on church furniture, and parishioners' commitment to church practices in the early sixteenth century, for example in the Devonshire village of Morebath, it has been assumed that traditional religion had been strong then, at least in parts of the country.³⁵ Despite Ian Hazlett having questioned whether commitment to traditional religion had actually been commitment

³⁰ A.G. Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York, 1509-1558* (London, 1959).

³¹ W.I.P. Hazlett, *The Reformation in Britain and Ireland: An Introduction* (London, 2003), p. 31.

³² E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, 2005), pp. 65-83.

³³ Hazlett, *Reformation*, pp. 30-2.

³⁴ D. MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 105-9.

³⁵ E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, 2001).

to traditional custom,³⁶ such evident devotion creates reservations about how and when a transformation to Protestantism had been accomplished. As well as the 'above/below' debate, another concern is speed of change: rapid or slow?

MacCulloch observed that reaction to the Reformation was not homogeneous across England and that local response appeared to have been influenced by previous exposure to dissenting creeds such as Lollardy. Where it had enjoyed a significant presence, such as in the Chilterns, Coventry, Kent, East Anglia and the Thames Valley, the Reformation had been 'quick', facilitated by cooperation from 'below'.³⁷ Generally, Protestantism had taken hold more rapidly among the more commercial and itinerant sections of the laity, such as those who had traded with the continent, and artisans in the cloth trade in particular, who had had dealings with merchants. Manchester and Kendal were examples of these more receptive areas.³⁸ Claire Cross found a greater rate of uptake in Hull than in nearby Leeds, ascribed to the former's trade with Hanseatic ports.³⁹

Without awareness of beliefs other than traditional Catholicism, parochial systems must have possessed a firm grip on their parishioners for the Reformation to have supplanted the established order and Protestantism to have gained acceptance. MacCulloch doubted whether this had been possible in most of the sparsely populated uplands of northern England including the Pennines, where pastoral supervision provided by the churches in geographically dispersed parishes had relied on being supplemented by monasteries and chantry chapels, all of which had been dissolved under Henry VIII and Edward VI. Indeed,

³⁶ Hazlett, *Reformation*, p. 51.

³⁷ MacCulloch, *Later Reformation*, pp. 105-6.

³⁸ Hazlett, *Reformation*, p. 51. MacCulloch, *Later Reformation*, p. 108.

³⁹ C. Cross, 'The development of Protestantism in Leeds and Hull, 1520-1640: The evidence from wills', *Northern History*, 18 (1982), pp. 230-8.

he surmised that the onset of the Reformation in the northern uplands had typically been driven from 'above' and had been tentative.⁴⁰ It is in areas such as these where it is reasonable to expect the Marian Restoration to have been welcomed with relief.

Belonging to MacCulloch's postulated 'above' and 'slow' category, the research area consists of the southern Pennines and contains several large dispersed parishes, most notably Leek and Alstonefield.⁴¹ It would have been strange if the deanery of Leek had been in the vanguard of Protestantism in the early sixteenth century, as contact with any creed other than traditional Catholicism in such an inaccessible place would probably have been insignificant. Lollardy has not been recorded in the area. Most of the population worked in agriculture rather than commerce, for example, in the 1570s out of eighty-two testators whose occupation was recorded only two, a weaver and a fuller, were employed in the cloth trade.⁴² No testator in the deanery was described as a merchant, so few would have encountered anyone familiar with continental religious practices.⁴³ Based on MacCulloch's hypothesis therefore, it is to be anticipated that the Reformation in this area of the southern Pennines would have been imposed from above and slow in acceptance, with an eager embrace of the reversal under Mary.

Indeed, the county of Staffordshire has a reputation among historians as having been a recusant rural backwater which would have adhered to customary beliefs, rather than

⁴⁰ MacCulloch, *Later Reformation*, pp. 106-8.

⁴¹ See figure 2.1.

⁴² LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Fawlderinge, Leek, 5 Aug 1573. LRO, B/C/11 William Porter, Bramshall, 2 Aug 1580.

⁴³ See table 3.1.

contemplated change.⁴⁴ Duffy referred to the diocese in Elizabeth's reign as 'a dark corner of the land', where conditions for reform were 'no doubt' worse than many other places, and survival of traditional practices was rife.⁴⁵ It seems that, for the mid-sixteenth century at least, these opinions hinge on some of the sentiments expressed by Bishop Bentham. A Protestant exile on the continent during Mary's reign, after his return he was appointed a Visitor on the Royal Commission to Lichfield, Oxford, Lincoln and Peterborough in 1559 and then in 1560 Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield. In a letter to the archdeacon of Stafford, Richard Walker, written on April 16 1561, Bentham revealed that the incidence of traditional customs in the archdeaconry was a cause for concern:

And as towchyng the perambulation weyk mencioned in the xix iniunction of the Quens iniunctions, they must syng or say the ii psalmes begynnyng benedyc anima mea domino in Englyshe with the letanye and suffragyes thereto with some sermon or homelye of thanks gevenge to God and movyng to temperancye in theyr drynkyng yf they have anye. Here you must charge theym to avoyd superstition and suche vayne gaysynge as the used the last yere and in no case that they use either crosse, taper, nor beades, nor wemen to go abowte but men that knowe the bondes of theyr parysh.⁴⁶

He had also been aware that the clergy did not always follow accepted practice because, in a letter to Lawrence Nowell, Dean of Lichfield, written on 3 January 1561, he had complained

⁴⁴ D.M. Palliser, 'Popular reactions to the Reformation during the years of uncertainty, 1530-70,' in C. Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 103.

⁴⁵ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 572.

⁴⁶ R. O'Day and J. Berlatsky (eds.), 'III the Letter-Book of Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield', *Camden Fourth Series*, Vol. 22, p. 211.

of William Walkeden, rector of Clifton Campville, Staffordshire, for 'evell and papyste stuff ... uttered in his sermon'.⁴⁷

Notwithstanding his efforts at remedying the situation, he was reproved 'from above' about the state of his diocese, and in 1565 he ordered a visitation to be conducted by William Sale, prebendary of Weeford, stating:

Whereas I and my diocese are accused of disorders used of my clergy, these are to will you charge them all to behave theirselves ... for pains which may ensue for transgressing the Queen's injunctions.⁴⁸

Possibly in an attempt to mitigate criticism, on 10 November 1564 Bishop Bentham had written to the Privy Council and while admitting that Staffordshire, 'is too much hinderly in all good things pertaining to religion', excused himself as, 'many offenders ... fly into exempt places and peculiar jurisdiction and so avoid ordinary correction'.⁴⁹ He did have cause for complaint as, of more than 500 congregations in the diocese roughly one fifth, especially those from large urban areas such as Wolverhampton, were outside his control.⁵⁰ One Staffordshire peculiar was Eccleshall, a prebend, unfortunately situated in the episcopal manor, one of over thirty prebends under the authority of the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 192.

⁴⁸ 'Bentham's Instructions for Coventry and Lichfield Diocese 1565' in Alcuin Club Collections XIV, W.H. Frere and W.P.M. Kennedy (eds.), *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation, Volume III, 1559-1575* (London, 1910), pp.163-170.

⁴⁹ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 368-9.

⁵⁰ O'Day and Berlatsky, *Bentham*, pp. 115-16.

Cathedral.⁵¹ On 31 October 1560 Bishop Bentham had written to Lawrence Nowell about Eccleshall objecting to lack of personal support from the Dean and Chapter:

I must requyre in you & the rest with you more diligence and severyty then haithe hitherto bene shewed. For suche sygnes and tokens of open sedition and manifest rebellion this weyke in wycked wemens doynge haithe bene used that yf it be not in tyme corrected yt wyll growe to suche a scabbe that you and I and all the godlye in this contrey shall not be able to cure, besydes the danger that we shall incurr towardes the Quene yf we do not whitestand ytt. And frely I must desyre you to sygnifye thus moche unto your bretherne, that yf yt be neglected of theyr part I wyll not onelye present the fact sediciously commytted but allso theym to the counsell, and that whithe spede.⁵²

He did indeed report them, writing on that same day to Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London, seeking his assistance and that of the other 'commissioners'.⁵³

He also argued in his letter to the Privy Council that the most problematic areas in his diocese then (rather than rural parishes) were 'great towns corporate', due largely to resistance from officers especially bailiffs. He may have been implying that, although he felt he could make little impact in the peculiars and large towns, sometimes, as in the case of Lichfield one and the same, the remainder of his diocese was susceptible to improvement. Whether or not the dissident attitudes of Bentham's pockets of defiance had influenced adjacent rural parishes,

⁵¹ Peter Heath has determined that by about 1600 Lichfield was 'a city of perfunctory conformity and lively Catholic non-conformity', partly because it was independent of the bishop's control. P. Heath, 'Staffordshire towns and the Reformation', *North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies* (1979), p. 6-7.

⁵² O'Day and Berlatsky, *Bentham*, p. 174.

⁵³ O'Day and Berlatsky, *Bentham*, p. 175.

there is some later evidence of entrenched Catholicism in the vicinity of the deanery of Leek. In 1569 Mary Queen of Scots, under the guardianship of the Earl of Sheffield, was imprisoned at Tutbury Castle, about eight miles south east of Uttoxeter. On February 28 1585 Sir Ralph Sadler, into whose custody she had then been placed, complained to Sir Francis Walsingham of the unsuitability of Tutbury, 'Surely sir, this is a perilous country, for both men and women of all degrees are almost all Papists'. This view was endorsed by her next custodian, who had spent much of his life in Jersey, Sir Amyas Paulet, writing to Walsingham on 10 January 1586, 'There are many recusants and other suspected Papists within twelve miles of Tutbury whose wives are not unlikely to do bad offices'.⁵⁴ However, they may have had an ulterior motive as Tutbury castle was a vile prison: in poor repair and comfortless, exposed to winds, damp with a midden below its walls.⁵⁵ Sadler and Paulet could have been exaggerating claims to which Elizabeth's ministers would have been likely to have paid heed, to establish the case for relocation. Their statements may have applied to Derbyshire, but on the Staffordshire border the parish of Tutbury was surrounded for almost its entirety by the parishes of Rolleston and Hanbury, patron of the parsonage was the bishop, to whom the rectory had been appropriated by 1549.⁵⁶ Although Tutbury in the return of 1604 had 'some popish', neither Rolleston nor Hanbury was recorded as possessing any popish or recusants. Yoxall brushed Tutbury at its furthestmost tip from the castle and in 1604 that parish held 'many popish recusants', possibly due to the influence of the Fitzherberts of neighbouring Hamstall Ridware.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ J. Morris (ed.) *The Letter-Book of Sir Amias Poulet: Keeper of Mary Queen of Scots* (London, 1874), pp. 22,125.

⁵⁵ A. Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots* (London, 1969), pp. 509-10,591,595.

⁵⁶ O'Day and Berlatsky, *Bentham*, p. 128, n. 22.

⁵⁷ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 374,384,386-8.

Another issue which has been considered in this study has been described by Duffy as, 'one of the most puzzling aspects of Tudor religious history, the conformity of the overwhelming majority of clergy, despite their conservative opinions'.⁵⁸ He was reflecting on Christopher Trychay's acceptance of the Elizabethan Settlement: the priest who twenty-five years earlier had been exhorting his parishioners for money to adorn the altar of his favourite, St. Sidwell.⁵⁹ A number of reasons have been mooted to explain why there was little obvious dissension among parish clergy, the most well-known being the unprincipled attitude of the well-known 'Vicar of Bray', Simon Aleyn. One priest who has been accused of similarly protecting his personal career was Richard West, vicar of Woking from 1538 to 1573.⁶⁰ Possibly the least likely explanation is that traditional clergy became converts to Protestantism. Duffy, on the other hand, proposed that the loyalty of the beneficed clergy, by nature conformable to government instruction, was to their familiar parish, so that their personal religious beliefs would have been tempered by their desire to continue serving the parishioners.⁶¹ This would have been less demanding under what was arguably a compromise under Elizabeth than when subject to the destructive regime of Edward.⁶²

MacCulloch stated that contradictory opinions on the response of the general population to the Reformation have arisen due mainly to the differing natures of the geographical areas from which evidence has been sought. Further clarification of such issues as speed of change and level of acceptance from 'below' therefore is dependent on micro-studies of localities, based for the most part on churchwardens' accounts or wills. The former throw light on the

⁵⁸ Duffy, *Morebath*, p. 175.

⁵⁹ Duffy, *Morebath*, p. 40.

⁶⁰ A. Crosby, 'Piety and charity, 1480-1580: the evidence of probate records from four Surrey parishes', *The Local Historian*, 43, 1 (2013), pp. 40-2.

⁶¹ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 592. Duffy, *Morebath*, pp. 176-7.

⁶² C. Cross, *Church and People England, 1450-1660* (Oxford, 1999), p. 118.

official response of the parish to government instructions, whereas in contrast wills can provide insights into personal sentiments. 'Localism', defined as writing national history through the history of the areas which constituted the realm, and their mutual interaction, has been acclaimed by scholars for directing attention outwards from the centre of power.⁶³ However, micro-studies, as a mode of historical research have been criticised, Hazlett having stated that, 'slagheaps of archival data ... do not so much resurrect history as suffocate and inhume it'.⁶⁴ He also referred to their potential for inaccuracy, and to their use often leading to irrelevant and contorted discussions on various topics including meaning and interpretation of data.

Hazlett's misgivings are valid. No micro-study is directly applicable to an issue such as the Reformation, and at its worst it is simply an opinion about what happened in a certain locality at such and such a period of time. However, the output of a micro-study can be relatable to other evidence, provided the micro-study is conducted in such a manner as to minimise bias and prejudice, and its results are reliable and demonstrate consistency both internally and externally. An important issue is that studies should follow a standard set of criteria in interpreting data, in this instance, in particular will preambles. Indeed this is difficult: one's own opinion evolves as deeper understanding is gained in an investigation of an area and its characters, which engenders doubts concerning comparability between similar studies, which may only be overcome by lengthy and 'contorted' discussions. Caroline Litzenberger stated that she determined the religious flavour of each will based on its preamble combined with

⁶³ P. Collinson and J. Craig, 'Introduction', in P. Collinson and J. Craig (eds.), *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 1.

⁶⁴ Hazlett, *Reformation*, pp. 2,32-3.

other evidence such as bequests.⁶⁵ Cross in her study of Protestantism in Hull and Leeds, rejected the evidence of preambles in favour of that of the main body of the will, which she felt to be a far more reliable indicator of belief. She cited bequests of books and financial aid to support preaching to be indicators of Protestant conviction.⁶⁶ However, often the only evidence is the preamble, alone common to almost every will; other evidence is fragmentary and on its own is almost certainly of little validity, and unlikely to be relatable to other studies. Therefore most pertinent micro-studies of the course of the Reformation using wills as evidence will be based to a heavy extent on the interpretation of preambles. These can be problematic to place on the spectrum of meaning that occurs in a population moving towards Protestantism. Contradictory opinions, therefore, might have arisen due to differing interpretations of key phraseology, rather than geographical location. With that caveat in mind, after an account of the methodology I adopted in chapter 2, what I have discovered is described and discussed in the following two chapters. Chapter 3 examines change in characteristics such as preamble wording and religious and charitable bequests over time. Chapter 4 takes a holistic approach to will contents in relation to specific clergy acting as scribes, and landowners who were prominent in certain parishes. My overall findings are summarised in the concluding remarks in chapter 5.

⁶⁵ C. Litzenberger, 'Local responses to changes in religious policy based on evidence from Gloucestershire wills (1540-1580)', *Continuity and Change*, 8 (1993), p. 420.

⁶⁶ Cross, *Protestantism in Leeds and Hull*, pp. 235-7.

Figure 1.3



Map of the deanery of Leek in 1695⁶⁷

⁶⁷ From Robert Morden's map of Staffordshire, published in the 1695 edition of Camden's *Britannia* by Awnsham and John Churchill with Abel Swalle.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

During the course of the research it was necessary to investigate the following relevant factors:

1. Based on Caroline Litzenberger's study of the Reformation in Gloucestershire, the religious flavour of each will: 'traditional', 'Protestant' or 'neutral'/'ambiguous', by studying the wording of the soul bequest, any other religious sentiments expressed, and any charitable or ecclesiastical gifts.⁶⁸
2. Patterns discernible in the varying proportions of these types and attributes of wills, between home parishes of testators and in relation to the period of the Reformation when will writing took place. As explanations may be associated with local pressure from members of the clergy, and may involve neighbourhood landowners, the output of individual clergy was examined coupled with religious bias shown by certain landowners of the deanery of Leek.⁶⁹
3. Consistency of the results compared with those obtained by other historians of the Reformation.

Most of the wills that form the primary research material for this study were proved under the auspices of the Episcopal Consistory Court of Lichfield, either at the consistory court itself, or at the peripatetic court for the archdeaconry of Stafford. They are stored at Lichfield Record Office (LRO), where they were photographed and then downloaded onto a computer for examination. After obtaining, reading and interpreting the selected sample of wills, the data was stored on a spreadsheet for retrieval and analysis. The spreadsheet was constructed with

⁶⁸ C. Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity: Gloucestershire, 1540-1580* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 169-74.

⁶⁹ Palliser, *Popular reactions*, p. 105.

twenty-eight fields, containing details of the testator including dates of will writing, burial if known, and probate, as well as features of will contents, and technical information such as the storage location of the will image (See table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Field	Field name
1	File number of image
2	Date will photographed
3	Probate day and month
4	Probate year
5	Surname of testator
6	First name of testator
7	Home including parish
8	Occupation if given
9	Court where probate obtained
10	Type of document: will/inventory only
11	Date of burial if known
12	Preamble
13	Reference to monarch if given
14	Year will dated
15	Day and month will dated
16	Burial instructions
17	Funeral arrangements including masses
18	Gifts for health of soul
19	Bequests to named clergy
20	Bequests to religious institutions
21	Charitable bequests
22	Bequests for sermons and books
23	Notes, e.g. date of inventory, dreading death
24	Scribe/witnesses
25	Will or testament
26	Answering before God
27	Thanking God
28	Is other information held on testator in separate file?
Supplementaries	
	Gender
	Bequests to family and neighbours
	Value of inventory
	Debts Y/N
	Length of will
	Land ownership

Fields of spreadsheet

The other source of wills for this research was the National Archives web site. The National Archives holds wills which were proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC). This was the higher, archbishop's court for the southern half of England and Wales, and its main testamentary task was to award grants of probate to administer estates with goods in more than one diocese. The majority of those estates in sixteenth-century Staffordshire belonged to the landowning gentry, other testators being wealthy individuals, for instance merchants or clergy, and a few were lower status members of society such as servants of gentry descent, in service away from home.⁷⁰ Of 4,591 wills identified from the archdeaconry of Stafford registered in the period 1532 to 1580, only 103 had been proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, with the remainder at one of the local peripatetic probate courts held within the archdeaconry of Stafford, or at the bishop's court at Lichfield. In contrast to Lichfield Record Office, the majority of whose wills are original; those downloaded from the National Archives web site were copies which had been written into volumes by clerks at the courts.⁷¹ This reduced their research value, as well as their lack of inventories. Handwriting can provide clues as to authorship of a will, and, in the case of a self-written will, state of health of the testator.⁷² Some wills and inventories included lists of debts owed and owing, which contained useful information regarding money paid to the church.⁷³ Inventories frequently had been dated and this information was of use in establishing the year for wills which had

⁷⁰ As exemplified by the will of Elizabeth Rysse, daughter and legatee of John Ryse gentleman of Stone, serving as a maid to her brother-in-law residing in London. PCC, PROB 11/27/13 f.8 Elizabeth Rysse, London, 6 Feb 1537.

⁷¹ The National Archives, *Wills 1384-1858*, at: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858/> [accessed 17 January 2016]

⁷² The signed will of John Morrys, priest of Wichnor, is almost illegible scrawl, dated 12 Jan 1548. His inventory was taken in the same month. LRO, B/C/11 John Morrys, Wichnor, 20 Nov 1548.

⁷³ The inventory of the will of Rauffe Turner of Ellastone contains a list of his burial expenses. LRO, B/C/11 Rauffe Turner, Ellastone, 23 Feb 1540.

been written between January 1 and Lady Day, and determining how near the testator had been to death when they made their will.

Ideally every will available, which had been produced in the archdeaconry of Stafford immediately before, during and after the Reformation, should have been examined. However, perusing almost four and a half thousand wills housed at Lichfield Record Office was deemed beyond the scope of this project. Viewing the archdeaconry as a set of communities, based on the parish and its attendant clergy, it was decided, in contrast to Litzenberger, to research a significant number of adjacent parishes in their entirety and ignore others further afield, rather than sampling across the whole archdeaconry. A major factor in that decision was the extent of the archdeaconry outside diocesan control in the early- and mid-sixteenth century, known as peculiar parishes, for which all the wills except nine are missing: mostly great tranches of land particularly including and in the vicinity of the larger towns such as Wolverhampton.⁷⁴ Hence a broad-scale sampling would have been fragmentary and therefore inappropriate. Examination of the scatter of the locations of surviving wills revealed that the parishes of the deanery of Leek, excluding the geographically separate and much more heavily populated town of Burton on Trent, formed a contiguous mass with few suspicious gaps suggestive of the presence of peculiars (See figure 2.1).⁷⁵ The most likely, Croxden, previously belonging to Croxden Abbey, appeared to be an under-represented quasi-parish,⁷⁶ although there might have been other, small and hitherto undetected peculiars, perhaps belonging to manors, concealed within the deanery. This block of twenty-nine parishes, situated largely in the

⁷⁴ A.D.M. Phillips and C.B. Phillips (eds.), *Atlas*, p. 19.

⁷⁵ A.D.M. Phillips and C.B. Phillips (eds.), *Atlas*, p. 39. Burton on Trent is about ten and a half miles from the closest point within the deanery 'as the crow flies'.

⁷⁶ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 79-80. Croxden chapel was not mentioned in the returns of 1563.

Staffordshire Moorlands, with, in the south, an alluvial plain of the river Tean and tributaries of the Dove, yielded slightly fewer than 1,300 diocesan wills.⁷⁷

Table 2.2

Parish	No. of wills	Parish	No. of wills
Alstonefield	125	Grindon	29
Alton	61	Horton	38
Blore	17	Ilam	14
Bramshall	15	Ipstones	23
Butterton	30	Kingsley	56
Caverswall	25	Kingstone	18
Cauldon	21	Leek	206
Cheadle	46	Leigh	59
Checkley	76	Mayfield	25
Cheddleton	72	Rocester	28
Croxden	5	Sheen	31
Dilverne	17	Uttoxeter	115
Draycott in the Moors	18	Waterfall	28
Ellastone	61	Wetton	23
Gratwich	12		

Parishes within the deanery of Leek, 1532 to 1580, and number of wills examined

From table 2.2 it can be noted that there is a wide disparity between the numbers of testators within the parishes under consideration, between Leek itself, with 206, and Gratwich, with twelve. As well as parish size this may reflect the greater importance of towns such as Leek and Uttoxeter, which may have contained a concentration of wealthier inhabitants.

⁷⁷ Additionally included, despite being in Newcastle Deanery, was the adjacent parish of Draycott in the Moors as, until 1558, the patrons were the Draycott family, confirmed recusants, who appeared to have exerted influence within some of the parishes under consideration in the deanery of Leek. Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 58,83-4.

Figure 2.1



The parishes of the deanery of Leek with Draycott in the Moors in 1563 (enclosed in red)⁷⁸

⁷⁸ From Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, insert and pp. xxx-xxxii. Areas marked b, c belonged to Uttoxeter; d Checkley; e Croxden; f g Rocester.

A small proportion of testators whose wills were proved at one of the archdeaconry courts or the consistory court were the elite, described on their wills as gentlemen or clergy. From this group the 141 surviving wills of testators who were designated as gentlemen were combined with those whose wills were proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, excluding clergy, and were analysed for comparison with the contents of the wills written by all the testators from Leek Deanery. A second comparison was made with the 76 surviving wills belonging to clergy of the archdeaconry.⁷⁹

Apart from labels signifying elite status or widowhood, the majority of probate documents until the second decade of Elizabeth's reign did not state the occupation of the testator, which frequently could be inferred from their bequests and inventory contents. Mostly they were from the middle ranks of agricultural society: yeomen and husbandmen with a smattering of tradesmen.⁸⁰ Hence there is a bias in the data as the poor occur infrequently if at all, either present as widows of men who had possessed some means however modest when alive, or anomalies such as Humphrey Howorth of Cauldon, 'laborer', who in February 1579/80 bequeathed an inventory value of £30 11s 8d, including several bequests to 'pore folks', to which he 'sett my seal and marke with my owne hand'.⁸¹ A second bias occurs with the under-representation of women. A married woman required the permission of her husband in order to make a will, and a married woman's property in any case was acquired by her husband on marriage. Disregarding the eccentricity of Margaret Turner of Alton who in

⁷⁹ For each of these smaller datasets, of those of higher social status and clergy, a spreadsheet was created with the same fields as the main spreadsheet for the testators of the deanery of Leek.

⁸⁰ See table 3.1 for list of occupations given between 1570 and 1580.

⁸¹ LRO, B/C/11 Humphrey Howorth, Cauldon, 2 Aug, 1580. There are three other wills in the dataset where the occupation of the testator is given as labourer. LRO, B/C/11 Humfrye Brindlye, Leek, 11 Apr 1578. LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Heathe, Horton, 25 Apr 1569. LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Mylns, Leek, 13 Jun 1577.

March 1573/4 left the whole of her estate to 'Henry Phillippes my husband before god and suffycient wyttnes', wills of married women appear to be entirely absent.⁸²

However, the dataset does not contain a will from every person eligible through financial circumstances, gender and age to make a will who died in the deanery between 1532 and 1580.⁸³ It has been presumed that the number of wills which were written but never proved, and those where the testator died while temporarily residing in another diocese, so that the will is stored elsewhere, are insignificant. Although irregularities, which suggest that executors might have been dilatory about obtaining probate, did occur. For example, John Chatfild, carpenter of Uttoxeter, wrote his will on 25 June 1571; the will was followed in less than a week by his inventory on 1 July. It was not proved, however, until 1 October 1574 and was then reassessed in 1579.⁸⁴ The complicating factor may have been that his widow inherited the time remaining on the lease of his house, it reverting to his son if she died, but unusually no stipulation was made about possession of the lease in the event of her remarriage, which had occurred by 1579, except for his admonition that she was to, 'have a care to bringe uppe my children ... well as a good mother ought to doo'.⁸⁵ A sizeable proportion of the population died intestate. If their estate might have given rise to dispute or it was complex, then usually the next of kin sought letters of administration from the church court in order to administer the estate. Based on lists drawn up by Lichfield Record Office in the early 1970s, and their mid- to late-nineteenth-century index sourced from their act books, in the parish of Alstonefield, for example, there were 125 wills proved and thirty-six letters of administration granted, as well as six wills proved which are recorded but missing, and eight

⁸² LRO, B/C/11 Margaret Turner, Alton, 17 Mar 1574.

⁸³ A minor could not make a will, nor anyone whom the church court might have deemed not in full possession of their wits at the time of writing.

⁸⁴ Probate of John Chatfild of Uttoxeter. LRO, B/C/11 John Chatfild, Uttoxeter, 4 Apr 1579.

⁸⁵ Will of John Chatfild of Uttoxeter. LRO, B/C/11 John Chatfild, Uttoxeter, 1 Oct 1574.

probate documents consisting of an inventory only. However, it is apparent from the earlier index that blocks of wills proved in the mid- to late-1550s are missing from all parishes; it has been suggested that this may have been due to wilful destruction during the seventeenth century.⁸⁶ Attrition of wills may otherwise be due to probate documents which form a sequence being stored together. In addition to missing wills and intestacies, some of the older parishioners, if they had already disposed of an amount of their property, may have chosen not to go to the trouble and expense of writing a will. Burgess referred to the importance of community mores and kinship in determining funeral customs and provision for the soul in the late medieval period.⁸⁷ So, an unknown proportion of the population, who might have been expected to make a will, may have deemed one superfluous. Outhwaite cited a figure of twenty to twenty-five per cent of adult males in the sixteenth century leaving wills that have survived.⁸⁸

Another irregularity has occurred through the nature of mortal illness in the sixteenth century. Few people lived to be old; apart from the constant dangers of pregnancy and childbirth to married and hence non-will-writing women, the main threat was from waves of infectious disease, that led to fear in the population and consequently flurries of will writing, which fluctuated markedly from year to year, and few wills being written in certain years.⁸⁹ Despite the relative isolation of the Staffordshire Moorlands the population was still susceptible, in particular many deaths occurred between 1557 and 1559: from fevers and an 'ague', possibly a form of flu. Crises in other years were associated with the plague, which had spread from

⁸⁶ A. George, Principal Archivist, Staffordshire Record Office 2013, *pers. comm.*, 14 Nov.

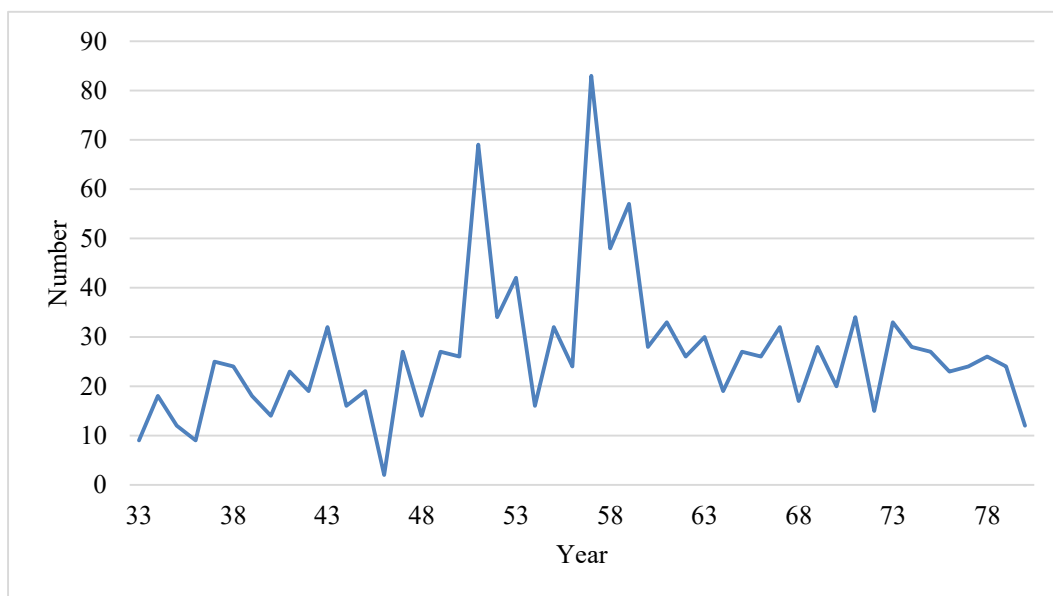
⁸⁷ C. Burgess, 'Late medieval wills and pious conventions: testamentary evidence reconsidered', in M. Hicks (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), p. 19.

⁸⁸ Outhwaite, *Ecclesiastical courts*, p. 36.

⁸⁹ N. Goose and N. Evans, 'Wills as an historical source', in T. Arkell, N. Evans and N. Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), p. 41.

London to the towns, and a sweating sickness, both mentioned by will-writers.⁹⁰ These infections caused high temperature, rapid prostration and often led to death due to complications. The sufferer would probably be delirious during stages of the illness. Hence, the proportion of wills in the dataset that had been produced when the testator was close to death, with the implication that the will may not have been clearly thought through, cannot be ignored, despite a statement in almost every will that the testator despite being sick was of good remembrance.⁹¹

Figure 2.2



Number of wills written per year in the deanery of Leek

The line graph, figure 2.2, demonstrates that, in agreement with data for the country as a whole, flurries of will writing corresponding to epidemics took place in the Staffordshire

⁹⁰ Elyn Ogden of Alstonefield in Jan 1557/8 wrote her will, 'Feryng the danger of the plague or pestylence by reason of my daylye byeng and acompeynyng with persons enfecte with the same disease'. LRO, B/C/11 Elyn Ogden, Alstonefield, 9 May 1558.

Roger Lord of Cauldon on 23 Jun 1551 wrote his will, 'fearynge ... vehement sickness or soden death, specially in tyme of thys most pilous sweatte'. LRO, B/C/11 Roger Lord, Cauldon, 6 Jul 1551.

⁹¹ Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England*, pp. 5-18.

Moorlands, particularly during the early and late 1550s. The number of wills tails off towards the end of the period as those wills probated after 1580 were not included in the sample.

Analysis of the data involved determining trends in religious practice between 1532 and 1580 both across the entire dataset and across subsets of data, for instance within parishes, or taking all the wills witnessed by individual members of the clergy.⁹² Despite accurate dating of wills being essential it was not always possible. Minor problems occurred through undated wills and the possibility of transcription errors in copies made at or for the probate courts.⁹³

However, the most intractable issue was associated with the system employed for year dating between January 1 and Lady Day. Officially in Britain, that is legally and ecclesiastically, until 1752 New Year's Day was celebrated on the feast of the Annunciation on March 25, so dates occurring between January 1 and March 24 before that year are often rendered now to show the year under both the old and more recent systems. That is true for Lichfield Record Office, although the probate dates given by the National Archives are given in the present-day form. Data presented in this research is in the present-day form where possible. It was assumed that the diocesan church courts were using the official method, so the probate dates given by Lichfield Record Office have been adjusted to the later year. However, calculating the year a will had been written, if possible, using probate date, or regnal year if given, or inventory or burial date if available, revealed that an informal dating of wills, based on the year beginning on January 1, was evident, and applied inconsistently, across the deanery.⁹⁴

⁹² The only relevant survivors before 1532 are copies of a clutch of six wills from the deanery of Leek written between 1521 and 1524. These were disregarded in this study as the time scale would not be continuous.

⁹³ The will of John Chatfield was proved twice; the first time using a copy and the second the original. There are differences between them, the copy being a formalised version of the original.

⁹⁴ Thomas Heth, curate at Horton, dated the will of Wyllyam Smyth 31 Jan 1547 by the official method, and stated that it was the second year of the reign of Edward VI, i.e. what we would now call 1548. Peter Clayton vicar of Ellastone, dated the will of Jonne Poyson 20 Mar 1562 informally, as the

Where, within the results presented in this thesis this problem has arisen, and the year a will has been written has to be stipulated in order to evaluate the data, then the year beginning 25 March has been assumed.

As described in the introduction, most testators did not actually write their own will. One will only from the deanery was formally designated nuncupative, that of Margrette Osbourne of Ellastone, 'being at the point of deathe'.⁹⁵ In order to compare religious sentiments within the output of an individual priest, expressed in his set of wills, it was necessary to try to determine whether a priest had actually produced each will and if so who he was. These were then drawn up in tables (See examples, tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3). Other than a few wills written by the testator, the majority were authored by priests, or literate neighbours or relatives, and in Uttoxeter, unusually, a family of scribes, the Alsoppes, was in operation.⁹⁶ Usually the priest responsible was recorded as a witness to the will, but Nicolas Stokes vicar of Ellastone, in particular, tended to leave his name off, especially when he was listed among the overseers or received a bequest. His authorship of a will could be inferred from handwriting and use of certain expressions.⁹⁷ However, it cannot be assumed that all diocesan wills are original, so handwriting cannot be relied on. This is because a copy was made by the probate court so that the executor could have one copy while the court retained another. However, it does

will was proved on 19 Sep 1562. Andrew Sherard vicar of Leek used both methods: the will of Jone Draycott was dated 19 Jan 1552 using the official method, in the sixth year of the reign of Edward VI, but the will of Thomas Nycolas was dated 20 Feb 1555 unofficially, with the will being proved on 16 May 1555 and inventory taken on 9 May 1555.

LRO, B/C/11 Wyllyam Smith, Horton, 6 May 1550. LRO, B/C/11 Jonne Poyson, Ellastone, 19 Sep 1562. LRO, B/C/11 Jone Draycott, Leek, 2 May 1553. LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Nycolas, Leek, 16 May 1555).

⁹⁵ LRO, B/C/11 Margrette Osbourne, Ellastone, 7 May 1565.

⁹⁶ 'Payd to henry allsopp for writinge of sed will 3s', referring to the will of John Mastergent of Uttoxeter written in 1574. LRO, B/C/5 1591/3 Mastergent, John and William, dec St Uttoxeter.

⁹⁷ Spufford, *Religious preambles*, pp. 147-56.

appear that almost always in the deanery the court retained the original, now housed in the diocesan records.⁹⁸

The religious content of wills was also compared within parish communities, by drawing up a table for each parish (See sample in appendix 2). However, neither defining the parish nor allocating testators to parishes was straightforward. Geographically dispersed parishes such as Leek, Alstonefield and Uttoxeter held worship at remote chapelries for those parishioners residing at a considerable distance from their parish church. Other parishes such as Rocester and Mayfield possessed outlying portions of land (see figure 2.1), where the parishioner, despite being designated as an inhabitant of that parish may have attended a different church that was closer to their home. Quite often though testators gave the name of the hamlet or farm in which they were residing, and these places could be located on a modern ordnance survey map, thus indicating their nearest place of worship. Three examples are John Cooke, Raphe Shaw and Robert Sheratt who, despite living at Foxt, ten miles from Checkley, belonged to that parish. Foxt is situated only about a mile from Ipstones, where all three were buried as stipulated in their wills.⁹⁹ However, a significant number of testators simply gave their parish as their place of residence, or none, but expressed a desire to be buried in a certain church. A few, such as Roger Sherrott of Leigh or Gratwich, appeared to hold allegiances to two parishes.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Tarver, *Church court records*, pp. 56,127.

⁹⁹ LRO, B/C/11 John Cooke, Checkley, 7 Mar 1573 (buried Ipstones 5 Jan 1573). LRO, B/C/11 Raphe Shaw, Checkley, 10 Apr 1573 (buried Ipstones 23 Jan 1573). LRO, B/C/11 Robert Sheratt, Checkley, 18 Apr 1561 (buried Ipstones 4 July 1560). The Federation of Family History Societies, *National Burial Index for England and Wales* (3rd. edn. Manchester, 2010).

¹⁰⁰ Roger Sherrott wrote his will in 1543, although stipulating that he was to be buried at Leigh, bequests were made to his landlords, the Chetwynds of Gratwich, and to Sir John Ward, parson of Gratwich, who also witnessed his will. His inventory, made in 1552/53, gave his abode as Leigh and was witnessed by Sir Thomas Drakeford, curate at Leigh. LRO, B/C/11 Roger Sherrott, Gratwich, 2 May 1553.

Having taken the most comprehensive set of wills of the period from the archdeaconry of Stafford in order to assess the attitude of the population to the religious changes they were witnessing, corroborative evidence would have strengthened any conclusions drawn.

However, examples of one source commonly used, churchwardens' accounts, have not survived from the sixteenth century from the deanery of Leek. A search of testamentary causes held at the National Archives and Lichfield Record Office revealed only one that was relevant, relating to the Mastergents of Uttoxeter. Nine parishes retained some contemporary burial records: Alstonefield, Caverswall, Dilhorne, Ellastone, Ipstones, Kingsley, Blore, Rocester and Leigh, with a smattering of relevant burials recorded from elsewhere in the deanery. Although many parish churches in Staffordshire underwent aggrandisement, some would say to their detriment, in the nineteenth century, some features surviving from the sixteenth century are preserved, which at least illuminate community religious mores.¹⁰¹

Despite a dearth of corroborative evidence, an examination of surviving Staffordshire wills of the period does provide indications of the religious feelings and responses of the population of the deanery to the changes they were experiencing.

¹⁰¹ N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Staffordshire* (London, 1974).

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Will Preambles

Even if the religious significance of the will preamble is interpreted correctly the extent to which it reflected an individual expression of piety is a contentious issue among scholars. Most dying testators dictated their wills to scribes who in all probability exercised a measure of control over the wording of the preamble. Regular scribes would have possessed their own repertoire of preambles, most likely in common use in the community, and some of the more elaborately worded preambles might originally have been obtained from one of several published formularies available at the time.¹⁰² However, Spufford, who first identified the issue of scribal influence, concluded that it was unlikely that a dying man or his relatives would have sent for a scribe who would have attempted to coerce the testator into a form of soul bequest contrary to his personal beliefs.¹⁰³ Cross originally noted the hazard presented by the use of standard formulas to analysts of sixteenth-century will preambles in her comparison of the development of Protestantism in Leeds and Hull.¹⁰⁴ As they did not comprise the actual words of the testator, set formulas have the potential to mislead scholars of the Reformation, but, despite the subsequent concern of historians, Christopher Marsh indicated that in the sixteenth century failure to produce an original composition was not the issue it is today, and scribes would have been well aware for whom they were drafting a will.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, even if it is assumed that scribal influence can be discounted, and that the fault of lack of creativity is an irrelevance, it would be prudent to interpret will preambles

¹⁰² Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 505-6.

¹⁰³ Spufford, *Religious preambles*, pp. 144-57.

¹⁰⁴ Cross, *Protestantism in Leeds and Hull*, pp. 230-8.

¹⁰⁵ Marsh, *Attitudes*, p. 168-70.

with caution. They should, whenever possible, be considered in combination with any other statements with religious significance in the will.¹⁰⁶

The classification of preamble wording to reflect religious belief has led to some disagreement among historians, with possibly the most discerning analysis by Litzenberger in her work on Gloucestershire wills.¹⁰⁷ She derived seventeen categories, reflecting a broad spectrum of religious belief, but described further categorization as problematic, eventually arriving at three general classes: 'traditional', 'neutral' and 'Protestant'. Duffy, while suggesting it would have been futile, refused to make any attempt at classification, and stated that, in particular, declaration of belief in salvation through the merits or Passion of Christ had led to misinterpretation by, among several historians, Dickens, whose text on the Reformation had been a standard for many years. The problem was that although such statements often occurred on Protestant wills, they have also been found on those of Catholics from the early-sixteenth century.¹⁰⁸ A confusing example from the Staffordshire Moorlands, albeit without mentioning Christ, was found on the will of Humffrey Baresford of Grindon who in 1567 bequeathed his soul to, 'the mercy and grace of Almyghtye God who hath made me and all man kynd with the shedyng of hys preycous blode and to God the Holy Ghost who hath sanctified me and all the elect people of God and all the holy cumpany of heaven'. Use of the final phrase suggests the will is Catholic and indeed, all the wills from Grindon written before 1581 were either traditional or neutral apart from the last which was ambiguous, that of the writer of Humffrey Baresford's will, John Addye, the rector, and closet Catholic.¹⁰⁹ Spufford

¹⁰⁶ Goose and Evans, *Historical source*, pp. 54-5. Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England*, pp. 120-1.

¹⁰⁷ Litzenberger, *Gloucestershire wills*, pp. 420-2.

¹⁰⁸ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 507-9.

¹⁰⁹ PCC, PROB 11/60/301 f.175 John Addye, Grindon, 3 Jun 1578. LRO, B/C/11 Humffrey Baresford, Grindon, 18 Apr 1572. John Addye's similar preamble was, "to Almightye God the father

cited as a distinguishing feature of Protestant wills reference to the company of the elect in heaven, but this was repudiated by Duffy as the doctrine of predestination had been accepted in England since the fourteenth century, the synonymous term 'predestinate' occurring in early wills.¹¹⁰

In this study, as Staffordshire and Gloucestershire both form part of the English Midlands,¹¹¹ the method of classification adopted was modelled on that of Litzenberger, acknowledged by historians for its thoroughness.¹¹² Figure 3.1 illustrates the wills written per year in the deanery of Leek displayed in one of five colours depending upon the religious flavour of the preamble.

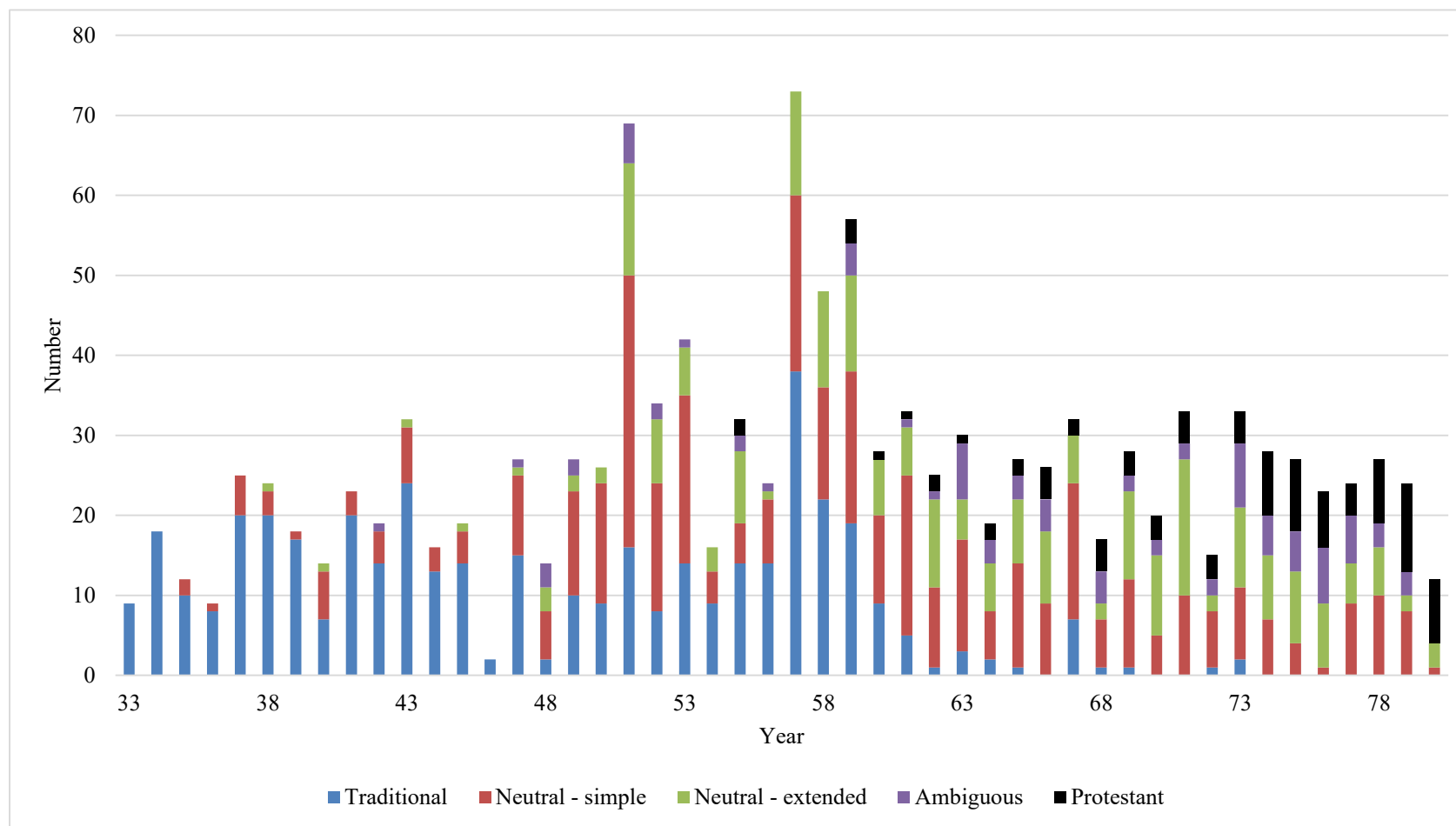
who hath made me and all the worlde Also to God the sonne who hath redemed me and all mankind and to God the Holie Ghost who hath sanctified me and all the elect people of God'.

