

“JUST AS THE PRIESTS HAVE THEIR WIVES”:
PRIESTS AND CONCUBINES IN ENGLAND, 1375-1549

Janelle Werner

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Department of History.

Chapel Hill
2009

Approved by:

Advisor: Professor Judith M. Bennett

Reader: Professor Stanley Chojnacki

Reader: Professor Barbara J. Harris

Reader: Cynthia B. Herrup

Reader: Brett Whalen

© 2009
Janelle Werner
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

JANELLE WERNER: “Just As the Priests Have Their Wives”: Priests and Concubines
in England, 1375-1549

(Under the direction of Judith M. Bennett)

This project – the first in-depth analysis of clerical concubinage in medieval England – examines cultural perceptions of clerical sexual misbehavior as well as the lived experiences of priests, concubines, and their children. Although much has been written on the imposition of priestly celibacy during the Gregorian Reform and on its rejection during the Reformation, the history of clerical concubinage between these two watersheds has remained largely unstudied.

My analysis is based primarily on archival records from Hereford, a diocese in the West Midlands that incorporated both English- and Welsh-speaking parishes and combines the quantitative analysis of documentary evidence with a close reading of pastoral and popular literature. Drawing on an episcopal visitation from 1397, the act books of the consistory court, and bishops’ registers, I argue that clerical concubinage occurred as frequently in England as elsewhere in late medieval Europe and that priests and their concubines were, to some extent, socially and culturally accepted in late medieval England. Clerical relationships took on a variety of configurations, but many resembled secular marriages, and these similarities may have contributed to the social acceptability of clerical families.

Despite the resemblance of these relationships to marriage, though, clerical concubines faced real disadvantages. Evidence about the social and economic status of

priests and concubines points to the low status of women who partnered with priests – particularly those in stable, long-term unions. Clerical concubines bore the brunt of punishment for these relationships: they were more likely to be punished than their clerical partners, and they were punished more harshly. These women were presented with less tangible difficulties, too. Despite the social tolerance of clerical families on the ground, the figure of the clerical concubine was not an honorable one. Moral censure of priests' partners drew on centuries of hatred and denigration of priests' wives; clerical concubines were characterized as lecherous, venal women, often equated – both tacitly and explicitly – with prostitutes.

To Dan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I sit down write these acknowledgements, I am overwhelmed by the number of people who have contributed – directly or indirectly – to this project. I am deeply grateful to all of them.

I could not have completed this dissertation without the financial support I received from several institutions and benefactors. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill provided generous support from the moment I arrived on campus. Teaching assistantships and a Mowry Grant from the Department of History and the Graduate School's William N. Reynolds Fellowship helped me complete my studies. A Schallek Dissertation Fellowship from the Medieval Academy of America and the Richard III Society provided me with the means to spend nearly two years working (and playing) in English archives. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies Dissertation Completion Fellowship gave me the freedom of a year of writing without distraction.

Many scholars have shared their insights, advice, and scholarship with me over the years. Stan Chojnacki, Barbara Harris, Cynthia Herrup, and Brett Whalen encouraged me throughout this project and gave me thoughtful comments on both my proposal and the final draft. Others have given me feedback at conferences or responded kindly to an unsolicited email from an unknown graduate student: Ann Barstow, Beth Barr, Virginia Davis, Caroline Dunn, Kit French, Joe Goering, Richard Helmholz, Ruth Karras, Marie Kelleher, Maryanne Kowaleski, Maura Lafferty, Shannon McSheffrey, Carin Ruff, and Jennifer Thibodeaux. I owe special thanks to Robert Swanson, who first pointed me in the direction of the diocese of

Hereford, and to Christopher Whittick of the East Sussex Record Office, who patiently helped me decipher the illegible scrawls of Hereford's court clerks.

I owe thanks to the staffs of the British Library, Lambeth Palace Library, the Gloucestershire Record Office, The National Archives, the Shropshire Archives, and the Worcestershire Record Office. The archivists and staff of the Herefordshire Record Office were gracious hosts during the eighteen months that I spent working on Hereford's church court records. I owe special thanks to archivists Rhys Griffiths and Hayden Burns and to the volunteers of the Friends of The Record Office – in particular, Sue Hubbard and Jim and Muriel Tonkin – who made my many months of research there a pleasure. I was fortunate to have the good company of Sylvia Gill and Richard Churchley as they sat across the table from me while sifting through episcopal registers for the Clergy of the Church of England Database.

I am especially grateful to the natives of Herefordshire and Powys, who must be some of the kindest people in the world. Mike and Annie Allen – welcoming landlords, good friends, and dedicated protectors of my Skoda – made Broxwood my second home; Elizabeth Snead-Cox entertained me with whiskey and the history of Broxwood Court; Jas Grassie, Kate Bull, and the Stitch 'n Bitchers at the Royal Oak in Gladestry provided companionship and a warm fire throughout the (endless) winters; and the Hay Festival stewards can always be counted on for a riotously good time. My deepest thanks are due to Lis and Andrew Darwin, who opened their home to me. Darwin provided curry nights and weekly mountain bike rides into the wilds of North Herefordshire (with only the occasional injury), and was a keen editor, as well; Lis offered Sunday dinners and bread-and-butter puddings, and let me sooth my frustrated inner gardener in her kitchen garden. Many of my fondest memories

were forged over tea or dinner or drinks at Church House, and without Andrew and Lis, my time there would have been far less rich.

My colleagues, friends, and students at Beloit College helped sustain me through a tough year of teaching, writing, and job-seeking. Linda Sturtz was a wonderful and supportive departmental chair. Mona Jackson, Ellen Joyce, Rob LaFleur, Ed Mathieu, and Beatrice McKenzie helped me navigate my first year of teaching. Rachel Ellett, Jennifer Esperanza, Paul Dionne, and Rod Wyrick were (and are) excellent companions, and Kathy Greene and Teresa Leopold were the best possible neighbors. Maria Albares, Madeline Kramer, Audrey Landale, and John Tryneski showed me what a joy teaching can be and reminded me that I am on the right path, after all. More than anything, I am grateful for the unexpected friendship of Daniel Barolsky, and he knows exactly why.

The support I have received from friends and family over the years has made all the difference. My mother, Ellen Werner, believed in me from the start and reminded me to celebrate my achievements. Dana Brinson, Amy Crow, Denise Domet, Marko Dumančić, Laurel Frydenborg, Marisa Guptarak, Zoe Latil, Amy Pattee, Cindy Skema, Nathaniel Smith, and Laura Wylie gave me unwavering support and kept me laughing. My fellow yogis at the Yoga Spot – especially Nancy Kimberly and Suzanne Faulkner – saw me through the highs and lows of the past nine years. Dina Taylor has been my best friend and came to visit when I needed her most. Sara Snyder has nourished me emotionally and spiritually, and helped me rewrite a truculent chapter at a rather crucial time. More recently, Erin Allingham, Laura Jones, and Raina Langley have dragged me out of the house for Sunday brunches, and Jason Bissey has supplied those brunches with weird, unhealthy doughnuts. Gee Barger, it turns out, shares my brain.

Two women have shaped my intellectual development and career trajectory. As a sophomore at Bryn Mawr College, I had the good fortune to stumble upon a course on medieval women taught by Susan Stuard. During that first lecture, I realized I was home. Dr. Stuard was a supportive mentor throughout my undergraduate studies, but more than anything else, I am grateful to her for suggesting I work with Judith Bennett.

To say that this dissertation could not have been written without the guidance of Judith Bennett is an understatement, and I find it difficult to articulate the many ways in which she has helped me over the past nine years. I was an exasperating and willful student at times, I am sure, but Judith somehow managed to balance firm supervision with unfaltering encouragement, and frank criticism with sincere praise. She has been a sharp and candid editor, and one with the uncanny ability of knowing what I meant to say, even when I did not. I could not have asked for a better advisor and mentor, and I am proud to be her student.

I dedicate this dissertation to Dan Warthman, who has been both friend and father to me over the past twenty years. He read endless drafts of job letters, chapters, and conference papers. He answered the phone at all hours and always knew when something was wrong. He listened to my worries, but cut right through my bullshit. He encouraged me and coached me and got me through the darkest of times. I would be lost without him.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSCRIPTION	xv
ABBREVIATIONS	xvi
CHAPTER 1: Clerical Concubinage and “English Exceptionalism”	1
Priestly Celibacy and Clerical Incontinence	2
“English Exceptionalism” in the History of Clerical Concubinage	7
Clerical Masculinity, Women, and European Misogyny	18
Approaching the Problem	23
CHAPTER 2: Traditions of Clerical Celibacy in England	33
The Origins of Clerical Celibacy in the Roman Church	35
Clerical Celibacy in the Roman Church: Antecedents and Influences	38
Clerical Celibacy in the Roman Church: Motives for Reform	44
Gender and Clerical Celibacy in the Roman Church	50
English Legislation on Clerical Marriage: The Imposition of Clerical Celibacy, 1066-1175	56
The Struggle to Enforce Celibacy in England, 1179-1300	61
The Legalization of Clerical Marriage in England, 1300-1549	68
CHAPTER 3: The Diocese of Hereford	83
Herefordshire and the Marches	84
Landscape	84
Political history	86

Demography and economy.....	90
Ethnicity	96
The Diocese of Hereford and its Clergy	99
History of the diocese.....	99
Description of the diocese	100
Diocesan administration	101
The secular clergy of Hereford.....	111
Socio-economic status of the clergy.....	115
Ethnicity of the clergy	119
CHAPTER 4: Whores, Strumpets, and Priests' Mares: Clerical Concubines in Pastoral and Popular Literature.....	121
Whores, Strumpets, and "The Devil's Mare"	128
"Devils that Beguile Men": Lechery and Female Sexuality.....	139
"Shall I never repent me": Depictions of priests and concubines in pastoral and popular literature	148
CHAPTER 5: "Just as the Priests Have Their Wives": Clerical Concubinage in the Diocese of Hereford.....	167
Prosecuting Clerical Incontinence in the Consistory Court.....	171
Detecting clerical offenders.....	174
Appearing in court, admitting guilt, and proving innocence.....	176
Disciplining and reforming offenders	179
Enforcing discipline.....	183
Decoding Concubinage.....	185
Clerical Incontinence in the Diocese of Hereford	199
Clerical Concubinage, Marriage, and Family.....	217
CHAPTER 6: "And of His Own Will, He Promised to Turn Her From Their Home": Lay and Clerical Concubines in the Diocese of Hereford.....	239

Lay Concubines	242
Clerical Concubines.....	254
Social Standing of Priests and Concubines	256
Clerical Concubines in Hereford's Consistory Court.....	265
CHAPTER 7: Gender, Sexuality, Misogyny	281
Clerical Sexuality and Masculinity.....	284
Clerical Concubines, Misogyny, and Female Sexuality	294
APPENDICES	299
Appendix I: Three late medieval <i>exempla</i> about clerical concubines	299
Appendix II: Charges of clerical incontinence in Hereford's consistory court, 1407-1503	302
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	303
Manuscripts.....	303
Printed Primary Sources	304
Secondary Sources.....	309

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: The late medieval bishops of Hereford.....	106
Table 3.2: Average benefice values, by deanery, in the diocese of Hereford.....	116
Table 4.1: An Alphabet of Tales: Titles and narrative summaries of exempla listed under the headings “woman” and “women”	141
Table 5.1: Individual clerics charged with incontinence in Hereford’s episcopal visitation of 1379	202
Table 5.2: All charges of incontinence in Hereford’s episcopal visitation of 1379	204
Table 5.3: Estimated percentages of the secular clergy charged with incontinence in continental European dioceses in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.....	206
Table 5.4: Charges of clerical incontinence in Hereford’s consistory court between 1442 and 1503, selected years	209
Table 5.5: Charges of clerical incontinence prosecuted by the fifteenth- century bishops of Hereford.....	212
Table 5.6: Distribution of charges of incontinence in Hereford’s eastern and western deaneries, selected years	214
Table 5.7: Distribution of charges of concubinage in Hereford’s eastern and western deaneries, selected years	215
Table 5.8: Charges of fornication and incontinence made against beneficed and unbeneficed clerics in Hereford’s 1397 visitation	216
Table 6.1: Naming data for women charged with sexual misconduct with laymen or clerics, 1468-69.....	257
Table 6.2: Status differences in clerical couples charged with incontinence in Hereford’s consistory court, selected years	260
Table 6.3: Ethnicity of clerical couples charged with incontinence in Hereford’s consistory court, selected years	262
Table 6.4: Penances assigned to clerical couples for fornication and concubinage in Hereford’s consistory court, selected years	267

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The late medieval dioceses of England and Wales, from R.N. Swanson, <i>Church and Society in Late Medieval England</i>	xvii
Figure 2: The late medieval diocese of Hereford, from William J. Dohar, <i>The Black Death and Pastoral Leadership</i>	xviii
Figure 3: Status differences in clerical couples charged with fornication and concubinage in Hereford's consistory court, selected years	261
Figure 4: Cross-ethnic clerical couples charged with fornication and concubinage in Hereford's consistory court, selected years	263

NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSCRIPTION

This dissertation draws on a variety of primary and secondary sources. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of primary sources and foreign-language scholarship are my own. For Middle English documents, I modernized the language, but rephrased the word order only when necessary.

I have quoted from both printed primary documents and archival manuscripts in this dissertation. When using printed documents, I have translated each quotation. If having the original Latin or Middle English text was important or useful, I have included it in the corresponding footnote. I have translated all quotations from archival sources and provided complete transcriptions in the footnotes.

Medieval church court records are notoriously difficult to read. Proceedings were recorded hastily, often while court was in session, and clerks used formulaic, abbreviated, and highly regional conventions. When transcribing these and other archival documents, I have tried to balance accuracy and accessibility. I added minimal punctuation for ease of reading and used standard, modernized place-names. I modernized common forenames, but left surnames as written. (When a surname has been spelled in more than one way, I have usually used the most common spelling). Standard editorial conventions make an occasional appearance: underscoring represents a blank space in a court entry; brackets contain either my editorial addition or an extrapolation of missing words; and carrots (< ... >) denote superscripted text.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Concilia Magnae Britanniae* David Wilkins, ed. *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, 4 vols. London: R. Gosling, 1737.
- Councils and Synods I* F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, eds. *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205-1313*, vol. II, parts 1 and 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.
- Councils and Synods II* Dorothy Whitelock, Martin Brett, and C.N.L. Brooke, eds. *Councils and Synods, With Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 871-1204*, vol. I, parts 1 and 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.
- EETS (OS and ES) Early English Text Society (Original Series and Extra Series)
- HCA Hereford Cathedral Archives
- HRO Herefordshire Record Office
- IMEV* *The Index of Medieval Verse*, edited by Carleton Brown. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.
- MED* *Middle English Dictionary*
- OED* *Oxford English Dictionary*
- Statutes of the Realm* *The Statutes of the Realm: Printed by Command of His Majesty King George the Third from Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts*, 11 vols. London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1810-28.
- Tubach Frederic C. Tubach. *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*. Folklore Fellows Communications 86, no. 204. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia Akademia Scientiarum Fennica, 1969.
- TWNFC* *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*

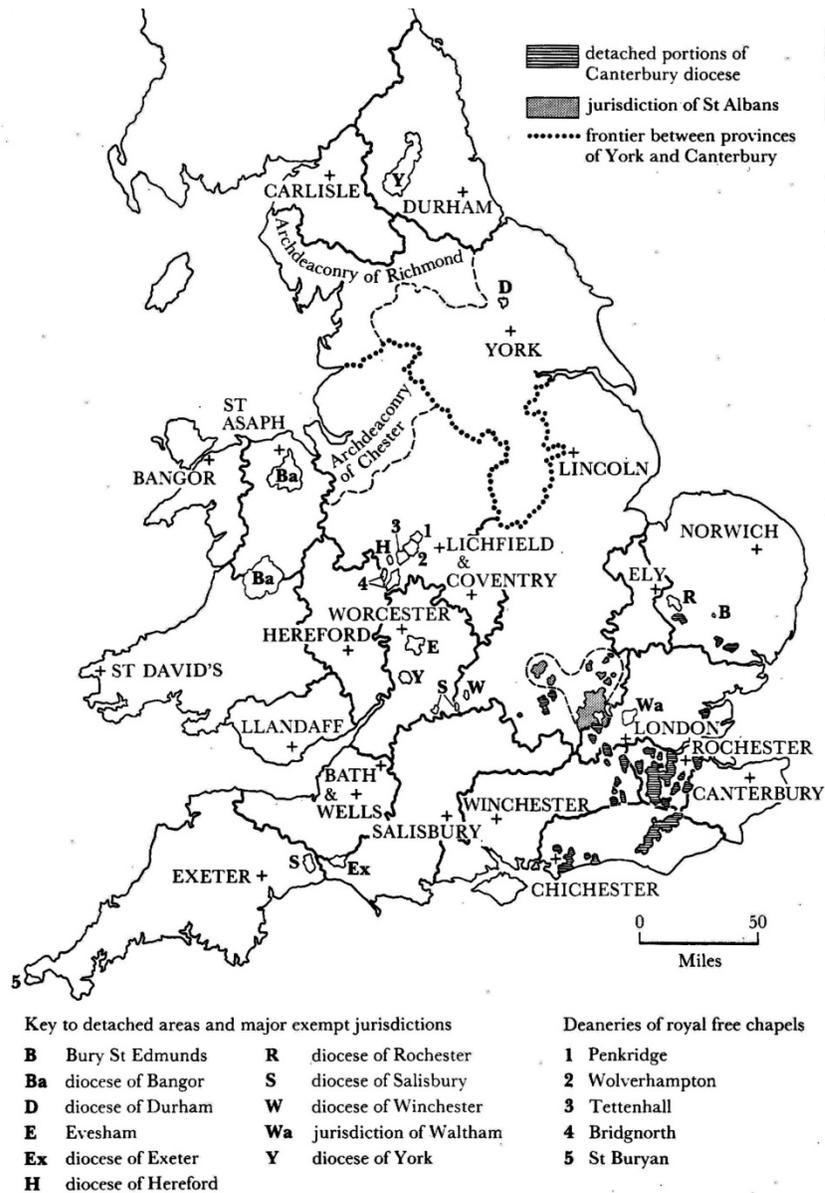


Figure 1: The late medieval dioceses of England and Wales, from R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England*

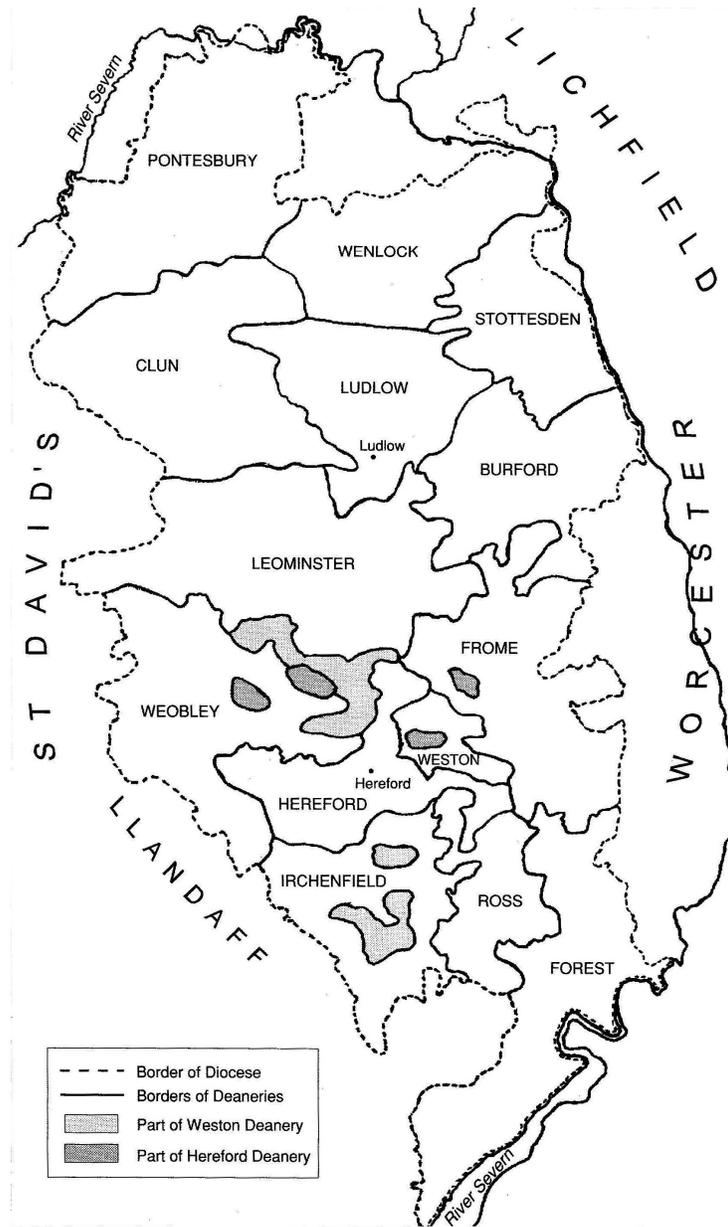


Figure 2: The late medieval diocese of Hereford, from William J. Dohar, *The Black Death and Pastoral Leadership*

Chapter 1: Clerical Concubinage and “English Exceptionalism”

In May 1442, John Haynes was charged by his parish priest, John Dunn, with unlawfully marrying a woman to whom he was related. Haynes, responding angrily, accused Dunn himself of sexual impropriety and asked a pointed question: “Why cannot laymen have wives in peace, just as the priests have theirs?” Haynes’ unorthodox analogy must have struck a nerve, because when he was brought before the bishop of Hereford a few weeks later, his punishment was unusually humiliating. He was sentenced to be flogged around his parish church the following Sunday, wearing the linen rags of a penitent and carrying a candle. He then had to approach the pulpit during high mass, confess that “he had spoken the words out of evil will,” and publicly seek forgiveness from Dunn.¹

In many ways, the altercation between John Haynes and John Dunn was typical of their time: English church courts frequently dealt with charges of defamation, and many of

¹ Herefordshire Record Office (HRO), HD4/1/88, f. 50. Charge of defamation: *Johannes Heynys de parochie de Leintwardine diffamat quemdam dominum Johannem Dun vicarium de Leintwardine ac decanum de Clun inponendo eidem crimen incontinentie videlicet quod habebit uxorem et quia dictus dominus Johannes eundem citat querelando seu rederguendo quare non possint ipsi uxores in pace sicut sacerdotes habebunt suas. Vir comparet et fatetur quod huiusmodi verba animo scandalizant eundem et habet pro commissis i fustigationem circa ecclesiam suam parochiam denudatus ad pannos lineos portans i cerem dimidi libre in manu sua et quod veniret tempore alte misse ad pulpetum et ibidem <publice> peteret misericordiam a dicto domino Johanne. Et quod protulisset huiusmodi verba ex mala voluntate et non ex bono zelo sed iracundia motus fuisset.* Charge of illicit marriage: *Johannes Heynys detectus <est> quod pater uxoris sue fuit compater dicti Johannis haynys et eandem duxisset in uxorem scienter non obstante impedimento predicto et quod mater dicti Johannis Heynys fuit commater uxori dicti Johannis. Vir comparet et negat de huiusmodi impedimentis et habet ad purgat se coram dicto Commissario in proximam viii manu quorum iiii erunt de vicinis suis et alii iiii de parochie de Leintwardine et habet ex prefixione dicti [comissarii] ad comparendum ibidem in proximam ad videndum de conversatione sua. I am grateful to Maura Lafferty for her help in deciphering this case.*

these cases involved allegations of sexual misbehavior. What is remarkable about this case, however, is Haynes' casual allusion to priests' wives, because it suggests both that many priests might have ignored the ecclesiastical mandate of celibacy, and that all priests were vulnerable to accusations of sexual misbehavior. By investigating the historical realities behind Haynes' offhand slur, this dissertation takes a closer look at priests and their "wives" in England from 1375 until the initial legalization of clerical marriage in 1549.

Priestly Celibacy and Clerical Incontinence

Christian teaching on clerical celibacy and marriage, to be explored more fully in Chapter 2, changed substantially in the West between 500 and 1500. The model of a celibate life was an important element of early Christian thought, and early church councils, such as Elvira (c. 306) and Nicaea (325), reiterated the importance of a *chaste* clergy, exhorting married priests to refrain from sexual intercourse with their wives.² The notion of a *celibate*, never-married clergy gained traction in the eleventh century, when clerical elites became increasingly concerned about sacerdotal purity, the formation of clerical dynasties, and the alienation of church property to priests' families. Celibacy became a marker of clerical status, helping the clergy distinguish themselves from lay society.

² A chaste marriage was a licit union in which the couple agreed to live together chastely, without sexual relations. See Jo Ann McNamara, "Chaste Marriage and Clerical Celibacy," in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, ed. Vern L. Bullough and James Brundage (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982), 22-33, for a brief summary of chaste marriage. See Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) for a more detailed analysis of chaste marriage and its many possible variations. For these, and other, early Christian councils, see Paul Beaudette, "'In the World but not of it': Clerical Celibacy as a Symbol of the Medieval Church," in *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Garland, 1998), 23-46; Samuel Laeuchli, *Power and Sexuality: The Emergence of Canon Law at the Synod of Elvira* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1972).

Until the central middle ages, however, most priests were married, although some chose to maintain chaste marriages. During the church reforms of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries – often referred to (somewhat erroneously) as the Gregorian Reform – celibacy became an ideal for the secular clergy. A number of eleventh-century synods denounced clerical marriages but did not make them illicit. The Lateran Councils of 1123 and 1139 finally and irrevocably decreed marriage a canonical crime for clerics in major orders (that is, priests, deacons, and subdeacons), and Lateran II (1139) barred married men from entering the priesthood. The councils specifically forbade both clerical marriage and concubinage, ordering clergymen to dismiss their wives and discouraging the laity from attending masses held by married priests. Priests' wives were denounced as concubines; their children were declared illegitimate. One chronicler even recorded (falsely, but dramatically) that Pope Leo IX ordered that “the concubines of Roman priests” be made slaves in the Lateran palace.³ The enforcement of celibacy was difficult, and at the end of the twelfth century, most clerics in minor order were still married, and many priests, deacons, and subdeacons maintained public relationships with women. Church leaders repeatedly condemned priestly unchastity in local and ecumenical councils and waged a centuries-long battle to eliminate the sexual incontinence of priests.⁴ By the fourteenth century, part of this

³ In his *Decretum*, Gratian did, however, include the penalty of enslavement for the wives, mistresses, and children of clerics. See James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 251.

⁴ James Brundage provides a clear overview of the Gregorian reforms and their reception in *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 214-23, 251-53, and 314-19. For more in-depth histories of celibacy and these reforms, see C.N.L. Brooke, “Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England, 1050-1200,” *Cambridge Historical Journal* 12 (1956): 1-21; Michel Dortel-Claudot, “Le Prêtre et le Mariage: Évolution de la Législation Canonique des Origines au XII^e Siècle,” *L'Année Canonique* 17 (1973): 319-44; Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), especially 81-106; Charles A. Frazee, “The Origins of Clerical Celibacy in the Western Church,” *Church History* 41 (1972): 149-67; Jean Gaudemet, “Le Célibat Ecclésiastique: Le Droit et la Pratique de XI^e au XII^e Siècles,” *Zeitschrift der*

battle had been won: although priests were still sometimes – perhaps often – sexually unchaste, the ideal of clerical celibacy was widely accepted.⁵

Yet evidence from late medieval Europe shows that clerical sexual incontinence – in the form of both fleeting sexual encounters and stable, marriage-like relationships – was widespread.⁶ “Clerical incontinence” was an umbrella term under which clerics were charged by medieval ecclesiastical courts; the expression could describe any sort of sexual misbehavior, ranging from bigamy to sodomy.⁷ In this study, however, I am concerned with two distinct types of incontinence: fornication and concubinage. “Fornication” was, strictly defined, sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and woman, although the term was often used to denote adultery, polygyny, or other sexual crimes. One of the most common charges brought by ecclesiastical courts against the laity, it often served (like incontinence)

Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonische Abteilung 68 (1982): 1-31; Henry C. Lea, *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church*, 4th edition (London: Watts & Co., 1932); John E. Lynch, “Marriage and Celibacy of the Clergy: The Discipline of the Western Church, A Historico-Canonical Synopsis,” *The Jurist* 32 (1972): Part I, 14-38; Part II, 189-212.

⁵ The end of clerical celibacy in England began in the 1530s, when some English clerics began to marry, even though clerical marriage was not legalized in England until 1549. These marriages were not secure for long, for Mary soon revoked the Edwardian legislation and deprived married clergy of their benefices; clerical marriage was not fully restored until 1604.

⁶ The choice of terminology here is a difficult one. In his article on priests’ housekeepers in early modern Italy, Oscar Di Simplicio coins the term “marriagelike” to describe certain stable, sexual relationships between priests and their servants. I have adopted it here, along with the term “clerical unions,” to denote clerical relationships that resembled marriage – long-standing relationships in which the couple lived together and possibly had children – but were, of course, illicit. See Di Simplicio, “Perpetuas: The Women Who Kept Priests,” in *History from Crime: Selections from Quaderni Storici*, ed. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 32-64.

⁷ According to Thomas Aquinas, incontinent behavior was characterized by moral weakness and a lack of restraint. Unlike intemperance, which Aquinas viewed as habitual, incontinence was a transitory vice: the incontinent person did not choose to sin, but was merely unable to restrain his or her passion in a given situation. Bonnie Kent, “Transitory Vice: Thomas Aquinas on Incontinence,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27 (1989): 199-223.

as a catch-all for heterosexual misconduct.⁸ Clerics, on the other hand, were rarely charged with fornication; instead, court officers prosecuted them under the charge of incontinence.

The generic charge of incontinence often concealed concubinary relationships. “Concubinage” was a less flexible – but more complex – term than fornication, and medieval lawyers had a difficult time defining it. Classical Roman law had defined concubinage as a relationship that lacked either marital affection or the intention to marry, but Gratian argued that a concubinary relationship *did* have marital affection; nonetheless it was “an imperfect, informal marriage.” According to other medieval decretalists, concubinage was a non-marital sexual relationship, usually a stable relationship between a man and a woman who were not married to each other, but habitually had sexual intercourse. They may or may not have lived together; they were often, but not always, sexually exclusive. These relationships were similar to marriage, and so the distinction between a wife and a concubine was not always an easy one for medieval thinkers to make. Most canon lawyers accepted the definition of concubinage as a long-term, cohabiting relationship with an intention to marry, but they also used the term concubinage to describe an illicit union, one that lacked marital affection. This led to further difficulties, as canon lawyers struggled to distinguish between concubinage and clandestine marriage, that is, a marriage that had not been properly publicized and solemnized. Among lay people, the distinctions between marriage and concubinage were always hazy. But after 1139, when clerical marriage was made a canonical crime, this lack of clarity was no longer an issue for clerics in major orders. All clerical unions were deemed

⁸ Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 303-8.

illicit and concubinary, any clerical sexual activity became a sin, and both were classed as incontinence by ecclesiastical courts.⁹

Distinguishing between fornication, concubinage, and marriage was sometimes difficult for medieval people; it is even trickier for modern historians. In theory, canon law made no substantial distinctions between clerical fornication and concubinage. In practice, this was also true: most clerics were generically charged with incontinence. However, some canonists thought that concubinage should be more harshly punished than fornication. The *Summa "Elegantius,"* compiled in 1169, prescribed a harsher punishment for concubinage, because a priest who disobeyed the prohibition of clerical marriage sinned more [*plus peccat*] than a priest who merely fornicated with a woman.¹⁰ The Statutes of Winchester (c. 1224) – some of the most in-depth legal writing on clerical sexual incontinence in England – devoted far more space to the punishment of concubinage than fornication. Clerics who fornicated were prohibited from celebrating mass until they had confessed their sin and received their penance. However, a cleric who kept a concubine in his house or otherwise supported her might have his benefice seized. Another statute from 1217 decreed that a cleric who was guilty of fornication should be temporarily suspended from his office and denied the fruits of his benefice. A cleric who held a concubine, however, would lose his benefice and be stripped of his holy orders altogether.¹¹ Perhaps inspired by such statutes, church court

⁹ James A. Brundage, "Concubinage and Marriage in Medieval Canon Law," in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, 118-28; Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 222-23, 444-45.

¹⁰ Quoted in Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 318.

¹¹ F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, eds., *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205-1313*, vol. II, parts 1 and 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). See particularly chapters 39, 40, and 42 of the "Statutes of Winchester," at 132; for the 1217 "Statutes of Salisbury," see chapters 7 and 8, at 62. Practice, of course, differed greatly from prescription, as I will discuss in chapters 5 and 6.

officers often took pains to describe these relationships as specifically as they could, adding details about the length of a relationship, offspring, and whether a couple lived together.

“English Exceptionalism” in the History of Clerical Concubinage

The historiography of clerical fornication and concubinage has developed in different directions on the Continent and in England. Evidence from continental Europe has shown that both fornication and concubinage were widespread among the clergy in the centuries leading up to the Reformation. Yet the topic has been neglected by English historians, who have assumed that clerical celibacy was a matter of practice as well as doctrine.

English thinkers have long looked across the Channel and perceived themselves as different. Defending English clerics against attacks that characterized them as “the worst of all others [in Christendom],” Thomas More asserted:

But yet for that I have myself seen and by credible folk have heard, like as you say by our temporality, that we be as good and as honest as anywhere else... the secular clergy is in learning and honest living well able to match and... far able to over-match number for number the spirituality of any Christian nation.¹²

William Tyndale, in an uncharacteristic defense of the English clergy, similarly claimed in 1527 that concubinage was less prevalent in England than it was in Germany, France, or Spain.¹³ Today, most English historians would still agree, arguing (or assuming) that English priests, with their “honest livings,” were better behaved than their continental peers.

This narrative of English “exceptionalism” has been used to frame topics as diverse as the English feudal system, the development of common law, and the history of Parliament,

¹² Thomas More, *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, in *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 6, part 1, ed. Thomas M.C. Lawler, Germain Marc’Hadour, and Richard C. Marius (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 295.

¹³ William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises*, as quoted in Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 151.

but it has had a particularly tight grasp on the history of religion. A far-reaching challenge to this orthodoxy has recently been presented by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton in *Books Under Suspicion*, in which she argued that English religious thought had a long history of intellectual radicalism that was not simply based on Wyclif and his followers, but was, instead, heavily influenced by continental writers. Kerby-Fulton queried the usefulness of the pervasive England/Continent binary, concluding that English religious culture was more pluralist and less insular than scholars have assumed.¹⁴ I extend Kerby-Fulton's challenge to English exceptionalism to another aspect of religious culture and argue that priests who committed fornication or kept concubines were as common in England as on the Continent.

Despite the evidence that concubinage was widespread on the Continent, most English historians have portrayed misbehaving clerics as both culturally and statistically marginal. Unchaste clergy on the European Continent have been more forthrightly acknowledged and studied. Although historians continue to debate the full extent to which continental priests kept concubines, they agree that concubinage was relatively common, perhaps particularly in the Low Countries, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy.¹⁵

¹⁴ Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). See also Dyan Elliott's comments on *Books Under Suspicion*: "Comment: English Exceptionalism Reconsidered," *Journal of British Studies* 46 (2007): 753-57.

¹⁵ Less research has been done on clerical concubinage in other European countries, but in Sweden and Norway, for example, at least one-third of illegitimately-born clerics who received papal dispensations were sons of priests. Bernard Schimmelpfennig, "Ex Fornicatione Nati: Studies on the Position of Priests' Sons from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 2 (1980): 3-50, at 41. In a late fourteenth-century visitation from the diocese of Prague, Brigitte Rath found that 26 percent of priests in the diocese were reported as having concubines, and a further 25 percent were accused of other sexual transgressions. Brigitte Rath, "'De Sacramentis, Concubinato et ludo taxillorum...': Über ein Böhmisches Visitationsprotokoll aus dem 14. Jahrhundert," in *Von Menschen und Ihren Zeichen*, ed. Ingrid Matschinegg, Brigitte Rath, and Barbara Schuh (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1990), 41-59. There have been no thorough quantitative studies of clerical concubinage in Italy, but a number of scholars have noted its acceptance and consequences: Daniel E. Bornstein, "Priests and Villagers in the Diocese of Cortona,"

Some of the best quantitative research comes from the Low Countries and France. E.J.G. Lips has found that between 45 percent and 50 percent of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century clergy of North Brabant were fined for being incontinent, although he could not establish how many of these priests were involved in long-term relationships.¹⁶ In a detailed analysis of records from the diocese of Tournai, Monique Vleeschouwers-Van Melkebeek has shown that between 6 percent and 11 percent of curates were fined for incontinence in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹⁷ The diocese of Rouen has produced inconsistent statistics: one study of the thirteenth century found that 12 percent of priests were accused of having concubines, but other estimates have ranged from 7 percent to 50 percent.¹⁸ The bishop of Rouen found eighty-six clerics accused of incontinence in 1250 and suspected that about one-eighth (13 percent) of the clerics in his diocese were unchaste.¹⁹ More recently, however, Jennifer Thibodeaux has done a thorough analysis of the Rouen records and

Ricerche Storiche 27 (1997): 93-106; Carol Lansing, "Concubines, Lovers, Prostitutes: Infamy and Female Identity in Medieval Bologna," in *Beyond Florence: The Contours of Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, ed. Paula Findlen, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 85-100; Guido Ruggiero, "The Abbot's Concubine: Lies, Literature, and Power at the End of the Renaissance," in *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, ed. Ellen E. Kittell and Thomas F. Madden (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 166-80; Di Simplicio, "The Women Who Kept Priests."

¹⁶ E.J.G. Lips, "De Brabantse Geestelijkheid en de Andere Sekse," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 102 (1989): 1-29.

¹⁷ Monique Vleeschouwers-Van Melkebeek, "Mandatory Celibacy and Priestly Ministry in the Diocese of Tournai at the End of the Middle Ages," in *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe: Studia in Honorem Adriaan Verhulst*, ed. Jean-Marie Duvosquel and Erik Thoen (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1995), 681-92.

