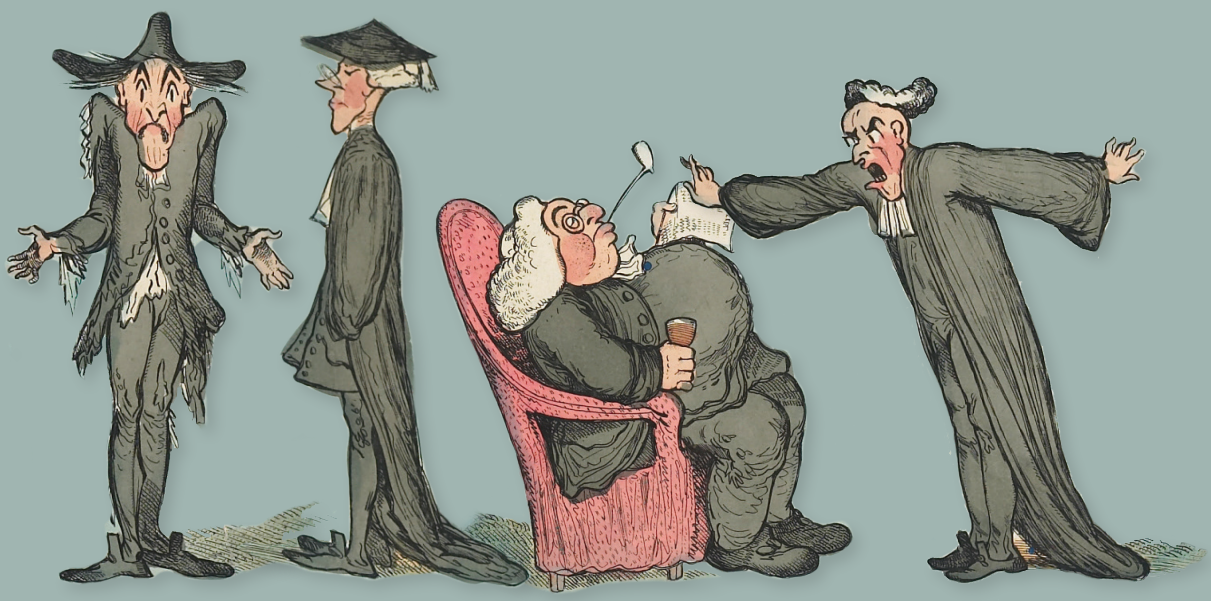
THE EDUCATION *of the* ANGLICAN CLERGY

1780–1839



Sara Slinn

STUDIES IN MODERN BRITISH RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Volume 35

THE EDUCATION OF THE ANGLICAN CLERGY 1780–1839

STUDIES IN MODERN BRITISH RELIGIOUS HISTORY

ISSN: 1464–6625

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THE EDUCATION OF THE ANGLICAN CLERGY 1780–1839

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THE BOYDELL PRESS

First published 2017
The Boydell Press, Woodbridge

ISBN 978-1-78327-175-7

The Boydell Press is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
and of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620–2731, USA
website: www.boydellandbrewer.com

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

This publication is printed on acid-free paper

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Acknowledgements

This book has had a long gestation period. Life among the dead clergy began at the Borthwick Institute, University of York, and I owe to Professor David Smith the initial opportunity of working with the York ordination papers. For encouragement, which resulted in initial research on clerical recruitment seeing the light of printed day, I would particularly like to thank Professor Edward Royle.

The following archives and libraries have all provided assistance; in particular I wish to thank those staff who went out of their way to facilitate the consultation of a great deal of material, sometimes unlisted, in relatively short but intense periods of time: Bristol Record Office; Cambridge University Library, Special Collections and Manuscript Department; the archivists and librarians of Trinity College, Cambridge, and St John's College, Cambridge, especially Fiona Colbert; Canterbury Cathedral Archives; Cheshire Archives and Local Studies; Cumbria Archives, Whitehaven; Devon Record Office; Durham University Library Special Collections; Gloucestershire Archives; Hampshire Archives and Local Studies; Herefordshire Archives and Records Centre; Patricia Underwood at Kent History and Library Centre; Lambeth Palace Library; Lichfield Record Office; Lincolnshire Archives; London Metropolitan Archives; the National Library of Wales; Norfolk Record Office; Northamptonshire Record Office; Bodleian Library Special Collections, Oxford; Christopher Jeens, archivist at Jesus College, Oxford; Oxfordshire History Centre; Somerset Archives and Local Studies; Swindon and Wiltshire History Centre; West Sussex Record Office; West Yorkshire Archive Service, particularly Gary Brannan at Wakefield and Julie-Ann Vickers at Leeds; Worcestershire Archives; the City of York Archives and York Minster Library. The cover image is reproduced with the permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

I thank Professor Arthur Burns for introducing me to the Clergy of the Church of England database project and for his subsequent interest in my research, including the many suggestions for improvement he offered for the text of this book. Professor Stephen Taylor introduced me to the interior workings of the database and has also generously allowed me to see an early draft of a forthcoming edition of the records of the Elland Clerical Society, thus saving me a number of trips to Wakefield. Thanks also to Dr Charles Fonge for alerting me to the 1647 York petition (as well as for being a good listener over many years). To Dr Frances Knight I offer warm thanks for many things, not least of all for reading earlier drafts of material presented here.

The completion of both research and book was only made possible by Philippa Hoskin, who cheerfully furnished the context and space in which it could be written and who has never failed in her encouragement, or in her enthusiasm for swapping clerical anecdotes across six hundred years. To her I dedicate this work, with love.