¹¹⁰ Spufford, *Religious preambles*, p. 145. Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 327, 518-19.

¹¹¹ MacCulloch referred to the 'great crescent', where reform was more readily accepted by the general population. Gloucester itself was considered to be an outlying early centre of the great crescent and hence may not be comparable with rural Staffordshire. MacCulloch, *Later Reformation*, pp. 105-6.

¹¹² Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England*, p. 120.

Figure 3.1



Wills per year broken down by type of preamble

■ Wills with preambles that were deemed 'traditional'. During the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary such testators usually committed their soul to Almighty God, the Virgin Mary and the holy company of heaven. Invocation to specific saints had been under attack in the last decade of Henry VIII's reign. Under Edward the cult of saints was banished from public worship, with purgatory being excluded from the 1552 Book of Common Prayer. It is not surprising therefore that during the reign of Edward traditional testators tended to omit reference to the Virgin Mary, mentioning only Almighty God and the holy company of heaven.¹¹³

■ Wills where the testator simply committed their soul to Almighty God, with the occasional addition of 'my maker'.

■ Wills where the preamble is a permutation of an extended version of those in the previous group, referring to Almighty God, my maker, saviour and redeemer. Preambles referring to Almighty God, with or without qualification, were deemed 'neutral'.

■ Wills with often nebulous preambles which are ambiguous. Commonly such testators referred to the blood and/or Passion of Christ, or they might have bequeathed their soul to the Holy Trinity.

■ Wills with preambles that were deemed 'Protestant'. The testators were distinguished by the strict criterion of expressing trust that they would be saved, 'justification by faith alone', with no evidence of doubt, such as pleading for salvation, which would have placed a will in

¹¹³ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 511-13.

the ambiguous category. Litzenberger would also have rejected similar wills where the testator alluded to hope that they would be saved, or that they would receive remission for their sins but with no mention of salvation.¹¹⁴ However, Spufford found such statements to be common among dissenters and strong Protestants in seventeenth-century Cambridgeshire.¹¹⁵ In this study I have adopted the looser definition of Spufford.

Ignoring those preambles that were apparently 'traditional' or 'Protestant', the others, of indeterminate belief, present a number of possibilities. Assuming that the testators, rather than their scribes, were in control of the contents of their preamble, firstly the testator might have possessed committed but unsanctioned beliefs which they did not wish to express, due to fear over the consequences for their families, and/or not wishing to impede or prevent probate.¹¹⁶ Secondly the testator may have been confused, perhaps linked to cynicism, due to the swings in religious practice that took place throughout the Reformation. Thirdly the testator might have been someone for whom spiritual matters, rather than worldly affairs, were of little or no concern; holders of the 'tavern unbelief' which was typical of early-sixteenth-century sceptics who were unfamiliar with church doctrine.¹¹⁷ However, that would have been unlikely in the sixteenth-century Staffordshire Moorlands, with the centrality of the parish church to communities there. Fourthly, testators, especially those writing ambiguous preambles, may have thought they were expressing religious sentiments different from the present interpretation. However, because the number of ambiguous wills increased markedly in Elizabeth's reign, especially during the second decade, it gives rise to the suspicion that

¹¹⁴ Litzenberger, *Reformation and the laity*, p. 165.

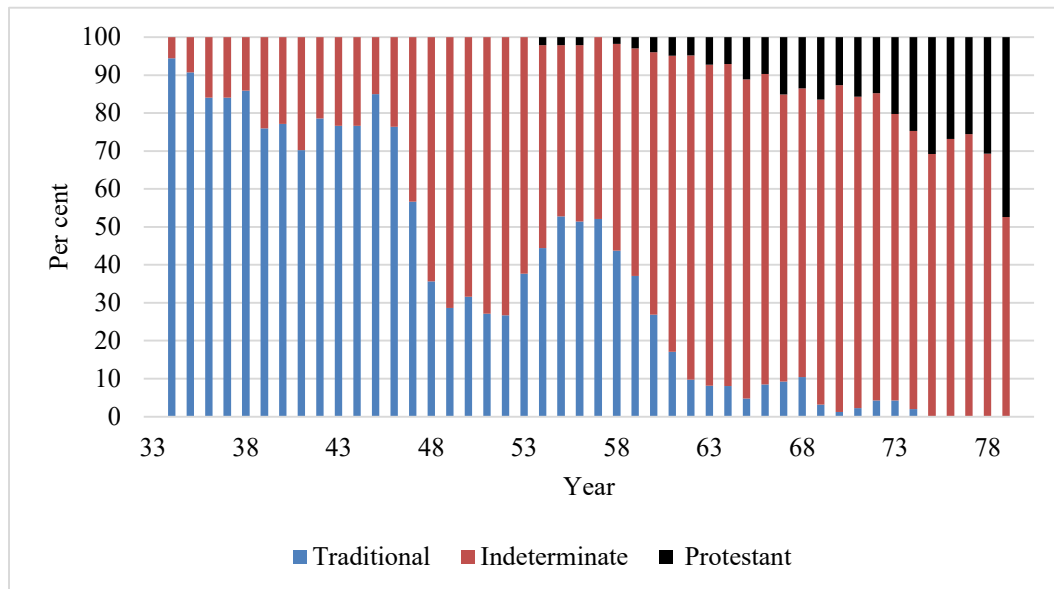
¹¹⁵ Spufford, *Religious preambles*, pp. 150-3.

¹¹⁶ Cross cited one of the minster clergy of York who was declared intestate in 1568 as his will was contrary to the religious policy of the government. C. Cross, *York Clergy Wills 1520-1600: I Minster Clergy* (York, 1984), p. vi.

¹¹⁷ Dickens, *Protestants*, pp.12-13.

some of those testators at least may have been deliberately trying to give a false impression of Protestant belief.

Figure 3.2



Wills per year broken down by type of preamble in per cent

In figure 3.2, those wills with neutral and ambiguous preambles of figure 3.1 have been amalgamated to form the group with preambles of indeterminate belief, so that this bar chart, using three-year rolling averages, compares the proportions per year of traditional preambles, indeterminate preambles, and Protestant preambles.¹¹⁸

Overall figures 3.1 and 3.2 demonstrate the conventional view of traditional beliefs being superseded by Protestantism in the second decade of Elizabeth's reign. However, six parishes, most notably the population of the moderately sized Alton had produced no Protestant wills by 1580. Furthermore, this remote area of Staffordshire was unusual in

¹¹⁸ When three-year rolling averages were used, the value for each year was obtained by taking the mean for that year and the means for the two years on either side, and then averaging the three means. This technique revealed significant changes and reduced the impact of aberrant years.

showing little evidence of Protestantism until Elizabeth's reign,¹¹⁹ as before her accession only two Protestant wills had been written in the deanery of Leek, both, by a strange coincidence, at Kingsley on 20 December 1555.¹²⁰ Possibly the burning at the stake of seven 'heretics' from the diocese under Mary, including three burnings at Lichfield, only forty miles from Leek, may have inhibited testators from expressing Protestant leanings.¹²¹ The burning in 1557 of one heretic, Joyce Lewes, did excite some sympathy among influential townspeople of Lichfield.¹²² Nevertheless, Protestant wills did not form a significant proportion of the wills in any particular year until 1574. Furthermore of the fourteen produced up to 1565 all but two were written by gentlemen, yeomen or tradesmen, rather than lower class husbandmen. In comparison of these findings with those of Litzenberger's Gloucestershire study, in contrast to this work, Litzenberger distinguished between elite and non-elite wills. Nevertheless both Gloucestershire groups had produced Protestant preambles by the later 1540s.¹²³ The deanery of Leek was clearly much tardier than this, conforming to Staffordshire's reputation among historians as remote, and reluctant to relinquish familiar

¹¹⁹ R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), p. 94. MacCulloch, *Later Reformation*, p. 111.

¹²⁰ LRO, B/C/11 Henry Bradshaw, Kingsley, 8 May 1556. LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Brassynton, Kingsley, 8 May 1556.

These wills, though based on a common source, probably had different authors because, as well as witnesses, spelling, format, and wording differed. For instance, Henry Bradshaw was of, 'p[er]fyt mynd and good remembrance how beyt sycke in body and doubtyng the uncertayn tyme of deth'. Thomas Brassynton was, 'seycke in body butt off p[er]fyt mynd dowtyng the uncertayn tyme off dethe'. Henry Bradshaw stated that he bequeathed his soule, 'unto Almyghty God who hath redeemed the same by his most p[re]cious passyon trustyng faythfully through the same to be one of ev[er]lastyng lyffe'. Thomas Brassynton bequeathed his soul 'unto God Almyghty who red[e]med the sam[e] w[ith] h[is] most p[re]cious passyon trustyng there by to be one off ev[er]lastyng lyffe'. The date was inscribed at the end of the former's will, with reference to the regnal year. This will gave just two witnesses, neither being a priest. The date was inscribed at the start of the latter's will with no reference to the regnal year. This will named four witnesses, 'with others more', one of which was the curate at Kingsley, Robert Aspeden, who witnessed another nine wills with differing preambles between 1549 and 1563.

¹²¹ Burning of 'heretics' had begun in February 1555 with that of John Rogers, canon of St Paul's.

¹²² M. Greenslade, *Catholic Staffordshire 1500-1850* (Leominster, 2006), p. 25.

¹²³ Litzenberger, *Reformation and the laity*, pp. 179-80.

beliefs and practices.¹²⁴ In Litzenberger's sample, by 1580 the proportion of her approximately five hundred elite wills with Protestant preambles had risen to almost fifty per cent. However, the proportion among her 2,610 non-elite wills was still less than ten per cent, which suggests that the majority of the non-elites in Gloucestershire then were unsympathetic to Protestantism. Overall therefore roughly one sixth of the will-making population in Gloucestershire by 1580 were writing Protestant preambles. Contrary to expectation in the deanery of Leek on the other hand the overall proportion by 1580 was beginning to approach fifty per cent, apparently involving acceptance here by non-elites too.

Like both Gloucestershire groups the Staffordshire sample demonstrates a marked dip in the proportion of traditional soul bequests in the reign of Edward, followed by a rise under Mary. However, unlike in Gloucestershire, traditional soul bequests in Staffordshire during Mary's reign never achieved the popularity they had enjoyed throughout that of Henry VIII, apart from another slight dip which occurred immediately after the Dissolution.¹²⁵ The increase under Mary is at the expense of the neutrals, suggesting as in Gloucestershire, that throughout Edward's reign many testators were concealing their true Catholic faith by committing their soul only to Almighty God, with or without qualification. The deanery differs also in that traditional bequests had died out by 1574, whereas in Gloucestershire they continued, albeit at a low level, until 1580. In this study the two latest references to Our Lady Saint Mary occurred in 1567, first at Grindon, the other from nearby in the will of the vicar of Mayfield, although in Elizabeth's reign the majority of traditional soul bequests omitted such references.¹²⁶

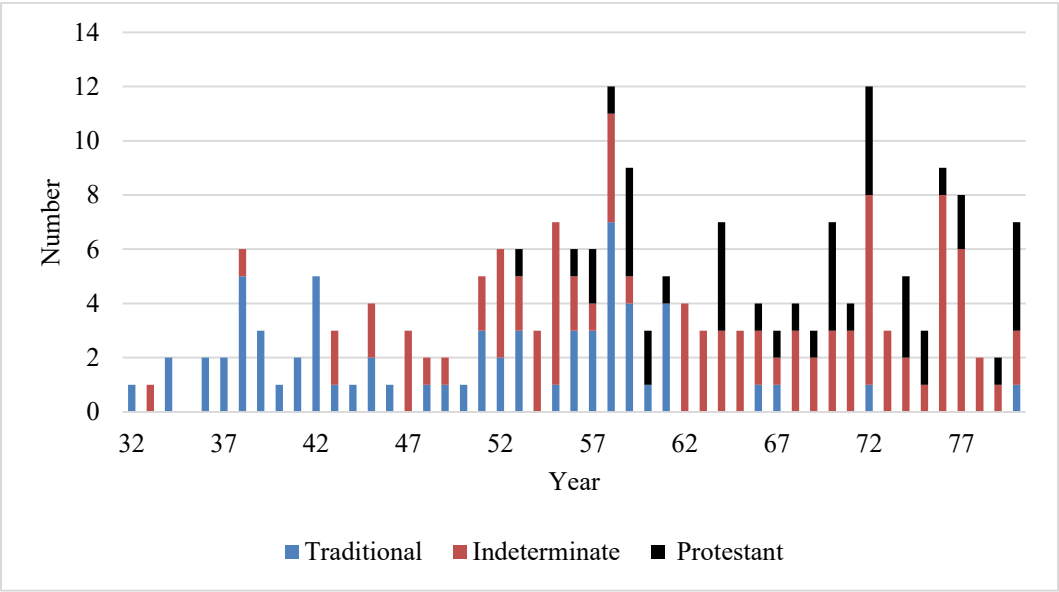
¹²⁴ Palliser, *Popular reactions*, p. 105.

¹²⁵ Litzenberger, *Gloucestershire wills*, pp. 425-6.

¹²⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Robert Coppestake, Grindon, 21 Sep 1566. LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Marler, Mayfield, 24 April 1569.

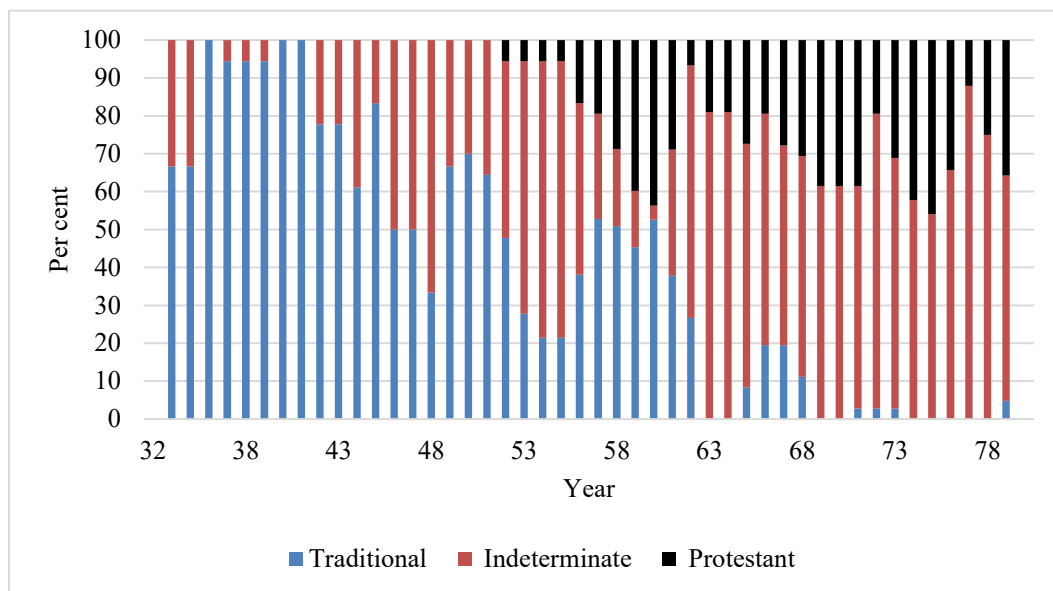
Wills belonging to clergy and other elites from the whole of the archdeaconry of Stafford, a group of 217, were also analysed. In figures 3.3 and 3.4, the numbers and percentages of wills per year with traditional preambles, indeterminate preambles and Protestant preambles are represented.

Figure 3.3



Wills of clergy and other elites in the archdeaconry of Stafford broken down by type of preamble per year

Figure 3.4



Wills of clergy and other elites in the archdeaconry of Stafford broken down by type of preamble per year as three-year rolling averages in per cent

The most difficult preambles to interpret belonged to Catholic lay elites writing in Elizabeth's reign. Equivocating, they often produced preambles which were contrived and verbose, as can be illustrated by three representative cases. First, in 1561 Humfrey Swynnerton of Swynnerton and Hilton near Wolverhampton stated that he intended to make his testament and last will, 'in this my prosperyty to take suche order for the dysposinge of my goods as may be for the healthe of my sowle and the quyetnes of my frends and the avoydinge of trouble whiche otherwyse myghte aryse'. He then proceeded, non-controversially, to bequeath his soul to, 'Allmyghty God my only creator and redemer by the meryttes of whose bytter and paynfull passyon I truste to be one of the children of salvat[i]on and to se him in his heavenly kingdome'. However, after several sentences more he continued, 'I comend my sowle beseachinge our blessed lady the glorious virgen and mother of God wythe all the celestyall court of heaven to pray for me'. He further gave every priest serving in

[Wolver]Hampton church 3s 4d to pray for his soul and all Christian souls.¹²⁷ The Swynnertons formed part of a group of recusant Staffordshire families. Humfrey had married Cassandra Gyfford of Chillington near Brewood, whose nephew John Gyfford was an executor of his will. One of his two daughters was the widow of William Fitzherbert, the brother of the infamous recusant, Thomas Fitzherbert.¹²⁸

In 1564 Humphrey Wellis of Horecross, was noted by Bishop Bentham as one of the Staffordshire justices who was an 'adversary of religion';¹²⁹ unsurprisingly as his mother was a Fitzherbert and his aunt, to whom he bequeathed a ring, was Elizabeth Draycott, widow of Philip Draycott and grandmother of the persecuted recusant John Draycott. He wrote his will in August in that year in his 'owne hande'; it had a rather lengthy but seemingly Protestant preamble in which he bequeathed his soul to Almighty God his only maker and redeemer, 'besechyng hym ... to take my soule to hys infynyte mercye and goodnes havyng a suer stydfaste and perfecte faythe that through the meryts of hys bytter passyon hys moste gloryus resurrection and assentyone I shalbe one of the number that shalbe saved and to ryse to hym in glorye at the laste daye'. However, he ensured that his soul would benefit from a considerable number of prayers by making bequests of 3s 4d to five local bridges, varying amounts to the poor of four parishes, and 'vs in meate and drinke' to the poor prisoners in Stafford gaol.¹³⁰ Elizabeth Draycott wrote her will in April 1568, 'goinge on my jorneye

¹²⁷ PCC, PROB 11/46/89 f.62 Humfrey Swynnerton, Swynnerton, 9 Feb 1563.

¹²⁸ A.D.K. Hayward, *Swynnerton, Humphrey (by 1516-62, of Swynnerton Hilton, Staffs.* (History of Parliament Online) at: <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/swynnerton-humphrey-1516-62>> [accessed 13 August 2015]

¹²⁹ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 370.

¹³⁰ LRO, B/C/11 Humfrey Wellis, Yoxall, 29 Jan 1566. N.M Fuidge, *Welles, Humphrey (by 1502-65) of Hoar Cross, Staffs.* (History of Parliament Online) at: <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/welles-humphrey-1502-65>> [accessed 13 August 2015]

towards deathe', and bequeathed her soul to, 'All mighty God my only creator redeamer and saviour by whose deathe and passion I truste and verely beleave to einoye the fruy[c]i[on] of his presence in his everlastinge kyngdome prayeing hyme to torne his face from my synnes and to putt awaye all my offence'. She also bequeathed 20s to the poor of Uttoxeter. The word 'trust' was inserted later, which, accentuating the notion of confidence, strengthened the Protestant flavour of the preamble.¹³¹

Without reading the full extent of lengthy preambles, or perusing religious bequests made by the testators, or being aware of their recusant loyalties, it is easy to be misled into thinking these and similar wills were probably written by Protestant testators. In addition, due to the small sample size, this elite data in any case is cruder than that of the whole set of wills from the deanery of Leek. However, a few tentative points can be made. Firstly, as in Gloucestershire, Protestantism apparently was stronger among this group, at least until the late 1570s. A lay elite will was one of only two wills examined with the emphatic statement that the testator was, 'trustinge onely to be saved by the merits of his [i.e. Christ's] precious death and passion and by noe other meanes'.¹³² Allegiance to traditional beliefs, almost solid before 1543, died out after 1561, apart from four isolated instances. As in Gloucestershire, around the mid-1560s, this group appears to have been less inclined to produce preambles of indeterminate belief than the yeomen and husbandmen of the deanery, instead more of their preambles appeared to be Protestant.

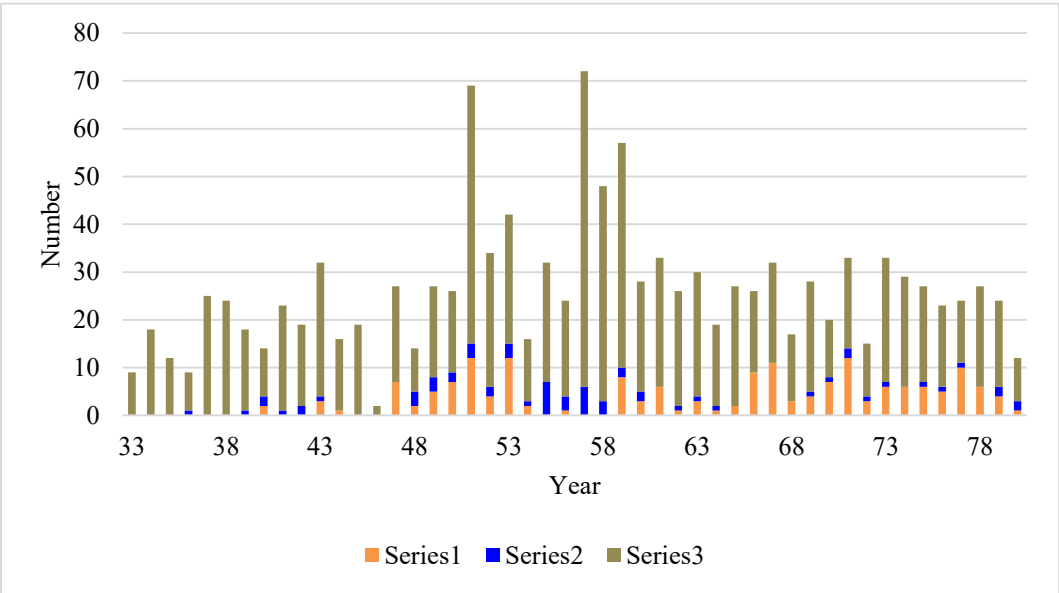
¹³¹ LRO, B/C/11 Elizabeth Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 4 Jun 1568. See Chapter 4, section on Landowners and Parishes for a detailed description of the recusancy of the Draycott family.

¹³² LRO, B/C/11 William Mayners, Tatenhill, 17 Oct 1576. LRO, B/C/11 John Wall, Dilverne, 31 Oct 1578.

On preamble evidence, therefore, by 1580 the Staffordshire sample, with wealthier members of the population including clergy forming the vanguard, appeared to be crystallising out into Protestantism. Evidence of traditional beliefs had steadily declined from before the Reformation with a moderate recovery under Mary. Thus, although the testators of Staffordshire moved more slowly towards Protestantism, apparently they demonstrated less indecision than the lay population of Gloucestershire.

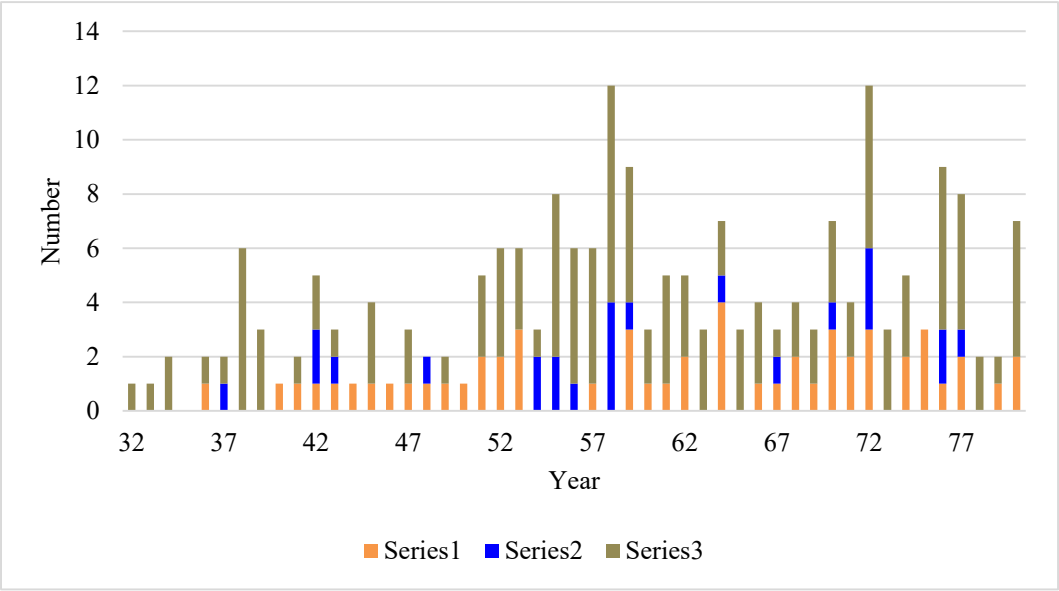
After the Act of Supremacy of 1534, Henry VIII broke with Rome and was declared Supreme Head of the Church of England. In figures 3.5 and 3.6, series 1 contains wills which formally acknowledged the monarch as Supreme Head in the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward, or Governor in the reign of Elizabeth, usually abbreviated to 'etc'; series 2 contains wills which simply stated the monarch's name in specifying the regnal year; and series 3 contains wills which did not refer to the monarch. It is debatable whether the testators of the wills in series 2 had deliberately excluded reference to the monarch's position in relation to the church because they refused to accept it.

Figure 3.5



Wills per year broken down per year by acknowledgement of the monarch

Figure 3.6



Wills of clergy and other elites in the archdeaconry of Stafford broken down per year by acknowledgement of the monarch

From figure 3.5 it can be seen that in the deanery of Leek testators did not appear to have espoused the concept of the monarch as Supreme Head of the church until the reign of

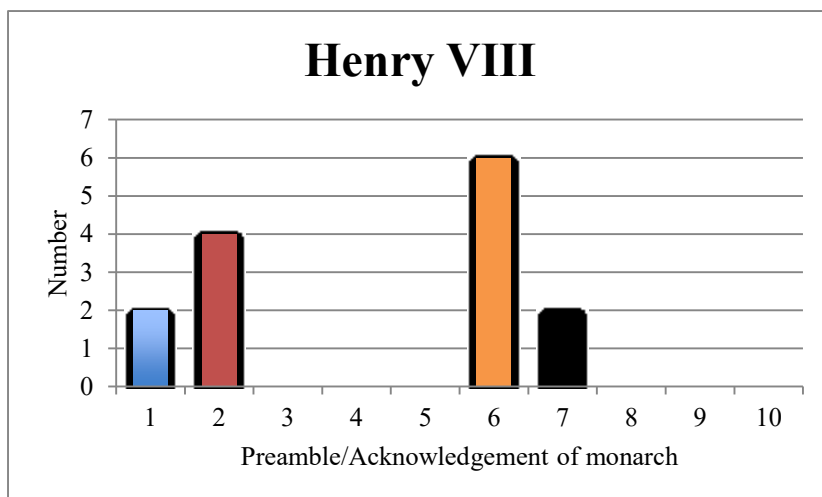
Edward from 1547, declining immediately after his death in 1553, and rising again from 1566 onwards for Elizabeth as Governor. As might be expected support appears to have been, with few wills as evidence, much greater among the clergy and other elites of the whole archdeaconry, being consistent from 1540 until 1553 and then increasing again during Elizabeth's reign. Elite support may have been greater because retention of certain positions in society for themselves and their families may have required display of allegiance to the crown. Also, wealthy testators, anxious to have a precisely worded will which would be less susceptible to misinterpretation, rather than making use of a local priest or neighbour, would probably have employed a better educated scribe, more familiar with, and preferring, formal, and lengthier, formats. Mary had retained the title of Supreme Head of the church for only fifteen months while she dismissed her Protestant bishops and replaced them with Catholics, and deprived married clergy, but, as she believed that the Pope was the head of the church, and urged on to reconciliation to Rome by her new husband Philip II of Spain, then relinquished the title.¹³³ In her reign, from both charts, it can be seen that the majority of testators who named her as monarch did not refer to her holding any position in relation to the church.

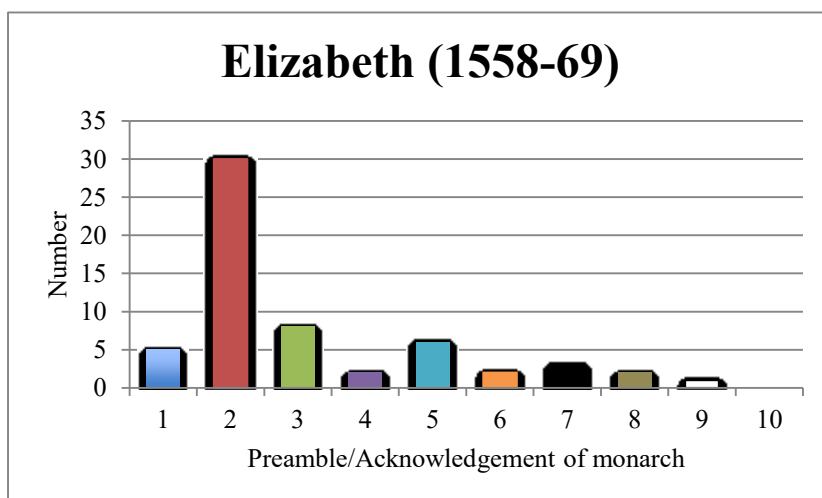
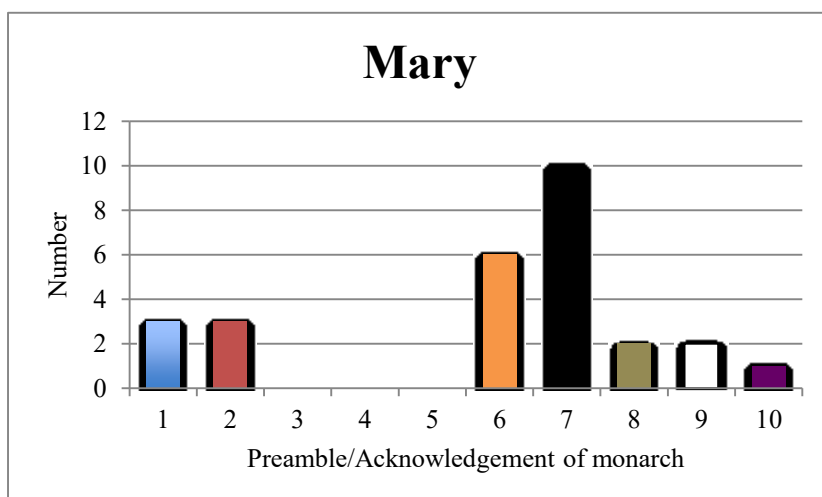
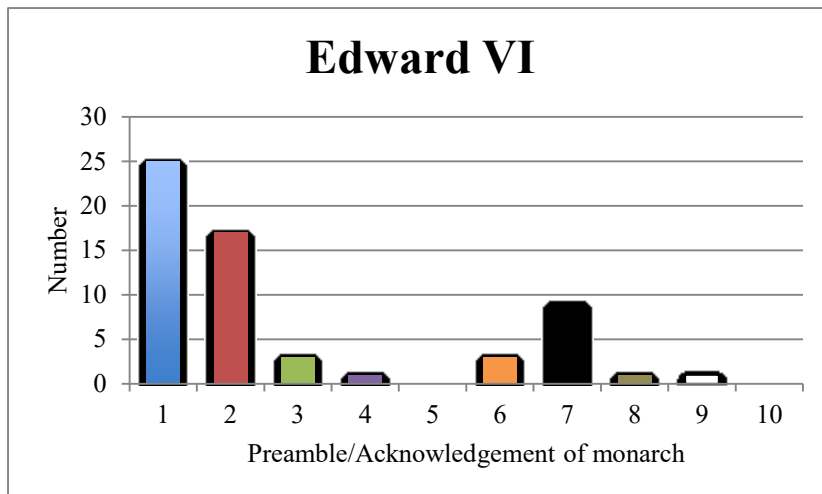
It might be supposed that a traditional testator would have been loyal to the Pope and would have eschewed acknowledging the monarch as head of the church, but the bar charts given in figure 3.7 reveal that there is little apparent link between a testator's acknowledgement of the monarch and their preamble. With a sample of fourteen, under Henry VIII more testators named the monarch without stating that he was head of the church, which perhaps reveals reluctance, as only six overall out of a total of 224 wills written between the Act of

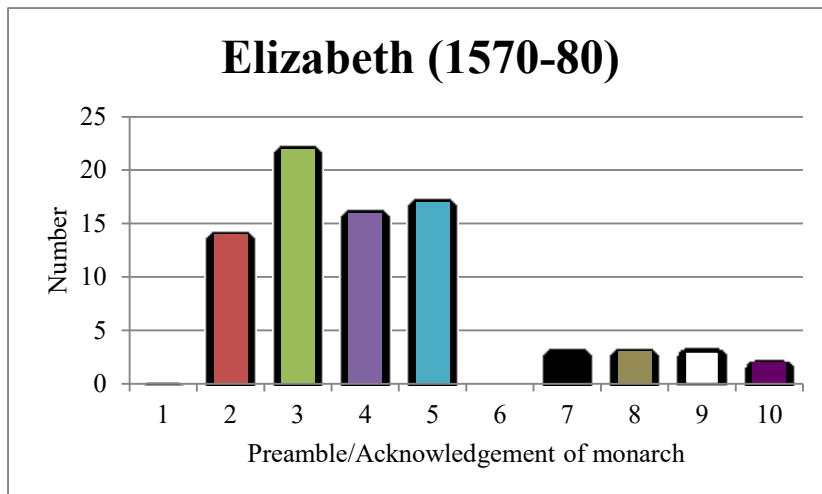
¹³³ MacCulloch, *Later Reformation*, p. 20. A. Whitelock, *Mary Tudor: England's First Queen* (London, 2009), pp. 249-52.

Supremacy and the accession of Edward, acknowledged the monarch's position. Under Edward VI, with a sample of sixty, about three quarters of those who gave the monarch's name also acknowledged that he was head of the church. However most of those wrote traditional preambles. Conversely, of those that omitted reference to his position in relation to the church most wrote neutral preambles. In a sample of twenty-seven who named Mary, less than a quarter acknowledged her as head of the church, all but one during her first fifteen months. In the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign, approximately five-sixths of testators who named her, fifty-nine in all, acknowledged that she was Governor of the church. In the first decade there were five who also wrote traditional preambles, although most were neutral.

Figure 3.7







References to the monarch by reign among the testators of the deanery of Leek

Key:

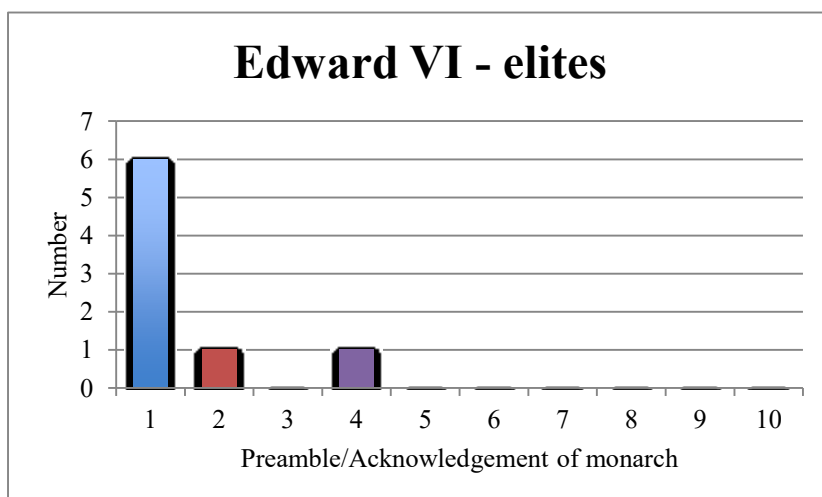
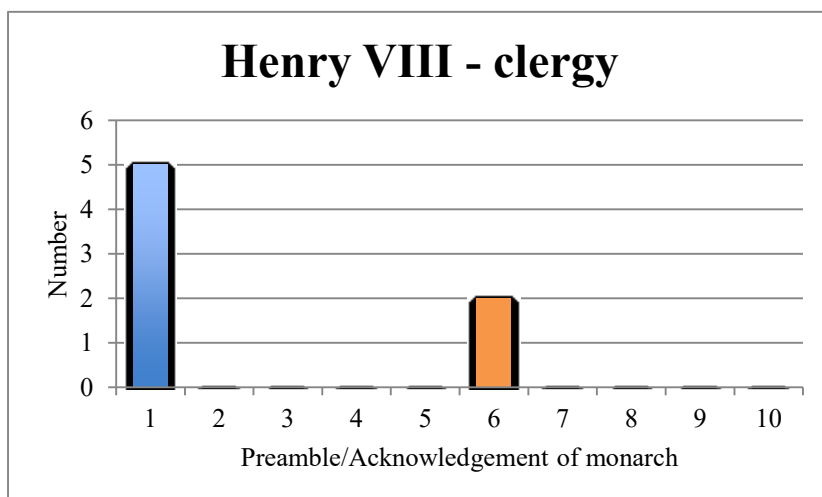
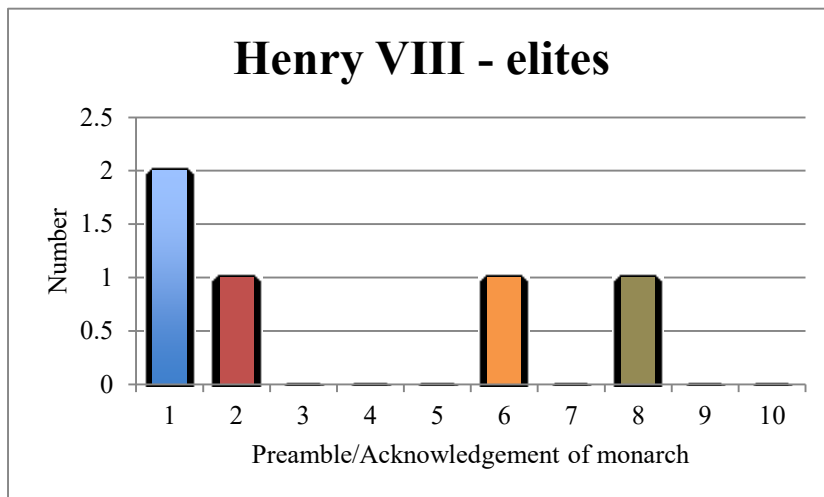
1	Traditional preamble, acknowledging monarch as head of church
2	Soul committed to Almighty God, acknowledging monarch as head of church
3	Soul committed to Almighty God with qualification, acknowledging monarch as head of church
4	Ambiguous preamble, acknowledging monarch as head of church
5	Protestant preamble, acknowledging monarch as head of church
6	Traditional preamble, with monarch but no mention of position in relation to the church
7	Soul committed to Almighty God, with monarch but no mention of position in relation to the church
8	Soul committed to Almighty God with qualification, with monarch but no mention of position in relation to the church
9	Ambiguous preamble, with monarch but no mention of position in relation to the church
10	Protestant preamble, with monarch but no mention of position in relation to the church

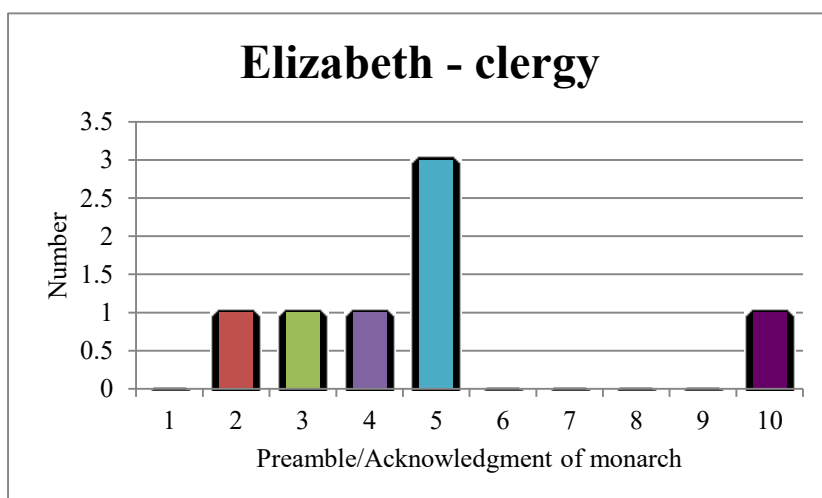
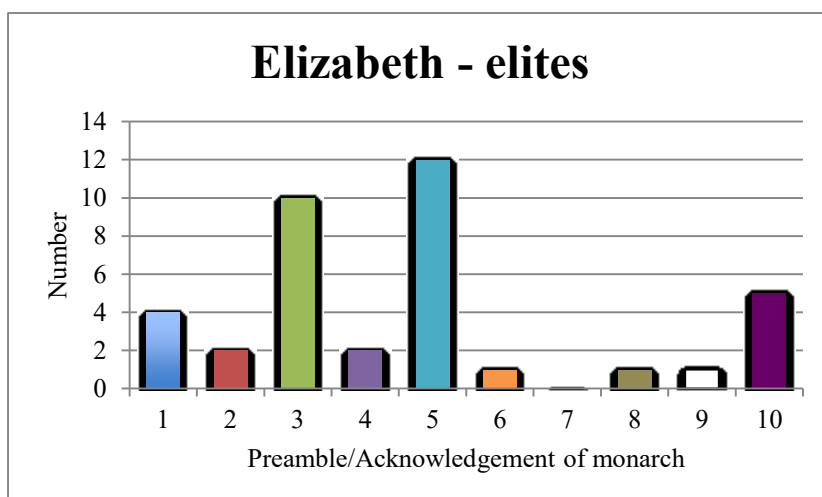
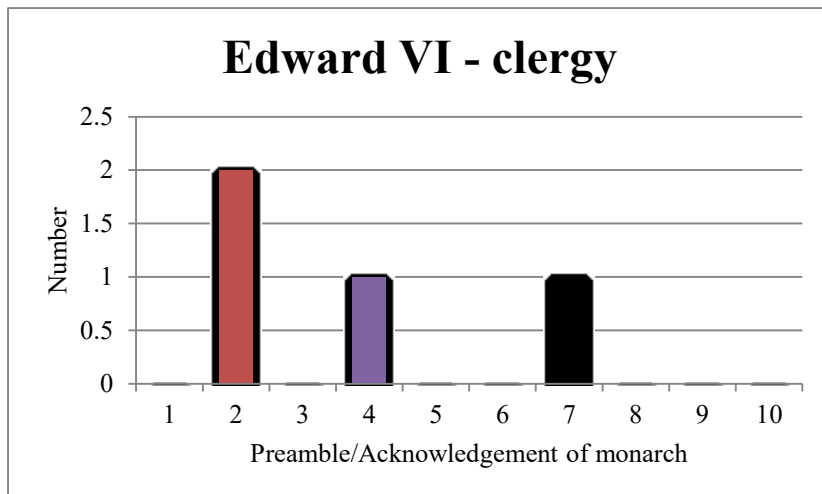
The six bar charts in figure 3.8 represent the same data either for the clergy or for the elites excluding clergy from the archdeaconry of Stafford. There are none for Mary's reign as in all but one instance where she was named she was afforded no title in relation to the church, the

exception being the parson of Himley, William Hasterley, who in 1557 described Philip and Mary as 'defenders of the faythe etc'.¹³⁴ Also Elizabeth's reign has not been split into first and second decades as there was no apparent difference between them, unlike for the general testators of Leek Deanery. Those in positions of influence within the archdeaconry in the reigns of Henry, Edward and less so Elizabeth appear to have discerned no inconsistency between writing a traditional preamble and acknowledging the monarch as head of the church, or if they did they ignored it. They appear to have accepted being Catholics in a church where the monarch was between the bishops and God. Under Henry VIII all clergy wills depicted had traditional preambles, including the five who stated Henry was Supreme Head. Under Edward VI all the lay elites in the sample of eight acknowledged his position, mostly with traditional preambles. On the other hand the four clergy under Edward VI who named the monarch, three acknowledging his position, had neutral or ambiguous preambles. Under Elizabeth the lay elites displayed the whole gamut of preambles in a sample of thirty-eight, including traditional ones where she is acknowledged as Governor. The seven clergy who named Elizabeth, six giving her position, mainly wrote Protestant preambles.

¹³⁴ LRO, B/C/11 William Hasterley, Himley, 23 Jan 1559. The title 'Defender of the Faith' was first granted by Pope Leo X to Henry VIII in 1521, and so holds no Protestant connotations.