¹⁸ Pere Benito i Monclús, "Le Clergé Paroissiale du Maresme (Évêché de Barcelone) d'après les Visite Pastorales (1305-1447): Recherches sur le Thème du Concubinage," in *Le Clergé Rural dans l'Europe Médiévale et Moderne: Actes des XIIIe Journées Internationales d'Histoire de l'Abbaye de Flaran, 6-8 Septembre 1991*, ed. Pierre Bonnassie (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail: 1995), 187-203; Raymond Eichman, "The 'Prêtres Concubinaires' of the Fabliaux," *Australian Journal of French Studies* 27 (1990): 207-13.

¹⁹ Mary C. Mansfield, *The Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 118, fn. 87; Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 403.

concluded that between 12 and 34 percent of the secular clergy in the thirteenth-century diocese were accused of errant sexual behavior (the proportions varied among different archdeaconries).²⁰ In the Low Countries and France, then, somewhere between 6 and 50 percent of clerics were accused of errant sexual behavior, with most estimates clustering between 10 and 30 percent.

Evidence of clerical concubinage in Germany is more oblique. Here, priests' sons – there is almost no evidence about clerical daughters – have been a particular interest among historians.²¹ Bernhard Schimmelpfennig has examined papal dispensations for priests' sons to receive major orders (an illegitimately born man needed a dispensation to become a priest) and found that more than sixty sons of priests from just *one* German diocese were granted dispensations in a forty-year period in the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century diocese of Constance, Peter-Johannes Schuler has found a yearly average of between five and twenty-five sons of priests who asked for dispensations to be ordained.²²

²⁰ Jennifer D. Thibodeaux, "Man of the Church, or Man of the Village? Gender and the Parish Clergy in Medieval Normandy," *Gender & History* 18, 2 (2006): 380-99; see also Jennifer D. Thibodeaux, "Man of the Church or Man of the Village? The Conflict of Masculinities among Priests in the Thirteenth-Century Diocese of Rouen" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 2004). Andrew J. Finch provides anecdotal evidence of concubinary priests in the fourteenth-century diocese of Cerisy (France), but no hard statistical figures, in "Crime and Marriage in Three Late Medieval Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions: Cerisy, Rochester and Hereford" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of York, 1988). A late fourteenth-century visitation from the diocese of Lyon lists many concubinary priests, but without contextual evidence about the number of clerics in the diocese, it is not possible to know what proportion of them held concubines. The visitation is printed, with a brief introduction; in Abbe Merle, "Visite Pastorale de Diocèse de Lyon (1378-1379)," *Bulletin de la Diana* 26 (1937-39): 217-363.

²¹ Bernhard Schimmelpfennig has noted that the term "priest's son" was used indiscriminately to refer to any child who had at least one parent who was supposed to be celibate – priest, monk, nun, etc. Schimmelpfennig, "*Ex Fornicatione Nati*," 12.

²² Schimmelpfennig, "*Ex Fornicatione Nati*," 39; Peter-Johannes Schuler, "Illegitime Klerikerkinder in Bistum Konstanz," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 144 (1996): 183-214. Gerritdina D. Justitz, "The Abbot and the Concubine: Piety and Politics in Sixteenth-Century Naumberg," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 92 (2001): 138-64. For concubinage in Germany after

It seems that priests, concubines, and their children were a common part of German parish life. Gerritdina Justitz has also demonstrated that concubinage was fairly common in the late medieval period and that German reformers in the sixteenth century were eager for clergy to marry and turn their concubines into wives. Using canon law, papal dispensations, and literature, Schuler and Schimmelpfennig have pointed to the widespread social and legal problems of priests' children in medieval Germany.

Concubinage seems to have been especially well tolerated in Spain where, as James Brundage has noted, some communities – hoping to safeguard the honor of the parish women – *required* priests to take a concubine.²³ Pere Benito i Monclús, examining visitations from the Maresme region in the diocese of Barcelona in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, found a total of fifty-seven priests accused of holding concubines. Although he could not accurately determine what proportion of the clergy this figure represents, Monclús has concluded, “During first third of the fourteenth century, every parish knew a concubinary rector or vicar.”²⁴ A different study of the early fourteenth-century diocese of Barcelona found that 25 percent of the clergy held concubines.²⁵ Other historians have focused on the lived experiences of Spanish priests and their concubines: Marie Kelleher, in a study of clerical concubines in Barcelona, argued that although priests' concubines had no legal status, they were accepted within their communities; Heath Dillard suggested that concubines

the Council of Trent, see also Simone Laqua, “Concubinage and the Church in Early Modern Münster, *Past and Present*, Supplement 1 (2006): 72-100.

²³ Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 476.

²⁴ Benito i Monclús, “Le Clergé Paroissiale,” 190-91.

²⁵ Immaculada Puig I Alue, *Les Visite Pastorales al Baix Empordà* (Unpublished *Mémoire de Licence*, University of Barcelona, 1985), 199-200, as cited in Benito i Monclús, “Le Clergé Paroissiale,” 187.

(and their children) were fairly well protected by the law. Perhaps because concubinage was somewhat accepted among laypeople, concubinary priests were “tolerated and not always punished,” according to Reginetta Haboucha.²⁶

Italian historians have not offered much quantitative work on clerical concubinage but, in the tradition of microhistory, they have written about the lived experiences of particular priests and concubines. Oscar di Simplicio has found that, in Italy, concubines were integrated into their communities; some were considered “matriarchs” who held important roles and even took on spiritual responsibilities in rural parish churches during the early modern period. Carol Lansing has agreed that concubinage was fairly common, arguing that clerical children posed a legal problem because of their illegitimate status. Daniel Bornstein, examining parish life in the diocese of Cortona, has argued not only that clerical concubinage was widespread, but that it was accepted – and sometimes even welcomed – by parishioners: “clerical concubinage was evidently considered to be normal, even proper behavior.”²⁷

²⁶ M.A. Kelleher, “‘Like Man and Wife’: Clerics’ Concubines in the Diocese of Barcelona,” *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002): 349-60; Heath Dillard, *Daughters of the Reconquest: Women in Castilian Town Society, 1100-1300* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 128, 132; Reginetta Haboucha, “Clerics, their Wives, and their Concubines in the ‘Partidas’ of Alfonso el Sabio,” in *Homo Carnalis: The Carnal Aspects of Medieval Human Life*, ed. Helen R. Lemay (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1990), 85-104, quotations at 85 and 94. See also Eukene Lacarra Lanz, “Changing Boundaries of Licit and Illicit Unions: Concubinage and Prostitution,” in *Marriage and Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, ed. Eukene Lacarra Lanz (New York: Routledge, 2002), 158-94, for estimates of the proportion of illegitimate children whose fathers were priests. Flocel Sabaté has noted that women in medieval Catalonia were frequently slandered using insults about sexual relations with clerics, “Femmes et Violence dans la Catalogne du XIV^e Siècle,” *Annales du Midi* 106 (1994): 277-316.

²⁷ Di Simplicio, “The Women who Kept Priests”; Lansing, “Concubines, Lovers, Prostitutes”; Daniel E. Bornstein, “Parish Priests in Cortona: The Urban and Rural Clergy,” *Prete nel Medioevo: Quaderni di Storia Religiosa* 4 (1997): 165-93; Bornstein, “Priests and Villagers”; Ruggiero, “The Abbot’s Concubine.”

Current research on clerical concubinage in late medieval England stands in stark contrast to this continental wealth of quantitative and qualitative studies of priests, their concubines, and their communities. Three English studies have considered the topic in the immediate wake of church reforms in the central middle ages. C.N.L. Brooke has argued that married clerics among the parish clergy were a particular problem in the late thirteenth century and that the hereditary succession of ecclesiastical benefices continued practically unchecked in spite of canonical prohibitions. Even among the upper clergy (bishops, archdeacons, canons, and regular clergy), marriage was slow to die out. Julia Barrow has pushed the end-date of clerical marriage in Hereford until around 1200, even among the higher clergy; hereditary succession, she has argued, was “the norm” in Hereford until the early thirteenth century. Brian Kemp has bolstered these arguments by tracing the hereditary succession of the living of the parish of Eye (Herefs.), which was the “preserve” of one Herefordshire family from 1150 to 1254.²⁸

For the fourteenth century and later, English historians have acknowledged that incontinence was the most frequent charge brought against the clergy in the church courts, but have said little more.²⁹ Their studies suffer from three broad problems: historians have

²⁸ Brooke, “Gregorian Reform in Action.” Brooke provides a list of married clerics in “Married Men among the English Higher Clergy, 1066-1200,” *Cambridge Historical Journal* 12, 2 (1956): 187-88. Julia Barrow, “Clergy in the Diocese of Hereford in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” *Anglo-Norman Studies* 26 (2004): 37-53,” and Barrow, “Hereford Bishops and Married Clergy, c. 1130-1240,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 60, no. 141 (1987): 1-8; Brian Kemp, “Hereditary Benefices in the Medieval English Church: A Herefordshire Example,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 43 (1970): 1-15.

²⁹ Research on concubinage in the rest of Britain has been similarly spotty, but a contrasting assumption about Wales – that nearly every Welsh parish priests had a concubine – has been prevalent. See Glanmor Williams who asserted, “The practice of clerical marriage was in fact so persistent and so general in Wales at this time [the 1530s] that English popular opinion firmly believed the practice to have legal sanction.” Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation* (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 1993), quotation at 341, but see 339-46. There is little scholarship on clerical concubinage in Ireland; see Joseph E. Earley and

used small samples to generalize about the entire late medieval period; they have been interested in clerical incontinence only as it relates to anti-clericalism, the reception of the Reformation, and the supposedly better behavior of the English clergy; and they have yet to look at the topic for what it can tell us more broadly about medieval English society and constructions of gender and sexuality.

The most frequently cited studies of clerical incontinence are based on limited samples of the documentary evidence. In his study of ecclesiastical courts in the sixteenth century, Ralph Houlbrooke looked at accusations of sexual misconduct against clerics in two archdeaconries in the dioceses of Winchester and Norwich, but only examined records from one year in each diocese. He found eleven clerics charged with incontinence in the diocese of Winchester between 1527 and 1528, and eight clerics in Norwich in 1538. While Houlbrooke has admitted that his records were incomplete, he nonetheless broadly concluded – based on this small survey – that incontinence among the clergy was rare. Tim Cooper, in his monograph on the pre-Reformation clergy, has cast a slightly larger net in the records of the Lichfield consistory court: between 1524 and 1531, charges were brought against eighteen clerics in the diocese. While he acknowledged that these charges might “confirm negative stereotypes of the parish clergy,” he nonetheless argued, like Houlbrooke, that “the problem [of incontinence] was comparatively small-scale.” Margaret Bowker, in her study of the diocese of Lincoln, surveyed clerical incontinence in four different years over the course of the early sixteenth century. Sampling four Lincoln court books from the early sixteenth century, she found varying statistics, with more charges toward the end of her survey period:

Leonard E. Boyle, “Conflict Over the Rectory of Cinel Luachain During the Fifteenth Century” *Breifne: Journal of Cumann Seanchais Bhreifne* 9, 35 (1999): 103-13; and Brian J. Hodkinson, “A Fifteenth-Century Precentor of Limerick,” *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* 35 (1996): 72-75.

between 1514 and 1521, priests in 10 percent of parishes visited were charged with incontinence. Because good comparative figures are not available for the sixteenth century, Bowker rightly refused to make broad generalizations about the extent of sexual immorality among the clergy, but other historians, such as Christopher Harper-Bill and Peter Marshall, have not hesitated to use her statistics to do just that.³⁰

Peter Heath's study of the diocese of York uniquely examines clerical incontinence over a comparatively long period of time, but his geographical area is still limited, covering only between fifty and eighty-six parishes (the number varies by date) within the diocese. Heath examined one late fifteenth-century court book (1453 to 1491) from the Dean and Chapter of York and found ninety-three charges against priests for fornication or adultery over a period of forty years. He concluded, based on dropped charges and purgation, that only 1.5 offenders per year were guilty of sexual misconduct and that, therefore, sexual offenses were uncommon and easily corrected by the church courts. Heath did not differentiate between fornication and concubinage (in fact, he did not mention concubinage at all in his analysis of the court book), and he assumed that "only a small number of offenders eluded the vigilant detection processes of that age." While Heath provided some examples of priests committing fornication or bequeathing property to their sons and daughters, he downplayed their significance, arguing that priests were simply "easy" targets

³⁰ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation 1520-1570* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 177-80; Tim Cooper, *The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 1999), 177; Margaret Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495-1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Christopher Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England, 1400-1530*, revised edition (New York: Longman, 1996); Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood*.

for accusations of sexual misconduct.³¹ Even Heath's statistical analysis, while more inclusive than the rest of the English studies, was based on a relatively narrow sample of the available evidence. None of these brief studies considered variations over time, for example, or whether particularly zealous or lax prosecution of clerical incontinence might affect reported numbers.

With the exception of Heath's analysis, most of these English studies have been based on early sixteenth-century documents, and they betray a somewhat narrow interest in clerical incontinence only in terms of its ramifications for anticlerical sentiment and the English Reformation. Statistics about clerical unchastity have been used primarily to support arguments about whether the English laity were satisfied with their pastoral care. Christopher Harper-Bill has continuously downplayed sexual immorality among the clergy in order to further his argument that the pre-Reformation church was neither corrupt nor anachronistic, that most English parishes were satisfied with their priests, and that "the majority of the clergy at every level struggled manfully to discharge the duties committed to their order."³² Peter Marshall similarly argued that cases of concubinage were rare not because priests feared court sanctions, but because they had a sense of responsibility to their parishioners. He asserted that clerical unchastity damaged a priest's relationship with his parishioners, and his commitment to the notion that clerical unchastity was "very limited" seems tied up in his broader argument that widespread dissatisfaction with the early Tudor church was not an initial cause of the Reformation.³³ Tim Cooper stressed that relations between the clergy and

³¹ Peter Heath, *English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 115-19, quotation at 118.

³² Harper-Bill, *Pre-Reformation Church*, vii.

³³ Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, 145.

laity were good, and that infrequent charges of clerical incontinence do not provide evidence of lay hostility towards priests.³⁴

Even historians who argue that anti-clericalism was a prime factor in the English Reformation tend to downplay clerical incontinence. Robert Whiting has stressed that laypeople were becoming more dissatisfied with the clergy during the sixteenth century, but not that clerical incontinence was widespread or on the increase. According to A.G. Dickens, the immoral sexual behavior of priests was a contributing factor to anti-clericalism. Yet he has also downplayed evidence of clerical depravity, arguing that contemporary Protestant critics of the English church were exaggerating their claims of clerical unchastity.³⁵

It is telling that the one early (1976) study of clerical incontinence which showed a high rate of clerical incontinence has rarely been cited in more recent scholarship. Using records from the diocese of Chichester in 1506 and 1507, Stephen Lander found that 15 percent of parishes in the archdeaconry of Chichester had an incontinent cleric.³⁶ These findings from Chichester fall within the range of figures from continental Europe, but historians have tended to ignore them, possibly because Lander's numbers do not mesh well with their broader arguments about the Reformation. Thomson, one of the few historians who

³⁴ Cooper, *Last Generation*, 169-78.

³⁵ Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 113-44; A.G. Dickens, "The Shape of Anti-Clericalism and the English Reformation," in *Politics and Society in Reformation Europe: Essays for Sir Geoffrey Elton on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. E.I. Kouri and Tom Scott (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1987), 379-410.

³⁶ Stephen Lander, "Church Courts and the Reformation in the Diocese of Chichester," in *Continuity and Change: Personnel and Administration of the Church of England 1500-1642*, ed. Rosemary O'Day and Felicity Heal (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976), 215-38.

has even mentioned Lander's study, breezily dismissed it with an inverse argument:

"Misconduct was not a problem in some 85 per cent of the parishes."³⁷

It is also telling that although English historians have rarely cited the many available studies on continental concubinage, most have been willing to assert that the English clergy had concubines less often than continental clerics. Cooper, for example, stated that concubinage was "treated with a high degree of tolerance" on the Continent, but did not refer to the historical literature; Marshall, having consulted some old scholarship on Spain and Germany, claimed, "In England the ecclesiastical atmosphere was notably less conducive to widespread concubinage than it was in parts of the Continent."³⁸ Since English historians have rarely consulted modern continental historians, on what are they basing these claims? The writings of Thomas More and William Tyndale, it might seem. While sixteenth-century views on the "honest living" of English priests are no doubt useful, they are perhaps not an objective guide to levels of concubinage among European clergy. It is time to look again at More's and Tyndale's confident assertions of "exceptional" English purity.

Clerical Masculinity, Women, and European Misogyny

Clerical concubinage is about more than simply misbehaving priests; it also has much to tell us about masculinity, gender, and misogyny. As to masculinity, Jennifer Thibodeaux, working on priests in the thirteenth-century diocese of Rouen, has argued that although preachers used the language of masculinity (such as metaphors of spiritual fatherhood and of the priest-warrior) in their sermons to persuade secular clerics to be "men of the church," they nonetheless defined clerical masculinity as separate and independent from lay models of

³⁷ Thomson, *Early Tudor Church*, 171.

³⁸ Cooper, *Last Generation*, 173; Marshall, *Catholic Priesthood*, 151.

manhood. But priests deviated from church prescriptions, engaging in behavior that signaled their secular manhood: they frequented taverns, brawled, played sports and military games, carried weapons, and failed to wear clerical dress. These Norman priests rebelled against a clerical model of masculinity and “behaved and appeared as secular men through their participation in masculine activities through their participation in masculine activities and with their clothing.”³⁹

English historians of the late medieval clergy have, like Thibodeaux, been interested in the masculinity of priests, but their analyses have, so far, hinged on the assumption of widespread conformity to clerical celibacy. They have not only dismissed clerical concubinage as *statistically* irrelevant, but have characterized it as *culturally* marginal. Recent scholarship on late medieval England has suggested that clerical masculinity was both distinct from and at odds with lay masculinity, with some historians arguing that because priests could not have sexual relations, marry, raise children, or carry weapons, they were something of a third gender. As Robert Swanson has put it, they were *male*, but they were not *men*; they were, instead, “emasculine.” Patricia Cullum, perceiving a fundamental conflict between lay and clerical masculinity, has argued that young clergy were forced to make a choice: “to keep their vows and risk their masculinity; or to confirm their masculinity at the expense of their vows.” Cullum further argued not only were clerics not fully masculine, they were not fully socially adult, either, because they did not marry and become heads of independent households. More recently, Cullum has asserted that clerics had a distinct life-cycle and, therefore, a different cultural identity from laypeople.⁴⁰ If English priests, like

³⁹ Jennifer D. Thibodeaux, “Gender and the Parish Clergy,” 395.

⁴⁰ R.N. Swanson, “Angels Incarnate: Clergy and Masculinity from Gregorian Reform to Reformation,” in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D.M. Hadley (New York: Longman, 1999),

their colleagues in Rouen, frequently had sex with women, lived with concubines, and raised children, perhaps English notions of clerical masculinity also incorporated characteristics of lay masculinity. In Chapter 7, I return to the matter of how clerical sexual misbehavior, particularly priests' position as heads of households, affected notions of clerical masculinity.

The topic of clerical concubinage also offers some interesting possibilities for researching women and gender in late medieval England. Marie Kelleher's article on clerical concubines in the diocese of Barcelona is, so far, the only study that has addressed the lived experiences of these women. As Kelleher has insightfully observed, modern historians mimic medieval church court officers: "the vast secondary literature on this topic [clerical sexuality] has been nearly silent on the subject of the women involved in such cases, unwittingly treating them much as medieval ecclesiastical authorities did, as a secondary element in the larger problem of clerical discipline."⁴¹ One reason for this lack of research is methodological, for clerical concubines are some of the most obscure of all medieval European women, and their lives can be difficult to trace in medieval records. Unrecognized by law, they rarely appeared in medieval documents unless their illicit relationships were

160-77; P.H. Cullum, "Clergy, Masculinity and Transgression in Late Medieval England," in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, 178-96, quotation at 183; Cullum, "Life-Cycle and Life-Course in a Clerical and Celibate Milieu: Northern England in the Later Middle Ages," in *Time and Eternity: The Medieval Discourse*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz and Gerson Moren-Riaño (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 271-81. In another recent article, however, Cullum has argued that clerical identity became less distinct from lay identity during the later middle ages, due to both the increasing numbers of married clergy in the lower orders and the transmission of clerical culture to elite laymen, who sometimes received basic training in Latin, law, and accounts so that they could manage their households and estates. P.H. Cullum, "Learning to be a Man, Learning to be a Priest in Late Medieval England," in *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 135-53.

⁴¹ Kelleher, "Like Man and Wife," 350. For the late medieval period, Reginetta Haboucha has looked at legal attitudes toward clerical concubines in "Clerics, their Wives, and their Concubines"; Flocel Sabaté has briefly discussed slanderous language used against concubines in "Femmes et Violence," 280-81. For the early modern period, see Di Simplicio, "The Women who Kept Priests," and Ruggiero, "The Abbot's Concubine."

noticed by an officer of the ecclesiastical courts. Yet other groups of marginal women, such as lesbians and prostitutes, whose histories were ignored for decades, have proven to be productive avenues for historical research.⁴² Priests' concubines may be some of the most invisible of medieval women, but as I argue in Chapter 7, research into their lives illuminates some long-standing issues of women's history.

The experiences of – and attitudes toward – clerical concubines also have broader ramifications for the history of misogyny. Anne Barstow and Mary Prior, both looking at clerical wives during the English Reformation, have raised questions about how cultural perceptions of concubinage affected women's lived experiences, even after the legalization of clerical marriage. Barstow has argued that residual medieval scorn of priests' concubines and ambivalence about clerical marriage combined to stop legitimate clerical wives from participating in the development of the early Anglican church. Prior has similarly concluded that the position of clerical wives reflected the attitude of church and society toward women – neither especially positive – and that bishops' wives (especially vulnerable because of their visibility) were even more socially and legally disadvantaged than laywomen.⁴³

⁴² For a discussion of some of the difficulties involved in searching through court records for women involved in informal relationships, see Ruth Mazo Karras, "Invisible Women," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 39 (2005): 15-21. For the conceptual problems faced in writing histories of another group of invisible women – lesbians – see Judith M. Bennett, "'Lesbian-Like' and the Social History of Lesbianisms," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9 (2000): 1-24; and Jacqueline Murray, "Twice Marginal and Twice Invisible: Lesbians in the Middle Ages," in *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, ed. Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (New York: Garland, 1996), 191-222.

⁴³ Anne Llewellyn Barstow, "The First Generations of Anglican Clergy Wives: Heroines or Whores?" *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 52 (1983): 3-16; Mary Prior, "Reviled and Crucified Marriages: The Position of Tudor Bishops' Wives," in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (New York: Methuen, 1985), 118-48. See also Helen Parish, *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation: Precedent, Policy and Practice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Muriel Porter, *Sex, Marriage and the Church* (Melbourne: Dove, 1996). Most historians would agree with Peter Sherlock's recent assessment that although seventeenth-century clerical wives (by which time the clerical wife was a respected figure) have been well-researched, "almost nothing is known about the first generations of women who took clerical husbands." Peter Sherlock,

Clerical wives and concubines were vilified in different ways throughout the central and later middle ages, and their history speaks to both the theoretical constructions and tangible effects of misogyny. Many women's historians have viewed the imposition of clerical celibacy during the central middle ages as a crucial moment in the history of misogyny: binary ideas of gender became solidified, a masculine identity crisis precipitated a restructuring of the gender system, convictions about female pollution were more clearly (and more virulently) articulated. Dyan Elliott has more specifically argued that the figure of the priest's wife – once respectable – became demonized by the intellectual elite, “cast in the role of the devil's colleague and concubine.” Reformation historians, too, have considered attitudes toward priests' companions, showing that the first generations of clerical wives faced similar censure, both from elite clerical culture and within their communities.⁴⁴ While the figure of the “parson's wife” eventually became respected again, the intervening centuries should prove fertile ground for exploring whether and how elite, clerical ideas were adopted by lay society, why these misogynistic attitudes were so long-lived in both elite and popular culture, and how (or if) they changed over time. In the concluding chapter of this dissertation, I return to these three themes to explore how clerical incontinence in late medieval England urges us to think reconsider the histories of masculinity, women, and misogyny.

“Monuments, Reputation and Clerical Marriage in Reformation England,” *Gender & History* 16 (2004): 57-82, quotation at 59.

⁴⁴ There is a large body of scholarship on medieval misogyny. For a few examples, see Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*; Jo Ann McNamara, “The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150,” in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 3-29; Katherine M. Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966). For Reformation-era attitudes toward clerical wives, see Prior, “Reviled and Crucified Marriages”; Sherlock, “Monuments, Reputation and Clerical Marriage.” Quotation is from Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, at 106.

Approaching the Problem

The topic of clerical concubinage in England is overdue for an in-depth case study. This dissertation takes as its focus the late medieval diocese of Hereford. Although some scholars have characterized the diocese as “backward,” far from London and slow to embrace change, the advantages to basing a study on Hereford far outweigh this seeming shortcoming. The diocese of Hereford is a manageable size, making it ideal for a long-term case study; its location in the Welsh Marches allows an unusual opportunity to compare English and Welsh parishes; and it has excellent ecclesiastical records, including a rare episcopal visitation.

Hereford is a mid-sized diocese, much smaller than the largest English dioceses of Lincoln and York and on par with the more typical dioceses of Worcester, Winchester, and Salisbury (see Figure 1). Hereford’s manageable size allows a thorough analysis of its records over time: this study begins in 1375 (when the first good sources on concubinage began) and concludes in 1549, the initial legalization of marriage in England and Wales. No diocese, of course, is representative of all England, but Hereford nonetheless offers a well documented case study.

The pre-Reformation diocese had its seat in the town of Hereford and was something of an amalgamation, for it included all of Herefordshire, a large part of Shropshire, and smaller parts of two other English counties (Worcestershire and Gloucestershire) and three Welsh counties (Radnorshire, Monmouthshire, and Montgomeryshire). The diocese spanned the Marches –contested territory between England and Wales – which meant that it contained both Welsh- and English-speaking areas. Some historians have argued that the Welsh church

was more tolerant of clerical concubinage than the English church, and Hereford offers an chance to look closely at differences between its Welsh and English parishes.⁴⁵

Hereford has some important and rare sources: an episcopal visitation from 1397, excellent records from the consistory court, and a nearly uninterrupted series of episcopal registers. Hereford's episcopal visitation is one of only a few extant medieval English visitations and is remarkably complete, containing returns from two-thirds of the parishes in the diocese.⁴⁶ The obligation of church officials to visit their jurisdictions developed in England in the thirteenth century, an outgrowth of the synodal legislation that proliferated after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Returns from these "visitations" reported the moral infractions of laypeople and clerics, noting crimes such as defamation, usury, and

⁴⁵ Glanmor Williams notes that clerical celibacy "was less observed in Wales than almost anywhere." See Williams, *The Welsh Church*, 339-46, quotation at 339; Heath, *English Parish Clergy*, 107. Ian Jack has supported William's characterization of the Welsh clergy, describing a "campaign of enforcement" of clerical celibacy in one Welsh lordship in the 1440s. R. Ian Jack, "Religious Life in a Welsh Marcher Lordship: The Lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd in the Later Middle Ages," in *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Du Boulay*, ed. Caroline Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1985), 143-57. See Richard Davies, "The Church," in *The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Ralph Griffiths (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 87-114, for a discussion of variations in the practice of celibacy between the English and Welsh churches.

⁴⁶ I am grateful to Christopher Whittick of the East Sussex Record Office for providing me his translation of Hereford's visitation. I also consulted the original manuscript, housed in the Hereford Cathedral Archives and Library (HCA), A1779. Diocesan visitations from medieval England are rare. Some late thirteenth-century and early fourteenth-century visitations are extant, but few from the late fourteenth or fifteenth centuries have survived. A 1405 visitation from the diocese of Salisbury, recorded within a bishop's register, has been edited by T.C.B. Timmins, "Extracts from the Register of John Chandler, 1404-1417," *Wiltshire Record Society* 39 (1984) and the Lincolnshire Record Office holds a visitation from 1473. Christopher Harper-Bill discusses an unedited visitation of the diocese of Norwich in 1499 in "A Late Medieval Visitation – The Diocese of Norwich in 1499," *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 34 (1977): 35-47. E.M. Elvey has edited an archidiaconal visitation, in *The Courts of the Archdeaconry of Buckingham, 1483-1523*, Buckinghamshire Record Society 19 (1975). There are a few visitations of single parishes, including one from an unedited 1401 visitation of the parish of Hartlebury in the diocese of Worcester, and a 1317 visitation of Tarvine (Cheshire), edited by Nigel J. Tringham, "The Parochial Visitation of Tarvin (Cheshire) in 1317," *Northern History* 38 (2001): 197-220.

fornication.⁴⁷ In April of 1397, Bishop Thomas Trefnant authorized his triennial visitation, during which his representative went through the diocese, parish by parish, questioning local clergy and laity (the latter assembled into juries) about the maintenance of their parish church and the moral lapses of their peers. Many infractions were immediately resolved through confession and correction; others would later be heard at the bishop's consistory court. Hereford's visitation offers a detailed snapshot of parish life at the turn of the fourteenth century. It also provides a nearly complete examination of sexually misbehaving clerics and includes more than eighty charges of fornication and concubinage among the clerics of the diocese.

Unlike episcopal visitations, consistory courts were held year-round, but charges were made only when churchwardens, prominent parishioners, or local clergy brought offenses to the court's attention. Court records contemporaneous with the 1397 visitation do not survive, but the diocese of Hereford holds a series of act books from its consistory court, running – with some breaks – from the mid-fifteenth century into the early modern period.⁴⁸ The act books, much like Hereford's visitation, recorded moral infractions, from defamation, to sorcery, to non-attendance at church services. But most of the cases contained within the books concerned charges of sexual misbehavior: adultery, incest, sodomy, fornication, and concubinage. Initially, an article was brought against a parishioner or cleric, who would be

⁴⁷ For discussions of episcopal visitations, see Finch, "Crime and Marriage"; Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), especially 158-66; and Tringham, "The Parochial Visitation of Tarvin."

⁴⁸ HRO, HD4/1/87-129. The first extant act book is for 1407-08; there is then a long break until 1442-43, after which the series continues with some gaps until 1547. There are no act books for the following periods: 1448-53, 1460-68, 1476-79, 1482-86, 1495-99, 1503-07, 1509-14, and 1531-34.

summoned to court and asked to respond to the charge, either admitting or denying the article. If a person denied the charge, he or she would undergo the process of canonical compurgation and would be required to bring neighbors (usually four or six) to court who would swear to his or her statement of innocence. If the compurgation was successful, the charge was dismissed. If the accused failed to bring in compurgators or admitted the charge, he or she would be assigned a penance – usually a public flogging around the parish church or market. Church courts procedure was notoriously slow, and cases often took months – and sometimes years – to be resolved.

We cannot always know the outcome of a case; as a result, there is more information about accusations of misbehavior than about guilt. And, as with all medieval records, methodology is tricky. We cannot know how many transgressions escaped detection by church officers, nor can we assume that all their accusations were valid. It is sometimes clear that a charge was falsely made; the commissary, who oversaw the consistory court, might dismiss an article because “it contained no truth.” Likewise, guilt is sometimes clear, and many cases were quickly resolved when a defendant admitted culpability. But most often, there is a troubling level of ambiguity about guilt or innocence. If defendants denied a charge but failed in compurgation, should we consider them innocent or guilty? And the court’s own method of establishing innocence – compurgation – further complicates the use of these records, for it is clear, in some instances, that guilty people successfully purged themselves. Culling these records for *accusations* of misconduct is fairly straightforward; compiling statistics for *guilty* priests is more difficult, indeed impossible. Quantitative analysis takes us only so far, but the court books also offer rich qualitative details about priests, their concubines and children, and parishioners’ attitudes towards concubinage.

For statistical analysis throughout the dissertation, I sample four of Hereford's act books: 1445-46, 1468-69, 1478-88, and 1501-02. I chose these books because they are complete (many of the act books are missing pages), in good condition, and fully legible. Further, they provide a long view of clerical sexual misbehavior in the last half of the fifteenth century. When possible, I include statistics from the 1397 visitation in these comparisons.

Hereford's episcopal registers, which run in an almost uninterrupted series, from the medieval period to the present, are my last major documentary source on clerical concubinage.⁴⁹ These registers, in which bishops recorded their daily business, include ordination lists (which show when priests were ordained to the minor and major orders); they detail institutions (when a cleric received a benefice); and they often document other actions, such as dispensations for the sons of priests to enter major orders, that provide evidence of clerical sexual misbehavior. These sources – the visitation returns, consistory court act books, and bishops' registers – provide the core documentary evidence for my study.

Given the dissertation's focus on both practice and cultural attitudes, my approach is bilateral, using both documentary and textual records. In terms of method, I use some quantitative analysis, but much of my study rests on close readings – not only of texts but also of documentary records – to talk about clerical concubinage. In this qualitative aspect of my work, I draw especially on religious and secular literature. Sermons, homilies, priests' handbooks, and didactic religious literature reveal how moralists viewed clerical

⁴⁹ HRO, AL19/4, AL19/6-14. Registers from all Hereford's bishops during the period of this study are extant, except for those of Bishops Edmund Audley (1492-1502) and Adrian de Castellesi (1502-04).

concubinage.⁵⁰ One homilist, for example, condemns clerics who “nourish the wives and clothe the adulteresses of others and harlots also, and maintain illegitimate sons.”⁵¹ A fourteenth-century sermon observes that “now most priests indulge more in sensual pleasure than do burgesses.”⁵² I also look at the writings of Lollards, who denounced unchaste priests and promoted clerical marriage.⁵³ A close analysis of these texts helps show how clerical concubinage was understood by both orthodox and unorthodox religious thinkers.

Secular texts in the English vernacular, such as songs, proverbs, and vernacular literature such as *Canterbury Tales* and *Piers Plowman* also support my discussion of lay attitudes towards clerical concubinage. Lascivious priests, clerks, and friars were a staple of medieval texts and songs, such as “Ladd Y the Daunce a Myssomur Day,” in which Jack, the holy-water clerk, seduces and impregnates a young woman.⁵⁴ A few proverbs, such as

⁵⁰ G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, 2nd edition (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1961) provides a useful discussion of late medieval sermons. I begin my search of religious literature with the following printed collections: M.M. Banks, ed., *An Alphabet of Tales*, EETS OS 127 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1904-05); Arthur Brandeis, ed., *Jacob's Well*, EETS OS 115 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1900); F. Madden, ed., *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, EETS ES 33 (London: 1879; reprint, London: Oxford University Press, 1962); Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983); John Mirk, *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies by Johannes Mirkus*, ed. T. Erbe, EETS ES 96 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1905); John Mirk, *John Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. G. Kristensson, Lund Studies in English 49 (Lund: Gleerup, 1974); Woodburn O. Ross, ed., *Middle English Sermons*, EETS OS 123 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940); E.H. Weatherly, ed., *Speculum Sacerdotale*, EETS OS 200 (London: Oxford University Press, 1936).

⁵¹ Quoted in Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, 259.

⁵² Quoted in Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, 268.

⁵³ Collections of Lollard writings include Anne Hudson, ed., *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Anne Hudson, ed., *Two Wycliffite Texts*, EETS OS 301 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Anne Hudson and Pamela Gradon, eds., *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 3 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983-90).

⁵⁴ For songs and ballads, I look at Carleton Brown, ed., *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939); E.K. Chambers and F. Sidgwick, eds., *Early English Lyrics* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1966); Francis James Child, ed., *The English and Scottish Popular*

“women, priests, and poultry never have enough” allude to priests’ greed and, possibly, their sexual appetites.⁵⁵ In Chaucer’s “Miller’s Tale,” Absolon, a parish clerk, cast “many a lovely look” on the wives of his parish and tried to seduce Alison, a carpenter’s wife.⁵⁶ While *Canterbury Tales* and *Piers Plowman* may provide a more literary perspective, songs, proverbs, and other colloquial material are invaluable in illuminating popular culture. Of course, the use of these texts raises critical methodological issues: to what extent can these texts – written, or at least written down, by literate men – serve as a reflection of popular opinion? Do they unreflexively reproduce old cultural topoi, such as the lascivious friar? Colloquial sources can nonetheless be useful; as Frances Dolan has put it in her study of popular representations of crime in early modern England, “these sources are *representations* that often conform to conventions and may or may not correspond to the range of actual experiences... yet [they] had material consequences, shaping as well as being shaped by...

Ballads (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1962); R.T. Davies, ed., *Medieval English Lyrics* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963); Thomas G. Duncan, ed., *Late Medieval English Lyrics and Carols 1400-1530* (New York: Penguin, 2000); R.L. Greene, ed., *The Early English Carols*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); Rossell Hope Robbins, ed., *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952); H.E. Rollins, ed., *Old English Ballads, 1553-1625, Chiefly from Manuscripts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920). “Ladd Y the Daunce” appears in Duncan, *Lyrics and Carols*, at 140-142, and in Greene, *Early English Carols*, at 276-77.

⁵⁵ For proverbs, I look at G.L. Apperson, *English Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases: A Historical Dictionary* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1929); Walter W. Skeat, *Early English Proverbs Chiefly of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910); Emmanuel Strauss, ed., *Dictionary of European Proverbs*, 3 volumes (New York: Routledge, 1994); Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950); F.P. Wilson, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); Bartlett Jere Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968). Quotation from Tilley, *A Dictionary of Proverbs*, 556.

⁵⁶ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edition, ed. F.N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 68-77.

cultural practices.”⁵⁷ With due care, late medieval colloquial sources can tell us as much as sermons or elite literature about how medieval people – preachers, courtiers, or peasants – thought about clerical fornication and concubinage.

The early chapters of this dissertation provide historical, legal, and socio-economic backgrounds for the project. Chapter 2 (“Traditions of Clerical Celibacy in England”) sets the stage by discussing both the wider shift toward clerical celibacy in the medieval church and specific legal developments in England. Beginning with the central middle ages, it looks at the church reforms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when celibacy was made mandatory for clerics and marriage became an impediment to priesthood. The chapter then examines how celibacy was imposed in England through synodal and parliamentary legislation. Tracing the continuing efforts to create and maintain a celibate clergy in England, it provides a prescriptive context for the dissertation.