Abbreviations

Archives

BI	Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York
BRO	Bristol Record Office
CUL	Cambridge University Library
Cambridge, TCL	Trinity College Library, Cambridge
CA	Cumbria Record Office, Whitehaven
DUL	Durham University Library
GA	Gloucestershire Archives
Hamps. A	Hampshire Archives and Local Studies
Heref. A	Herefordshire Archives and Records Centre
Lich. RO	Lichfield Record Office
LA	Lincolnshire Archives
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
NLW	National Library of Wales
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NRO	Norfolk Record Office
Oxford, JC	Jesus College, Oxford
WYAS	West Yorkshire Archive Service

General Abbreviations

Alum. Cant.	J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses, Part 2, 1752–1900*
Alum. Oxon.	Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses, 1715–1886*
BCES	Bristol Clerical Education Society
BD	Bachelor of Divinity

CCEd	Clergy of the Church of England database
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CPAS	Church Pastoral Aid Society
CO	*Christian Observer*
CR	*Christian Remembrancer*
CUC	*The Cambridge University Calendar*
DD	Doctor of Divinity
DEB	Donald M. Lewis, ed., *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*
EC(E)S	Elland Clerical (Education) Society
Gent. Mag.	*Gentleman's Magazine*
LLD	Doctor of Laws
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
PP	Parliamentary Papers
QR	*The Quarterly Review*
SBCC	*The Saint Bees College Calendar*
SCL	Student of Civil Law
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
TCD	Trinity College, Dublin
TCWAAS	Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society

Introduction

Offered here is the largest historical study of recruitment to the ministry of the Church of England attempted to date. It takes as its focus the educational backgrounds of men ordained in the late Hanoverian period, from 1780 to 1839 – a period during which the path to the pulpits and parishes of the Established Church was not quite as straightforward as has often been assumed. Certainly a 'liberal' or classical education, followed by university, was the most judicious way forward. Oxford fellow, clerical schoolmaster and essayist, Vicesimus Knox, gave this advice in 1782: 'To facilitate the tenure of some preferments, and to satisfy the prejudices of the world, it will be necessary to take academical degrees. This cannot reputably be done without becoming a member of an English university.'[1] But Knox's choice of words is telling. 'Some' preferments did indeed require a degree, but what about the young man who did not aspire to a deanery or even to hold in plurality?[2] What about those prepared to disregard the 'prejudices of the world'? And if the English universities were the reputable way into the Church, what about the less reputable routes? Knox's advice was excellent, but even he might disregard it: in 1805 he helped his assistant, John Oxlee, to take orders, although Oxlee had never attended university.[3]

Throughout the period of this study it was possible to describe a man as having been educated for the Church, without necessarily suggesting that he had been intended for university. Parents might prepare a biddable, bookish son by giving him a classical education and maintaining him, without setting him to secular trade or business (school-keeping excepted), until he was of age to take orders. It would have been possible to point to non-graduate role models, both of national reputation and from within the local clergy. Amongst the more notable of such men were Bishop William Warburton;[4] archdeacons

1 Vicesimus Knox, 'Hints to Young Men who are designed for Orders' in *Essays Moral and Literary*, new edn (London, 1782), Vol. I, p. 86.

2 Canon 14 (1604) allowed only those with an MA to apply to hold benefices in plurality.

3 University of York, Borthwick Institute for Archives (BI), Ord.P.1805, Oxlee. For Oxlee's subsequent career see G. C. Boase, 'Oxlee, John (1779–1854)', revised by John D. Haigh, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*ODNB*).

4 B. W. Young, 'Warburton, William (1698–1779)' in *ODNB*. Thomas Lewis O'Beirne (bishop of Ossory, 1795–98, and Meath, 1798–1823) and William Ward (bishop of Sodor and Man, 1828–38) were also ordained as literates, their BDs acquired after ordination through the Cambridge 'ten-year' route – for which see below, pp. 125–6, and Sara Slinn, 'Ambition, Anxiety and Aspiration: the use and abuse of Cambridge University's Ten-Year Divinity Statute', *Historical Research* (forthcoming). Their early biographies were, however, probably not well known.

Joseph Jefferson and Thomas Beynon;[5] evangelical elder statesmen such as John Newton; the bible commentator Thomas Scott; and popular preachers Cornelius Bayley of Manchester and Robert Storry of Colchester.[6]

The route to orders without a degree did, however, become progressively more difficult during this period. In the 1780s, non-graduates might have had a chance of ordination throughout much of the country; subsequently, they became less acceptable, and sometimes almost inadmissible, in the English dioceses of the Southern Province. In 1821 John William Whitaker, examining chaplain for Archbishop Manners-Sutton, was put in an awkward position when asked by an old friend to look for a curacy for her son, who wanted to take orders in London. Whitaker wrote to his mother, 'she might as well have asked me to make him Pope or Emperor of Japan. The lad was never at the university and talks broad Cumberland.'[7] Certainly, despite a continuing, limited admissibility of non-graduates in southern dioceses, resulting variously from clerical shortages and permissive episcopal policies, from the 1800s a non-graduate man would have been well advised to seek titles in the Northern Province or South Wales – or, failing that, a colonial or missionary post.

Such changes in episcopal preferences were not immediately clear to people in general. When John Bickersteth, a London post office clerk, broached a career change with his father in 1806, it still seemed to his father Henry (a surgeon living in Kirkby Lonsdale, Westmorland) that a university education was elective – an opinion formed by discussion with knowledgeable neighbours and reinforced by the example of the local clergy.[8] Writing to his son, he reported that: 'Mr Wilson, as well as myself think you will find little disadvantage from the want of a College education,'[9] and later, 'I do not think there is so much advantage in your going to Coll[ege] as many may imagine. Clergymen who have never been at College are generally very unpolished in their manners which is generally owing to their taking orders immediately on their being let

5 For Joseph Jefferson (archdeacon of Colchester, 1812–21) see John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1828), Vol. V, pp. 235–53. His MA was a Lambeth degree. For Thomas Beynon (1744–1833) see *Welsh Biography Online*, http://wbo.llgc.org.uk/en/s-BEYN-THO-1744.html.

6 See below, p. 128; John Scott, *The Life of the Rev. Thomas Scott*, 2nd edn (London, 1822), pp. 26–9; John Scott, *A Vindication of the Rev. Joseph Milner and his History of the Church of Christ against ... Rev. Hugh James Rose* (London, 1834), pp. 55–6; B. W. Young, 'Bayley, Cornelius (1751–1812)' in *ODNB*.