Figure 3.8





References to the monarch by reign among clergy and other elites of the archdeaconry of Stafford

It would be optimistic to assume that the evidence obtained from the will preambles and ensuing analyses are absolutely correct. However, they are in line with what might be expected, based on work by other scholars researching different counties of England. Based on figures 3.7 and 3.8, there is little discernible relationship between religious belief as interpreted through preambles, and sentiments concerning the head of the Church of England. This leads to the conclusion that these populations were not unduly exercised over the loss of the Pope as head of the church caused by the Henrician reforms. Indeed MacCulloch acknowledged Catholic gentry apathy towards a return to papal supremacy under Mary, perhaps linked to potentially controversial ownership of lands previously held by the church.¹³⁵

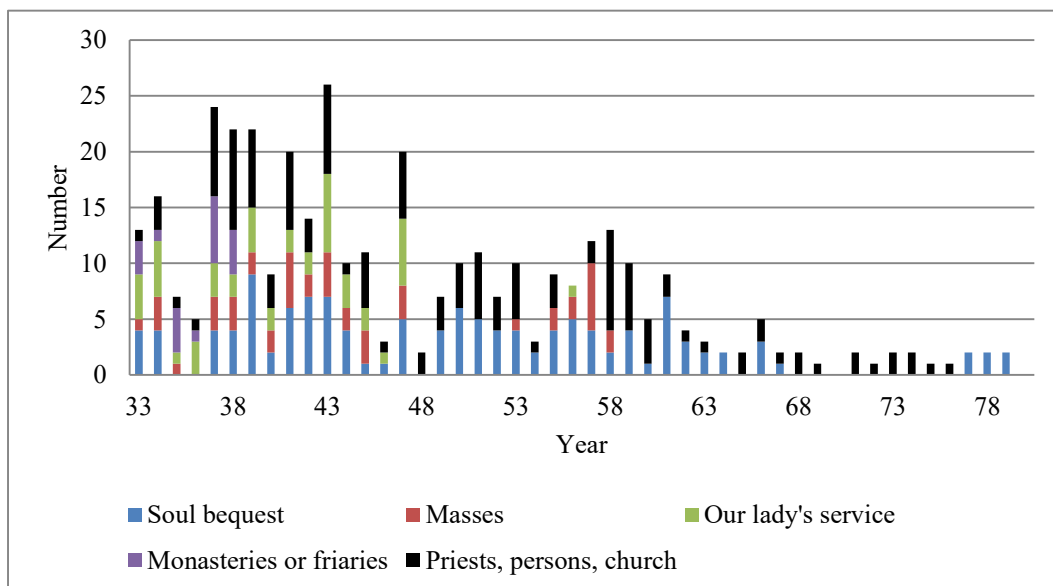
Prayers for the Dead

The following set of graphs illustrates bequests made by the testators of the deanery of Leek where they were either explicitly or implicitly asking for prayers to be said for their soul. It is to be expected that such requests would only be made by a testator with traditional beliefs and hence should not appear in a true Protestant will. Intercession on behalf of the dead was officially denied with the publication of the Book of Common Prayer in 1552, but bequests had faltered before then. Figure 3.9 represents the number per year of the various types of bequest. It should be borne in mind that prosperous and pious testators frequently requested several types of intercession, whereas most testators made no special bequests, no doubt relying on their family to make appropriate arrangements, and for their family and the parish congregation to pray for their soul unasked. Unlike the preamble evidence, where virtually

¹³⁵ MacCulloch, *Later Reformation*, pp. 18-19.

every will had a preamble, only a minority of wills requested prayers for the dying testator's soul, so this evidence should be regarded as no more than indicative. It can be seen that bequests to monasteries and friaries continued until the Dissolution was in full spate in 1538. Bequests to chantries such as 'our lady's service', with one exception, ceased after 1547. Bequests for special masses stopped at the beginning of Edward's reign and then began again during that of Mary, ceasing again after 1558. Bequests for the health of the soul continued into the early years of Elizabeth's reign and then recurred in the late 1570s. The only vehicles for prayers for the soul that continued throughout the period until 1576 were bequests to individuals or the church, specifically asking for prayers, or nonspecific gifts to clergy presumably made in a number of instances in expectation of intercession.

Figure 3.9



Bequests involving prayers for the soul

The following five, rather crude, line graphs are three-year rolling averages to show trends with these different types of bequest and should be examined in conjunction with figure 3.9.

Figure 3.10 represents the soul bequest, which usually took the form of a request to the

executors to dispose of [the residue of]¹³⁶ the estate to the pleasure of God and health of the testator's and all Christian souls, perhaps including family members' souls too, although Isabell Sterndale, a widow of Wetton, in 1551 instructed her executors simply to, 'do for [my] soule as [they] thinke beste'.¹³⁷ Only five testators made a specific soul bequest, for example Lawrence Clowes of Leek, who in 1559 left his wife Cycele her entitlement of a third part of his 'goods debts and cattalls', and without mentioning her again, stated that from his own two-thirds, which he left completely to his daughter and son-in-law, 'the valewe of four marks shalbe taken uppe ... to gyve and bestowe where I shall thynke best and most convenyent for the healthe of my soule'.¹³⁸ Five testators, all in Catholic regimes, stated that money should be bestowed at their burial for the health of their soul; Thomas Bull of Ellastone in 1558 instructed his executors that, 'funeralles and offerynges to be made for my soule on the day of my buryall'.¹³⁹

Approaching thirty per cent of wills contained a soul bequest until the start of Edward's reign. They then occurred at a noticeably lower rate until around 1567, when they disappeared, as towards the end of the 1560s the attitude of Elizabeth's government towards Catholics hardened. Due to increasing diplomatic tension with Spain and the arrival in England in 1568 of a focus for Catholic hopes, Mary Queen of Scots, failure to support the Church of England was perceived as disloyalty to the crown. Interestingly, however, soul bequests reappeared with two in each of the years 1577, 1578 and 1579. Four of these testators made indeterminate preambles but two seemingly were Protestant. Among these, on 12 September 1578 John Kempe of Horton bequeathed the residue of his estate to his executors, 'to the

¹³⁶ Approximately one quarter of wills specifically named 'the residue'; the others were more vague in their wording, commonly telling the executors that they should execute the will 'to the honor of God and welthe of my solle'.

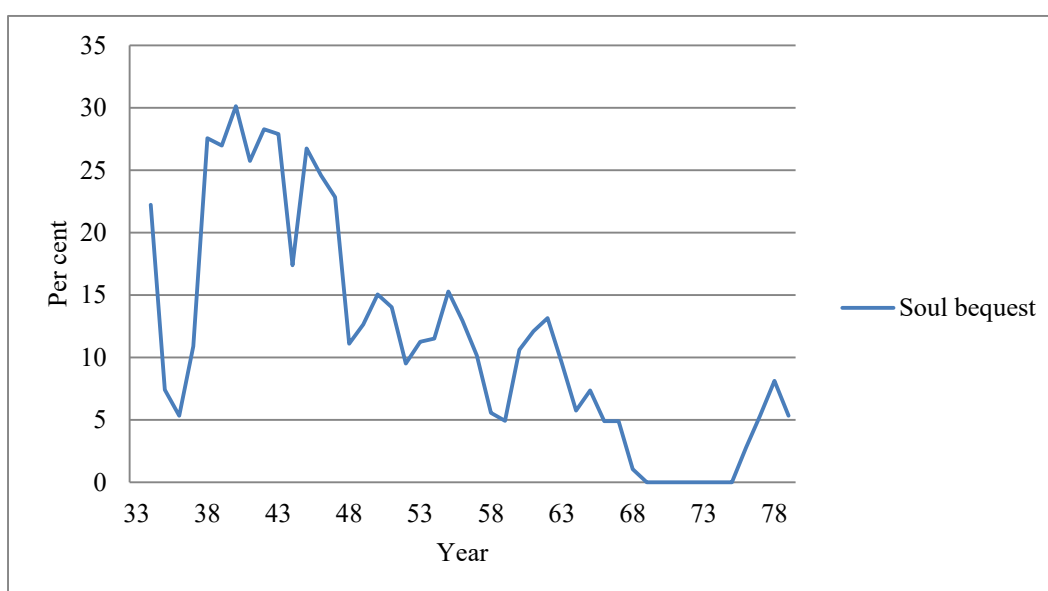
¹³⁷ LRO, B/C/11 Isabell Sterndale, Wetton, 20 Jul 1551.

¹³⁸ LRO, B/C/11 Lawrence Clowes, Leek, 1560 (value of inventory £22 10s 4d).

¹³⁹ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Bull, Ellastone, 9 May 1558.

relyffe of the poore and neadye people and other deeds of charitie for the healthe of my soule as shalbe thought meete at their discretion'.¹⁴⁰ Also in the second decade of Elizabeth's reign, the rector of Grindon, John Addye, who wrote an ambiguous preamble, trusted his executor, 'with god before his eies', to do that that was rightful before God, discharged his (the

Figure 3.10



Bequests for the health of the soul in per cent

testator's) conscience and relieved the poor.¹⁴¹ There were a further two testators like John Addye, probably a closet Catholic,¹⁴² who wrote residual bequests which hinted at benefiting the health of the soul, referring instead to the soul's conscience or comfort. The wills of John Kempe and his co-Protestant with a soul bequest, Lewis Walker, gentleman and church warden of Uttoxeter, possibly reveal religious confusion.¹⁴³ However, it is difficult to comprehend how there could have been misunderstanding concerning two mutually

¹⁴⁰ LRO, B/C/11 John Kempe, Horton, 25 Sep 1578.

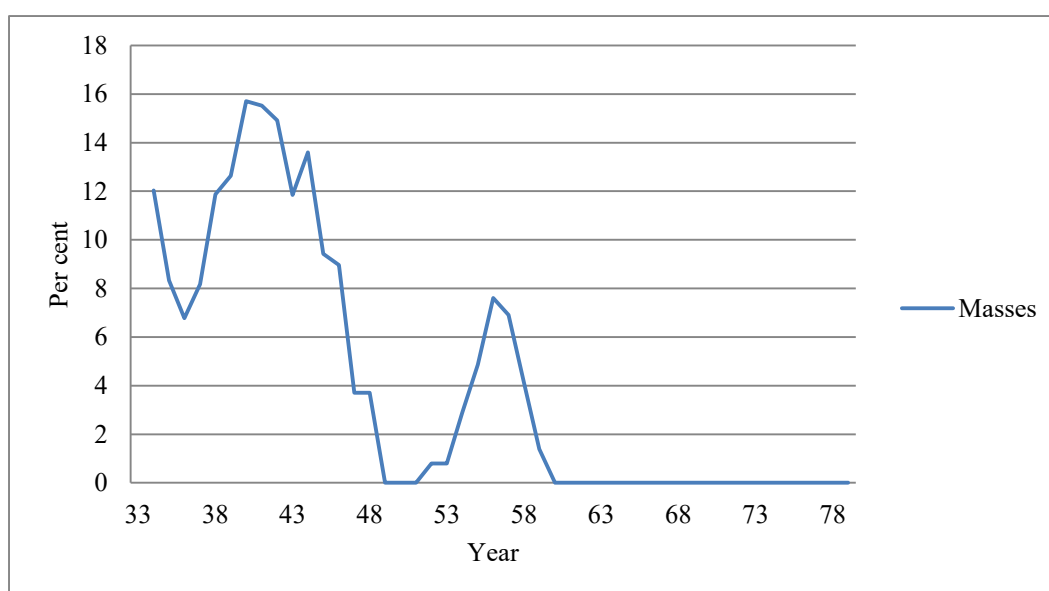
¹⁴¹ PCC, PROB 11/60/301 f.175 John Addye, Grindon, 3 Jun 1578.

¹⁴² John Addye was connected with a Catholic nexus related to the patrons of Grindon church, the Bassetts of Blore.

¹⁴³ LRO, B/C/11 Lewis Walker, Uttoxeter, 1 Mar 1577.

incompatible beliefs: the Catholic need to relieve the soul in purgatory and the Protestant justification by faith alone. Alexandra Walsham is correct in that it is a fallacy to consider Catholic or Protestant as absolute categories during the early modern period; she defined Catholicism then as 'a vague body of opinion'.¹⁴⁴ The existence of two clusters of varying, linked, fuzzy beliefs can be conjectured: Catholic-like and Protestant-like, nonetheless that does not imply that they would overlap. There would not have been a continuum of belief. John Kempe and Lewis Walker, while adhering to accepted practice in the majority of the format and wording of their wills, probably allowed their true beliefs to percolate out in the concluding statements.

Figure 3.11



Bequests for masses for the dead in per cent

The line graph in figure 3.11 represents the three-year rolling average of bequests either for individual special masses or for trentalls (sets of thirty) masses, usually but not necessarily

¹⁴⁴ A. Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 6-8.

delivered in the parish church. Sometimes the bequests sought intercession for dead family members too. At their most popular, around 1540, between fifteen and twenty per cent of testators made such bequests. After the Chantry Acts of 1545 and 1547, which rendered property including funds bequeathed for the purpose of providing masses for the soul liable to confiscation, they vanished from wills. The chantry priests were pensioned off, so that in some, more isolated, rural areas of England, including parts of Staffordshire, there would have remained significantly fewer clergy to perform the function. Duffy has described these acts as nothing 'short of a disaster for lay religious life, ... designed to eliminate the remaining institutional framework underpinning the daily round of intercession for the dead'.¹⁴⁵ Finally, the Book of Common Prayer of 1552 changed the sacrificial nature of the mass replacing it with a communion service. After Mary in 1553 repealed the Edwardian statutes concerning the sacraments, requests for masses underwent somewhat of a resurgence before disappearing altogether after Elizabeth's accession and the reinstatement of the 1552 Book of Common Prayer through the Act of Uniformity of 1559.

It can be seen from figure 3.12 that bequests to established chantries such as 'our lady's service', which had occurred in almost thirty per cent of wills under Henry VIII, ceased emphatically when their dissolution began on Easter Day 1548. However, Robart Jacson of Alstonefield in his will of 3 September 1556 harked back to the old religion when, after stating that 'my bodye to be buryed as nere unto our ladyes quere doore as may be suffered', bequeathed, 'ii shepe towards the begynny of our ladys service agayne at Alstonfold'. He also made a bequest of two pence to the, by then decayed, St Mary's House of Coventry.¹⁴⁶

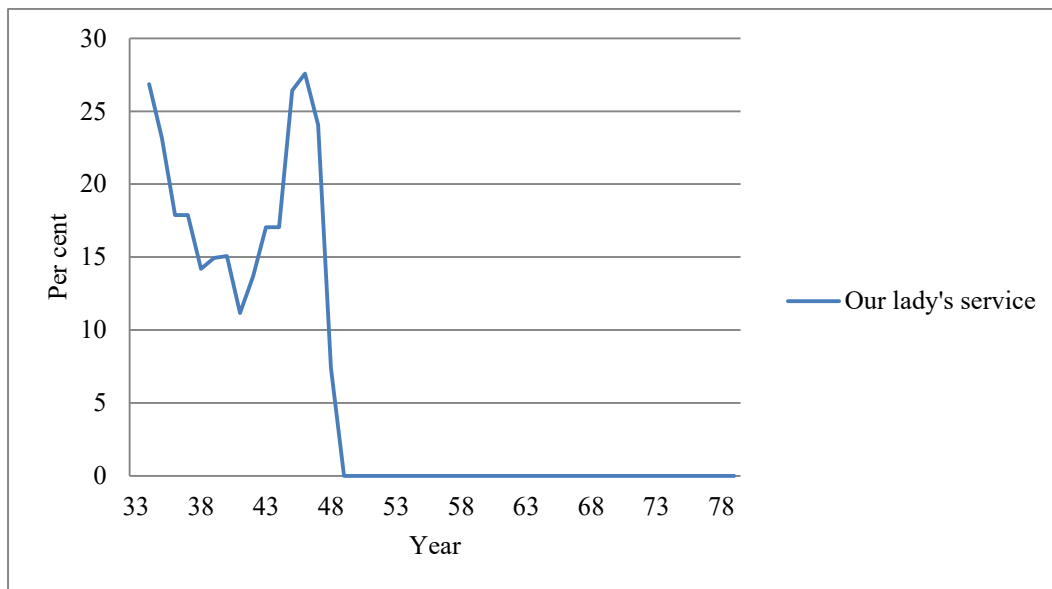
Similarly, as can be seen below from figure 3.13, bequests to monasteries or friaries ceased

¹⁴⁵ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 454.

¹⁴⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Robart Jacson, Alstonefield, 9 Oct 1556.

after 1538. It was assumed that gifts to them had been made in the expectation of prayers being given for the soul of the testator. The most common recipients were the Austin and Franciscan friars of Stafford, as well as the local monastery of Dieulacres, and Croxden Abbey.

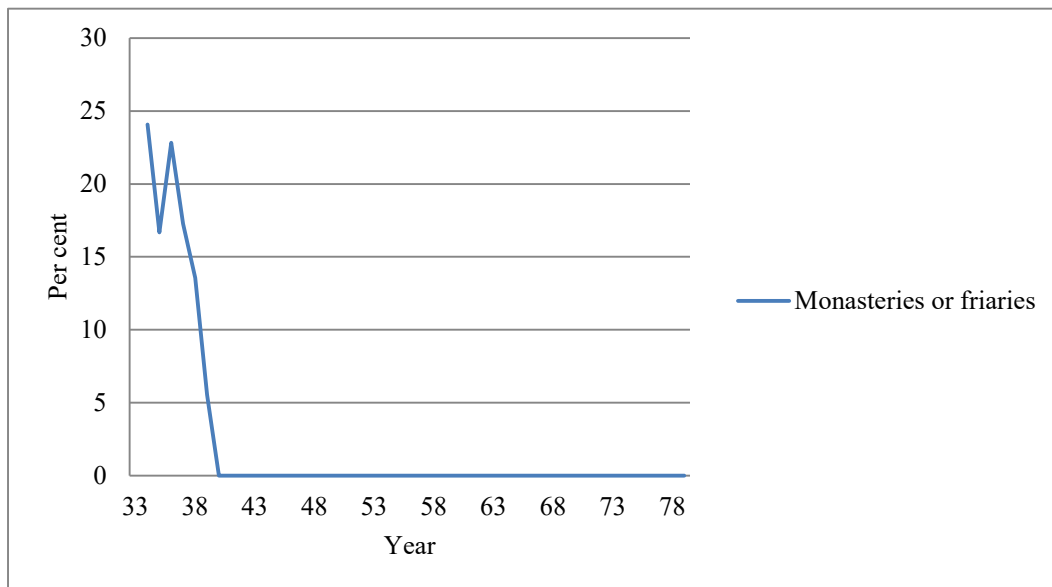
Figure 3.12



Requests to chantries in per cent

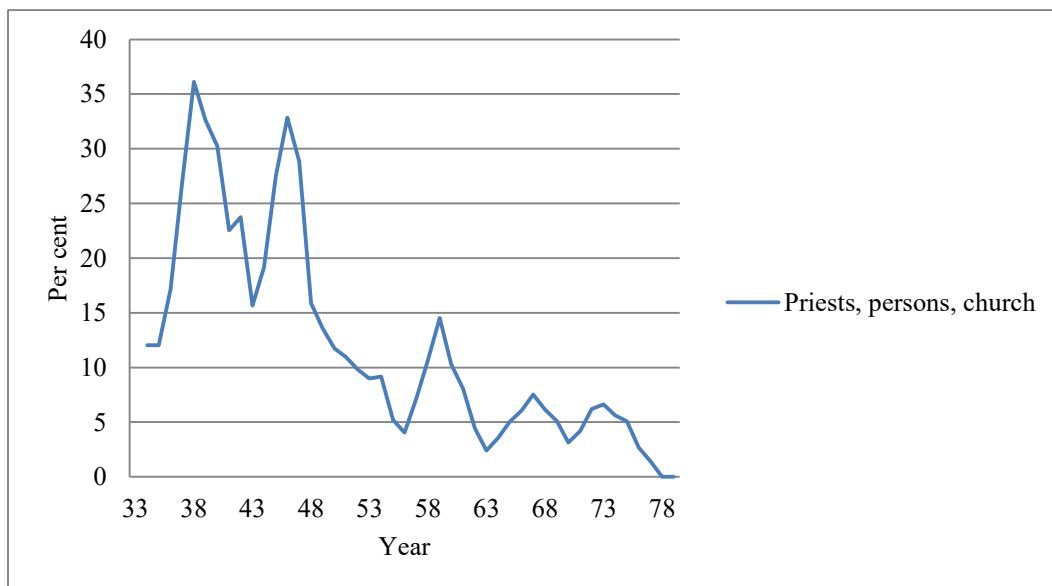
The sudden falls in bequests for masses, to chantries and to religious houses depicted in figures 3.11, 3.12, and 3.13 demonstrate abrupt changes in will-writing practice caused by declarations of government policy, i.e. change dictated from the top. However, these were changes in behaviour, and were not necessarily accompanied by changes in belief.

Figure 3.13



Bequests to monasteries or friaries in per cent

Figure 3.14



Bequests to clergy, the church, or private individuals, requesting prayers, in per cent

Finally bequests were made occasionally to individuals or the church which specifically stated that the recipient was to pray for the testator's soul. In the case of priests it was assumed that

any bequest to a member of the clergy was made with the understanding that a prayer would be offered. As illustrated in figure 3.14, these declined after the death of Henry VIII being excluded from the 1552 Book of Common Prayer and condemned in the Homily of Prayer written in the 1560s by Bishop John Jewel of Salisbury.¹⁴⁷

Neither let us dreame any more, that the soules of the dead are any thing at all holpen by our prayers: But as the Scripture teacheth us, let us thinke that the soule of man passing out of the body, goeth straight wayes either to heaven, or else to hell, whereof the one needeth no prayer, and the other is without redemption

Bequests continued, albeit at a low level, until 1576, as priests who were willing to pray for the testator's soul became fewer: those that left the area or died were, after 1559, replaced by Protestant clergy. From 1569 John Beardmore twice was a beneficiary in Cheadle wills. He was the schoolmaster and ex-chantry priest at Kingsley, about three miles from Cheadle, and died in 1576. Roger Copestack, curate at Cauldon, recorded as chaplain there in 1532-3, received three bequests, one being from John Beardmore. He died in 1579.¹⁴⁸ However, both priests wrote wills with ostensibly Protestant preambles, although John Beardmore admitted that he was 'dreading death', a statement with Catholic connotations, and also bequeathed 2d per year to the parish poor forever. Like John Addye of Grindon, they appear to have been closet Catholics.

¹⁴⁷ Church of England, *Certain sermons or homilies appointed to be read in churches in the time of the late Queen Elizabeth of famous memory* (Oxford, 1840), pp. 299-300.

¹⁴⁸ A. J. Kettle, 'A list of the families in the archdeaconry of Stafford 1532-3', *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, Staffordshire Record Society (1976), p.9.

As well as these bequests, there was a smattering of gifts almost entirely in the 1530s to create chantries (two testators), for indulgences (seven testators) and one to a local guild.¹⁴⁹ The most popular indulgence was Burton Lazars. As a result of collateral damage from Cromwell's Injunctions of 1536 and 1538 against pilgrimage and the abuse of images for superstition or financial reward, there were no more obvious bequests for indulgences after that of Richard Stanlow of Leek on 3 March 1537/8 to, 'saynte robert of knaresburgh xiid, saynte w[̄] fus frary xiid, saynte lazars of burton xiid, saynte thomas of canterbury xiid'.¹⁵⁰ There is a suggestion that bequests for indulgences may have continued for a further few years in the guise of the standard 4d bequests to the mother churches of the diocese, which virtually ceased in this study after the reign of Henry VIII.¹⁵¹ Chantries, guilds and obits were suppressed later under the Chantry Act of 1547. John Rochedale of Ellastone in 1541 created an obit for twenty years, whereas John Dynnes of Uttoxeter in 1537 bequeathed a cow for an obit. Subsequently John Dynnes's gift was crossed through, possibly revealing a prescient lack of confidence that the prevailing practices would continue.¹⁵²

These bequests in the expectation of prayers being made for their souls by the testators of the deanery of Leek can be compared with such bequests made by the clergy and other elites of the entire archdeaconry of Stafford, depicted in the bar chart, figure 3.15. Possibly the latter group would be more likely than ordinary testators to have made provision for the salvation of their souls separately from preparing their will, perhaps to ensure secrecy, perhaps because considerable investment was anticipated. Therefore figure 3.15 may be significantly under-

¹⁴⁹ Ellen Wright bequeathed one cow to 'our ladyes gulde of bromley Abbotts'. LRO, B/C/11 Ellen Wright, Kingstone, 13 Apr 1543.

¹⁵⁰ Duffy, *Stripping*, p.407. R.N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 500. LRO, B/C/11 Richard Stanlow, Leek, 6 May 1538. Saynte w[̄] fus frary has not been identified.

¹⁵¹ Swanson, *Indulgences*, p. 159.

¹⁵² LRO, B/C/11 John Rochedale, Ellastone, 1542. LRO, B/C/11 John Dynnes, Uttoxeter, 1 Oct 1537.

representing their commitment. Again bequests to monasteries and friaries continued until 1538: only three bequests were made to monasteries and one to a friary, none by clergy. Possibly with more awareness of the likely direction in government sentiment than the general population, clergy and other elites had ceased bequests to chantries by 1543. There were only six, one of which was made by the chantry priest of Marchington to his own chantry of St Katherine.¹⁵³ No member of the clergy supported guilds or indulgences. Lewis Bagott, knight of Blythfield, bequeathed to 'our ladies gylde of Bromley Abbotts on heyffer of ii yeres old' in 1534.¹⁵⁴ In 1538/9, John Wistowe, a wealthy layman, bequeathed 6s 8d and a velvet jacket to the Corpus Christi play of Tamworth, possibly run under the auspices of the town guild. Considered idolatrous, the celebrations at Corpus Christi would have ended with the suppression of the guilds.¹⁵⁵ Wistowe was the only member of the lay elite to create an obit, requiring his son Edward to pay 5s annually for the next twenty years to the church at Tamworth, to observe an annual obit for his soul, his late wife's soul, and those of his parents, children and all Christians, 'whiche our Lorde God wolde have prayed for'.¹⁵⁶ The only member of the clergy to create an obit was Bartholomew Francis, 'parishe prest' of Burton upon Trent, who, mortally ill on 25 May 1557, in a will with a preamble bequeathing his soul to 'Almyghtye God my maker trusting to be savyd onlye be the merytts of Jhesu Chrysts passion', set one up at Burton church leaving 6s 8d per year for seven years for his soul and all Christian souls. Clearly, he was not anticipating an imminent change in government.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ LRO, B/C/11 William Mowyr, Marchington, 19 Oct 1541.

¹⁵⁴ LRO, B/C/11 Lewys Bagott, Blythfield, 5 Jul 1535.

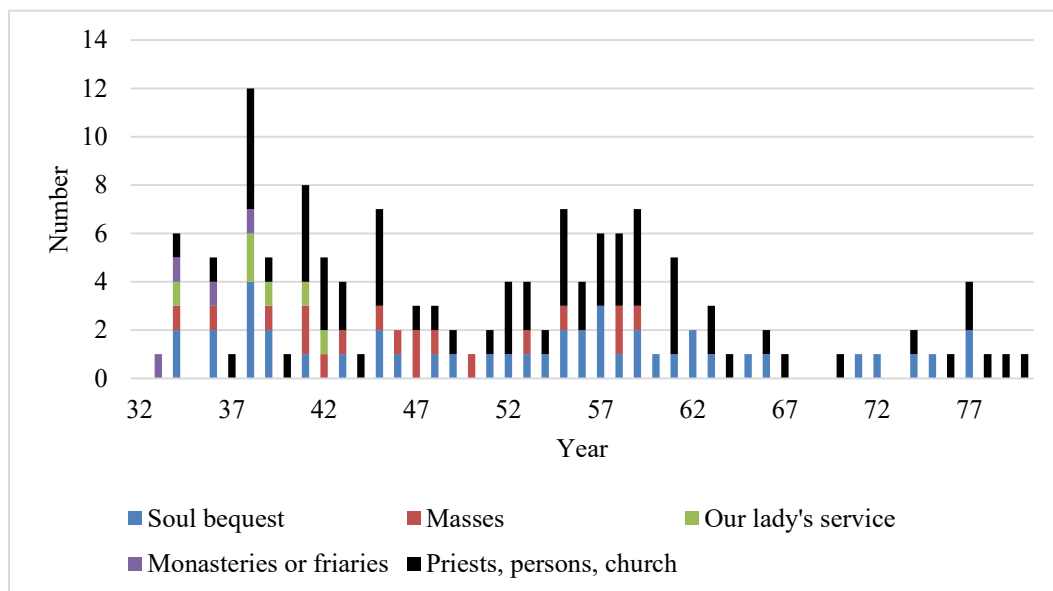
¹⁵⁵ Hutton, *Rise and fall*, pp. 82-3.

¹⁵⁶ PCC, PROB 11/27/546 f.248 John Wistowe, Tamworth, 14 Oct 1539.

¹⁵⁷ LRO, B/C/11 Bartholomew Francis, Burton upon Trent, 2 Jul 1557.

There are at least two possible reasons why Bartholomew Francis, a Catholic, would have written a will with seemingly Protestant preamble during Mary's reign. He began his long, somewhat rambling will on 25 May; it was proved only thirty-eight days later on 2 July. In the will he referred twice to seven marks which he was owed by the vicar and church warden of Uttoxeter, for 'one half yeare wages and one fortnight more'. The church warden was Lewis Walker who, twenty years later, in a

Figure 3.15



Bequests involving prayers for the soul made by the clergy and other elites of the archdeaconry of Stafford

Soul bequests were more popular among this group than among the ordinary testators of Leek Deanery and declined at the start of Edward's reign. Again there appears to have been a recovery under Mary, followed once more by decline, with them being virtually abandoned by 1567. However, echoing the results for the general population, they recovered some popularity in the mid to late 1570s, in the lay elites, all but one written apparently with a Protestant preamble.¹⁵⁸ Bequests for masses which had declined during the reign of Edward, disappeared rapidly after the Elizabethan Settlement received royal assent in May 1559. In

will with a very similar preamble, made a bequest for the health of his soul. Firstly, this preamble wording may have been considered traditional in the vicinity. Secondly, for six months before his final illness Bartholomew Francis must have been travelling frequently the fourteen miles between Burton on Trent and Uttoxeter, so he was not infirm; he had probably been taken ill suddenly, possibly with a fever which were rife in 1557. As no family members were mentioned in his will, perhaps a scribe was summoned urgently who in this instance was not of the testator's or his family's choosing, and who wrote the preamble without consulting the dying man.

¹⁵⁸ PCC, PROB 11/53/330 f.212 John Goodcole Burton on Trent, 20 Jun 1571. PCC, PROB 11/56/446 f.285 William Moreton, Eccleshall, 7 Oct 1574. The previous will has a traditional preamble. PCC, PROB 11/62/450 f.318-21 Edward Littleton, Pillaton, 31 Oct. 1580. LRO, B/C/11 Edmund Walker, Aldridge, 20 Feb 1575. LRO, B/C/11 Lewis Walker, Uttoxeter, 1 Mar 1577. PCC, PROB 11/62/155 f.114-5 Francis Roose, Eccleshall, 26 Apr. 1580.

his will with a neutral preamble, John Morrys, priest of Wichnor and ex-chantry priest at Longdon, asked for a trentall and dirige on 12 January 1548.¹⁵⁹ In 1550, in a will with a traditional preamble, Robert Whytgreve esquire stated, acknowledging the wording of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer but clearly envisaging a traditional funeral, that, 'I wyll have at my buryall ... ix tapers to brene at my dyryge and at mynistracon of the comynyon'.¹⁶⁰ In January 1553, before Edward VI had fallen ill, William Bassett knight of Blore, in the concluding statements of his will with a traditional preamble, asked for a priest to sing for seven years for his, his parents, and all Christian souls.¹⁶¹ The most popular type of bequest was to members of the clergy, individuals or churches for prayers and these continued throughout the period, although never at such a high rate as during some of the later years of Henry VIII's reign. Interestingly these results, like those of the soul bequests, reveal a serious decline in popularity in the late 1560s and early 1570s coinciding with the government stiffening its stance against Catholics, before being included in wills again towards 1580, perhaps when testators had become less fearful of recrimination.

To conclude, among the general testators of the deanery of Leek, until checked or forbidden, traditional bequests for prayers for the dead did continue throughout the Reformation period, albeit at reduced levels, diminished further under pro-Protestant governments. Such bequests were more popular among the clergy and other elites of the archdeaconry of Stafford. The lay elites in particular were more likely to exhibit anomalous behaviour, and disregard accepted practice. A significant proportion of this group devised their own wills, which would have led to more individuality. Possibly too the lay elites were protected from retribution through

¹⁵⁹ LRO, B/C/11 John Morrys, Wichnor, 20 Nov 1548.

¹⁶⁰ LRO, B/C/11 Robert Whytgreve, Castle Church, 28 Apr 1551.

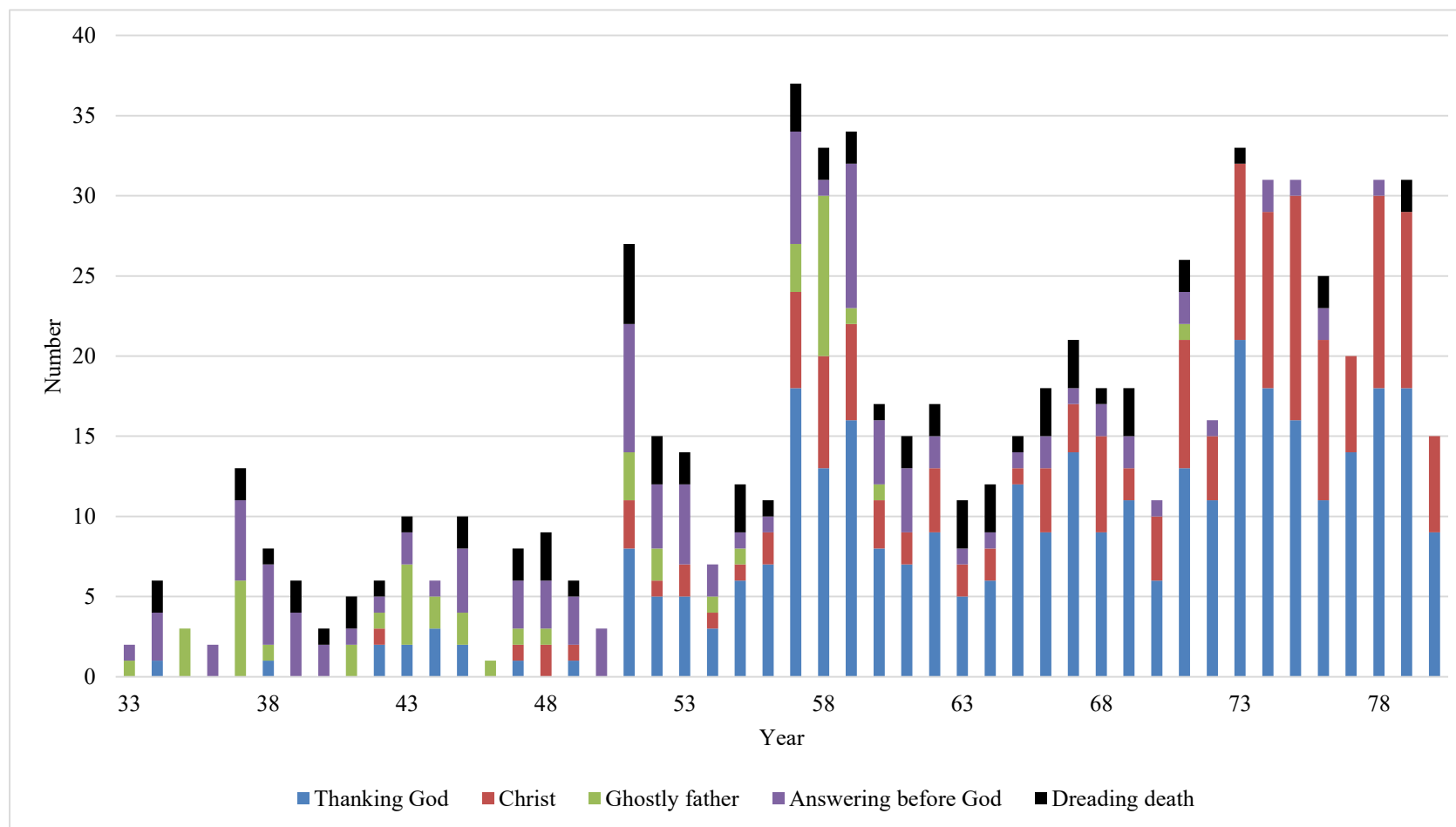
¹⁶¹ LRO, B/C/11 William Bassett, Blore, 7 Dec 1553.

their power within the county, or the influence that they exerted in higher spheres of government. Also, unlike the general population, members of the gentry possessed resources, such as a cushion of wealth, and a personal chapel with resident chaplain, the latter especially important for recusants, which allowed them licence to ignore government injunctions. However, despite doubt about the interpretation of the beliefs of some, especially lay elite testators, with fifty per cent of will preambles written towards 1580 being Protestant, outlying will statements, by themselves, do not invalidate the overall impression of a general shift towards Protestantism, reported in the previous section.

Expressions Relating to Religious Belief

Certain religious expressions tended to occur repeatedly within this group of wills. Some of them have been putatively linked by scholars to sets of belief; five of them, three possibly Catholic, one unknown and one possibly Protestant are discussed in this section. The variation in their occurrence over time is depicted in figure 3.16. Also indicative of traditional belief were bequests to the mother church and the high altar, whereas requests for funeral sermons were considered to be suggestive of Protestantism. Book bequests provide evidence of the value placed on certain books by the testator.

Figure 3.16



Types of religious expression used per year

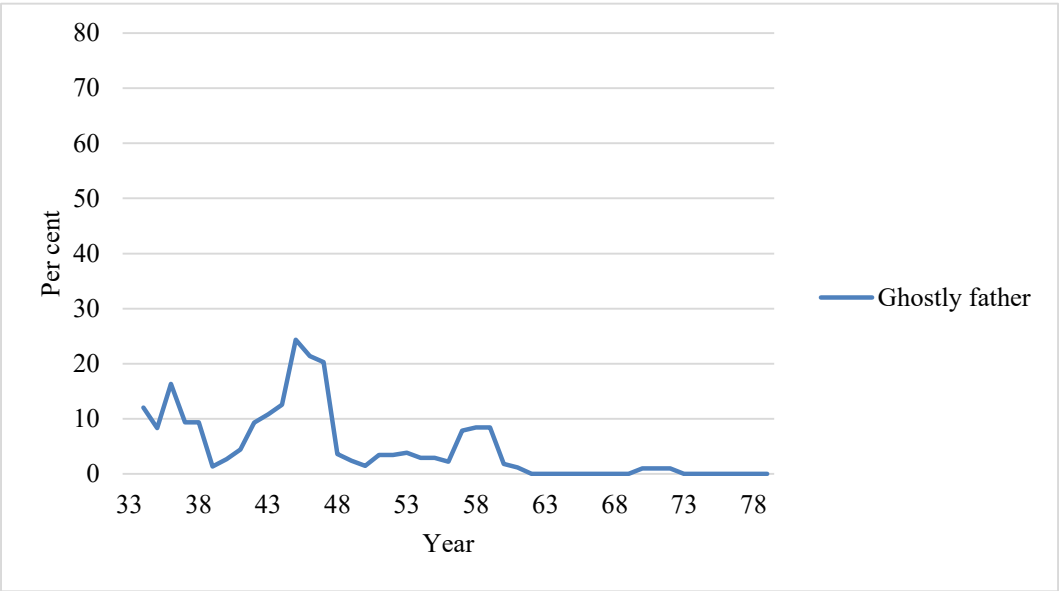
Wills where the priest was referred to as 'my ghostly father' had almost certainly been written by Catholic testators for whom their priest had been their personal confessor. Examination of figure 3.16 with figure 3.17, the line graph of three-year rolling averages, shows that, apart from a dip immediately after the Dissolution, the expression was present in around fifteen per cent of wills until Edward's reign, with a faint suggestion of a rise during the reign of Mary, due to a peak in 1558, hinting at a swing back then to Catholic practices in the deanery after previous restrictions. Its use ceased in 1560, with one further isolated occurrence in 1571, in the will of Margery Asshenhurst, the widow of an affluent yeoman of Leek.¹⁶² Similarly, Litzenberger found that in Gloucestershire the expression was often employed until Edward's reign when its use declined, never recovering until it stopped altogether in 1570.¹⁶³ Figure 3.18 demonstrates that these testators wrote traditional preambles until Edward's accession. During his reign they usually chose to commit their soul to Almighty God, then they preferred the expanded version, with a further two ambiguous preambles. A transition from traditional to neutral preambles among Catholic testators during Protestant regimes has been noted by Litzenberger.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² LRO, B/C/11 Margery Asshenhurst, Leek, 4 Oct 1572.

¹⁶³ Litzenberger, *Reformation and the laity*, p. 160.

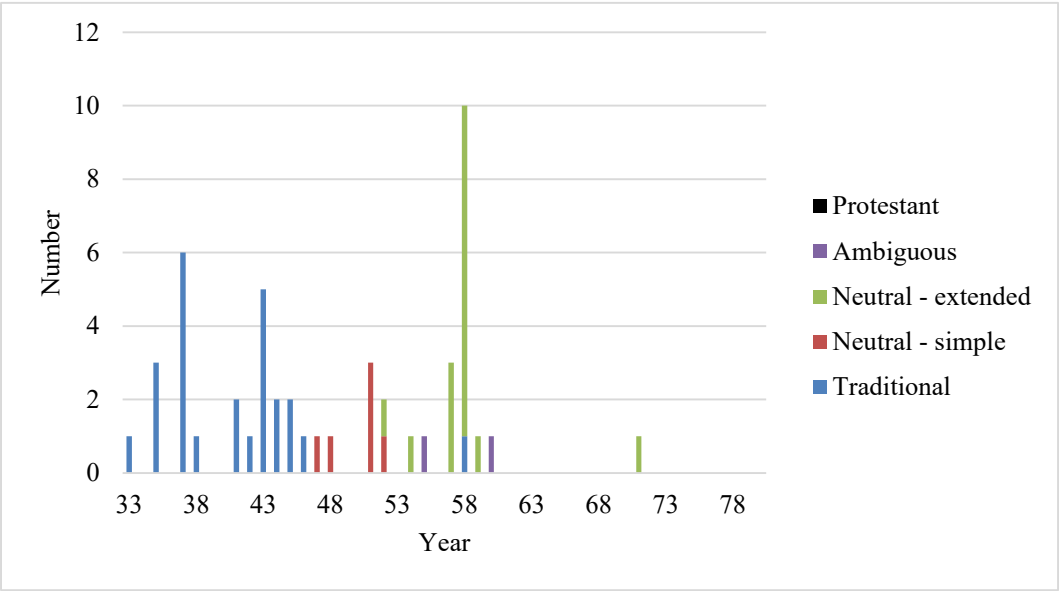
¹⁶⁴ Litzenberger, *Gloucestershire wills*, pp. 426-8.

Figure 3.17



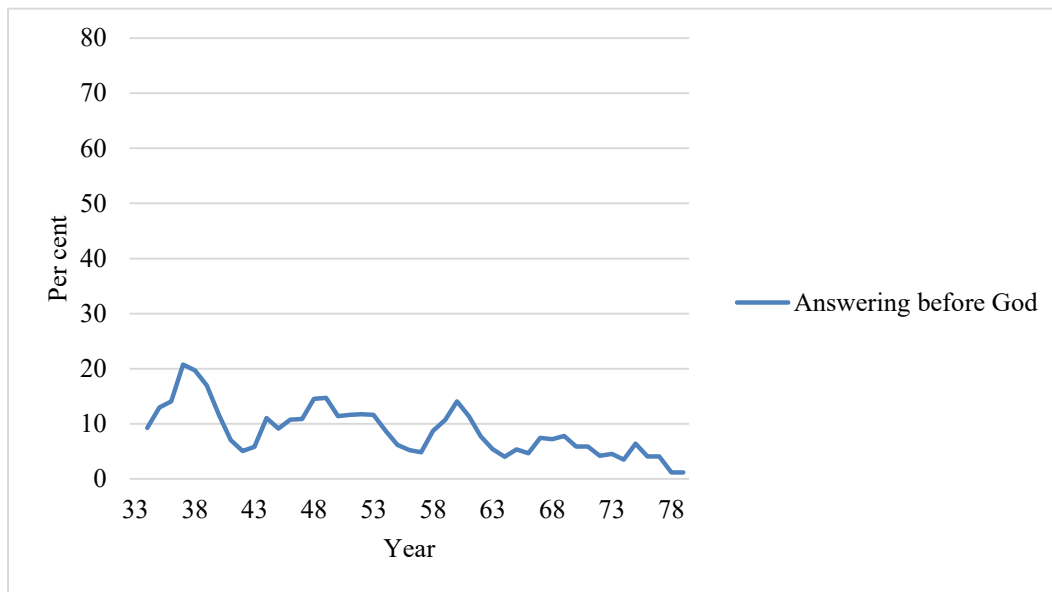
Wills where the testator referred to the parish priest as 'my ghostly father', in per cent

Figure 3.18



References to 'my ghostly father' by preamble

Figure 3.19



Wills where the testator warned their executors that they would be 'answering before God' if they failed to carry out their wishes, in per cent

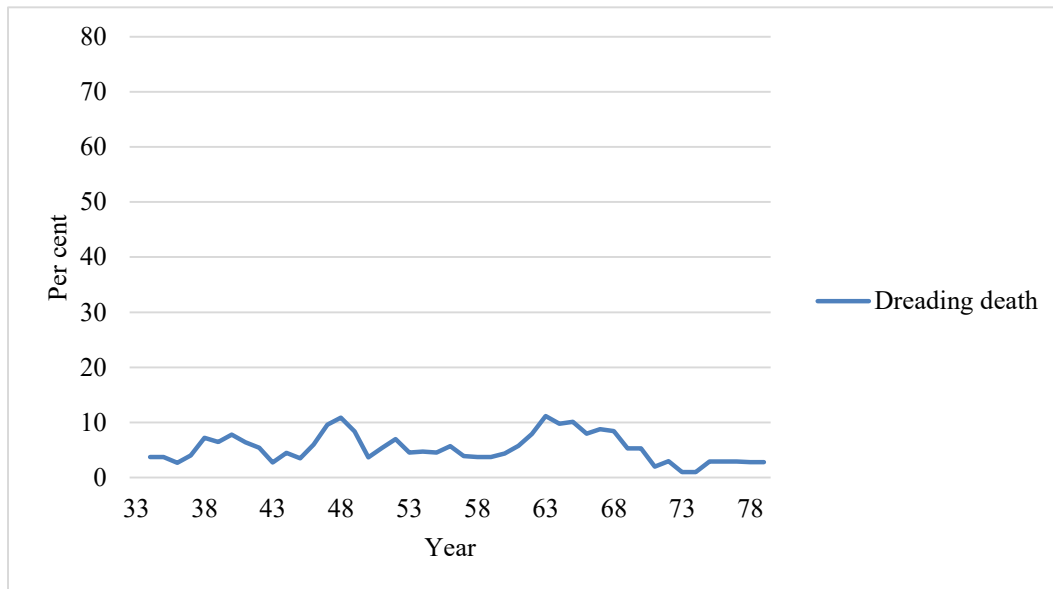
According to figure 3.19, the line graph of three-year rolling averages, the admonition to executors that they would be 'answering before God' if they did not fulfil the bequests which the testator had stipulated in his will, was used by about fifteen per cent of testators until 1563. Some statements, for instance requesting tapers at their funeral, may well have been oral and not featured in the will, if it had been felt that they would cause problems with the church court at probate. An alternative version was that used by Thomas Close of Leek in 1534, 'they shall answer beffore the high juge'.¹⁶⁵ The reference to Judgment Day was clearly expressed by William Riley of Alstonefield in 1552, in denying that he had not settled with his son-in-law. 'I shall answere before the high judge at the dredefullday of judgement when the secrets of all herts shalbe opened.'¹⁶⁶ The spectre of the consequences on Judgment Day of misbehaviour and sin had been depicted in Doom paintings which used to sit on chancel

¹⁶⁵ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Close, Leek, 4 Dec 1534.

¹⁶⁶ LRO, B/C/11 William Riley, Alstonefield, 9 Jul 1552.

arches or the west wall of churches, before they were whitewashed over during Edward's reign. As familiarity with traditional religious beliefs had grown less by Elizabeth's reign, the use of this expression gradually died away.