Chapter 3 (“The Diocese of Hereford”) turns to Hereford and its clergy, setting up two main categories of analysis: socio-economic status and ethnicity. Based on the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of 1291-92 and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, this chapter analyzes the economic contours of Hereford and describes the clerical make-up of the diocese. It primarily addresses structural and economic issues: which parishes and benefices were wealthy or poor; if certain areas of the diocese were more impoverished than others; and how Welsh parishes compared to English parishes. Using taxation records and episcopal registers, it also looks specifically at the individual priests of Hereford diocese, discussing clerical income and the clerical underclass – unbeneficed clerics and chaplains who were typically among the

⁵⁷ Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994), 3.

poorest members of the clergy. Finally, it addresses the ethnic make-up – English and Welsh – of the diocese.

The next three chapters examine clerical concubinage using literary and documentary texts. Chapter 4 (“Whores, Strumpets, and Priests’ Mares: Clerical Concubines in Pastoral and Popular Literature”) relies on close textual readings of religious and secular literature to analyze views of clerical concubinage in late medieval culture, paying particular attention to the vocabulary used to describe priests’ companions. It takes an in-depth look at two texts in particular – Robert Mannyng’s *Handlyng Synne* and the anonymous *An Alphabet of Tales* – collections of sermon stories that were in circulation in late medieval England. Combined with an examination of proverbs, songs, and vernacular literature, an analysis of these two texts shows that, in the medieval imagination, lascivious sexuality and venality were defining attributes of women who slept with priests.

Chapter 5 (“‘Just as the Priests Have Their Wives’: Clerical Concubinage in the Diocese of Hereford”) is based on evidence from Hereford’s visitation returns and act books from the consistory court. It begins with a discussion of the hierarchy and functions of ecclesiastical courts, typical court procedure, and the advantages and drawbacks of using these records. This section also explores the language used by court officials and sets out a method to distinguish between fornication and concubinage. Using quantitative analysis, it then looks at clerical misbehavior in the diocese, discussing the number of clerics charged with fornication and concubinage, concentrations of charges within the diocese, and the connections between concubinage socio-economic status, and ethnicity.

Chapter 6 (“‘And of his own will, he promised to turn her out of their home’: Lay and Clerical Concubines in the Diocese of Hereford”) extends my analysis of the records of the

consistory court of Hereford to the treatment and perception of women by court officials. First, the chapter looks at treatment of *lay* concubines in the church courts, establishing a base-line to which I can compare the experiences of *clerical* concubines. In particular, it looks at the specific difficulties concubines faced, arguing both that concubinary relationships had different consequences for women and men, and that concubines were more vulnerable – socially and economically – than married women. The chapter then turns to the treatment and perception of clerical concubines in the church courts of Hereford. While there is less information on clerical concubines than on the priests who were their partners, it is nonetheless clear that clerical concubines were a particularly vulnerable group of women, sometimes punished more harshly than their clerical lovers, less apt to commute their public and humiliating penance into a monetary fine, and unable to marry their lovers, as concubines of laymen were usually encouraged – and sometimes, coerced – to do by court officials.

The conclusion (“Gender, Sexuality, Misogyny”) explores the significance of late medieval clerical concubinage on constructions of medieval masculinity, female sexuality, and misogyny.

Chapter 2: Traditions of Clerical Celibacy in England

By the time Bishop Thomas Trefnant began his visitation of the diocese of Hereford on the last day of April in 1397, the ideal of a celibate clergy was well established in England and Wales. In the weeks that followed, Trefnant, or his appointed officer, held an inquest in each parish, asking jurors and clerics about the conduct of their neighbors and local clergy. Ecclesiastical decrees against clerical incontinence notwithstanding, many inquests reported that their clergy “kept” (*tenet*) women. In the parish of Llanwarne, for example, jurors stated that a chaplain named John ap Adam kept a woman named Cecily “in his house day and night as if they were man and wife.”¹ This chapter traces how a relationship like that between John and Cecily – once common, lawful, and generally accepted – had become by 1397 a matter of formal inquest, social disapproval, and canonical punishment. I begin by discussing early Christian thought on clerical celibacy. I then trace the process by which clerical celibacy became the preferred state for clerics and clerical marriage became a canonical crime. Next, I place these developments in the context of ecclesiastical concerns about the economic state of the church, the separation of the clergy from the laity, the fear of female pollution, and constructions of gender. Finally, I examine how clerical celibacy was imposed in England, from the first Anglo-Norman synod that addressed clerical marriage in the eleventh century until its legalization in the sixteenth century.

¹ Hereford Cathedral Archives and Library (HCA), A1779, f. 4r. *Item [parochiani] dicunt quod dominus Johannes ap Adam capellanus parochialis ibidem incontinens est cum Cecilia Veyr quam tenet in domo sua die noctuque ut si essent vir et uxor.*

The first comprehensive histories of clerical celibacy were written in the nineteenth century. These narratives viewed the eleventh century (particularly, the pontificate of Gregory VII, 1073-85) as a turning point for the articulation and enforcement of notions of clerical celibacy. Modern historians have tended – sometimes automatically – to maintain this narrative. Recently, though, a number of scholars have questioned the traditional chronology, some arguing that early Christians laid essential foundations for the eleventh-century reforms, others simply downplaying Gregory VII's personal role in the formulation and imposition of reform. Most historians have continued to focus on the eleventh century as a watershed in the history of clerical celibacy, but they have varying explanations for why and how the reforms occurred at that time. Some scholars have pointed to economic stimuli: in an age of declining ecclesiastical wealth, the church may have needed to eliminate clerical dynasties in order to prevent the further alienation of church property to priests' families. Others, tracing the history of the ascetic tradition, have argued that spiritual concerns were the driving force of the reforms, particularly a concern with sacerdotal purity. Still others have concentrated on the social and cultural aspects of the reform, arguing that concerns about clerical marriage were a result of the church's desire to separate the spiritual realm from the secular world, to distinguish the clergy – and elevate them above – lay society.

In delving into these different aspects of the reforms, historians have told a story of influential churchmen, great synods, and intellectual elites. Few have looked beyond the actions of these prominent men, at popular attitudes toward clerical marriage and celibacy, for example, or at what happened to clerical families in the wake of the reforms.

The Origins of Clerical Celibacy in the Roman Church

The church was always uncomfortable with the idea of a married, sexually active clergy, but it nevertheless accommodated clerical marriage for centuries. The model of a celibate life was an important element of early Christian thought, and the early church councils of Elvira (c. 306) and Nicaea (325) decreed that married bishops, priests, and deacons should remain chaste and refrain from sexual intercourse with their wives.² During the fourth and fifth centuries, the influence of asceticism grew, and a number of fourth-century popes (Damasus I, Siricius, and Innocent I) again forbade clerics from having sex with their wives. Clerical marriage was acceptable, but chastity within such marriages was best. Men who were ordained as priests were not expected to give up their wives; instead, the wife of a cleric should be treated “like a sister.”³ Three councils at Carthage set out various requirements of chastity; the first, in 290, advised priests who ministered at the altar to avoid sexual intercourse, but provided no penalties; the second, in 401, required a vow of chastity at ordination and added a decree that unchaste priests should be deprived of their offices; the third, in 419, again encouraged priests to be continent, this time explicitly including subdeacons. None of these councils declared existing clerical marriages to be invalid, and none was particularly effective. Clerical marriage continued to be widespread in the early church and until the fifth century, at least, most clerics had wives.⁴

² For discussions of chaste marriages, see Jo Ann McNamara, “Chaste Marriage and Clerical Celibacy,” in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, ed. Vern L. Bullough and James Brundage (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982), 22-33; and Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

³ Brian Brennan, “‘*Episcopae*’: Bishops’ Wives Viewed in Sixth-Century Gaul,” *Church History* 54 (1985): 311-23.

⁴ Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy: The Eleventh-Century Debates*, Text and Studies in Religion 12 (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 19.

Priests were encouraged to be continent within marriage throughout the early middle ages, and in 567, the Council of Tours coined a new term for priests who had sexual intercourse with their wives – “Nicolaitans” – forging a connection between clerical marriage and heresy.⁵ Canons from the early church councils were incorporated into Carolingian penitentials, but enforcement was sporadic, at best; the only available punishment was to take away a priest’s benefice, and it was rarely used in the early middle ages. In the tenth century, historians agree, most rural priests had wives, and many urban clergy were also married.⁶

The roots of the reform of clerical marriage lie in the tenth century. Beginning in the 970s, the Peace of God movement – devoted to moral purity and social order – sparked the beginning of a sustained preoccupation with clerical chastity. A number of eleventh-century synods denounced clerical marriages but did not make them illicit: the provincial councils at Pavia in 1022 and Bourges in 1031 are considered crucial antecedents to later reforms. Pavia excluded all women from priests’ houses and deposed married clergy, including bishops, although these measures, like earlier legislation, went mostly unenforced. Bourges took a particularly strong stand against clerical dynasties, decreeing that no one could give a daughter to a priest or a priest’s son in marriage, or accept in marriage the daughter or wife of a priest. The council required a vow of chastity at ordination and further decreed that priests should separate from their wives, instead of attempting to cohabit chastely.

A flurry of legislation in the mid- and late eleventh century, referred to as the “Gregorian reforms,” began under the pontificate of Leo IX (1049-54). Simony (the buying or

⁵ The Nicolaites, an obscure, late antique sect mentioned in the Book of Revelation, endorsed free love and unrestrained sexual indulgence; their deacon, Nicholas, was accused of heresy. The term “Nicolaitism” thus evoked both sexual license and heretical thought. See James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 63 and 216.

⁶ Barstow, *Married Priests*, 36-37.

selling of ecclesiastical offices) and “Nicolaitism” were two of the most frequently addressed issues; throughout this period, legislation against clerical marriage was closely tied to efforts to root out simony, because both were seen as polluting the purity of the church and sacraments.⁷ The councils of Rome in 1049, 1050, and 1059 once again forbade clerics in major orders from having sexual relations with their wives and decreed that clerics dismiss any women they kept in their houses (including their wives); some also commanded laypeople to abstain from communion with unchaste priests.⁸ Gregory VII’s Lenten synod in 1074 required a vow of chastity for entry to major orders – that is, subdeacons, deacons, and priests – and forbade priests, deacons, and all beneficed clerks from having wives or living with women. It also reiterated earlier decrees that the laity should not attend mass celebrated by an unchaste priest and threatened to depose married clergy who did not separate from their wives.

Similar legislation emerged from synods and councils for the next fifty years, and in 1123, the council known as Lateran I prohibited clerical marriage and concubinage, declaring that ordination to a major order (subdiaconate, diaconate, and priesthood) created an impediment to marriage. Clerics in major orders could no longer marry; existing clerical

⁷ The term “Gregorian” was once universally used to describe these reforms, but has become controversial, with scholars arguing that some important reforms took place well before Gregory VII’s pontificate and that he was only one of a number of zealous church reformers. James Brundage provides a clear overview of the reforms and their reception in *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, especially 214-23, 251-53, and 314-19. Other authoritative histories include Michel Dortel-Claudot, “Le Prêtre et le Mariage: Évolution de la Législation Canonique des Origines au XII^e Siècle,” *L’Année Canonique* 17 (1973): 319-44; Charles A. Frazee, “The Origins of Clerical Celibacy in the Western Church,” *Church History* 41 (1972): 149-67; Jean Gaudemet, “Le Célibat Ecclésiastique: Le Droit et la Pratique de XI^e au XII^e Siècles,” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonische Abteilung* 68 (1982): 1-31; John E. Lynch, “Marriage and Celibacy of the Clergy: The Discipline of the Western Church, A Historico-Canonical Synopsis,” *The Jurist* 32 (1972): Part I, 14-38; Part II, 189-212.

⁸ Similar legislation was passed at local synods at Compostella (1056), Tours (1060), and Gerona (1068).

marriages were stripped of their legal status. Lateran II, in 1139, repeated these injunctions and made provisions for enforcement: clerical marriages would be considered invalid, both priests and their wives were to perform penance, and married clergy who resisted were to be deprived of both their clerical offices and their benefices. The Second Lateran Council also forbade parishioners from attending a mass celebrated by an unchaste priest.⁹ Together, the first and second Lateran councils finally and irrevocably decreed marriage a canonical crime for clerics in major orders; women who had married priests were denounced as concubines; children of priests were declared illegitimate. Lateran III (1179) reiterated the pronouncement that clerics who lived with women would be deprived of their benefices, and by the end of the twelfth century, marriage was an impediment to clerical orders. The change was not an easy one; while Peter Damian and other clerics supported the reforms, many resisted – sometimes violently. The struggle to enforce clerical celibacy had begun.¹⁰

Clerical Celibacy in the Roman Church: Antecedents and Influences

Modern historians have struggled to understand why, after centuries of theoretical opposition to clerical marriage, celibacy was so vociferously targeted in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This historiography has been more preoccupied with the *causes* of reform than with the critical matters of its enforcement and aftermath.

Henry Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church*, first published in 1867 and subsequently appearing in four revised editions, is still considered a classic work in

⁹ See Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 220, for a clear historical overview of the Lateran decrees.

¹⁰ Anne Barstow analyzes literature in defense of clerical marriage in *Married Priests*.

the field and is cited in nearly every piece of scholarship on the topic.¹¹ With a scope characteristic of nineteenth-century histories, Lea began by examining asceticism in the Roman world and then traced the evolution of the celibate ideal from the early church, through the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, up to the nineteenth century. Much of the book is merely descriptive and Lea's writing is clearly colored by a concern with his own contemporary Roman Catholic church, yet his underlying narrative of clerical celibacy has been widely influential: clerical marriage was widespread throughout Europe at beginning of the eleventh century, clerical dynasties were ubiquitous, and "the standard of morality was extremely low... the clergy scarcely distinguishable from the laity in purity of life or devotion to their sacred calling."¹² A number of zealous, high-profile reformers – Leo IX, Nicholas II, Peter Damian, and, especially, Gregory VII – struggled to bring about a "revolution" in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, resulting in the mandate of clerical celibacy. Although their progress was slow and there were many "obstinate" supporters of clerical marriage, the reformers eventually "achieved an inevitable triumph," and sacerdotal marriage became obsolete.¹³ Concentrating on the church's desire to eliminate the hereditary priestly "caste" for economic reasons and promote clerical purity, Lea's narrative paid virtually no attention to ordinary clerics or laypeople.

¹¹ Henry C. Lea, *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church*, Fourth Edition, Revised (London: Watts & Co., 1932). For another classic work, see Augustin Fliche, *La Réforme Grégorienne*, 3 vols. (Paris: Louvain, 1924-37); Fliche was one of the earliest scholars to argue that the elimination of simony and clerical marriage was the main goal of the reforms. For a brief discussion of the early historiography of clerical celibacy, see Edward Peters, "History, Historians, and Clerical Celibacy," in *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Garland, 1998), 3-21.

¹² Lea, *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, 225.

¹³ Lea, *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, 279.

Lea's teleological history continues to influence historians of clerical celibacy, who have generally looked back only as far as the eleventh century and have focused on the actions of "great men," particularly Gregory VII. Even those who disagree with the term "Gregorian reform" – Gerd Tellenbach, for example – have accepted this chronology. In Tellenbach's monumental work on the church in the central middle ages, he critiqued most scholars' identification of a reform movement in the eleventh century, arguing that these reforms were not part of a "clear programme" with coherent aims.¹⁴ Yet Tellenbach cursorily noted earlier antecedents to the demand for clerical celibacy and nonetheless placed all important developments firmly in the mid- and late eleventh century.

More recently, a number of historians have begun to examine earlier centuries, arguing that there were crucial antecedents to eleventh-century legislation and that fundamental ideas about clerical continence and celibacy took shape in the late antique period, not the central middle ages. Christian Cochini has studied a canon from the Council of Carthage (390) which emphasized the importance of chastity and decreed that bishops, priests, and deacons should, although married, remain chaste.¹⁵ In another monograph on an early Christian synod, Samuel Laeuchli has suggested that the roots of the decrees against clerical marriage appear in the canons of the synod of Elvira, which took place in southern Spain in the first decade of the fourth century.¹⁶ Laeuchli pointed out that canon 33 of the

¹⁴ Gerd Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century*, trans. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), quotation at 157. Originally published as *Die Westliche Kirche vom 10. bis frühen 12. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1988). Tellenbach's well-known earlier work on the eleventh century, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest* (1940), has little to say about clerical marriage.

¹⁵ Christian Cochini, S.J., *Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy*, trans. Nelly Marans (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990).

¹⁶ Samuel Laeuchli, *Power and Sexuality: The Emergence of Canon Law at the Synod of Elvira* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1972).

synod mandated the sexual continence of married clergy; that is, priests could marry, but they were to abstain from sexual intercourse with their wives and from having children. Canon 27 of the synod was directed at unmarried priests and prohibited them from living with any woman except a sister or a daughter. Laeuchli concluded that Elvira “expresses the evolution toward a celibate priesthood, where the married priest was by definition always in the wrong.” Although the enforcement of celibacy would not be completed for many centuries, Elvira was a crucial step in Laeuchli’s view because it first formulated the notion that priesthood and sex were incompatible.¹⁷

Building on Laeuchli’s argument, Paul Beaudette has placed the origins of the imposition of clerical celibacy in the fourth century, when the priesthood was first seen as irreconcilable with sexual intercourse and concerns about the purity of priests were expressed. Like Laeuchli, he credited the synod of Elvira with setting important precedents regarding continence, but Beaudette also examined three other fourth-century decretals which exhorted clerical continence (abstinence from sexual intercourse within marriage), although not celibacy (abstinence from marriage). This shift, Beaudette argued, was influenced by three changes in late antiquity: “the rise of asceticism and monasticism, the sacralization of the Christian church, and a markedly negative shift in the church’s attitudes toward sexuality and marriage,” particularly in the writings of the church fathers.¹⁸ Beaudette diverged from Laeuchli’s argument in stressing the profound and far-reaching influence of ritual or cultic purity, concerns that stemmed from the church’s increasingly close ties to society and its resulting preoccupation with pollution. Beaudette then turned to the eleventh-century reforms,

¹⁷ Laeuchli, *Power and Sexuality*, 94-113, quotation at 95-96.

¹⁸ Paul Beaudette, “‘In the World but not of it’: Clerical Celibacy as a Symbol of the Medieval Church,” in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 23-46, quotation at 27.

arguing that the imposition of clerical celibacy should be seen within the larger history of the church's efforts to disentangle itself from the secular world.

Phyllis Jestice, taking another tack, has argued that monastic communities played a critical role in promoting celibacy.¹⁹ She suggested that reforming monks of the early tenth century, particularly Odo of Cluny, highlighted the issue of celibacy; through the writings of these monastic reformers – which emphasized the sacrosanct nature of the Eucharist, the importance of moral cleanliness for those who celebrated mass (ritual purity), and the possibility of emulating Christ through chastity – celibacy became “a potent force.” Jestice concluded that clerical celibacy became established as an important and influential issue of reform during this time, expressly because of its prominence in monastic circles.²⁰

Michael Frassetto has singled out the pre-Gregorian decades of the eleventh century as *the* crucial moment in the elevation of purity and celibacy. Through an examination of sermons, Frassetto has argued that the sudden explosion of heresy, particular Catharism, in the early eleventh century forced church thinkers to examine doctrinal questions. The heretics' rejection of the sacraments and of marriage, in particular, challenged the church and its definition of the social order, and their emphatic embrace of chastity compelled church

¹⁹ Phyllis G. Jestice, “Why Celibacy? Odo of Cluny and the Development of a New Sexual Morality,” in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 81-115.

²⁰ H.E.J. Cowdrey makes a similar argument that the spiritual objectives of reforming monastic movements, such as that among the Cluniacs, heavily influenced the reform of the secular clergy. See *The Cluniacs and the Gregorian Reform* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), especially Part III. The influence of monasticism and monastic communities on beliefs about clerical celibacy has also been discussed by Mayke de Jong, “*Imitatio Morum*. The Cloister and Clerical Purity in the Carolingian World,” in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 49-80; and David C. Van Meter, “Eschatological Order and the Moral Arguments for Clerical Celibacy in Francia around the Year 1000,” in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 149-75.

leaders to address the matter of their own celibacy. They responded to the heretical challenge by opposing clerical marriage in order to enhance the often-tarnished reputation of priests.²¹

Although not concerned with developments prior to the eleventh century, Uta-Renate Blumenthal has rethought the conventional attribution of the reforms to the pontificate of Gregory VII and greatly downplayed his function. Looking specifically at Gregory's role in the enforcement of celibacy, she has argued that he should not be credited with formulating ideas about clerical celibacy. Blumenthal looked closely at texts from the early eleventh century, particularly the decrees from a Lateran synod of 1059. These decrees, circulated in an encyclical letter of Pope Nicholas II, called for a boycott of married priests, the prohibition of unchaste priests serving at the altar, and the deprivation of benefice for unchastity. They are significant because, unlike earlier legislation, such as the synod of Pavia (1022), which was concerned with protecting church property, the 1059 decrees emphasized the importance of ritual purity. Blumenthal also argued that contemporary letters indicate that Leo IX prohibited clerical marriage and Stephen IX expanded Leo's decree. Gregory VII, Blumenthal asserted, was more concerned with simony than clerical marriage, and was simply renewing the 1059 legislation; further, "the final legislation promulgated by Pope Innocent II at the Second Lateran Council of 1139, to be taken up in Gratian's *Decretum*, owes nothing original to Pope Gregory VII."²² Blumenthal was most concerned with minimizing Gregory's role in the formulation of celibate ideals and calling attention to the popes of the mid-eleventh century,

²¹ Michael Frassetto, "Heresy, Celibacy, and Reform in the Sermons of Ademar of Chabannes," in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 131-48.

²² Uta-Renate Blumenthal, "Pope Gregory VII and the Prohibition of Nicolaitism," in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 239-67, quotation at 253.

but by doing so, her argument meshes with those which have tried to displace the late eleventh century as the crucible of reforming ideology.

By addressing earlier antecedents to priestly celibacy, these more recent works have moved away from a traditional “top-down” approach, which viewed celibacy as imposed on the clergy through a series of (mostly Gregorian) councils in a few decades during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Laeuchli and Beaudette have identified important early synodal precursors to legislation on celibacy; Jestice and Frassetto have detected other strands of thought – both orthodox and heretical – that influenced church thinking on clerical marriage and celibacy; Blumenthal has shifted the spotlight from Gregory VII to the mid-century popes. All these scholars argue, in opposition to Lea and others, that the ideological framework which viewed marriage, sexuality, and clerical status as incompatible was in place before – sometimes well before – the late eleventh century. It simply went unenforced.

Clerical Celibacy in the Roman Church: Motives for Reform

The influence of Henry Lea’s *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy* can be seen not only in historians’ traditional focus on the Gregorian period, but also in their attention to economic motivations. Although Heinrich Fichtenau’s history of the central middle ages does not focus specifically on the reform of clerical marriage, his discussion of clerical celibacy reiterates this historiographical theme. Fichtenau, like Lea, concentrated on the existence of clerical dynasties and argued that the imposition of celibacy was motivated by economic concerns:

Here we come to the real reasons for the prohibition of marriage – reasons that the reformists’ polemic suppressed in favor of the ideal ones....

[Celibacy was] a matter of maintaining [the Church's] material foundation in a period when this nearly always took the form of real property.²³

Fichtenau concluded that clerical marriage was made illicit to protect church property and to prevent ecclesiastical offices and tithes from becoming family resources.

Uta-Renate Blumenthal has also highlighted the economic incentives for reform. Noting the close association of simony and clerical marriage in reforming rhetoric, Blumenthal argued that social and economic issues were more important than concerns about ritual purity. While many historians have viewed the synod of Pavia (1022) as a crucial antecedent to later reforms, she asserted that it was less concerned with sexual morality than with protecting church property in a time of ecclesiastical poverty. Blumenthal even reinterpreted a well known decree that the ex-wives of priests should be made serfs. Rather than construing it as a misogynistic statement (as is typically done), she viewed it as economically motivated, a way of protecting church property.²⁴ Kathleen Cushing has reiterated the argument that the ban on clerical marriage was economically motivated, arguing that the devolution of church property to the sons and wives of priests was perceived as impoverishing both individual parishes and the church as a whole. Condemnations of clerical marriage, she maintained, “probably had more to do with the economic situation and the poverty afflicting the church... than with disinterested promotion of clerical celibacy.”²⁵

Despite her conviction that much of the impetus behind the reforms was financial, Cushing also discussed the increasing importance of ritual purity during the eleventh century.

²³ Heinrich Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century: Mentalities and Social Orders*, trans. Patrick J. Geary (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). See 115-19 for his discussion of clerical celibacy, quotation at 118.

²⁴ Blumenthal, “Pope Gregory VII.”

²⁵ Kathleen G. Cushing, *Reform and Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), quotation at 99.

Drawing heavily on R.I. Moore's *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* and Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger*, Cushing framed her discussion of clerical celibacy within the context of fears of pollution. During the eleventh century, reformers began to transfer monastic ideals of purity to the secular clergy; Cushing suggested that anxieties about purity began to be expressed in terms of the physical bodies of priests and bishops and the impact of bodily pollution on the performance of sacramental duties:

By increasingly emphasizing the potential for contagion and by reiterating the paramount need to cleanse the sacred from contamination by the secular, the reformers used the language of purity and pollution, in particular the rhetoric of sexual separation, both to delineate and more sharply enforce what they deemed to be the appropriate spheres of activity both for themselves and for lay society.²⁶

Cushing emphasized the continuing desire of the church and individual clerics to distinguish and privilege themselves over the laity; rhetoric about bodily pollution, purity, and clerical celibacy served to reinforce this separation. Christopher Brooke has also looked at this aspect of the reforms, arguing that the condemnation of clerical marriage was associated not with monastic ideals of purity, but with the new sacramental theology that was developing in the central middle ages and “the growing sense that the priesthood and all who stood by the altar at mass were a race apart, ‘separated for the work.’”²⁷ Herbert Cowdrey has also stressed ritual purity, arguing that Pope Gregory VII promoted chastity because he saw a need for purity in those who ministered at the altar. But Gregory was also concerned with moral character, Cowdrey argues, and saw chastity as a moral virtue; he was concerned with “the

²⁶ Cushing, *Reform and Papacy*, 112. Cushing also relates fears of pollution to the Peace and Truce of God movement, because as the priesthood took on “the role of guardian and critic of social and religious morality,” the secular clergy had to remove themselves from worldly contact.” The Council of Anse (994), for example, was a peace council which also required married clergy to remain chaste. Quotation at 115.

²⁷ C.N.L. Brooke, “Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England, 1050-1200,” *Cambridge Historical Journal* 12, 1 (1956): 1-21, quotation at 3.

polluting effect of lust upon the clerk's manner of life."²⁸ Unlike other polemicists – such as Peter Damian – who were concerned with pollution and contamination, Gregory brought a moral dimension to the issue of chastity.

Through an examination of the language and content of peace councils, Amy Remensnyder has identified what she dubs a “complex of pollution fears” in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. Remensnyder allowed that regulations of clerical violence, simony, and clerical marriage were part of a process of social ordering, but she further argued that these three behaviors became linked and were seen, together, as threatening both the church and social peace. Peace and clerical purity became connected, and impure clerics (whether they were polluted by blood, money, or sexual contact with women) violated the peace of the church. Warring clerics ravaged ecclesiastical property, destroying churches and relics and wounding people. Simoniacs impoverished churches by paying for offices with ecclesiastical revenues, which dissolved the bond of charity. Married priests plundered ecclesiastical property by enriching themselves and their families at the expense of the church. Further, a priest who fought, bought offices, or lived with a woman was a source of contamination: “The pollution of the priest was not confined to himself and to his social role; it spilled out to infect the people to whom he gave the sacraments.”²⁹ Such pollution threatened both peace and social order.

Other historians have suggested that these concerns about pollution were related less to concerns about ritual purity and more to the relationship between clergy and laity, that is,

²⁸ H.E.J. Cowdrey, “Pope Gregory VII and the Chastity of the Clergy,” in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 269-302, quotation at 286.

²⁹ Amy G. Remensnyder, “Pollution, Purity, and Peace: An Aspect of Social Reform between the Late Tenth Century and 1076,” in *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000*, ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 280-307, quotation at 301.

church's desire to distinguish itself from the secular world. Anxiety about the social order – specifically, the need to separate clergy from laity – was the primary motivation behind the enforcement of clerical celibacy, they have argued, not concerns about church finances or ritual purity. R.I. Moore has placed clerical celibacy within the context of social change in the central middle ages.³⁰ Like Cushing and Brooke, he emphasized that celibacy was a way of distinguishing the sacred from the profane, but Moore also explicitly connected the reforms with the restructuring of lay society and the distinctions between *oratores* and *bellatores* in the new tripartite social order. Megan McLaughlin has similarly argued that the campaign for celibacy was central to the reform movement because it provided a way of differentiating clerics from laypeople. Clerical celibacy was contrasted with the sexual activity of laypeople and therefore became a crucial marker of priestly status.³¹

Moore has also explored the reforms within the framework of social upheaval and the Peace of God movement in the central middle ages.³² The Peace movement, which was formed to counter violence and lawlessness, advocated a new spiritual code based on chastity, the renunciation of property, and bodily asceticism. Moore argued that a priest's concubine caused social discord because she and her children were supported by parish tithes and alms; more symbolically, concubines and wives ensnared clerics in secular concerns and female sexuality. Priests were meant to be representatives of and mediators within a community, but an incontinent priest was influenced by both female sexuality (in itself a threat to social

³⁰ R.I. Moore, "Property, Marriage, and the Eleventh-Century Revolution: A Context for Early Medieval Communism," in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 179-208.

³¹ Megan McLaughlin, "The Bishop as Bridegroom: Marital Imagery and Clerical Celibacy in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries," in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 209-37.

³² R.I. Moore, "Family, Community and Cult on the Eve of the Gregorian Reform," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series* 30 (1980): 49-69.

fabric, as Cushing, Cowdrey, and Remensnyder have shown) and familial interests. A priest's sexuality was thus incompatible with his social and symbolic role as mediator and peacemaker:

The fear of pollution was the fear of manipulation, that society was being subverted by mysterious enemies which, by their own malice or by invoking the wrath of God upon their sins, caused conflict, corruption and eventually collapse.³³

Moore did not posit a direct causal connection between social change and the imposition of celibacy, but he nonetheless showed that priests and their wives or concubines could be associated with social friction.

These issues of social order and the need to separate the church from the secular world were far-reaching. Lauechli has detected these concerns as early as the synod of Elvira, which took steps to separate the clergy from the laity, to elevate priests over average Christians, and to promote an image of clerical purity. Beaudette saw the shift toward celibacy as part of a larger effort to disengage the church from the world: "It was the Gregorian period which established within the church the increasingly sharp division of Christian society into two classes, the priestly above the lay."³⁴ According to Frassetto, the adoption of clerical celibacy was not only a way to augment the status of priests, but also to distinguish the clergy from the laity and establish the clergy as unique and authoritative. Cowdrey, too, has suggested that Gregory VII was concerned with proper social order. The tripartite division of society (those who pray, those who fight, and those who work) was mirrored in the three orders of

³³ Moore, "Family, Community and Cult," 67.

³⁴ Lauechli, *Power and Sexuality*; Beaudette, "Clerical Celibacy," quotation at 39.

Christianity (the virgins, the continent, and the married). All clerical relationships with women, in his mind, were seen as contrary to the right ordering of society.³⁵

Gender and Clerical Celibacy in the Roman Church

The reforms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries are considered by many modern scholars to be a watershed in the history of gender, when the imposition of priestly celibacy – as well as other proscriptions of clerical behavior – affected constructions of both masculinity and femininity. Historians have agreed that a distinct model of clerical masculinity emerged in the wake of these reforms, but there is little consensus on the components of this new masculine identity.

Most scholars have characterized the imposition of celibacy and other ecclesiastical reforms (such as the prohibition of weapons) as a drastic, traumatic change for the secular clergy. Some have emphasized the ways in which clerics lost access to masculine behavior, while others have argued that they adapted masculine ideals in order to carve out a new masculinity. Jo Ann McNamara has discerned a “masculine identity crisis” precipitated, in part, by the imposition of celibacy. The monopoly of the church by these “ungendered” men destabilized the existing gender system; as clerics struggled to maintain a masculine identity, a separation of the sexes became integral to gender constructions.³⁶ Megan McLaughlin, too, has suggested that the reforms prevented clerics from acting like men: they were “expected to eschew precisely those practices (violence, the pursuit of wealth and – above all – sex) that eleventh-century society defined as ‘manly.’” Instead, McLaughlin has posited, they

³⁵ Frassetto, “Heresy, Celibacy, and Reform”; Cowdrey, “Pope Gregory VII.”

³⁶ Jo Ann McNamara, “The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150,” in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 3-29, quotations and 3 and 5.

constructed new, paternal identities, defining themselves as spiritual fathers, roles that allowed them to perform fatherhood while remaining celibate.³⁷

Jacqueline Murray and Maureen Miller have also argued that clerics (both secular and regular) constructed alternative models of masculinity in the wake of the reforms, but they have stressed the ways in which the clergy reappropriated conventional masculine traits. Murray has suggested that when secular priests gave up their families and were prohibited from carrying weapons, they lost “clear and visible markers of gender.” Lacking the ability to prove their sexual and military prowess, “celibate men came to redefine masculinity in such a way that they could *be* masculine without having to *act* masculine.” By using military metaphors (wars, battles, struggles) to describe spiritual achievements – particularly their triumphs over the temptations of women – clerics integrated secular and spiritual values, thus enhancing their masculinity.³⁸ Similarly, Miller has noted that priests not only were denied “the sexual enjoyment and possession of women,” but were also barred from wearing secular clothing or spurs, bearing arms, owning hunting dogs or falcons, and frequenting taverns. A competition between lay and clerical men resulted, as clerics “described themselves

³⁷ Megan McLaughlin, “Secular and Spiritual Fatherhood in the Eleventh Century,” in *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West*, ed. Jacqueline Murray (New York: Garland, 1999), 25-43, quotation at 27. Other historians have maintained that the imposition of clerical celibacy created a “third gender,” a notion I will explore further in Chapter 7.

³⁸ Jacqueline Murray, “Masculinizing Religious Life: Sexual Prowess, and Battle for Chastity and Monastic Identity,” in *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, ed. P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), 24-42, quotation at 27. John H. Arnold has also characterized male chastity as a form of agency. “The Labour of Continence: Masculinity and Clerical Virginity,” in *Medieval Virginites*, ed. Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans, and Sarah Salih (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 102-18.

unambiguously, and in increasingly assertive terms, as men,” emphasizing their *spiritual* power and authority.³⁹

Miller has also linked this “discursive competition” between masculinities to the rising misogyny of the central middle ages, suggesting that the reformers’ vilification of women was an unintended result of their desire to construct a more powerful, virile masculine identity. Murray, too, has argued that misogynistic attacks on clerical wives were directed at the priests themselves, and that the depiction of their wives as whores was meant to cast doubt on their own status as honorable men.⁴⁰ Clerical masculinity was certainly transformed during the reforming era, but these studies have underestimated the influence of misogynistic texts on constructions of femininity. Women bore the brunt of the reforms, both rhetorically and legally.⁴¹

Whether or not the denigration of priests’ wives in elite clerical literature was deliberate, it affected for centuries views (both elite and popular) of women who slept or partnered with priests. Medieval attitudes towards clerical wives and concubines drew on notions of female venality and lust, characterizing the figure of the priest’s wife (and later, concubine) as a woman whose greediness drained church finances and whose promiscuous sexuality defiled ritual purity.⁴²

³⁹ Maureen C. Miller, “Masculinity, Reform, and Clerical Culture: Narratives of Episcopal Holiness in the Gregorian Era,” *Church History* 72 (2003): 25-52, quotations at 27 and 28. Robert Mills has similarly argued that tonsure acted as a visible signifier not only of clerical status (differentiating clerics from laymen), but also of religious authority.

⁴⁰ Miller, “Masculinity, Reform, and Clerical Culture,” 49; Murray, “Masculinizing Religious Life,” 34.

⁴¹ Other scholars have argued that clerical wives were considered the real transgressors, rather than their husbands. See, for example, Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, c. 3.

⁴² Scholarship on gender and clerical celibacy is inextricably linked to work on medieval misogyny, particularly the characterization of female sexuality as a source of pollution. See Barstow,

Clerical wives and concubines (and their children) were perceived as siphoning money and resources from the church. Rather of Verona grumbled in the tenth century that priests married off their daughters to other priests so that they could acquire benefices for their sons, and his was just one of near-constant complaints about priestly dynasties and hereditary benefices. In the tenth century, Atto of Vercelli and others protested against clerics who left church property to their wives and children in their wills.⁴³ Synodal and conciliar legislation echoed these concerns, often including special provisions that sons of priests could not inherit their fathers' benefices. The councils of Bourges (1031) and Clermont (1095), for example, stipulated that priest's sons could not be ordained (and would not, therefore, inherit the benefices of their fathers), and the synod of Melfi (1089) ordered priests' sons who had already been ordained to be removed from the church.⁴⁴ The decrees of Bourges displayed marked hostility toward the children of priests, dubbing their sons "cursed seed" and discouraging laymen from contracting "abominable" marriages with clerical daughters.⁴⁵

Clerical children played another role in reforming rhetoric – as emblems of the stain of sexuality. As Laura Wertheimer has put it, they were "conclusive proof of priests' engagement in carnal pleasures that kept them from separating themselves from the things

Married Priests; Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); McNamara, "Chaste Marriage and Clerical Celibacy"; McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*"; Remensnyder, "Pollution, Purity, and Peace."

⁴³ Barstow, *Married Priests*, 38-39.

⁴⁴ Remensnyder, "Pollution, Purity, and Peace," 288-89; Laura Wertheimer, "Children of Disorder: Clerical Parentage, Illegitimacy, and Reform in the Middle Ages," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15 (2006): 382-407, at 399.

⁴⁵ Wertheimer, "Children of Disorder," 393.

they were supposed to leave behind.”⁴⁶ Although children might represent this sexual corruption, clerical wives were at the center of the complex of pollution fears.