7 Cambridge, St John's College Library: papers of John William Whitaker, 10/18; 2/18. He had been educated at St Bees Clerical College, for which see below, p. 84.

8 Note that whilst the vicars of neighbouring Orton, Ravenstonedale and Kirkby Stephen were non-graduates, Trinity College, Cambridge, had the patronage of Kendal, Kirkby Lonsdale, Heversham and Sedbergh, which meant that some local incumbents were college members.

9 Cambridge, Trinity College Library (TCL), Mayor/D2/15. Mr Wilson is Daniel Wilson (d.1824) of Dallam Towers, who had the nomination of the Heversham exhibition to Trinity College, Cambridge, subsequently offered to John Bickersteth. For the exhibition see Nicholas Carlisle, *A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools in England and Wales* (London, 1818), Vol. II, p. 708.

loose from a Grammar School, & seeing nothing of the World, which is by no means your case.'[10]

Further enquiries amongst friends and acquaintances, perhaps with a view to opportunities outside the local area, began, however, to tip the balance in favour of university. 'Mr Wilson now thinks there may be some difficulty in your getting into the Church without going to College – most of the Bishops making a point of it.'[11] Accordingly, the expense was deemed justifiable and John was entered at Trinity College, Cambridge, in April 1807. As an addendum, however, notwithstanding the fact that the argument in favour of university education had won the day, the possibility of ordination before taking a degree still proved attractive to his parents, his mother offering the example of Robert Housman, incumbent of St Anne's, Lancaster, ordained as an undergraduate, urging John to consider doing the same.[12]

Counting clergy

Studies of Anglican clerical recruitment have, until recently, had very little quantitative data to work with. This study is able to offer a substantial revision of previous scholarship relating to clerical education by using two important sets of sources: firstly, the data collected by the Clergy of the Church of England database project, and secondly, the collections of ordination application papers, numbering many thousands, which survive in diocesan archives. A third, subsidiary, source – ordination lists printed in periodicals and newspapers – has also been mined far more extensively than before.[13] Thus, for the first time, it is possible to offer a comprehensive view of the numbers recruited by the Church, examine their educational backgrounds and, in doing so, bring a fresh, empirical perspective to discussions about the type of men who were the face of the establishment at the local, parish level.

The first attempts to quantify clerical recruitment were made in the context of concerns about declining numbers choosing to enter the Church, and a perception that the quality of recruits was falling – matters which became pressing in the late 1850s and 1860s. Churchmen began to wonder if the universities could supply the Church's ever-growing needs, and also to reflect on the consequences of what, for them, seemed like an unprecedented need to ordain non-graduate men from lower status backgrounds in order to make sure that there were clergy enough to fill vacant posts. But hard statistical evidence was not easily avail-

10 Cambridge, TCL, Mayor D2/16.
11 Cambridge, TCL, Mayor D2/17.
12 Cambridge, TCL, Mayor D2/27-28. Housman entered St John's College, Cambridge, in October 1780 and was ordained in 1781: J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, *Part 2, 1752–1900* (Cambridge, 1940–54). John completed his degree before ordination.
13 The Clergy of the Church of England database (CCEd) is at http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/index.html. For a detailed explanation of its use by this study see Appendix 2. For other sources see the bibliography.

able. Robert Gregory, incumbent of St Mary's, Lambeth, was to become something of an authority on the subject. In 1860 he published a statistical account of the educational background of ordinands, compiled from lists published in the *Ecclesiastical Gazette*, beginning with data for 1841 followed by annual totals from 1850.[14] Then, a few years later, he gave aggregated data for 1834 to 1843 in the Convocation of Canterbury's 'Report of the Committee on Deficiencies of Spiritual Ministration', published in 1876.[15] Gregory's work underpinned Thomas Espin's examination of the problem. Espin, professor of theology at Queen's College, Birmingham, and examining chaplain to the bishop of Chester, referred to it in his 1863 Oxford University sermon, *Our Want of Clergy*,[16] and in his papers delivered to Church Congress later in 1863[17] and then in 1869.[18]

However, the interests of the mid-nineteenth-century Church extended backwards only a generation or so and made no attempt to place current recruitment issues against a broader history.[19] This was unfortunate since, although contemporaries believed themselves to be living in unprecedented times, a longer historical perspective would have shown that they were not in *terra incognita*; only fifty years previously, the universities had also seemed incapable of providing enough graduates to satisfy the recruitment needs of the Church.[20] This short view of history led to a misapprehension of the traditional nature and character of the clergy of the Established Church, and an inability to draw upon the experiences of earlier generations.

The image of an occupational caste of university-educated 'gentlemen' socially appendant to local elites coloured the Church's view of itself, and engendered a historiographical treatment of the clergy which persists up until the present day. Amongst studies specifically concerning the clerical profession,

14 Robert Gregory, *How is Clerical Destitution to be Prevented?* (London, 1860). This is apparently the source for the data presented (unacknowledged) by C. R. Sumner in *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Winchester ... October 1862* (London, 1862), p. 23. This gained additional circulation when reprinted in John William Colenso, *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (London, 1863), Vol. II, pp. x–xi.

15 Convocation of Canterbury, 'Report of the Committee on Deficiencies of Spiritual Ministration', *Chronicle of Convocation,* VII (1876), Appendix B, p. 28. Gregory was committee chair. No methodology is given: it is probable that newspapers were, again, the source of data.

16 T. E. Espin, *Our Want of Clergy: Its Causes, and Suggestions for its Cure* (Oxford, 1863), Appendix A, p. 21.

17 Church Congress, *Report of the Proceedings of the Church Congress ... Manchester ... 1863* (Manchester, 1864), p. 68.

18 Church Congress, Report of the Proceedings of the Church Congress … Liverpool … 1869 (Liverpool, 1869), p. 63.

19 In 1833 E. B. Pusey attempted to calculate ordinations by proxy measures. Using an account of those attending divinity lectures at Oxford, he added an estimate for their Cambridge equivalents and weighed the result against the ordinations enumerated by the *British Magazine* (the unarticulated assumption being that all ordinands were from Oxford and Cambridge). This was in the context of suggesting that, if Church extension objects were to be realised, more clergy would be needed and additional provision for their education would be necessary. Edward Bouverie Pusey, *Remarks on the Prospective and Past Benefits of Cathedral Institutions*, 2nd edn (London, 1833), p. 77.