Figure 3.20



Wills where the testator stated that they were 'dreading death', in per cent

Protestants believed in 'justification by faith alone', hence they should have been welcoming death, rather than dreading it as a time for cleansing of sin through purgatory. According to figure 3.20, the line graph of three-year rolling averages, this expression occurred on roughly five to ten per cent of wills until the second decade of Elizabeth's reign when its use fell, suggesting a decline in traditional beliefs then.

Before the Reformation, people were made aware of the inevitability and nearness of death, and the importance of preparation for it throughout life, by vivid paintings on church walls. These images were largely destroyed during the Reformation. In a few instances where medieval paintings were whitewashed out during Edward's reign, they have been recovered,

albeit in a muted form, for instance at Claverley near Wolverhampton.¹⁶⁷ Figure 3.21, the barely discernible painting from the chapel of Haddon Hall, Derbyshire, depicts the common theme of three rich young men who meet three skeletons in a forest. The skeletons are saying, 'As you are, so were we: As we are, so you will become'. This image was particularly apposite to the wealthy Catholic Vernons, meeting their eyes as they left their private chapel in the early-sixteenth century. It may be supposed that similar illustrations would have been familiar to the inhabitants of Leek Deanery, fifteen miles away, and, until they disappeared, must have influenced their conception of death.

Figure 3.21



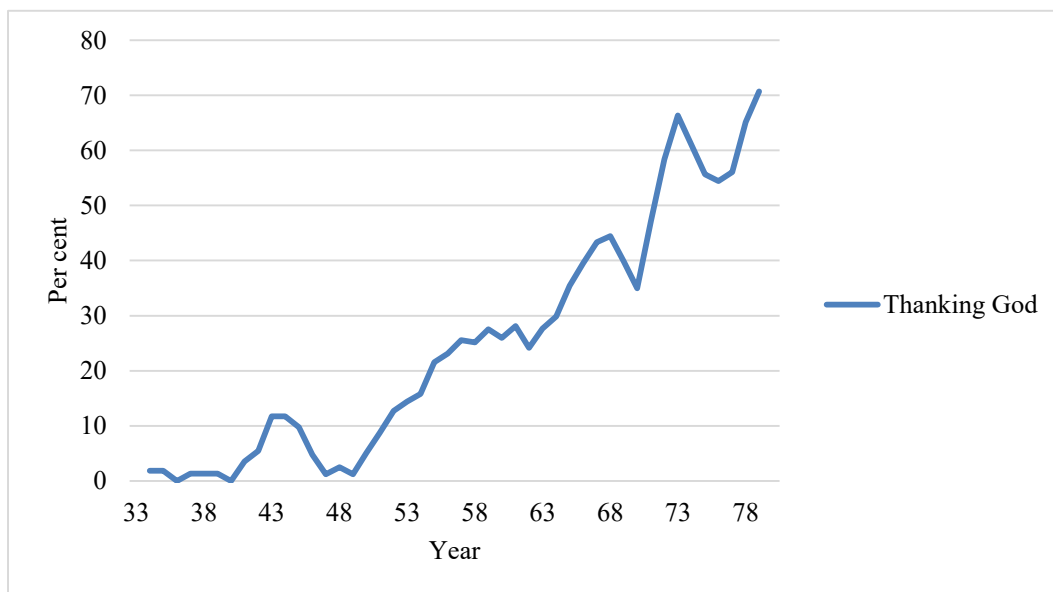
Painting on the west wall of the chapel of Haddon Hall, Derbyshire¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ J. Newman and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Shropshire* (New Haven, 2006), p. 210.

¹⁶⁸ Photographed 18 Apr 2014.

Finally, a few inventories produced between 1552 and 1560 began by asking God to have mercy on the soul of the departed. Possibly these, mainly Marian, inventory writers were concerned that insufficient reparation offerings had been made, due to changes brought about by the Reformation. David Hickman stated that the expression occurred in about twenty per cent of tomb epitaphs in the East Midlands in the 1560s and did not disappear there until the 1570s.¹⁶⁹ This suggests that acknowledgement of the doctrine of purgatory survived for longer in the East Midlands than in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Figure 3.22



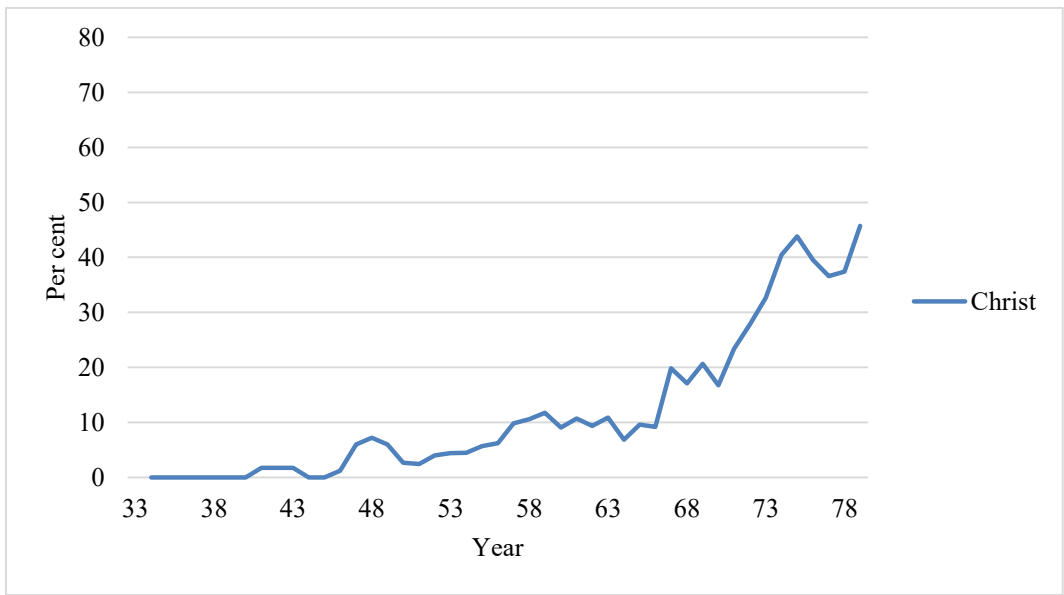
Wills where the testator offered thanks to God, usually that they were of 'sound mind and good remembrance', in per cent

From figure 3.22, the line graph of three-year rolling averages, thanking God, usually in the form of 'laud and praise almighty God', became increasingly popular from 1550 until it was included in a significant proportion of wills by 1580. Perhaps it gained popularity at this troubled time because it was innocuous, and unlikely to offend anyone of any religious

¹⁶⁹ D. Hickman, 'Wise and religious epitaphs: funerary inscriptions as evidence for religious change in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire, c.1500-1640', *Midland History*, 26 (2001), p. 117.

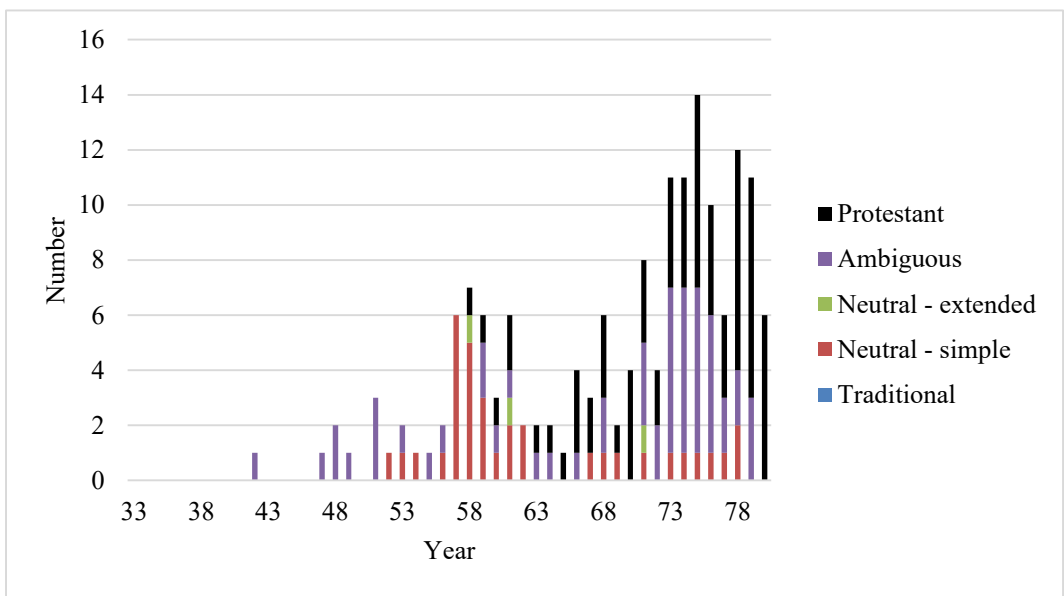
background. It had occurred on the birth announcement of Elizabeth Tudor in 1533, so presumably was in common usage in the sixteenth century.

Figure 3.23



Wills where reference was made to the importance of Christ, in per cent

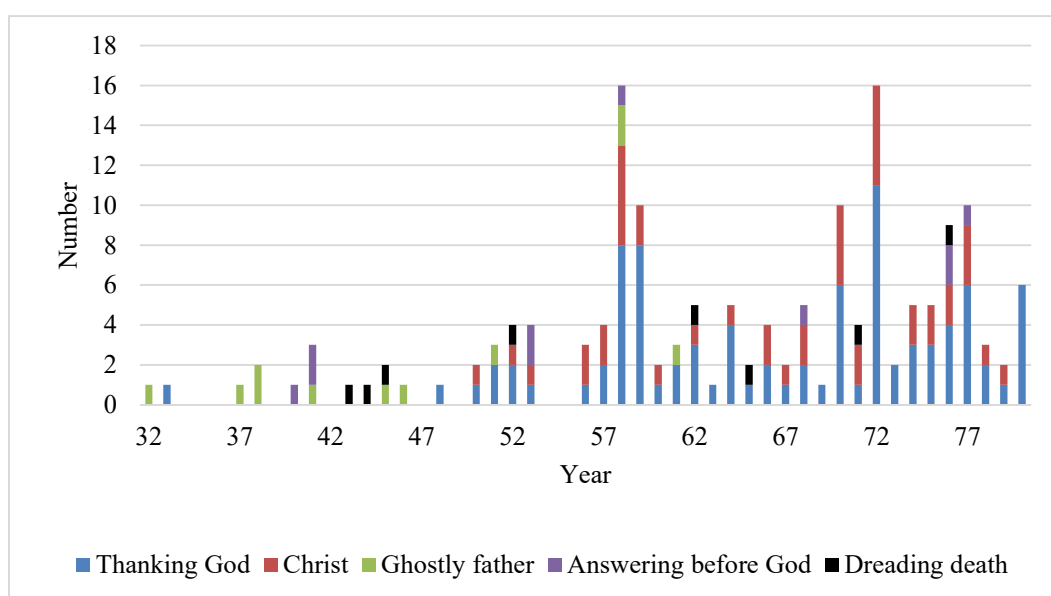
Figure 3.24



Wills which expressed the importance of Christ by preamble

From figure 3.23, the line graph of three-year rolling averages, references to Christ tended to increase during Protestant regimes, most markedly during the second decade of Elizabeth's reign. Apparently, testators had spiritually replaced the Virgin Mary and the saints with Christ as their intercessor with God. However, from figure 3.24, no testator had written a traditional preamble; the wills predominantly bore Protestant or ambiguous preambles. Neutral preambles almost entirely referred to Almighty God with no qualification, perhaps because the appellation of redeemer had been transferred to Christ. The profile shows a more Protestant bias than that of the population as a whole, shown in figure 3.1. Hsia hypothesised that Catholicism in Münster had become more Christocentric after the Reformation, as Catholics preferred then to place their trust in a merciful Christ rather than various saints. However, in England, in Leek Deanery at least, it appears that such a change had not occurred, with those who embraced trust in Christ being predominantly Protestant.¹⁷⁰

Figure 3.25



Various types of religious expression used by the elites including clergy of the archdeaconry of Stafford per year

¹⁷⁰ R. P-chia Hsia, 'Civic wills as sources for the study of piety in Münster, 1530-1618', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, XIV (1983), pp. 329-30.

From figure 3.25, as with the general population of Leek Deanery, there was a halt to references to 'my ghostly father' around 1560 by the elites including clergy of the archdeaconry of Stafford. They also exhibited a Catholic profile as, out of eleven occurrences, ten wills with traditional preambles were written before 1559, and there was one other, the last, in 1561 where the testator's soul was committed to Almighty God. There were a few instances only of 'answering before God' and 'dreading death', which occurred throughout the period.

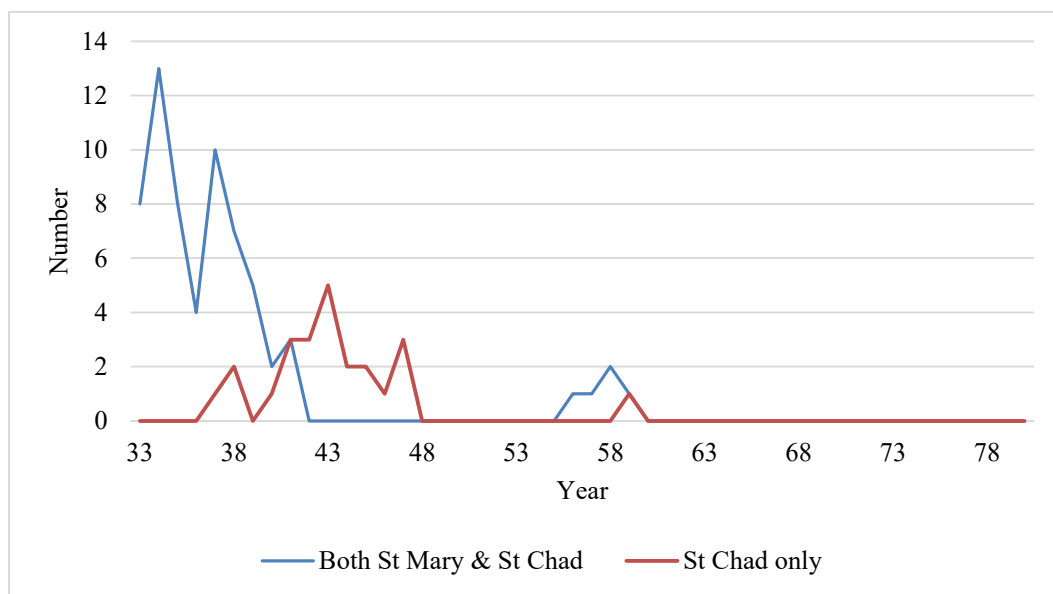
References to thanking God in elite wills, like those of the general testators of the deanery, began to rise about 1550 being present in seventy to eighty per cent by the late 1570s. A similar profile is shown for references to Christ. The wills, like those of Leek Deanery, have a marked Protestant bias, bearing Protestant preambles in approximately two thirds of cases.

Bequests of a few pence to the cathedral as the head or mother church of the diocese had been a characteristic of medieval wills. The diocese of Lichfield and Coventry was unusual in possessing two 'mother churches', St Chad of Lichfield and St Mary's House of Coventry. From figure 3.26, among the general testators of the deanery bequests to St Mary's, which, together with St Chad, had occurred in about two thirds of wills in the early 1530s, first faltered in 1537, and had stopped by 1542, as the cathedral had begun to fall into decay after 1539 when control of the diocese was handed to Lichfield; also in 1539 St Mary's priory, to which the cathedral belonged, was dissolved.¹⁷¹ Bequests to St Chad ceased after 1547, but had declined rapidly from around 1538 during the reign of Henry VIII when shrines,

¹⁷¹ For a description of St Mary's see: M. Sadgrove, 'The Theatre of the Soul – liturgy then and now: worship in Coventry's priory church,' in G. Demidowicz (ed.), *Coventry's First Cathedral* (Stamford, 1994), pp. 169-180.

including that of St Chad at Lichfield, were removed.¹⁷² In Mary's reign there were four bequests to both institutions and one bequest in 1559; to St Chad's house alone there was one bequest in 1559. This suggests that there was some belief among the laity during the reign of Mary that the cathedral of St Mary was going to be restored.

Figure 3.26



Bequests to the 'mother churches'

Litzenberger remarked that in Gloucestershire references to the 'mother church' were still occurring in about two per cent of wills in 1580.¹⁷³ The question then arises as to why the testators in a backward area like rural Staffordshire were much quicker at discarding what had been accepted as traditional custom. The working population in the area was probably much more conformist than elsewhere, as it lacked economic independence. The stated occupations of testators between 1570 and 1580, which began to be recorded regularly on wills in 1570, are given in table 3.1. It can be seen that the largest group consisted of husbandman, tenants

¹⁷² MacCulloch, *Later Reformation*, pp. 99-100.

¹⁷³ Litzenberger, *Reformation and the laity*, p. 160.

of the gentry, the men on whom the entire economic structure of the community depended. Farms were family businesses, providing the income that sustained successive generations. Farmers could not have moved from the area, nor chosen another landlord.

In their wills husbandmen in particular were anxious to secure the tenancy of the farm for their heir, usually their eldest son. This would have been decided in the manorial court and required the agreement of the landowner, whom it was important not to antagonise. Hence, many testators reminded their executors that their landlord was to receive their best beast as a heriot. For example, in 1534 John Bucknall of Checkley instructed his executors, 'my best good to my herret as custom is'.¹⁷⁴ As major landowners were probably patrons of their parish churches, tenants would have been very unwise to have ignored accepted religious practice in the parish. The effect of these relationships on the religious leanings of parishioners is discussed further in the second section of chapter 4.

Table 3.1

Occupational area	Occupation	Number
Gentry	Gentleman	7
	Esquire	3
Church	Vicar	7
Agriculture	Yeoman	14
	Husbandman	34
	Labourer	3
Trade	Butcher	3
	Carpenter	2
	Servant	2
	Shoemaker	2
	Weaver	1
	Tanner	1
	Fuller	1
	Tailor	1
	Fishmonger	1

Occupations of the testators of the deanery of Leek where given, between 1570 and 1580

¹⁷⁴ LRO, B/C/11 John Bucknall, Checkley, 21 Jul 1534.

Bequests to the mother churches from the lay elites of the archdeaconry of Stafford were sparse, one in each of 1533, 1534 and 1536, and, acknowledging the change in circumstances, one to the cathedral church of Lichfield in 1539, and to the reparations of the minster church of Lichfield in 1553.¹⁷⁵ The clergy of the archdeaconry followed a similar pattern to the testators of Leek Deanery: one in each of 1534, 1537 and 1538. Then there was another bequest in 1544, and in 1558 a bequest of 6d to St Chad only.¹⁷⁶

Another form of bequest hinting at confidence in the Marian restoration was money left to the high altar of the parish church, with connotations of the mystique of the sacrament deplored by Cranmer.¹⁷⁷ After a fourteen year gap following four gifts in the 1530s and one in 1541, there occurred a sudden flurry of three by lay elites during Mary's reign.¹⁷⁸

Claire Cross argued that an important indicator of the growth of Protestantism from 1560 to 1640 in two urban centres in Yorkshire was the number of bequests for funeral sermons. She contrasted the probable underestimate of fifty-four in Hull, with the testators of Leeds making four bequests, all in the seventeenth century.¹⁷⁹ The archdeaconry of Stafford had two, both in the late 1570s: one from John Addye, rector of Grindon, and the other from Christopher Eurye, a mercer of Wolverhampton, neither of whom appeared to be committed

¹⁷⁵ LRO, B/C/11 Lewis Bagott, Blythfield, 5 Jul 1535. PCC, PROB 11/25/3 f.2-3 Richard Grey, Tutbury, 2 Apr 1533. LRO, B/C/11 Reynald Pygott, Forton, 19 Apr 1554. PCC, PROB 11/25/493 f.255 John Ryse, Stone, 1 Apr 1536. PCC, PROB 11/27/546 f.248 John Wistowe, Tamworth, 14 Oct 1539.

¹⁷⁶ LRO, B/C/11 William Asshenhurst (ex-monk of Hilton Abbey), Stoke on Trent, 25 Nov 1544. LRO, B/C/11 Thurston Bradshaw, Cheddleton, 8 Oct 1534. LRO, B/C/11 John Ley, Worfield, 18 Dec 1537. LRO, B/C/11 Richard Malkyn, Norton in the Moors, 20 Sep 1561. LRO, B/C/11 William Swynnerton, Blymhill, 26 Sep 1538.

¹⁷⁷ Litzenger, *Reformation and the laity*, p. 65.

¹⁷⁸ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Chatwyn, Ingestre, 28 Nov 1555. LRO, B/C/11 Philip Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 8 Jan 1563. PCC, PROB 11/37/506 f.277-8 Thomas Wood, Wednesfield, 15 Jan 1556 (an altar cloth for the high altar).

¹⁷⁹ Cross, *Protestantism in Leeds and Hull*, pp. 230-8.

Protestants.¹⁸⁰ Mark Knight cited two gentlemen of Warwickshire who had made such bequests in 1509 and 1520 and noted that both had almost certainly been traditional in their religious sympathies then.¹⁸¹ He believed that they had been trying to promote a more rigorous and intellectual Christian message than was being conveyed routinely in churches through allegories. This could well have been the motive in the two instances in Staffordshire in the 1570s, although preachers at that time would almost certainly have been espousing Protestant views. John Addye, after giving instructions for relieving both poor and rich neighbours and parishioners at his burial with meat and drink, stated, 'one sermon be made to the edifieng of the people,' the preacher to receive 6s 8d. Such bequests for sermons would have been rare in Staffordshire, in comparison with Hull. William Overton, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, declared in 1584 that despite the archdeaconry possessing about 150 cures, there were scarcely five tolerable preachers, the country being 'so dangerous and superstitious'.¹⁸² It would have been of little value to make a bequest that it would have been almost impossible for the executors to fulfil, due to limited contact with suitable preachers. Christopher Eurye, a merchant, who in February 1575/6 gave 'to some goldie preacher to make a sermon at my buriall vis viiid', had a strong association with Redditch and was not certain where he might die. John Addye must have been well connected, firstly to have been chaplain to Sir William Bassett of Blore, and secondly in his will he described himself as, 'one of the gentlemen of the Quenes ma[jes]ties Chappell'. Possibly the congregations at their

¹⁸⁰ PCC, PROB 11/60/301 f.175 John Addye, Grindon, 3 Jun 1578.

PCC, PROB 11/59/58 f.33 Christopher Eurye, Wolverhampton, 28 Jan 1577. Christopher Eurye, merchant, in a will with a neutral preamble, left 20s to be distributed to the poor at his funeral, as well as two further sums of 20s for the poor of Wolverhampton and Redditch to be distributed within a month of his death. It appears that, like many Catholics, he was soliciting prayers indiscriminately from the poor. He also trusted his executors to see his will performed as he intended, 'for conscience sake and rewarde at Godes hande'. A committed Protestant would have been unlikely to have suggested being rewarded by God as an inducement.

¹⁸¹ M. Knight, 'Piety and devotion among the Warwickshire gentry, 1485-1547', *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers*, 32 (1989), pp. 35-6.

¹⁸² Lander, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 376-7.

funeral services would have been more advanced intellectually and more avant-garde than the norm in Staffordshire, so that the testators felt a sermon was appropriate, and 6s 8d might have purchased the services of a celebrity preacher from outside the archdeaconry.

Few of the testators of the deanery could sign their name so, although possibly they could read, they would have been unlikely to have welcomed engagement in more subtle religious messages than those depicted in wall paintings and stories. Bequests of books were sparse. Ordinary testators contributed three single items, although William Grene of Cheadle bequeathed 'all my bookes' to a friend from Kingsley, singling out 'the collection of the statutes of M[aste]r Rastell onelye excepted' for another recipient.¹⁸³ In 1537 Edmund Washynton bequeathed 'a masse boke' to Leek church for his burial, in 1553 Thomas Smith of Horton left 'iiis iiid to bye a boke to the servis of God', and a dictionary was given to Uttoxeter school in 1577 by Lewis Walker. Among the clergy, John Holme of Alton bequeathed his bible in Latin to the parish church in 1545, John Ward of Gratwich gave his books to a godson in 1570, and John Addye of Grindon left his books to a scholar in 1577. Finally Sir Philip Draycott underlined his Catholic sympathies by bequeathing the works of Thomas More to his son-in-law in 1558.¹⁸⁴ In the archdeaconry as a whole an additional three lay elites and nine clergy made bequests of books, which gives the impression that the population of Staffordshire considered books to be of limited value as purveyors of knowledge, although the books belonging to some of the deceased may have been passed on

¹⁸³ LRO, B/C/11 William Grene, Cheadle, 26 Mar 1566. The statutes referred to may have been a 'Collection of All the Statutes', published in 1557 by William Rastell. J.H. Baker, *Rastell, William (1508-1565) printer and legal writer*, (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography) at: <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/view/printable/23151>> [accessed 12 January 2014]

¹⁸⁴ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Smyth, Horton, 18 Apr 1554. LRO, B/C/11 Lewis Walker, Uttoxeter, 1 Mar 1577. LRO, B/C/11 Edmund Washynton, Leek, 1537. PCC, PROB 11/60/301 f.175 John Addye, Grindon, 3 Jun 1578. LRO, B/C/11 John Holme, Alton, 7 Jan 1546. LRO, B/C/11 John Ward, Gratwich, 26 Oct 1570. LRO, B/C/11 Philip Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 8 Jan 1563.

to their next of kin, without being mentioned in the will. Two of the three lay elites who bequeathed books clearly possessed extensive collections. In 1572 William Sutton of Asheley near Eccleshall bequeathed many volumes to several recipients: scholars at Oxford colleges, his brother and the sheriff of Cheshire. They included amongst other titles psalters, a dictionary, a new testament in Latin and a table of the names of the Kings of England with their reigns and ages.¹⁸⁵ In an undated will, the lawyer William Fitzherbert of Swynnerton bequeathed his law books to whomever was his first son to read the law, and ten books each to his brothers Thomas and John of their choosing.¹⁸⁶ Humfrey Cumberforth of Comberford near Tamworth in 1554 asked that the books of his chapel remain at Comberford.¹⁸⁷ Apart from a bible and a volume of sermons, the clergy referred simply to 'bokes'. They were bequeathed to fellow clergy (four), their parish church (three) a relative (one) and scholars (one).¹⁸⁸

Bequests to Churches

Based on the bar chart, figure 3.27, and the line graph of three-year rolling averages, figure 3.28, some general remarks can be made about how the behaviour of the testators of the deanery of Leek was affected by the events of the Reformation. Bequests are divided into donations to the parish church as cash or equivalent, for instance livestock; those to a local chapel; gifts for reparations to the parish church; money or equivalent for steeple building; and bequests to provide fixtures or fittings. Under the formula of the bidding prayer at mass

¹⁸⁵ PCC, PROB 11/55/390 f.224 William Sutton, Asheley, 10 Oct 1573.

¹⁸⁶ PCC, PROB 11/42B/408 f.291 William Fitzherbert, Swynnerton, 4 Aug 1559.

¹⁸⁷ PCC, PROB 11/38/205 f.144-5 Humfrey Cumberforth, Comberford, 7 Nov 1556.

¹⁸⁸ LRO, B/C/11 William Astley, Seighford, 5 May 1561. LRO, B/C/11 Alice Beach (ex-nun of Black Ladies of Brewood), Biddulph, 24 May 1577. LRO, B/C/11 John Harte, Hanbury (LRO, 24 Jul 1552. LRO, B/C/11 John Ley, Worfield, 18 Dec 1537. PCC, PROB 11/37/336 f.187 William Lynde, Wombourne, 17 May 1555. LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Meyre, Norton in the Moors, 2 Oct 1542. LRO, B/C/11 John Nowell, Swynnerton, 31 May 1555. LRO, B/C/11 William Tollet, Stoke on Trent, 25 Nov 1545. LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Wilson, Abbots Bromley, 17 Nov 1561.

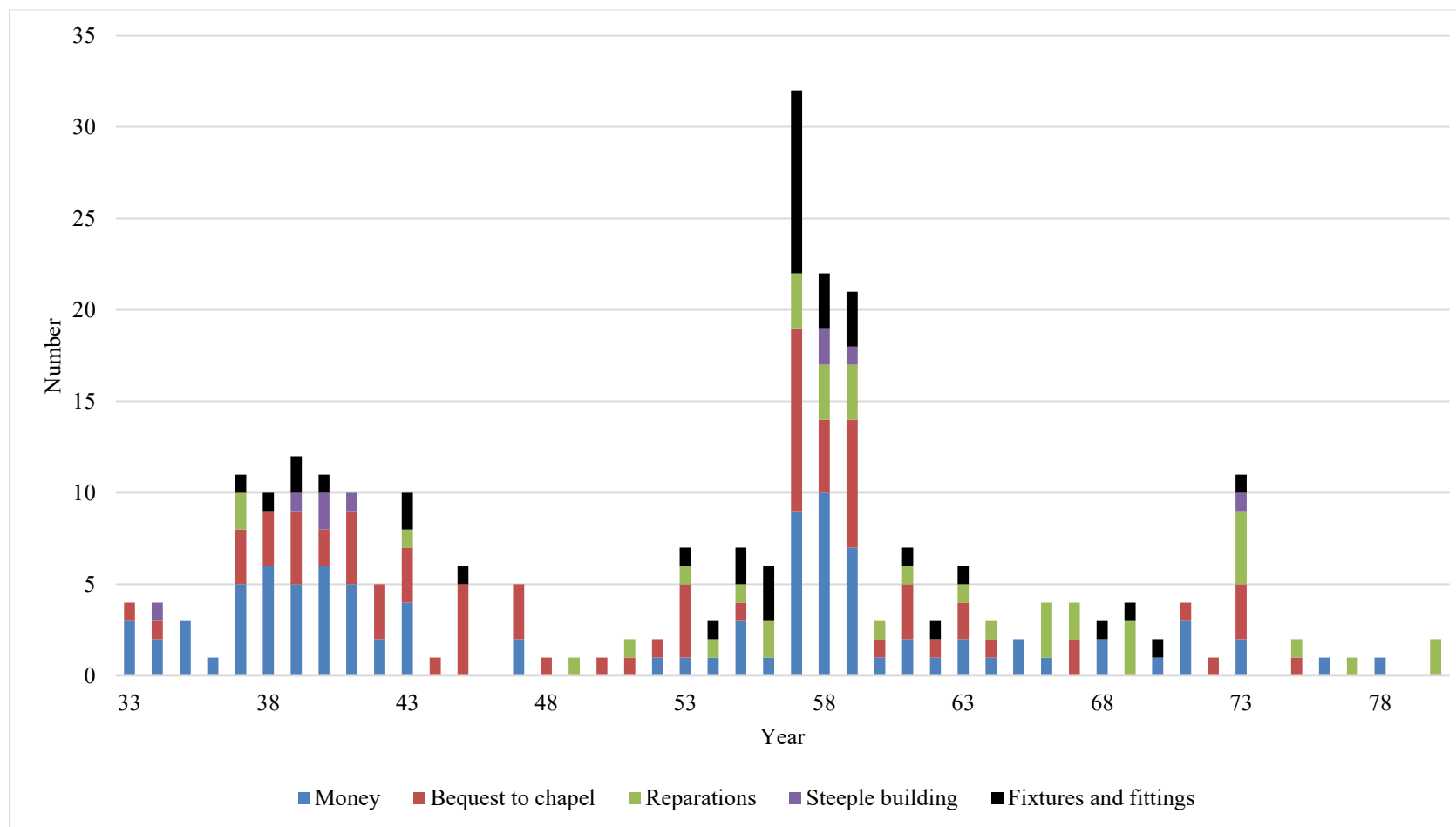
used in the diocese, Catholics would have expected to receive prayers for bequeathing 'any kind of goods to this church', so that 'God for their good deeds should reward them with the joy and bliss of heaven'.¹⁸⁹ In comparison with the reign of Henry VIII, all such bequests were extremely sparse under Edward, although they had been declining since the early 1540s. Those for fixtures and fittings would have been non-existent, if it were not for the insubordinate Sir William Bassett of Blore, who in January 1553 made two bequests to embellish the altars of Blore church and Grindon church, despite his bishop having been sent a letter in November 1550 from the Privy Council ordering the demolition of all altars in the diocese. Due to Sir William Bassett's status in the county, and the national esteem he had enjoyed under Edward's father, he must have believed himself to be sufficiently privileged to be able to make his will as he wished.¹⁹⁰ The prompt destruction of church images and ceremonial artefacts following the 1547 injunctions of Edward's government, and plans to confiscate 'useless' church goods such as bells and plate, would have caused great unease in the general population. Remembering the destruction of the monasteries under Henry VIII, testators would have been wary, and would have been alarmed further by the 1547 campaign and legislation to dissolve the chantries. Under Mary, particularly in the later years of her reign, after she had had time to remove her Protestant bishops, there was a splurge in church bequests, perhaps with the intention of recovering some lost church splendour, before those bequests declined again under Elizabeth.

¹⁸⁹ E. Calvert, 'Extracts from a fifteenth century MS', *Transactions of the Shropshire archaeological and natural history society*, 2nd ser., 6 (1894), pp. 104-6.

¹⁹⁰ LRO, B/C/11 William Bassett, Blore, 7 Dec 1553. The Bassetts were patrons of the churches of Blore and Grindon. J.E.M. and P.W. Hasler, *Bassett, William II (1551-1601), of Blore, Staffs. and Langley Meynell, Derbys*. (History of Parliament Online) at: <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/bassett-william-ii-1551-1601>> [accessed 21 April 2015]

D. MacCulloch, 'Worcester: a cathedral city in the Reformation', in P. Collinson and J. Craig (eds.), *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 105.

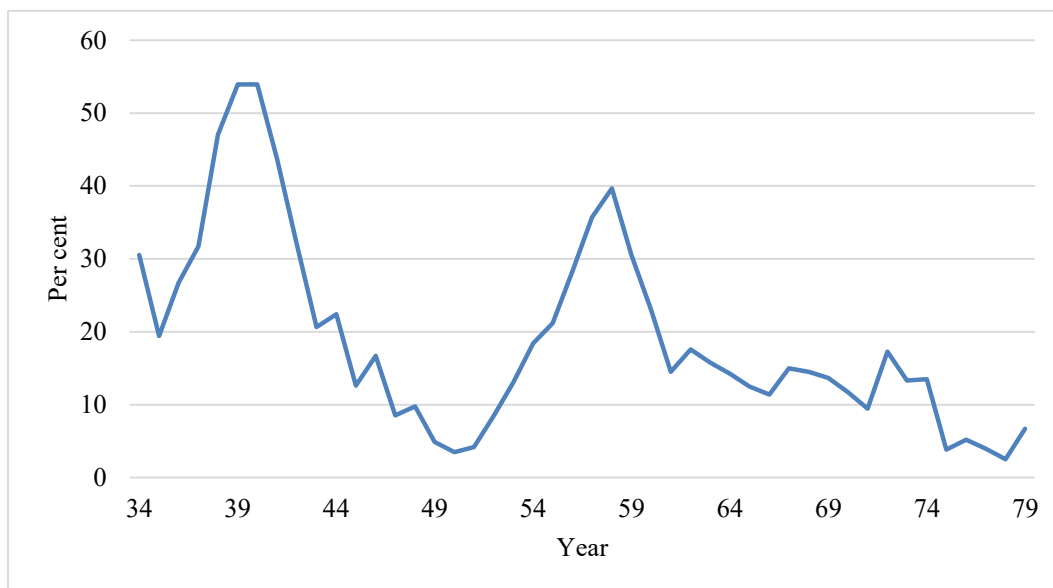
Figure 3.27



Church bequests

The deanery of Leek was not unusual. Based on a study of eight urban parishes, Kümin referred to the sharp decrease in 'voluntary' church spending in the reigns of both Edward and Mary, due to the more constrained religious atmospheres which prevailed then. Also, particularly under Edward, parishes were subjected to considerable extra expenditure, such as purchasing books and paying labour to reengineer church furniture.¹⁹¹ Described in detail in the church records of Morebath, a rural parish in Devon, Duffy concluded that the ample flow of money and gifts to the church up to the early 1540s, declined subsequently to mere drips.¹⁹²

Figure 3.28



Bequests to churches in per cent

Sometimes left to the high altar, and sometimes made the responsibility of the local curate or church warden, most of these church bequests were of money or equivalent, either to parish churches or to chapels. Leaving money to one or several chapels was almost as popular as leaving money to the parish church. A chapel might have been built as an endowed chantry,

¹⁹¹ B. Kümin, 'Voluntary religion and Reformation change in eight urban parishes', in P. Collinson and J. Craig (eds.), *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 185-6.

¹⁹² Duffy, *Morebath*, p. 182.

or as a component of a private house, but most were chapels of ease situated in large, dispersed parishes, such as Longnor chapel, attached to Alstonefield vicarage. Altogether there were three vicarages with chapels of ease in the deanery of Leek: Alstonefield, Leek and Rocester. Uttoxeter's chapels at Loxley and Crakemarsh were thought to have been chantry chapels as there was no record of them after 1533.¹⁹³ Maintaining the chapels and their curates, with small congregations, might have been a financial responsibility for the parish, although Longnor chapel was endowed with a toll of one penny for every covered booth and one halfpenny for every open stand at each of the four fairs held each year at Longnor.¹⁹⁴ Perhaps the testator or a close relative attended one of the chapels, and such a gesture to a relatively impoverished institution, would have been of lasting benefit to the local community, although some chapels may well have been the preferred 'consumer choice' in the area.¹⁹⁵ A typical bequest was that of John Chedwycke in 1542, 'the meyneteynyng of gods servis at Longnor a shepe'.¹⁹⁶ As the century progressed and, especially under Protestant regimes, bequests of money for the reparations of the parish church assumed importance instead. Indeed in 1565 Bishop Bentham saw fit to remind 'the parson, vicar, curate and churchwardens of ... and every of you', within his diocese of their responsibilities regarding the removal of altars and rood lofts and, 'that you keep your church in good reparation from rain and weather'.¹⁹⁷ His admonition apart, such bequests were more likely to be immune from confiscation or diversion to other causes.

¹⁹³ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 295-6, 366.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁵ R.N. Swanson, 'Fissures in the bedrock: parishes, chapels, parishioners and chaplains in Pre-Reformation England', in N. Lewycky and A. Morton (eds.), *Getting Along: Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England - Essays in Honour of Professor W.J. Shells* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 77-9.

¹⁹⁶ LRO, B/C/11 John Chedwycke, Alstonefield, 8 May 1542.

¹⁹⁷ Frere and Kennedy, *Visitation articles and injunctions*, pp. 165-170.

There were eight bequests in three flurries for steeple building, mostly relating to Sheen steeple: around 1540, in 1558 and 1559, and in 1573. Other than Sheen, there was one bequest for Cheddleton steeple in 1539 and one to point Alton steeple in 1541. Sheen church was originally a dependent chapel of Ilam church and both had belonged to Burton on Trent Abbey, which was dissolved in 1539, becoming a college; in turn that was dissolved in 1545 and its possessions, including the chapel at Sheen, were granted to Sir William Paget in 1546. By 1553 it had been sold to Ralph Crane of Wirksworth in Derbyshire.¹⁹⁸ Presumably these magnates regarded Sheen church, which by then was independent of Ilam parish, as a financial investment based on tithe income, and were not minded to spend their money on an embellishment such as a steeple, so that duty lay with the parishioners. Originally in 1529 the chapel had been leased by Burton Abbey to the curate Henry Longworth, including glebe, tithes and offerings, with responsibility for providing a priest and repairs. He died in 1540/1 and in his will bequeathed two years' rent, hay and corn, which the parish owed him, to building a steeple, but it had to be done within three years.¹⁹⁹ In all probability the steeple was started then but had remained unfinished.

Inventories of 'church ornaments' were prepared on 8 May 1553 by church wardens of all the churches and chapels in Leek Deanery, as part of a survey by the county commission acting on behalf of the government. There were three commissioners appointed in autumn 1552 for the hundred of Totmonslow, which included Leek Deanery. As well as Lord Ferrers of Chartley, they were the Catholic Thomas Fitzherbert and the conservative Edward Littleton, friend of the Gyffords and step-son of Philip Draycott. These two members of

¹⁹⁸ C.R.J. Currie and M.W. Greenslade (eds.), 'Sheen', *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 7: Leek and the Moorlands* (London, 1996), pp. 239-250 at:

<<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol7/pp239-250>> [accessed: 22 January 2016]

¹⁹⁹ LRO, B/C/11 Henry Longworth, Sheen, 9 Mar 1541.

parliament would have been unlikely to have speedily advanced Protestant reforms.²⁰⁰

Confiscation of church goods was ordered in January 1553 by the government but some commissions, such as that of the Weald of Kent, stalled and had to be forced to implement government edicts.²⁰¹

The parishes of the deanery varied greatly in the number and value of their possessions, the record for Alstonefield even detailing, '1 pick and 1 spade to make graves with'.²⁰² For example, Leek, with its population of 119 households in 1563 appeared to be considerably less well endowed than, for instance, Ellastone with seventy-seven households in 1563.²⁰³ This disparity was also true of the London parishes, where a minority had pared down to the requirements for worship under the Book of Common Prayer, but the majority still retained illegal medieval furnishings.²⁰⁴ Ellastone had a veil for Lent and five linen banner cloths. Veils to cover statues during Lent had become superfluous after the destruction of images in 1547/8; most parishes had sold them at that time, with only four parishes of the deanery still retaining their veils. Rogation processions around parish boundaries ceased after 1548, and the banners that had accompanied them had become redundant then too.²⁰⁵ Parishes such as Leek may have been disposing of valuable artefacts to prevent them being confiscated, and perhaps to defray parish expenses in implementing government demands for church alterations and provision of items such as communion tables.²⁰⁶ Uttoxeter stated that six objects had been sold, as well as giving the price they had fetched, including '1 partly gilt

²⁰⁰ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 405. History of Parliament Online.

²⁰¹ E. Duffy, 'The end of it all: the material culture of the medieval English parish and the 1552 inventories of church goods', in C. Burgess and E. Duffy (eds.), *Harlaxton Medieval Studies, Volume XIV, The Parish in Late Medieval England* (Donnington, 2006), p. 397.

²⁰² Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 9.

²⁰³ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 491.

²⁰⁴ Duffy, *Inventories*, pp. 390-1.

²⁰⁵ Hutton, *Rise and fall*, pp. 81-2, 85.

²⁰⁶ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 485-6.

silver chalice of the church still' for £2 10s 0d. Also reported was that a ship, supposed to be silver, had been stolen.²⁰⁷ In his will written in September 1558, Philip Draycott instructed his heir to keep, 'the bigger chalys to use of hopton chapell from whence it came tyll sutchetye yt may be ther quietly and all other alter clothys and vestiments'.²⁰⁸ These items had not been listed among the possessions of the chapel, which lay in Newcastle Deanery, on a chantry certificate in May 1548, so they must have been secreted away by then.²⁰⁹

On examining the bequests for church fixtures and fittings, detailed in table 3.2, during the reign of Mary, there appears to have been a dearth of personal gifts to replace the Catholic accoutrements which had been lost from the reign of Henry VIII onwards.²¹⁰ As well as the artefacts listed by church wardens in May 1553, which perhaps, two months before Edward's death, avoided confiscation by the commissioners, there would have been the valuable items that had been stolen or sold. Leek received two bequests of albs and one for a vestment, whereas it had possessed three albs and seven vestments in 1553. Alton had a bequest for altar cloths whereas it had had nine in 1553; Alstonefield with five old altar cloths in 1553, received a bequest of one. Altar cloths were popular, relatively low value bequests to churches, the donor perhaps thinking that their gift, and vicariously they themselves, would be present at the mass. Finally in 1555, Cheadle received 20s from Homfrey Lee, an associate of the devoutly Catholic Draycotts, to buy a pyx, when in 1553 it had possessed a pewter pyx with canopy.²¹¹ Pewter was used for domestic ware in the sixteenth century, so the gift envisaged by Homfrey Lee may have been a more lavish article than the pyx described in

²⁰⁷ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 294.

²⁰⁸ LRO, B/C/11 Philip Draycott knight of Draycott in the Moors, 8 Jan 1563.

²⁰⁹ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 129.

²¹⁰ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 483.

²¹¹ According to the Worcester Chronicle, pyxes had been removed from the interior of churches and chapels in 1549. MacCulloch, *Worcester*, p. 102.

1553. The majority of bequests during Mary's reign were to repair unsightly damage, or for wax which was disposable. It may have been that parishioners had already embraced Protestantism, or perhaps their willingness to bestow gifts had been eroded when they witnessed their ancestors' bequests being seized by the government.

Illuminating the church with tapers was fundamental to pre-Reformation religious worship. In 1538 injunctions issued by Cromwell attacking superstitious devotion at images, such as was alluded to in the 1534 bequest at Draycott in the Moors, listed in table 3.2, forbade church lights unless on the altar, the rood loft or before the Easter Sepulchre.²¹² Further injunctions in 1547 allowed only two candles, on the high altar. In line with the former order, a 1539 bequest of a sheep at Ilam was to maintain the light in the rood loft. After a gap of over sixteen years, between 1556 and 1558/9 there were several bequests of wax, mostly for the reinstated ritual of the sacrament. The use of hand-bells by churches was curtailed by the 1547 injunctions banning processions, the ban also extending to ringing for the dead on All Saints Eve, and instructions for reduced ringing during Sunday worship too were issued.²¹³ According to table 3.2, bequests for buying and repairing bells ceased in 1543, and restarted in 1556, continuing during the early years of Elizabeth's reign, the last being in 1568/9. The Elizabethan Settlement of 1559 was mellowed than the previous Edwardian strictures, and allowed Rogation processions, which used to be accompanied by the ringing of hand-bells. Also change back to Protestant practice by the population under Elizabeth was delayed due to fatigue, and resistance spurred by the notion that she, like her brother and sister, might not live for long, or she might be replaced by her cousin the catholic Mary Queen of Scotland

²¹² Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 451.

²¹³ Hutton, *Rise and fall*, pp. 84-5. Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 452.

and, from 1559 to 1560, Queen consort of France.²¹⁴ However, in 1565 Bishop Bentham issued a set of injunctions urging his clergy and churchwardens to greater action, including removing hand-bells from churches, and, with its link to purgatory, to suffer no ringing of bells for the dead.²¹⁵ In 1550 the government ordered that all altars and crucifixes should be removed and that altars should be replaced with long wooden tables. In 1557 Ales Ransdaley of Mayfield bequeathed 3s 8d for repairs over the altar, possibly to the reredos. Mayfield must have retained its altar, as too Alstonefield had in 1554. The only mention of use of a communion table was in 1571/2 at Longnor chapel. Worship at the image of the cross was associated with idolatry, and bequests of crosses may have fallen foul of Cromwell's injunctions of 1538 before the 1550 order. The last bequest to buy a cross before Mary's reign was in 1540. The Worcester Chronicle records that rood lofts were also included in the 1550 order, although their destruction is thought to have been due rather to local initiatives, such as that of Bishop Hooper of Gloucester in 1551. Some rood lofts may have been wrecked though through removal of heavy carving decorated with religious symbolism.²¹⁶ Leigh, recorded in 1604 as having many recusants,²¹⁷ appears to have suffered a badly damaged rood loft, for which, during Mary's reign, the parish was raising funds to effect a pragmatic repair. The rood loft of Wetton, on the other hand, was still serviceable in 1558/9, although in 1565, referring to an order of 1561, Bishop Bentham reminded the diocese that all rood lofts should be taken down to the lower beams.²¹⁸ The 1552 Book of Common Prayer stipulated that the clergyman, officiating at a communion rather than at mass, should do so in a plain surplice and not in catholic vestments. However, at Blore, almost immediately in January 1553, nothing daunted, Sir William Bassett bequeathed black velvet for a vestment

²¹⁴ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 568,571.