Even before clerical marriage was made illicit, churchmen denigrated the wives of priests. These women were frequently characterized as promiscuous or deemed prostitutes: in an early tenth-century letter to the priests in his diocese, Atto, bishop of Vercelli, called clerical wives “harlots” (*scorta*) and “indecent whores” (*obscenas meretriculas*).”⁴⁷ This language became even more vitriolic over time. By 1050, as Anne Barstow has pointed out,

the terminology used in decrees to describe the woman of a priest has become harsher: the change from *uxor*, *diaconissa*, even *episcopissa* to *concupina*, *meretrix*, *scortum* [whore], *pellex*, degrades the woman, implicitly denies the possibility of her being lawfully married (already a century before the canons decreed such a change) and increases the immoral connotation.⁴⁸

While the increasing disparagement of priests’ wives was not a universal trend – the wife of the bishop of Le Mans was still called his *episcopissa* in the tenth century⁴⁹ – their denigration became far more frequent during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and it also began to express more explicit concerns about pollution. Peter Damian, for example, addressed supporters of clerical marriage:

Since all ecclesiastical orders are accumulated in one awesome structure in you alone, you surely defile all of them as you pollute yourself by associating with prostitutes. And thus you contaminate by your actions the doorkeeper, the lector, the exorcist, and in turn all sacred orders, for all of which you must give an account before the severe judgment seat of God. As

⁴⁶ Wertheimer, “Children of Disorder,” 397.

⁴⁷ Even in the tenth century, the pairing of female sexuality and venality was present – Atto also complained that priests were stripping the church of its resources in order to provide for their wives and heirs. Atto of Vercelli, *Epistolae*, no. 9, as quoted in Barstow, *Married Priests*, 208, fn. 54. See also Remensnyder, “Pollution, Purity, and Peace,” 293.

⁴⁸ Barstow, *Married Priests*, 43.

⁴⁹ Lea, *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, 122.

you lay your hand on someone, the Holy Spirit descends upon him; and you use your hand to touch the private parts of harlots.⁵⁰

Damian's condemnation of priest's wives as prostitutes is especially striking and forceful; other medieval thinkers were less extreme in their denigration of these women, but language about the pollution and contagion of clerical wives and concubines was a constant throughout the middle ages.

Much of this elite clerical rhetoric was simply that, but it sometimes translated into ruthless treatment of clerical wives and concubines during the era of reforms. In Augsburg in 952, a bishops' council decreed that women who were suspected of being priests' concubines should have their heads shaved. Libentius, a German archbishop, personally drove his canons' wives from the city of Hamburg in 1049 in order to restore the city to health; after they were removed, "the illness ceased (*cessavit hic morbus*)." His successor, Archbishop Alebrandus, faced with a resurgence of the "pestiferous illness (*pestiferum morbum*)" of clerical marriage, also responded by expelling priests' wives.⁵¹ Both English and continental synods of the thirteenth century decreed that concubines' heads should be shaved and that they should be denied the sacraments.⁵² Although the intensity and tenor of the denigration of clerical wives (and later, concubines) shifted over time, these two core characterizations – lust and venality – were still present in the later middle ages, as I explore in Chapter 4.

⁵⁰ Letter from Peter Damian to Pope Nicholas II (1059), in *The Letters of Peter Damian*, 61-90, trans. Owen J. Blum (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 10-11.

⁵¹ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammenburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, as quoted in Remensnyder, "Pollution, Purity, and Peace," 298, and Barstow, *Married Priests*, 39-40.

⁵² Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Society*, 405.

English Legislation on Clerical Marriage: The Imposition of Clerical Celibacy, 1066-1175

As on the Continent, clerical marriage was widespread in England prior to church reforms. Despite early church canons that urged clergy to be chaste or celibate, most parish priests in tenth- and eleventh-century England were married.⁵³ Following a pattern whereby English statutes appeared decades after they had been adopted by synods on the Continent, legislation on clerical marriage in England did not begin to emerge until the late eleventh century, after the Norman Conquest.⁵⁴ While it was fairly straightforward to ban clerical marriage in theory, it was a trickier matter to enforce clerical celibacy in practice, as repeated prohibitions of clerical marriage reveal. No one has yet traced, as I do here, the history of English synodal legislation on this subject.

At the Synod of Winchester in 1076, Archbishop Lanfranc promulgated the first English decree against married clergy.⁵⁵ The synod specifically forbade canons from having wives and prohibited unmarried priests from marrying, although it did not require married priests to put away their wives. It further decreed that a man could not be ordained to major

⁵³ R.R. Darlington, "Ecclesiastical Reform in the Late Old English Period," *English Historical Review* 51 (1936): 385-428, see especially 404-7. Anglo-Saxon archbishops urged celibacy and threatened unchaste priests with deprivation, but with little success. For early legislation, see Dorothy Whitelock, Martin Brett, and C.N.L. Brooke, eds., *Councils and Synods, With Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 871-1204*, vol. I, parts 1 and 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), especially 108, 196-201, 277-78, 289-90.

⁵⁴ Although ecumenical councils, such as those held at the Lateran Palace, determined Church doctrine and practice, bishops and archbishops were responsible for putting these decrees into practice within their own jurisdictions at local synods and councils. For a discussion of synodal legislation on clerical marriage from France, see Kathryn Ann Taglia, "'On Account of Scandal...': Priests, Their Children, and the Ecclesiastical Demand for Celibacy," *Florilegium* 14 (1995-96): 57-70. For a brief discussion of Spanish synods, see Eukene Lacarra Lanz, "Changing Boundaries of Licit and Illicit Unions: Concubinage and Prostitution," in *Marriage and Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, ed. Eukene Lacarra Lanz (New York: Routledge, 2002), 158-94.

⁵⁵ There was a brief command that clerics to live chastely, or else leave their office, in a council at Winchester (1070), but no substantial remarks on clerical marriage. *Councils and Synods I*, part 2, 576.

orders unless he publicly declared he did not have a wife.⁵⁶ These decrees were repeated in 1102 at the Council of Westminster, when Archbishop Anselm forbade priests, deacons, and archdeacons from marrying. Anselm also went three steps further than previous legislation: he told married priests to put away their wives, he decreed that sons of priests could not inherit their fathers' churches, and he required subdeacons, deacons, and priests to take vows of chastity at ordination. Anselm also tacitly invoked notions of female pollution, declaring that priests who had "lived in an unlawful manner with women" should not celebrate mass; parishioners were not required to listen to masses said by these unchaste priests.⁵⁷ This echo of continental literature on female pollution is a crucial expansion of English legislation and is the only canon in the Westminster council that does not specifically refer to a priests' sexual partner as his "wife" (*uxor*); here, any woman (*mulier*) contaminates.

The canons of Winchester and Westminster were difficult, if not impossible, to implement, and enthusiasm for enforcing decrees against clerical marriage was mixed with toleration and, perhaps, resignation. Resistance was widespread, according to Anselm, who discussed these disobedient priests in a letter to Herbert de Losinga, Bishop of Norwich. Gerard, Archbishop of York, also complained about "priests and deacons who have wives and concubines, but no respect for the altar."⁵⁸ The incidence of clerical incontinence was so widespread that the crown profited from it. As Eadmer, the twelfth-century historian and biographer of Anselm, told it, 1105 marked the first attempt of an English king to enforce

⁵⁶ David Wilkins, ed., *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, vol. 1, (London: R. Gosling, etc., 1737), 365-67, quotation at 367. See also *Councils and Synods* I, part 2, 619.

⁵⁷ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* I, 382-84, quotation at 382. See also *Councils and Synods* I, part 2, 675-76, 680.

⁵⁸ "Letter of Anselm to Bishop Herbert of Norwich" (1102), *Councils and Synods* I, part 2, 683-84; "Letter of Archbishop Gerard to Anselm," *Councils and Synods* I, part 2, 684-86.

clerical celibacy. Eadmer recounted how Henry I began a “campaign of extortion,” collecting fines from married priests as a way of disciplining them.⁵⁹ In a letter to Archbishop Anselm in 1107, Pope Paschal II tacitly acknowledged a tolerance for clerical marriage – in practice, at least – by providing a dispensation for priests’ sons to become ordained.⁶⁰

The subject of clerical marriage was again taken up a year later at the Council of London in 1108, when Anselm himself acknowledged that despite his decrees, many priests continued to live with their wives. Invoking the Council of Nicaea, Anselm ordered priests, deacons, and subdeacons to live chastely; any priest, deacon, or subdeacon who had married or had taken a concubine since the Westminster council of 1102 was forbidden from keeping her within his house or having “carnal commerce” with her in his or any other house. If a priest wanted to celebrate mass, he needed to evict his wife and abstain from any contact with her. Those “rebellious and contemptuous” priests who refused to give up their wives but celebrated mass anyway would be removed from their offices and deprived of their benefices.⁶¹ This council discussed priests’ wives in a way distinct from most prior English legislation, shifting from the use of a specific noun – *uxor* – to a more general condemnation of women, using the terms *mulier* and *femina*. Like the 1102 Council of Westminster, which emphasized the hazards of female pollution, this council referred to women involved with priests using abstract terms, paving the way for later descriptions of them as *meretrices*.

At the time of Anselm’s death in 1109, clerical incontinence was still widespread. Subsequent legislation focused on priests’ companions, instead of priests themselves. The

⁵⁹ Eadmer, *Historia Novorum in Anglia/History of Recent Events in England*, trans. Geoffrey Bosanquet (Philadelphia: Dufour, 1965), 184-85.

⁶⁰ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* I, 387; *Councils and Synods* I, part 2, 700-702.

⁶¹ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* I, 388.

Councils of Westminster (1125 and 1127), and London (1129) continued to reiterate earlier decrees, but began to emphasize the danger of women living in priests' houses and more frequently ordered the punishment of priests' wives and concubines. The 1127 council prohibited "the companionship of wives, concubines, and each and every woman (other than mothers, sisters, or relatives, or women who are free from suspicion) to priests, deacons, subdeacons, and canons."⁶² Canon 7 of the 1127 Westminster council took a particularly harsh stance against clerical concubines:

The concubines of priests and canons, unless they have been lawfully married [presumably, that is, before the Council of Westminster in 1102] should be driven outside the parish. But if they shall later be found to be guilty, in whatever place they shall be, let them be seized by officials of the church.⁶³

The canon further assigned the punishment of major or minor excommunication to concubines. Another canon forbade men in major orders from the "companionship of illicit women." If a priest remained with his concubine or wife, he was to be deprived of his orders, his honor, and his benefice. Archdeacons and other church officials were enjoined to "eradicate this evil altogether."⁶⁴ The Council of London, held in August 1129, again made stern decrees against clerical marriage, ordering priests to put away their wives by November of that year under penalty of losing their benefices, but entrusted enforcement to the king.⁶⁵ Since the king ended up merely charging them a fine to keep their wives, this legislation was ineffective, at best. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recorded Henry I's response to the 1129 council: "The king gave them all [the archdeacons and priests] permission to go home, and so

⁶² *Councils and Synods* I, part 2, 740.

⁶³ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* I, 410. See also *Councils and Synods* I, part 2, 748.

⁶⁴ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* I, 410.

⁶⁵ *Councils and Synods* I, part 2, 751.

they went home, and all the orders availed to nothing – they all kept their wives by permission of the king as they had done before.”⁶⁶ The Chronicle’s resigned account of the council highlights the futility of ecclesiastical legislation in the face of priestly resistance and royal permissiveness. And, as Julia Barrow has pointed out, there was neither a means of removing all married clergy at once, nor were there enough ordained men to replace them.⁶⁷

Legislation against clerical marriage and concubinage culminated in the Council of Westminster (1175), which issued a far-reaching, definitive, and frequently quoted statement against clerical marriage and the inheritance of benefices in England in the central middle ages. The text of the council gathered together statements from many different church councils and quoted a contemporary decree from Pope Alexander III on married priests:

If any priest or clerk in sacred orders, having a church or ecclesiastical benefice, openly has a *fornicaria* and, having been warned once, twice, and three times, does not send his *fornicaria* away, and does not send her away from himself absolutely, but rather marries her, persisting in his filth, he shall be stripped of every office and ecclesiastical benefice.⁶⁸

The council went on to warn any married cleric in minor orders that if he wished to continue in service to God and progress to major orders, he must separate from his wife; a married cleric could not hold a benefice. The sons of priests were also prohibited from being instituted in their fathers’ churches.

The use of the term *fornicaria* in this legislation is particularly intriguing, because it once again marks a shift in the language used to talk about priests’ wives and concubines. While the 1108 Council of London had condemned women in general, using the terms *mulier*

⁶⁶ *Councils and Synods* I, part 2, 752.

⁶⁷ Julia Barrow, ed., *English Episcopal Acta VII: Hereford 1079-1234* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), xliii.

⁶⁸ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* I, 477-79. See also *Councils and Synods* I, part 2, 984.

and *femina* rather than the specific term *uxor*, the Council of Westminster reduced priests' companions to a sexual act. *Fornicaria*, unlike the more neutral *concupina*, coded priests' companions as sexual women, fornicators. It revealed a certain level of disparagement, too, for the term was also used to describe an adulterous woman or a prostitute.⁶⁹ It is even possible that *fornicaria* was a nasty sort of pun – a play on the term *focaria*, which was sometimes used to describe a priest's lover. *Focaria*, from the word *focus* (meaning fire or hearth), denoted a housekeeper or concubine and was inclusive of a woman's dual role in a clerical household. If so, *fornicaria* laughingly degraded a housekeeper into a whore.

English legislation of the eleventh and twelfth centuries – with its repeated attempts to root out clerical marriage – shows how difficult it was to impose celibacy on an unwilling priesthood. These statutes also reveal an intriguing pattern: English legislation contains no new words for *priests* who kept concubines, but the terminology for the women with whom they consorted became increasingly negative – from wife (*uxor*), to woman (*femina*), to whore (*fornicaria*).

The Struggle to Enforce Celibacy in England, 1179-1300

By the third Lateran Council of 1179, it was impossible for a priest in major orders to contract a licit marriage. But enforcing the ban on clerical marriage proved problematic, and there was a noticeable upsurge in English legislation during the thirteenth century: between 1200 and 1300, nearly thirty English synods dealt with marriage, concubinage, and

⁶⁹ J.F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), s.v. “fornicaria.” Similarly, the term *fornicatrix* was used in the early middle ages as a synonym for *meretrix*; according to Isidore of Seville, *fornicatrix* indicated a woman “whose body is public and shared by all.” Quoted in Harry E. Wedeck, “Synonyms for *Meretrix*,” *Classical Weekly* 37 (1944): 116-17, quotation at 116.

incontinence among the clergy, compared to only a handful in the twelfth century.⁷⁰ Many of these statutes reiterated earlier legislation, but three significant differences emerged in the thirteenth century. First, legislation tended to provide more graduated penalties for concubinary priests, including monetary fines. Second, church officers were increasingly concerned about the inheritance of property – whether church or personal property – by priests’ concubines and sons. And lastly, the treatment of priests’ companions (now nearly always referred to as concubines rather than wives) worsened. Eviction, excommunication, and even the denial of a Christian burial were frequently prescribed punishments for these lustful, polluting women.⁷¹

Over and over in the statutes from thirteenth-century synods, archbishops and bishops warned priests to live continently. The Statutes of Worcester (1229), for example, exhorted priests to live “honestly and chastely,” as did the Statutes of Salisbury (1238). At a synod at Durham (1241), the bishop proclaimed, “No priest shall take a wife,” and a synod at Chichester exhorted, “No cleric or beneficed clerk shall dare to have a concubine.”⁷² This repetition alone suggests that priests were not, in fact, living honest and chaste lives. On occasion, even bishops themselves noted that incontinency among the clergy was a

⁷⁰ Thirteenth-century synods were certainly concerned with issues other than clerical concubinage, but the topic was regularly addressed. For a more general discussion of thirteenth-century legislation (including issues of parochial ministry, instruction of and by the clergy, and the duties of the laity towards the clergy), see C.R. Cheney, *English Synodalia of the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941).

⁷¹ James Brundage has argued that papal decretals during this period merely reiterated earlier bans on clerical marriage and “did little more than reaffirm positions that had become standard teaching since the Gregorian reform.” Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 342-43. While he may be right, there were some subtle, but important, developments in English legislation.

⁷² F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, eds., *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205-1313*, vol. II, parts 1 and 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 175, 381, 427, 463.

widespread and tenacious problem. At the Council of London in 1237, Cardinal Otto, the papal legate, stated, “It has been made known to us... that many negligent men... having contracted marriage clandestinely, are not afraid to keep their churches and ecclesiastical benefices with their wives (*uxoribus*), gain new benefices, and be promoted to sacred orders, contrary to the statutes of the sacred canons.”⁷³ Otto’s acknowledgement that – almost forty years after Lateran III – priests were still marrying exposes the difficulty of enforcing clerical celibacy, as do repeated injunctions for archdeacons to inquire whether any priests had wives or concubines.⁷⁴

The 1237 council discusses both wives and concubines, but it is one of the last to use the term *uxor* to refer to a priest’s partner. It also reveals another linguistic shift: the chapter on priests’ “wives” (*De uxoris a beneficiis amovendis*) uses straightforward and neutral language to condemn married priests, their wives, and their illegitimate children; the chapter on concubines (*De concubinis clericorum removendis*), however, is rife with the language of pollution. Clerical concubines are equated with filth: they are a “rotten contagion of lustful indecency (*putridum illud turpitudinis libidinosae contagium*).”⁷⁵ They contaminate, they taint, they desecrate. A generation later, Giles of Bridport, Bishop of Salisbury, used similar terms when he explicitly admitted that the church was having little success enforcing celibacy: “[T]he rotten contagion of lustful filth (*putridum libidinosae spurcitie contagium*) indeed grows stronger among clerics and priests, that neither evangelical authority nor

⁷³ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* I, 647-56; *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 252.

⁷⁴ See, for example, the constitutions issued by William Cantilupe, bishop of Worcester, in 1240, the 1245 “Statutes of London,” and the 1273 “Articles of Inquiry by the Nuncios.” *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 312, 632; *Councils and Synods* II, part 2, 805.

⁷⁵ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* I, 647-56; *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 252.

canonical severity has been able to uproot it, up to this point....”⁷⁶ The bishop may have been exaggerating for dramatic effect, but the frequency of complaints that priests continued to live openly with their concubines suggests that they probably did.

Nearly every statute that addressed clerical celibacy advised priests not to have *any* women in their houses, even female servants. The Statutes of Canterbury (1213) put it succinctly: “It is not safe to live with women.”⁷⁷ Although the Council of Nicaea had allowed a priest’s mother, sister, or aunt to live with him, legislation of the thirteenth-century made no such distinction and viewed all women with suspicion. Bishop Grosseteste of Lincoln, for example, forbade a priest from keeping any woman in his house, whether or not she was a relative. Other synods emphasized the danger of infamy that might be generated by this “suspicious cohabitation.”⁷⁸

Punishments prescribed for priests who had concubines ranged from general – “clerks who fornicate or have a concubine should be severely punished” – to more specific penalties.⁷⁹ The Statutes of Winchester (1224), for example, decreed that incontinent priests should not celebrate mass until they had confessed their sin and received penance. Others warned priests not to be “familiar” with their concubines, under penalty of losing their benefices.⁸⁰ One approach, increasingly common over the course of the thirteenth century, was to assign progressively more severe penalties each time a priest was caught with his concubine. In 1240, the bishop of Worcester decreed that incontinent priests should, on first

⁷⁶ “Statutes of Salisbury IV” (1257), *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 555.

⁷⁷ *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 26.

⁷⁸ *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 486.

⁷⁹ *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 132.

⁸⁰ *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 62.

offense, pay monetary fines and be “removed from the place in which they were defamed at least until the end of the year, in order to avoid infamy and danger, and placed in another position, if there is to be hope of their correction.” A second offense brought a longer exile and a strict warning. After a third offense, the priest was to be thrown out of the diocese.⁸¹ Other bishops advised similar punishments, often culminating in a priest’s loss of his benefice. All these penalties were, of course, a matter of prescription, but they give us an idea of how medieval church officers attempted to enforce rules against the sexual misconduct of clerics, even if they were unsuccessful.

Church officials in England were as anxious to eradicate clerical marriage and concubinage as their contemporaries on the Continent, in part, because priests’ concubines and sons might inherit church property. Many thirteenth-century statutes addressed this problem by outlawing inheritance by priests’ concubines and sons (no statutes mention priests’ daughters) and decreeing that wills which bequeathed such property were invalid. This decree by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, made at the Council of Oxford in 1222, set out the church’s prerogative: “We do not wish that they [beneficed clerics] should bequeath, in a will, anything to their concubines, but if he has done, the whole testament shall be reversed by judgment of the bishop to the use of the church which the deceased priest governed.”⁸² A number of other synods and councils made similar provisions, sometimes targeting priests’ sons in an effort to end both clerical dynasties and the alienation of church property. The Council of London (1237) specified that a priest’s son needed a dispensation to inherit property from his father; the Statutes of Winchester (1262) decreed that a priest could

⁸¹ *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, “Statutes of Worcester” (1240), 319.

⁸² *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 117.

not leave his house or possessions to the use of his concubine or son.⁸³ In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, English bishops regularly obtained papal mandates to prevent hereditary succession in their dioceses.⁸⁴

It was not simply the alienation of ecclesiastical property that concerned church officers: they sometimes denied a concubine's inheritance of any goods whatsoever as a means of punishing her. A statute from a synod at Exeter in 1225 proclaimed that clerics could not pass on to their concubines "either lay houses or possessions (*domos aut posesiones* [sic] *laicas*)..., especially not ecclesiastical goods."⁸⁵ A concubine, then, could not inherit property from her lover, even if it belonged to him personally.

Taking away a concubine's inheritance was only one of the many punishments church officers imposed on priests' concubines, and it was relatively mild. Nearly every thirteenth-century statute decreed that concubines should be evicted from the houses of priests. One early statute (Canterbury, 1213) warned concubines to "withdraw" (*recedere*) from their clerical lovers; most others ordered priests to evict them. In a frequently repeated canon from the Council of London (1237), the papal legate Otto ordered not only that married clerics should be deprived of their benefices and that their sons could not inherit their benefices, but also that they should separate from their wives or evict their concubines within one month. He proclaimed, "We order that unless clerks (and especially those in sacred orders) who openly hold concubines in theirs or other houses banish them directly within one month, they shall be suspended from office and benefice...."⁸⁶

⁸³ *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 252, 710-11.

⁸⁴ *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 98-99. See also the "Statutes of Winchester" (1224), 128.

⁸⁵ *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 229.

⁸⁶ *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 25, 252-53.

In addition to eviction, clerical concubines faced harsh ecclesiastical discipline. Excommunication was a favored punishment: some synods recommended that any concubine of a priest be immediately excommunicated, while other legislation, like the Statutes of Canterbury (1213), gave a concubine three opportunities to leave a priest's household before excommunicating her and denying her the sacraments.⁸⁷ Others reserved particularly severe penalties for recalcitrant concubines. This decree, made by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1225 and repeated in synods throughout the thirteenth century, included measures that essentially banished clerical concubines from Christian society:

The concubines of priests and clerks who will be beneficed or ordained into sacred orders shall be deprived of an ecclesiastical burial, unless they truly and entirely correct themselves.... Neither shall they receive the kiss of peace nor the blessing of bread in church.... If they have given birth they shall not be purified, unless they have sworn to the archdeacon or his officer an adequate guarantee of fulfillment of penance to be made in the next chapter meeting after their purification.⁸⁸

The penalties for priests' concubines were far more severe than for the priests' themselves. Could the threat of a priest's deprivation from his benefice or loss of his office compare to the specter of being excluded from the living communion of the faithful and being refused, in death, a Christian burial?

The disparity in punishments for priests and their concubines reflects a virulent fear of female sexuality that prevailed among the English clergy as much as among their continental brethren. Take, for example, this explanation of why priests' wives and concubines could be excommunicated: "It is lawful to banish from the bosom of the church that rotten contagion of

⁸⁷ *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 180, 25.

⁸⁸ *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 154-55. See also the "Statutes of Chichester," 463.

lustful indecency by which the grace of the church is grievously tainted....”⁸⁹ Lustful, fleshly concubines endangered priests’ purity and polluted those who “bear the vessels of the Lord,” as Bishop Grosseteste of Lincoln put it, when he ordered “all beneficed clergy and those in sacred orders [to] shun the vice of lust and every willful impurity of the flesh, preserving the purity of their chastity.” The polluting, sexual presence of women “defiled the lips and hands” of priests and, therefore, the sacraments.⁹⁰

When Otto’s constitutions from the 1237 Council of London were renewed at another London council in 1268, there was no mention of priests’ wives; tellingly, they referred only to their concubines.⁹¹ While the repetition of the decrees suggests that they were not being obeyed, new language that omitted any hint of clerical marriage, per se, implies that its acceptance was on the wane. By the close of the thirteenth century, then, the struggle against clerical marriage had been won, at least in theory. Clerical concubinage was another matter.

The Legalization of Clerical Marriage in England, 1300-1549

By the fourteenth century, the struggle to outlaw clerical marriage had succeeded, but clerical concubinage remained commonplace. In the later middle ages, local synods throughout Europe continued to censure clerical concubinage, mostly by restating twelfth- and thirteenth-century legislation. The Council of Basel (1435) reiterated earlier condemnations of priests who had concubines, decreeing that clerics who did not renounce

⁸⁹ “The Council of London” (1237), *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 252-53.

⁹⁰ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* II, 5; *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 269, and part 2, 756. But see N.M. Schulman, “Husband, Father, Bishop? Grosseteste in Paris,” *Speculum* 72 (1997): 330-46, for an argument that, when he lived in Paris in the early twelfth century, Grosseteste himself was married and had three children.

⁹¹ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* II, 1-19; *Councils and Synods* II, part 2, 738-92, especially 756.

their concubines within two months would be deprived of their offices and benefices. This legislation was re-enacted at a number of local synods, including Avignon, Seville, Florence, and Tournai. In England, the councils at London in 1237 and 1268 stood as decisive legislation throughout the fourteenth century, and their canons on clerical concubinage were frequently reiterated in local canons and pastorals.⁹² Bishop Spofford of Hereford (1421-48), for example, invoked earlier canon law on concubinage in a citation to unchaste clerics in his diocese:

Certain clerks of our diocese beneficed and unbeneficed who have been infected by the crime of incontinence publicly and wickedly are keeping, for love, suspicious women in their houses, wherefore they incur... sentences of suspension and excommunication shown by the sacred canons provided for the purpose.⁹³

Spofford, like other late medieval bishops, was responsible for seeking out priests and concubines and implementing ecclesiastical law.⁹⁴

Over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, however, secular governments in England and abroad became increasingly involved in enforcing clerical celibacy. One late fifteenth-century legal treatise declared that secular authorities had the right to punish concubinary clerics, and some temporal leaders shared this opinion. In Spain, for instance, Alfonso X of Castile and Leon warned priests who kept concubines that they would lose their benefices and be excommunicated. Legal codes of fourteenth-century Aragon took a

⁹² Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 537; Lea, *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, 242-43; *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 252-53, and part 2, 756-57.

⁹³ John Shinner and William Dohar, eds., *Pastors and the Care of the Souls in Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 278.

⁹⁴ During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, most episcopal legislation was produced in synods. During the 1300s, however, synodal legislation became less important, and bishops tended to issue instructions to their dioceses via mandates or circular letters. W.A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 191-95.

different tack, forcing clerical concubines to pay a fine and, sometimes, wear a mark that distinguished them from “honest women.” The Crown continued, however, to legitimate priests’ children.⁹⁵

Secular authorities in England, too, interfered in clerical life. Although medieval thinkers recognized distinctions between temporal and spiritual matters, the royal courts successfully claimed jurisdiction over many ecclesiastical issues, such as disputes over church patronage and, sometimes, tithes. In the later middle ages, English rulers often legislated on such topics as clerical salaries, dress, and privileges. During the fourteenth century, parliamentary statutes set priests’ salaries and sumptuary laws regulated their dress. Statutes from the mid-fifteenth century confirmed clerical privileges and in the 1530s, parliament again addressed clerical dress and salaries, as well as tithes and leases of church property.⁹⁶ Beginning in the reign of Henry VII, parliament also began to take a more active position on controlling clerical sexual behavior, echoing the concerns of ecclesiastical councils and synods.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Reginetta Haboucha, “Clerics, Their Wives, and Their Concubines in the ‘Partidas’ of Alfonso el Sabio,” in *Homo Carnalis: The Carnal Aspect of Medieval Human Life*, ed. Helen Rodite Lemay (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1990), 85-104; Lacarra Lanz, “Changing Boundaries”; Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 537.

⁹⁶ See, for example, the 1337 statute banning clerics with incomes under £100 from wearing furs (11 Edward III c. 1-4). *The Statutes of the Realm: Printed by Command of His Majesty King George the Third from Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts*, 9 vols. (London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1810-22), vol. I, 280-81. Robert Swanson discusses other secular “incursions” into spiritual affairs in *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 142-49.

⁹⁷ For a classic – if not fully accurate – overview of clerical marriage under the Tudors, see Lea, *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, 378-426. For a more recent discussion, see chapter 3 of Eric J. Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 37-66. Helen L. Parish provides an excellent analysis in *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation: Precedent Policy and Practice* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000).

The first statute to directly address clerical sexual behavior was promulgated by a parliament of Henry VII in 1485 and expressly gave archbishops, bishops, and other diocesan officials the ability to *imprison* incontinent clerics: “That it be lawful to all archbishops and bishops... to punish and chastise such priests, clerks, and religious men being within the bounds of their jurisdiction, as shall be convicted afore them... of adultery, fornication, incest, or any other fleshly incontinency, by committing them to ward and prison....”⁹⁸ The statute affirmed the church’s jurisdiction over misbehaving clerics, but made an additional provision that church officials who imprisoned unchaste priests could not be liable for false or wrongful imprisonment. Overall, the statute was more concerned with protecting church officials who punished priests for incontinence than it was with controlling priestly misbehavior. As the first authorization for bishops to actually imprison offenders, however, it was nonetheless a legal landmark.⁹⁹

Secular legislation in England began in earnest in November 1521, with a unequivocal proclamation against clerical marriage by Henry VIII. With the nascent acceptance of clerical marriage on the Continent, some English priests, it seems, may also have taken wives:

The king’s majesty, understanding that a few in number of this his realm, being priests, as well religious as other, have taken wives and married themselves.... His Highness... doth therefore straightly charge and command... the said priests... that they, nor any of them shall minister any sacrament... nor have any office, dignity, cure, privilege, profit, or commodity heretofore accustomed and belonging to the clergy of this realm; but shall be utterly, after such marriages, expelled and deprived from the same.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ 1 Henry VII c. 4, *Statutes of the Realm* II, 501.

⁹⁹ H. Maynard Smith, *Pre-Reformation England* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), 49.

¹⁰⁰ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* III, 696. Debates about clerical marriage raged throughout the 1520s and 1530s, and polemical writing flourished.

Henry's threats against married priests (and those who held concubines) would be repeated for the next twenty years.

Although there is limited evidence of how such proclamations were received on the ground in English dioceses, Charles Booth, Bishop of Hereford in the early sixteenth century, drew on Henrician policy in an attempt to discipline a parish priest in 1527. David ap John, a priest in the town of Monmouth, was "an open and notorious fornicator (*fornicarius*)," Booth declared. Despite many warnings, he continued commit incontinence with his concubine (*fornicaria*), Alice Phelpotis; they lived together openly and he had fathered a child "from their wicked and wretched sexual union." Faced with an unresponsive priest who had ignored warnings, injunctions, and an excommunication, the bishop ordered David's parishioners not to attend any mass that he celebrated.¹⁰¹

When the English church separated from Rome with the 1534 Act of Supremacy, the crown became more intrusively involved in the regulation of priests and their concubines. Although there was some support among the English clergy for clerical marriage in the 1530s, Henry VIII remained opposed to it, and clerical celibacy became a defining characteristic of the reformed English church, setting it apart from Lutheran reforms in particular.¹⁰² During the next seventy years, English monarchs showed a growing concern with the sexual behavior

¹⁰¹ Herefordshire Record Office (HRO), AL19/13, ff. 133v-134r. ...*contra dominum David ap John, presbiterum de Monmouth nostra diocese, publicum et notorium fornicarium, ad anime sue correctionem diversis vicibus rite et legitime procedentes, eundem de fornicatione, incontinentie, et recidivatione cum quadam Alice Phelpotis, quam fornicariam in domo sua publice retinuit et ex eadem nephario et damnato coitu proles suscitavit....*

¹⁰² The reasons behind Henry VIII's opposition to clerical marriage continue to be a matter of debate. See Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, 37-39 and 49-50; Parish, *Clerical Marriage*, 32-34. This was, by no means, a universal view in the English church. For an account of debates over clerical marriage, including petitions and other literature in favor of clerical marriage, in the later sixteenth century, see Parish, *Clerical Marriage*, and J.K. Yost, "The Reformation Defense of Clerical Marriage in the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI," *Church History*, 50 (1981): 152-64.

of priests. Unlike ecclesiastical synods of the central middle ages, however, English secular regulations tended to treat priests and their concubines more equally, often prescribing equal punishments for them.

At first, secular English legislation reiterated earlier synodal dictates. A royal proclamation of 1534 decreed that no priest who married “shall minister any sacrament... nor have any office, dignity, cure, privilege, profit, or commodity,” and would be deprived of his benefice and his clerical office, be demoted to the status of a layperson, and possibly be punished or imprisoned. In 1536, the belief that priests should marry was included in a list of heresies.¹⁰³ In the same year, Henry VIII instructed English and Welsh bishops to make secret inquiries to see if there were any married priests in their dioceses and report them to the King’s council or arrest them.¹⁰⁴ A veiled concern with sexual misbehavior appeared in a 1536 statute that primarily addressed clerical non-residency. It condemned clerics who used the excuse of attending university as a pretext for leaving their benefices, but who had no intention of studying and who “under the said pretence and color of study doth continue and abide living dissolutely, nothing profiting themselves by study at all in learning...”¹⁰⁵ Although the statute did not expressly mention sexual misbehavior, the phrase “living dissolutely,” much like the term “incontinence,” had connotations of unrestrained behavior: lax morals, licentiousness, and sexual debauchery.

King and parliament soon prosecuted clerical concubinage and marriage more aggressively. A royal proclamation of November 1538 laid out a number of prohibitions about religious customs and beliefs, including a decree for the deprivation of married clergy. In it,

¹⁰³ *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* III, 776-78; Parish, *Clerical Marriage*, 28.

¹⁰⁴ Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, 50; Parish, *Clerical Marriage*, 29.

¹⁰⁵ 28 Henry VIII c. 13, *Statutes of the Realm* II, 668-69; *OED*, s.v. “dissolute.”

Henry VIII addressed those priests and monks who “have taken wives and married themselves... not esteeming also the avow and promise of chastity which they made at the receiving of their holy orders.” Invoking St. Paul and the church fathers, Henry condemned married clerics and forbade any priest who continued his marriage or who married after the proclamation to administer sacraments. Married priests would be deprived of their offices or benefices, risk further punishment or imprisonment, and even forfeit altogether their clerical status: they shall “be had and reputed as lay persons to all purposes and intents.”¹⁰⁶

Parliament explicitly addressed clerical marriage in 1539, when a prohibition of clerical marriage was tacked onto the end of an act that enabled former monks (whose religious houses had been dissolved) to purchase land. The act stated that these ex-monks could purchase or inherit property and sue or be sued in court, but they could not marry, nor could any man (priest or monk) who had voluntarily taken a vow of chastity after the age of twenty-one. So although the distinctions between monks and laymen had been partially erased, celibacy was still retained as a distinctive marker of religious status, just as it had been since the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹⁰⁷

Although this act outlawed clerical marriage, it made no provisions for the punishment of errant clerics. Later that year, however, the Act of Six Articles took a decisive and punitive stance against clerical fornication and marriage; contemporary thinkers and modern historians

¹⁰⁶ Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations, Volume 1, The Early Tudors (1485-1553)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), Proclamation 186, “Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à Becket from Calendar,” 270-276, quotations at 274. See also Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, 50. Married priests were certainly deprived of their benefices and some married men were refused ordination during the sixteenth century, but I have seen no evidence of priests who were actually stripped of their clerical status.

¹⁰⁷ 31 Henry VIII c. 6, *Statutes of the Realm II*, 724-25.

alike have considered it the most vital piece of Henrician legislation on clerical marriage.¹⁰⁸

Placing clerical marriage on par with doctrinal controversies, the Act addressed six religious issues: transubstantiation, communion in both kinds, clerical celibacy, vows of chastity, private masses, and auricular confession. The conservative act also upheld elements of traditional Christianity, including a ban on clerical marriage: “Priests after the order of priesthood received as afore may not marry by the law of God.” Clerical marriage – or even preaching or printing literature in support of clerical marriage – was made a felony, with harsh penalties:

If any priest, after the said 12th day of July [1539]... do actually marry or contract matrimony with any person, that then [he]... shall be by authority above-written deemed and adjudged a felon and felons; and that every offender in the same being therefore duly convicted or attainted by the laws under written shall therefore suffer pains of death as in cases of felony without any benefit of clergy or privilege of the Church or sanctuary to him.

Any existing clerical marriages were made void, diocesan officials were empowered to separate and divorce clerical couples, and an offending cleric became a felon, subject to capital punishment.¹⁰⁹

The act went on to address not only clerical marriage, but also celibacy, fornication, and concubinage. Any priest who had married or contracted marriage before 1539 was forbidden to “carnally keep or use” his wife, or even to be “openly conversant” or “keep company or familiarity with any such woman to the evil example of other persons.” Like

¹⁰⁸ Parish, *Clerical Marriage*, 32-33.

¹⁰⁹ 31 Henry VIII c. 14, *Statutes of the Realm III*, 739-43, quotations at 739 and 740. For an overview of the Act of Six Articles, see Glyn Redworth, “A Study in the Formulation of Policy: The Genesis and Evolution of the Act of Six Articles,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 37 (1986): 42-67. The act created a never-resolved problem for Archbishop Thomas Cranmer who, by 1539, had married twice. See Susan Bridgen, *London and the Reformation* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1989), 354; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 69-72; Parish, *Clerical Marriage*, 32.

clerical marriage, these actions constituted a felony; unlike the section on clerical marriage, which made no mention of how clerical wives might be punished, women who slept with priests were made vulnerable to prosecution under common law. If convicted, they would forfeit their lands and goods, like other felons. Clerical concubines were subject to the same penalties – “like punishment” – as their clerical lovers.¹¹⁰ Yet the Act of Six Articles made no distinction between women who were guilty of fornication with a priest and women who were priests’ concubines, so even a woman who had had a fleeting affair with a cleric was, in theory, liable to be indicted as a long-term concubine.