20 See below, pp. 71–3.

C. K. Francis Brown's 1953 study, *A History of the English Clergy, 1800–1900,* used the 1876 Convocation of Canterbury data. Although relating to no earlier than 1834, it did not deter him from his confidence that '[t]ime was when the English clergy for their learning were *stupor mundi* and certainly for the years 1663–1800 they were graduates almost without exception'.[21] Soon after, F. W. B. Bullock, in *A History of Training for the Ministry of the Church of England, 1800–1874* – the first scholarly, and very compendious, study of Anglican clerical education – used both the data from the 1869 Church Congress and the 1876 Convocation of Canterbury report and, seeking material for an earlier period, offered data calculated from the incomplete lists of ordinands printed in the *Christian Remembrancer* for 1830.[22] From this, Bullock concluded that the universities were a monopoly supplier of ordinands, confidently endorsing Charles J. Abbey's assertion of 1887 that 'from them came all the clergy. It was very rarely that any bishop would confer orders on anyone who was not a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge.'[23]

The next generation of historians of the clergy were similarly reliant on these two sets of data. Brian Heeney's 1976 study presented Espin's data for the period after 1841.[24] Alan Haig's 1984 study of the Victorian clergy cited the 1876 Convocation of Canterbury report.[25] For both Heeney and Haig, focusing on the Victorian period, such data served their purposes well. However, Haig ventured to propose of the earlier period, 'the 1820s and 1830s saw a peak in the proportion of ordinands from the older universities – although, unfortunately, it seems to have established a norm to which churchmen continued to refer throughout the century', an assertion borne out by this study.[26]

A work which took a more direct look at the late Georgian church was Peter Virgin's *The Church in an Age of Negligence, 1700–1840*. His study was rich in quantitative analysis, drawing on contemporary material, but when it came to discussing clerical qualifications he was unable to find sound data. He again used the 1876 Chronicle of Convocation report but then, in the absence of any quantity of national data for the earlier period, he creatively extrapolated backwards, using a calculation based on assumptions about the number

21 C. K. Francis Brown, *A History of the English Clergy, 1800–1900* (London, 1953), pp. 248, 250.

22 F. W. B. Bullock, *A History of Training for the Ministry of the Church of England in England and Wales from 1800 to 1874* (St Leonards-on-Sea, 1955), pp. 47, 74. Bullock noted that the 1830s data was imperfect, including no men ordained by the bishops of St Asaph, St David's, Canterbury, York, Carlisle or Sodor and Man.

23 Charles J. Abbey, *The English Church and its Bishops, 1700–1800* (London, 1887), Vol. I, p. 320. Bullock also cites Charles Smyth, *Simeon and Church Order* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 98, who also states that Oxford and Cambridge 'virtually monopolised' training of the clergy. Interestingly, despite this assertion, Smyth refers to sources from the 1780s and 1820s that indicate that non-graduate clergy were fairly common.

24 Brian Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman: Parish Clergy as Professional Men in Early and Mid-Victorian England* (Hamden, 1976), Appendix 2, p. 126. Espin's data was, in fact, largely Gregory's.

25 Alan Haig, *The Victorian Clergy* (London, 1984), p. 32, Table 2.2.

26 Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, p. 29; this study, Table 4.

of university matriculants who took orders. Virgin's methodology and results are examined in greater detail in Chapter 1, but it is relevant to note here that, despite an acknowledgement that literates were ordained in 'outlying districts', Virgin is confident that calculations based on university membership are sound: 'The typical English incumbent, whether in the mid-nineteenth century or the mid-seventeenth, was an Oxbridge man.'[27]

Parallel to these histories of the national clergy as a body there exists a sizeable body of regional and diocesan studies which make specific reference to clerical recruitment, and which have increasingly alerted us to the regional variations in the composition of the clerical workforce.[28] The varying scale of these works, the sources they used and their differing methodologies mean, however, that there are distinct difficulties of comparability. Those studies which have used bishops' registers, ordination registers and act books often seem to have been unable to distinguish precisely between ordinations made for the local diocese and those performed on letters dimissory from other bishops.[29] Those which have used diocesan visitation records offer a quite different picture, since they give a snap-shot of a clerical community composed of a number of generations, many of whom began their careers in other dioceses and continued to accumulate academic degrees after ordination. Some of these studies have confidently supported a view of the clergy as an almost totally graduate body, and have thus been able to assume that William Sancroft's articles, issued as archbishop of Canterbury in 1685, instructing his suffragan bishops to ordain only graduates, were by and large adhered to during the eighteenth and early nine-

27 Peter Virgin, *The Church in an Age of Negligence: Ecclesiastical Structure and the Problem of Church Reform, 1700–1840* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 132, and see below, p. 21 n.7.

28 Examples of regional studies which refer to the educational status of clergy include the following: J. Addy, 'Two Eighteenth-Century Bishops of Chester and their Diocese, 1771–1787' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, 1972); Viviane Barrie-Curien, *Clergé et Pastorale en Angleterre au XVIIIe siècle: le diocèse de Londres* (Paris, 1992); Jeffrey S. Chamberlain, '"A regular and well-affected" diocese: Chichester in the eighteenth century' in Jeremy Gregory and Jeffrey S. Chamberlain, eds, *The National Church in Local Perspective* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 73–97; E. T. Davies, 'The Education of Clergy in the Diocese of Llandaff, 1750–1866', *Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales* 26 (1979), pp. 54–64; Jeremy Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation and Reform, 1660–1828: Archbishops of Canterbury and their Diocese* (Oxford, 2000); Colin Haydon, 'The Church in the Kineton deanery of the diocese of Worcester, c.1660–1800' in *The National Church in Local Perspective,* pp. 145–73; W. M. Jacob, 'Clergy and Society in Norfolk, 1707–1806' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Exeter, 1982); Robert James Lee, 'Encountering and Managing the Poor: Rural Society and Anglican Clergy in Norfolk, 1815–1914' (Ph.D. thesis, Leicester University, 2003); Robert Lee, *The Church of England and the Durham Coalfield, 1810–1926* (Woodbridge, 2007); W. B. Maynard, 'The Ecclesiastical Administration of the Archdeaconry of Durham, 1774–1856' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Durham, 1973); Philip John Rycroft, 'Church, Chapel and Community in Craven, 1764–1851' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1988); Sara Slinn, 'Archbishop Harcourt's Recruitment of Literate Clergymen. Part 1: Non-graduate Clergy in the Diocese of York, 1800–49', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 80 (2008), pp. 167–87; Mark Smith, *Religion in Industrial Society: Oldham and Saddleworth, 1740–1865* (Oxford, 1994); M. F. Snape, *The Church of England in Industrialising Society: The Lancashire Parish of Whalley in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2003); Arthur Warne, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century Devon* (Newton Abbot, 1969).