²¹⁵ Frere and Kennedy, *Visitation articles and injunctions*, pp. 169-170.

²¹⁶ MacCulloch, *Worcester*, pp. 105-6. Hutton, *Rise and fall*, pp. 81-2.

²¹⁷ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 149.

²¹⁸ Frere and Kennedy, *Visitation articles and injunctions*, p. 169.

for the priest. The remainder of bequests for clerical garb were in line with the policy of the government of the day.

Table 3.2

Date will written	Testator	Bequest
1534	Jamys Parkyn of Draycott in the Moors (LRO, B/C/11, 21 Jul 1534.)	10s yerely a pond of wax to brene afor the sepulcur 7s to fund a pond of wax yerely be for the ymage of owr lady 4s to fund a pond of wax afor sent Jamys
01 01 35/6	John Turnshyll of Uttoxeter (LRO, B/C/11, 24 Jan 1536.)	3 pounds of wax to make tappers
01 04 37	John Pyott of Leek (LRO, B/C/11, 6 May 1538.)	Toward byyng bells 12d 6s 8d toward byyng of a vesteme[n]t at a chapel
26 01 37/8	John Walker of Uttoxeter (LRO, B/C/11, 5 Feb 1538.)	6s 8d to by a crosse
12 03 38/9	John Cartlach of Ilam (LRO, B/C/11, 6 May 1539.)	Mayntaynyng of the lyght of the roodeloft oon good shepe
Will ripped, only m[d]xxx[?] visible for the year.	John Yonge of Kingsley (LRO, B/C/11, 25 Sep 1539.)	Lynnyne cloth [for] hye auter
27 08 40	Alice Wetton of Bramshall (LRO, B/C/11, 18 Oct 1540.)	To bye a crosse 3s 4d
29 03 43	Ellyn Wright of Kingstone (LRO, B/C/11, 13 Apr 1543.)	Mendying of the bellys 20s
05 09 43	Thomas Colear of Grindon (LRO, B/C/11, 7 Oct 1543.)	The makying the lyche gate 8d
11 45	John Holme vicar of Alton (LRO, B/C/11, 7 Jan 1546.)	Hooll byble in latyn and a sylver pane and vestment
12 01 53	William Bassett of Blore (LRO, B/C/11,	Black velvet for a vestiment and a fronnte for the altare, wheratt the prest shall serve.

	7 Dec 1553.)	4 yarde and a half of sattaine for a frontte to the altare (in another church)
22 10 53	Thomas Smyth of Horton (LRO, B/C/11, 18 Apr 1554.)	3s 4d to bye a boke to the servis of god
11 08 54	Ann Penystone of Alstonefield (LRO, B/C/11, 14 Sep 1554.)	Burd clothe to the hyghe aulter
19 05 55	William Hyll of Leigh (LRO, B/C/11, 8 May 1556.)	Towards byyng them a crucyfuxe for the rood 20d
27 10 55	Homfrey Lee of Cheadle (LRO, B/C/11, 17 May 1557.)	Toward the biyng of a pyx to putt the sacramentt in 20s
05 06 56	Thomas Smith tholder of Leek (LRO, B/C/11, 21 Jul 1556.)	An albe and an amys
21 12 56	William Lawtun of Cheadle (LRO, B/C/11, 17 May 1557.)	Sacrament half a pond of waxe
23 12 56	John Kene of Horton (LRO, B/C/11, 18 May 1557.)	Mendying of the broken bell 3s 4d
14 03 56/7	John Lees of Leigh (LRO, B/C/11, 17 May 1557.)	Towards the makyng of the flore for the syngers and removng of the roode lofte 3s 4d
18 03 56/7	Thomas Myddleton of Leigh (LRO, B/C/11, 17 May 1557.)	Makyng of the roode loft 3s 4d
11 03 57	John Godhelpe of Ellastone (LRO, B/C/11, 17 May 1557.)	2s to be used in wax at masse tyme and other divine syrvise
28 03 57	John Etwall of Cheadle (LRO, B/C/11, 17 May 1557.)	Sacrament halfe a pound of wax
08 05 57	Robert Thacker of Leigh (LRO, B/C/11, 21 May 1558.)	Makyng of the florre for syngers and removng the roode lofte 3s 4d
10 05 57	John Wyttryns of Leigh (LRO, B/C/11,	Makyng of a flore for the syngors and removing the rode lofte 2s

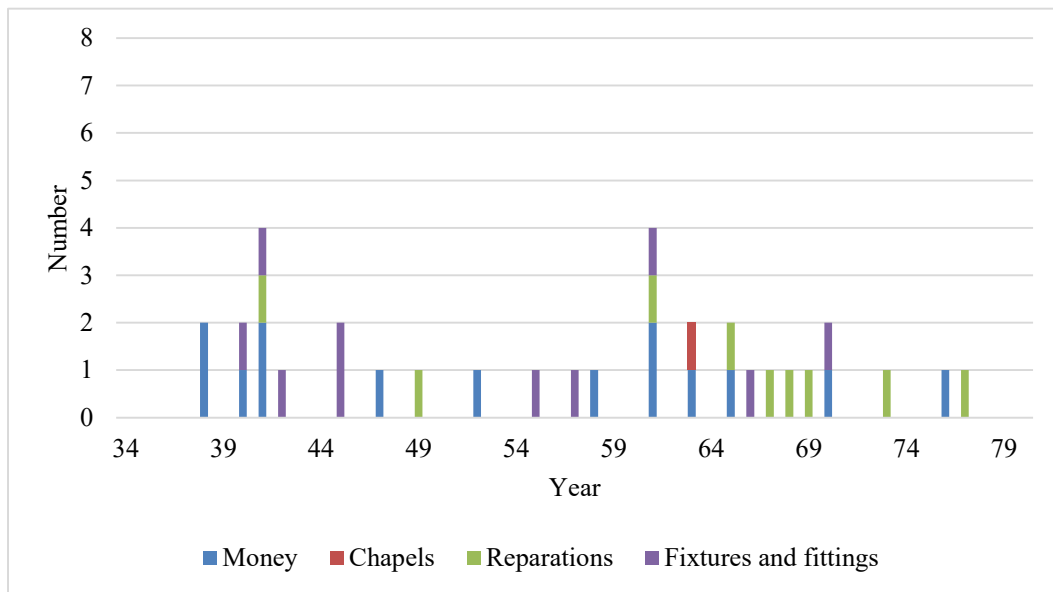
	18 Sep 1557.)	
19 05 57	James Cocke of Sheen (LRO, B/C/11, 17 Sep 1557.)	Mayntenance of the lyght in my p[ar]isshe church 20d
10 06 57	John Wyston of Leek (LRO, B/C/11, 7 Oct 1557.)	An albe
17 08 57	Hugh Mochell of Horton (LRO, B/C/11, 7 Oct 1557.)	Towards the bying of belles 3s 4d
18 11 57	Ales Ransdaley of Mayfield (LRO, B/C/11, 21 Oct 1558.)	3s 4d to mend over the hey autar
12 03 57/8	John Packen of Checkley (LRO, B/C/11, 14 Apr 1558.)	Pond of wax to burne afore the blessed sacrament
18 07 58	John Walker of Checkley (LRO, B/C/11, 21 May 1558.)	Bying a taper to be afore the blessed sacrament 6s 8d
21 07 58	Roger Bagnald of Checkley (LRO, B/C/11, 21 May 1558.)	3s 4d towards the bying of a lampe to burne in the chancell afore the blessed sacrament. One grett taper of waxe to burne afor the sepulchre on good fryday unto easter day untill the resurectyon by don and after to burne afore the blessed sacrament for 3 yeres next folowyng my deceasse
03 10 58	Thomas Morte of Sheen (LRO, B/C/11, 21 Oct 1558.)	Meyndyng of the bells 6s 8d
04 10 58	Laurence Clowes of Leek (LRO, B/C/11, 10 Apr 1559.)	Byinge of a vestyet 12d
26 10 58	Nycholas Grene of Checkley (LRO, B/C/11, 7 Oct 1559.)	3s 4d toward the bying of sum ornament
03 01 58/9	Thomas Wyncle of Wetton (LRO, B/C/11, 3 Oct 1560.)	One shepe to make [something] to sett uppon the rode lofte for certayn tapers. Somoche waxe as will make one taper for the said purpose
15 03 59	Thomas Allkoc of Waterfall (LRO, B/C/11, 10 Apr 1559.)	Mendying the brockyn bell 5s
16 12 59	Thomas Godhelp of Alton (LRO, B/C/11,	Best bordcloths to make 2 altar clothes

	13 Sep 1563.)	
17 01 61	James Plante of Waterfall (LRO, B/C/11, 18 Apr 1561.)	Mendying of the bell 2s
22 06 62	Henry Davie of Gratwich 21 Jan 1563 (PCC, PROB 11/46/33 f.19.)	Shingling of the churche 6s 8d
10 04 63	James Kelyng of Leigh (LRO, B/C/11, 23 Apr 1563.)	Mendying the foteway to the churche 12d
17 12 65	John Lees of Cauldon (LRO, B/C/11, 26 Apr 1566.)	Mendying of the way to the churche 20d
28 03 68	Thomas Adderley of Kingsley (LRO, B/C/11, 25 Apr 1569.)	Parish owed 7s 6d for a sanctus bell (in the testator's debts - a churchwarden)
04 02 68/9	Raffe Hareson of Cheadle (LRO, B/C/11, 25 Apr 1569.)	Bynge of a bell 6s 8d
13 10 70	John Ward rector of Gratwich (LRO, B/C/11, 26 Oct 1570.)	Byinge a surplesse 10s
12 03 1571/2	William Waterhouse of Alstonefield (LRO, B/C/11, 20 May 1572.)	Bye a table clothe to cover the communion table at Longnor 12d
09 03 73	Robert Ford of Cheddleton (LRO, B/C/11, 10 Apr 1573.)	Buyldinge of the churche roufe 6s 8d

Bequests for church fixtures and fittings within the deanery of Leek

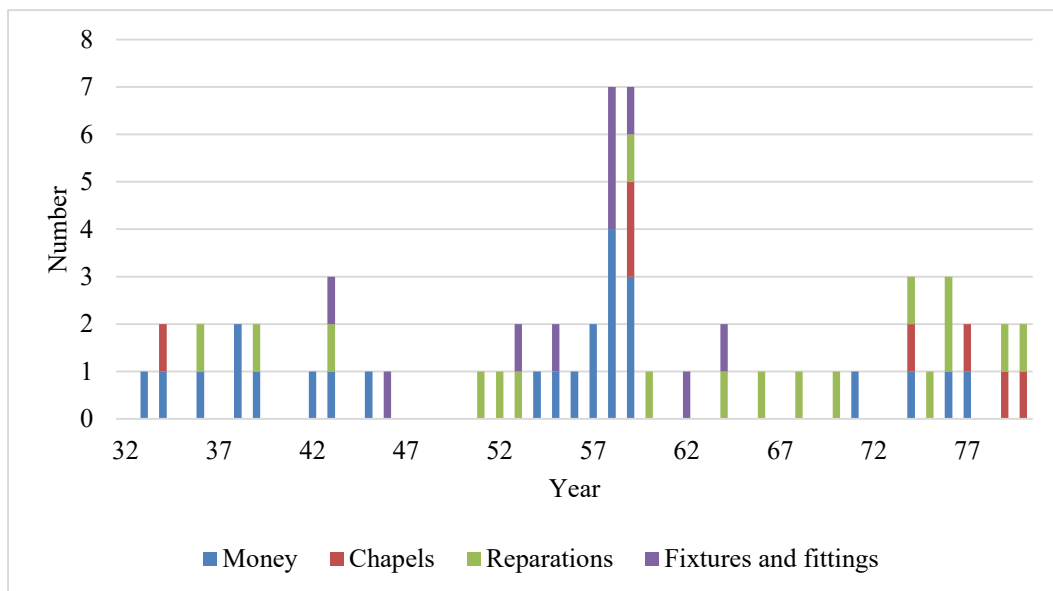
Figures 3.29 and 3.30 display separately the equivalent results for the clergy and the elites excluding clergy of the archdeaconry of Stafford, as there are hints of some small differences.

Figure 3.29



Church bequests by clergy in the archdeaconry of Stafford

Figure 3.30



Church bequests by elites excluding clergy in the archdeaconry of Stafford

As with prayers for the dead, it is probable that many elites had made gifts to their favoured churches separately from making their wills, so this data represents a small proportion of the

whole. This is borne out by those buried in sumptuous chest tombs, neither the construction of which nor their funeral arrangements had been recorded in their wills. They include Sir Robert Broke a knight of Claverley, who in his will of January 1557/8 made no stipulations about his funeral; Sir Edward Littleton a knight of Pillaton near Penkridge, who in July 1574 stated that he should be buried according to his degree in the Chapel of Our Lady at Penkridge; and Humphrey Swynnerton of Shareshill who in July 1561 asked that he should be buried in the chancel of his parish church before the place where the image of our lady stood.²¹⁹ In agreement with observations about the general testators of the deanery of Leek, the elites made hardly any bequests under Edward, with much more determined giving under Mary. However, neither group, and especially not the clergy, showed as much enthusiasm as the general population for gifts to chapels, and all but one of those eight bequests was under Elizabeth. They associated themselves more with their parish churches. Of the fourteen clergy who made bequests of money or equivalent to churches, presumably expecting prayers, nine bequests were to their own church and five to churches where they had some association, such as an earlier post or family connection. Apart from William Swynnerton rector of Blymhill who gave a cow in 1538,²²⁰ all bequests of parish clergy to churches were of a few shillings only. In the same manner as the general population, to prevent confiscation, and especially under Protestant regimes, gifts switched from being outright donations to the church to gifts for reparations of the church buildings. Thus, as the century progressed it appears that bequests of the lay elites in particular tended towards gifts for reparations and for chapels.

²¹⁹ PCC, PROB 11/41/124 f.118-9 Robert Broke, Claverley, 12 Oct 1558. PCC, PROB 11/62/450 f.318-21 Edward Littleton, Pillaton, 31 Oct. 1580. PCC, PROB 11/46/89 f.62 Humfrey Swynnerton, Swynnerton, 9 Feb 1563. Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire buildings*, p. 211. Pevsner, *Staffordshire buildings*, pp. 221,234.

²²⁰LRO, B/C/11 William Swynnerton, Blymhill, 26 Sep 1538.

There were also gifts for church fixtures and fittings, which are detailed in table 3.3. The clergy, of whom there were fewer, were more prolific givers than the lay elites, usually favouring their own church. Again there were no bequests during the reign of Edward apart from those of Sir William Bassett of Blore.

As with the general population there was a lengthy gap, of eleven or twelve years, when no bequests were made for lights in the church, between William Oke's hives of bees to maintain three tapers in the rood loft at Adbaston in 1546, and Sir Robert Broke's 6s 8d for the church light at Claverley in 1557/8. No mention was made of bells until the mid-1560s, when two bequests were made for maintenance. Sir Thomas Gyfford of Chillington in 1559 told his executors to, 'Cause the table standinge on the alter commonly called the trynnytie alter [in Brewood church] ... to be amended'. He may have been referring to an ingenious means of converting an altar into a communion table without actually destroying the altar, but it is more likely that he was referring to a damaged retable as he continued, 'yf tables be permitted at that tyme', expressing the uncertainty which many must have been feeling then towards church imagery. Bequests towards clerical garb were fairly popular among both elites and clergy. In 1557 Bartholomew Francis expressed concern that the parishioners at Hanbury would interfere with a surplice, which he wished to return to his bishop, 'Surpleyse be delyvered to me lorde bysshope when he shall be at Hanbury, or ells to his farmer ther to be referred to the use of suche minister as shall come to Hanbury to prech the word of god and not the parishonirs to medle with yt'. Before Protestant edicts surplices had been worn by priests for divine services other than the mass, when they dressed in vestments with copes. Under the 1552 Book of Common Prayer, these frequently richly decorated garments had been replaced by surplices for celebrating communion, but this use of surplices was rescinded

under Mary. It reads as though some at least of the parishioners in 1557 intensely disliked the surplice, which suggests that they were traditional in their sympathies. On a more prosaic note, if after having been issued during the reign of Edward the surplice was redundant, Bartholomew Francis might have been concerned that some member(s) of the parish harboured an intention to reutilise the material. John Ward in 1570 bequeathed a surplice to his church of Gratwich, where, in the ambit of recusant Draycott influence, Catholic practices had persisted. Perhaps this surplice was intended for use in traditional ceremonies. Books were also popular bequests among the clergy, Thomas Wilson of Abbots Bromley revealing his Catholic tastes in 1561 with his gifts to his parish church of a parchment Bible in Latin lined with gold and a book written by an indecipherable cardinal on the four evangelists. Finally, William Nall of West Bromwich in his will of 1558, expressed his dismay at the outcomes of the Reformation in the churches of West Bromwich and Wednesbury, 'Towardes the repaying ... wythe suche ornymentes as ar moste neadfull to be boughte wherby and wherewyth the sorvyce of allmyghty god maye be the same were mynystred and god the better served fortye shillinges'.

Table 3.3

Date will written	Testator	Bequest
18 04 40	Henry Longworth priest of Sheen (LRO, B/C/11, 9 Mar 1541.)	The byldyng of the steple at Shene 2 yers rent last past hey and corne whiche the parishe owithe me
26 04 41	William Mowyr chantry priest of St Katherine's chapel, Marchington (LRO, B/C/11, 19 Oct 1541.)	One bord clothe to make a nater cloth to sent kateryns aulter and a shete to make another to the same alter
28 11 42	George Tatton rector of Colton (LRO, B/C/11, 16 Jun 1545.)	Cowe for maynetenace of a lampe to brenne in tyme of divine service upon Sondays and holy days afore the blessed Sacrament of the alter [at the church of Colton]
18 12 43	Walter Osborne of	Lighte before the blessed Sacrament of the

	Stone 4 Feb 1544 (PCC, PROB 11/30/24 f.10.)	aulter and to the hearse lighte and to the torche lighte 4s
02 10 45	William Tollet curate at Stoke upon Trent (LRO, B/C/11, 25 Nov 1545.)	Coveryng of the conopy 3s 4d Byeng a mannoll 2s (Manual of Prayers of 1539?) [at the church of Stoke]
11 45	John Holme vicar of Alton (LRO, B/C/11, 7 Jan 1546.)	Hooill byble in latyn and a sylver pane and vestment [for the church of Alton]
15 10 46	William Oke of Adbaston 5 Jul 1547 (PCC, PROB 11/31/576 f.335.)	Two stalles of bees to mainteyne the light of three tapers in the rode lofte
12 01 53	William Bassett knight of Blore (LRO, B/C/11, 7 Dec 1553.)	Black velvet for a vestment, and a fronnte for the altare, wheratt the prest shall serve. 4 yardes and a half of sattaine for a fronnte to the altare (in another church)
05 05 55	William Lynde vicar of Wombourne (LRO, B/C/11, 11 May 1555.)	Bying books for the furnytüre of the quyre 13s 4d [for the church of Wombourne]
30 05 55	Thomas Wood of Wednesfield 15 Jan 1556 (PCC, PROB 11/37/506 f.277-8.)	6s 8d to bye an altare clothe for the highe altare
25 05 57	Bartholomew Francis curate at Burton upon Trent (LRO, B/C/11, 2 Jul 1557.)	A flaxen sheats (one each to two churches - Burton and Hanbury) Surpleyse be delyvered to me lorde bysshope when he shall be at hanbury, or ells to his farmer ther to be referred to the use of suche minister as shall come to hanbury to prech the word of god and not the parishonirs to medle with yt.
07 01 57/58	Sir Robert Broke of Claverley 12 Oct 1558 (PCC, PROB 11/41/124 f.118-9.)	The church light 6s 8d
04 06 58	Thomas Astley of Patsull 10 Nov 1558 (PCC, PROB 11/41/276 f.245.)	A velvett cote for to helpe to make a vestment
11 08 58	William Nall of West Bromwich 26 Apr 1559 (PCC, PROB 11/42B/109 f.52.)	Towardes the repaying ... wythe suche ornamentes as ar moste neadfull to be boughte whereby and wherewyth the servyce of allmyghty god maye be the same were mynystred and god the better served 40s 20s to bye such ornymnts as are moste

		neadfull (a neighbouring church)
04 08 59	Sir Thomas Gyfford of Chillington 6 Jan 1560 (PCC, PROB 11/43/5 f.279-80.)	Cause the table standinge on the alter commonly called the trynnytie alter ... to be amended yf tables be permitted at that tyme
03 11 61	Thomas Wilson vicar of Abbots Bromley (LRO, B/C/11, 17 Nov 1561.)	1 blacke coverlet 1 parchment Byble in laten lynned with golde 1 boke [written by a cardinal on the gospels] [for the church of [Abbots] Bromley]
22 06 62	Henry Davie of Gratwich 21 Jan 1563 (PCC, PROB 11/46/33 f.19.)	Shingling of the churche 6s 8d
29 09 64	Richard Hackfort of Upper Arley 27 Nov 1564 (PCC, PROB 11/47/365 f.244.)	6s 8d towards the amending of the broken bell
06 05 66	Richard Gorste vicar of Lapley (LRO, B/C/11, 24 May 1566.)	Repatons of the belles 13s 4d [at the church of Lapley]
13 10 70	John Ward rector of Gratwich (LRO, B/C/11, 26 Oct 1570.)	Byinge a surplesse 10s [for the church of Gratwich]

Bequests of church fixtures and fittings by elites and clergy of the archdeaconry of Stafford

_____ Bequests made by priests

_____ Bequests made by lay elites

Charitable Bequests

Under Catholicism, the prayers of the poor for the souls of the dead were valued especially, as the poor were felt to be closer to a state worthy of heaven. Their difficulties on earth were seen as preparing them for the life to come, and they were perceived as being immune to such sins as pride or craving worldly goods which afflicted the wealthy. Whereas Catholics associated the performance of good works with their own salvation, Protestants believed that they should participate in acts of charity as an expression of being a true Christian. Thus, as

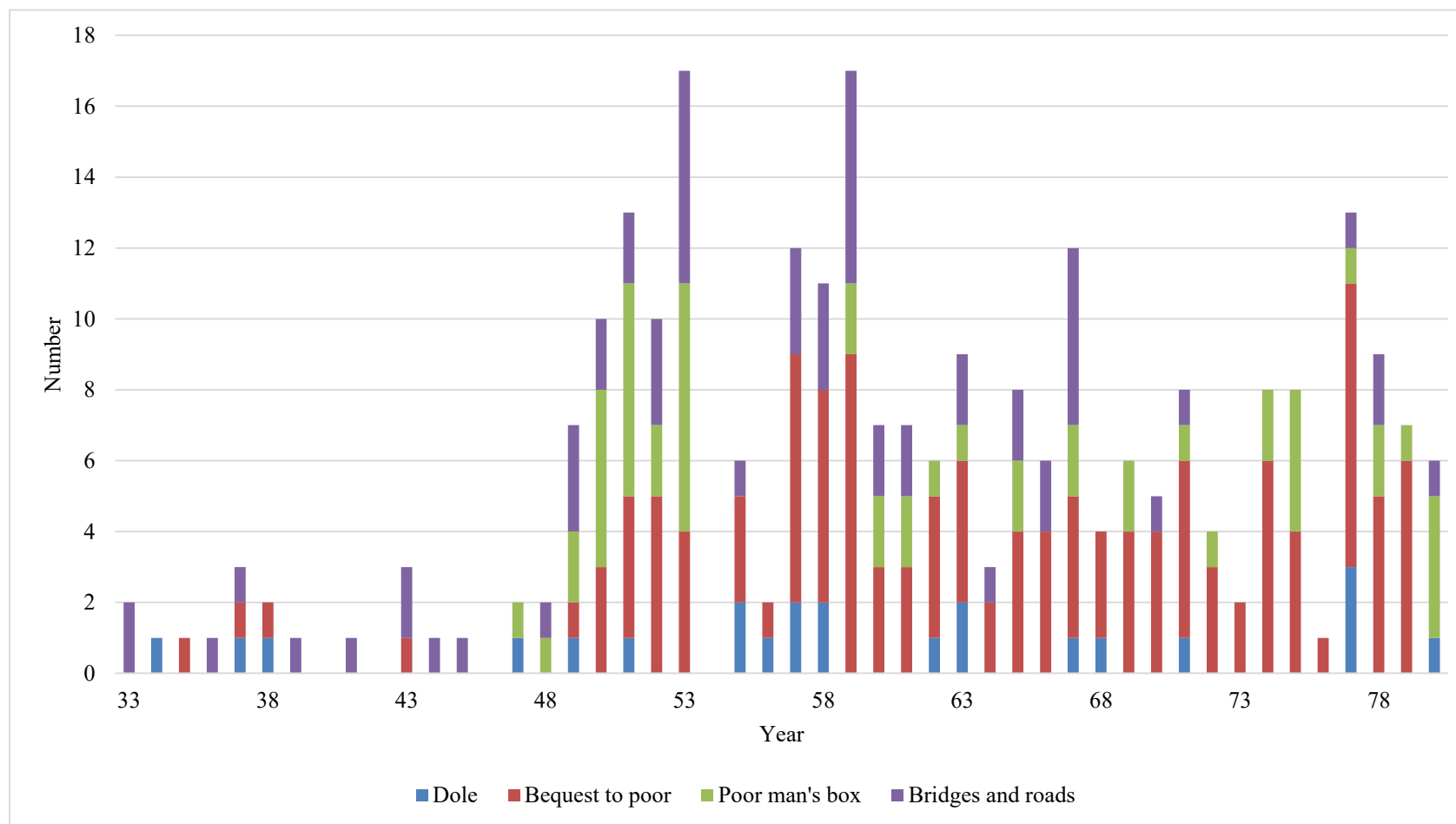
Catholics were motivated as much by concern for the donor as for the recipient, they are believed by some scholars to have been more indiscriminate in their giving and to have ignored the distinction between lazy vagrants and the impotent and worthy poor, such as the neighbourhood lame, widows and orphans. Indeed, Catholics would have believed that discriminating between the unworthy and the worthy was being judgmental and rejecting some who were esteemed by God. Nevertheless, Catholics such as Elizabeth Leveson were wary of wasting dole money on those deliberately poor, as they doubted whether such vagrants could be trusted to pray, and, furthermore, considered that they may even be in a state of sin (Described in the next section on funerals and burials).²²¹ Prohibiting support for this group was a much discussed issue throughout the sixteenth century, presumably by those of all religious leanings. In 1536, an attempt had been made by Cromwell to pass an act to better manage the poor, which stipulated parish-led compulsory collections for the worthy poor and forbade indiscriminate almsgiving. Although the act failed to gain sufficient support for its main provisions to become law, it did provide a template which was adopted piecemeal across the country.²²² A statute of 1552 laid down voluntary church collections for those designated as being in need in each parish, and fear of civil revolt after the Northern Rebellion of 1569 led to an act in 1572 with penalties for vagrancy and a compulsory poor rate to support the destitute.²²³

²²¹ PCC, PROB 11/58/395 f.211 Elizabeth Leveson, Parton (Tettenhall), 27 Oct 1576. Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 362-6.

²²² P. Slack, Economic History Society, *The English Poor Law, 1531-1782* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 9.

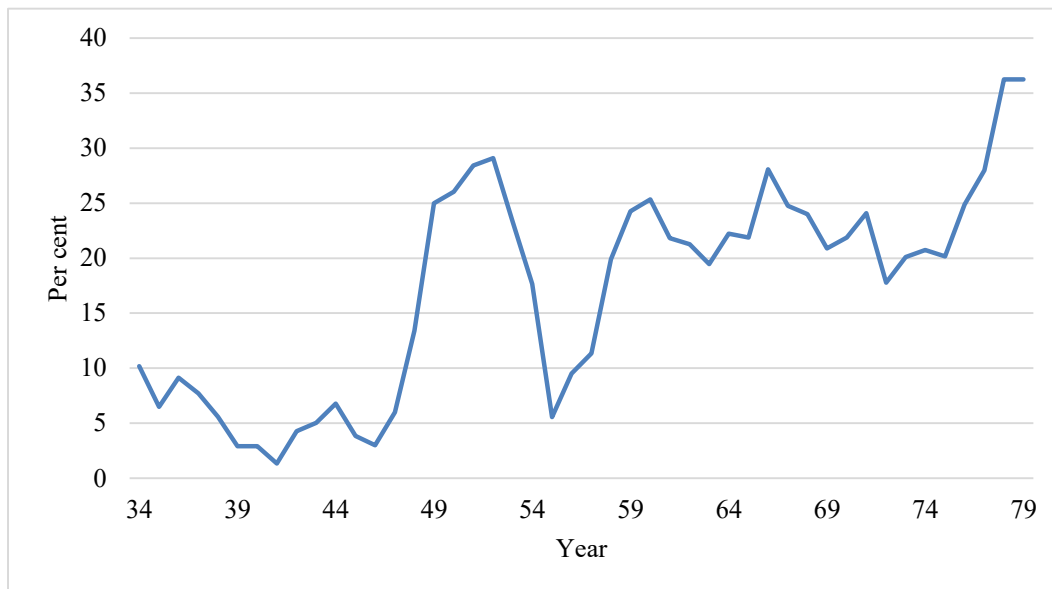
²²³ P. Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (Harlow, 1988), pp. 10,13,17-23,118-24.

Figure 3.31



Wills per year broken down by type of charitable bequest

Figure 3.32



Wills containing charitable bequests in per cent

From the bar graph, figure 3.31, and the crude line graph of three-year rolling averages, figure 3.32, charitable bequests became noticeably more common after the death of Henry VIII, albeit with a dip in overt charitable giving during Mary's reign. This rise may have been driven by the elimination of those recipients of bequests, and major providers of charity: monasteries, guilds and chantries in the 1530s and 1540s. Before 1547 the majority of bequests were for road or bridge-making or repairing, from which it can be inferred that giving alms to the poor, in particular the penny dole at funerals, was customary then and therefore mentioned only infrequently in wills. Indeed, the 1537 dole on figure 3.31 was listed in the inventory, 'bestowid at his buriall xiiis iiid' (by the executors, his sons) and was not mentioned in the will.²²⁴ General gifts to the poor at burials were encountered no less frequently in wills as the century progressed, although in the 1570s a gift commonly took the form of a 'dyner dole'. For example in 1577, John Addye rector of Grindon asked that, 'all

²²⁴ LRO, B/C/11 John Woode, Ellastone, 1538.

my neighbors and parishioners as many as will come to my buriall aswell the poore as the riche be releaved w[i]th meate and drincke accordinge to the fare in the cuntre there used'.²²⁵ The preambles of wills with dole bequests were predominantly traditional, with a few neutrals until Elizabeth's reign, when there was one traditional, four neutrals, three which were ambiguous and one Protestant. The three with ambiguous preambles belonged to members of the clergy: John Addye, a closet Catholic, and two others of similar ilk, Thomas Drakeford and William Caterbanke, both of Leigh, a village noted in 1604 as possessing many recusants.²²⁶ The only 'Protestant' was the eccentric Humphrey Howorth labourer of Cauldon, who in 1579/80 bequeathed money for reparations to the parish church, to the poor, and to his curate, as well as providing a dole and sustenance, 'bread cheis and dre[n]ke to be geve[n] liberally and to everyone that cometh to the house after my deptime affore I be buried and a good dynner to be made for all them that come to my buryall and that that remenethe to be geven to the pore folks'.²²⁷ If it is assumed that the last four testators mentioned were in reality Catholics, then the data does not refute a link between indiscriminate alms giving and Catholicism.

Bequests in the form of alms given out to the parish poor, 'the poor man's box', occurred under Edward from 1547 to 1553, ceased under Mary, and then continued under Elizabeth from 1559. The injunctions of 1547 stated that clergy should encourage dying parishioners to

²²⁵ PCC, PROB 11/60/301 f.175 John Addye, Grindon, 3 Jun 1578. Others bequeathed doles in the 1570s. LRO, B/C/11 Richard Cowhope, Leigh, 10 Apr 1573 (penny). LRO, B/C/11 Richard Hacke, Gratwich, 11 Apr 1578 (penny). LRO, B/C/11 Humphrey Howorth, Cauldon, 2 Aug 1580 (dole and dinner). LRO, B/C/11 John Warde, Blore, 12 Mar 1578 (dinner).

²²⁶ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 386.

²²⁷ PCC, PROB 11/60/301 f.175 John Addye, Grindon, 3 Jun 1578. LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Drakeford, Leigh, 7 May 1565. LRO, B/C/11 William Caterbanke, Leigh, 3 Nov 1568. LRO, B/C/11 Humphrey Howorth, Cauldon, 2 Aug 1580. Despite the last testator being a labourer, his will was sealed and signed.

forgo bequests to assist the soul in purgatory, in favour of giving to the poor man's box.²²⁸ If the benefactor had done so they would not have been donating a personal gift, and hence probably would not have attracted special prayers from the poor, although they would have received intercession in accordance with the formula of the Catholic bidding prayer at mass in use in the diocese, for benefitting the parish: 'you should pray ... especially for the commonalty of this parish'.²²⁹ This clearly was not popular as, under Mary, when the strictures as to the suitability of various types of bequest were no longer in place, it can be seen that there was a dearth of donations to the poor man's box.

Other general charitable gifts were those made to make or repair local bridges or roadways. They were ubiquitous, featuring in twenty-two parishes out of twenty-nine, and showed no evidence of contribution to a longstanding undertaking, such as the bequests made for Sheen steeple. Frequently they were given in the expectation that grateful travellers would pray for the souls of donors,²³⁰ and they also attracted Catholic intercession, as they occurred in the bidding prayer: 'You shall also pray especially for those who mend bridges, causeways, and roads, so that the people can pass over without any damage or death'.²³¹ Indeed several testators, such as the traditional Thomas Russell of Rocester made multiple bequests. In 1559 he bequeathed 6s 8d each to four local bridges and a lane, 5s to a fifth local bridge, and 3s 4d to his town of Combridge (situated between Uttoxeter and Rocester).²³² Other traditional testators combined bridge and road bequests with gifts to the poor, one example being John Talor, a yeoman of Uttoxeter. In 1567, in a will with a neutral preamble he left two bequests

²²⁸ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 452-3.

²²⁹ E. Calvert, *Extracts*, pp. 104-6.

²³⁰ R.N. Swanson, 'Piety and infrastructure: bridge maintenance in early sixteenth-century Staffordshire', *Staffordshire Studies*, 13 (2001), pp. 145-56.

²³¹ E. Calvert, *Extracts*, pp. 104-6.

²³² LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Russell, Rocester, 18 Sep 1561.

of 'twelve shillynges' and 'twenty shillynges' to local bridges, and stipulated that, 'twelve shillynges be geven in allmes unto the poure of the tone of Uttoxatur att the daye of my buriall' as well as 'parte of residue to poure'. He was unique in the deanery in investing in water supply, 'the makynge of on conditt within the towne of Uttoxatur twentye shillynges'.²³³ Bequests to improve travel infrastructure occurred throughout the period and may, on the other hand, have been stimulated simply by a wish on the part of testators to leave a lasting memorial which would benefit their neighbours, rather than soliciting intercession for their souls. Women wrote almost seventeen per cent of the wills in the group from the deanery of Leek, but female wills occur more frequently (twenty-two per cent) among the group who made bridge and road bequests. The female bequests could usually be distinguished by being specific and of lower value, such as that of Agnes Sawtre of Mayfield who in 1543 bequeathed 12d, 'to the [mending] of the fowle waye in oller carre'.²³⁴ Perhaps women were more concerned than men with being remembered fondly by those they had known when alive.

Two testators benefitted their local school in Uttoxeter, founded in 1558, one of three schools endowed under the will of a priest, Thomas Alleyne. Mary Mynors widow, in an undated will instructed, 'my Executors shalbestowe appon the poore in Uttoxeter x£ ... towards the Repayring of Dovebridge and the scholehowse x£'. Lewis Walker, gentleman, on 12 January 1577 bequeathed 30s for his executors and overseers to purchase Cooper's dictionary²³⁵ for the free scholars of Uttoxeter, 'for ever for the better Attayninge of knowledge and

²³³ LRO, B/C/11 John Talor, Uttoxeter, 14 May 1568.

²³⁴ LRO, B/C/11 Agnes Sawtre, Mayfield, 23 Oct 1543.

²³⁵ M. Bowker, *Cooper, Thomas (c.1517-1594), theologian and bishop of Winchester* (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography) at: <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/view/article/6229?docPos=3> [accessed 10 September 2015]

lerninge'.²³⁶ These were the only bequests to charitable institutions in the deanery of Leek, as the area did not possess, for instance, hospitals, such as occurred in settlements drawing on a large population, like Bristol or London.

The bulk of bequests were directly to the poor; those by Catholics would have been in the expectation of prayers for the soul. Typical bequests were those of Robert Barton husbandman of Kingstone who, in 1559 bequeathed to, 'por fowke of my parach 2d', and Edmund Gledenhurst of Cheadle who, in 1569 bequeathed 12d to 'every poore house holder in Chedull'.²³⁷ Bequests such as these, unlike dole bequests, were not indiscriminate gifts, because in this type of small rural community the identity of the poor would have been well known, as well as their good will being more certain.²³⁸ Often it was left to the executors to distribute the whole or portion of the residue of an estate to the poor, for the benefit of the testator's soul. One testator only, in 1574, Barbara Eton, left a bequest to the poor of an almshouse, that at Ashbourne on the border of Derbyshire. It has been observed that women were more likely to bestow gifts on almshouses, as they tended to be occupied predominantly by old women and widows.²³⁹ Three testators, including Arthur Nedham yeoman of Kingstone in 1570/1, left bequests to fund the marriage of poor maidens.²⁴⁰ As well as possibly removing a future drain on parish resources, such a bequest may have provided the testator with prayers from the girl concerned and her children for several years.

Only rarely did a will state explicitly that a bequest to the poor was 'payment' for prayers.

There were two in 1537 and 1538 and then, somewhat later, two others, both wills of

²³⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Mary Mynors, Uttoxeter, 15 Apr 1578. LRO, B/C/11 Lewis Walker, Uttoxeter, 1 Mar 1577.

²³⁷ LRO, B/C/11 Robert Barton, Kingstone, 13 Jul 1560. LRO, B/C/11 Edmund Gledenhurst, Cheadle, 25 Apr 1569.

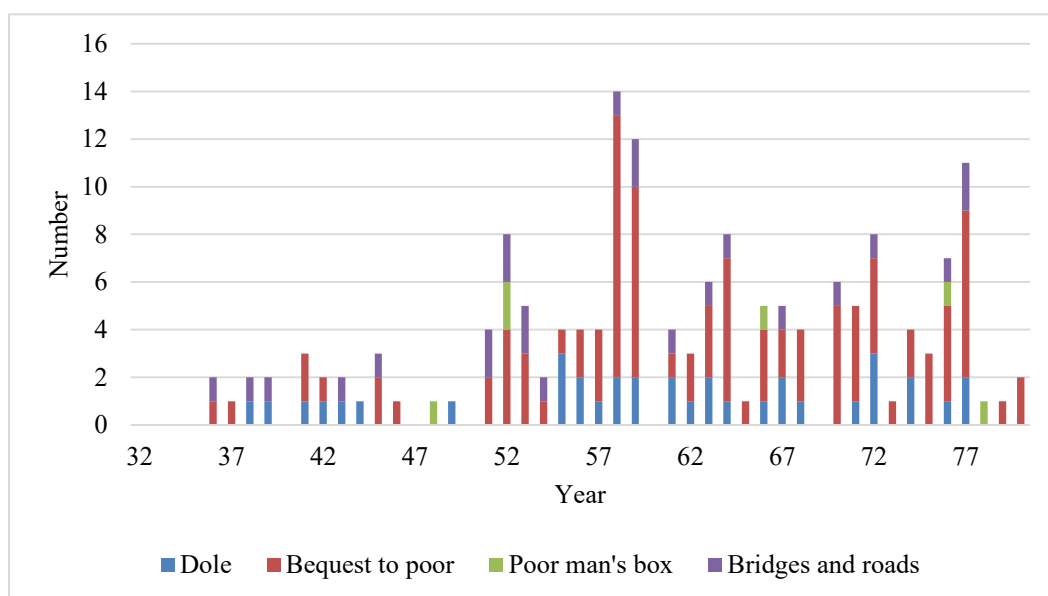
²³⁸ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 363.

²³⁹ LRO, B/C/11 Barbara Eton, Mayfield, 14 Apr 1575. Hsia, *Civic wills*, p. 342.

²⁴⁰ LRO, B/C/11 Arthur Nedham, Kingstone, 22 Mar 1571.

committed Catholics: Henry Nicholson, the chaplain of Francis Meverell of Throwley, in 1552, and Sir Philip Draycott in 1558.²⁴¹ Under the lapsed legislation of 1536 noblemen and their servants were exempted from almsgiving prohibitions.²⁴²

Figure 3.33



Wills of elites including clergy of the archdeaconry of Stafford broken down by type of charitable bequest per year

With reference to the bar graph, figure 3.33, although members of the elites including clergy of the archdeaconry of Stafford were more likely to make a charitable bequest than the ordinary testators of the deanery of Leek, the data is dominated by lay elites. They can also be distinguished by making bulk bequests, such as John Woode of Kingswinford who left various amounts of money to the poor of Kingswinford, Dudley, Oldswinford, Penn,

²⁴¹ LRO, B/C/11 John Dynnes, Uttoxeter, 1 Oct 1537. LRO, B/C/11 John Walker, Bramshall, 5 Feb 1538. LRO, B/C/11 Henry Nicholson, Ilam, 17 May 1552. LRO, B/C/11 Philip Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 8 Jan 1563.

²⁴² Slack, *Poverty and policy*, pp.118-19. It was difficult for Cromwell to gain agreement with members of parliament for this 'poor law' legislation and a number of provisos had to be created. Perhaps this was one. The legislation was short term only and was not renewed at the end of the year.

Wombourne and Himley, as well as 13s 4d for the mending of highways as his executors think best.²⁴³

In comparison with the data depicted in figure 3.31, the elites including clergy of the archdeaconry made few bequests to the parish poor box, and relatively few bequests to benefit the general community by enhancing provision of bridges and roads. Instead, bequests to the poor, often of several parishes, dominated. This finding is similar to that of Knight in examining wills made by Warwickshire lay elites between 1485 and 1547.²⁴⁴ There were also three bequests to the prisoners in Stafford gaol and four bequests to poor maidens. There was one bequest of £10 to hospitals in and near London, and two to schools. Lawrence Rolleston of Rolleston in 1558 endowed his local school with a house and wages for the master and Sir Thomas Gyfford of Chillington in 1559 gave a mere to the use of Brewood Free School forever. These acts of charity, whatever the motivation of the testator, would also have resulted in prayers from sizeable groups of the poor.²⁴⁵

It should be noted that figure 3.33 has three similarities to that of the general testators of the deanery of Leek, which lends weight to the previous conclusions. Firstly, charitable giving was noticeably greater after the reign of Henry VIII, and secondly bequests to the poor man's box ceased during Mary's reign. The third similarity is that indiscriminate dole bequests continued throughout the period, although they were more frequent among this group than among the testators of the deanery of Leek. Another similarity not apparent from the graph is

²⁴³ PCC, PROB 11/36/236 f.10 John Woode, Kingswinford, 11 Sep 1553.

²⁴⁴ Knight, *Piety and devotion*, pp. 25-6.

²⁴⁵ LRO, B/C/11 John Harte, Hanbury, 24 Jul 1552. PCC, PROB 11/41/124 f.118-9 Robert Broke, Claverley, 12 Oct 1558. LRO, B/C/11 Lawrence Rolleston, Rolleston, 8 Apr 1559. PCC, PROB 11/43/5 f.279-80 Thomas Gyfford, Chillington, 6 Jan 1560. LRO, B/C/11 Francis Meverall, Throwley, 14 Feb 1565.

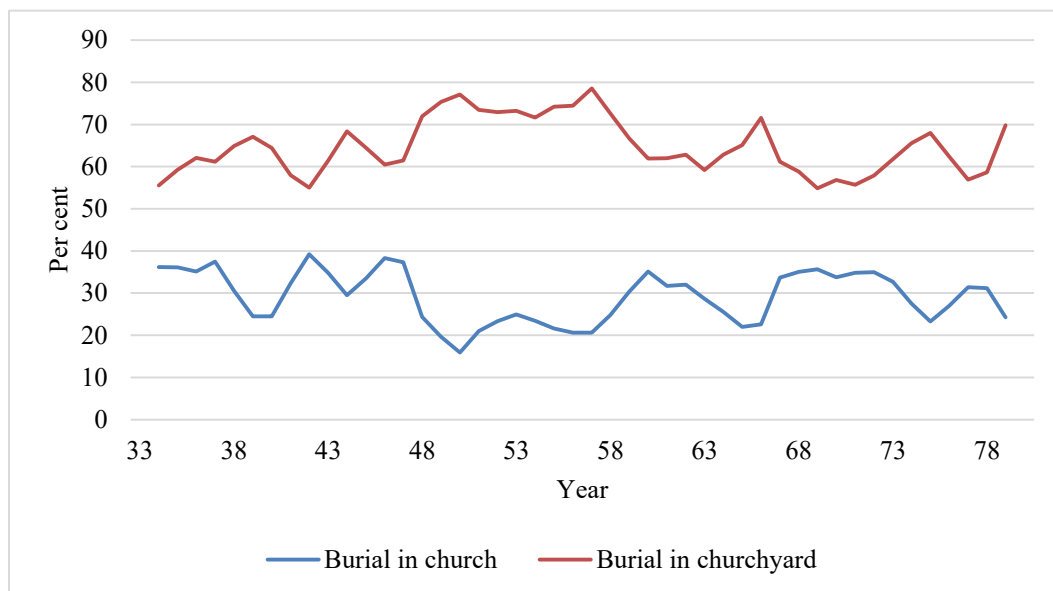
the rarity of bequests to the poor explicitly stating that prayers for the soul were expected. Other than the same two Catholics from the deanery of Leek, Henry Nicholson chaplain at Ilam in 1552, and Sir Philip Draycott of Draycott in the Moors in 1558, there was only Edward Whorewood of Kinver who, in 1547, left twenty stooks of corn to poor parishioners to pray.²⁴⁶ Perhaps the last escaped censure during Edward's reign as the bequest was in a useful form, which had to be processed by members of the community before it benefited them.