The act concluded with a harsh condemnation of clerical concubinage, assigning similar penalties to a priests who kept concubines: any priest who “carnally used” any woman or kept her as his concubine, would, if convicted, be imprisoned and lose his goods, benefice, and spiritual office. Although a concubinary priest, like a married or unchaste cleric, might be deprived of his benefice, forfeit his goods and property, and suffer imprisonment, he had one mitigation: he would not be tried as a felon for his first offense. A second offense, however, would be judged a felony, and he “shall suffer pains of death,” forfeiting his “goods, lands, and tenements as in cases of felony, without having any benefit or clergy or sanctuary.”¹¹¹ Given the imperfect survival of sixteenth-century records, it is impossible to know how strictly these statutes were enforced. But a number of historians have documented priests who divorced or sent away their wives, were denied ordination, or fled to the Continent with their

¹¹⁰ 31 Henry VIII c. 14, *Statutes of the Realm* III, 741 and 743.

¹¹¹ 31 Henry VIII c. 14, *Statutes of the Realm* III, 743.

wives.¹¹² In upholding Catholic beliefs, the Act of Six Articles, then, also transformed clerical marriage, fornication, and concubinage into felonious crimes.

These drastic penalties for priests who married or kept concubines were soon mitigated in the “Act for moderation of incontinence of priests.” In 1540, parliament admitted that the punishment of death for “the incontinent living of priests” was “very sore and too much extreme”; it voided some parts of the Act of Six Articles, most notably repealing the penalties of felony and forfeiture.¹¹³ The doctrinal discussion of celibacy present in the Act of Six Articles did not appear in the 1540 statute. Instead, this act emphasized the importance of priests modeling good behavior for their parishioners. Priests should instruct and edify Christian people, setting an example of “virtue and good living”; an incontinent priest not only was an offense to God, but might also cause “a great occasion of increase of like sinful living to all other the King’s subjects.”¹¹⁴

The revised statute set out that for the first conviction of fornication or concubinage, a priest would forfeit only “his goods, chattels, and debts” (but not his property); if he held ecclesiastical offices, he would forfeit – for life – revenues and income from all but one of the benefices. Upon a second conviction, he would lose his goods, chattels, and debts, and income

¹¹² Eric Carlson argues that the Act of Six Articles “appears to have been enforced.” Eric Josef Carlson, “Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation,” *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992): 1-31, quotation at 5, and Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, 52-53. But two or three Henrician bishops were married during the 1540s: William Barlow, Bishop of St. David; possibly Henry Randes or Holbeach, Bishop of Lincoln; and, of course, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. Sherlock, “Monuments, Reputation and Clerical Marriage,” 57-82. On Cranmer, see MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 69-72. For the illicit marriage of another high-ranking Henrician clergyman, see Eric Carlson, “The Marriage of William Turner,” *Historical Research* 65 (1992): 336-39.

¹¹³ 32 Henry VIII c. 10, *Statutes of the Realm* III, 754-55. I have come across no evidence, either in documentary or secondary sources, that a priest was ever executed for incontinence.

¹¹⁴ 32 Henry VII, c. 10, *Statutes of the Realm* III, 754.

from all his ecclesiastical lands. A third conviction would result in the forfeiture of income not only from his ecclesiastical offices, but also from his own lands and tenements; he would also be imprisoned for the remainder of his life.¹¹⁵

The punishment of priests' lovers was also mitigated in the 1540 statute, but this time the law made a distinction between single and married women. As for a priest, a first conviction for an unmarried woman would result in the forfeiture of her goods, chattels, and debts. After a second conviction, she would also lose half of all the revenues and profits of her lands, tenements, and inherited properties for life. A third conviction meant the forfeiture of the other half of her income from her lands and tenements, as well as imprisonment for life. The penalties for a married woman who slept with a priest were particularly harsh, probably since she would have had no land of her own to forfeit, due to coverture: for any conviction of fornication or concubinage with a priest, "she shall have and suffer imprisonment of her body by all the term of her life at the King's will and pleasure."¹¹⁶

These were not mere prescriptions – secular authorities sometimes prosecuted offenders, as a case heard in Hereford's Quarter Sessions shows. In the 1540s, Katherine Symondis alias Partrygge, a widow who had remarried, was accused of committing adultery with a cleric named Richard Badam and being his concubine "in pernicious example to others and against the form of the statute in the parliament of the said king [Henry VIII] at Westminster in the 31st year of his reign [1539-40]."¹¹⁷ While the outcome of the case does not survive (nor is it clear whether Richard Badam was ever brought before the court), it is nonetheless intriguing evidence that clerical sexual misbehavior was catching the attention of

¹¹⁵ 32 Henry VIII c. 10, *Statutes of the Realm* III, 754-55.

¹¹⁶ 32 Henry VII, c. 10, *Statutes of the Realm* III, 755.

¹¹⁷ HRO, BG1 1/8/8, loose, unnumbered folio.

secular officials, for prior to 1539 this case would certainly have been heard only in an ecclesiastical court. In claiming that Symondis' behavior set a dangerous example to others, the inquiry also echoes the language of the 1540 "Act for moderation of incontinence of priests."

After the parliamentary statutes of the late 1530s, there was no further legislation on clerical sexual behavior during the reign of Henry VIII. The Act of Six Articles was repealed by the first parliament of Edward VI in 1547, and although clerical marriage was no longer a crime, Parliament made no positive statement in support of it.¹¹⁸ In early 1549, parliament passed an additional statute – "An act to take away all positive laws against marriage of priests" – that explicitly supported clerical marriage.¹¹⁹ Although the statute reiterated the legality of clerical marriage, it stressed – at length – that chastity was still the clerical ideal:

Although it were not only better for the estimation of priests... to live chaste, sole, and separate from the company of women and the bond of marriage, but also thereby they might the better attend to the administration of the Gospel, and be less intricate and troubled with the charge of household, being free and unburdened from the care and cost of finding wife and children, and that it were most to be wished that they would willingly and of their selves endeavor them self to a perpetual chastity and abstinence from the use of women... it were better and rather to be suffered in the Commonwealth that those which could not contain should after the counsel of Scripture live in holy marriage, than feignedly abuse with worse enormity outward chastity or the single life.¹²⁰

As Eric Carlson has put it, this statute was "strikingly halfhearted."¹²¹ Clerical marriage was a lesser evil than fornication, but not by much.

¹¹⁸ 1 Edward VI c. 12, *Statutes of the Realm* IV, part 1. See also Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, 51.

¹¹⁹ 2-3 Edward I c. 21, *Statutes of the Realm* IV, part 1, 67.

¹²⁰ 2-3 Edward I c. 21, *Statutes of the Realm* IV, part 1, 67.

¹²¹ Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, 52.

A statute of 1551-52 went somewhat further. It reiterated the 1549 act in response to “untrue slanderous reproach” of married priests, voiding any legislation that had prohibited clerical marriage and specifically recognizing marriages that were made before the repeal of the Act of Six Articles.¹²² The statute attempted to remove the stigma of clerical marriage by adding a declaration that the children of priests were legitimate and heritable and by enabling widowed priests and priests’ widows to inherit from each other.

In 1553, Mary I’s parliament once again made clerical marriage illegal as part of her project to restore Catholicism to England. “An act to take away all positive laws against marriage of priests” was specifically repealed, priests’ children were declared illegitimate, and many married clerics, including bishops, were deprived of their benefices. Estimates of priests who lost their benefices range from 10 to 25 percent of the English clergy.¹²³ Mary’s “Injunctions for Religion” of 1554 ordered bishops to deprive married clerics and sequester their tithes, although she permitted them to be more lenient with priests whose wives had already died. Mary also decreed that any married religious man should “be also divorced every one of them from his said woman”; she allowed widowed or divorced priests, however, to do penance and be restored to the priesthood in a different parish.¹²⁴

¹²² 5-6 Edward I c. 12, *Statutes of the Realm* IV, part 1, 146-47.

¹²³ 1 Mary st. 2, c. 3, *Statutes of the Realm* IV, part 1, 202. On these Marian deprivations, see Geoffrey Baskerville, “Married Clergy and Pensioned Religious in Norwich Diocese, 1555,” *English Historical Review* 48 (1933): 43-64; Carlson, “Clerical Marriage,” 6; A.G. Dickens, “The Marian Reaction in the Diocese of York: Part I, the Clergy,” *Reformation Studies*, 93-130; Hilda E.P. Grieve, “The Deprived Married Clergy in Essex, 1553-1561,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, fourth series, 22 (1940): 141-69; Prior, “Reviled and Crucified Marriages,” 118-48; Richard Spielmann, “The Beginning of Clerical Marriage in the English Reformation: The Reign of Edward and Mary,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 56 (1987): 251-63.

¹²⁴ Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations, vol. 2, The Later Tudors (1553-1587)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), Proclamation 407, “Announcing Injunctions for Religion,” 35-38, quotation at 37. For the effect the Marian deprivations had on the children and former wives of priests, see Anne Llewellyn Barstow, “The First Generations of

The second supremacy bill passed by Commons in 1559 once again allowed priests to marry, but Elizabeth I removed this provision from the final statute; although their marriages remained illegal, married priests were no longer prosecuted. Later that year, Elizabeth I's religious injunctions of July 1559 revived, albeit reluctantly, the Edwardian acts of parliament that had legalized clerical marriage. But these injunctions, striving in many ways to attain a respectable priesthood (who were educated, responsible for their parishioners, did not commit simony, and did not "haunt taverns"), included specific provisions for parish clergy who wanted to marry so that they might avoid "slander to the church by lack of discreet and sober behavior in many ministers of the church, both in choosing of their wives and in indiscreet living with them." Elizabeth required that a priest's wife should be an "honest and sober" woman and that the marriage be respectable: a woman could not marry a priest without the knowledge and consent of her parents or kin, the priests' congregation needed to be notified, and the woman herself had to be examined and approved by the bishop and two justices of the peace.¹²⁵ While controversy over clerical marriage continued throughout most of Elizabeth's reign, its legality was repeatedly affirmed.¹²⁶ The 39 Articles of Religion (approved by the clergy in 1563 and ratified by Parliament in 1571) allowed clerics to marry at their own

Anglican Clergy Wives: Heroines or Whores?" *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 52 (1983): 3-16, and Prior, "Reviled and Crucified Marriages."

¹²⁵ Carlson, "Clerical Marriage," 12-13; *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 2, Proclamation 460, "Announcing Injunctions for Religion," 117-32, quotations at 125. Elizabeth's requirements for the marriage of higher clergy even more stringent: a bishop who wished to marry had to be approved by a royal commissioner.

¹²⁶ Like Henry VIII, Elizabeth I's views on clerical marriage – in particular, whether she was personally opposed to it – have been vigorously debated by modern historians. Eric Carlson has argued that she simply wanted to avoid the scandal that clerical marriage provoked (Carlson, "Clerical Marriage," especially 1-2 and 20-21), while Helen Parish has maintained that Elizabeth had a personal dislike of clerical marriage; Parish, *Clerical Marriage*, 26. According to Peter Sherlock, Elizabeth was simply opposed to marriage, clerical or otherwise. Sherlock, "Monuments, Reputation and Clerical Marriage," 64-66.

discretion, without having their potential wives examined by diocesan authorities. By the end of the sixteenth century – despite the fact that formal legislation on clerical marriage never passed Parliament during Elizabeth’s reign – clerical marriage was widely tolerated by the government, the church, and the laity, and was no longer a contentious issue. In 1604, the parliament of James VI revived the two Edwardian statutes, removed all laws against clerical marriage, legitimated clerical children, and ended the conflicting legislation on clerical marriage, though it would be decades before priests’ wives and children were fully accepted by early modern society.¹²⁷

This chapter has traced the history of clerical celibacy and marriage across more than a millennium and most of Europe. From the fourth century to the seventeenth, clerical sexuality was a matter that was treated with ambivalence. Although broad, this legal context is essential for understanding the practice of clerical fornication and concubinage in Hereford. When Bishop Trefnant questioned the parishioners of his diocese in 1397 about the chastity of their priests, for example, his questions drew partly from English traditions and partly from the legislation of a well organized and highly bureaucratized Roman Church. Even in Hereford, a diocese tucked away on the border of Wales, more than one thousand miles from Rome, papal statutes were read, reiterated, and put into practice. Chapter 3 turns to this diocese to explore its history, its economy, and its parish clergy.

¹²⁷ Carlson, “Clerical Marriage,” 27-28; 1 James I c. 25, *Statutes of the Realm* IV, part 1, 1052.

Chapter 3: The Diocese of Hereford

Historians have tended to overlook the Marches of western England, dismissing the area as economically backward and politically irrelevant to more central areas such as East Anglia and London.¹ But centrality was not everything. Although Herefordshire was a multi-day journey from London, the county nonetheless contained important trade routes and the area's wool and cloth production was economically significant. In political terms, crucial battles were fought there during both Owain Glyn Dŵr's rebellion and the War of the Roses. In 1500, as Patrick Dwyer has put it, "Hereford was, in almost every sense, very much like other provincial centers in England religiously, economically, demographically, and politically."²

The diocese of Hereford, roughly contiguous with the county of Herefordshire but incorporating parishes from six other counties, has similarly been passed over in favor of the wealthier and more densely populated dioceses of east and south-east England. While the diocese of Hereford was undeniably on the geographical fringe of England, it was in many ways characteristic of English dioceses. Its low population density and relatively poor clergy were more representative than the uncharacteristically wealthy dioceses of

¹ See, for example, Julia Barrow's characterization of Hereford as a "backward diocese." Barrow, "Hereford Bishops and Married Clergy, c.1130-1240," *Historical Research* 60, 141 (1987): 1-8. See also Simon Townley, "Unbeneficed Clergy in the Thirteenth Century: Two English Dioceses," in *Studies in Clergy and Ministry in Medieval England*, ed. David M. Smith, Borthwick Studies in History 1 (York: Borthwick Publications, 1991), 38-64.

² John Patrick Dwyer, "'As Wee May Live in Peace and Quietnes': Regulation in the Age of Reformation: Hereford, 1470-1610" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Colorado, 2001), 90.

Lincoln and Norwich. What set the diocese apart, however, was its inclusion of Welsh parishes. Its proximity to Wales meant that it was an area of cultural contact between the Welsh and the British. The melding of different populations did not occur only in border areas like Herefordshire, but also in other areas of high migration and cultural assimilation, like London and Bristol. But it was particularly observable in the Marches, as Welsh and English parishioners were neighbors, attended the same parishes churches, and appeared side by side in the church courts of Hereford. This aspect of the diocese offers a particularly interesting chance to look at both ethnic integration and the adoption (or rejection) of English ecclesiastical regulations – especially vis-à-vis clerical marriage – by a subjugated Welsh society.

In Chapter 2, I set the regulatory scene, surveying the history of ecclesiastical legislation of clerical sexuality and marriage. Here, I set the local scene. First, I discuss the landscape, political setting, economy, demography, and ethnicity of Herefordshire and the Marches. Then, I look specifically at the history of the diocese of Hereford, including its administrative structure and its bishops. Finally, I examine the secular clerics of the diocese, particularly their socio-economic status and ethnicity.

Herefordshire and the Marches

Landscape

The landscape of the Marches is at once mundane and dramatic. Its terrain quickly transforms from green farmland neatly partitioned by hedgerows, to bleak, windswept moorland, to rocky limestone peaks, and back again. Within the space of a few miles, fertile, settled valleys give way to isolated farms perched high in the Black Mountains – hills so moody and unpredictable that, even now, walkers are warned away from the range during

poor weather. Remnants of antiquity are ubiquitous: Neolithic burial mounds interrupt the smooth profiles of hillsides, ramparts from Iron Age forts encircle steeply contoured hilltops, the banks and ditches of Offa's Dyke mark the ancient border between Mercia and Wales.

This mixed terrain has influenced the Marches' patterns of settlement, agriculture, and transportation. Much of the landscape was still wooded in the middle ages, but moorland and heath also abounded. In upland areas, the land is isolated, steep, and difficult to cultivate; as a result, the Marches have always been relatively sparsely populated. The western Marches, with its pastoral uplands, was an area of particularly thin population and dispersed settlements; toward the east, mixed settlement patterns predominated, with people living in both scattered farmsteads and nucleated villages.³ An arable open field system was in place in some areas of the Marches, but after the famines and plagues of the fourteenth century, enclosed pastoral farming became more common.⁴ Gerald of Wales described the area's arable and pastoral farming at the end of the twelfth century: "This region produces a great amount of corn. ... There is ample pasture and plenty of woodland, the first full of cattle, the second teeming with wild animals. There is no lack of freshwater fish, both in the Usk and the Wye."⁵

³ Joan Thirsk, "The Farming Regions of England," in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol. IV, 1500-1640*, ed. Joan Thirsk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 1-112; Dorothy Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 38-44.

⁴ The wool trade and textile industry became important to the Marches during the later middle ages, especially in the towns of Hereford, Leominster, Ludlow, and Shrewsbury, just to the north of the diocese. Trevor Rowley, *The Landscape of the Welsh Marches*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1986), 170-71.

⁵ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin, 1978), 93 (Book 1, chapter 2).

Gerald also commented on the difficulties of travel, observing, “Because of its high mountains, deep valleys and extensive forests, not to mention its rivers and marches, it is not easy of access.”⁶ The Romans, undeterred as always by rough terrain, had built roads throughout the Marches that continued to shape the landscape of the middle ages. Watling Street remained an important Marcher trade route as it made its way from Wroxeter to Kenchester (near Hereford), passing through market towns and villages of Shropshire and Herefordshire. Hereford also lay on a main east-west route that connected southern Wales to Gloucester, Worcester, and the rest of England; this road served as the main route between London and Wales, shunting traffic through central Herefordshire and the city of Hereford.⁷

The rivers Severn and Wye also eased transportation and encouraged trade in Herefordshire and the Marches, particularly with the city of Bristol to the south. Taken together, these land and river routes criss-crossed and tamed the region’s challenging topography, supporting trade, communication, and geographic mobility.

Political history

The political history of the Marches was marked by instability; cross-border warfare was a long-standing and persistent feature of life in Herefordshire. Little is known about Herefordshire in the early middle ages, although the area had been integrated into the kingdom of Mercia by the end of the eighth century. The royal shire of Hereford was first mentioned around the year 1000, but it is possible that it was formed as early as 900. Entries in Domesday Book show that Herefordshire was sparsely populated in its upland regions, had

⁶ Gerald of Wales, *Description of Wales*, 220 (Book 1, chapter 1).

⁷ Dwyer, “Regulation in the Age of Reformation,” 45-46; Christopher Dyer and T.R. Slater, “The Midlands,” in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume 1, 600-1540* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 609-38; *Historical Map and Guide: Roman Britain*, 5th edition (Southampton: Ordnance Survey, 2001); Rowley, *The Landscape of the Welsh Marches*, 1-62.

a relatively high proportion of slaves, and suffered much destruction from warfare in the north-western part of the county. Economically, it looked much like the rest of England: most of the population derived their living from agriculture; cattle and pigs were important resources: the main agricultural crops were wheat and barley; water mills were scattered throughout the region.⁸

The town of Hereford, the county's most important regional center, had a settled population (and street pattern) by around 700 and was part of the demesne of King Offa in 758. In 760, the city fell into Saxon hands after the battle of Hereford and, at some point in the eighth century, became a planned royal town, laid out on a grid. Soon after, in the late eighth or ninth century, the town was enclosed in defensive walls and later, along with Worcester, Gloucester, and Chester, Hereford became one of a defensive network of Saxon *burhs*, or fortified towns. By the mid-tenth century, Hereford had a busy royal mint and an active economy. In 1055, however, the town (including its castle and cathedral) was sacked and destroyed by Gruffydd ap Llywelyn as he conquered territory along the Welsh-English border; it was not until after the Norman Conquest that Hereford was rebuilt. Norman Hereford was again laid out on a grid, with uniform burgage plots and a large market. The castle was rebuilt immediately after the Conquest, but the cathedral remained in ruins until the thirteenth century. The town was once again attacked and laid under siege during the mid-twelfth century struggle for power between Stephen and Matilda, but was not thoroughly destroyed. Although named as a borough in Domesday Book, Hereford's earliest extant charter dates from 1189, when its citizens obtained the right from Richard I to hold the borough by a fee farm. Other privileges followed: a merchant guild was established in 1215,

⁸ Raymond Perry, *Anglo-Saxon Herefordshire, 410 AD – 1086 AD* (Gloucester: Oxenard Press, 2002), 72-124.

a yearly three-day fair was founded in 1227, and in 1399, the citizens of Hereford gained control of the borough law courts, although the city was not fully incorporated until 1597.⁹

During the period of this study, the Marches suffered two main bouts of political turmoil: the Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Wars of the Roses. Unresolved tensions between the Welsh and the English had been building for some time. An ethnically mixed population created competition for political authority within Wales; Wales was still viewed as a volatile threat by the English crown; and institutionalized discrimination created resentment within Wales. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, increasing financial demands by English overlords took an especially heavy toll on a society devastated by the Great Plague of 1348-49, and the Welsh elite became caught up in the political drama surrounding the usurpation of the English crown by Henry IV in 1399. In 1400, Glyn Dŵr was proclaimed prince of Wales and, soon after, he and his supporters attacked English towns in north-east Wales. The revolt quickly spread and in 1402, a crucial battle was fought at Bryn Glas, less than thirty miles north-west of Hereford, where Glyn Dŵr and his men slaughtered a considerably larger militia levied from Herefordshire. From there, Glyn Dŵr could – and did – raid border villages and towns, burning villages, displacing peasants, and disrupting trade. Subsidies and levies placed financial stress on local communities, even those not directly affected by warfare. Glyn Dŵr’s forces began to suffer defeats in 1406, and by 1409 the revolt had, for the most part, been suppressed. Although periodic disruptions continued in western and north-east Wales as late as 1420, the revolt in the Marches had been

⁹ Dwyer, “Regulation in the Age of Reformation,” chapter 1, especially 20-22; Dyer and Slater, “The Midlands,” 613; Ralph A. Griffiths, “Wales and the Marches,” in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume 1, 600-1540*, 681-714; Jennifer Kermode, “The Greater Towns 1300-1540,” *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume 1, 600-1540*, 441-65, especially 442-43; Perry, *Anglo-Saxon Herefordshire*, 82; I.M. Slocombe, “The Government of Hereford in the Sixteenth Century,” *TWNFC* 40, pt. 3 (1972): 356-72.

permanently subdued. In the wake of the revolt, English authority was reasserted through judicial sessions, penal statutes, and the imposition of large fines. The suppression of the rebellion and subsequent restriction of the rights of Welshmen in the border counties would lead to bitter unrest and lawlessness for the rest of the fifteenth century.¹⁰

Glyn Dŵr's revolt left one lingering connection in Herefordshire. Sir John Oldcastle, a member of the Herefordshire gentry, was deeply involved in Glyn Dŵr's revolt, providing military and non-military service to Henry IV. It is unclear when he developed a sympathy to Lollardy, but in 1413 he was accused of heresy, brought to trial, and condemned. He soon escaped from imprisonment in the Tower and attempted to capture Henry V in an armed revolt in London in January, 1414. Oldcastle's rebellion was easily suppressed, but he escaped and went into hiding in Herefordshire and mid-Wales, possibly with the help of Owain Glyn Dŵr's son; in 1417, he was captured, charged with treason, and executed. Oldcastle's connections to other Lollard supporters are mostly speculative, but it is clear that he was in communication with Richard Wyche, a Lollard priest from the diocese of Hereford.¹¹

Violence in Herefordshire was not limited to Glyn Dŵr's revolt. Throughout the fifteenth century, ethnic tensions plagued the Marches, in the form of both casual hostility and organized warfare. Constant raids and petty warfare ravaged the countryside, made roads unsafe, and disrupted trade. Parliamentary petitions of 1414, 1442, 1445, and 1449, repeatedly complained about Welsh raids (property damage, theft, and abduction) in the

¹⁰ Richard R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), especially chapters 3, 4, 10, and 11.

¹¹ Davies, *Owain Glyn Dŵr*, 300-301; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Oldcastle, John, Baron Cobham."

Marches, attesting to the frequency and seriousness of the violence; the 1420s were marked by particularly high crime rates.¹²

Later in the century, the Wars of the Roses brought new troubles to Herefordshire. The Yorkists were defeated by the Lancastrians at Ludford Bridge, just south of Ludlow, in 1459, but in 1461 they won a decisive battle at Mortimer's Cross, near the town of Leominster. These tensions also played out in the local government of Hereford: the 1440s were marked by political unrest and during the 1450s, armed uprisings agitated the town of Hereford, with newcomers struggling with the established elite for political power. Sir Walter Devereux, a devoted supporter of Richard, duke of York, staged a series of uprisings in 1452 in support of Richard. In 1456, he successfully overthrew the government and took control of the town, though only for three days. Later that year, Devereux and his supporters seized castles in Wales in support of Richard's claim to the throne.¹³

Demography and economy

Difficult terrain and border warfare meant that the Marches were sparsely populated throughout the medieval and early modern periods. Herefordshire and Shropshire (much of the county of Shropshire was in the diocese of Hereford) were consistently in the lowest third of English counties in terms of population density. In 1377, Hereford ranked thirtieth out of thirty-seven English counties, with a population density of 27.9 people per square mile.

¹² Alisa Herbert, "Herefordshire, 1413-61: Some Aspects of Society and Public Order," in *Patronage, the Crown, and the Provinces in Later Medieval England*, ed. Ralph A. Griffiths (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1981), 103-122; Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape*, 129.

¹³ Dwyer, "Regulation in the Age of Reformation," 141-43; Herbert, "Herefordshire," 103-6. See Herbert for a thorough discussion of tensions between the Welsh and the English in the border counties during the fifteenth century.

Shropshire ranked twenty-ninth, with a density of 28.5 people per square mile.¹⁴ In comparison, heavily populated Norfolk had 65.5 people per square mile; the least dense county, Cheshire, had only 11.5. Population patterns remained much the same throughout the late medieval period.¹⁵ In 1524, Herefordshire and Shropshire still had low population densities, with an average of five to nine taxpayers per square mile; in more populated areas, such as the East Midlands and East Anglia, population densities were as high as thirty to forty taxpayers per square mile.¹⁶

As befitted the rolling landscape of Herefordshire, four out of every five inhabitants lived in small, nucleated settlements of less than 200 people and a handful lived in even more remote settlements. Seventy-nine percent of communities in Herefordshire (116 hamlets and villages) had between twenty-six and 200 people in 1377, and another 8 percent (eleven hamlets) had less than twenty-five people.¹⁷

Agriculture was the mainstay of the economy of Herefordshire and the Marches. Although the upland areas relied on pastoral farming, the Wye valley – with its mild climate and excellent soil – sustained arable cultivation. Grains, especially wheat, but also rye and

¹⁴ J.C. Russell, *British Medieval Population* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1948), 313. Russell's figures do not include boroughs. Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, the other two English counties in the diocese, ranked twentieth and twenty-seventh, respectively.

¹⁵ Dwyer, "Regulation in the Age of Reformation," 49-51; John Sheail, "The Distribution of Taxable Population and Wealth in England during the Early Sixteenth Century," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 55 (1972): 111-26.

¹⁶ Sheail, "The Distribution of Taxable Population," 117.

¹⁷ Russell, *British Medieval Population*, 306-10; Russell does not provide statistics about community sizes for Shropshire or any Welsh counties. These statistics are close to average community size of other English counties: 6 percent of communities overall had less than twenty-five people; 13 percent had more than 200 people. There are only two noticeable difference in settlement patterns: in Herefordshire, only 15 percent of communities had between twenty-six and fifty people, while the average for all counties was 24 percent; 22 percent of Herefordshire communities had between 101 and 200 people, while the average for all counties was 29 percent.

oats, were the most frequently grown crop; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Herefordshire would become well known for its prosperous apple orchards. Pastoral farming was also an important component of the economy, especially the raising of cattle and sheep. There were cattle markets at Kington and Ludlow, and sheep markets at Hereford and Leominster. Herefordshire wool was taken north to Shrewsbury and Oswestry to be spun and woven.¹⁸

Rural settlement patterns reflected this mixed pastoral and arable use. Large, nucleated villages – groups of farms and dwellings with commonly tilled fields, associated with lowlands and valleys – were common in the north-west and mid-west, where the climate was mild and the land was fertile. In the south and south-west, a settlement pattern of dispersed and semi-dispersed hamlets prevailed. Sometimes called “celtic,” this pattern is related to a pastoral economy. Throughout the rest of the county, settlements patterns were mixed, consisting of smaller villages, hamlets, and dispersed farms.

There were other, less prominent rural industries, as well. Village water mills were used for grinding corn and fulling cloth; fisheries provided salmon and other fish to be sold at local markets. There is some evidence of iron mining in southern Herefordshire, and there were at least four iron forges in the area. As already noted, the wool and cloth trades became important after the Conquest and flourished in the later middle ages.¹⁹

¹⁸ Dwyer, “Regulation in the Age of Reformation,” 46-48; Alan Everitt, “The Marketing of Agricultural Produce,” in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. IV, 466-592, see 492; A.J. Roderick, “Open-Field Agriculture in Herefordshire in the Later Middle Ages,” *TWNFC* 33 (1950): 55-67; Thirsk, “The Farming Regions of England,” 99-112.

¹⁹ O’Donnell, “Market Centres in Herefordshire”; Thirsk, “The Farming Regions of England,” 109.

Not everyone in Herefordshire lived in small communities, for there were quite a few towns and boroughs: 13 percent of settlements had more than 200 people.²⁰ The town of Hereford was the largest, with a 1377 population of 3,000 to 4,000, roughly comparable to Worcester, Cambridge, and Leicester. By the late fifteenth century, Hereford's population had been drastically reduced by famine, plague, warfare, and emigration, but by 1525, the population had bounced back to between 3,000 and 4,800 and it was one of the more populous provincial capitals in England, ahead of Cambridge, Oxford, and Leicester.²¹ There were a number of smaller market towns, including Kington, Leominster, Bromyard, Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye, Monmouth, and Ludlow. In the thirteenth century, Ross-on-Wye had a population of around 525, Ledbury had 1,410, and Bromyard had 1,275.²² Ludlow, in southern Shropshire, had just over 2,000 people, about the same size as Derby or Southampton. This population pattern was typical of the West Midlands, which tended to have more small towns than other English counties.²³

Markets were essential to this trade. A network of market towns was in place throughout Herefordshire and the Marches, and the river valleys of the Severn and Wye were essential channels of distribution for livestock, grains, wool, and other commodities. Before 1348, Herefordshire had approximately thirty-seven market towns and villages, 20 percent

²⁰ Russell, *British Medieval Population*, 306-10.

²¹ These figures have been extrapolated from the 1524-25 subsidies. Dwyer, "Regulation in the Age of Reformation," 131-32.

²² Joseph Hillaby, "The Boroughs of the Bishops of Hereford in the Late Thirteenth Century," *TWNFC* 40: 1 (1970): 10-35. There were a number of smaller market towns throughout the medieval period, but by 1500 there were only nine market towns left: Bromyard, Hereford, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster, Pembridge, Ross, Weobley, and Wigmore; Jean O'Donnell, "Market Centers in Hereford, 1200-1400: Some Factors Influencing Development," *TWNFC* 40 (1971): 186-94.

²³ Dyer and Slater, "The Midlands," 626.

of which were located near the river Wye. About half of these were boroughs whose free tenants enjoyed trading privileges. After the plague only three additional markets were established, and as a result of depopulation and warfare, most markets had disappeared by 1500, leaving the county with only nine.²⁴

The town of Hereford served as a regional center for the Marches and the hub of this trading network. Hereford's market was mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, when it was referred to both as a port and a market. By 1215, Hereford's merchant guild had acquired the right to control the town's market, and economic activity increased in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The people of Hereford, like those in other English towns, engaged in manufacturing and trade: the city had twenty craft guilds in the fifteenth century, including harpers, weavers, coopers, and parchment makers; leather and cloth manufacturing were prominent trades.²⁵

Despite this thriving trade network, the people of the Marches were not wealthy. Compared to the most affluent counties of England – Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire, and Middlesex – Herefordshire and Shropshire were relatively poor. But when placed in the context of all of England, these counties had a fairly average level of aggregate wealth. According to the lay subsidy returns of 1334, Herefordshire ranked thirtieth and Shropshire ranked thirty-first in assessed wealth out of thirty-eight English counties. Both counties were well below the country-wide average of £21.5 per 1,000 acres, with Herefordshire at £14.4 and Shropshire at £11.9 per 1,000 acres. The district of Holland in Lincolnshire had the

²⁴ Everitt, "The Marketing of Agricultural Produce," 471; O'Donnell, "Market Centres in Herefordshire," 188-91.

²⁵ Kermode, "The Greater Towns," 450-43; O'Donnell, "Market Centres in Herefordshire," 186.

highest level of aggregate wealth in 1334, with £46.4 per 1,000 acres – more than three times the assessed wealth of Herefordshire. Disparities in levels of wealth among middling counties, however, were less dramatic: the difference between Herefordshire and Warwickshire, ranked twentieth at £21.2 per 1,000 acres, was less than £7.²⁶ There would have been considerable local variations within all counties and perhaps an especially large discrepancy between the rich and poor of Herefordshire, for the city of Hereford was one of the twenty richest towns in England in the 1330s.²⁷ Little changed in the next 250 years: in 1515, Herefordshire again ranked thirtieth in assessed wealth, although Shropshire had fallen to thirty-fifth. Hereford's economy continued to be prosperous, although there were many poor and indigent people living in the city.²⁸

Like the rest of Britain, Hereford experienced demographic and economic upheaval in the late medieval period. The famines of 1315, 1316, and 1321 took a toll on both the population and the economy, and although Herefordshire was an important corn-growing region (so much so that, in the sixteenth century it was dubbed “the barns for the corn” of England), its relative lack of accessible pastoral land and forest meant that refuges for the poor were limited.²⁹ Herefordshire was also hit hard when the Great Plague arrived in the spring of 1349 and lost perhaps one-third to one-half of its population.³⁰ As with all estimates of plague mortality, statistics for Herefordshire are impressionistic at best, but there is some

²⁶ R.S. Schofield, “The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649,” *Economic History Review* 18 (1965): 483-510, especially 503-9.

²⁷ Dyer and Slater, “The Midlands,” 622-23.

²⁸ Dwyer, “Regulation in the Age of Reformation,” 100-103; Schofield, “Geographical Distribution of Wealth,” 504.

²⁹ Thirsk, “The Farming Regions of England,” 109.

³⁰ The city of Hereford, however, may not have suffered mortality rates as high as those in some other British towns. See Kermode, “The Greater Towns,” 444.

evidence of the plague's devastation in a few manors and villages. Around 158 tenants of four episcopal manors died during the first outbreak, and the village of Eye was depopulated, described by contemporaries as "ruinous."³¹ The revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr caused further damage, chaos, and loss of life in the early fifteenth century.

These were difficult centuries for Herefordshire and the Marches. Famine, plague, and warfare all took their toll on the region's inhabitants and their economy. But, despite these troubles, the diocese boasted bustling towns, prosperous farms, and a diverse population.

Ethnicity

The whole of the Welsh Marches was an ethnic frontier, as Welsh and English people migrated back and forth over the border, or as the border itself changed. Patterns of settlement reflected this mixed heritage, and there was a distinct area in western Herefordshire and Shropshire that had both Welsh settlement patterns and a high concentration of Welsh people. Dispersed farms and occasional hamlets made up the landscape; Welsh place- and farm-names were common.

But how many Welsh were living on the English side of the border? Medieval ethnicity generally went unrecorded, so reconstructing the ethnic make-up of the Marches is difficult. Tax returns, the documents most often used to describe medieval populations, did not deliberately record ethnicity. Nonetheless, we can glean some evidence about Welsh and English populations from surname analysis. The poll tax returns of 1377, 1379, and 1381 were all nominal, meaning that tax collectors listed the names of tax-payers along with the

³¹ William J. Dohar, *The Black Death and Pastoral Leadership: The Diocese of Hereford in the Fourteenth Century* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 37-39.

amount of money they paid.³² The extant tax returns for Herefordshire or Shropshire are not complete, but those that survive can provide us with a basic sketch of Welsh and English settlement in the late fourteenth century. I have used personal name analysis to determine probable ethnicity. I take surnames with the Welsh patronymics of *ap* (“son of”) and *verch* (“daughter of”) as Welsh. For women and men who lacked recorded surnames, I count characteristically Welsh forenames, such as Angharad or Jevan, as indicative of Welsh ethnicity.³³ I also include typically Welsh surnames, such as Llywellyn or Cadwallader, even if they lack a patronymic. Personal name analysis is not fool-proof and probably underestimates the Welsh population – after centuries of acculturation, some Welsh people had likely taken English names –but it is nonetheless a rough guide to Marcher ethnicity.

Of those hundreds in Herefordshire and Shropshire that have extant poll tax returns, two areas show a particularly high concentration of Welsh settlement.³⁴ The hundreds of Chirbury and Ford, in Shropshire, were located in the western-most part of the county, bordering Wales, and both had a fairly high proportion of Welsh people. In 1381, Chirbury’s

³² There are no extant returns from the 1381 poll-tax of Herefordshire. The 1377 and 1379 returns have been edited by Carolyn C. Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379, and 1381, Part 1, Bedfordshire-Leicestershire*, Records of Social and Economic History, New Series 27 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 354-83. Shropshire lacks nominal returns for 1377 and 1379, but has incomplete returns for 1381. Fenwick, ed., *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379, and 1381, Part 2, Lincolnshire-Westmorland*, Records of Social and Economic History, New Series 29 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 374-417.

³³ Throughout her edition of the poll taxes, Fenwick has consistently mis-transcribed the Welsh forename “Jevan” as “Jena.” I have corrected this mistake in my analysis of names.