29 See below, p. 222.

teenth centuries.[30] For the Northern Province, Claire Cross has pinpointed the episcopate of Toby Matthew (1606–28) as the period during which the graduate clergy ideal 'pursued for more than a generation finally came to fruition', so that by the reign of James I, York was able to implement an all-graduate recruitment policy.[31] Others have, however, noted that non-graduate clergy formed a significant part of the workforce, although such discoveries have generally been concluded to result from factors of 'remoteness' or poverty. W. M. Jacob's *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1680–1840* – the most recent examination of the Anglican clerical profession – integrates many of these local studies to give a broader view of regional variation over the period, concluding that: 'Most clergy were graduates,' but highlighting 'exceptions' in the north of England and south-west Wales.[32]

This present study does not dispute such a summary, but it does seek to reorientate the discussion away from both a 'golden-triangle' and a Canterbury-centric tendency in the historiography of the Established Church: the areas now known to be 'exceptional' are surely extensive enough in terms of territory and population to deserve fuller integration into a whole-Church picture. If the history of the clergy were to be written from the point of view of the Northern Province, it might equally posit that in many areas graduate clergy were something of a rarity, although in southern dioceses and North Wales they came to predominate from the 1790s, sometimes to the exclusion of non-graduates. It also underscores the shortcomings of a 'golden-triangle' focus, which has underwritten much of the historiography of the national Church, with its tendency to narrow the field of view by pinpointing the Church's sites of executive significance, and its capacity for origination, in the metropolis and at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Neither does this study accept as an explanation of the distribution of non-graduate clergy a simple correlation with geographical and economic factors; whilst they do form an important part of an explanation of the admissibility of non-graduate clergy, they are not sufficient reasons in themselves. Once regional studies are put in a national context it becomes clear that impoverished areas with many poor benefices, which were geographically distant from cultural and political centres, did not necessarily recruit largely non-graduate men. Whilst Carlisle and St David's were certainly at the geographic and economic periphery of national life, so were Exeter and Bangor, dioceses with very different recruitment histories.[33] The consideration of local cultures and

30 For Sancroft's injunction see below, p. 76, and for comments see Gregory, *Restoration*, p. 78.
31 Claire Cross, 'Realising a Utopian Dream: The transformation of the clergy in the diocese of York, 1500–1630' in Rosemary Horrox and Sarah Rees Jones, eds, *Pragmatic Utopias, Ideals and Communities, 1200–1630* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 267.
32 W. M. Jacob, *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1680–1840* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 43–4.
33 See Table 4.

episcopal attitudes, presented here, usefully extends previous explanations for the distribution of non-graduate clergy.

The education of non-graduate ordinands

Because non-graduate clergy have been seen as something of a rarity, not a great deal of attention has been paid to the details of their preparation for ordination. On the whole, before the advent of St Bees Clerical College, Cumberland (1817), and St David's College, Lampeter (1827), non-graduates or 'literates' have generally been assumed to be synonyms for poorly educated men, of low social status, ordained only because 'better' candidates did not present themselves. The attitude was common amongst contemporaries, but its persistence probably results in large part from W. J. Conybeare's 1853 essay, 'The Church in the Mountains', a savagely humorous outing of the non-graduate clergy. A patchwork of anecdote, statistics based on assumptions that cannot be validated and doubtful reasoning, it depicted the literate clergy, *en masse*, as uneducated (literate, he points out, is a misnomer), inebriated peasants: men of 'low tastes and coarse vices', 'despised and despicable'.[34] In this, Conybeare reflected much of the mid-century, middling- and upper-rank discomfort with the erosion of traditional Anglican prestige, associated with the transformation of the social and professional status of the clergy – now no longer an occupation for the well-born and well-connected amateur, but for a better-trained, but not necessarily better-bred, professional. But beyond capturing a certain spirit of the age, Conybeare is not a sound witness to the actual state of pastoral provision in Wales or the north of England in his own time, much less the earlier part of the century.[35]

A neglect of the non-graduate clergyman's world is also the unintended consequence of the preoccupations and perspectives of a generation of clerical historians who, claiming important, internal insight, inadvertently produced histories of a Church staffed by men much like themselves, emphasising the significance of the public schools, the universities (mostly Oxbridge) and theological colleges.[36] The theological colleges, whose rise has been convincingly

34 W. J. Conybeare, 'The Church in the Mountains' in *Essays Ecclesiastical and Social reprinted with additions from the Edinburgh Review* (London, 1855), p. 4, first printed in *Edinburgh Review* XCVII (April 1853), pp. 342–79.

35 Some claim might be made for Conybeare's insight: his father William Daniel Conybeare was beneficed in Glamorgan during his childhood and was later dean of Llandaff, although he spoke no Welsh and was largely non-resident. Author W. J. Conybeare was principal of Liverpool Collegiate Institution (1842–48), where he may have heard stories about the clergy of the north-west. He cites anecdotes and opinions of 'friends' and 'intelligent and trustworthy' correspondents, but evidences no personal, professional contact with non-graduate clergy. For a more positive assessment see Arthur Burns, ed., 'W. J. Conybeare: "Church parties"' in Stephen Taylor, ed., *From Cranmer to Davidson: A Church of England Miscellany* (Woodbridge, 1999). On clerical professionalisation see Anthony Russell, *The Clerical Profession* (London, 1984), particularly pp. 20–7, 40–1, 45–8.