Funerals and Burials

As can be seen from figure 3.34, the line graph of three year rolling averages, most testators gave burial instructions and most opted for the churchyard; the percentage requesting burial in church, including those who allowed for the alternative of the churchyard, varied between nineteen and about forty per cent. This proportion appears high, but most of the dying would have made no will, and would have been buried in the churchyard. The change in popularity of burial in church as against churchyard does not appear to be relevant to any changes in religious opinion, but there is a suggestion that the proportion opting for the more expensive alternative, the church, decreased during the will writing flurries of the 1550s, corresponding to times of general hardship.

²⁴⁶ PCC, PROB 11/32/154 f.70 Edward Whorewood, Kinver, 21 Jun 1548.

Figure 3.34



Burial instructions of the testators of the deanery who expressed a preference for church or churchyard in per cent

Some testators stated where they wished their grave to be situated. Of the eight testators who specified a position within the churchyard, two in the early 1540s opted for 'bifore the crosse', and 'nyghe unto the crosse'.²⁴⁷ A slight preference for proximity to the cross in churchyard burials in the Staffordshire Moorlands during the reign of Henry VIII, perhaps because that location was perceived as imbued with holiness, would be in line with similar findings of doubtful statistical significance for medieval Worcester and Yorkshire.²⁴⁸ Apart from two later testators who specified nearness to the end of the chancel,²⁴⁹ other churchyard requests were peculiar to the individual, such as that of Rauf Wodcok of Mayfield who, in 1547, asked to be buried, 'bifore the Steple dore there. Also I will that myn executors shall cause an honest stone to be made and lade upon my grave suche as they shall thynke mete'. He was

²⁴⁷ LRO, B/C/11 Richard Pare, Uttoxeter, 24 Nov 1544. LRO, B/C/11 Robart Clarke, Caverswall, 3 Oct 1541.

²⁴⁸ C. Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066 - 1550* (London, 1997), pp. 99-100.

²⁴⁹ LRO, B/C/11 Wylliam Hulme, Leek, 21 Oct 1558. LRO, B/C/11 Roland Lovatt, Kingstone, 15 Jun 1571.

one of only two testators who mentioned a gravestone: the other being Robart Jacson of Alstonefield who, in 1556, wished to be buried, 'as nere unto our ladyes quere doore as may be suffered and uppon my grave one grave ston'.²⁵⁰ These testators may have been creating memorials in positions where they would be noticed by those passing, as they lowered their gaze while stepping across the grave stones, thereby being prompted to offer intercessory prayers. Christopher Daniell suggested that such 'liminal' burial positions may, including in pagan England, have invoked the soul crossing the boundary between earth and the afterlife.²⁵¹ Possibly the stones may have been to protect the graves, as both graves, situated by doors, would presumably have been subject to heavier than normal foot traffic.

Wills of important members of English communities at the time of the Reformation sometimes contained complex instructions for the construction of prominent tombs depicting their effigies. One of only two examples from the Staffordshire Moorlands is that of Philip Draycott who in September 1558, requested that, 'a stone of marble may be layd apon me and wyth the ymages of me and my wyff my vi sonnes and vi daughters and with letters graven in the same stone in englyche'.²⁵² The tomb must have been built promptly as specified as, in April 1568, his widow Elizabeth requested that she be buried in, 'the channcell of the churche of Draycott so neare the corps of my said late husbande as convenyentlie maye be and on that side of the Tombe that my picture is made'.²⁵³ In the archdeaconry during this period seven grand tombs were requested as listed in table 3.4. Also appended to table 3.4 are the details of three testators whose arrangements for tomb chests and indeed for their funerals were not enunciated in their wills. The building of their tombs may have been instigated by themselves

²⁵⁰ LRO, B/C/11 Rauf Wodcok, Mayfield, 6 Jul 1547. LRO, B/C/11 Robart Jacson, Alstonefield, 9 Oct 1556.

²⁵¹ Daniell, *Death and burial*, pp. 100-1.

²⁵² LRO, B/C/11 Philip Draycott, Draycott in the Moors. 8 Jan 1563.

²⁵³ LRO, B/C/11 Elizabeth Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 4 Jun 1568.

before their deaths, as evidenced by John Leveson's will, 'there shalbe provided a toombe for me yf I doe it not my selfe in my lief tyme.'²⁵⁴ A search of Pevsner's 'Historic Buildings of Staffordshire' and Newman and Pevsner's 'Historic Buildings of Shropshire' has produced an additional nine chest tombs commissioned between 1532 and 1580 in the archdeaconry of Stafford, where no will has been found.²⁵⁵ There would have been other tombs which have been lost, such as those of Elizabeth and Edward Leveson in Tettenhall church, destroyed by fire in 1950.²⁵⁶

Four of the ten wills in table 3.4 were proved several years after the testator died. One possibility, such as in the case of the Catholic Philip Draycott, is that the will may have contained requests that were not acceptable to the governing regime.²⁵⁷ Otherwise delay in obtaining probate may have been due to the complexity of the estates, with multiple beneficiaries and claimants. Also executors and witnesses may have been unavailable, possibly living abroad for extended periods.

²⁵⁴ PCC, PROB 11/57/675 f.438 John Leveson, Wolverhampton, 7 Feb 1576.

²⁵⁵ John Astley of Patshull 1532, Edward Aston of Stafford 1568, Thomas Caldwell of Rolleston 1554, Walter Devereux of Stowe by Chartley, 1537, Richard Draycott of Draycott in the Moors 1544, William Gatacre of Claverley 1577, John Gyfford of Chillington near Brewood 1556, Edward Littleton knight of Pillaton near Penkridge 1558, John Vernon of Clifton Campville, 1545. Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire buildings*, p. 211. Pevsner, *Staffordshire buildings*, pp. 218,242,226,100,79,221.

²⁵⁶ Pevsner, *Staffordshire buildings*, p. 325. PCC, PROB 11/58/395 f.211 Elizabeth Leveson, Parton (Tettenhall), 27 Oct 1576.

²⁵⁷ Greenslade, *Catholic Staffordshire*, p. 28.

Table 3.4

Testator	Date will written	Date of death	Date of probate
Philip Draycott knight of Draycott in the Moors	6 Sep 1558	25 Feb 1559	8 Jan 1563
Godfrey Foljambe esquire of Croxden	1 Feb 1558/9		18 Jan 1560
Thomas Gyfford knight of Chillington near Brewood	4 Aug 1559	1560	6 Jan 1560
Thomas Grey esquire of Enville	22 Dec 1559	31 Dec 1559	12 Feb 1566
Humphrey Wellis esquire of Yoxall	31 Aug 1564	1565	29 Jan 1566
William Stanford of Handsworth	7 Jun 1570		16 Nov 1570
John Leveson esquire of Wolverhampton	17 Jul 1574	11 Apr 1575	7 Feb 1576
Robert Broke knight of Claverley	7 Jan 1557/8	1558	12 Oct 1558
Humphrey Swynnerton of Swynnerton and Shareshill	6 Jul 1561	26 Aug 1562	9 Feb 1563
Edward Littleton knight of Pillaton near Penkridge	8 Jul 1574	1574	31 Oct 1580

Testators of the archdeaconry of Stafford requesting elaborate tombs²⁵⁸

On 19 September 1560 Elizabeth issued a proclamation against the breaking or defacing of church monuments, where it might deny kin the ability to assert their rights, and to establish inheritance. Such memorials were also testament to where families stood in relation to each

²⁵⁸ PCC, PROB 11/41/124 f.118-9 Robert Broke, Claverley, 12 Oct 1558. LRO, B/C/11 Philip Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 8 Jan 1563. PCC, PROB 11/43/68 f.49-51 Godfrey Foljambe. Croxden, 18 Jan 1560. LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Grey, Enville, 12 Feb 1566. PCC, PROB 11/43/5 f.279-80 Thomas Gyfford, Chillington, 6 Jan 1560. PCC, PROB 11/57/675 f.438 John Leveson, Wolverhampton, 7 Feb 1576. PCC, PROB 11/62/450 f.318-21 Edward Littleton, Pillaton, 31 Oct. 1580. PCC, PROB 11/52/475 f.235-6 William Stanford, Handsworth, 16 Nov 1570. PCC, PROB 11/46/89 f.62 Humphrey Swynnerton, Swynnerton, 9 Feb 1563. LRO, B/C/11 Humphrey Wellis of Yoxall, 29 Jan 1566. Dates of death obtained from History of Parliament Online, apart from that of John Leveson which is carved into his tomb in St Peter's Church Wolverhampton.

other.²⁵⁹ Maintenance of a social hierarchy, members of which had prominent and established descendants, was considered by the Elizabethan state to be important to ensure the loyalty of the population and hence for its own stability. Thus, many tombs, like that of Philip Draycott, depicted wives and children, emphasising family lineage. However, tombs also became the one enduring vehicle which Catholics could use to solicit intercessory prayers, although they were by no means restricted to Catholics, for instance Edward Littleton was regarded as a Protestant.²⁶⁰ The tomb of William Stanford at Handsworth, in figure 3.35, is an example of a cadaver tomb; this style of tomb is considered by scholars to be particularly efficacious in attracting intercessory prayers. Cadavers also encouraged the viewer to contemplate their own mortality which in itself granted remission from purgatory.²⁶¹

Figure 3.35

²⁵⁹ P. Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Farnham, 2008), p. 166.

²⁶⁰ Described by Bishop Bentham in 1564 as 'Meet to be called to office' of Justice and, 'I hear well of [him]', in Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 369-370.

²⁶¹ E. Norton, 2015, 'Transmitting belief in stone: Elizabethan cadaver tombs as a demonstration of traditional faith', paper presented to European Reformation Research Group, Birmingham University, 9 September 2015.



Cadaver tomb of William Stanford at Handsworth Church²⁶²

Tomb use widened after the Reformation to be within the sphere of knights and esquires such as the Draycotts and Levesons, whereas previously it had tended to be restricted to higher nobility, and abbots and bishops. Elizabeth Draycott referred to her 'picture'; more accurately it was simply a representation of her, and the tomb itself symbolised her husband's wealth and social standing. The tomb of John Leveson is illustrated in figure 3.36. That tomb was constructed of alabaster from the Midlands, a substance then deemed prestigious. The detailed carving would have been effected by specialists based elsewhere in the country, possibly London. The Leveson tomb, as almost all chest tombs, conveyed status, and implied

²⁶² W. Dargue, *A History of Birmingham Churches ... from A to Y: Handsworth St Mary* at: <http://ahistoryofbirminghamchurches.jimdo.com/handsworth-st-mary> [accessed 10 September 2015]

importance within the community, through its size and position in the church, in this case in a separate chapel.²⁶³

Figure 3.36



Chest tomb of John and Joyce Leveson, 1575, Lady Chapel, St Peter's Church, Wolverhampton²⁶⁴

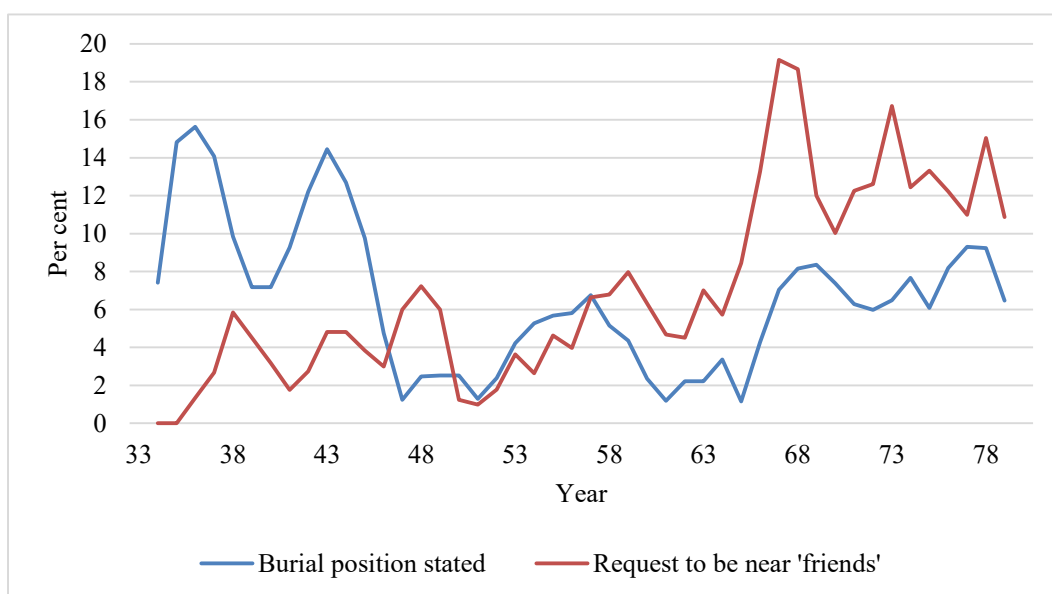
Preference for burial near objects which were venerated and had spiritual significance is thought by scholars to be indicative of traditional beliefs. As can be seen from figure 3.37, the line graph of three year rolling averages, stated burial positions declined during Edward's reign, and in the early years of that of Elizabeth. They were never as popular again as during the reign of Henry VIII, when typical requests included: 'before the ymage of saynt ...', 'by

²⁶³ B. Ford (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Britain: Volume 3 Renaissance and Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 236-47.

²⁶⁴ Photographed 31 Aug 2011.

fore the rode', and 'before our lady's altar';²⁶⁵ there was only one request for a burial not adjacent to a venerated artefact, 'in the new yle'.²⁶⁶ Apart from two that were illegible, three requests featured the rood, two stated before an altar, three included our lady's chapel, one St John's quere, and seven stated before a saint's image or shrine. Protestant removal of images, shrines, and altars led to preferences during Elizabeth's reign, apart from those of clergy and church patrons and their wives, who wished to be buried in the chancel, ostensibly being spiritually more benign. Requests featured the north and south aisle, where the testator probably was hoping that in such a position, equivalent to a present-day railway advertising hoarding, his grave would attract intercessory prayers. Some requested burial positions which were personal such as that of John Talor yeoman of Uttoxeter who in 1567 wished to be buried, 'at the stolle ynde where I am wontte to knyle'.²⁶⁷

Figure 3.37



Testators of the deanery who gave a precise burial position in per cent

²⁶⁵ LRO, B/C/11 John Grene, Ellastone, 19 Oct 1541. LRO, B/C/11 Ellen Wright, Kingstone, 13 Apr 1543. LRO, B/C/11 John Cartlach, Ilam, 6 May 1539.

²⁶⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Bedulf, Horton, 1 Dec 1535.

²⁶⁷ LRO, B/C/11 John Talor, Uttoxeter, 14 May 1568.

Otherwise eighty testators asked to be buried near specific family members, or occasionally (nine requests) near 'friends', which may well have meant family members. In 1571, Thomas Wodd of Cheddleton, for instance, asked to be buried, 'nigh where frendes do lye'.²⁶⁸ The highest number of family burial requests was for wives to be buried near husbands (twenty-five), closely followed by husbands wishing to be buried near wives (twenty-one requests). The next most popular request was for burial near parents (father eight, mother two and both parents five). Some requests were more singular, such as that of Nicolas Naden of Alstonefield who, in 1562, asked to be buried, 'as nere unto [his] doghter in law as the grownde will suffer'.²⁶⁹ Three testators, in 1564, 1573 and 1575, in recognition of their lineage, asked to be buried 'where my ancestors lie'.²⁷⁰ These proportions are consistent with those cited by Daniell for medieval England.²⁷¹ There were also four requests for burial seemingly next to non-relatives. In October 1552 Richard Fylton, the parson of Draycott in the Moors, asked to be buried in 'the churchyarde ... ny to [the] grave of Sir Robert Whithel late dep[ar]ted (whose soole God pardon)'.²⁷² Robert Withall had been described as a 'clerk' 'of Draycott'.²⁷³ As this was during Edward's reign the parson might have been seeking burial next to a fellow Catholic. As can be seen from figure 3.37, family requests peaked after about 1566. Perhaps, prompted by the religious turmoil and destruction of their churches that they had witnessed, the requests were due to apprehension that the second coming may have been imminent. Aggravating concerns, there had been national epidemics especially in the late 1550s, and poor harvests resulting in a famine in 1555/6.²⁷⁴ Alternatively, those dying in

²⁶⁸ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Wodd, Cheddleton, 4 Oct 1572.

²⁶⁹ LRO, B/C/11 Nicolas Naden, Alstonefield, 26 Jan 1566.

²⁷⁰ LRO, B/C/11 Francis Meverall, Ilam, 14 Feb 1565. LRO, B/C/11 John Cooke, Checkley, 7 Mar 1573. LRO, B/C/11 Edward Fynney, Cheddleton, 7 Sep 1575.

²⁷¹ Daniell, *Death and burial*, pp. 101-2.

²⁷² LRO, B/C/11 Richard Fylton, Draycott in the Moors, 5 Nov 1552.

²⁷³ Landon, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 83-5.

²⁷⁴ Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England*, p. 12.

Elizabeth's reign, when demonstrating lineage was considered important, may have been reacting to the confiscation of church artefacts under Edward's government, which had destroyed the heritage of the parish and its ancestral links.²⁷⁵

Some testators of the deanery left bequests for lights during their burial, in the form of tapers or wax, the distribution of which is given in figure 3.38. Forbidden under the Protestants, such bequests disappeared during Edward's and Elizabeth's reigns.²⁷⁶ Lights were the only items of display mentioned by the ordinary testators of Leek Deanery. However, Sir Philip Draycott of Draycott in the Moors in 1558 bequeathed, 'to the sexton for lyghtes and ryngyng 6s 8d', at his funeral in Lichfield Cathedral.²⁷⁷ Sir William Bassett of Blore simply stated that at his burial, 'all things be done accordinge after my degre at the discrecion of my executors'.²⁷⁸ From the medieval period the wealthy sometimes made provision for poor mourners ostentatiously to be clad in black.²⁷⁹ In 1576, Elizabeth Leveson of Parton, near Wolverhampton, as well as gifts of money to the poor of eleven neighbouring parishes, bequeathed, 'to twentie poore woomen at the daye of my buriall twentie black gownes and in like maner to twentie poore children twentie black coates'. She also noted that the churchwardens were to be responsible for distributing her pecuniary gifts as, 'at my buriall there be no comen doll made bicause to suche burialls there resorte aswell the riche people and the wilfull pore as the needie poore'.²⁸⁰ The Levesons were wool merchants²⁸¹ and had a penchant for bedecking poor mourners, and their servants, in black garments at their funerals,

²⁷⁵ Swanson, *Indulgences*, p. 509.

²⁷⁶ Apart from Robert Whytgreve. LRO, B/C/11 Robert Whytgreve, Castle Church, 28 Apr 1551.

²⁷⁷ LRO, B/C/11 Philip Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 8 Jan 1563.

²⁷⁸ LRO, B/C/11 William Bassett, Blore, 7 Dec 1553.

²⁷⁹ Daniell, *Death and burial*, pp. 55-6.

²⁸⁰ PCC, PROB 11/58/395 f.211 Elizabeth Leveson, Parton (Tettenhall), 27 Oct 1576.

²⁸¹ G.P. Mander, N.W. Tildesley (eds.), *A History of Wolverhampton to the early nineteenth century* (Wolverhampton, 1960), pp. 35,41-2.

no doubt prompted by being able to obtain the material at cost price. Like his father James, Elizabeth's brother-in-law, Richard Leveson of Lilleshall in 1560 left, 'every of my household servants and retainors ... one black cote', the women receiving 'a black gowne' instead.²⁸² Members of the Leveson family were noted recusants; Elizabeth's sister-in-law Joyce married John Gyfford of Chillington, whose penalties for recusancy were mitigated because his son Gilbert Gyfford was an agent of Sir Francis Walsingham, and was instrumental in revealing the Babington plot.²⁸³ As recipients of gifts such as money or clothes were expected to offer prayers for their benefactor's soul at their funeral, Elizabeth in soliciting so many potential intercessors, may too have been a Catholic.²⁸⁴ In restricting her dole to the worthy poor, she was avoiding those who would not keep their part of the common understanding and pray for her soul, as well as those in mortal sin, whose prayers therefore would be of little efficacy.²⁸⁵

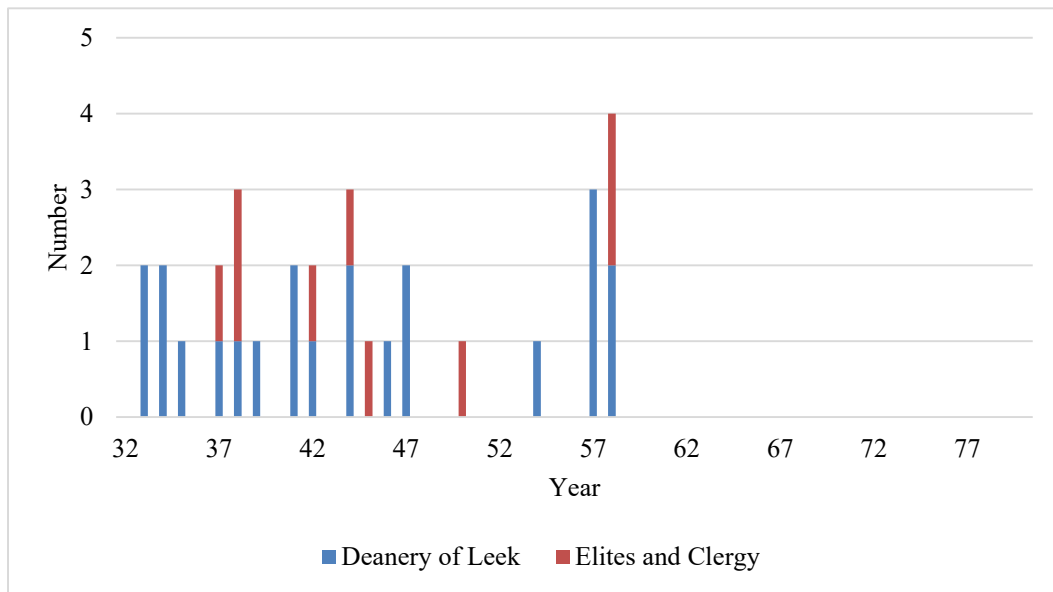
²⁸² PCC, PROB 11/31/655 f.373-4 James Leveson, Wolverhampton, 27 Oct 1547. PCC, PROB 11/43/621 f.442 Richard Leveson, Lilleshall, 28 Nov 1560.

²⁸³ A.G. Petti (ed.), 'Roman Catholicism in Elizabethan and Jacobean Staffordshire: Documents from the Bagot Papers', *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, Fourth Series, Volume 9, The Staffordshire Record Society (1979), p. xiv.

²⁸⁴ Daniell, *Death and burial*, p. 56.

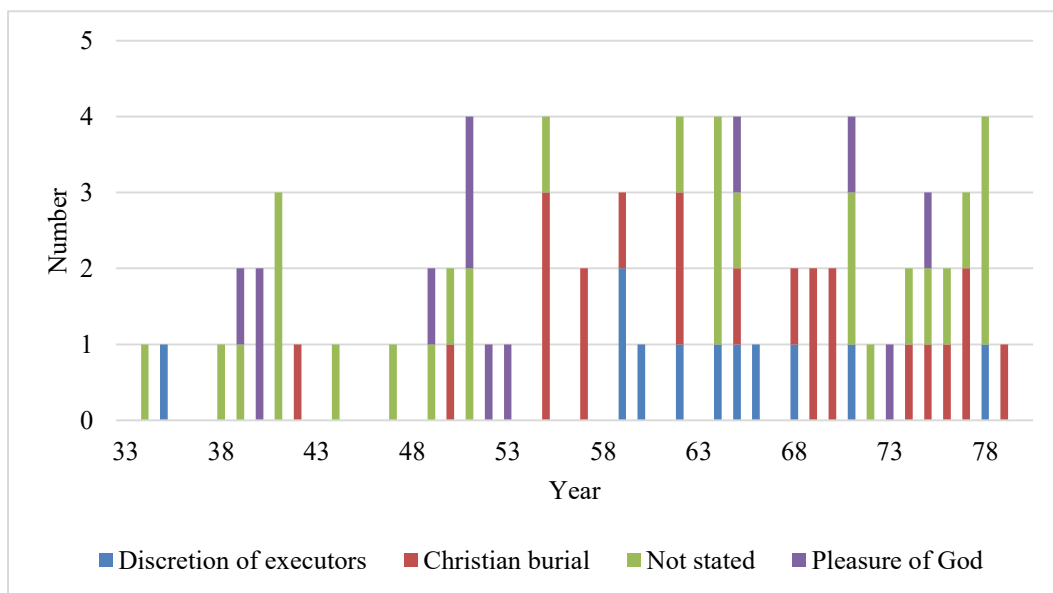
²⁸⁵ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 362-6.

Figure 3.38



Bequest for lights by both the testators of the deanery and the elites including clergy of the archdeaconry of Stafford

Figure 3.39



Testators of the deanery who did not give precise burial instructions

Finally in most years a few testators gave vague or no burial instructions. As can be seen from figure 3.39, those who omitted instructions altogether, or whose wills were illegible, were scattered throughout the period. Apart from one will made in 1535, where the overseer allowed to exercise discretion was the Abbot of Dieulacres,²⁸⁶ those who left the disposal of their corpse to the discretion of their executors all made their wills in the reign of Elizabeth, and all but one in the first decade of her reign. Of the ten in the reign of Elizabeth, six bore Protestant preambles, and hence were probably motivated by a desire to disavow interest in their burial. However, the preambles of those, like James Rolleston of Mayfield, who in 1553, left his burial, 'wher yt shall plase God', were approximately one third traditional, at the Dissolution, and two thirds neutral, mainly during the reign of Edward, suggesting traditional sympathies then.²⁸⁷ The notion of simply requesting a 'Christen mens buriall', appears to have become more popular from 1555 onwards.²⁸⁸ Again, the preambles of those wills were mainly, that is approximately three-quarters, neutral implying a traditional allegiance. This is a small sample, of uncertain statistical value, and subject to the vagaries of chance. However, the results hint that those who stated no burial preference but referred instead to God or Christian burial were more likely to be traditional testators. Those who left the matter to their executors were more likely to be Protestant.

Overall what these results demonstrate is the changes that the testators of the deanery were party to during this period. During the reign of Henry VIII, except during the years of the Dissolution, a reasonable proportion requested burial near to objects they venerated such as images of saints or the rood. These requests virtually ceased at his death, with a limited

²⁸⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Geoffrey Atkyson, Leek, 1 Dec 1535.

²⁸⁷ LRO, B/C/11 James Rolleston, Mayfield, 11 Sep 1555.

²⁸⁸ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Mylns, Leek, 13 Jun 1577.

number recurring during Mary's reign. Due to the dampening effect of successive government edicts on religious ceremonies and church decoration, after Henry VIII, where burial positions were mentioned, they tended to be of sentimental value, or to be visible to those who might offer intercessory prayers, especially during Elizabeth's reign. Again after Henry VIII, the use of lights at funerals appeared to be insignificant, ceasing altogether after Mary's death. Simultaneously, requests for burial near family members rose, as did noncommittal statements such as the use of the plain 'Christian burial'. Hickman referred to churches losing some of their religious connotations after the Reformation, coinciding with an increase in chest tombs belonging to wealthy laymen.²⁸⁹ These changes were perhaps the precursors of a larger movement, resulting in a change in mores and ultimately beliefs of the lay population.

²⁸⁹ Hickman, *Epitaphs*, pp. 112-13.

CHAPTER 4: CLERGY, AND LANDOWNERS AND PARISHES

The Clergy

Based on this dataset, in the period from 1532 to 1580 a total of 140 local clergy wrote wills for the testators of the Staffordshire Moorlands of which about half, sixty-nine, were left at least one bequest, not necessarily in wills which they had authored (See appendix 3). Only one clergyman who wrote a significant number of wills was from outside the deanery of Leek: Gervase Alen, vicar of Hartington in Derbyshire. Between 1552 and 1570 he was responsible for seven wills for the parishioners of Alstonefield, Grindon and Sheen, poorly populated parishes situated next to the border with Derbyshire. As Hartington is less than a mile east of the border, Gervase Alen may have been the closest priest available, or possibly those testators had opted to attend Hartington church, and be ministered to by Gervase Alen. The majority of clergy, ninety-eight, featured on five wills or fewer. The most prolific will-writer was Andrew Sherard, vicar of Leek who, from 1547 until his death in 1568, produced forty-three wills, restricted to his parishioners. He also, as ‘vicar of Leke’, received one token bequest only, of 2s in a will written in 1559 in London by a yeoman of Leek.²⁹⁰ John Standley, vicar of Alton, during the same period, 1548 until 1569, wrote thirty-five wills, covering Alton, Uttoxeter and Bradley on the Moors, a chapel of Rocester, and received no bequests. The third most popular will-writer was Nicholas Stokes, vicar of Ellastone, who produced thirty-one wills for his parishioners between 1537 and 1560, receiving a nominal 4d, ‘over and above all other dutyes’ as ‘vicar of Ellaston’ from a will written in 1545

²⁹⁰ PCC, PROB 11/54/333 f.188 John Asshenhurste, Leek, 19 Jul 1572 (the year his wife died).

probably by the testator or a relative.²⁹¹ Unlike Sherard, Standley and Stokes, who were beneficed, Robert Sutton, curate of Rushton Chapel, parish of Leek, was unbeneficed. He wrote twenty-four wills between 1537 and 1569, and received five small bequests.²⁹² It is possible that the vicars had received handsome remuneration already for will-writing and 'other duties', whereas the unbeneficed Sutton, almost certainly in greater need of monetary gifts from testators, had accepted less for his services. However, bequests to clergy were often linked to other factors, such as prayers for the soul, or gratitude for services rendered. Indeed, one of Sutton's bequests was specifically for prayers, and in another three instances he was referred to as 'my ghostly father', signifying the special relationship of personal confessor. Bequests in expectation of prayers for the soul would have fluctuated depending on the religious persuasion of the government, being greatest during the reign of Henry VIII, as illustrated in figures 3.9 and 3.14. Also, gifts may not have been recorded, having been presented in person by a family member. Notwithstanding, it does appear from a crude calculation, based on the clergy who had written six or more wills, that the unbeneficed generally were more likely to have been rewarded for such supplementary services. Out of these forty-two more active will-writers, twenty-five possessed a benefice and averaged just over one gift each, whereas seventeen were unbeneficed and averaged just under three gifts each.²⁹³

²⁹¹ LRO, B/C/11 Henry Aynesworth, Ellastone, 7 Nov 1545.

²⁹² LRO, B/C/11 Robert Clowes, Leek, 18 Apr 1561, 2s. LRO, B/C/11 George Cloys, Leek, 1537 (indecipherable amount). LRO, B/C/11 Richard Fernehulge, Leek, 1553 (12d). LRO, B/C/11 Necolas Hegynbothum, Leek, 11 Apr 1551 (12d). LRO, B/C/11 John Leke, Leek, 21 Jun 1552 (4d).

²⁹³ David Postles has calculated that before 1547 just over six per cent of testators in the diocese stipulated that a gift of cash should be made to their priest. Whilst disagreeing with his interpretation, this low figure is in line with the findings in this study. D. Postles, 'Relations between the laity and the parochial clergy during the Henrician Reformation: the case of the North and West Midlands', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 59 (2015), pp. 211-13.

This view is in agreement with the opinion of Tim Cooper who described the unbeneficed of the diocese in the early-sixteenth century as ‘economically disadvantaged’. He stated that clergy such as Robert Sutton would probably have been more receptive to the feelings of their communities, which would accord with them being mentioned more often in parishioners' wills than the incumbents.²⁹⁴ Cooper cited average figures of 167 priests ordained per year from 1503 to 1531 in the diocese, with only fifteen vacancies in benefices per year, usually created by death of the serving clergyman. Hence, a backlog of unbeneficed clergy would have been created. According to the clerical subsidy return of 1533 the diocese then employed under 420 clergy with parochial livings: rector, vicar, perpetual curate or perpetual chantry priest, and over 930 stipendiary clergy: curates serving parishes of non-resident incumbents or chapels of ease, chantry priests and assistant clergy. The families of many of the stipendiary clergy, in particular, were members of the agricultural community that the priests served.²⁹⁵

In addition Cooper drew attention to the proportion of those admitted to a benefice in the diocese with a degree, just under twenty-five per cent between 1503 and 1531. Often belonging to wealthy families, graduates would not only have stood out through their better educational attainments, but also, through family connections, have secured the patronage necessary to obtain a benefice. Such men could also have hoped to gain preferment to more prestigious posts such as that of a prebendary at Lichfield or Stafford.²⁹⁶ Those recorded as graduates did not feature among the committed will-writers of the Staffordshire Moorlands. For instance, the most notorious, Anthony Draycott, authored just two wills in the sample

²⁹⁴ T. Cooper, *The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 127-8.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-9, 94, 127.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 92-3, 127.

between obtaining the rectory of Checkley in 1516 and his deprivation in 1559, after refusing to take the oath accepting the Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy.²⁹⁷ This is hardly surprising as, at different times and often contemporaneously, he held eight livings, including another two in the Staffordshire Moorlands: Draycott in the Moors and Grindon. He also held several higher ecclesiastical offices, including that of chancellor to the bishop of the diocese, Ralph Baynes. Both he and Baynes were condemned in the writing of John Foxe for their pitiless pursuit of heretics in the reign of Mary.²⁹⁸

After the accession of Elizabeth, Ralph Baynes, with the rest of Mary's bench of bishops, rejected the new religious settlement, and he was deprived. Baynes was replaced by the committed Protestant, Thomas Bentham. Of the Staffordshire clergy, seven were deprived and twelve resigned.²⁹⁹ However, Landor stated that he had found estimating the effect of the Elizabethan settlement on the parochial clergy of Staffordshire extremely difficult and hence likely to have been imprecise.³⁰⁰ He identified as 'nonconformists' two clergy who, as well as Anthony Draycott, resigned or were deprived in the deanery of Leek in 1559, 1560 or 1561: William Stapleton rector of Draycott in the Moors, and George Hilton vicar of Uttoxeter, who did subscribe in 1559, and was appointed rector of Norton in Hales in 1561 where he remained until 1572. As well as Hilton, he almost certainly wrongly identified as a 'probable nonconformist' William Okeden of Rocester who only served there in 1559, but he was also curate two miles away at Marston Montgomery in Derbyshire until the 1570s.³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ LRO, B/C/11 George Barlow, Checkley, 23 Nov 1536. LRO, B/C/11 Edmonde Wytrens, Checkley, 26 May 1548.

²⁹⁸ G. Goodwin, *Draycot Anthony (d.1571)* (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography) at: <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/8/101008041>> [accessed 7 March 2015]

²⁹⁹ M.B. Rowlands, *The West Midlands from AD 1000* (Harlow, 1987), p. 125.

³⁰⁰ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. xlii - xlviii.

³⁰¹ CCED, *The Clergy of the Church of England Database* at:

<<http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/persons/index.jsp>> [accessed 8 March 2015]

Landor identified as ‘possible’ an unknown incumbent at Cheadle in the late 1550s. That would have been John Stephenson, the rector, a graduate who was also prebendary and canon at Lichfield Cathedral. He wrote no Cheadle wills, so was probably non-resident. His patron for the post of canon under Bishop Baynes was the Crown; he was a victim of the Elizabethan settlement and was deprived at Lichfield in 1562.³⁰²

Landor named only three Staffordshire clergy who were deprived under Mary and six who resigned, possibly because they were married. None of those named was associated with the deanery of Leek. Much more significant were the effects of the dissolution of the chantries and guilds in 1548. Rowlands stated that eighty-five chantry priests were dispossessed in Staffordshire; although they would have received pensions, and some of the funds released by the dissolution provided for the construction and maintenance of new chapels of ease.³⁰³ John Beardmore, ex-chantry priest of the Jesus chantry at Kingsley, in receipt of a pension, continued to be employed in Kingsley as curate and schoolmaster until his death in 1577.³⁰⁴ He wrote sixteen wills between 1533 and 1573 and received eight bequests of small sums of money and a sheet.³⁰⁵ Richard Weyne had been chantry priest of Our Lady's Service at Uttoxeter from 1543 until 1548.³⁰⁶ He then, in receipt of a pension, served as curate at Checkley under Anthony Draycott, unrecorded by the authorities, until his death in 1559. He

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Rowlands, *West Midlands*, pp. 123-4.

³⁰⁴ Cooper, *English Catholic clergy*, p. 109.

³⁰⁵ LRO, B/C/11 Homfrey Browne, Cheadle, 18 Sep 1573 (2s). LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Coke, Grindon, 5 Feb 1534 (12d). LRO, B/C/11 Edmund Gledenhurst, Cheadle, 25 Apr 1569 (10s to pray). LRO, B/C/11 William Grene, Cheadle, 26 Mar 1566 (6s 8d). LRO, B/C/11 Robert Grene, Cheadle, 20 Mar 1566 (5s). LRO, B/C/11 John Hall, Kingsley, 22 Oct 1543 (12d to pray). LRO, B/C/11 Elyn Jonson, Kingsley, 22 Oct 1543 (a floxon sheyt). LRO, B/C/11 John Stobbes, Grindon, 4 Jul 1541 (12d).

³⁰⁶ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 295.

wrote twenty-two wills and received six bequests of money, clothes and wax.³⁰⁷ Another unregistered priest, Richard Holme of Cheddleton, appears to have been an unnamed curate there from 1559 until his death in 1565.³⁰⁸ He wrote thirteen wills, and as a witness in 1547 was named as a chantry priest of Dovebridge in Derbyshire.³⁰⁹ He bequeathed 20s to Dovebridge church in his will of 1565 as well as 5s to the ‘allmes folkes there’, despite being owed a quarter of his wages by Sir Raffe Bagnall knyght.³¹⁰ At least three chantry priests from the deanery obtained no preferment after the dissolution of the chantries. First, John Bee of the Blessed Trinity in Uttoxeter, who wrote one will in 1543 and died in Uttoxeter in 1555.³¹¹ Second, John Beylatt, Our Lady's priest of Cheadle, wrote thirteen wills between 1535 and 1553 and received seven gifts, consisting of money and three sheep.³¹² Third, Robert Greves, priest of Our Lady's Service of Leek from 1533 to 1548, wrote seven wills.³¹³ The dispossessed chantry priests clearly were valued by the population of the deanery while they survived. They would have provided a bulwark against Protestantism which eventually failed with their gradual dispersal and death.

The seven wills Robert Greves wrote in Leek between August 1534 and May 1547, as would be expected, were all strongly Catholic, with traditional soul bequests. On all but one will the

³⁰⁷ LRO, B/C/11 John Abell, Kingstone, 9 May 1558 (money and clothes as executor). LRO, B/C/11 Thurstan Cartmel, Tutbury, 20 Apr 1543 (‘my beste syde gowne satyned’). LRO, B/C/11 Nycholas Grene, Checkley, 7 Oct 1559 (‘my waxe to pray for me’). LRO, B/C/11 Robert Meere, Checkley, 21 May 1558 (12d). LRO, B/C/11 William Meyre, Checkley, 17 May 1555 (2s). LRO, B/C/11 Agnes Russell, Kingstone, 16 May 1559 (3s 4d).

³⁰⁸ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 60.

³⁰⁹ LRO, B/C/11 William Taylor, Uttoxeter, 26 Oct 1549.

³¹⁰ LRO, B/C/11 Richard Holme, Leek, 17 Sep 1565.

³¹¹ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 295. Under the will of William Tulle, vicar of Uttoxeter, received 3s 4d to pray. LRO, B/C/11 William Tulle, Uttoxeter, 5 Feb 1538.

³¹² Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 54. LRO, B/C/11 John Gleynhurst, Cheadle, 24 Nov 1544 (10s). LRO, B/C/11 Kathryn Gledynhurst, Cheadle, 18 May 1545 (10s). LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Gledynhurst, Cheadle, 19 Sep 1551 (3s 4d). LRO, B/C/11 Raffe Johnson, Cheadle, 8 Jul 1543 (3s 4d). LRO, B/C/11 Elen Smyth, Cheadle, 17 May 1552 (a sheep). LRO, B/C/11 Raffe Smyth, Cheadle, 23 Jun 1551 (a sheep). LRO, B/C/11 William Smyth, Cheadle, 11 Aug 1550 (‘oon ewe’).

³¹³ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 146.

executors were warned that ‘thei shall answer afore God the hye juge’. Five wills mentioned the customary payment of ‘the principall that the lawe doth require’.³¹⁴ The similarities in structure and wording between them lead to the conclusion that they were drafted using a template. There were no bequests to charity and only the earliest three wills, 1534-6, contained differing small bequests to the church. The thirteen wills John Beylat authored in Cheadle between November 1535 and March 1553 reveal more variation in wording so cannot be ascribed to the use of one template, nevertheless twelve of the thirteen demonstrated Catholic sentiments. All soul bequests under Henry VIII were traditional and the earliest three testators, 1535 - 43, referred to Beylat as ‘my gostely fader’. Under Edward some soul bequests were neutral, and, if so, the wills mentioned answering before God or made bequests for the health of the soul. Two testators under Edward, perhaps at Beylat's prompting, made generous charitable bequests, to ‘poore people in Cheadill and Kyngley in breade or money xxs’, and for bridge repair.³¹⁵

John Beardmore was a local of Kingsley, being named in 1547 when he was priest of the Jesus chantry, as executor of his brother's will.³¹⁶ His own will, written in 1576 with a vaguely Protestant and lengthy preamble, had a Catholic flavour. He left a charitable bequest in perpetuity maintained by rent from property, ‘iiii grotes a yeare to be delt everie Good Fridie after my buriall to eyght of the poore people in the perich of Kindgly to everie one of theme iid yearly for ever’.³¹⁷ He also bequeathed money and personal items to Roger Copestake, a curate from Cauldon, possibly for prayers for his soul, and he stated that he was ‘dreaddinge death’. All but one of the wills he wrote had traditional or neutral preambles, and

³¹⁴ Mortuary right, i.e. the gift which a parish priest could expect from a deceased parishioner's estate.

³¹⁵ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Gledynhurst, Cheadle, 19 Sep 1551. LRO, B/C/11 Wyllyam Jacson, Cheadle, 2 May 1553.

³¹⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Richard Beardmore, Kingsley, 1547.

³¹⁷ LRO, B/C/11 John Beardmore, Kingsley, 13 Sep 1577.

none referred to Christ. During the reign of Henry VIII, in the majority of wills he authored, money was left to the church and bequests were made 'to dispose for my sowle'; one contained a specific request to be prayed for. Of the seven he wrote in the reign of Elizabeth, four testators left him sums of money, one of whom in 1569, Edmund Gledenhurst of Cheadle, stated explicitly that the money was for his prayers. Four testators left money to the poor, for instance Thomas Walles of Cheadle in 1562 bequeathed, "to every poor howse a peny worthe of bred".³¹⁸ His Catholic sympathies were borne out by the will of William Grene of Cheadle, who in January 1566, from concerns expressed in his testament, had been involved with conspirators in the Prayer Book Rebellion of 1548/9. The ostensible cause of this revolt based in the West Country was religious discontent, but social grievances against the gentry and fears about new taxes may also have been contributory factors.³¹⁹ He asserted that to recompense two men who had been punished for their participation for 'such monies as I had of them in the rebellion fund', his assets near Bodmin and other capital should be realised.³²⁰ It is unlikely that William Grene would have divulged so much information about his connection to the rebellion and, presumably, have discussed his options, with a priest who was unfamiliar with the issues or unsympathetic to them.

On the other hand, the wills written by another ex-chantry priest, Richard Holme, were characterised by uniformly neutral preambles and a dearth of bequests of a charitable or religious nature. Perhaps he was erring on the side of caution, in the religiously charged atmosphere that existed between 1557 and 1565. Richard Weyn, who wrote wills between

³¹⁸ LRO, B/C/11 Homfrey Browne, Cheadle, 18 Sep 1573 (2s). LRO, B/C/11 Edmund Gledenhurst, Cheadle, 25 Apr 1569 (10s). LRO, B/C/11 Robert Grene, Cheadle, 20 Mar 1566 (5s). LRO, B/C/11 William Grene, Cheadle, 26 Mar 1566 (6s 8d). LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Walles, Cheadle, 23 Apr 1563.

³¹⁹ J. Youings, 'The south-western rebellion of 1549', *Southern History* (1979), pp.99-120. B.L. Beer, *Rebellion and Riot: Popular Disorder in England During the Reign of Edward VI* (Kent State, US, 2005), pp.46-8. A. Fletcher and D. MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (4th edn., Essex, 1997), pp.50-63.

³²⁰ LRO, B/C/11 William Grene, Cheadle, 26 Mar 1566.

1548 and his death in 1559, also was concerned that the wording of his wills did not offend the clergy sitting in the probate court during the reign of Edward. The most popular bequest among those eight wills, all with neutral preambles, was 4d to the 'poore mens boxe'. Only the will of William Meyre, 'being feble and aged', demonstrated Catholic tendencies with a bequest of 2s to Weyn who was referred to as 'my gostly father'.³²¹ All his remaining fourteen wills, thirteen with neutral preambles and one ambiguous, and all but one in the reign of Mary, demonstrate a marked swing back to Catholicism. In every one he was referred to as my ghostly father. Seven testators left money to the church, and four asked to be prayed for. Three testators in 1558 requested tapers to burn before the sacrament, the most extravagant being Roger Bagnald, who asked his wife to, 'fynd and upholde one grett taper of waxe to burne afore the sepulchre on Good Fryday unto Easter Day untyll the resurectyon be don and after to burne afore the blessed sacrament for iii yeres next folowyng my deceasse'.³²² Also in 1558 two testators asked for masses to be said for their souls, those of their families and 'all Christen soules'.³²³ In summary, despite the chantry priests having retained their Catholic sympathies, as evidenced particularly under Mary by Richard Weyne; only John Beylat, without preferment, and perhaps more accommodating to his testators, allowed his wills to betray Catholic sentiments during the reign of Edward. Both John Beardmore, who wrote one nondescript will between 1547 and 1553, and Richard Weyn, were careful not to attract attention then to themselves or their testators. Richard Holme too, in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, was wary of coming to the notice of the authorities.

³²¹ LRO, B/C/11 William Meyre, Checkley, 17 May 1555.

³²² LRO, B/C/11 Roger Bagnald, Checkley, 21 May 1558.

³²³ LRO, B/C/11 Robert Meere, Checkley, 21 May 1558. LRO, B/C/11 John Packen, Checkley, 14 Apr 1558.

Taking the numerically larger group consisting of the beneficed clergy, apart from those ordained in Elizabeth's reign, they fell broadly into two groups: Catholic sympathisers and pragmatic survivors.