³⁴ Overlapping secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions complicate any discussion of the medieval Marches. Poll tax returns were organized and collected by hundreds, secular administrative divisions of medieval counties. For this analysis, I have included all extant hundreds in Herefordshire, since the entire county was within the ecclesiastical administration of the diocese of Hereford. For Shropshire, I have included the hundreds of Purslow, Ford, Chirbury, Munslow, Wenlock, Stottesdon, and Overs (though poll tax returns do not survive for all of these), since the boundaries of these hundreds generally – but not exactly – correspond to the portion of Shropshire that lay within the diocese of Hereford.

tax-payers were 31 percent Welsh and 69 percent English; Ford's tax-payers were 14 percent Welsh and 86 percent English. In Herefordshire in 1377, Wormelow hundred, also on the Welsh border had an even higher concentration of Welsh inhabitants (37 percent). Radlow hundred lay in the south-eastern part of the county and, according to the 1377 returns, had a tax-paying population that was 21 percent Welsh.³⁵ Although these returns are incomplete, it seems reasonable to assume that border areas in Herefordshire and Shropshire saw a good deal of migration from Wales. Even hundreds far from the Welsh-English border had some Welsh inhabitants; in fact, most returns from both Shropshire and Herefordshire listed some Welsh tax-payers.³⁶ Welsh migration into England was at higher levels in the hundreds closest to Wales, but there were Welsh people scattered throughout the counties.³⁷

Evidence of ethnic make-up gleaned from the ecclesiastical courts of Hereford diocese supports these findings. Kristine Rabberman has analyzed the names of people brought before the consistory court in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.³⁸ Rabberman's analysis indicates, as the poll tax returns do, that many parishioners in western Herefordshire and Shropshire were Welsh: the Welsh inhabitants of the deanery of

³⁵ Radlow's 1379 tax returns show a Welsh population of only 3%, so it is possible that Welsh inhabitants were over-reported in 1377. See Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379, and 1381, Part 1*, 366-67 and 369-72.

³⁶ In Herefordshire's poll tax returns, for example, only Greytrees and Wolphy hundreds had no Welsh tax-payers. Other hundreds ranged between 1% and 10% Welsh tax-payers.

³⁷ Wales was rarely included in parliamentary taxation prior to the sixteenth-century Acts of Union of England and Wales, and, to my knowledge, there are no printed editions of nominal tax returns for Wales, so it has not been possible to estimate the number of English inhabitants on the Welsh side of the border. See Helen Watt, "Old Welsh Tax Returns/*Hen Gofnodion Treth*: The Central Government Taxation Records For Wales 1291-1689 Project," *North American Journal of Welsh Studies* 6 (Winter 2006): 19-47.

³⁸ Kristine Rabberman, "Marriage on the Boundaries: Cultural Contact and Marriage Formation on the Welsh/English Border, 1442-1526," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1998).

Pontesbury, which roughly corresponds to the Shropshire hundred of Chirbury, frequently appeared in the church courts (between 50 percent and 74 percent of all court-goers were Welsh).³⁹ Rabberman's data also reinforces the impression that Welsh people had migrated to villages throughout both counties. Although levels of Welsh population were varied, with the highest concentrations in the west, even those deaneries in central Herefordshire and Shropshire, such as Leominster and Weobley had Welsh inhabitants. And all areas showed a mixed English-Welsh population at some time in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁴⁰

The Diocese of Hereford and its Clergy

History of the diocese

The see of Hereford, carved out of the kingdom of Mercia, was established in the late seventh century on the site of Hereford Cathedral. Through the ninth century, its bishops acted under the lordship of the Mercian kings, but after 927, the diocese of Hereford – and the newly established royal shire of Hereford – came under the jurisdiction of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Alfred the Great. Throughout the early medieval period the diocese was part of the Welsh frontier and subject to intermittent raids and invasions by the Welsh particularly during the 1130s and 1140s, as it would be for many centuries thereafter.⁴¹

³⁹ Hereford's ecclesiastical court records were organized by deanery, rather than hundred. The two methods of administration were completely distinct.

⁴⁰ Rabberman, "Marriage on the Boundaries," 50, 238.

⁴¹ Julia Barrow, ed., "Introduction" to *English Episcopal Acta VII: Hereford, 1079-1234* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993), xxv-cxvii; Barrow, "Clergy in the Diocese of Hereford in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 26 (2004): 37-53; Simon Keynes, "Diocese and Cathedral before 1056," in *Hereford Cathedral: A History*, ed. Gerald Aylmer and John Tiller (London: The Hambledon Press, 2000), 3-20; H.W. Phillott, *Diocesan Histories: Hereford* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1888). There is some disagreement about the original site of the see and about the diocese's founding bishop: see Barrow, *English Episcopal Acta*, xxvi-xxviii; Barrow, "Clergy in the Diocese of Hereford," 39-40; Christopher N.L. Brooke, "The Diocese of Hereford, 676-1200," in *Churches and Churchmen in Medieval Europe* (London: The

Gerald of Wales wrote, “Wales recalls with horror the great number of terrible disasters which, as the result of the miserable desire to seize possession of land, have occurred in our time, among blood-brothers and close relations, between the Wye and the Severn.”⁴² As a result, the western boundary of the diocese fluctuated along with the political frontier and did not become fixed until the twelfth century or later.⁴³

During the central middle ages, tensions along the Welsh border continued to affect the diocese: in 1055, the town of Hereford was sacked by the Welsh prince Gruffydd ap Llywelyn and the cathedral was burned. Hereford underwent changes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries characteristic of other English dioceses: the Dean and Chapter of the cathedral began to define its jurisdiction and property rights and to solicit donations from the lay community; the bishop set up hospitals for the poor and sick and established a cathedral school; written statutes clarified the institutional structure of the cathedral.⁴⁴

Description of the diocese

Although it was partially defined by the River Severn in the north-west and east and stretched south to the River Wye, the medieval diocese straddled the ever-changing English-Welsh border. To the west were the Welsh dioceses of St. Asaph, St. David, and Llandaff; to the east lay the diocese of Worcester; and to the north, Coventry and Lichfield (see Figure 1). Eventually, the diocese of Gloucester – created in the sixteenth century – bordered the southern tip of the diocese. During the medieval period, the diocese of Hereford incorporated

Hambledon Press, 1999), 19-36; and Joseph Hillaby, “The Origins of the Diocese of Hereford,” *TWNFC* 42 (1976): 16-52.

⁴² Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, 80 (Book 1, chapter 1).

⁴³ Barrow, *English Episcopal Acta*, xxviii; Brooke, “The Diocese of Hereford,” 25-28.

⁴⁴ Julia Barrow, “Aethelstan to Aigueblance, 1056-1268,” in *Hereford Cathedral*, 21-47.

parishes from seven different counties: Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, and Shropshire in England; Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire, and Monmouthshire in Wales.⁴⁵

Nearly all of Herefordshire was part of Hereford diocese, except a small section of the far south-western corner of the county. Southern Shropshire (south and west of the Severn) made up a significant part of the diocese, which also included the north-western corner of Worcestershire and the Forest of Dean, which lay in Gloucestershire.

Hereford was a mid-sized diocese, roughly on par with Worcester and Winchester and far smaller than the largest English dioceses of York, Lincoln, and Norwich. In 1291, there were 316 parish churches in the diocese of Hereford. By comparison, the comparably sized diocese of Worcester had around 360 churches in 1291, and Norwich, one of the largest dioceses in medieval England, had over 1300 churches.⁴⁶ By the fourteenth century, the number of parishes in Hereford had risen to just under 400 parishes and chapels, but after the diocesan reorganization of 1541, when many southern parishes were transferred to the new diocese of Gloucester, there were only 266 parishes in the diocese.⁴⁷

Diocesan administration

Presiding over these parishes was the bishop of Hereford, whose see was in the town of Hereford, described by William of Malmesbury around 1125 as “a city, across the Severn, almost bordering Wales, it is not big now, although the remains of its steep-sided fosse show

⁴⁵ During the diocesan reorganization of 1541, most of the parishes that lay in Gloucestershire (in the southern part of the diocese) became part of the newly-created diocese of Gloucester. The diocese still includes parishes in Shropshire, Worcestershire, Monmouthshire, and Powys. For a description of the diocese, see Phillott, *Diocesan Histories*.

⁴⁶ Barrow, “Clergy in the Diocese of Hereford,” 40-43; *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae Auctoritate P. Nicholai IV, c. 1291* (London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1802), 157-77.

⁴⁷ Dohar, *The Black Death*, 15; *Valor Ecclesiasticus Tempore Henrici VIII*, vol. III (London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1817), 1-48, 277-80.

that it was once quite sizeable.”⁴⁸ In theory, a bishop was a paternal figure, “a shepherd of souls”; in practice, however, medieval bishops were well born administrators, members of the gentry or nobility who sometimes had family connections to the royal family. Their pastoral and administrative activities in the diocese were mixed with – and sometimes superseded by – their participation in secular government.⁴⁹

A bishop’s pastoral duties mainly concerned instruction of his parishioners in matters of doctrine and discipline. According to church statute, each bishop was supposed to perform a visitation of his diocese every three years to correct the faults of the clergy and laity, although visitations were rarely performed that often. Most bishops made one visitation through the diocese near the beginning of their episcopate, and this first survey was often the last, as well. As Hamilton Thompson has observed, “The bishop was not a familiar figure to his subjects.” Bishops presided over consistory courts (or, more likely, they appointed a commissary-general to oversee the court) which proved wills, arbitrated debt, breach of contract, and matrimonial disputes, and corrected moral sins, such as fornication and adultery, failure to attend church services, or usury. Medieval bishops also performed a number of religious functions that required episcopal orders, such as consecrating churches and churchyards, blessing sacred objects, and ordaining clerics, but they often appointed a suffragan, who exercised all the spiritual powers of bishop. As a priest, a bishop also said mass and celebrated sacraments.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ William of Malmesbury, *The Deeds of the Bishops of England (Gesta Pontificum Anglorum)*, trans. David Preest (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002), 202. Ludlow, in Shropshire, was an important ecclesiastical center for the northern section of the diocese.

⁴⁹ R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 1-3; A. Hamilton Thompson, *The English Clergy and Their Organization in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 40-57. Quotation from Thompson, 40.

⁵⁰ Dohar, *The Black Death*, 17-18; Thompson, *The English Clergy*, 45-53, quotation at 45.

The bishop held administrative jurisdiction throughout the diocese, except in a few peculiar jurisdictions. In the diocese of Hereford, the most prominent peculiar jurisdiction was the city itself, where the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral had authority over all ecclesiastical matters and held its own church courts.⁵¹ A bishop's administrative duties included appointing clerics to cures, receiving oaths of obedience from priests who received benefices, holding diocesan synods, collecting taxes and subsidies, and executing royal writs. Many bishops were habitually absent from their dioceses, especially in the fifteenth century, and often delegated the administration of their authority to a clerk, chancellor, or, most often, a vicar-general; by 1400, such officers effectively managed most dioceses.⁵²

As Christopher Brooke has described the diocese, "Hereford was no distant borderland, hidden away in the Welsh march."⁵³ Despite Hereford's relative poverty and remoteness, the medieval bishops of Hereford were "cosmopolitan figures," well connected with both the Continent and the papacy, and the ecclesiastical networks of England and Wales.⁵⁴ Two of Hereford's early bishops were from Burgundy; others were educated at the important cathedral school in Liège and Paris or had prior careers in Rouen and Cluny. Gilbert Foliot (1148-63) travelled on two missions to Pope Eugenius III; a few Hereford bishops acted as papal judge-delegates; and Robert Foliot (1174-86), Gilbert's cousin, was one of only four English bishops to attend the Third Lateran Council. William of Malmesbury wrote of Robert de Bethune (1131-48): "He is certainly so well known to the

⁵¹ Dwyer, "Regulation in the Age of Reformation," 40. Hereford's other peculiar jurisdictions were small, relatively unimportant, and scattered throughout the diocese.

⁵² Swanson, *Church and Society*, 25, 81; Thompson, *The English Clergy*, 44-55.

⁵³ Brooke, "The Diocese of Hereford," 36.

⁵⁴ Brooke, "The Diocese of Hereford," 36.

papal see that, after the legate and the archbishop, he is the person who receives all the papal commands for England.”⁵⁵ Hereford, like other English dioceses, was a site of papal interference in episcopal appointments; there were proctors from Hereford at the papal courts, and the diocese contributed to papal taxes.⁵⁶ Hereford’s bishops also served as priors, abbots, canons, and officials – including deans, archdeacons, and bishops – in other English dioceses: Gerard (1096-1101) became bishop of York after his time at Hereford, Gilbert Foliot (1148-63) was also bishop of London, as was William Courtenay (1370-75); other medieval Hereford bishops served, during their careers, as bishops of the dioceses of Worcester, Exeter, Salisbury, and Lichfield and Coventry, among others.

For some noblemen, like Courtenay, Hereford – a relatively modest diocese in terms of prestige and income – was a stepping-stone in their ecclesiastical careers. But for others, like Thomas of Cantilupe, it was the culmination of their profession. After acting briefly as Chancellor of England and holding various other ecclesiastical positions, Cantilupe served as bishop of Hereford from 1275 until his death 1282. His tomb was a site of miracles and visions as early as 1287, but became especially popular after his canonization in 1320. In response to the plague’s devastation in Hereford, Bishop Trillek (1344-61) completed a new shrine to Cantilupe in Hereford Cathedral and had his relics moved there in 1349. The shrine

⁵⁵ William of Malmesbury, *Deeds of the Bishops of England*, 206. Robert Foliot was an active papal judge-delegate, received at least 23 papal mandates delegating cases to him, and wrote another 13 letters interpreting canon law. He was particularly interested in the issues of clerical marriage and celibacy. According to Julia Barrow, “He often drew abuses or problems to Alexander III’s attention, and sought papal approval in the form of decretals to tackle the difficult question of clerical marriage.” Barrow, *English Episcopal Acta*, xliiii.

⁵⁶ J.T. Driver, “The Papacy and the Diocese of Hereford, 1307-1377,” *Church Quarterly Review* 145 (1947): 31-47; Robert Swanson and David Lepine, “The Later Middle Ages, 1268-1535,” in *Hereford Cathedral*, 48-86, at 83.

became one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in England in the fourteenth century, attracting between 2,400 and 9,600 people each year.⁵⁷

The diocese of Hereford and its bishops were also involved in secular government throughout the middle ages. Many bishops held positions in the royal household, as chaplains, clerks, treasurers or chancellors to English kings and queens: Robert Mascall (1404-16), for example, served as confessor to Henry IV, and Thomas Mylling (1474-92) was a privy councillor of Edward IV. Like other English bishops, those in Hereford were politically active: some were involved in royal service as envoys or performed military duties, and others took part in the dispute between Stephen and Matilda or the controversy over Thomas Becket.⁵⁸ Adam Orleton (1316-27) played an active role in the deposition of Edward II.⁵⁹ The crown often held influence over the appointment of bishops and cathedral canons and over the election of deans.⁶⁰ And because Hereford's bishops held dual roles as Marcher lords, they were deeply involved in local politics and military actions.⁶¹

The late medieval bishops of Hereford were a diverse group, including noblemen, jurists, lawyers, friars, and abbots. (See Table 3.1 for a list of Hereford's late medieval bishops.) All were university graduates, and some held doctorates in law or theology. Most, but not all, were local to Hereford or came from neighboring regions. John Gilbert (1375-89),

⁵⁷ Dohar, *The Black Death*, 60; Penelope E. Morgan, "The Effect of the Pilgrim Cult of St Thomas Cantilupe on Hereford Cathedral," in *St Thomas Cantilupe, Bishop of Hereford: Essays in His Honour*, ed. Meryl Jancey (Hereford: The Friends of Hereford Cathedral Publications Committee, 1982), 145-52; Swanson and Lepine, "The Later Middle Ages," 48, 71-76.

⁵⁸ Barrow, *English Episcopal Acta*; A. Lowndes Moir, "The Bishops of Hereford," *TWNFC* 35 (1955-57): 117-33.

⁵⁹ Driver, "The Papacy," 42.

⁶⁰ Swanson and Lepine, "The Later Middle Ages," 82.

⁶¹ Barrow, *English Episcopal Acta*, xxxi-l; Dohar, *The Black Death*, 13-15.

who was bishop when this study begins, held important positions in royal government: he was Chancellor of Ireland and Lord Treasurer of England. Although he was often absent from the diocese and appointed a suffragan to take his place, he conducted regular visitations and punished misbehaving clergy. Thomas Trefnant (1389-1404), unlike Gilbert, remained in the diocese throughout his bishopric. He enforced discipline among his parishioners and clergy (Trefnant's 1397 visitation of the diocese is one of few extant medieval visitations) and was active in prosecuting Lollards.⁶²

Table 3.1: The late medieval bishops of Hereford

John Gilbert	1375-1389
Thomas Trefnant	1389-1404
Robert Mascall	1404-1417
Edmund Lacy	1417-1420
Thomas Polton	1420-1421
Thomas Spofford	1421-1448
Richard Beauchamp	1449-1450
Reginald Boulers	1450-1453
John Stanbury	1453-1474
Thomas Mylling	1474-1492
Edmund Audley	1492-1502
Adrian de Castellesi	1502-1504
Richard Mayhew	1504-1516
Charles Booth	1516-1535
Edward Fox	1535-1538
Edmund Bonner	1538-1539
John Skip	1539-1552

In the early fifteenth century, Hereford's bishops were fairly detached from the daily business of the diocese. Robert Mascall (1404-17) spent little time in the diocese; Edmund Lacy (1417-20) was deeply involved in royal politics and warfare, even accompanying Henry

⁶² William W. Capes, ed., *Registrum Johannis de Trefnant, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCLXXXIX-MCCCCIV*, Canterbury and York Society 20 (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1916); Dohar, *The Black Death*, 16; Joseph H. Parry, ed., *Registrum Johannis Gilbert, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCLXXV-MCCCLXXXIX*, 18 (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1915).

V to Agincourt; and Thomas Polton (1420-21) probably never set foot in Hereford. Thomas Spofford (1421-48), on the other hand, rarely left the diocese. He was an engaged administrator, particularly active in disciplining the clergy for non-residence, neglect of their spiritual cures or church property, and incontinence. Unlike other bishops, Spofford aggressively punished these transgressions, sometimes even depriving a priest of his benefice. Richard Beauchamp (1449-50) continued Spofford's disciplinary zeal, specifically rebuking the Dean of Hereford for not prosecuting a concubinary priest within his peculiar jurisdiction. Hereford's clergy had some relief from overenthusiastic leaders during the bishoprics of Reginald Boulers (1450-53), who regularly attended the king's council, and John Stanbury (1453-74), who remained in attendance of Henry VI as his confessor during the 1450s. Thomas Mylling (1474-92), too, was frequently absent from Hereford, but took a strong interest in clerical conduct, depriving nine priests of their benefices for concubinage or other misconduct. Not much is known about the brief bishoprics of Edmund Audley (1492-1502) and Adrian de Castellesi (1502-04) because their registers – which tell us about their daily business – were lost; De Castellesi, however, never even visited the diocese.⁶³

Richard Mayhew (1504-16) condemned the “incontinence and lewdness” of his clergy, monks in particular, and made a special visitation of the monastic house at Wigmore to deal with abuses there. Although Charles Booth (1516-35) took actions against non-

⁶³ Joseph H. Parry, ed., *Registrum Roberti Mascall, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCIV-MCCCCXVI*, Canterbury and York Society 21 (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1917); Arthur T. Bannister, ed., *Registrum Edmundi Lacy, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCXVII-MCCCCXX*, Canterbury and York Society 22 (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1918), includes the register of Thomas Polton; Arthur T. Bannister, ed., *Registrum Thome Spofford, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCXXII-MCCCCXLVIII*, Canterbury and York Society 23 (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1919); Arthur T. Bannister, ed., *Registrum Ricardi Beauchamp, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCXLIX-MCCCCL*, Canterbury and York Society 25 (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1919), includes registers of Reginald Boulers and John Stanbury; Arthur T. Bannister, ed., *Registrum Thome Myllyng, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCLXXIV-MCCCCXCII*, Canterbury and York Society 26 (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1920).

resident clergy, he was not especially concerned with clerical incontinence. Edward Fox (1535-38) and John Skip (1539-52) were proponents of church reform, but spent more time at court than in Hereford.⁶⁴

The bishop was at the apex of the administration of a medieval diocese. The next subdivision of a diocese was the archdeaconry, and Hereford had two: Hereford and Shropshire. Each district was overseen by an archdeacon, who was the bishop's deputy in the parochial administration of the diocese. His main responsibility was the cure of the souls within his jurisdiction, but he also held some vital administrative duties, including summoning his secular clergy to attend diocesan gatherings and inducting priests into benefices. Each archdeacon held a court in which he exercised judicial authority corrected the sins of the clergy and laity, except in matters of marriage, which were reserved for the bishop. Unlike bishops, who might spend most of their time in London or elsewhere, an archdeacon (ideally) had regular contact with parishioners both in his court and during his annual visitations of the archdeaconry.⁶⁵ Archdeacons were also assigned some specific duties concerning clerical sexual misbehavior. The Council of London in 1108 required archdeacons to report priests who lived with women and to follow up on accusations of

⁶⁴ Arthur T. Bannister, ed., *Registrum Ricardi Mayew, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MDVI-MDXVI*, Canterbury and York Society 27 (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1921); Arthur T. Bannister, ed., *Registrum Caroli Bothe, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MDXVI-MDXXXV*, Canterbury and York Society 28 (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1921), includes the register of Edward Foxe.

⁶⁵ L.R. Poos, ed., *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in Late-Medieval England: The Courts of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln, 1336-1349 and the Deanery of Wisbech, 1458-1484*, Records of Social and Economic History, NS 32 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), xxiv-xxxv; Jean Scammell, "The Rural Chapter in England from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century," *English Historical Review* 86, 338 (1971): 1-21; Swanson, *Church and Society*, 25-26; Thompson, *The English Clergy*, 57-63.

concubinage. Each archdeacon was specifically asked to take an oath that he would not take a bribe from a priest in exchange for tolerating his concubine.⁶⁶

Medieval archdeaconries were further divided into rural deaneries, of which Hereford had thirteen (see Figure 2).⁶⁷ A rural dean presided over each deanery and was appointed – in theory – by the rectors and vicars over whom he would hold authority, although in some dioceses the year-long office was held according to a rotation of beneficed priests, and in others, a rural dean was appointed by his archdeacon or bishop. As minor officials, deans dealt with local matters, such as patronage disputes, and were also important in disseminating episcopal orders. They were usually required to participate in sessions of the bishop’s courts: they summoned offenders to court, published purgations, pronounced sentences of excommunication, and proved wills. Endowed with administrative and legal functions, rather than a pastoral one, they also delivered clerks from secular gaols and collected clerical taxes. Rural deans were local clergy, more likely to reside within the diocese than either bishops or archdeacons.⁶⁸

The parish was the smallest geographical unit in a diocese and formed the base of this administrative pyramid. Each parish church’s clerical staff varied according to the needs, size, and wealth of the community. Each parish had a rector – either an individual cleric or

⁶⁶ David Wilkins, ed., *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, vol. I, (London: R. Gosling, etc., 1737), 387-88.

⁶⁷ The archdeaconry of Hereford contained the deaneries of Weston, Leominster, Weobley, Archenfield, Frome, Ross, and Forest; the archdeaconry of Shropshire contained Burford, Stottesdon, Ludlow, Pontesbury, Clun, and Wenlock.

⁶⁸ Robert W. Dunning, “Rural Deans in England in the Fifteenth Century,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 40 (1967): 207-213. Some evidence that this office was a burden, rather than a privilege, comes from priests who refused to serve either because it was not their turn in the rotation, or whose benefice was, by tradition, free from the obligation (see Dunning, 209-10); Swanson, *Church and Society*, 2-4, 26; Thompson, *The English Clergy*, 64-71.

corporate body – who held the benefice, received the parish tithes, and was responsible for the material upkeep of the church. Every parish had a curate, too, who had the cure of souls (*cura animarum*) and was responsible for the spiritual leadership of the community. A parish's curate might be the rector, but it could also be a vicar or other cleric hired to celebrate mass, administer the sacraments, preach, and administer charity. The rector of a parish might appoint a vicar to carry out his pastoral duties and, in some cases, the vicar also received a benefice. Most parishes employed one or more chaplains, often called stipendiaries, who assisted in the parish church for a fixed annual salary. In the later middle ages, chaplains frequently served altars in private chantries or guilds. Although chaplains performed many of the same functions as rectors and vicars, they had little job security and did not hold benefices; the distinction between a beneficed and unbeneficed cleric was a crucial one, affecting a priest's social status, economic prospects, and position in the hierarchy of the church.⁶⁹

The diocese had a number of monastic houses, most of them fairly small. There were Benedictine foundations at Leominster, Bromfield, Kilpeck, and St. Guthlac's in the town of Hereford; Cluniac houses at Wenlock and Clifford, a Cistercian house at Abbey Dore, and Augustinian houses at Wigmore, Wormsley, Chirbury, and Flanesford. A number of smaller houses and cells were scattered throughout the diocese, including small groups of canonesses at Aconbury and Limebrook, and all four mendicant orders had a presence in the diocese,

⁶⁹ John Shinnars and William J. Dohar, eds., *Pastors and the Care of the Souls in Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 79-84; Swanson, *Church and Society*, 4-5, 27-28. For authoritative studies of the late medieval clergy, see Margaret Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495-1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Peter Heath, *English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969); and Thompson, *The English Clergy*.

with convents at either Hereford or Ludlow.⁷⁰ Although there was a monastic presence in Hereford diocese, the secular clergy were especially prominent.

The secular clergy of Hereford

Medieval clerical populations are as difficult to estimate as lay populations, but we can get some idea of how many people – both lay and clerical – lived in the diocese of Hereford and place these figures in the context of other English and Welsh dioceses. The population of the diocese – rather than the population of Herefordshire, discussed above – is especially tough to estimate because ecclesiastical boundaries overlapped secular ones, so that the diocese comprised parishes from many counties. Poll tax returns, the most useful evidence for clerical as well as lay population, were organized by county. Because Herefordshire and southern Shropshire made up the bulk of the diocese, the following discussion addresses only those counties. Based on the poll tax returns of 1377 (the only evidence for population figures in the fourteenth century), the population of the diocese of Hereford was between 41,000 and 45,000.⁷¹

In 1377 there were 824 clerics listed in the poll tax returns: 329 beneficed clerics and 495 unbeneficed clerics.⁷² In 1381, the poll tax returns show a total of 820 clerics (815 who held benefices and 65 who were unbeneficed), but this return greatly under-represents the

⁷⁰ Barrow, *English Episcopal Acta*, xxix-xxx; Barrow, “Clergy in the Diocese of Hereford,” 41-43; Dohar, *The Black Death*, 29-30; J.W. Tonkin, “Religious Houses with Special Reference to Herefordshire,” *TWNFC* 44 (1982): 196-201.

⁷¹ Dohar, *The Black Death*, 15; See also R.B. Dobson, *The Peasants’ Revolt of 1381* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1970), 54-46.

⁷² A priest who held no benefice (rectory or vicarage) was not necessarily unemployed, though he had no fixed income and little job security. Many found work as assistants in parish churches or chapels, as private chaplains or chantry priests for wealthy local families, or in monastic houses, especially nunneries. See Townley, “Unbeneficed Clergy.”

number of poor, unbeneficed clerics who were not taxed; most historians of the late medieval church agree that there were more unbeneficed than beneficed clerics.⁷³ J.C. Russell, for example, has argued that in England in 1377 there were approximately 8,100 secular clerics who held benefices and nearly double that number of unbeneficed clerics – at least 16,000.⁷⁴ P.E.H. Hair, however, has maintained that Russell overestimated the number of unbeneficed clerics. Based on a subsidy roll from 1406, Hair claims that unbeneficed clerics were a much smaller proportion of the overall clergy and that numbers of beneficed and unbeneficed clergy were nearly equal.⁷⁵

Whatever the exact proportion of beneficed to unbeneficed clergy, it is clear that there were more far clerics in Hereford than there were benefices for them to hold. During the bishopric of Thomas Cantilupe (1275-82) in Hereford, 320 men were ordained within three years, yet there were fewer than 300 benefices in the diocese at the time, most of which were already occupied (and some priests held more than one benefice). Of priests who were ordained during these years, only twenty-nine held local benefices by 1317.⁷⁶ In the early

⁷³ Russell, *British Medieval Population*, 134-35. The Hereford returns from the 1379 levy are incomplete and, therefore, not useful for population estimates.. R.B. Dobson argues that the 1377 numbers are more accurate but A.K. McHardy claims that the 1381 tax was more efficient and as useful as the 1377 survey. Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt*, 58; McHardy, *Clerical Poll-Taxes of the Diocese of Lincoln, 1377-1381*, Lincoln Record Society 81 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1992), xxix-xxx.

⁷⁴ J.C. Russell, "The Clerical Population of Medieval England," *Traditio* 2 (1944): 177-212. Although Russell's article is more than sixty years old, it is still considered authoritative and has not yet been replaced by another comprehensive study of the medieval clerical population. For the province of York, see F.P. Mackie, "The Clerical Population of the Northern Province in 1377-1381: A New Estimate," *Northern History* 43 (2006): 39-51. There has been no similar study for the province of Canterbury.

⁷⁵ P.E.H. Hair, "Mobility of Parochial Clergy in Hereford Diocese c. 1400," *TWNFC* 43 (1979): 164-80, see especially 179, fn. 15. As Hair is careful to point out, however, all estimates of clerical population are "inspired guesswork."

⁷⁶ Townley, "Unbeneficed Clergy," 47-48.

fourteenth century, then, probably fewer than one priest in ten could expect to be instituted to a benefice.

This might have been partly because the diocese had an exceptional number of clerics. With approximately 41,000 laypeople and 800 secular clerics in the diocese of Hereford in 1377, there was a ratio of about fifty-one laypeople to each cleric.⁷⁷ In comparison to other dioceses, Hereford had a fairly high lay-clerical proportion. Out of twenty-four ecclesiastical districts, Herefordshire and Shropshire ranked seventh in lay:clergy ratios, with 40.7 lay adults to each cleric.⁷⁸ Despite these high numbers in 1377, the clerical population declined over the course of the later fourteenth century and remained stagnant during the early fifteenth century. Recurrent outbreaks of the plague during this period affected both the numbers of men seeking ordination and the ability of priests to minister to their parishioners and maintain their parish churches.⁷⁹

Estimates of plague mortality are imprecise, but it seems likely that between 30 and 50 percent of the clerical population of Hereford died during the first years of the plague.⁸⁰ In an effort to increase clerical recruitment, Bishop Trillek – who presided over the diocese during the Great Plague – increased the number of clerical ordinations, shortened the time it

⁷⁷ Dohar, *The Black Death*, 15.

⁷⁸ Russell, *British Medieval Population*, 139-40.

⁷⁹ Dohar, *The Black Death*, 148; Swanson and Lepine, “The Later Middle Ages,” 49.

⁸⁰ Dohar, *The Black Death*, 149; B.H. Putnam, “Maximum Wage-Laws for Priests After the Black Death, 1348-1381,” *American Historical Review* 21 (1915): 12-32. In terms of the general population of Herefordshire, Joseph Lunn suggested a mortality rate of 43.2 percent and Dorothy Sylvester estimated that the population decreased 25-40 percent as a result of war and plague in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Sylvester, *Rural Landscape*, 127. Joseph Lunn’s unpublished Ph.D. thesis is summarized by Russell, *British Medieval Population*, 221. Michael Faraday has examined mortality during subsequent outbreaks of the plague in “Mortality in the Diocese of Hereford 1442-1541,” *TWNFC* 42, 2 (1977): 163-74.

took for a man to proceed through clerical orders, and quickly instituted newly ordained priests to vacant benefices.⁸¹

In the 1360s, clerical recruitment slowed, perhaps because some would-be priests found better economic opportunities in the changing post-plague society. Ordinations dropped dramatically from peaks of 1,303 clerics in 1349 and 1,235 in 1350, as Bishop Trillek scrambled to staff his diocese in the wake of the plague, to a low of only 76 clerics in 1360. On average, 382 men were ordained each year between 1328 and 1347; in the late fourteenth century (1360-1400), only 135 men were ordained yearly. Over the course of the later middle ages, then, the clerical population was dramatically reduced.⁸² It seems reasonable to assume that the clerical population, like the general population, did not return to pre-plague levels until the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.

The economic consequences of the plague affected clergy as well as laity. The plague not only transformed relations between landlords and tenants, as has so often been discussed by medieval historians, but also drastically changed the economic value of rectories. The value of tithes from the rectory of Sellack and Baysham, for example, was reduced by half: from over £12 in the early fourteenth century, it fell to £6 6s 8d in 1450-51. By 1477-78, it had fallen even further to £6, and by 1528-29 the tithes were worth only £5.⁸³ Poverty and economic upheaval afflicted many parishes in Hereford throughout the fourteenth century: in 1357, some villages in Hereford had been so devastated by that plague that their parish priests refused to pay a clerical subsidy.⁸⁴ Even the fortunes of Hereford Cathedral suffered

⁸¹ Dohar, *The Black Death*, 68-69.

⁸² Dohar, *The Black Death*, 88-117 and 160-61.

⁸³ Swanson and Lepine, "The Later Middle Ages," 48 and 53.

⁸⁴ Dohar, *The Black Death*, 66-67.

as manorial and rental incomes declined, unrented properties became dilapidated, and tenants sometimes simply refused to pay rent.⁸⁵

In addition to the plague, the revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr in the early 1400s caused widespread social and economic disruption, including a loss in church revenues so tangible that the bishops of Hereford allowed that “benefices in Wales and the Marches destroyed by wars” were exempt from the payment of an aid in 1406. The damage was extensive: approximately fifty-nine parish churches and chapels were listed as having sustained damage in the first years of the revolt.⁸⁶

Socio-economic status of the clergy

The best evidence of the economic standing of clerics comes from two taxation assessments. The first, now referred to as the *Taxatio Nicholai*, was ordered by Pope Nicholas IV in 1291 and assessed the tax liability of all benefices and lands in the church’s possession in England and Wales. It remained a baseline for clerical taxation until the 1520s and was not fully replaced until Henry VIII ordered a new assessment in 1535, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*.⁸⁷ Because the two assessments evaluated each church separately, data gleaned from the *Taxatio* and the *Valor* allow a comparison of most parishes in Hereford diocese (see Table 3.2). Although it is likely that these “benefice” values did not always correspond with a cleric’s income (the income of some churches was shared by more than one cleric, for instance), these assessments can nonetheless help reveal the economic contours of the

⁸⁵ Swanson and Lepine, “The Later Middle Ages,” 52-54.

⁸⁶ Some entries are illegible. Herefordshire Record Office (HRO), AL19/6, ff. 9v.-10r.

⁸⁷ Swanson, *Church and Society*, 111. For a discussion of the drawbacks of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, particularly its tendency to overvalue incomes, see Tim Cooper, *The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1999), 78.

diocese. In addition, lists of tax-exempt parishes from the registers of Hereford's bishops supplement the tax assessments.⁸⁸

Table 3.2: Average benefice values, by deanery, in the diocese of Hereford

Rural Deanery	Average Benefice Value, 1291	Rank, 1291	Average Benefice Value, 1535	Rank, 1535	Unvalued Benefices, 1291
Burford	£5 5s	13	£11 4s 5d	3	9 (23%)
Clun	£6 7s 4d	9	£7 17s 11d	7	7 (26%)
Forest	£10 5s 6d	2	---	---	5 (14%)
Frome	£6 7s	10	£6 18s 11d	10	12 (21%)
Hereford	£6 17s 4d	6	£6 9s 5d	11	15 (33%)
Archenfield	£6 3s 3d	11	£6 4s 9d	12	7 (18%)
Leominster	£7 2s 3d	5	£11 9s	1	9 (16%)
Ludlow	£9 1s 7d	4	£10 5s 1d	4	5 (18%)
Pontesbury	£10 10s 6d	1	£11 8s	2	2 (10%)
Ross	£9 5s 1d	3	£9 9s 4d	5	3 (11%)
Stottesdon	£4 14s 5d	14	£6 4s 5d	13	8 (17%)
Wenlock	£6 7s 8d	8	£8 5s	6	8 (23%)
Weobley	£6 14s 2d	7	£7 6s 1d	9	13 (25%)
Weston	£5 17s 1d	12	£7 9s 7d	8	2 (6%)
Average value of all benefices:	£6 19s 2d (1291)		£8 4s 10d (1535)		

The value of Hereford's churches tended to correspond to settlement density. The two wealthiest deaneries in 1291 were Pontesbury, in the north-western part of the diocese near the wealthy market of Shrewsbury, and Forest, almost entirely in Gloucestershire to the south-east. Each had an average benefice value of more than £10. In 1535, Pontesbury still ranked near the top of the list, with an average value in 1291 of just over £11. The deaneries of Ross, south-east of the town of Hereford, and Ludlow, in southern Shropshire, were also fairly densely settled deaneries with market towns at their center, and formed the next tier of

⁸⁸ The following analysis is based on the printed editions of the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae*, 157-77, and *Valor Ecclesiasticus Tempore Henrici VIII*, 1-48, 277-80. I have also cross-referenced the *Taxatio* data with the on-line *Taxatio* database, located at <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/taxatio/index.html>.

benefice values, at around £9 on average in 1291 and between £9 and £10 in 1535. Four deaneries consistently had low values: Stottesdon, Burford, Frome, and Weobley. Stottesdon, Burford, and Frome were located on the western side of the diocese, bordering the dioceses of Worcester and Lichfield; Weobley lay to the north-west of the town of Hereford. In 1291, the values of churches in these deaneries ranged from £4 to £6 and in 1535, from £6 to £7. Benefices in the poorest deanery, Stottesdon, in remote and hilly southern Shropshire, had an average value roughly half that of the wealthiest deaneries in both 1291 and 1535.