36 In this group are Rev. Dr C. K. Francis Brown, Rev. Canon F. W. B. Bullock, Rev. Prof. Owen Chadwick, Rev. W. K. Lowther Clarke, Rev. Canon L. E. Elliott-Binns, Rev. Professor Brian

contextualised in the stirrings of diocesan revival of the 1820s and 1830s,[37] have had a cadre of historians who have celebrated their successes and mourned their demise.[38] Although it is not to be expected that such institutional histories should include an exposition of the vitality of alternative forms of professional preparation, even general accounts of clerical education have often been constructed almost entirely in terms of institutional histories.[39] Even F. W. B. Bullock's survey of ministerial education, which made considerable efforts to explore the pre-history of the colleges – from Bishop Gilbert Burnet's unsuccessful attempts to form a body of theological students at Salisbury in the 1690s, to the much vaunted work with ordinands by bishops of Sodor and Man, Thomas Wilson (1698–1755) and Mark Hildesley (1755–72) – concludes that 'in the year 1800, the experiment of Bishops Wilson and Hildesley in the Isle of Man had been in abeyance for nearly thirty years and with one exception [Ystrad Meurig] there were at that date no facilities anywhere in England and Wales for training men for the ministry besides those rather meagre ones supplied at the two universities'.[40]

Various studies of the southern Welsh dioceses have since done much to challenge the impression that before the establishment of St David's College, Lampeter, Welsh-born, non-graduate clergy were illiterate, uncouth peasants: the specialist Welsh grammar schools have been shown to be capable of providing a classical education to match the basic university standard, and a theological education which overreached it,[41] and the system has been shown to be capable of producing high-calibre clergy.[42] Less work has been done on the northern English grammar schools and their contribution to clerical education

Heeney, Rev. Dr Arthur Tindal Hart, Rev. Prof. C. F. D. Moule, Canon C. H. E. Smyth and Rev. Prof. Norman Sykes.

37 Arthur Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England c.1800–1870* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 151–6.

38 St Bees (founded 1817) and St David's (founded 1827) are outliers in the development of theological colleges which addressed diocesan needs, although neither was restricted to local students. They were not initially seen as desirable models. The first of the diocesan colleges proper, intended to provide professional, supplemental education, was Chichester (1839) followed by Wells (1840). In terms of non-graduate education for the home Church, in addition to St Bees, St David's and the provision at King's College, London, and at Durham University, there were initiatives at St Aidan's, Birkenhead (1846), Queen's College, Birmingham (1849), Lichfield (1857) and St John's, Highbury (1864). Notable examples of institutional histories include: D. T. W. Price, *A History of Saint David's College, Lampeter* (Cardiff, 1977); F. B. Heiser, *The Story of St Aidan's College, Birkenhead, 1847–1947* (Chester, 1947); G. C. B. Davies, *Men for the Ministry: The History of the London College of Divinity* (London, 1963); Mark D. Chapman, *Ambassadors of Christ: Commemorating 150 years of Theological Education in Cuddesdon, 1854–2004* (Aldershot, 2004); Owen Chadwick, *The Founding of Cuddesdon* (Oxford, 1954); E. L. Elwes, *The History of Wells Theological College* (London, 1923), especially the preface, p. v.

39 See for instance David Dowland, *Nineteenth-Century Anglican Theological Training: The Redbrick Challenge* (Oxford, 1997); Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, Chapter 3; Heeney, *Different Kind of Gentleman*, pp. 98–107.

40 Bullock, *Training for the Ministry*, pp. 27–8.

41 For the Welsh grammar schools see below, pp. 129–35, 146–55.

42 Frances Knight, 'The Cultural Aspirations of the Welsh Clergy' in David Bebbington and Timothy Larsen, eds, *Modern Christianity and Cultural Aspirations* (Sheffield, 2003), pp. 124–38.

in the period before St Bees Clerical College opened in 1817. What is presented below in this area is predominantly a new synthesis.[43] Further exploration of the role that grammar schools played in clerical education in the earlier eighteenth century may perhaps be pertinent to the question of the overall national decline of such institutions, which in many parts of the country underwent a period of painful redefinition of purpose during the eighteenth century.

Neither have clerical tutors and small-scale clerical institutions received much attention from historians. Their utility was discussed at various meetings of Church Congress, with speakers noting that they had themselves been prepared by a tutor or had taken in ordinands or new deacons for a period of parish training,[44] but readers would be forgiven for thinking they were primarily resorted to only by the most diligent, serious-minded graduates. John Walsh's 1956 study of the evangelical 'revival' in Yorkshire threw light on the operation of the clerical education society based at Elland, West Riding, whose aim was to assist devout but poor young men to enter the ministry.[45] But Walsh looked at those men who were enabled to go to university and did not engage with the society's alternative method of preparing men for ordination as non-graduates, using a network of clerical tutors and schoolmasters who were in sympathy with its aims. To date, there are only two detailed studies of non-collegiate, parish-based preparation of non-graduate ordinands, the first dealing with the diocese of York in the first half of the nineteenth century, the second with the significance of small-scale, domestic clerical seminaries in late Georgian England.[46]

The operation of such tutors, their colleges, seminaries or institutions was, undoubtedly, rather shadowy. The anonymous pamphleteer Eusebius, writing in 1826 in support of the establishment of diocesan theological colleges, noted that it was not uncommon for parochial clergy to train candidates for the ministry, 'especially on that side of the Church commonly called Evangelical'; but, he went on to ask, 'is it endurable that the only Theological Schools which we possess should be hidden from public view and ecclesiastical inspection?'[47] This study can by no means offer a full inspection, but it can certainly shed more light on them than has previously been possible.