Two, almost certainly Protestant, clergy were ordained by Bishop Bentham. First, Thomas Rawlen, vicar of Alton, who was ordained in 1563, wrote fifteen wills between 1568 and 1578 which showed some variety, suggesting that he was not adhering to a script, and possibly that he was relatively confident in his position.³²⁴ Souls were usually simply bequeathed to God, with the soul bequests of two testators expanded to, 'Almighty God my maker and Jesus Christ my redemer and to the Holy Ghost my swete comforter'. Those wills remembered the poor, but it was the deserving poor: 'pore people within the parish iis to be distributed either in breade or money at the sight and discretion of our vicar'.³²⁵ In one of those wills Rawlen was referred to as 'my ghostly counceleur'. Another will with Catholic undertones bequeathed ten shillings to the parish poor, ten shillings to the church and sixteen shillings to Robert Sutton, curate at Rushton chapel.³²⁶ Robert Smith, vicar of Rocester, ordained by Bishop Bentham in 1564, wrote eight wills between 1567 and 1577, which demonstrated a similar profile but without any hint of Catholicism. The wills possessed some variety: three with neutral preambles, two ambiguous and three Protestant, the last apparently obtained from a published source, 'Almighty God my onlie maker redemer and savioure by

³²⁴ Described in the Puritan Survey of Staffordshire in 1604 as ignorant. A. Peel, 'A Puritan Survey of the Church in Staffordshire in 1604', *The English Historical Review*, 26, (1911), p. 343.

³²⁵ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Hoden, Alton, 4 May 1576). LRO, B/C/11 Robert Holme, Alton, 16 Aug 1574.

³²⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Adderley, Kingsley, 25 Apr 1569.

the meritte of whose precieuse deathe and passion I truste and stedfastlie beleave to enioye the inheritance of his everlastinge kyngdome with him in Heyvon'.³²⁷

Roger Banne, vicar of Leek, was ordained by Thomas Goldwell, the bishop of St Asaph in 1559, before the bishop fled from England that year. An ally of Reginald Pole, who was consecrated as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1556, Goldwell was one of Mary's Catholic bishops. He was appointed in 1555, having spent almost all of the previous twenty years on the continent, avoiding the impact of the Reformation.³²⁸ Roger Banne must, however, have satisfied Bishop Bentham in 1569 that he was a suitable priest to be granted the vicarage of Leek. As can be seen from table 4.1, in appendix 4, he wrote fifteen wills between 1565 and 1580, none of which referred to customary payments to the church. The first six wills were bland, characterised by neutral preambles, and with no bequests of a religious or charitable nature. The next will written in 1571 possessed a hint of Catholicism, in that Banne was described as 'our gostlie father'. He was left a lamb, perhaps because he was to be responsible for distributing forty shillings to poor folks of the parish.³²⁹ Thereafter, most of his wills thanked God, and there were a few bequests to the poor and for the reparation of the church. Two testators gave instructions that their corpse should be buried, 'where it shall please God to call for me'. Finally in 1575 Banne started using an overtly Protestant preamble, 'goodnes of Almighty God belevinge stedfastely by the merits purchased for me in Christs deathe to be one of those that shall enioye everlastinge lyef in the Kingdome of Heaven'. His wills, therefore evolved from the nondescript to the Protestant in the 1570s.

³²⁷ Claire Cross cites *A Newe Booke of Presidents*, first published in 1543 and reprinted many times thereafter in the sixteenth century, as a possible source for such formularies. Cross, *Protestantism in Leeds and Hull*, p. 233.

³²⁸ T.F. Mayer, *Goldwell, Thomas (d.1585)* (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography) at: <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/10/101010927>> [accessed 26 March 2015]

³²⁹ LRO, B/C/11 Margery Asshenhurst, widow of John Asshenhurst, Leek, 4 Oct 1572.

Rawlen, Smith and Banne were indicative of the sort of clergy who, in Elizabeth's reign, had begun to assume responsibility for the care of souls, which a generation earlier had been the province of priests ordained before the Reformation. The difference, in reference to will-making, can be exemplified by comparing the wills written for the parishioners of Leek by Roger Banne, with nineteen wills written by an earlier vicar of Leek, Richard Gent, between 1534 and 1545 (See table 4.2 in appendix 4). It should be noted that there were other will-writers available in Leek at these periods, so testators may, for reasons peculiar to them, have sought out these particular priests. Hence, their choice of will-writer makes these testators a self-selecting sample for present purposes. Richard Gent wrote wills which during the 1530s contained many references to Catholic practices, but after the Dissolution the previous detail was lacking. All his wills contained a traditional preamble, and many referred to the customary payment due to the church. There was only one charitable bequest, in 1537, for the 'welthe of my sowle'.

Like the chantry priests several clergy who wrote strongly Catholic wills in the 1530s remained in position until the reign of Elizabeth, such as John Wildeblod vicar of Caverswall. Similar to Richard Gent they produced less full wills, as well as appearing as a witness less frequently after the Dissolution. John Godwyn, curate at Cheddleton, and after 1549 vicar of Ilam, was slightly more audacious in that he wrote ten Catholic wills from 1534, through the Dissolution, until very early in Edward's reign. They all had traditional preambles and seven contained a request for, 'iii pond of wax to be made apon tapers to berne about my baudy in they day of bereall'³³⁰, as well as making eight bequests to, 'Our Ladyes Servys of Chedulton' and nine for 'helth of my soule'. Godwyn's final four wills were dissimilar in that they

³³⁰ For example, LRO, B/C/11 Wyllyam Brassington, Cheddleton, 27 Oct 1546.

contained much less detail, the last in 1568/9 the only one with a neutral preamble. William Caterbanke, rector of Leigh, produced twenty-one wills: the first in 1552 and the last, his own, written in 1568; in his own will he betrayed his Catholic beliefs. With an ambiguous preamble, he bequeathed a penny dole at his funeral and a year's wages to his servants to pray for him. He also made a further gift of 6s 8d to the poor of Leigh, and 20s to the poor of Longdon, Staffordshire, where he had been priest of the Holy Trinity chantry until 1544.³³¹ Caterbanke possessed a will-writing repertoire upon which he drew depending on the government in power. He wrote two wills during Edward's reign with no religious or charitable bequests, and an ambiguous soul bequest, 'Almighty God besechyng hym to be mercyfull and to pardon and forgyve me all mye offences and mysdedes'. In Mary's reign he wrote ten wills all with the traditional preamble, 'Almighty God besechyng owr blessyd ladye and all the hollye companye of heyvon to prey for me'. There were a few charitable bequests, of clothes for the poor and a dole for prayers, and bequests for masses to be sung for the soul. He seems to have had a talent for influencing testators to bestow gifts to repair the church, eight out of ten did so, perhaps to rectify damage brought about by Edward's government. He began in Elizabeth's reign by writing two wills with neutral preambles, and then he reverted to using the same preamble he had employed previously during Edward's reign; again the majority of testators gave money for church works, with half making charitable bequests. Andrew Sherard, vicar of Leek, can be described as a pragmatic survivor, authoring forty-three wills between 1547 and his death in 1568. Six of the ten wills he wrote during the reign of Edward had neutral preambles and four traditional. There was only one significant bequest, to the poor man's box. Similarly, during the reign of Elizabeth he authored nine wills, all but one with neutral preambles, the other ambiguous. Excluding the will of the

³³¹ LRO, B/C/11 William Caterbanke, Leigh, 3 Nov 1568.

priest Richard Holme, there were no significant bequests, but three testators admitted to dreading death. Andrew Sherard was certainly not courting conflict with the church authorities at this point. However, the inherent Catholicism of the Leek parishioners was revealed in Mary's reign, when out of twenty-four wills, all but five had traditional preambles. Significant statements were sparse, but there was a clutch of bequests for the health of the soul, valuables for the church, masses and a dole.

A different technique of pragmatic survival was demonstrated by John Standley, who became vicar of Alton in 1546 after serving as a monk at Croxden Abbey (Alton had previously belonged to the abbey).³³² The soul bequest in virtually all of his thirty-five wills written between 1548 and 1569 was of the form, 'God my maker savior and redemer', and there were just two significant bequests made, both money to the poor. However, on all but four wills the executors were warned to carry out the wishes of the testator, 'as they will answer to God'. This suggests the possibility that religious bequests and sentiments had been conveyed to the executors by word of mouth with the vicar as witness. Another priest possibly adopting a similar *modus operandi* was John Garlec, curate at Waterfall then, from 1549, vicar of Rocester, who wrote sixteen wills between 1547 and 1563. Soul bequests were neutral, being traditional in Mary's reign. There were five bequests to 'pore folkes' or the 'pore mens boxe', during Edward's and Elizabeth's reigns. Again during the Protestant regimes only, half of the testators stipulated that they wished to have their 'wylle fullfyllled for the helthe of my sowle'. They could have been alluding to customary bequests which had been agreed without being stated in writing. In turn this begs the question, how common was this practice, bearing in mind from inventory evidence that certain rituals would have been accepted as a matter of

³³² Greenslade, *Catholic Staffordshire*, p. 16.

course. For instance the will of Rauffe Turner of Ellastone written on 6 January 1540 only mentions, 'a preest to say a trentall of masses for my sowle', but his inventory lists the following debts paid by one of his executors, John Bull:

in bread the nyght that he waked ... xvid
in ale the same nyght ... vid
in offeryngs at hys buryall ... xiid
in lyght iiij taburs ... viiid
to iii preests saying dirige ... xiid
to the p[a]r[i]che clerke ... iid
for wrytyng hys testament and inventarie ... viiid.³³³

Certain customs being understood possibly underlay the subdued style of Nicolas Stokes, vicar of Ellastone in 1533, who authored thirty-one wills for his parishioners from 1537 to 1560, soon after which he disappeared and was replaced by Peter Clayton.³³⁴ Perhaps he had resigned after the Elizabethan settlement. He received one token bequest and was never referred to as ghostly father. Only two testators made charitable bequests. Most soul bequests were to (Almighty) God, with the remainder traditional, mainly in the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary. Bequests to the church were restricted to before 1544. Overtly Catholic practices only occurred in the reign of Henry VIII, being present in about half of those wills.

The impression gained from examining wills written by the beneficed clergy is that, although at times traditional beliefs were honestly expressed, obfuscation was rife. Thus, little significant change occurred in the religious sentiments expressed by the priests, and, it may be inferred, religious practice, until the clergy who had been ordained in Elizabeth's reign and

³³³ LRO, B/C/11 Rauffe Turner, Ellastone, 23 Feb 1540.

³³⁴ Kettle, *Families*, p. 129. Stokes would have been appointed when the advowson was controlled by Calwich Priory.

appointed by Bishop Bentham began to assume responsibility for cure of souls in the deanery of Leek. This would not have been wholesale, as the surviving old priests retained established customs in parishes such as Blore, where John Warde, who was in post in 1533 remained as rector until his death in 1577, writing seventeen wills from 1538 to his own in 1577. He was generous, leaving a sheep to each household in Blore, and £4 in total distributed between the poor of several local parishes. He provided for a funeral dinner for his neighbours, 26s 8d dole for the poor at his funeral, and bequeathed £1 to the church.³³⁵ However, apart from one will written in 1538, the wills he wrote for the most part were noncommittal, all with neutral preambles. He was unusual among the beneficed clergy in receiving eight gifts from testators, all but the first offered during Protestant administrations, presumably for unnamed services rendered.³³⁶

It might be imagined that unbeneficed clergy were not under the same will-writing constraints as their beneficed colleagues, and this might have resulted in different patterns of wills. This was not the case. Two were probably Protestant: first Edmund Holme, curate at Cheddleton, who wrote seventeen wills between 1566 and 1573. His wills could be distinguished by the preamble, 'Almighty God who hath made me and all the world' until 1571, and then the somewhat more explicit, 'Almighty God the father who made me and all the world and to Jesus Christ the seconde persone in trinitie who hath redemed me and all mankynde'. Presumably both preambles had been copied from published sources. Similarly, John Thorley who wrote ten wills as curate at Horton from 1568 to 1577 always used the seemingly

³³⁵ LRO, B/C/11 John Warde, Blore, 12 Mar 1578.

³³⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Bagnald, Mayfield, 2 Apr 1572 (12d). LRO, B/C/11 William Bassett, Blore, 7 Dec 1553 (£40 to pray). LRO, B/C/11 Rauf Cartell, Ilam, 9 Apr 1551 (indecipherable item). LRO, B/C/11 William Eton, Blore, 2 May 1553 (3s 4d). LRO, B/C/11 Richard Hall, Ilam, 18 Nov 1549 (10s). LRO, B/C/11 Richard Hoode, Blore, 7 May 1538 (4s). LRO, B/C/11 Henry Turner, Blore, 2 May 1549 (a lamb). LRO, B/C/11 Jone Turner, Blore, 20 Sep 1561 (a sheep).

Protestant, 'Almighty God creator and maker and to Jhus Christe his onely sone my redemer and saviour by whose deathe and precious blodde sheidinge I truste to have remission and forgiveness of my synnes'. Both curates on almost every will thanked God. Thorley's wills contained no significant religious or charitable bequests, whereas Holme's wills contained a smattering of bequests for the reparation of the church (roof) or gifts to him personally.

There were overt Catholic sympathisers among the curates, the most prolific being Robert Sutton curate of Rushton chapel, Leek, and Thomas Drakeford, curate at Leigh. On all Sutton's twenty-four wills between 1537 and 1569, except the last, testators either stated that they were dreading death or they warned their executors that they would answer before God, usually both. Preambles were almost entirely traditional in the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary, switching to neutral in the reigns of Edward and Elizabeth. Five charitable bequests were for public works, four of them for bridge-repair, and bequests to churches were common only during the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary. As already indicated Sutton was popular as a personal confessor, receiving five small gifts from testators. Thomas Drakeford, in a will written in 1563 with an ambiguous preamble, 'Almighty God mye maker and redemer besechyng hym to be marcyffull and to pardon and forgive me all mye misdeeds and offenssses', left a penny dole to be distributed at his burial and the, 'resydew of mye goods yf anye be leyfte mye funerall expenses and other ordynarye charges aloweyd I will be bestoweyd in deeds of charytye for they healthe of mye soll'. As well as bequests of corn to the parish poor and money for the maintenance of local bridges, he left 6s 8d to, 'Master Doctor [Anthony] Draycott'. Thomas Drakeford's twenty-six wills were written mainly in the reign of Henry VIII, all with traditional preambles, and generous gifts to the church until the Dissolution, after which there was a decline in religious donations, until Edward's reign when

they disappeared completely and the preambles were neutral. In 1555 he was commissioned to say a trentall of masses for the soul of William Hyll of Leigh.³³⁷

Two curates, like Andrew Sherard of Leek, were pragmatic survivors. First the twenty-seven wills of Richard Smith of Alstonefield, dated from 1543 to 1573 (see table 4.3 in appendix 4), tended to be unvarying and bland, except during Mary's reign. All his preambles were neutral, nineteen wills referred to customary dues, and virtually all wills from 1556 onwards offered praise to Christ. The majority of wills written during the reigns of Edward and Elizabeth made bequests to the 'poore mens boxe', but none of those written during the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary. Instead, during Mary's reign charitable bequests were for building projects to benefit the community, such as 3s 4d for Longnore bridge.³³⁸ Three testators reverted to leaving bequests for St. Mary's House of Coventry and St. Chad of Lichfield, and just over half made a bequest to the church, such as a sheep for altering the rood to hold tapers, and the wax for a taper.³³⁹ There were two bequests to chapels during Elizabeth's reign. The twenty wills of Richard Malkyn, of Sheen and Grindon, authored from 1549 to 1580, were characterised by a dearth of testators making charitable or religious bequests, except for four out of the five wills between 1557 and 1560. In 1557 these bestowed 12d to St Edmund of Sheen, 20d to the maintenance of the light in Sheen church and 6s 8d to Longnor chapel, and, in 1560, 3s 4d to reparations of the church with 3s 4d to poor people.³⁴⁰ All soul bequests were neutral, apart from four out of five that were traditional during Mary's reign and another traditional preamble written in 1573.

³³⁷ LRO, B/C/11 William Hyll, Leigh, 8 May 1556.

³³⁸ LRO, B/C/11 Roger Ryley, Alstonefield, 21 Oct 1558.

³³⁹ LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Wyncle, Wetton, 3 Oct 1560.

³⁴⁰ LRO, B/C/11 James Cocke, Sheen, 17 Sep 1557. LRO, B/C/11 Gorgge Krychelaw, Alstonefield, 18 Sep 1557. LRO, B/C/11 Nicholas Krychelaw, Sheen, 18 Apr 1561. LRO, B/C/11 William Whyldown, Sheen, 29 Apr 1557.

One curate, Roger Copestake of Cauldon, may well have adopted the technique favoured by John Standley, vicar of Alton, and John Garlec, curate at Waterfall. Indeed, Cauldon is bordered by Waterfall to the north and Alton to the south (See figure 2.1). Ellastone, with its noncommittal vicar Nicholas Stokes, is adjacent, lying to the east of Alton. Copestake collaborated with John Garlec on two wills, that of Alys Hole of Waterfall, where both priests received a hive of bees, and that of John Lees of Cauldon.³⁴¹ Copestake, who had been curate at Cauldon at least since 1533,³⁴² wrote eleven wills from 1551 until 1571, and then his own in 1578/9. Apart from thanking God in his own will (which had an apparently Protestant preamble, 'Almighty God my creator and maker trustinge that by the merits and deathe of Christ Jesus my saviour I shall have cleane remission of all my synnes'), he made no bequests of a religious or charitable nature.³⁴³ His previous eleven wills, mostly with neutral preambles, contained no religious bequests and the only charitable ones occurred in the last two wills, two for path repair and one, also including a bequest of a sheep for John Garlec, to the poor of Waterfall, Cauldon and Calton.³⁴⁴ However, in the 1570s Roger Copestake received three personal bequests, one including spectacles, implying he may, by then, have been hampered by failing eyesight. These personal gifts indicate that the testators may have been expecting to be remembered in his prayers.³⁴⁵ There is a suggestion that, as in Alton and Waterfall, and possibly Ellastone, in Cauldon practices, understood and accepted, were not stated in wills.

³⁴¹ LRO, B/C/11 Alys Hole, Waterfall, 9 May 1558. LRO, B/C/11 John Lees, Cauldon, 26 Apr 1566.

³⁴² Kettle, *Families*, p. 9.

³⁴³ LRO, B/C/11 Roger Copestake, Cauldon, 12 Jun 1579.

³⁴⁴ Calton may have been a chapelry, but its wills fell under one of Blore, Waterfall and Mayfield.

³⁴⁵ LRO, B/C/11 John Beardmore, Kingsley, 13 Sep 1577 (3s 4d, gowne and tippit of taffitie, paire of spectacles bound in silver). LRO, B/C/11 Laurens Copestake, Cauldon, 24 Apr 1574 (6s 8d). LRO, B/C/11 Homfrey Fynney, Cauldon, 4 May 1576 (2s).

At this dynamic and difficult period for the clergy, it may be concluded that, as the impact of resignations and deprivations was insignificant in the deanery of Leek, few priests rebelled. Those that did, such as Anthony Draycott, were those who were financially secure, and little involved with the day-to-day affairs of the parish. The priests who were Catholic, probably all those who were serving before the Dissolution, as well as many who obtained cure of souls in the years following it, appear to have remained true to their beliefs and dissembled. Duffy has stated that he believed they had no alternative.³⁴⁶ Their focus was on their parishioners, for whom they had a responsibility to remain composed and set an example, and to conform to the established social order and hence dictates of higher authority. This was true of Christopher Trychay, vicar of the Devon parish of Morebath from 1520 to 1574, who had 'eased them into a slow and settled conformity to a new order of things';³⁴⁷ although Duffy suggested that the changes in religious practice Trychay had lived through had ultimately seeped through and altered his attitudes.³⁴⁸ Some Catholic clergy wrote less detailed wills after the Dissolution, and then their will-writing fizzled out during subsequent changes of government. Otherwise, the ones who continued as authors of wills, either out of financial motives, or greater concern for their flock than the niceties of dogma, produced bland wills which conformed to the religious principles of the prevailing regime. At the extreme, wills contained little or nothing signifying religious practices, the wishes of the testator probably being communicated orally. After the enthronement of Bishop Bentham clergy were appointed who were Protestants, and then the style of will-writing changed, especially as those in the lay community died out who remembered pre-Dissolution ways, and churches before they were stripped and whitewashed during Edward's reign.

³⁴⁶ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 592.

³⁴⁷ Duffy, *Morebath*, p. 190.

³⁴⁸ Duffy, *Morebath*, p. 180-2.

Landowners and Parishes

The ministers of Elizabeth's new government were aware that they would not shift popular opinion away from Catholicism unless they had the support of those that held sway at local level. Thus, the Privy Council of England in October 1564 asked the bishops to classify their justices of the peace as to their attitude towards the government's stance on religion, and whether they should be allowed to stay in post or be removed. Before responding the following month, Bishop Bentham sought the advice of three trusted Staffordshire justices: Thomas Wyrley of Hampstead at Sandwell, John Lane of the Hyde at Kinver, and Roger Fowke of Gunstone near Codsall.³⁴⁹ Their findings were that just seven justices out of seventeen listed were 'favourers of religion'.³⁵⁰ From Leek Deanery there were only two, first Ralph Oker of Okeover, a chapelry, which in 1541 was granted to the collegiate church of Burton on Trent.³⁵¹ Okeover contributed three wills between 1532 and 1580, all from members of the Okeover family. Potentially much more significant was the influence of Sir Ralph Bagnall, knight of Dieulacres near Leek. When Dieulacres Abbey fell in 1538, it was granted to Edward, Earl of Derby, and then stripped; but in 1552 the site and 12,000 acres of land in north Staffordshire were given by the Crown to Sir Ralph Bagnall, a committed Protestant. Knighted under Edward Seymour, Lord Protector, in 1547, during Mary's reign he had a rather turbulent career, after he had declared Lady Jane Grey Queen on the death of Edward. Despite being dismissed from all his offices by Queen Mary, he continued as a member of parliament for Staffordshire, and then in 1554 he alone refused to kneel to receive

³⁴⁹ Bishop Bentham needed financial support from the local gentry and tended to be obsequious towards them; he possibly wished to avoid being held directly responsible if any of them fell into disfavour. O'Day and Berlatski, *Bentham*, p. 118.

³⁵⁰ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, Appendix II, pp. 368-71.

³⁵¹ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 199.

Figure 4.1



The parishes of the deanery of Leek, showing purported Protestant parishes (outlined in blue) and Catholic strongholds (outlined in orange)

the papal absolution from Cardinal Pole.³⁵² After Elizabeth's accession, he remained significant in Staffordshire until his death in 1580, being the patron of Leek church, and endowing one of its chapels, Meerbrook, in 1564. In addition to Leek, Ralph Bagnall also controlled Horton, Ipstones and Cheddleton as all three parishes were described in 1553 as chapels of Leek.³⁵³ Thus from Edward's reign roughly one quarter of the deanery by area was subject to Protestant influence (see figure 4.1), which correlates with comments made previously on the output of several clergy: Roger Banne, vicar of Leek; John Thorley curate at Horton; and Edmund Holme curate at Cheddleton.³⁵⁴

However, from examination of the wills written in the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth by testators residing in those parishes, only after replacement of the sitting Catholic priests did significant changes in content and format occur.³⁵⁵ Indeed, comparison of figure 4.2 with figure 3.1, reveals that the profile of will preambles of these four parishes is very similar to that of the deanery as a whole. Despite a swing back to traditional preambles during Mary's reign, those identified as Protestant, which were appearing by 1560, had achieved prominence during the 1570s.

³⁵² A. Davidson and A.D.K. Hawkyard, *Bagnall, Sir Ralph (by 1508-80), of Dieulacresse, Staffs.* (History of Parliament Online) at: <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/bagnall-sir-ralph-1508-80>> [accessed 4 March 2015]

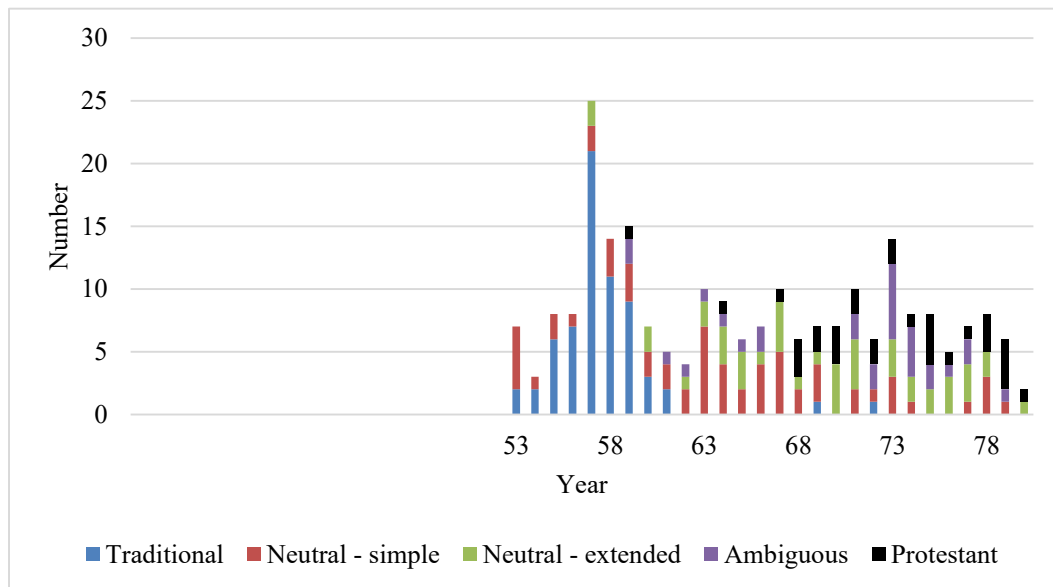
M.J.C. Fisher, *Dieulacres Abbey Staffordshire* (Leek, 1969), pp. 58-9.

³⁵³ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 60,130,133.

³⁵⁴ See previous section on the Clergy.

³⁵⁵ Roger Banne replaced as vicar of Leek the pragmatic survivor, Andrew Sherrard, after his death in 1568. In Cheddleton, the traditional William Carteledge was replaced in 1559 by the noncommittal ex-chantry priest Richard Holme, who after his death in 1565 was replaced by Edmund Holme. There did not appear to be a priest in Ipstones who consistently authored wills, nor was there one in Horton until John Thorley became curate in 1567.

Figure 4.2



Wills per year of Leek, Horton, Ipstones and Cheddleton after Ralph Bagnall became patron in 1552, broken down by type of preamble

Several lists of recusants in Staffordshire were drawn up in the late sixteenth century. The earliest, produced by Bishop Bentham in 1577, made no reference to any recusants living in Leek, Ipstones, Cheddleton or Horton.³⁵⁶ A later, much fuller list based on the recusant rolls for 1590-3, named two each in Cheddleton and Leek, and a husband and wife in Ipstones.³⁵⁷ Another similar list from the same period, obtained from the Bagot papers, named just three recusants from the area living in Cheddleton.³⁵⁸ The four parishes were not commented on in the summary of 1604. Whilst acknowledging that the lists are not considered by scholars to be comprehensive, they do suggest that, although the large combined population of Leek,

³⁵⁶ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, Appendix II, pp. 373-5.

³⁵⁷ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, Appendix II, pp. 384-8.

³⁵⁸ Petti, *Bagot papers*, pp. 46-9.

Horton, Ipstones and Cheddleton may have harboured a few papist families in the later sixteenth century, the community did not support serious numbers of Catholics.³⁵⁹

In contrast, the two parishes in the sample recorded as possessing 'many recusants' in 1604, were Leigh and Draycott in the Moors, linked through family ties to, about nine miles south of Uttoxeter, Hamstall Ridware, which in 1604 had 'many popish recusants'. In Bishop Bentham's list of 1578 Hamstall Ridware contained more names than any other Staffordshire parish, thirty-eight, all considered to be family, servants or tenants of the lord of the manor, Sir Thomas Fitzherbert of Norbury and Padley, Derbyshire. Fitzherbert had had a successful early career as a member of parliament for Staffordshire, sheriff and justice of the peace. However, after rejecting the Elizabethan settlement and being suspected of being one of those gentlemen encouraging recusancy in the county, he was imprisoned before Bishop Bentham's attempt of 1564 to categorize the justices of the peace and, after several further periods of imprisonment, finally died in the Tower in 1591.³⁶⁰ Nevertheless, despite his imprisonment, or perhaps because of it, recusancy continued to thrive in Hamstall Ridware.

Also considered a vigorous supporter of recusancy was John Draycott of Paynsley, Draycott in the Moors, grandson and heir of Sir Philip Draycott who had died in 1559. He too was imprisoned in the 1560s and was then subject to surveillance, examination before the Privy

³⁵⁹ Landor queried the accuracy of the number of households given per parish in a survey of 1563, as he believed that the more inaccessible places had been seriously underestimated, although he believed the Hearth Tax Survey of 1665 to have been extremely thorough. Based on the values given in the latter, which concur with the number of wills per parish taken in this research, whilst Horton and Ipstones were relatively small with 105 and 79 households respectively in 1665, and Cheddleton was of moderate size at 154 households, Leek contained one of the largest populations in the deanery, with 666 households. Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. lxvi-lxxii.

³⁶⁰ Petti, *Bagot papers*, p. 18, n.2. A. Davidson, *Fitzherbert, Sir Thomas (1513/14-91), of Norbury Padley Derbys. and Hamstall Ridware, Staffs.* (History of Parliament Online) at: <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/fitzherbert-thomas-151314-91>> [accessed 21 April 2015]

Council, periods of confinement, and heavy financial penalties for the rest of the century.³⁶¹

The Draycotts had strong familial links to several infamous Catholics. Philip Draycott's widow Elizabeth was the daughter of John Fitzherbert of Norbury, Derbyshire, and in his will of 1558, witnessed by the parsons of Draycott in the Moors and Leigh, Philip Draycott named his 'cousin' Sir Thomas Fitzherbert and his own brother, Doctor Anthony Draycott, as overseers of his will.³⁶² Furthermore, the Draycotts were connected to Anthony Babington of the Babington Plot, a Catholic conspiracy of 1586 to place Mary, Queen of Scots, on the throne, as John's son Philip Draycott of Draycott in the Moors, Anthony Babington's future brother-in-law, had acted as one of his guardians after the death of Babington's father in 1571.³⁶³ Margaret Draycott, one of John's daughters was Babington's wife.³⁶⁴

The Draycotts had been patrons of Draycott in the Moors church, but in 1562 the role was assumed by the Crown. In the years that followed there were a number of appointments to the rectorship which were subsequently cancelled,³⁶⁵ resulting in an uncertain situation. Hence, before the will of Philip Draycott written in 1558, there had been ten wills written by parishioners, with only two not attributable to a priest; unusually for the Staffordshire Moorlands, in five cases execution of the will was to be supervised by the local landowner, a Draycott. After the will of Philip Draycott there were seven wills, including that of his

³⁶¹ Petti, *Bagot papers*, pp. 5-6. Greenslade, *Catholic Staffordshire*, pp. 50-1.

³⁶² LRO, B/C/11 Philip Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 8 Jan 1563.

A. Davidson, *Draycott, Sir Philip (by 1483-1559), of Paynsley in Draycott, Staffs and Smithfield, Mdx.* (History of Parliament Online) at:

<<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/draycott-sir-philip-1483-1559>> [accessed 21 April 2015]

³⁶³ P. Williams, *Babington, Anthony (1561-1586), conspirator* (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography) at:

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/view/article/967?docPos=1>> [accessed 1 May 2015]

³⁶⁴ W. F. Carter, 'Notes on Staffordshire Families 3. Draycote of Draycote', *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, The William Salt Archeological Society (1925), p. 136.

³⁶⁵ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 83-4.

widow. Only the last in 1579 was written by a priest, the rector of Draycott in the Moors, and once again named a Draycott overseer. It can be assumed that, when allowed to do so, the Draycotts exerted significant control over the parish. Apart from the will of Philip Draycott, those wills written after the Dissolution were uniformly bland, and conventions followed rigidly those acceptable to the regime in power. Dame Elizabeth Draycott, his widow, in her will of 1568 was the only testator to make a religious or charitable bequest, to 'poore people in Uttaxetor xxs'.³⁶⁶ Philip's will was not proved until 1563, almost four years after his death in February 1559, giving rise to the suspicion that it may have been delayed by the court due to its strongly Catholic and hence contentious tone. John Draycott, his heir, ostensibly left no will, prompting the comment that Catholics may have preferred to settle their affairs by private settlement, rather than be exposed to public scrutiny.³⁶⁷

The Draycotts were also major landowners in the adjacent parish of Leigh, although Henry Vernon, who owned considerable property in Derbyshire, was church patron.³⁶⁸ Vernon had been a justice in 1564, but was labelled 'an adversary of religion' by Bishop Bentham, so possibly this resulted in him being removed from the bench.³⁶⁹ Philip Draycott of Leigh was noted as a wealthy recusant in Bishop Bentham's list of 1578,³⁷⁰ and Petti observed that he was one of the six or seven landowners in Staffordshire who were repeatedly coming to the attention of the authorities in the later sixteenth century.³⁷¹ Most of the wills from Leigh before 1569 were witnessed by one of two priests with Catholic sympathies, firstly Thomas

³⁶⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Elizabeth Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 4 Jun 1568.

³⁶⁷ Carter, *Draycote of Draycote*, p. 135.

³⁶⁸ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 149.

³⁶⁹ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, Appendix II, p. 370.

³⁷⁰ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, Appendix II, p. 374.

³⁷¹ Petti, *Bagot papers*, p. x.

Drakeford and secondly William Caterbanke.³⁷² In 1569 Richard Willson, proposed by the patron, Henry Vernon, was appointed rector on the death of Caterbanke. Possibly because Leigh was considered to be 'at risk' due to the activities of Philip Draycott, combined with the complement of recusants identified in 1578, Willson was deprived in 1581 and replaced by a Crown nominee. Willson had authored five wills, all with neutral preambles, featuring bequests to the church and poor, including a penny dole, and revealing no sympathies towards Protestantism. Ralph Caterbanke, probably nephew of William Caterbanke, authored two Leigh wills, again with bequests to the poor and the church. He died in 1579, and in his will witnessed by Philip Draycott, bequeathed Richard Willson a gown and 'my sadle and brydle'.³⁷³

To the south of Leigh is Gratwich; the rector of that small parish from 1533 belonged to the dissenting religious community of which the Draycotts formed the nucleus.³⁷⁴ No Protestant, John Ward made his will in 1570, bequeathing Master Doctor Draycott 6s 8d, and a silver spoon to Sir William Stapleton. The latter, from a well-known recusant family, had been presented by Sir Philip Draycott to the living at Draycott in the Moors in 1558, but resigned promptly after the Elizabethan Settlement.³⁷⁵ John Ward also bequeathed 10s to Ralph Caterbanke of Leigh and 6s 8d to another priest, as well as, towards 'byinge a surplesse in Gratwiche 10s', with 13s 4d and 5s to two other local churches, £2 towards the mending of two bridges, 12d to each household in Gratwich and the residue to the poor.³⁷⁶ He bequeathed all his books to a godson, John Norman, whose family lived in Uttoxeter parish, on the border with Gratwich, but who attended Gratwich church. Under John Ward's charge, the old

³⁷² See previous section on the Clergy.

³⁷³ LRO, B/C/11 Ralph Caterbanke, Leigh, 1 Sep 1579.

³⁷⁴ The table of Gratwich wills is in Appendix 2.

³⁷⁵ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 84. Petti, *Bagot papers*, p. 18.

³⁷⁶ LRO, B/C/11 John Ward, Gratwich, 26 Oct 1570.

religion had survived. For example, in one of two wills made in Gratwich after Ward's death, in 1577 Richard Hacke a tanner of Gratwich asked to be buried in Gratwich church 'here to goodma[n] Norma[n] forme', with 'penie dole delt for me of my wife', and executed 'to the pleasure of god and healthe of my solle'.³⁷⁷ One of the Norman family, William Norman, had been chaplain of the Priest's Service at Leigh, until he was pensioned off in 1548.³⁷⁸ Elizabeth Norman, a widow, in her will of 1572, authored by Ralph Caterbanke who received 20d, referred to her son Francis, a priest, possibly subsequently rector of Mavesyn Ridware. She made three bequests, each of 6s 8d, to the poor of Uttoxeter, the chapelry of Loxley and Gratwich.³⁷⁹ All these testators simply bequeathed their souls to Almighty God.

In contrast to Gratwich which was ministered to by one rector from 1533, when John Ward was recorded as paying tax there, to 1570 when he died; in the same period Uttoxeter had eight vicars. The first two died: Thomas Smith in 1533 and William Tull in 1538. The next four all resigned, only one of them apparently because he had been offered another living: William Brymley in 1546, Thomas Aynesworth in 1554, Nicholas Harwar in 1557, who moved to a rectorship in Leicestershire in that year, and George Hilton in 1559. Brymley contemporaneously and subsequently was employed fifteen miles away at Lichfield Cathedral. Aynesworth may have been married, and that led to his resignation under Mary. Hilton subsequently obtained a living in 1561 at Norton in Hales. Arthur Blount who was appointed in 1562, was deprived in 1567. Finally, before Blount was deprived, Thomas Barnes became vicar of Uttoxeter in 1566 and he remained until well into the next century.³⁸⁰ The patron, when given, in five cases, was the Dean and Chapter of Windsor, so possibly

³⁷⁷ LRO, B/C/11 Richard Hacke, Gratwich, 11 Apr 1578.

³⁷⁸ LRO, B/C/11 Robert Norman, Uttoxeter, 2 May 1553.

³⁷⁹ LRO, B/C/11 Elizabeth Norman, Uttoxeter, 11 Feb 1573.

³⁸⁰ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 109-10, 294-6.

these had not been local appointments, and the incumbents had found problems adjusting to the living in Uttoxeter. Of 115 Uttoxeter wills, the only priests to author six or more were Aynsworth, twelve, Barnes, eleven, and Harwar, six. A few wills were written by neighbouring clergy, such as Thomas Latwis curate at Kingstone, who wrote five, but the greatest number of wills, twenty-seven, was produced by a family of 'professional' will-writers, the Alsoppes: John, Henry and Robert, who operated from 1552 onwards. In his own will of 1566, Robert described himself as 'corvesor'³⁸¹, an occupation which would not have conflicted with being summoned at short notice for will-writing.³⁸² Predictably, the Alsoppes were most productive during the years of clergy absence, for instance between George Hilton leaving and Arthur Blount starting, 1559 to 1562, when they authored eight wills. They did not favour religious bequests nor ones to charity, which were more the province of the clergy. This mixture of will-writers, until the arrival of Thomas Barnes in 1566, has led to a lack of consistency in wills from Uttoxeter.

However, Uttoxeter was the only other parish in the sample where, in 1604, 'some recusants' were recorded, and a few were noted there too in the surveys taken in the early 1590s.³⁸³ Probably this was again due to the Draycott influence. One of Philip Draycott's daughters, Susannah, was married to John Blount of Blount's Hall, about one and a half miles from the centre of Uttoxeter (See figure 4.3³⁸⁴). She was to receive 'two heffers' under her father's will. Thomas Kynnersley of Loxley Hall who was married to Dorothy, another daughter, was to receive 'a yong gelding unbroken', and the Kynnersley's were 'to take and provide for Bagot

³⁸¹ Shoemaker

³⁸² LRO, B/C/11 Robert Alsoppe, Uttoxeter, 21 Sep 1566.

³⁸³ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, Appendix II, p. 387. Petti, *Bagot papers*, p. 48.

³⁸⁴ A modified portion of Robert Morden's map of Staffordshire, published in 1695 in Camden's *Britannia* by Awnsham and John Churchill with Abell Swalle.

my boy in the kitchen'.³⁸⁵ Elizabeth Draycott, Philip's widow, as well as leaving clothes and jewellery to her daughters, had arranged 'to byld and sett up a parlor above the hall at Loxley for the bewtifying of the house of my son-in-law Thomas Kynnersley'.³⁸⁶ The intermediary in the arrangements for building work was Edward Mynors who was almost certainly the step-son-in-law of Philip's brother, Edward Draycott, of Rocester. The Mynors lived in Uttoxeter at Woodland Hall. Sir Thomas Fitzherbert also had connections in the parish; Edward Draycott had married first Maud Fitzherbert, formerly widow of Sir Anthony Fitzherbert and Thomas's mother.³⁸⁷ Thomas would have been step-brother of Edward Mynors through Edward Draycott's second marriage to Mary, the widow of Richard Trentham of Rocester. In 1555, a yeoman of Loxley, Robert Hogeson, appointed 'Sir Thomas Fytzherberte and hys bretherne overseyers' of the execution of his will.³⁸⁸ This core of Catholicism, including the Normans, was centred to the south of Uttoxeter in Loxley chapelry, which is adjacent to Gratwich.³⁸⁹ Perhaps, the presence of a large, mutually supportive group of dissidents, was a factor which led to the frequent resignations of the Uttoxeter clergy noted in the previous paragraph.

³⁸⁵ LRO, B/C/11 Philip Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 8 Jan 1563.

³⁸⁶ LRO, B/C/11 Elizabeth Draycott, Draycott in the Moors, 4 Jun 1568.

³⁸⁷ Carter, *Draycote of Draycote*, pp. 126-7.

³⁸⁸ LRO, B/C/11 Robert Hogeson, Uttoxeter, 21 May 1558.

³⁸⁹ Although mentioned in 1572 in Elizabeth Norman's will, the chapelry of Loxley at Uttoxeter, as well as the other chapelry, Crakemarsh, were not recorded after 1533. LRO, B/C/11 Elizabeth Norman, Uttoxeter, 11 Feb 1573. Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, pp. 295-6.

Figure 4.3



Map of the area south of Uttoxeter including Loxley chapelry, and the halls of John Blount (1), Edward Mynors (2), and Thomas Kynnersley (3)

Checkley, which is situated to the north of Leigh and east of Draycott in the Moors, lay within the ambit of Draycott influence. Anthony Draycott was rector of Checkley from 1516 to his deprivation in 1559; and the curate at Checkley from 1534 to the mid 1540s, Thomas Gylbert, became rector of Edlaston in Derbyshire in 1546 under the patronage of Edward Draycott. Edward, probably Anthony Draycott's brother, supported his acquisition of the rectory of Grindon in 1544. A Draycott may well have been patron of Checkley, as the position was assumed by William Yonge in 1560, about the time the Draycotts fell into disfavour. There was also a link between Checkley and Uttoxeter as Richard Weyn, the Catholic chantry priest of Our Lady's Service at Uttoxeter, became curate at Checkley, after he was pensioned off in 1548.³⁹⁰ After the death of Weyn in 1559, Thomas Barnes became curate at Checkley until he was appointed vicar of Uttoxeter in 1566. Barnes' close association with the area probably helped to ensure his survival at Uttoxeter. The standing of

³⁹⁰ See previous section on the Clergy. Weyn received six bequests from testators.

the Draycotts in Checkley is evidenced by the six wills between 1538 and 1576 where they were asked to oversee the execution of the testator's wishes.

Blore, with its aged rector John Warde who died in 1577 (not to be confused with John Ward rector of Gratwich who died in 1570) did not appear in lists of recusants.³⁹¹ However, this may have been due to the influence of the church patron, William Bassett of Blore, grandson of Sir William Bassett who died in 1553. He was sheriff of the county in 1587-8 and a justice from 1582 onwards, although his mother was a sister of Sir Thomas Fitzherbert, and the Fitzherberts had been influential in his upbringing.³⁹² When the Armada was imminent in early 1588 the Earl of Shrewsbury castigated his officials in Staffordshire for their lethargy in curbing the activities of known recusants.³⁹³

the recusantes within the countye of Staffs. shalbe restrayned from there former liberties accordinge as there severall qualities and habilities shall deserve, because suche persons in these doubtfull tymes are cheflye suspected as the onely members and assistantes which may put the enemye in hope to invade this her realme³⁹⁴

upon receipt of your last lettres ... I could not be resolved whether the affeccion you beare to her Majeste's service or the favour you shewe to those bad members of the comon welthe should be the greater. Neither can your doinges prove clere from

³⁹¹ See previous section on the Clergy.

³⁹² J.E.M. and P.W. Hasler, *Bassett, William II (1551-1601), of Blore, Staffs. and Langley Meynell, Derbys.* (History of Parliament Online) at: <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/bassett-william-ii-1551-1601>> [accessed 21 April 2015]

³⁹³ Petti, *Bagot papers*, pp. 24-31.

³⁹⁴ Sheffield to sheriff and deputy lieutenants, Sheffield 15 January 1588. Bagot manuscript 801. Petti, *Bagot papers*, p. 24.

suspicion of indifferencye herein, unles you accuse your selves of necligence in execucion of those especyall affayres wherwith you have ben charged ... I fynd the trust reposed in you so corrupted as ... her Majestie's commandment myght retorne frustrat.³⁹⁵

In the case of Bassett, Sheffield was almost certainly justified. David Thurkettle has identified Bassett as a member of Thomas, Lord Paget's inner circle of Catholic landowners before Paget fled the country in 1583 after being implicated in the Throckmorton Plot to kill Elizabeth and place Mary, Queen of Scots, on the throne.³⁹⁶ In 1595 Bassett's Catholicism and treason were alleged by a younger Thomas Fitzherbert,³⁹⁷ and Richard Topcliffe, Elizabeth's government's enforcer. Thomas Fitzherbert had colluded with Topcliffe to destroy the Fitzherberts and William Bassett. As a result Bassett was removed as a justice of the peace, dying in 1601.³⁹⁸

The Bassetts were also patrons of Grindon church. No doubt after Anthony Draycott had been deprived of the rectorship in 1560/1, Sir William Bassett's heir supported John Addye for the post. Sir William Bassett, in his will of 1553 had described John Addye as his chaplain, and bequeathed him 'one half yeres wage' and 'a blacke gowne'.³⁹⁹ There were a few recusants in Grindon in 1575, the most notable being Edmund Draycott, brother of John

³⁹⁵ Sheffield to sheriff and deputy lieutenants, Sheffield 30 January 1588. Bagot manuscript 802. Petti, *Bagot papers*, p. 25.

³⁹⁶ D. Thurkettle, "'Knytt in one knott together': Catholic survivalism in Elizabethan Staffordshire and Derbyshire and the role of Thomas, Lord Paget, 1570-1583", *Staffordshire Studies*, 21 (pre-publication draft), pp. 39-41.

³⁹⁷ Sir Thomas Fitzherbert's nephew.

³⁹⁸ Petti, *Bagot papers*, pp. xiv, 30.

³⁹⁹ Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 110. LRO, B/C/11 William Bassett, Blore, 7 Dec 1553.