Tax assessments are useful for the information they provide about benefice values, but it is also helpful to look at those churches that were considered too poor to be taxed. Described in the 1291 *Taxatio* as *non valet propter paupertatem* (“it has no worth on account of poverty”), or sometimes simply *non valet*, these benefices usually had an annual income of less than £4 per year, and sometimes they had no value at all. The proportion of unvalued benefices roughly corresponds to the hierarchy of average benefice values: Pontesbury, the wealthiest deanery, had a low proportion (10 percent) of unvalued benefices. These figures underscore the general trend that more densely settled areas were wealthier: the most remote areas of the diocese (Burford, Clun, and Weobley) had the highest proportions of unvalued churches (23, 26, and 25 percent, respectively). Occasional lists of tax-exempt churches solidify this view of the geographic distribution of relative wealth or poverty of Hereford’s churches: Burford, assessed at a low value in both 1291 and 1535, also had large numbers of churches that were considered too poor to be taxed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. While Pontesbury, a reliably wealthy deanery, only had two to three exempt churches in these subsidies, Burford had between seven and eleven exempt churches.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ I have used lists of tax-exempt churches from the following bishop’s registers: Thomas Spofford, HRO, AL19/4, ff. 159r.-159v. (1432 subsidy); Thomas Mylling, HRO, AL49-11, ff. 5v.-6r.

In comparison to other dioceses, Hereford's parish clergy were not affluent. Hereford ranked fifteenth out of sixteen counties or dioceses in terms of the average values of rectories, and thirteenth in terms of the average values of vicarages in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*. For example, the average value of a benefice in Essex, in the top third of these rankings, was about £14, while Hereford's average was only £8. Although these rankings seem to place Hereford as particularly unfortunate, most clerics in the rest of England were not well off, either. In the neighboring diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 77 percent of vicarages and just under 50 percent of rectories were worth less than £10.⁹⁰ Did an annual income of £8 or £10 provide a cleric with a decent living? Peter Heath has argued that £15 was the minimum annual income that would allow a cleric to live comfortably during the later middle ages, so priests who earned less than £10 per year probably managed, but just barely. Clerics who held the most impoverished benefices – like those in Stottesdon, where the annual income averaged £4 in 1291 and £6 in 1535 – struggled to get by on the equivalent of the wage of an unskilled laborer.⁹¹

If the financial situation of these men was bleak, unbeneficed clerics were even worse off. Lacking the guaranteed annual salary of a benefice, stipendiary clerics were wage-earners who worked as parochial assistants, chantry priests, or private chaplains. Some of these men might have had private means to support themselves, but others eked out a living

(1474 subsidy); John Stanbury, HRO, AL19/11, ff. 9r.-9v. (1453 subsidy); Charles Booth, HRO, AL19/3, ff.17r.-18r. (1517 subsidy).

⁹⁰ Gianetta Marie Hayes, "Reforming the Frontier: The Clergy in Wales and the Diocese of Hereford, c. 1540-1640," Ph.D. Dissertation (Vanderbilt University, 2004), 50; Cooper, *The Last Generation*, 78. See also Gianetta M. Hayes, "Ordination Ritual and Practice in the Welsh-English Frontier, Circa 1540-1640," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005): 713-27; Christopher Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church, From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 111.

⁹¹ Hayes, "Reforming the Frontier," 51.

by celebrating mass or hearing confession in one or more parishes.⁹² Until 1348, wages for stipendiary priests had been, according to statute, a minimum of 5 marks, or £2 13s 4d, per year, and in the early fifteenth century, stipends were capped at £4 13s 4d.⁹³ After the Great Plague, clerical wages rose along with laborers' wages, but their maximum statutory stipends were increased by no more than 13s 4d.⁹⁴ Stipendiary chaplains, like laborers, lived meagerly and with little or no economic security.

Ethnicity of the clergy

Much like the lay population of the Marches, clerics along the border migrated between England and Wales. A significant proportion of beneficed clerics in English-speaking parishes were Welsh, and vice versa. In 1397, the parishioners of one Welsh-speaking parish complained that their parish priest was “unfit to carry out the cure of the souls” because he could not speak the Welsh language.⁹⁵

Most clerics in the diocese were English, and Hereford's Welsh clerics tended to be more poorly remunerated than their English peers. In 1535, 12 percent of all incumbents in Hereford (clerics who held benefices) were Welsh, and these men tended to hold the diocese's more poorly paid churches. Twenty-two percent of the incumbents of mid-level benefices, with annual incomes of between £10 and £15, were held by Welsh priests. And 15 percent of the poorest churches (with incomes of less than £5) were occupied by Welshmen. Only one of the twenty-four most lucrative benefices in Hereford – those with incomes of

⁹² The frequency with which these chaplains were charged by the bishop for celebrating mass more than once per day suggests that they often took jobs in more than one parish.

⁹³ Dohar, *The Black Death*, 22.

⁹⁴ Putnam, “Maximum Wage-Laws,” 20-21; Townley, “Unbeneficed Clergy.”

⁹⁵ Hereford Cathedral Archives and Library (HCA), A1779, f. 5r.

more than £15 – was held by a Welsh cleric. Welsh clerics were also disproportionately represented in Hereford’s unbeneficed clerical population. Although we do not have comparable figures for the fifteenth century, evidence from the mid-sixteenth century shows that Welsh priests were less likely to obtain a benefice than English priests. In 1546, Welsh clerics occupied only 7 percent of benefices, but they held 25 percent of temporary jobs as curates.⁹⁶ Ethnicity, it seems, strongly determined how likely a priest was to obtain not only a well paying benefice, but any benefice at all.

When Bishop Trefnant set out to investigate – among other matters – the morality of his clergy in 1397, his world was shaped by church and society. His actions were backed by both papal authority and an English church that had long denounced clerical marriage, fornication, and concubinage. His jurisdiction embraced a patch-work of English and Welsh parishes, a politically unstable region that, nonetheless, had a thriving network of trade, and a large body of secular clerics. His cultural world, the subject to which I turn in the next chapter, also shaped how he – and ordinary people, too – viewed priests, their concubines, and their children.

⁹⁶ Hayes, “Reforming the Frontier,” 60-62.

Chapter 4: Whores, Strumpets, and Priests' Mares: Clerical Concubines in Pastoral and Popular Literature

In 1525, Margaret Lloyd filed a suit of defamation in Hereford's consistory court against Golibrod verch Jevan. Margaret alleged that Golibrod had defamed her by saying, "I am no monk's whore, nor priest's whore, nor friar's whore," implying, presumably, that Margaret *was* a whore.¹ The terms used in this vitriolic exchange had a history, and when Golibrod (herself the granddaughter of a priest) suggested that Margaret was a priest's whore, she was participating in a tradition of denigrating women who were sexually involved with clerics. In addition to "priest's whore," many names were used by medieval people to indicate a woman who had sex with a cleric: wife, concubine, lemman, *focaria* (hearth-mate or housekeeper), strumpet, *fornicaria*, harlot, mare, and file. While some of these terms – "concubine" and "lemman," for example – could also be used neutrally, most emphasized the lustfulness, the menace, and especially, the promiscuity of these women.

The disparagement of women who were the sexual partners or concubines of priests drew on themes developed for centuries in pastoral and popular literature. As we saw in Chapter 2, the reforming rhetoric of the central middle ages emphasized their venality, their polluting sexuality, and their lust. In the late middle ages, clerical concubines were still accused of siphoning money away from the church and parish and defiling ritual purity, and

¹ Herefordshire Record Office (HRO), HD4/1/118, f. 102. Following the usual practice in slander cases, the clerk recorded Golibrod's words in English: "I am no monkeis ne prest whore et frieris wore." I am grateful to Richard Helmholtz for helping me work through this case.

these accusations dogged them through the Reformation. But their sexuality *defined* them, and in this chapter, I focus on this aspect of the figure of the priest's concubine.

Priests and their concubines appeared in nearly every genre of medieval literature, both Latin and vernacular. They were depicted and discussed in treatises, chronicles, sermon collections, ghost stories, pastoral handbooks, vernacular tales, proverbs, and more. My aim here is not to survey the ways priests and concubines were represented in clerical, pastoral, and secular literature, which would be a dissertation in itself. I first discuss some of the vocabulary used to refer to clerical concubines; then, I look at the rich literary background of this terminology. I have limited my discussion to popular and pastoral literature in the vernacular, in order to explore images which ordinary people would have encountered. After all, Golibrod ap Jevan would probably not have been familiar with Peter Damian's treatise on clerical celibacy, but she almost certainly came across depictions of priests and concubines in the sermons she heard in church, the stories she and her friends told each other, and the songs she sang on holidays.

Scholarship on vernacular literary portrayals of clerical concubines has been sparse. In a monograph on the eleventh-century reform of clerical marriage, Anne Barstow has examined contemporary legislation and Latin tractates on clerical marriage. Although she focused on the defense of clerical marriage, she also explored its condemnation, arguing that clerics such as Peter Damian – whose tirades against “the seducers of clerics” characterized them as venomous, lustful harlots – denigrated clerical wives (and women in general) in order to make them less desirable to priests. Dyan Elliott has discussed representations of priests' wives during the Gregorian reforms, arguing that theirs was a threatening image that “cast a long shadow” well after the prohibition of clerical marriage. Analyzing the polemic

writings of Peter Damian, Elliott concluded that his condemnation of priests' wives stemmed from their polluting effect: when performed by a priest made impure by sex with his wife, the efficacy of the sacrament of the Eucharist was jeopardized. As a result, the priest's wife became a "stand-in for all those mundane, particularly sexually active, women who imperil sacerdotal and ritual purity." Elliott focused on the theological implications of these condemnations, not the concrete social and cultural ramifications. Although she posited that the emergence of witchcraft beliefs in the early modern period – especially accusations of witches having sex with the devil or stealing the Eucharist – stemmed from the eleventh-century debates over clerical marriage, her analysis is somewhat ungrounded.²

Both Barstow and Elliott rely on elite, Latin literature – Peter Damian, in particular. Although Damian is often exhibited as an example of misogynous and virulent condemnations of clerical wives and concubines (his declaration that "the hands that touch the body and blood of Christ must not have touched the genitals of a whore" has made its way into most discussions of the reform of clerical marriage), his writing was known only to the clerical elite.³ I focus this discussion elsewhere, primarily on Middle English literature, because these texts would have been accessible to a wider audience than the Latin or Anglo-Norman works in circulation at the same time. I have also chosen the most commonly recurring characterizations of priests and concubines, because their reiteration over time and in multiple locations speaks to their popularity, longevity, and wide cultural dissemination.

² Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy: The Eleventh-Century Debates* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982); Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), chapters 4 and 5, quotation at 82.

³ Peter Damian, *De Celibatu Sacerdotum*, quoted in Barstow, *Married Priests*, 59-60.

One ubiquitous medieval literary device was the *exemplum*. *Exempla* were short, didactic tales, intended to entertain as well as edify. Meant for both clerical and lay audiences, they described good conduct, provided religious instruction, and reinforced doctrinal tenets; as Joan Gregg has put it, *exempla* were “theology made vivid.” Confessors’ manuals, penitentials, and sermons relied heavily on both Latin and Middle English *exempla*, and medieval writers, particularly mendicant friars, gathered these stories into collections. Many collections were arranged alphabetically by subject, allowing a preacher to quickly find a story about, say, abstinence, gluttony, or obedience. They dealt with vices, virtues, and religious practice; they drew on a broad array of literary genres, incorporating fables, saints’ lives, fabliaux, legends, and miracles. Some related – or claimed to relate – contemporary events, such as the story of a canon from Hereford who witnessed the miracle of a pyx (a box which contained the bread of the Eucharist) that was transformed into flesh. Although *exempla* are often described by modern scholars as “sermon stories,” authors of chronicles, vernacular tales, and annals also made use of them.⁴

Exempla were not simply reflections of society and culture – they were agents, inscribing particular ideals and ideologies. As Ruth Karras has argued, “The same tales made the same points over and over again, and helped shape the way in which lay men and women

⁴ Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories*, SUNY Series in Medieval Studies (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 3. Gregg also offers a history of the use of *exempla* in Roman and Greek writing and their increasing importance after Lateran IV. Annette Kehnel, “The Narrative Tradition of the Medieval Franciscan Friars on the British Isles, Introduction to the Sources,” *Franciscan Studies* 63 (2005): 461-530, provides a thorough catalogue of Franciscan *exempla* collections; see page 499 for the story of the canon and the pyx. The authoritative index to *exempla* found in published collections is Frederic C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, Folklore Fellows Communications 86, no. 204 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia Akademia Scientiarum Fennica, 1969).

thought about their world.”⁵ Their widespread use suggests that ordinary people would have been exposed to *exempla* frequently and in many contexts. Medieval people would certainly have heard them in sermons: there is good evidence that medieval preachers mined *exempla* collections for preaching materials.⁶ *Exempla* were likely retold among friends or by parents to their children, they were painted on church walls, and they were incorporated into popular songs. Because they were ever-present, *exempla* have often been studied as both realistic illustrations of everyday life and popular belief in the Middle Ages and as windows into medieval mentalities. Here, I examine them as narratives that reveal cultural ideas about priests and concubines – or, at the very least, what ordinary people would have learned from their parish clergy and mendicant preachers.⁷ Although *exempla* and other didactic texts did not necessarily reflect practice, these stories did important imaginative work in late medieval society. In this chapter, I explore some of the many roles in which priests and concubines were cast by writers of pastoral and secular literature.

I focus on two *exempla* collections that offer particularly rich stories about priests and concubines: *Handlyng Synne* and *An Alphabet of Tales*. Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s *Handlyng Synne*, a confessional manual containing *exempla* and didactic tales, is a

⁵ Ruth Mazo Karras, “Gendered Sin and Misogyny in John of Bromyard’s ‘Summa Predicantium,’” *Traditio* 47 (1992): 233-57.

⁶ For the use of collections of *exempla*, see Christina von Nocklen, “Some Alphabetical *Compendia* and How Preachers Used Them in Fourteenth-Century England,” *Viator* 12 (1981): 271-88; Joan Young Gregg, “The *Exempla* of ‘Jacob’s Well’”: A Study in the Transmission of Medieval Sermon Stories,” *Traditio* 33 (1977): 359-80.

⁷ Gregg says it well: “What makes the popular homiletic *exemplum* irreplaceable as a cultural artifact is not so much that it depicts for us the material world of medieval life... but that it... permits us to discover those unselfconscious cultural notions that, by their frequent hearing and retelling in narrative context, became imprinted on the medieval mind.” *Devils, Women, and Jews*, 4. See also Valerie Edden, “Devils, Sermon Stories, and the Problem of Popular Belief in the Middle Ages,” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 213-55, for an analysis of some of the implicit assumptions in *exempla*.

fourteenth-century translation of a thirteenth-century Anglo-French work, *Manuel des Pechiez* (Handbook of Sins). Mannyng wrote his verse translation (with many changes, additions, and omissions) around 1338; he intended both to entertain the laity and to encourage them to confess their sins to their parish priests. Writing for the monks of a Gilbertine house at Sempringham (Lincolnshire), Mannyng instructed the clergy as much as “lewd men” (by which he meant the laity). Like other confessional manuals, *Handlyng Synne* was popular and widely read by both clergy and laity; manuscripts were copied both for private owners and preaching clerics.⁸

Handlyng Synne is not a penitential manual (it does not prescribe punishment for sins) but it does exhort its audience, lay and clerical alike, to recognize, confess, and repent.⁹ Mannyng undertakes this aim by using *exempla* that demonstrate, for example, the sin of adultery or the sacrament of baptism; he then follows each story with commentary that clarifies or reiterates its meaning. The stories Mannyng includes were meant to be enjoyable, but also didactic. They illustrate church doctrine on subjects such as the sacraments, the commandments, and the seven deadly sins, with the aim of teaching laypeople to recognize their own sins so they would know what to confess to their parish priests.

⁸ See Idelle Sullens’ introduction to her edition of *Handlyng Synne* for a full discussion of Mannyng’s sources and the extant manuscripts. *Robert Mannyng of Brunne, Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens, (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1983). *Handlyng Synne* is considered by most scholars to be part of the fourteenth-century penitential movement and a component of medieval narrative collections such as *The Canterbury Tales*. See Cynthia Ho, “Dichotomize and Conquer: ‘Womman Handlyng’ in ‘Handlyng Synne,’” *Philological Quarterly*, 72 (1993): 383-402. D.W. Robertson, “The Cultural Tradition of *Handlyng Synne*,” *Speculum* 22 (1947): 162-85, places the manual in the context of medieval pastoral instruction, especially penitential literature. Fritz Kemmler, “*Exempla*” in *Context: A Historical and Critical Study of Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s “Handlyng Synne”* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1984) offers an in-depth study of the sources, background, and content of Mannyng’s work.

⁹ Kate Greenspan argues that Manning speaks simultaneously to both priest and parishioner, “Lessons for the Priest, Lessons for the People: Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s Audiences for *Handlyng Synne*,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 21 (2004): 109-21, at 109-10.

An Alphabet of Tales, based on Arnold of Liège's twelfth-century *Alphabetum Narrationum*, was translated into English by an unknown author in the fifteenth century.¹⁰ The collection, as its title suggests, is an alphabetically arranged book of *exempla* and other texts, including saints' legends, miracles of the Virgin Mary, and cautionary tales. (Unlike Mannyng, who uses *exempla* as illustrations within the framework of his text, *An Alphabet of Tales* is purely a collection of stories.) Like some other such collections, this text is arranged by subject-headings in alphabetical order – from abbots and abstinence, through marriage, obedience, and temptation, to usury and “ypocrisis” – and contains over 800 *exempla*. The author drew on many sources, from Roman authors to the thirteenth-century writer Jacques de Vitry. The text was used as a source-book for preachers, but, like many late medieval English texts, it straddles the line between lay and religious literature. Some stories were common religious *exempla*, such as “The Procuress and her Weeping Bitch”; others were popular lay tales, like the fabliau “Dame Sirith.” In addition to these two collections of *exempla*, I draw on late medieval word-lists and dictionaries to make sense of how these women were referenced and discussed in literary texts. Popular lyrics round out my sources for this analysis and provide a fruitful comparison with pastoral literature.

Despite the changeable and even contradictory depictions of clerical concubinage in medieval literature, one dominant theme emerges: if there was an archetype of female lechery in medieval literature, it was the clerical concubine. All women were strongly associated with lechery, which was itself figured as a female sin. Although women

¹⁰ J.A. Herbert, “The Authorship of the ‘Alphabetum Narrationum,’” *Library*, series 2, 6 (1905): 94-101; Robert R. Raymo, “Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction,” in *Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, vol. VII, ed. Albert E. Hartung (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1986), 3291-3321. Many of these tales also appear in sermon collections, such as *Jacob's Well*, *Gesta Romanorum*, and Mirk's *Festial*.

committed other sins, such as gluttony or sloth, lechery was women's primary sin. Construed as – and reduced to – sources of sexual temptation, women posed a danger to all men. But women's innate lust posed a particular threat to holy men, for whom even a lustful glance at a woman might constitute a sin. Thus, the clerical concubine was depicted as a lecherous, tempting woman who endangered both a priest's vow of celibacy and his ability to perform the sacrament of the Eucharist, thus putting his parishioners at risk. Although there were many potential ways to classify clerical concubines – as wives, or housekeepers, or mothers – they were defined by their sexuality and their sexual sin.

Whores, Strumpets, and “The Devil's Mare”

The association of women and lust was never more entrenched than in the words used to refer to clerical concubines. Medieval people had many ways to think about a priest's partner – as a wife, a concubine, a housekeeper, a hearth-mate – but almost inevitably, they cast her as a whore. The vocabulary used to describe clerical concubines both highlighted their sexuality and reduced them to their sexual behavior.

When Golibrod struck out at Margaret, her choice of words was far from unusual. Much slander directed at women (by either women or men) was sexual in nature – harlot, whore, and bawd were popular. In 1493, for example, 89 percent of all defamation cases in the commissary court of London involved a sexual slur.¹¹ The specific terms “priest's whore” (along with its variations) and “priest's bawd” often sparked suits of defamation in the

¹¹ Richard M Wunderli, *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1981), 78. These cases were brought by both men and women, though women made up most of the defendants and plaintiffs in defamation suits.

fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹² In Exeter in 1560, for example, John Prout denounced Thomasine Bligh as a priest's whore, accusing her of having a child by a priest. And in London, a chantry priest called his own mother a priest's whore.¹³

Ruth Karras has convincingly argued that what identified a woman as a whore in late medieval England was her promiscuity. According to medieval thinkers, prostitutes' sexuality defined their nature, and so canon law defined prostitutes by their promiscuity. Although a prostitute often took money for sex, it was her indiscriminate sexuality that labeled her a whore. Because all women were potentially indiscriminate, any woman – especially an unmarried woman – whose sexual behavior was perceived as promiscuous might be considered a prostitute.¹⁴ In her study of the language of insult, Laura Gowing, too, has found that “‘whore’ rarely meant a real prostitute,” but might be applied to any woman who engaged in sexual misconduct.¹⁵

Karras describes one charge brought against a servant named Cecilia, whose neighbors “found her” with a priest. Although they never alleged that she received money

¹² For an overview of defamation in late medieval England, see R.H. Helmholz, “Canonical Defamation in Medieval England,” *American Journal of Legal History* 15 (1971): 255-68. For an overview of the use of the term “whore” and some of its variations, see Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), especially 59-110.

¹³ Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 128; Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 64. Brigden has observed that “priest's whore” and “priest's bawd” were extremely common terms in defamation suits brought before London's ecclesiastical courts in the sixteenth century.

¹⁴ Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Karras, “Sex and the Singlewoman,” in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. Judith M. Bennett and Amy Froide (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 127-45; Karras, “Sex, Money, and Prostitution in Medieval English Culture,” in *Discipline and Desire: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West*, ed. Jacqueline Murray and Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 201-16.

¹⁵ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 59.

from the priest, they nonetheless accused Cecilia of being a whore.¹⁶ What was it about clerical concubines that laid them open to the accusation of promiscuity and prostitution? Clerical concubinage was sometimes linked to money. First, there was a long-standing belief that priests paid fines to keep their concubines. Second, concubines were often cast as greedy women who diverted tithes away from the parish and depleted church funds. And as Karras argues, because women were defined by their sexuality, *any* woman was vulnerable to the accusation of prostitution. As the quintessential lecherous woman, a clerical concubine was assumed to be sexually indiscriminate, available to all men.

Not all terms applied to clerical concubines were explicitly derogatory, but even words that were often used neutrally, such as “lemman,” could be deployed in a way that emphasized their sexuality. The cleric’s lemman was a stock character in medieval literature. *The Alphabet of Tales* tells of a monk’s lemman who “dwelled with him, and he had children with her, both sons and daughters,” and a priest’s lemman who tried to hang herself.¹⁷ “Lemman” was a common Middle English term akin to the modern “girlfriend,” “boyfriend,” or “lover.” The term was sometimes used neutrally, to indicate a lover, paramour, or sweetheart. Although the word could describe either a woman or a man, “lemman” was only infrequently used for men; more often, it referred to women, especially the mistresses of both laymen and clerics.¹⁸ In the *Promptorium Parvulorum*, an English-Latin dictionary compiled in the mid-fourteenth century, lemman is equated with the Latin *concupina* (concubine) and

¹⁶ Karras, *Common Women*, 27.

¹⁷ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 781, 255.

¹⁸ *MED*, s.v., “lemman.” “1. A loved one of the opposite sex: (a) a paramour, lover; haven (taken) to (unto) ~, to accept (sb.) as a paramour, lover; (b) a concubine; (c) a betrothed lover; (d) a wife; haven to ~, to have (sb.) as wife.” “Lemman” could be also used in a spiritual context to refer to the close connection between a devoted Christian and Jesus.

amasia (sweetheart, mistress). The *Catholicon Anglicum*, a slightly later English-Latin wordlist, defined the term similarly, though it also added the terms *focaria* (hearth-mate), *pellex* (mistress or concubine), and *multicuba* (prostitute).¹⁹ Regardless of whether “lemman” referred to a brief romance or a long-term relationship, the term was strongly associated with sex: the author of the *Hortus Vocabulorum* (another late medieval dictionary) defined *cubiculum*, or bed-chamber, as “a bed of lemman.”²⁰ And Robert Mannyng warned his listeners against sexual pleasure within marriage by prohibiting them from using their husbands or wives “as a lemman.”²¹

Despite its sometimes neutral use, “lemman” seems to have also denoted women (and, perhaps, men) of lower status, possibly even prostitutes. Chaucer, in “The Manciple’s Tale,” explains that an upperclass lover was called a “lady,” and a poor woman (here, “wench”) was referred to as a “lemman”:

There is no difference, truly,
 Between a wife that is of high degree,
 If of her body dishonest [unchaste] she be,
 And a poor wenche, other than this –
 If it so be they were both amiss –
 But that the gentile, in estate above,
 She shall be called his lady, as in love;
 And for that other is a poor woman,
 She shall be called his wenche or his lemman.²²

¹⁹ A. Way, ed., *Promptorium Parvulorum sive Clericorum: Lexicon Anglo-Latinum Princeps*, vol. 1, Camden Society 25 (London: Camden Society, 1843-65), 295; Sidney J.H. Herrtage, ed., *Catholicon Anglicum, an English-Latin Wordbook, Dated 1483*, Camden Society NS 30 (London: Camden Society, 1882), 213.

²⁰ A fragment of the *Hortus Vocabulorum* has been transcribed by Peter Haworth, “The First Latin-English Dictionary. A Bristol University Manuscript,” *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society* 45 (1923): 258-75.

²¹ *Handlyng Synne*, 161-62.

²² Chaucer, “The Manciple’s Tale” (H), ll. 212-20. The editor defines “wench” as “low-class woman.”

In one story found in *The Book of the Foundation of St. Bartholomew's Church in London*, the term "lemman" takes on an overtone of prostitution. The tale, "Of the daughter of Wymunde the priest," relates the life of a priest "given to voluptuous life" who "purchased himself a lemman / and of her unlawfully begat a daughter..."²³ "Lemman" could certainly be used disparagingly, depending on the context: Chaucer's parson condemned priests' lemmans, because they "do great wrong to Christ, and to the holy church..."²⁴

While "lemman" hinted at licentiousness, "strumpet" was a far more unambiguous way of describing priests' lovers; the term labeled them as promiscuous and equated them with prostitutes. In his chronicle of the papacy, John Wyclif summed up the Gregorian reforms in this way: "He forbade clerics in holy orders to have wives or to dwell with any women... and commanded that no man should hear mass by a priest that held a strumpet."²⁵ Lecherous priests, Wyclif also wrote, who "dared not hold their lemmans at home," went to universities to "study with the cup and strumpets."²⁶

²³ *The Book of the Foundation of St. Bartholomew's Church in London*, ed. Norman Moore, EETS OS 163 (London, Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 47-48. Robert of Gloucester, too, made a connection between lemmans and whores (though not a priest's lemman) in his *Chronicle*: Robert (the son of Richard, Duke of Normandy) loved a maiden "and held her as his lemman, as we say, in whoredom." *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W.A. Wright, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 86, part 2 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), l. 7069. Although neither "purchasen" nor "whoredom" necessarily implied prostitution ("purchasen" could mean "to obtain"; "whoredom" sometimes simply meant "fornication"), it seems crucial to acknowledge the derogatory undercurrent in these words, especially considering other terms that were used to denote clerical concubines.

²⁴ Chaucer, "The Parson's Tale," ll. 901-2.

²⁵ E.W. Talbert, "A Lollard Chronicle of the Papacy," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 41 (1942): 175-93, quotation at 186.

²⁶ John Wyclif, "How the Office of Curates is Ordained of God," in *The English Works of Wyclif, Hitherto Unprinted*, ed. F.D. Matthew, EETS OS 74 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1880), 156.

The word “strumpet” referred to a woman who was perceived to be sexually promiscuous. Its definition was somewhat flexible: it could refer to a “loose” woman, a concubine, or – most often – a prostitute.²⁷ As the *Catholicon Anglicum* defines the term, a strumpet was “a common woman,” a “prostitute.”²⁸ The flexibility of the term, then, conflated a concubine with a prostitute by emphasizing her promiscuity. In *An Alphabet of Tales*, “The Discreet Abbot Leads Sinners From Sin” tells the story of a willful young woman who “became the most common strumpet in all the land” after her mother died. An abbot went to see her and offered her a shilling “to let him have his will of her”; she agreed and led him to a private room. But when they were alone, the abbot asked her, “Why have you lost and led astray so many souls as you have? For you will not only be damned in your own soul, but also will give account for their souls that you have damned.”²⁹ The strumpet wept, performed penance by enclosing herself in a cell for three years, and was saved. Not only does this story imply that women, uncontrolled and left to themselves, are promiscuous by nature, it also demonstrates how “strumpet” could be used as a synonym for “prostitute.” Although “strumpet” might refer to any promiscuous woman or concubine, it was frequently used to describe women who had sex with clerics. By using the term to describe the wives or concubines of priests, Wyclif thus cast any woman who lived with a priest as a prostitute.

The term “harlot,” too, emphasized the licentiousness and promiscuity of these women. “Harlot” seems to have become more popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was used somewhat interchangeably with “strumpet.” While it occasionally referred to a

²⁷ *MED*, s.v. “strumpet”: “A prostitute, whore; a concubine; a loose woman, an adulteress.”

²⁸ *Catholicon Anglicum*, 369, 73.

²⁹ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 3.

licentious man or a vagabond, it most often a prostitute or whore.³⁰ Miles Coverdale, a Protestant bishop and reformer, made the association between clerical concubines and prostitutes even more explicit in his mid-sixteenth-century treatise, *The Defence of a Certayne Poore Christen Man*. Coverdale, who married in the late 1530s (while clerical marriage was illegal in England), supported priests' marriage but condemned concubinage. He found it ironic that a priest could be deposed for taking a wife, "but if he against all honesty take an harlot, or keep another man's wife, he is suffered as a profitable member of the church." Wanton "Romish" priests, he argued, took concubines, paid fines to their bishops, and were left alone: "They take harlots of their pleasure, when they will, and where, and ask no question for conscience sake, so that they pay the bishop the whore-toll."³¹ Coverdale's observation could reasonably be interpreted as a condemnation of clerical fornication, rather than concubinage. However, his inclusion of the verb "to keep" (commonly used in descriptions of concubinary relationships, as I will argue in Chapter 5) and the phrase "whore-toll" (which usually referred to the fines priests paid at regular intervals for keeping concubines), makes it clear that by "harlot," he means not just any promiscuous woman, but a clerical concubine. And although Coverdale's indignation is directed at priests, his use of the phrase "whore-toll" is telling. Clerical concubines are described as prostitutes twice, not only by the appellation "harlot," but also by Coverdale's unsubtle allusion that priests paid to have sex with them.³²

³⁰ *MED*, s.v. "harlot."

³¹ *Dictionary of National Biography*, Miles Coverdale; *Remains of Miles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter*, ed. George Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), 483-84.

³² Coverdale's phrase "whore-toll" echoes earlier accusations that incontinent priests simply paid a fine, often called a *cullagium*, to keep their concubines. An eleventh-century council warned bishops to enforce celibacy and stop collecting the *cullagium*. Barstow, *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy*, 88-89.

Two Middle English translations of Ranulph Higden's fourteenth-century *Polychronicon* demonstrate the tenuous boundaries among concubines, strumpets, harlots, and whores. In his universal history, Higden chronicles the twelfth-century disagreements over ecclesiastical reform between Henry I and Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury. Higden describes the Council of London in 1102, during which clerical marriage was prohibited: "Finally, at an episcopal council held at London, the concubines [of priests] were banished" (*amotis pellicibus*). In his 1387 version of the text, John Trivisa translates *pelleces* as "strumpets," and an anonymous fifteenth-century author describes these clerical wives and concubines as "harlots and whores."³³ The term *pellex* could have been rendered neutrally, as "concubine," but the choice to emphasize its more derogatory meaning calls attention to the interchangeability of these terms.

Calling a clerical concubine a strumpet or a whore was unambiguous. But there were more subtle ways of denigrating these women. In an *exemplum* in *Handlyng Synne*, Robert of Mannyng calls a priest's concubine by a somewhat unusual term: "mare." One of Mannyng's intentions in this *exemplum* was to dissuade women from becoming clerical concubines by using the specter of public censure and damnation. Here he addresses his female audience directly:

If you shall behave, do no more so,
Or harder penance with bitter tears
Shall you do here or elsewhere.
And shame it is always everywhere
To be called a priest's mare.
Of such one I shall you tell
That the fiend bore to hell.³⁴

³³ *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, Monachi Cestrensis*, ed. Rev. Joseph Rawson Lumby (London: Longman & Co., 1879), 419-20 (book 7, c. 12).

³⁴ *Handlyng Synne*, ll. 7981-82.

Throughout the *exemplum*, Mannyng emphasizes the immorality and sacrilege of clerical concubines, particularly because they “disturb the holy life / of the priest through lechery,” jeopardize the priest’s performance of mass, and endanger the souls of the dead.³⁵ The term “mare” was not as widely used as “harlot” or “strumpet,” and on first glance, could be taken as a mere synonym for wife or concubine, but it also hinted at the base sexuality of priests’ concubines.

The author of another *exemplum* employed a literal meaning of the appellation “mare,” using the equine imagery to underscore the punishment awaiting these women after death. This untitled story told the tale of a priest’s wife who suffered an unusual punishment. During life, she had frequently gossiped with one of her neighbors, a blacksmith. After her death, the devil transformed her into a mare, and paid the blacksmith two pence to forge horse-shoes for her feet. The story is short on detail, and it is left to the audience to imagine the agony the priest’s wife must have felt when her feet were shod and to speculate why her punishment was appropriate to her sin.³⁶

“Mare” could, of course, simply mean a female horse or beast of burden. It might also signify a goblin, incubus, or sorceress: the *Promptorium Parvulorum*, for example, gives two possible definitions: “night-mare” (as in a spirit) and “witch.” It could evoke the image of a siren or mermaid, as well, as it did in one medieval bestiary under the heading *Natura Sirene*:

³⁵ *Handlyng Synne*, ll. 7944-45.

³⁶ British Library, Royal 7 D. I, f. 134r. Although this is a Latin manuscript, I have included this *exemplum* because of its use of equine imagery. For a detailed description of the *exempla* in this collection, see the entry “Royal 7 D. i.” in J.A. Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 3 (London: Printed by Order of the Trustees, 1910), 477-503.

“Merry they sing, these mares.”³⁷ In the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, “mare” began to be applied contemptuously to women: the term denoted promiscuity and was used as a name for a bad woman or a slut.³⁸ In *The Castle of Perseverance*, a fifteenth-century morality play, lust and women personify the sin of lechery when a character addresses the seven deadly sins, “Ah, lechery, thou wretched mare!”³⁹ All of these meanings might have figured into Mannyng’s slur against clerical concubines.

Even when “mare” referred simply to a horse, it could take on a sexual connotation: the proverb “to ride (or shoe) the wild mare,” for example, described copulation, not horsemanship.⁴⁰ John Skelton toyed with the double meaning of “mare” in his satire on a knightly household in which the knight’s wife was having an affair with the servant in charge of the horses. Skelton’s sly description of the groom at once alluded to both his sexual prowess and his mistress’ promiscuity: “He rides well the horse, / but he rides better the mare.”⁴¹ A lyric from the late thirteenth century made use of the same double entendre. In the

³⁷ *MED*, s.v. “mare.” *Promptorium Parvulorum*, s.v. “mare,” p. 326. IMEV 3413, in *Selections from Early Middle English, 1130-1250*, part I, ed. J. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), 176-96, quotation at l. 448.

³⁸ Grzegorz A. Kleparski, “Despotic Mares, Dirty Sows, and Angry Bitches: On Middle English Zoosemy and Beyond,” in *Global Perspectives on Medieval English Literature, Language, and Culture*, ed. Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. and Richard Scott Nokes (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), 93-116. “Mare” was occasionally used to signify another type of unacceptable sexuality – an effeminate man. See *OED*, s.v. “mare,” definition 2. Drawings of sirens (women with long hair, prominent breasts, and curling tails) appear in the margins of one manuscript of John Mirk’s *Festial*, a collection of sermons and homilies. Beth Barr, “Gendered Lessons: The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004), 63.

³⁹ Mark Eccles, ed., *The Macro Plays: The Castle of Perseverance, Wisdom, Mankind*, EETS OS 262 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1-111, l. 1814.

⁴⁰ Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 443.

⁴¹ John Skelton, *John Skelton, the Complete English Poems*, ed. John Scattergood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 43.

tradition of the lover's complaint, a melancholy cleric stands beneath the window of his beloved and begs her to return his affection. She refuses, warning him that he would be disgraced if they were discovered together and colloquially advising him to be safe, rather than sorry: "It is better for you to go on foot / than to ride a wicked horse."⁴²

The author of *An Alphabet of Tales* also played with the woman/mare association in the *exemplum* "Some Men Are Deceived By the Magic Arts." In this story, a man lusted after his neighbor's wife; in order to seduce her, he asked a necromancer to make the woman love him and hate her husband. The devious necromancer, however, turned her into a horse: "And he with his craft made her a mare, so that her husband, when he woke in his bed, he found her a mare lying next to him." The husband wandered around with his horsey wife seeking advice from priests and monks, but no one would believe that the mare was actually a woman. Finally, he went to St. Macarius, who immediately saw through the necromancer's spell and recognized the horse for the woman she was. He prayed and cast holy water on her, and she soon turned back into a woman.⁴³

The moral of the story might sensibly have been "Don't covet your neighbor's wife" (or even "Never trust a necromancer") but the author turned the story around to condemn the mare-wife. Her failure to attend divine services or mass for five weeks, he claimed, was the reason she had suffered under the curse. Another implied – but unspoken – cause of her affliction relies on the double meaning of the word "mare." There are, once more, sexual overtones to the imagery of the mare in this *exemplum*: the woman sexually tempted another

⁴² "De clerico et puella (My deþ Y loue, my lyf ich hate)," *IMEV* 2236, in Davies, *Medieval English Lyrics*, 59-62. See Susanna Fein, "The Lyrics of MS Harley 2253," in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, vol. 11, ed. Peter G. Beidler (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2005), 4196-98, for a discussion of this lyric, including its links to the tradition of courtly love and the *pastourelle*.