43 See pp. 136–55.

44 See for instance Church Congress, *Report of the Proceedings of the Church Congress ... Liverpool ... 1869* (Liverpool, 1869), p. 77, and *Report of the Proceedings of the Church Congress ... Nottingham ... 1871* (London, 1871), pp. 310–12.

45 J. D. Walsh, 'The Yorkshire Evangelicals in the Eighteenth Century, with special reference to Methodism' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1956).

46 Sara Slinn, 'Archbishop Harcourt's Recruitment of Literate Clergymen. Part 2: Clerical Seminaries for Literates in the Diocese of York, 1800–49', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 81 (2009); Sara Slinn, 'Sons of the Prophets: Domestic Clerical Seminaries in Late Georgian England' in John Doran, Charlotte Methuen and Alexandra Walsham, eds, *Religion and the Household*, Studies in Church History 50 (Woodbridge, 2014).

47 Eusebius, *The Actual State of Clerical Education Examined and a Remedy for its Defects Proposed* (London, 1826), pp. 22–3.

Arrangement of this study

This study is divided into two main parts. The first is an examination of the educational backgrounds of all the ordinands to the diaconate, for the home Church, for the period from 1780 to 1839. Then, for those dioceses where non-graduate clergymen (often termed 'literates') were either ordained in considerable numbers or formed a significant proportion of the whole, the policies of individual prelates are examined, both in terms of what they actually did and of what they said, looking in particular at their policies as articulated in episcopal visitation charges and published directions to their clergy, in diocesan and personal correspondence, and in terms of what was recorded by their near contemporary biographers. This makes it possible to see that bishops brought to their dioceses personal ideas about the educational background of the ideal parish clergyman, but also adjusted pragmatically to the local context in which they operated. What becomes clear is that those who spent their whole episcopal careers in regions where non-graduate clergy were the norm were not to be counted as the most enthusiastic endorsers of the graduate clergy ideal, focusing instead on regulating and improving existing methods of non-graduate preparation. The mid-1820s drive to increase the proportion of graduate clergy in the Northern Province was, I propose, instigated by an incomer to the province, Charles James Blomfield, who became bishop of Chester in 1824 and who was not habituated to the region's clerical culture.[48] In South Wales, pre-existing structures for the supply of non-graduate clergy were swept away by the aspiration of Thomas Burgess (bishop of St David's, 1803–25) for a Welsh higher educational institution which would adequately substitute for an English university education.[49]

The second part of this book concerns the nature of ordinands' education. It begins with a discussion of the provision at the two English universities of Oxford and Cambridge, exploring the extent to which a graduate clergyman, generally considered as the 'ideal type',[50] was fitted by his studies for his future role. Then follows an examination of the alternative routes men took to prepare themselves for orders. Firstly, it considers the provision of advanced schooling for young men in their late teens and early twenties, made by certain grammar schools, both endowed and private, in South Wales and north-west England.[51] The study then looks at those men who were in essence autodidacts, or who prepared for orders with minimum assistance,[52] before considering the work of 'tutors for orders' and small-scale, private, parish-based clerical seminaries or institutions, which offered academic and, sometimes, vocational and spiritual prepa-

48 See below, pp. 85–8.
49 See below, pp. 162–3.
50 The graduate clergyman is an ideal type, both in the sense that he conformed to a contemporary ideal, and also in the Weberian sense, since the 'approximate reality' implied by this term would select and accentuate the clergy's graduate status.
51 See Chapter 4.
52 See below, pp. 170–4.

ration to ordinands, both graduate and non-graduate.[53] Such activities were rather inconspicuous; certainly evidence of only a fraction of such enterprises is recoverable. Personal correspondence, journals and biographies throw up many references to such arrangements, but often in ways which make it difficult to identify particular tutors. However, some bishops made it a rule to enquire carefully about non-graduates' preparations for orders and, in these cases, much information can be found amongst the ordination application papers preserved in the various diocesan registries. A rich, additional source of information about the operation of certain clerical educators can be found in the records of the Elland Clerical Society, which dispersed those young men it selected for ministerial preparation amongst various tutors.[54]

Scope and limitations

In many ways this study has only scratched the surface of the matter of how Anglicans prepared for orders in the period before the theological colleges; undoubtedly there are other matters which could be profitably presented, and avenues which could be pursued a great deal further. Here it is worth noting some of the limitations of this research, resulting in part from methodological considerations but also from space constraints, and commenting on what has not been attempted.

Firstly, the study concerns ordination to the diaconate – the initial and, to all intents, irreversible entry into clerical life.[55] At this period it was common to proceed to the priesthood about twelve months after taking deacons' orders. Deviations from this rule of thumb were rare: shorter intervals occasionally occurred if there was a pressing pastoral need or a vacant benefice was at stake; longer intervals might result from personal circumstances, or were occasionally imposed by bishops for reasons of discipline or until a probationary condition had been fulfilled. Such intervals, however brief, mean that the data presented here is valid only for the *diaconate*: the proportion of graduates amongst those ordained to the *priesthood* will be very slightly higher, since some of those ordained deacon as undergraduates took degrees before they were priested.[56]

Secondly, since the focus is on the ordinand at the point of *entering* the Church, this study can comment on how successful the non-graduate was in

53 See pp. 174–97.

54 For clerical education societies and their records see below, pp. 182–6.

55 Anglicans understood Holy Orders to be indelible, the character of the ordinand being irreversibly changed by the act of ordination. The Clerical Disabilities Act (1870) allowed clergy to relinquish their orders and rejoin the ranks of the laity, thus avoiding secular and ecclesiastical penalties for unclerical behaviour, but the Church recognised a continuing, subsisting, spiritual character in such men.

56 For five sample dioceses (Bath and Wells, Bristol, Gloucester, Hereford and Winchester) where undergraduate ordinands were admitted fairly frequently, 23.7% were of graduate status (BA or SCL) by their priesting. Of the rest, most never graduated.

getting into orders, but makes no claims to discuss the longer-term trajectory of their careers, although undoubtedly such a dynamic study might be attempted.