Draycott of Draycott in the Moors. He also occurred on a list of Staffordshire papists of 1575, assessed for lances and light horse, and again on a list of recusants in 1592.⁴⁰⁰

The remaining parishes did not appear to have been linked significantly to known Catholic sympathisers, although there were occasional references to recusants dwelling there in the late sixteenth century. Rocester has been discounted as a Catholic stronghold despite Edward Draycott, brother of Philip Draycott of Draycott in the Moors, being a landowner there before his death in 1556. Whatever his loyalties to the Draycotts, Edward had been a servant of Cromwell and his step-son Thomas Trentham, who had inherited the Trentham lands in Rocester, was strongly anti-Catholic.⁴⁰¹ Despite lack of concrete evidence of Catholic sympathisers among the parishioners, Bramshall and Kingstone have been included as Catholic parishes in figure 4.1, due to their proximity to Loxley, Leigh and Gratwich. The longevity of Bramshall's rector, Thomas Bakewell, appointed in 1532 and dying in 1585, would have militated against a shift to the new religion. Of the eight wills he wrote between 1537 and 1576 only the first two, in 1537 and 1540, contained any bequests of a religious or charitable nature. His own will, which he wrote himself in 1585, hinted at subterfuge. Thomas Harryes, an executor, was to be his residual legatee, 'provided alwayes nevertheless that the said Thomas Harryes shall discharge and pay whatsoever legacies I shall further bequeath in this my present testament hereafter to be expressed if any such be'. No others were written down, but may have been dictated in front of his witnesses. He also bequeathed

⁴⁰⁰ Carter, *Draycote of Draycote*, p. 134. Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, Appendix II, pp. 374,377-8. Petti, *Bagot papers*, p. 60.

⁴⁰¹ B. Coates, *Trentham, Francis (c.1564-1626), of Rocester, Staffs.* (History of Parliament Online at: <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/trentham-francis-1564-1626>> [accessed 12 May 2015])

M.W. Greenslade and R.B. Pugh (eds.), 'Houses of Augustinian canons: The priory of Rocester', in *A History of the County of Stafford*, Vol. 3 (London, 1970), pp. 247-51 at: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol3/pp247-251>> [accessed 22 January 2016]

gifts of at least several shillings each, or livestock, to thirteen beneficiaries not including his own brother and nephews, and Thomas Harryes, who he may have been hoping would pray for his soul.⁴⁰² Kingstone had belonged to Rocester Abbey, but the Crown had assumed patronage by 1565.⁴⁰³ The priest in position in 1532,⁴⁰⁴ presumably appointed by the abbey, John Abell, wrote his Catholic will in June 1553, leaving £1 13s 4d to the poor of three parishes as well as the residue of his estate; he also left money and clothes to two priests, warning his executors, 'As they shall answer afor the hye Judge when the secrets of all manes harts shalbe in opened [and] knowen'.⁴⁰⁵

The data from Uttoxeter is excluded from figure 4.4, as only a minority of the parish appeared to be subject to Catholic influence. Therefore, the graph represents only about twenty per cent of the overall sample. Comparison of figure 4.4 with figure 3.1, implies that the Catholic parishes started to produce Protestant wills about fifteen years later than the rest of the deanery. The high proportion of ambiguous preambles, particularly noticeable in 1563, was due to the influence of William Caterbanke of Leigh, for whom ambiguous wording was preferred during Protestant regimes. It might have been expected that this group would have demonstrated a convincing swing back to traditional preambles during Mary's reign. There is a doubtful hint that that was the case.

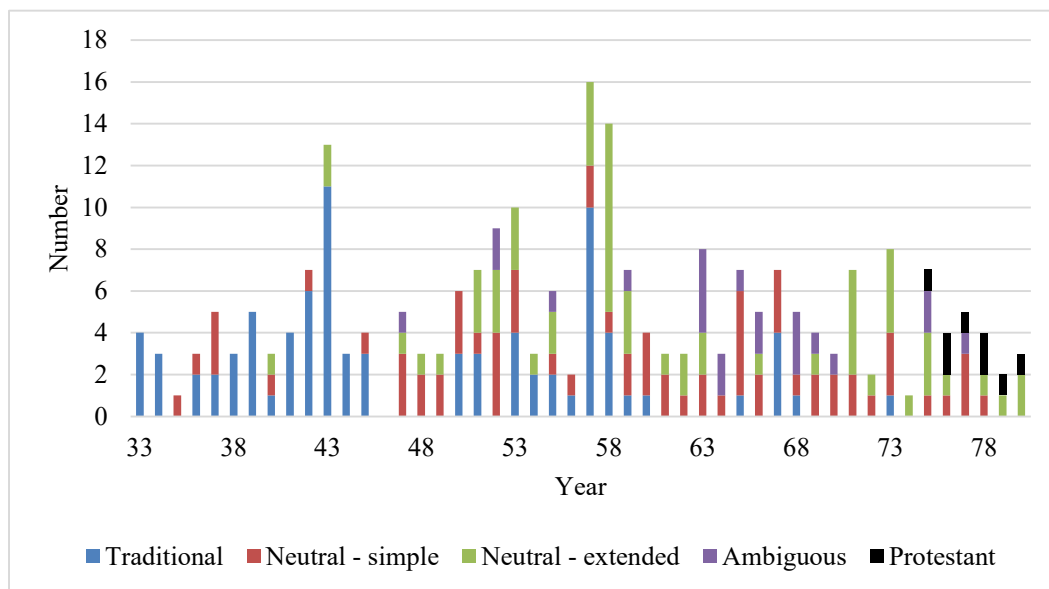
⁴⁰² LRO, B/C/11 Thomas Bakewell, Bramshall, 5 Apr 1585.

⁴⁰³ CCED: The Clergy of the Church of England Database at: <http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/locations/index.jsp> [accessed 2 June 2015] Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*, p. 138-9.

⁴⁰⁴ Kettle, *Families*, p. 68.

⁴⁰⁵ LRO, B/C/11 John Abell, Kingstone, 9 May 1558.

Figure 4.4



Wills per year of Draycott in the Moors, Leigh, Gratwich, Checkley, Kingstone, Bramshall, Blore and Grindon, broken down by type of preamble

The Catholic landowners of the deanery formed an extensive network based on family connections. Further, from information derived from Thomas, Lord Paget's household accounts, Thurkettle has surmised that the Draycotts, for example, were part of a Catholic coterie orbiting around Paget's star through attendance at social events such as parties held at his various great houses in mid-Staffordshire including at Burton on Trent. For instance on 6th and 7th of January 1580 John Draycott, almost certainly accompanied by his wife (wives were not recorded), was present at a Twelfth Night feast and masque, with music performed probably by players from Uttoxeter.⁴⁰⁶ Protestants, such as Edward Littleton of Pillaton, also attended events staged by Paget, but Paget's social circle did consist mainly of local Catholic gentry families. As well as participating in the mass in his private chapel, they would have been able to discuss the political situation within a mutually supportive group of friends.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Thurkettle, *Paget*, pp. 45-9.

⁴⁰⁷ Thurkettle, *Paget*, pp. 49-53.

Bishop Bentham identified 'mastership', the actions of Catholic gentry in encouraging their tenants and servants to stay rooted in the old religion, as a significant factor inhibiting the spread of Protestantism in Staffordshire.⁴⁰⁸ This is borne out by the results depicted in figure 4.4. However, as clergy in those parishes were replaced in Elizabeth's reign by ones selected by Protestants, and attempts were made to curtail the activities of landlords such as the Draycotts by imprisonment and substantial fines, a gradual shift in the religious sentiments of some parishioners began to take place. In other parishes, whether the church patrons were acknowledged Protestants or not, change progressed more rapidly.

⁴⁰⁸ Greenslade, *Catholic Staffordshire*, p. 39.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

From the analyses of wills presented in chapters 3 and 4 an impression can be formed of the personal responses of the population of the deanery of Leek, and their concerns, during the early course of the Reformation, possibly covering two or three generations. Mostly tenant farmers, in what was a harsh environment and area of poor farming, they were under a form of servitude to their landowners, as well as needing to retain the good will of their neighbours. In order for they and their families to survive, they would have been unwise to have engaged in the luxury of dissent. Throughout the early Reformation the community had witnessed a revolution affecting many aspects of their religious life, including the interior of their parish churches. The beauty of medieval wall-paintings, carvings, and images of saints (to which their ancestors may have subscribed), bathed in light from tapers, had been replaced by Protestant austerity. As well as loss of wonder at the sacred, and loss of the miracle of the mass, contact with the dead had diminished: since purgatory did not officially exist, those suffering were eligible no longer for the support of the living. In addition, the old familiar church services had been replaced by ones from the Book of Common Prayer.

Evident responses were manifest in various ways, for instance considerably more charitable bequests were made during Protestant regimes, in particular to the anonymous 'poor man's box'. Changes in funeral practice occurred, with a dearth of lights after the death of Henry VIII, and, in Elizabeth's reign, requests for burial by family members were more common than those for burial near venerated objects. This feature, combined with a proliferation of chest tombs, testament to the authority of wealthy families, might indicate a move towards secularisation of the parish church, away from the mystique of traditional religious practices.

During Elizabeth's reign preference was for reparations of the parish church, rather than an outright gift of money or equivalent item, such as livestock, whereas under Henry VIII the converse was true, with a minority of bequests for repairs to the church. Certain gifts disappeared in the 1530s and 1540s as an end was put to the beneficiaries: guilds, chantries, religious houses and indulgences. Bequests for wax and bells for the church and funeral masses rigorously followed what was permitted under the law, which perhaps indicates the essential conformity of the community.

Putting to one side any influence of the scribe, or unintentional misuse of standard formulas, unless a traditional preamble was used, it is almost impossible to gauge confidently the intent behind a testator's words. Nonetheless, preambles constitute the only universal expression of belief given in wills, and so variation in their wording was considered together with other evidence. The suggestion is that there was virtually no interest in Protestantism in the deanery until the reign of Elizabeth. Under Edward traditional beliefs probably lurked under the guise of a neutral preamble, borne out in figure 3.18, linking references to my ghostly father to preamble wording. However, after Mary's reign there appears to have been a rapid move away from Catholic practices, unlike in Gloucestershire. This is represented in the preamble data in figures 3.1 and 3.2 where the use of traditional preambles visibly retreats, being superseded in the second decade of Elizabeth's reign by ones with a Protestant bias. Other evidence is the rise in mention of Christ, often linked to Protestant preambles, figure 3.24. Catholic requests given on inventories for mercy on the soul of the departed disappeared after Mary's reign, unlike in the East Midlands.⁴⁰⁹ In Gloucestershire, references in the will to the mother church continued until the 1580s. They were linked by Litzenberger,

⁴⁰⁹ Hickman, *Epitaphs*, p. 117.

together with those to my ghostly father, to traditional beliefs.⁴¹⁰ In the deanery on the other hand there were a few references to the mother churches under Mary, ceasing in 1559.

However, suggestive of the survival of some Catholic practices, a few indiscriminate doles and bequests for the health of the soul occurred as late as the 1570s.

There was a swing back to traditional customs under Mary, as exemplified by the increase in traditional preambles in figures 3.1 and 3.2, and rise in funeral masses depicted in figure 3.11. There is also a suggestion of a rise in bequests for prayers for the soul, figure 3.14. However, this could not be described as a resurgence, and evidence of wholesale underlying resistance to Edwardian Protestantism. Traditional soul bequests formed more than eighty per cent of the cohort under Henry VIII, dipping immediately after the Dissolution, before rising again, and then falling once more under Edward to about thirty per cent. Under Mary they rose to an intermediate position of about fifty per cent. Among the non-elite laity in Gloucestershire, traditional wills formed a lower proportion, fifty per cent under Henry VIII and then ten per cent under Edward, so they did undergo a sharp recovery under Mary back to their position under Henry VIII.⁴¹¹ Possibly testators in the deanery making their wills in the late 1550s, when several epidemics occurred, may have been younger, and less imbued with the sentiments of the traditional religion of the reign of Henry VIII (See figure 2.2). However, there was universal dislike of the burning of heretics which took place under Mary and Philip, some at Lichfield, and connected to the then bishop, Ralph Baynes, and his chancellor, Anthony Draycott. Simon Renard, Philip's advisor warned him on 5 February 1555, 'the people of this town of London are murmuring about the cruel enforcement of the recent acts of Parliament on heresy ... I do not think it well that your Majesty should allow further

⁴¹⁰ Litzenberger, *Reformation and the laity*, p. 160.

⁴¹¹ Litzenberger, *Reformation and the laity*, p. 179.

executions to take place unless the reasons are overwhelmingly strong and the offences committed have been so scandalous as to render this course justifiable in the eyes of the people'.⁴¹² Philip was associated with the burnings and Protestantism became linked to the notion of freedom of the English from Spanish authority.⁴¹³ It does appear that the testators of the deanery, across a spectrum of belief, unless compelled to acknowledge the monarch, were unconcerned about headship of the English church, and presumably were not desirous of witnessing a return of the Pope. There was also a shortage of bequests during Mary's reign for church furniture, to replace that which had been lost under Edward. Instead gifts were either for wax, a consumable, or to repair obvious damage. This could indicate Protestant sympathies in the community, or simple financial caution at a time when harvests were bad.

As described in the introduction Bishop Bentham was sensitive to criticism of his diocese and prepared to act personally. Fundamental to the achievement of discipline of his clergy, he became involved in appointments in the diocese by wresting control from the registrar.⁴¹⁴ He was familiar with the parishes as, unlike any other bishop of the diocese in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, he intervened in disciplinary matters, excluding those pertaining to family law. He also preached at parish churches.⁴¹⁵ Most importantly he did discipline his clergy, for example, Richard Cook, ordained by Ralph Baynes, was removed from the curacy of Stone in 1573 for being lax with papists, as well as an unsuitable marriage.⁴¹⁶ Peter Marshall commented that Bentham alone of the bishops in 1565 precisely defined what

⁴¹² C.H. Williams (ed.), *The Marian persecution* (English Historical Documents Online, 1485-1558) at: <<http://www.englishhistoricaldocuments.com/document/view.html?id=1793>> [accessed 31 January 2014]

⁴¹³ Whitelock, *Mary Tudor*, p. 266.

⁴¹⁴ O'Day and Berlatsky, *Bentham*, p. 118.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Petti, *Bagot papers*, pp. 1-2.

constituted excessive ringing for the dead, allowing no quarter for superstitious sounding of bells.⁴¹⁷ On the other hand Bishop Cheyney of Gloucester, who was appointed in 1562 and died in 1579, was an unwilling Protestant, a poor administrator, who was reluctant to carry out official policy.⁴¹⁸ The different characters of these two men may explain why Protestantism, after a very late start, appears to have been embraced with considerable more alacrity in the Staffordshire Moorlands than in Gloucestershire.⁴¹⁹ Also, as described in the section on Landowners and Parishes in Chapter 4, some Staffordshire gentry, such as the Draycotts and Fitzherberts, were viewed as a threat to the security of the realm. Hence Staffordshire was subject to scrutiny, whereas possibly landowners in Gloucestershire did not arouse suspicion, and so Gloucestershire avoided criticism and sanctions.

Investigation of the landowners of the deanery revealed that there was a lag in the uptake of Protestantism of about fifteen years between those parishes subject to Draycott influence and the remainder (Compare figures 3.1 and 4.4). This lag bears out the comments of Bishop Bentham rueing the continued influence of 'mastership' within the archdeaconry.⁴²⁰ Also inhibiting Protestantism in Elizabeth's reign was the survival of Catholic clergy, both beneficed and unbeneficed, as can be seen by comparison of wills written by vicars of Leek twenty years apart: Richard Gent (1534 - 1545) and Roger Banne (1565 - 1580) (See tables 4.2 and 4.1). Catholic clergy were wary of attracting criticism during Protestant regimes and adopted various subterfuge techniques, the most common being producing bland wills, and reduced will-writing during difficult periods. There is a suspicion that groups of clergy may

⁴¹⁷ P. Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2002), p. 162.

⁴¹⁸ Litzenberger, *Reformation and the laity*, pp. 106-10.

⁴¹⁹ Litzenberger's tighter definition of a Protestant preamble may explain why the non-elites in Gloucestershire recorded less than ten per cent Protestant preambles in 1580. Litzenberger, *Reformation and the laity*, p. 179. See Chapter 3, Wills and Preambles.

⁴²⁰ Greenslade, *Catholic Staffordshire*, p. 39.

have witnessed aurally unrecorded instructions, based on customs that were accepted within their parishes. Only the wealthy Catholic clergy such as Anthony Draycott and John Stephenson had the private financial resources to opt out in Elizabeth's reign, and they did not enjoy such an intimate connection with their parishioners as the majority of long-standing parish clergy, such as John Beardmore, ex-chantry priest at Kingsley or John Standley, vicar of Alton. They and their ilk remained loyal to their parishioners, thereby retaining the life to which they had been accustomed, by apparently conforming. They did not have much alternative.

APPENDIX 1: WILL FORMATS

Two short wills have been chosen as exemplars of the typical structure of a sixteenth-century will.

Will 1: Laurens Ratclyffe of Leek (LRO, will proved 18 May 1557).

Date:

In the name of God ame[n] the xxvth of February in the [y]ere of o[ur] Lord God a thowsand v hu[n]dredth fyfty and vi.

Personal statement:

I Lauren[s] Ratclyffe seke in body but hoolle in sowle and of gud and p[er]fyte reme[m]brans make my wyll in man[er] and forme fowlowyng.

Soul bequest:

Fyrst I bequethe my sowle to Almyghty God and to our lady Saynt Mary and to all the woolly cu[m]pany of heyvy[n].

Burial instructions:

And my body to be buried in the church yerde of Saynt Edward[s] of Leke.

Bequests:

And after that I am brought howme and my dett[s] and bequest[s] deschargett and payd the[n] I beqweth and gyff all the reysydue of my good[s] quicke deade moveable and unmoveabull to A[n]ne my wyffe sole and to her selfe.

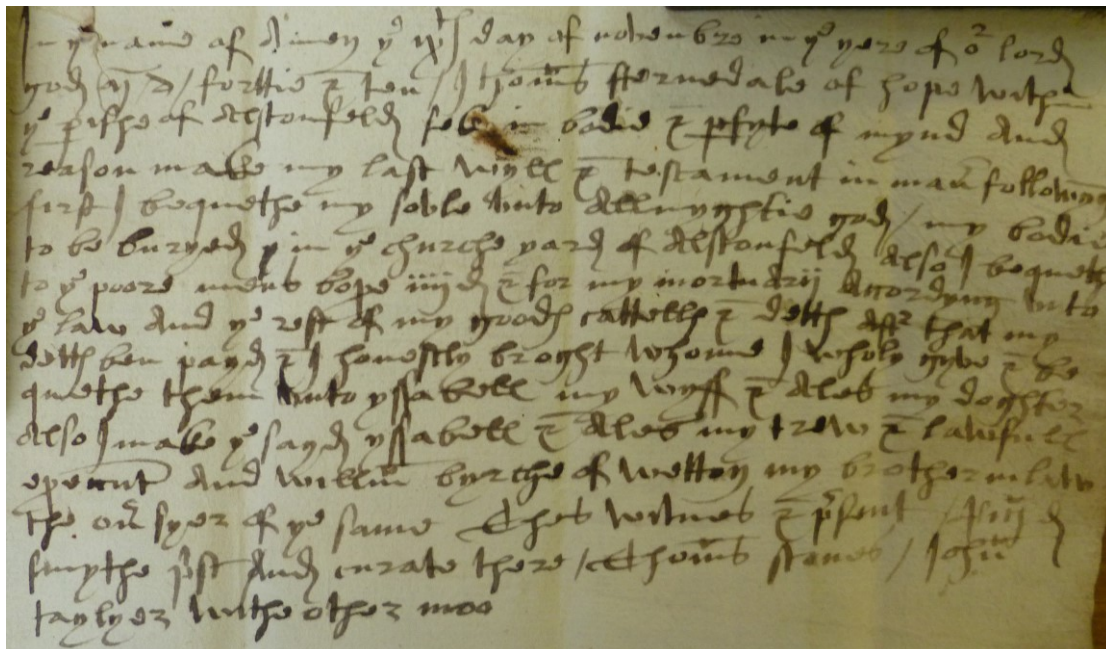
Executors:

I make and ordeyne Mayster Samson Walton and Anne my wyffe my trew and lefull executors and ov[er]seers of this my last [will] John Asshu[n]hurst and John Wystem.

Witness statement:

Thes beyng wytnes Andrew Sherard vicare of Leke Laurens Meyhote John Brassynton w[i]t[h] others moo.

Will 2: Thomas Sternedale of Hope in the parish of Alstonefield (LRO, will proved 18 Nov 1550). Thomas Sternedale was buried on 10 November 1550.



Date:

In the name of [God] amen the ixth day of Novenbre in the yere of o[ur] Lord God md fortie and ten.

Personal statement:

I Thomas Sternedale of Hope with[i]n ye p[ar]ishe of Alstonfeld seke in bodie and p[er]fyte of mynd and reason make my last wyll and testament in man[er] followyng.

Soul bequest:

First I bequethe my soule unto Allmyghtie God.

Burial instructions:

My bodie to be buried in ye churche yard of Alstonfeld.

Obligations:

Also I bequethe to ye poore mens boxe iiiid and for my mortuary accordyng unto ye law.

Bequests:

And ye rest of my good[s] cattel[s] and dett[s] aft[er] that my dett[s] ben payd and I honestly brought whome I wholly gyve and bequethe them unto Yssabell my wyff and Ales my doghter.

Executors:

Also I make the sayd Yssabell and Ales my trew and lawfull execut[ors] and Will[ia]m Byrche of Wetton my brother in law the ov[er]syer of ye same.

Witness statement:

Thes witnes and p[re]sent Rich[ar]d Smythe p[re]st and curate there Thomas Stanes John Taylyer withe other moo.

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE TABLE OF WILLS FROM A PARISH

Gratwich

John Warde was Rector of Gratwich from 1533 until 1570. Thomas Drakeford was Curate of Leigh from 1533 until 1565. John Bromley was a stipendiary at Stafford St Mary's in 1533, with John Wyldeblod, who became Vicar of Caverswall in 1539. Francis Hodgkin was Rector of Gratwich from 1577 according to Landor, but must have been appointed before. Thomas Latwis was a curate of Kingstone.

Date written	Authority of monarch	Soul bequest	Burial, funeral and health of soul	Bequests to church and clergy	Bequests to charity	Dreading natural death etc	Witness and comments
8 Jul 1538		A	Churche yorde Owes grotwyche churche 10s 4d				Laymen
29 Jun 1542		A	Church be north the fonte	Sir John bromley 10s			Sir John bromley
29 Mar 1543		A	Leghe churche yarde. A prest to syng at legh churche halffe a yere 40s	Sir John Warde parson of Gratwyche 13s 4d			Sir john Warde Sir john bro[m]ley
26 Jan 1543/4		A	Churche yerd		Every godchild 4d		My gostely father Sir Thomas latwayet and Robert norman - also overseer
18 Oct 1545		God almyghty	Church yarde				Laymen
26 Sep 1550		Almighty god	Churche yarde				Sir John Warde
7 Apr 1557		All myghtye god	Church yord				Laymen
22 Jun 1562		The handes of almightie god my maker &	Churche	Shingling of church 6s 8d	Every householde in Grotwich 4d.	Thanks be to god	Uncle Thomas Drakforth Clark overseer

		redemer			Every of my godchild 2s.		
17 Mar 1565 Inv 22 Apr 1565		Almyghty god	Church yarde				Sir John Warde parson ther
13 Oct 1570	EI 12 etc	Almightye god	Channsell	Byinge a surplesse in gratwiche 10s. Stowe churche 13s 4d. Weston on Trent churche 5s. Master doctor draycott 6s 8d. Sir Thomas preston clarke 6s 8d & clothes. Sir William steplinton on sylver spone.	Every household in gratwiche 12d. Mendinge of 2 bridges: 26s 8d & 13s 4d. Every godchild who aske within 1y of deathe 12d. Residue to pore.		Will of Sir Jhone Warde persone of gratwiche Raffe Catterbanke who is left 10s. All his bokes are left to Jhon norman of caverswall.
13 May 1572	EI 14 etc	Almightie god	Churche yard			Lawded be god.	Frannces Hodgkin parson
18 Mar 1577		Allmightie god	Church nere to Goodman Normon forme. Penie dole delt for me of my wife. To the pleasure of god & healthe of my sole.		Every godchild 12d		Laymen

A: Traditional preamble

Re: Will of John Ward:

Master doctor draycott was Anthony Draycott LLD, from 1533 to 1547 Rector of Draycott in the Moors. He resigned in 1547. He was also Rector of Checkley from 1520 to 1559, when he was deprived. He died 20 Jan 1571 at Draycott after being in the Fleet prison.

Sir William Stapleton, from a well-known recusant family, was chaplain at Draycott in the Moors from 1558 to 1560, when he resigned. He was presented by Philip Draycott, a recusant.

The Normans were a family from Caverswall, but belonging to Uttoxeter parish, a number of whom became clergy. They had connections to Gratwich and used the services of John Ward and Raffé Caterbanke. Raffé Caterbanke was a clerk of Leigh, who died in 1578. His will was witnessed by Philip Draycott.

A network of clergy under the auspices of Philip Draycott.

APPENDIX 3:

Details of clergy who wrote wills in the deanery of Leek, 1533 - 1580. Information based on evidence from the wills; Landor, *Staffordshire incumbents*; and the Church of England database.

Name	No. of wills written	Years of will writing	Main parish in which wills written	Post	No. of bequests made to them	Patron (where known) and other career notes
Andrew Sherard	43	1547-68	Leek	Vicar of Leek	1	1546 Edward Fyton, on that occasion only.
John Standley	35	1548-69	Alton	Vicar of Alton	0	1546 William Falderynge and James Stanley, on that occasion only.
Nicolas Stokes	31	1537-60	Ellastone	Vicar of Ellastone	1	
Richard Smyth	27	1543-73	Alstonefield	Curate at Alstonefield	1	Despite being presented by the Crown to the vicarage in 1562 and 1564, in 1564 a non-resident was appointed.
Thomas Drakeford	26	1533-57, 1562	Leigh	Curate at Leigh, Curate at Gratwich	3	
Robert Sutton	24	1537-69	Leek (Rushton Chapel)	Curate at Rushton	5	
Richard Weyn	22	1548-59	Checkley	Chantry Priest at Uttoxeter, Curate at Checkley	6	
William Caterbanke	21	1552-66	Leigh	Rector of Leigh	1	1550 George Willoughby, assignee of Thomas Vernon and Andrew Bullocke, on that occasion only.
Richard Malkyn	20	1549-80	Sheen	Curate at Sheen, Curate at Grindon	1	Ordained 1543 by Sampson.
Richard Gent	19	1534-45	Leek	Vicar of Leek	1	

Edmund Holme	17	1566-73	Cheddleton	Curate at Cheddleton	1	
John Warde 1	17	1538-77	Blore	Rector of Blore	8	
John Beardmore	16	1533-59, 1562-73	Kingsley	Curate at Grindon, Chantry Priest and Curate at Kingsley, Curate at Cheadle	8	
John Garlec	16	1547-63	Waterfall	Curate at Waterfall, Vicar of Rocester	3	
Roger Banne	15	1565-80	Leek	Curate at Ipstones, Vicar of Leek	1	Ordained 1559 by Goldwell, Bishop of St Asaph. 1569 (Leek) Ralph Bagnald, true patron.
Thomas Rawlen	15	1568-78	Alton	Curate at Kingsley, Vicar of Alton	0	Ordained 1563 by Bentham. 1569 Crown, true patron.
John Godwyn	14	1534-69	Cheddleton	Curate at Cheddleton, Vicar of Ilam	3	1549 (Ilam) Earl of Huntingdon, on that occasion only.
John Beylat	13	1535-53	Cheadle	Chantry Priest at Cheadle	7	
Roger Copestake	13	1551-71	Cauldon	Curate at Cauldon	5	
Richard Holme	13	1557-65	Cheddleton	Chantry Priest at Dovebridge, Derbyshire, Curate at Cheddleton	0	Ordained 1545 by Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, authorised by Coventry and Lichfield.
Thomas Aynsworth	12	1547-54	Uttoxeter	Vicar of Uttoxeter	1	1546 Dean and Chapter of King's Chapel, Windsor, true patron.

Thomas Barnes	11	1559, 1560, 1566-76	Uttoxeter	Curate at Checkley, Vicar of Uttoxeter	1	Ordained 1559 by Grindal, Bishop of London. 1567 (Uttoxeter) Dean and Chapter of St George's Chapel, Windsor, true patron.
Robert Aspeden	10	1549-63	Kingsley	Curate at Kingsley	2	
Thomas Gilbert	10	1534-43/4	Checkley	Curate at Checkley	0	1546 appointed Rector of Edlaston, Derbyshire, Edward Draycott, true patron.
James Masse	10	<1542-56	Waterfall	Curate at Waterfall	1	
John Thorley	10	1568-78	Horton	Curate at Horton, Vicar of Biddulph, Staffordshire	0	Ordained 1567 by Downham, Bishop of Chester. 1577 (Biddulph) Ralph Thorley, on that occasion only.
Thomas Heth	9	1533-52	Horton	Curate? at Horton	0	
Thomas Bakewell	8	1537-76	Bramshall	Rector of Bramshall	1	Appointed 1532.
William Carteledge	8	1545-59, 1565	Cheddleton	Curate at Cheddleton, Vicar of Dilverne	2	
Robert Smith	8	1567-77	Rocester	Vicar of Rocester	1	Ordained 1564 by Bentham.
Thomas Tunkynson	8	1539-59	Dilverne	Vicar of Dilverne	3	
John Wildeblod	8	1533-59	Caverswall	Vicar of Caverswall	4	
Gervase Alen	7	1552-70	Sheen	Vicar of Hartington, Derbyshire	0	1542 Earl of Shrewsbury, true patron.
John Billinge	7	1563-80	Alstonefield, Blore, Cauldon	Curate at Calton, Rector of Grindon	1	1578 (Grindon) William Bassett, true patron.

Robert Bruce	7	1541-55	Kingsley	Rector of Kingsley	2	
Robert Greves	7	1534-47	Leek	Chantry Priest at Leek	1	
Thomas Marler	7	1534-43/4, 1557-59	Mayfield	Vicar of Mayfield	0	1557 Edward Aston, true patron.
Richard Roggers	7	1538-59	Butterton	Curate at Butterton	2	
John Russell	7	1551-75	Kingstone	Vicar of Colwich, Staffordshire, Rector of Kingstone	1	
John Abell	6	1536-58	Kingstone	Curate at Kingstone	2	
Peter Clayton	6	1560-67	Ellastone	Curate then Vicar of Ellastone	1	
Nicholas Harwar	6	1554-56	Uttoxeter	Vicar of Uttoxeter	0	1554 Dean and Chapter, Chapel Royal, Windsor, true patron.
Robert Cundlyff	5	1543-50	Grindon, Leek	Chantry? Priest	3	
William Frende	5	1535-37	Uttoxeter	Curate at Uttoxeter	0	
James Hall	5	1565, 1577-80	Kingsley	Curate at Bonsall, Derbyshire, Curate at Kingsley, Vicar of Elmton, Derbyshire	0	1564 (Elmton) Edmund West, true patron.
Thomas Latwis	5	1543-44	Uttoxeter	Curate at Kingstone	0	
John Lee	5	1549-52	Alstonefield	Curate at Warslow Chapel	1	
John Mottram	5	1556-61	Cheadle	Curate at Cheadle, Vicar of Beeston, Nottinghamshire	0	

Richard Willson	5	1569-74	Leigh	Rector of Leigh	1	1569 Henry Vernon, true patron.
Robert Bagaley	4	1535-57	Leek	Monk at Dieulacres Abbey, Chaplain	1	1557 appointed Vicar of Attenborough and Bramcote, Nottinghamshire. Patron James Foljambe, in his own right.
Richard Blackhurst	4	1551-75	Alstonefield	Curate at Warslow Chapel	2	
Hugh Dayre	4	1553	Checkley	Curate at Checkley	0	
George Hilton	4	1558-59	Uttoxeter	Vicar of Uttoxeter	0	1557 Dean and Chapter of St George's Chapel, Windsor, true patron.
Hugh Sheldon	4	1533-49	Alstonefield	Vicar of Alstonefield, Rector of Carsington, Derbyshire	2	
George Showre	4	1545-53	Alstonefield	Curate at Longnor Chapel	4	
John Ward 2	4	1543- 65	Gratwich	Rector of Gratwich	1	
William Barley	3	1556-57	Rocester	Vicar of Rocester	0	
Raphe Caterbanke	3	1571-78	Leigh	Clerk	3	
Roger Fynney	3	1575-80	Cauldon	Curate at Cauldon	1	
Henry Gasken	3	1554-56/7	Draycott in the Moors	Rector of Draycott in the Moors	0	1553 Philip Draycott, true patron.
George Gee	3	1550-61	Croxden	Curate at Bradley in the Moors Chapel	1	

Robert Hancock	3	1539-41	Shene		1	
Henry Jenkinson	3	153X-41	Kingsley	Chantry Priest at Kingsley	0	
Raphe Lompe	3	1565	Uttoxeter	Rector of Bradley, Derbyshire	0	Ordained 1559 by Pole, Bishop of Peterborough. 1560 Francis Mallett, true patron.
William Okeden	3	1559	Rocester	Vicar of Rocester	0	
Francis Paddy	3	1578-80	Alstonefield	Curate at Alstonefield	0	
William Sanders	3	1538/9-41	Caverswall	Clerk	0	
John Smallshawe	3	1567-69	Checkley	Curate at Checkley	0	
Richard Sowre	3	1540-45	Rocester	Vicar of Rocester	0	1533 deputy to Abbot of Rocester Abbey
John Addye	2	1553-67	Grindon	Rector of Grindon, Chaplain to Sir William Bassett	1	
Arthur Blownt	2	1562-63	Uttoxeter	Vicar of Uttoxeter	0	1562 Dean and Chapter of St George's Chapel, Windsor, true patron.
Robert Bothe	2	1535-38	Mayfield	Vicar of Mayfield	1	
John Bromley	2	1542-43	Gratwich		1	
Richard Cooke	2	1557-61	Grindon	Curate at Grindon	0	

Anthony Draycott	2	1536-1547/8	Checkley	Rector of Checkley	2	LLD 1544 (Grindon) Edward Draycott, on that occasion only.
William Frost	2	1561	Alstonefield	Curate at Atlow Chapel, Derbyshire	0	
William Gibson	2	1541-66	Horton, Leek	Chantry Priest	1	
Richard Hall	2	1539	Ilam	Vicar of Ilam	1	
Ralph Harve	2	1554-57	Uttoxeter	Curate at Crakemarsh Chapel	2	
John Holiday	2	1573-75	Wetton	Curate at Wetton	0	
Thomas Joxson	2	1536-43	Leigh		0	
Richard Mere	2	1557-67	Mayfield	Curate at Calton (Mayfield)	0	
Stephen Milnes	2	1576-77/8	Cheadle	Rector of Cheadle	0	MA 1574 Trinity College, true patron.
Richard Plant	2	1551	Alstonefield	Priest	0	
Robert Rusheton	2	1578-79	Caverswall	Curate at Caverswall	0	
John Sander	2	1537-43	Cheddleton	Curate at Kingsley	0	
William Stephenson	2	1542	Uttoxeter	Curate at Loxley Chapel	0	
William Tull	2	1537-38	Uttoxeter	Vicar of Uttoxeter	1	
Phillip Tylney	2	1573-74	Ilam	Vicar of Ilam	0	1571 Francis Fitzherbert, on that occasion only.
Robert Wardle	2	1570-74	Mayfield	Vicar of Mayfield	0	Walter Aston, true patron.

Thomas Alynson	1	1538	Leek	Chaplain	0	
William Beche	1	1542	Okeover	Chaplain	1	
John Bee	1	1543	Uttoxeter	Chantry Priest at Uttoxeter	0	
Christopher Berde	1	1557	Wetton	Priest	0	
Roger Bolt	1	1567	Caverswall	Curate at Caverswall	0	
Richard Bothner	1	1541	Ellastone	Priest	2	
Richard Botte	1	1551	Ilam	Curate at Osmaston Chapel, Derbyshire	4	
Richard Bownd	1	1547	Leek	Rector of Somersal Herbert, Derbyshire	0	
Andrew Bowyer	1	1538	Leek	Curate at Keele, Staffordshire, Vicar of Wolstanton, Staffordshire	1	
Thomas Bradbury	1	1553	Draycott in the Moors		0	1556 appointed Vicar of Marston upon Dove, Derbyshire. Crown, true patron.
John Bradley	1	1541	Ipstones	Priest	0	
Thomas Bradshaw	1	1558	Leigh	Rector of Hamstall Ridware, Staffordshire	0	
William Brasenton	1	1554	Cheadle	Priest	0	
Henry Burlocke	1	1574	Sheen	Curate at Sheen	0	
Edward Careless	1	1534	Uttoxeter	Chantry Priest at Uttoxeter	1	

John Cowhope	1	1551	Wetton	Curate at Wetton, Chaplain	0	
Christopher Eaton	1	1552	Rocester	Curate	0	
Edmund Eyre	1	1543	Grindon	Rector of Grindon	0	
Robert Fenton	1	1537	Wetton	Chaplain at Wetton	0	
James Gibson	1	1579	Cheddleton	Curate at Cheddleton	0	
John Hare	1	1543	Kingstone		0	
Thomas Harrison	1	1534	Alstonefield	Curate at Warslow Chapel	0	
Richard Heath	1	<1542	Rocester	Canon at Rocester Abbey	0	
Francis Hodgkin	1	1572	Gratwich	Rector of Gratwich	0	1577 Crown, patron lapsed.
Laurence Horobyn	1	1537	Wetton	Vicar of Ashbourne, Derbyshire	0	
William Jarman	1	1574	Alstonefield	Curate at Longnor Chapel	0	
Nicholas Leche	1	1550	Uttoxeter		0	
Richard Ley	1	1537	Wetton	Chaplain	1	
Raphe Mallat	1	1577	Cheddleton	Clerk	0	1584 appointed Vicar of Halesowen. Thomas Chaunce, advowson from John Littleton, on that occasion only.

Thomas Manyfold	1	1539	Mayfield	Curate at Mayfield	1	
Humphrey Mores	1	1561	Uttoxeter	Curate at Uttoxeter	0	
Thomas Mowers	1	1555	Cheadle	Curate	1	
William Newbie	1	1578	Ellastone	Vicar of Ellastone	0	
Henry Nicholson	1	1538	Ilam	Chaplain to Francis Meverell of Throwley	0	
Robert Parton	1	1574	Cheddleton	Curate	0	
Hugh Perkin	1	1545	Checkley	Curate at Crakemarsh Chapel	0	
Richard Proudlove	1	1539	Ilam	Vicar of Thorpe, Derbyshire	1	
Thomas Rowbotham	1	1579	Alstonefield	Curate at Wetton	0	
John Rowke	1	1550	Cheddleton	Priest	0	
Homfrey Stephans	1	1538	Leek	Priest	0	
Thomas Tatton	1	1543	Uttoxeter	Chantry Priest at Lichfield	1	
Thomas Taylour	1	1539	Grindon	Curate at Grindon	3	
John Thornley	1	1541	Ellastone	Priest	0	
William Walbanke	1	1568	Alstonefield	Curate at Breadsall, Derbyshire	0	

Christopher Watson	1	1559	Uttoxeter	Priest	0	
Nicholas Whelocke	1	1557	Horton	Vicar of Biddulph, Staffordshire	0	
Thomas Whitney	1	1553	Leek	Abbot of Dieulacres Abbey	2	

APPENDIX 4: TABLES OF THE CONTENTS OF WILLS WRITTEN BY THREE MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY

Table 4.1: Wills written by Roger Banne, vicar of Leek

Date will written	Soul bequest	Funeral/burial arrangements	Bequests to the church/clergy	Bequests to charity	Expressions used
23/10/65	a g				
21/10/68	a g the maker and redemer therof				
28/03/69	a g the maker and redimer therof				
23/02/70	a g the maker and redemer therof				
13/08/70	a g maker and redemer				
17/08/70	a g the maker and redimer therof				
16/04/71	a g the maker redemer therof		Sir Roger Banne my curate a lambe	40s to poure folkes of my parryshe	
07/10/71	a g maker and redemer	where it shall please god to call for me			praise and thanks be geven to a g
19/10/72	a g the maker and his sone Jesus Christ my redemer and savyoure	churchyard of Leek or where hyt shall please god to call for me		poure folks in Leek towne and Mylne Strate 6s 8d	thanks be to God therfore
04/07/73	a g the maker therof				thankes be to God therfore
13/08/73	God				
12/10/75	a g my maker and redemer trusting by the merytes of his passyon to be one of celecte at			poore folks 6s 8d	thankes be geven to God therfore

	the generall Resurrectyon				
13/08/76	a g and to his sonne Jesus Christ trusting to be one of his elect people and to be saved by the mearytes of his passion death Resuarection and assention				dreaddinge naturall death
19/04/77	a g the maker and redemer therof				thankes be geven unto God
22/02/79/80	goodnes of a g belevinge stidfastely by the merits purchased for me in Christs deathe to be one of those that shall enioye everlastinge lyef in the kingdome of heaven	earthe wherof hit came in Leeke churche	Reperacion Leek churche 3s 4d		God be thanked

a g means Almighty God.

Table 4.2: Wills written by Richard Gent, vicar of Leek

Date will written	Funeral/burial arrangements	Bequests to the church/clergy	Expressions used	Customary payments
04/12/34		St M and St C 2d each Sont Johns fyary 2d Sont Thomas of Canterbury 2d Best jakett to Rustheton chapell to be pryed for	They shall answer before the high juge	Churche such princypall as ryght shall requyre
04/04/35		St M and St C 2d each		Herott according to the lawe
20/06/35			Richard Gent referred to as my gostly father	Princypall according to the lawe
06/01/35/6		Our Ladyes Service of Leke 12d	As thei sthall answar afor God the hye juge	Principall that the lawe doth require
26/05/36	Our Ladies chapel in church	Our Ladyes Service my best jacket	As thei shall answere afor God the hye juge	Principall that the lawe doth require
27/04/37		St M and St C 2d each		Herott according to the lawe
11/05/37	Nerre frerys of Stafford to say a trentall of masses for me For the welth of my sowle and my fathers as thy shall thynke best	St M and St C 2d each Elkeston chapel 20d Chapell of Warslow 20d Oncote chapel 20d Meerbroke chapel 3s 4d Our Ladyes Servyse 3s 4d	As they will answere before God at the dredfull Day of Jugement	Harryote
21/06/37		St M and St C 2d each Meerbroke chapel a jakytte My gostly father Sir Robert Sutton a shepe	As they shall answere Welthe of my sowle where they shall thynke most nedefull	Harryott according to the law

21/06/37	Churche yn my owne forme before Saynt Katheryne Churche for my buryall a masse boke	St M and St C 2d each New chapel of Saynt Katheryn with yn the churche of Leke £26 13s 4d to funde a prest to pray for my father sowle my mothers and al there chylder and all Crysten sowles	As thei shall answere before the high juge	Harryott according to the lawe
18/08/37		St M and St C 2d each Howse of Dieulacres grott broche? Contributes 3s 4d to [the new chapel] to fynde a pryste for eyver Richard Gent a shepe to pray		Herotte according to the lawe
31/10/37		St M and St C 2d each lord abbott of Dieulieacres and hys brether to be assoyled yn the chapyter howse 3s 4d 3s 4d to [the new chapel]	As they shall answare	Harryott according to the lawe
07/01/37/8		St M and St C 2d each Oure lady servys of leke 12d	As they shall answere	Haryote
03/03/37/8		St M and St C 2d each	As they shall answare	Harryott according to the law
38		St M and St C 2d each		Heyreet according to the law
39		St M and St C 2d each		
08/02/<41				
02/04/42		Marbroke chapel 40d		Heryott according to the lawe

12/03/43/4				
12/10/45				Haryott according to the lawe

St M and St C means Saint Mary's House of Coventry and Saint Chad of Lichfield.

Table 4.3: Wills written by Richard Smith, curate at Alstonefield

Date will written	Soul bequest	Bequests to the church/clergy	Bequests to charity	Expressions used	Customary payments
31/12/43	a g				
04/08/45	a g				
06/03/48/49	Chryst				
09/11/50	a g		Poore mens boxe 4d		Mortuary
28/09/53	a g	Repacion of Warslow chappell one shepe	Repacion of Ageford bridge one shepe	Laude and prayse be unto a g	Debts to be paid Haryott
03/09/56	a g	St M and St C 2d Two shepe towards the begynnyng of Our Lady's Service agayne		P[r]yse be to Chryste	Haryott Mortuary
01/06/57	a g			P[r]yse be to Chryst	
29/08/57	a g			P[r]yse be to Christ	Haryotte
04/09/57	a g	Churche 12d Sir Richard Bott 4d		Pryse be to Chryst	Haryott
13/10/57	a g			Pryse be to Christ	Mortuary
20/11/57	a g	Repacion of churche 3s 4d Longnore chappell 6s 8d	Longnore bridge 3s 4d	P[r]yse be to Christ	Haryott
23/12 /57	a g			Pryse be to Christ	Haryot
26/01/57/58	a g			P[r]yse be to Christe	
21/08/58	a g	St M and St C 3d		P[ra]yse be to Christe Heading of Jhesus	Haryott

				be mercye to all Christen soules	
10/09/58	a g	Repacions of churche 6s 8d	Makyng of Shene steple and Ageford bridge 3s 4d	P[ra]yse be to Christ	Haryot
03/01/58/59	a g	Construction on rode for tapers 1 sheape and waxe for 1 taper		Praye be to God	
28/01/58/59	a g	St M and St C 2d Longnore chappell 6s 8d		Pryse be to Christ	Haryott
08/10/59	a g		Poore mans boxe 2d	Prese be to Chryst	
04/01/59/60	a g	Longnore chapel 6s 8d Sir Rycharde Smythe 3s 4d	Poore mans boxe 4d	Prese be to God	Haryot
28/06/60	a g		Poore mens boxe 4d	Pryse be unto Chryst	Debts to be paid Haryott
13/01/60/61	a g				Mortuary
22/05/61	a g			Preyse be to Christe	Haryott
12/06/61	a g	Churche 3s 4d Warslowe chappell 20d	Poore mens boxe 2d Thamendment of Acheford bridge 20d	P[r]yse be to Christ	Haryott
09/04/62	a g my maker and redemer		Poore mens boxe 12d	Prayse be to Christ	Haryot
20/04/67	a g				Haryot
01/06/69	a g		Poore mens boxe 8d	Prayse be to Christ	Haryott Mortuary
27/04/73	a g		Poore mens boxe 2d	Pryese be to Chryst	

a g means Almighty God.

St M and St C means Saint Mary's House of Coventry and Saint Chad of Lichfield.

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PROB 11/27/546 f.248 John Wistowe, Tamworth, 14 Oct 1539.

PROB 11/37/506 f.277-8 Thomas Wood, Wednesfield, 15 Jan 1556.

PROB 11/36/236 f.10 John Woode, Kingswinford, 11 Sep 1553.