Thirdly, and relatedly, the data presented can be used only with caution to describe a diocese's clergy as a whole. Clergy migrated between dioceses, and a bishop who imposed a blanket ban on non-graduate ordinands rarely took this as far as not licensing non-graduate curates already in orders, and had little influence over the selection of those who were given benefices: legally the choice belonged to the benefice's patron, and a bishop's power of veto was limited only to manifest unfitness.[57] Additionally, since the proportions of literate men ordained for a diocese changed significantly over time, even if there had been no in-migration of literate clergy, a bishop who barred non-graduate ordinands almost certainly had some senior non-graduate clergy remaining from earlier generations. Thus a study of ordination records, as presented here, is likely to yield rather different results to a study based on episcopal visitation records.

Fourthly, this study does not deal specifically with the social status of clerical recruits, although matters of educational histories and social class were frequently elided by contemporaries, a conflation that remains common in historiographical discussions of clerical backgrounds; it is indeed a struggle to keep them separate. Clergy who had not attended university are generally assumed to have been poor and from lower ranks of society – why else had they not gone to university? By contrast, graduate clergy are generally assumed to have been comfortably situated, from families sensible to the necessity of a degree to 'get on' and with capital to invest in their offspring.

The difficulty with this rule of thumb is that whilst it may have a degree of merit on the large scale, it offers little utility on the intimate scale of individual careers. There are plenty of well-connected and wealthy literates, and plenty of graduates of poor, humble parentage. The difference between a graduate and a non-graduate was frequently only a matter of natal order or luck, often interpreted as the working of Providence. An excellent demonstration of this lies in the operation of the Lady Elizabeth Hastings Exhibition, which saw numerous northern boys from humble backgrounds sent to Queen's College, Oxford. Exhibitions were awarded to the best scholars of specified northern grammar schools, tested by an academic examination, followed up by the drawing of lots. Of the eight best scholars, every year, three were deselected by lot, 'as leaving something to Providence'.[58] The unfortunate three able young men were thus left to make their own way in the world without higher education; the lucky five went on their way to university.

57 In the late 1820s there is some limited evidence of bishops imposing restrictions upon literates later in their careers, but it seems likely that such attempts were recent and not widespread – see A Yorkshire Incumbent [William Snowden], *The Church. The Case of 'Non-Graduate Clergymen' usually called 'Literates' dispassionately considered* (London, 1830), pp. 6–7. Bishop Kaye of Lincoln made some efforts to prevent non-graduate clergy taking up curacies – see LA, DIOC/COR/B/5/14/1/13.

58 Richard Gilbert, *Liber Scholasticus* (London, 1829), pp. 412–22.

Undoubtedly perceptions of an ordinand's social status were relevant to bishops, and explain the admittance of the occasional literate by those who usually excluded such men; for individual cases we can sometimes offer such explanations. But we cannot bring to an examination of clerical social status the same kind of rigour we can to educational status. Even when we do have quantities of detailed biographical information, it is usually problematic. Classifying a man by an estimation of the rank of his parents at birth (often available from baptismal certificates, included amongst ordination application papers) and comparing him to a man whose status has been taken from the rank of his parents when he was a young adult (for instance, from college records or ordination papers) cannot suffice. Many a young father recorded as 'labourer' on a baptismal certificate, subsequently transformed into a prosperous farmer, might latterly describe himself as a gentleman. Wealth and social status were not, in most instances, persistent categories but fluid: a function of life cycle and the vicissitudes of fortune. Neither can social distance be measured objectively, since it varies according to the perspective of the viewer. Significantly, the bishops lacked a shared conception of suitability or respectability. Some baulked at those who had occupied 'menial' occupations, working with their hands or as the servants of other men.[59] Some had qualms about ordaining 'gentlemen' who had been involved in business or trade,[60] or who had followed the other professions – medicine, law and the armed forces – which had distinctly unsacramental overtones. Others were delighted to ordain celebrities of war.[61] Lying over all of this was the fact that the accident of lowly birth was wiped out by university membership. There was simply no shared conception of where the line was to be drawn when it came to barring entry to the ministry on the grounds of social background or life experience.

That is not to say such a study might not be attempted; indeed, most previous diocesan studies which deal with the clergy have ventured some comments upon social class composition, using widely varying methodologies and schemes of status categorisation. Since this study does not tackle social status directly, it does not offer a detailed critique of such studies. However, their conclusions

59 Canon Law did not exclude such men from ordination, although 'base or servile labour' was prohibited after ordination (Canon 75 (1604)). However, a sense that manual or servile labour debased character seems to have prevailed. A bar on ordaining 'any that hath been brought up in husbandry or some other base and handicraft labour' was introduced in the canons of 1571, but was not subsequently renewed – see Gerald Bray, *The Anglican Canons, 1529–1947* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 174–5. However, in 1650, Archbishop Parker resolved to exclude 'all others which have been brought up and sustained themselves either by occupation or other kinds of life alienated from learning' – see John Bruce, *Correspondence of Matthew Parker* (Cambridge, 1853), pp. 120–1.

60 Some bishops dealt with the matter by requiring a three-year separation from trade – see Sara Slinn, *York Clergy Ordinations, 1800–1849* (York, 2001), pp. vii–viii.

61 Canon Law's ancient prohibitions on clerical involvement with bloodshed cast a doubt on the suitability of lawyers, who dealt death through judicial process, and of doctors who certainly drew blood. Clergy were also prohibited from bearing arms, but a number of half-pay officers were ordained after the end of war in 1815. The inconsistency of ordaining men who had not only seen armed service but who were also retained to serve again did not escape the notice of critics – see William Cobbett, *Cobbett's Legacy to Parsons*, 4th edn (London, 1835), pp. 172–4.

present significant challenges for the reasons outlined above: the difficulty of obtaining reliable, comparable status information, and the difficulty in finding a categorisation of status which had a contemporary reality. Thus a large-scale prosopographical study of the status and rank of clerical recruits cannot be a close-cousin of this present study. Instead, the way forward undoubtedly lies in gathering and analysing competing discourses of gentility, respectability and sacramental suitability.

Part One

ENTRANTS TO THE CLERICAL PROFESSION 1780–1839