⁴³ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 237.

man. Whether she did so actively or passively makes little difference; as I discuss below, pastoral literature makes it clear that women were guilty of temptation by their nature. Her neighbor's lust transformed her into a mare both literally, as a horse, and figuratively, as a slut. Her transfiguration occurred while she was with her husband in bed, a place of sexual intimacy and availability. It is not too farfetched to read her transformation as a punishment for her sexual attractiveness and lust, just as the priest's wife was turned into the devil's mare and shod as a penalty for her sexual relationship with a cleric.

This is the cultural context in which Golibrod verch Jevan called Margaret Lloyd a priest's whore, an epithet which was hurled at women who had sex with priests throughout the late medieval and early modern periods. "Priest's whore" could refer to an actual clerical concubine, but it was also used more generally as a means of slandering women. Given the saturation of medieval vernacular culture with texts that described clerical concubines as promiscuous or labeled them as prostitutes, it is no surprise that "priest's whore" was a flexible and tenacious form of slander. The terms used to describe these women in popular texts echoed – and were perhaps influenced by – the portrayal of women as lustful sources of temptation in pastoral literature, the topic of the next section.

“Devils that Beguile Men”: Lechery and Female Sexuality

It has long been recognized by both their contemporaries and modern scholars that medieval clerics were suspicious of women. Medieval misogynistic writing devalued women and disparaged them as morally, biologically, and intellectually inferior to men. Clerical writers associated men with the mind and women with the body: men were rational, active,

reasonable, capable of self-control, and constant; women were appetitive, passive, emotional, lustful, and fickle.⁴⁴

Pastoral literature was no exception. Pastoral writers feminized lechery (*luxuria*), characterizing it as a sin committed more often by women than by men, and as the sin that women most frequently committed. While all women were stereotyped as sexual beings and equated with lechery and the flesh, pastoral literature painted clerical concubines as especially lascivious. And although women threatened all men with their innate sexuality and lustfulness, they posed a particular danger to priests.

An Alphabet of Tales demonstrates both how pastoral literature assigned the sin of lechery to women and how lechery dominated the imagined sinful behaviors of women. The author compiled four *exempla* under the heading “lechery,” and all four feature lecherous women. The story, “Lechery Produces Many Evils,” tells of a woman who desired a cleric with “fair eyes.” When he rejected her, she accused him of raping her. He was imprisoned, but even then, she courted him, continuing “in her false sin and lust.” She scaled the wall of the prison, climbed over the wall of his cell, and “leaped down unto him and urged him to get on with it.” When she was discovered in his cell, the cleric was accused of witchcraft and burned. Female sexual desire is presented as a frightening, destructive, and all-powerful force, both here and in the next *exemplum*, in which a nun conceived a child, gave birth, and

⁴⁴ Medieval misogyny has been a topic of much scholarship. Some influential and enduring works on medieval clerical misogyny are: Eileen Power, “Medieval Ideas about Women,” in *Medieval Women*, ed. M.M. Postan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 7-34; Howard R. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Alcuin Blamires, et al., eds., *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Leo Carruthers, “No Womman of No Clerk is Preysed: Attitudes to Women in Medieval English Religious Literature,” in *A Wyf Ther Was: Essays in Honour of Paule Mertens-Fonck*, ed. Juliette Dor (Liège: University of Liège, 1992), 49-60; Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*.

“when it was born she slew it.” The title of another *exemplum* – under the heading “desire (*concupiscentia*)” – baldly states: “Lust of the Flesh Is Naturally Inclined Toward a Woman.” It goes on to describe a young prince who was sheltered from everything except “meat, drink, and clothes” for the first ten years of his life. When finally introduced to the material world, he saw “young women and maidens” and asked what they were; the men of the court replied, “Those are devils that beguile men.”⁴⁵ In the third *exemplum* (discussed below), “The Devil Carried a Lecherous Woman to Hell,” a priest’s concubine is hunted by demons; “Dogs Crush a Lecherous Woman With Their Teeth,” describes a lustful young woman whose body, laid out after her death, was “pulled all to bits” by dogs. (Even after the pieces of her body were buried, the dogs unearthed and ate them.) In *An Alphabet of Tales*, the sin of lust is figured only in female terms.

The inverse was also true: in a complementary way, femaleness was figured in lustful terms. *An Alphabet* contains sixteen *exempla* under the headings of “woman” or “women”; only three of them depict honorable women. The other thirteen teach that women are deceptive, unfaithful, argumentative, disobedient, and – above all – wanton and lecherous (see Table 4.1). The titles of these *exempla* suggest the close association between women and lechery; the content of the narratives confirm it:

Table 4.1: *An Alphabet of Tales*: Titles and narrative summaries of exempla listed under the headings “woman” and “women”

No.	Title:	Summary of Narrative:
1	It Is Not Good to Touch a Woman	A monk refuses to help his mother cross a stream for fear of touching a woman.
2	A Woman Also Tries to Beguile a Friend	A woman makes a wager that she can seduce a chaste philosopher.

⁴⁵ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 308-11, nos. 454-57; 119, no. 170.

No.	Title:	Summary of Narrative:
3	A Virtuous Woman	A widow fights the army of Babylon.
4	A Lecherous Woman	A lecherous female ruler makes it lawful to have sex with or marry a close relative; she lusts for her own son, but he kills her in defiance.
5	Another about a Lecherous Woman	A lustful woman who sins openly is executed by the Emperor and her husband; at her execution she asks why they would not have sex with her.
6	A Woman Is Unfaithful to Her Dying Husband	A woman whose husband lay on his deathbed is stingy about his winding cloth.
7	Women Quarrel at Length over a Small Matter	Two women fight in court over a ball of yarn.
8	Religious Men Should Not Pay Attention to Women	An old woman chastises a monk for looking at her daughters.
9	An Evil Woman Deceived Her Husband	The wife of a farmer is having sex with her lover when her husband returns home unexpectedly; she distracts her husband and covers his eye with her mouth so that her lover can escape.
10	One Woman Should Not Help Another in Evil Deeds	While a man is on pilgrimage, his wife meets with her lover; when he returns unexpectedly, she hides her lover with a sheet until he can leave undetected.
11	A Procuress Leads Another Woman to Sin	A bawd persuades a good woman to take a lover while her husband is on pilgrimage.
12	A Woman Is Difficult to Control	A young man locks up his wife but, night after night, she escapes and has sex with her lover. She later accuses him of visiting “strumpets” at night and he is pilloried.
13	A Woman’s Malice Often Fills Her Head	One night while her husband is away, a queen seduces a duke by pretending she is his concubine and persuades him to have her husband murdered.

No.	Title:	Summary of Narrative:
14	A Woman Is to Be Avoided Everywhere by All Men	An abbot advises monks who want to leave the monastery to live in the wilderness to avoid women.
15	The Virtue of a Noble Woman Is Often Apparent in Her Death	A courageous woman does not flee from a company of men who come to kill her.
16	An Honest Woman, both While Alive and in Death, Should Preserve Herself	When the same woman is struck with a sword, she is careful to cover her body modestly as she collapses and dies. ⁴⁶

These stories demonstrate that lechery is women’s defining sin. A close look at the narratives reveals that even unrelated sins – such as malice or willfulness – guide the reader back to women’s innate lust.

These *exempla* convey the unmistakable message that women are lecherous: of these sixteen *exempla*, more than two-thirds discuss the sexual temptation that women pose to men, or their sexual appetites, or their sexual infidelity, or their desire to lead other women into sexual misbehavior (nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, and 8-14). Of the *exempla* that depict “bad” women, only two discuss non-sexual behavior (nos. 6 and 7): in one of these, a woman acts unfaithfully toward her husband when she uses rough cloth for his winding sheet, and in the other, two women showcase female querulousness when they argue in court over a ball of thread.

The three good women in these stories hardly present attainable role models for ordinary women. The “virtuous woman” was a widow who, disguised as a man, defeated the army of ancient Babylon (no. 3). Olympia, the “noble woman” of ancient Rome, faced off against a group of armed men; her fearless courage confused her attackers and delivered her

⁴⁶ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 355-66, nos. 527-42.

from death (no. 15). Another Roman – the “honest woman” – was murdered, but managed to keep her body covered with her clothes and her hair during her death throes, thus preserving her honor (no. 16). These women embodied qualities like courage and modesty to which laywomen were supposed to aspire, but they were not accessible figures; it seems unlikely that any woman hearing these *exempla* would lead an army, defy an armed faction, or die by a sword. All three stories are set in remote, almost mythical, times; the settings, as well as the narratives, underscore the inability of women to act honorably.

Many of the wicked women, on the other hand, are contemporary figures that would have been more familiar to ordinary women: the mother of a monk, a pretty maiden, a deceitful or unfaithful or disobedient wife. One *exemplum* tells of a monk who went on a walk with his mother (no. 1). The two came to a stream, but before the monk would carry his mother across the water, he wrapped his hands in his habit. When his mother asked him why he did this, he replied, “The body of a woman is fire, and because I thought what women are, therefore I would not touch you for the peril that might thereupon happen.”⁴⁷ Here is a situation – an outing, a stream crossing – that would be familiar to any laywoman, even if she were not the mother of a religious man. Although a few of these stories were located in unfamiliar circumstances (like the Athenian woman who made a wager that she could violate the chastity of a philosopher), most would have been recognizable to an ordinary lay audience: the woman who chose to use rough cloth for her husband’s winding-sheet (no. 6); another who slept with her lover while her husband was outside, tending to his crops (no. 9).

A comparison between *exempla* appearing under the headings “woman” and “man” might be fruitful, showing how medieval clerics thought about male versus female natures.

⁴⁷ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 355, no. 527.

But this comparison is impossible, because the compiler of *An Alphabet of Tales* did not use the heading “man.” Instead, men are depicted in their various roles and professions: abbot, lawyer, prelate, archdeacon, bailiff, monk, soldier, heretic, pauper, and more. There are no stories that generalize about all men or that instruct the medieval audience about essential male traits. While there are a few *exempla* about women’s social roles, compared to the plethora for men, even these emphasize women’s carnal natures. (Of the ten *exempla* that feature nuns and abbesses, for example, two exhort them to be chaste and four depict lustful women.) Men certainly acted sinfully, but their sins were more varied – greed, anger, jealousy, etc. – and there was no one sin that shaped the essential core of male nature, as lust constituted women. Men’s behavior might display the sin of avarice, for example, but it did not define them.

The theme of women’s sexual sinfulness lurks throughout *Handlyng Synne*, as well, coming to the forefront in Robert Mannyng’s frequent reiteration of the danger women pose to male chastity. According to Mannyng, temptation is at the heart of the sin of lechery, and women are – by their nature – temptresses.⁴⁸ With the exception of “The Priest’s Concubine” (which, as discussed below, makes female sin explicit in another way), each *exemplum* in Mannyng’s discussion of lechery contains an element of female temptation: In “The Temptation of St. Benedict,” the saint was tempted to lechery by the sight of a beautiful woman; in “Cypryen and Justyne,” Justyne’s beauty stirred up “a great temptation” in Cypryen; in “The Monk in Despair,” a hermit was enticed to lust by the mere thought of women. The *exemplum* “The Eavesdropping Jew” barely touches on lechery, despite its inclusion in this section. Focusing on the danger of female temptation, it recounts the story of

⁴⁸ Mannyng also classes lechery as the worst of the seven deadly sins, the “farthest from heaven.” *Handlyng Synne*, l. 7342.

a Jew who overhears a fiend bragging about how he tempted a bishop into “familiarity with a nun.”⁴⁹ The moral of this story? Sexual temptation is the greatest accomplishment of the devil.

The association of lechery with women was not specific to *An Alphabet of Tales* and *Handlyng Synne*. Beth Barr has found a similar pattern in other collections of Middle English *exempla*. Of all the women depicted as engaging in sinful activity in John Mirk’s *Festial*, 46 percent of them were lecherous or enticed others to lechery; in *Speculum Sacerdotale*, a compilation of sermons, 89 percent of the women portrayed as sinful in *exempla* committed the sin of lechery. Based on an analysis of the fourteenth-century *exempla* collection *Summa Predicantium*, Ruth Karras has argued that women in these stories disproportionately committed the sin of lechery, concluding “in the Middle Ages lust was considered the woman’s *sin par excellence*.”⁵⁰

Women’s lecherous nature meant that they posed a constant source of temptation for all men, but particularly for clerics. Some women (or devils in the form of women) actively tempted men, like the adulterous wife who brought presents to St. Edmund, the Archbishop of Canterbury, “to make him more eager to yield to her intent.” Another young woman became a “common strumpet” after her mother died and tried to seduce an abbot.⁵¹ Women tempted chaste men merely by being near them, failing to conceal their beauty, or simply speaking. Monks, the audience learns, should not touch or even look at women; one *exemplum* instructs young women that they should actively conceal their beauty.⁵² The story

⁴⁹ *Handlyng Synne*, 205-12.

⁵⁰ Barr, “Gendered Lessons,” 173; Karras, “Gendered Sin and Misogyny,” 241-42.

⁵¹ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 527, no. 795; 2-4, no. 3.

⁵² *An Alphabet of Tales*, 119, no. 170; 289-90, no. 421.

“A Woman Should Hide Her Beauty” tells of a young woman who shut herself away in a tomb and showed her face to no one, taking her food through a small hole in the door. As she explained to a visitor, she had not secluded herself for a religious purpose, but because the sight of her beauty alone was enough to tempt men’s souls: “Some time there was a young man who saw my beauty, and through that look his soul was injured by sin; and therefore before I appear to burden any man, I would prefer to be closed in this tomb as long as I live, rather than to harm a soul that is made in the likeness of almighty God.”⁵³

The coupling of women with temptation is a constant theme in *Handlyng Synne*, and the burden of safeguarding clerical chastity is placed on them. As Cynthia Ho has observed, “women must restrict their own freedom to prevent danger to the men who associate with them”; although the bar is held high for clerics (for whom a stray sexual thought constitutes lechery), it is held even higher for women.⁵⁴ Women, Mannyng advised, should try to contain their beauty and, most of all, stay away from the altar. In “St. John Chrysotome’s Deacon,” a fiend disguised as a woman appeared in church while St. John was singing mass. His deacon was distracted by “the temptation of this woman,” and the host disappeared, reappearing only when St. John confronted the fiend, causing him to flee. At the conclusion of the *exemplum*, Mannyng clarifies the meaning of the story: women should not go near the chancel, “else shall they go to hell both top and tail.”

A woman’s presence at the altar could be more than a temporary distraction; it could also constitute sacrilege, and Mannyng’s discussion of sacrilege is another section in which

⁵³ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 14-15, no. 16.

⁵⁴ Ho, “Dichotomize and Conquer,” 386.

women are prominently featured. By inciting lechery, the presence of a woman disturbs the mass:

But yet do women greater folly
That are accustomed to standing among the clergy
Either at matins or at mass...
And thereof may come temptation
And disturbing of devotion.⁵⁵

Women's presence is polluting as well as distracting: Mannyng discourages women from exchanging a kiss of peace with a priest, even if they are well acquainted, because a priest's mouth is "hallowed to God's service" and a kiss (or even the touch of a woman) would lead to foul sin. Priests should follow the example of St. Jerome, who shunned women's fellowship altogether.⁵⁶ As far as Mannyng is concerned, women's lustfulness threatened not only the chastity of priests, but the sanctity of the mass itself.

It is helpful to think of these collections as they were meant to be used: if a medieval preacher opened *An Alphabet of Tales* or *Handlyng Synne* to find an *exemplum* about women, he would have seen more stories about sinful women than about honorable ones. He would have been more likely than not to stumble across an *exemplum* that featured a lustful woman. And even if he chose a story to illustrate another subject – deception, or perhaps greed – it, too, could feature a lecherous or tempting woman. Nearly any direction he might turn, if this preacher spoke about women, his audience would have heard about lust.

“Shall I never repent me”: Depictions of priests and concubines in pastoral and popular literature

If the same preacher chose to talk specifically about clerical concubines, however, he would have had few, if any, stories about honorable women: priests' concubines were

⁵⁵ *Handlyng Synne*, ll. 8815-18.

⁵⁶ *Handlyng Synne*, l. 7696; ll. 7921-24.

presented in these collections – without exception – as lustful, sexual temptresses. Tellingly, the only *exemplum* listed under the heading “concubine” (“A Priest’s Concubine is Punished”) in *An Alphabet of Tales* redirects the reader to the heading *luxuria*.⁵⁷ And while all women were associated with lechery, literary depictions of priests’ wives and concubines were shaped by their particular sexual transgressions.

Clerical relationships were, in theory, mutually sinful, but the depiction of the two partners was contradictory: while erring priests were often sympathetic characters, their concubines had few, if any, admirable qualities. A priest might repent and be redeemed for his sin, but the woman who had sex with him was permanently stained. In this section, I analyze several *exempla* about clerical concubines who, in addition to lascivious, were characterized as shameless and unrepentant, irredeemably guilty, or worthy of gruesome punishment.

A concubine’s guilt was augmented, in many cases, by her stubborn unrepentance. Under the heading of “lechery” in *Handlyng Synne*, Robert Mannyng included an *exemplum* about a priest’s wife whose corpse was seized by demons. The story was already in circulation, having appeared in a thirteenth-century collection of Latin *exempla*. The anonymous Dominican author of that manuscript kept the narrative simple:

It is told of a certain woman who had three sons with a certain priest and who had died. Her three sons were keeping vigil over her body in the church when furious demons openly attacked, seizing upon the corpse (together with the bier on which it had been laid) carried it off, and it was never seen again anywhere.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 119.

⁵⁸ British Library, Royal 7 D.I, f. 132v. This manuscript may have been Mannyng’s source for the *exemplum*, or Mannyng might have come across it in a collection now lost.

In *Handlyng Synne*, Mannyng expands and elaborates on this brief story. Like the Dominican friar, Mannyng focuses on the priest's concubine rather than the priest himself. But Mannyng introduces a new aspect to the story: the concubine's stubbornness and lack of shame, even in the face of her sons' attempts to save their mother. He also expands the demons' attack on the concubine's corpse, highlighting her corporeal punishment and eternal damnation.⁵⁹

Mannyng frames the story within a condemnation of priests' wives, who, he claims, disrupt the holy life of the priest with their lechery and invalidate the sacramental mass: "Surely she does full much amiss, / The woman that disturbs all this, / For the souls are nothing / Worshipped with that offering." Mannyng openly exhorts his audience – both the living and those who already lie in paradise or purgatory – to curse these "priests' sorceresses," to damn them "without conscience."

Neither the priest nor his concubine, in the *exemplum*, feels shame about their relationship. The priest, who had "held a woman as his wife" for most of his life, thought the sin of lechery was "sweet" and agreeable. After his death, their sons, now adults – three priests and a scholar (Mannyng gives the couple four sons instead of three) – approach their mother and ask her to repent for living "in deadly sin." She refuses, brazenly defying them:

For nothing that may befall,
Shall I never repent me
While I have you priests three
That for me can read and sing
And full well me to bliss bring.

Mannyng imagines the concubine as a shameless, stubborn woman who revels in her lechery, unwilling to save herself through repentance and confession. Instead, she relies on her sons to pray for her soul and specifically requests that they watch over her corpse for three days and

⁵⁹ *Handlyng Synne*, ll. 7937-8102. See Appendix I for the full text of Mannyng's version of "The Priest's Concubine."

nights so that she might be saved, despite her sin: “And I hope to be saved from the devil /
Though I have lived a sinful life / And have been called a priest’s wife.”

Mannyng presents the priest’s concubine as the worst kind of sinner – she acknowledges her sin, but feels no disgrace.

Her sons obediently keep vigil over her body but at midnight on the first evening, the bier upon which her body has been laid begins to quake. The sons hold it steady, but everyone else in attendance flees out of fear. On the second night, the bier quakes again; a fiend appears and tries to drag her body away, but her sons wind a rope around the bier; the demon can drag it only as far as the door. On the third night, a horde of fiends appears at midnight, filling the house. Seizing the concubine’s corpse, they “bore it farther than none knew where / Without end for evermore.” By drawing the demons’ attack out for three nights, Mannyng both heightens the reader’s anticipation and gives more force to the devil’s assault.

After their mother’s body has been carried off to hell, the four sons openly condemn her: “Her sons said and hoped well / That body and soul was damned entirely.” Her youngest son, the scholar, travels throughout England, telling her tale and preaching “against women that priests take.” The sons’ damnation of their own mother demonstrates one of Mannyng’s primary messages in his discussion of lechery: clerical concubines should be condemned by everyone – including their own children. Even the fact that the concubine’s sons are priests does not mitigate her guilt.

Mannyng concludes the *exemplum* by directly addressing women who might be tempted to take up with a priest; the story, he stresses, was “no idle tale,” and he warns them not to invite God’s vengeance. Mannyng’s persistent focus on the priest’s concubine rather

than the priest codes this specific form of lechery as a female crime. Although Mannyng briefly mentions the pain that the lecherous priest will suffer after death, Mannyng's reworking of the narrative, his description of priests' wives as "sorceresses," his insistence on the public condemnation of clerical concubines, and his emphasis on the stubbornness of the priest's wife drive home the *woman's* sin, guilt, and eternal damnation.

Even concubines who recognize the enormity of their sin face awful ends in these tales. One *exemplum* about a priest's concubine in *An Alphabet of Tales* tells the story of a woman who kills herself in order to avoid going to hell.⁶⁰ The tale opens in a church, where the priest is admonishing his audience about sins and the pains of hell. One of the priest's female parishioners asks him, "Sir, what shall become of priests' lemmans?" Knowing she is "a simple thing," the priest replies (half in jest): "They shall never be saved unless they crawl into a hot oven." But the woman, herself "a priest's lemman," takes the priest at his word. One day, by herself, she heats a large oven. When it is red-hot, she locks the doors to her house, crawls into the oven, and burns herself to death. A large group of people, standing nearby, see a white dove fly out of her house and ascend to heaven. After breaking down the doors of her house, they pull her body from the oven and bury her in an unconsecrated field, an appropriate burial for a suicide, a sin in itself. But, one night, a great light radiates from her grave – a sign from God making it known that "she did not slay herself out of malice nor

⁶⁰ *An Alphabet of Tales*, "Perfect contrition fears no bodily punishment," 204. See Appendix I for the full text of this *exemplum*. Arnold of Liège borrowed this *exemplum* from Caesar of Heisterbach, a thirteenth-century German Cistercian monk whose collection of *exempla*, *Dialogue on Miracles*, was widely used as a source of sermon-stories in the Middle Ages. *Caesarii Heisterbacensis Monachi Ordinis Cisterciensis Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. Joseph Strange, 2 vols. (Paris: H. Lempertz & Co., 1851; reprint: Ridgewood, NJ: Gregg Press, 1966). The *exemplum* was also used in two other collections; see Tubach, no. 3546.

of ill will, but for penance and obedience” – and she is disinterred and given a Christian burial.

While the narrative is straight-forward, this *exemplum* functions on a variety of levels. On the surface, and considering its placement under the heading “perfect contrition,” this story is simply about penance – the extreme punishment any Christian should be willing to undergo in order to become truly penitent. The author pokes fun at both the priest and the concubine: the priest unintentionally hits on the truth by (inadvertently) encouraging the concubine to kill herself; the concubine reveals her unsophisticated literal-mindedness in her willingness to act on his insincere suggestion. But despite her mistakes, the concubine *did* redeem herself; the dove’s ascent to heaven shows that her soul would not, as she feared, suffer the pains of hell.

Shimmering beneath the surface, however, are messages about the identity of clerical concubines, the sinfulness of having sex with a priest, and the irredeemability of women who did. The (nameless) woman is described as “a priest’s lemman” – his lover or concubine. She did not merely commit the act of fornication with a priest; she was defined by her on-going relationship with a priest, her identity reduced to her sexual indiscretion. The *exemplum* also emphasizes the enormity of her sin which, apparently, is so grave that performing an ordinary penance, such as fasting, would not bring redemption. After hearing her priest talk about eternal damnation, she (mis)understands that the only way to absolve herself and gain salvation is by being burned alive – a gruesome, painful death that mirrors the suffering she would have experienced in hell. Part of the reason she is saved, it seems, is because she has already acted out her suffering in hell. She would have been, otherwise, damned.

In another *exemplum*, a clerical concubine also considers suicide, but with a better outcome:

In the town of Bonn, in the diocese of Cologne, there was a priest's lemmán; and she was so disgusted with her sin that she hanged herself. And as she did it the rope broke, and she was still alive; and when she saw that she had been delivered of that deed, she went and became a nun.⁶¹

The circumstances here are different: this woman tried to kill herself out of shame, while the concubine who crawled into an oven wanted to save her soul. Yet both *exempla* drive home the immorality of clerical concubinage, an offense so profoundly damning that the sin of suicide appears a better option. Profoundly damning for women, that is. Neither priest attempts suicide, or even shows remorse; in the second story, the woman's lover continues to court her after she has become a nun. Some *exempla* feature priests who were punished for having concubines, but I have not come across a story in which an erring priest undertook such extreme penance.

Whether remorseful or not, clerical concubines were imagined as enduring extreme punishments after death for their sins. The association of the female body with sexuality – in particular, pernicious sexuality – seems to have paved the way for their bodies to be seen as sites of sin. These women are reduced to sexual deeds and physical acts; perhaps because they commit such great bodily sin, their corpses suffer terribly after death.

In one especially popular *exemplum*, “The Devil Carried a Lecherous Woman to Hell,” a priest's concubine on her deathbed asks that a pair of high boots be made for her.⁶² That night, a knight and his servant are riding through the fields by the light of a full moon

⁶¹ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 255.

⁶² *An Alphabet of Tales*, 456, p. 310. See Appendix I for the full text of this *exemplum*. This story appeared in at least fourteen other collections, making it one of the most widely used of medieval *exempla*. See Tubach, no. 2454, for a list of these collections.

when a woman appears, running toward them and begging them to help her. The knight dismounts, pulls the woman near him, and draws a circle of protection around them. They hear “a blast of frightening horn that a hunter blew terribly, and the loud barking of hounds,” and the woman becomes very afraid. The knight remounts his horse and, wrapping the tresses of her hair tightly around his arm, draws his sword. The hunter of hell approaches quickly, and the concubine implores the knight to release her: “Let me go, for he comes.” The knight refuses but, desperate to get away, “she pulled so hard that all her hair was burst out of her head.” The hellish fiend catches her anyway, throws her on the back of his horse, and carries her off to hell. The next morning, when the knight wanders into the town where the woman lived, he finds out that she had just died and shows everyone the hair that is still wrapped tightly around his arm. When they look at the concubine’s corpse, they find a gruesome sight: all her hair has been plucked out by the roots.⁶³ This is an exciting story, meant to thrill an audience with its grisly ending; what the violence underscores, though, is the concubine’s corporeal suffering and eternal damnation. The painful removal of the concubine’s hair would have resonated with a medieval audience in a specific way, underscoring the sexual nature of her crime. As many literary scholars have noted, women’s hair often stood as a signifier of female sexuality; this is true in pastoral literature, too.⁶⁴ This violent loss

⁶³ This sort of a liminal moment, in which a soul seems to separate from its body, is a common narrative device in medieval *exempla*. Compare this story with an *exemplum* about a sleeping girl whose soul left her body and was carried to Jerusalem, where she heard mass in the presence of the Virgin and God. She still held a candle in her hand when she woke up. (Tubach, no. 4519.) This strategy allows an audience to easily connect the state of a person’s soul (the sinful concubine, the devout girl) with the body’s experience (the concubine’s suffering body, the girl’s blissful journey).

⁶⁴ A tenth-century German council, tellingly, ordered that the concubines of priests have their heads shaved. Barstow, *Married Priests*, 39-40. Prostitutes’ heads were also sometimes shaved; see Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Of Good and Ill Repute: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 25-27.

functions as an additional punishment, one that is appropriate to the sexual nature of her sin. Unchaste priests, although often criticized for their incontinence, were spared these horrible punishments.

Pastoral literature stressed that priests should set an example for their parishioners. *Handlyng Synne*, for example, contains instructions for priestly conduct as well as lay behavior, and Mannyng directs ample criticism at the clergy, who should serve as examples for their parishioner. They should maintain their chastity; they should not commit lechery, simony, or gluttony, and they should not reveal their parishioners' confessions. Because they served as models for lay behavior, priests who sinned were more to blame than laymen who committed the same sin – the rape of a married woman, for example, was a more serious sin if committed by a cleric.

But unlike a clerical concubine, who was eternally damned (unless she decided to hurl herself into a hot oven), an unchaste priest retained his clerical authority. Despite Mannyng's complaints about clerical misbehavior, he repeatedly emphasizes the clergy's unconditional authority: laypeople must obey their priest, no matter how much he sins. A priest who is not shriven before he sings mass, for example, commits sacrilege and pollutes the altar, but his mass is still valid: "Though the priest be false or fickle. / The mass is ever good enough."⁶⁵ While a clerical concubine was often presented as irredeemable, an unchaste priest could confess, repent, and be restored to a pure state.

An *exemplum* about a married priest starkly demonstrates this discrepancy. "A Woman Should Not Be Touched Neither by Healthy Nor Sick Men" is set in a time and place

⁶⁵ *Handlyng Synne*, ll. 2305-6.

where “every priest had a wife.”⁶⁶ One priest dearly loves his *presbitera*, but worries that her presence is polluting, and so he shuns her. Comparing her touch to a plague, “he fled from her as he would have done from the pestilence, and would not permit her to come near him.” Forty years later, on his deathbed, his wife visits him. Thinking he might have already died, she leans over him to check if he has stopped breathing. Even in his feverish state, the priest recoils from her, crying, “Go away from me, woman, for yet there is a spark of life in me, and therefore remove the sin [chaf] so that it burns not!”⁶⁷ In this passage, I have taken “chaf” to mean “sin,” but the term also carried connotations of evilness, temptation, and filth. While he has overcome temptation, repented for his sin, and lived an honorable life, the priest’s wife – the consummate sexual temptress – still embodies sin: she has the ability to defile her repentant husband with a simple, instinctive gesture.

Even blameless priests who had never been drawn toward women (much less married) were at risk: pastoral literature abounds with stories about dishonest women who falsely and knowingly accused clerics of impregnating them. These *exempla* accomplish two ends: they show that even priests who were *not* tempted by women were nonetheless endangered by female lust, and they undermine the gravity of clerical incontinence by suggesting that seemingly incontinent priests might simply be victims of rumors, gossip, and lies.

One popular medieval tale relates the life of St. Marina, whose widowed father has left her to be raised by her grandfather in order to enter a monastic order. In the abbey,

⁶⁶ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 756. This *exemplum* appeared in at least four other collections. See Tubach, no. 5286.

⁶⁷ *MED*, s.v. “chaf,” definition 4: “*Fig.* uses: (a) something trivial or worthless, a trifling matter; (b) something evil, such as temptation or sinning; (c) *theol.* human refuse; the sinful (who are burned in hell); also as a term of abuse.”

though, he is so miserable without her that his abbot asks what troubles him; when he replies that he has left a son behind, the abbot gives him permission to bring the child to the abbey. Disguised as a boy (and now called Marinus), she (now he) lives with her father in the abbey until his death. Eventually, Marinus is made an officer in charge of bringing fuel to the brewhouse, often staying the night there; soon the brewster's daughter becomes pregnant and accuses Marinus of being the father. Out of piety and obedience, Marinus admits that he has sinned and asks for penance, but he is nonetheless expelled from the abbey. After five years, the abbot forgives Marinus and allows him to reenter the abbey, where he eventually dies. It is not until his fellow monks prepare his body for burial that they realize Marinus had been unjustly accused and punished, and they weep with sorrow and remorse.⁶⁸ This plot is repeated in many *exempla*: *An Alphabet of Tales* includes three stories about clerics who were wrongly accused of impregnating women (two of the accused were women disguised as men), and one clerk who was jailed and executed after a woman falsely accused him of rape.

The *exemplum* "Rumor: Someone is Defamed Without Guilt" doubly indicts clerical concubines by featuring the daughter of a priest.⁶⁹ A "corrupt" clerical daughter, single and pregnant, falsely accuses a deacon of being the father. Although he denies it, his bishop takes away his office and forces him to marry the girl; the deacon, ever pious, puts his wife in a monastery and closes himself in a cell. Later, as she lies in childbirth, the priest's daughter suffers terrible labor pains for seven days. In desperation and fearing she will die, she admits her crimes: "Woe is me, wretch! For I have descended into a double peril. First, for I have

⁶⁸ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 32.

⁶⁹ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 380. Priests' daughters, while appearing in pastoral literature only infrequently, are almost always depicted negatively. The presentation of priests' sons in pastoral literature is more varied – some sons suffered for the sins of their fathers, while others overcame their illegitimate births – but unlike clerical daughters, they themselves were not sinful or dangerous to others.

lost my maidenhead; and the second, I have put a false crime upon the deacon.” Her involuntary confession clears the deacon’s name and he regains his office. Like many of the clerical concubines in other *exempla*, this clerical daughter is portrayed as licentious and malicious; perhaps a product of her tainted birth, she reproduces her mother’s lechery with her illegitimate pregnancy.

On the surface, these stories illustrate the susceptibility of priests to accusations of sexual misconduct or, perhaps, clerical anxiety over this vulnerability. They also highlight the piety, humility, and forbearance of the clergy: in every story, the accused priest or monk acts stoically, refusing to deny the charge and silently accepting his punishment. One clerk, sentenced to be burned at the stake, displays piety even at his death: “And when his ribs were burned so that men might see his lungs, he began to sing ‘Ave Maria.’”⁷⁰ Yet at the margins of each story is a lustful, deceitful woman who tries to blame a priest for her own uncontrolled sexuality. These stories, while ostensibly focusing on priests, nonetheless emphasize the lechery (and dishonesty) of women.

In pastoral literature, a woman could tempt a priest merely by her lustful presence. A woman who had sex with a priest (or said that she had) was a menace, an unrepentant sinner, or a deceitful liar. In contrast, a cleric who had a sexual partner, concubine, or wife could redeem himself. In popular literature, unchaste priests got off even more easily. Clerics were rarely cast as seducers in pastoral literature (unless the priest was in the perilous situation of confessing a female parishioner who might tempt him with her beauty), but the figure of the randy and manipulative priest was a popular character in lay poems and songs. Although

⁷⁰ *An Alphabet of Tales*, 454.

these texts reveal anxieties about a woman's vulnerability to a cleric's lustful advances, a priest who seduced a woman often functioned as an entertaining, rakish figure.

In the late fourteenth century, a scribe in the diocese of Hereford compiled a collection of secular and religious poems.⁷¹ Known to modern scholars as the "Harley Lyrics," the manuscript includes many poems in the tradition of courtly love, including "My Death I Love, My Life I Hate," a lover's complaint.⁷² From the outset, the author of this poem mocks the conventions of courtly love and the *pastourelle*, using double entendres, abrupt changes in tone, and comic disputation. Perhaps the author's most obvious use of parody, however, is that he has cast a cleric as the lovelorn suitor.

The poem opens with a forlorn cleric standing at the window of a maiden, bemoaning his unrequited love with lofty, metaphorical language, "As I fall, so does the leaf / in summer when it is green." Superficially, the cleric compares himself to a fading leaf, dropping from a tree. But the verb "fallen" had other, more figurative uses in Middle English (as it does in modern usage) – it could indicate a descent into sin, a moral decline, a fall into error. And so the cleric, perhaps unwittingly, gestures to his own iniquity when describing his heartbreak. Simultaneously, though, he alludes to the biblical Garden of Eden, where Eve caused the fall

⁷¹ British Museum MS Harley 2253 has long been popular with literary scholars as a source of Middle English and Anglo-Norman lyrics. For a description of the manuscript, see G.L. Brook, *The Harley Lyrics: The Middle English Lyrics of MS. Harley 2253* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1948); and N.R. Ker's introduction to *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*, EETS OS 255 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). The provenance and date of the manuscript are not certain, but scholars agree that it was written in fourteenth-century Herefordshire, possibly at Hereford or Leominster. Susanna Fein discusses the author's use of parody in "The Lyrics of MS Harley 2253," 4196-98.

⁷² "My deþ Y loue, my lyf ich hate," *IMEV* 2236. I have used the edition in Chambers and Sidgwick, *Early English Lyrics*, 12-14.

of Adam, thus blaming his guilt on the seductive young woman.⁷³ The maiden responds to her would-be seducer's melancholic, flowery declaration with a terse rebuff: "Get away! you cleric, you are a fool." Their debate (a typical element of the *pastourelle*) continues: the cleric tries to woo his "sweet lemman," she brusquely rejects him with a warning that her family would disgrace or even kill him if they were discovered together. He reminds her of a blissful time when they stood in her window and kissed "fifty times" and she relents, gradually recognizing him as the cleric she had loved in the past.⁷⁴ (The punch line is that clerical suitors are so common that the woman is momentarily confused and thinks that he is the *second* priest who has courted her.) The poem succeeds as a parody in part because the situation was a believable one; it was within the imaginative realm for a supposedly chaste cleric – or two – to seduce a woman.

Other Middle English lyrics also used the figure of the cleric who woos a young woman. At least five lyrics from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries played on the coupling of a seductive cleric and an innocent maiden.⁷⁵ More ribald and less subtle than

⁷³ The cleric's declaration also drew on a third use of "fallen": to kneel before a person in reverence or supplication. MED, s.v. "fallen."

⁷⁴ The cleric had, apparently, been away at school where, he assures the girl, "Well muchel I couthe of lore." The phrase "connen muchel of lore" meant "to be scholarly," but it was certainly meant to be read as ironic (he clearly did not learn much about clerical comportment/celibacy) and also as an allusion/pun (bringing to mind the common Middle English phrase "love's lore," i.e., he learned much about the conduct of love).

⁷⁵ These songs have been indexed in the *IMEV* and edited in the following collections of song and carols: R.T. Davies, ed., *Medieval English Lyrics* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963); Thomas G. Duncan, ed., *Late Medieval English Lyrics and Carols 1400-1530* (New York: Penguin, 2000); R.L. Greene, ed., *The Early English Carols*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); Rossell Hope Robbins, ed., *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). "Led I the Dance a Midsummer's Day": *IMEV* 1849; Greene, *Early English Carols*, no. 453. "The Other Day I Met a Clerk": *IMEV* 3594; Greene, *Early English Carols*, no. 454; Robbins, *Secular Lyrics*, no. 24. "The Last Tyme I the Wel Woke": *IMEV* 3409; Greene, *Early English Carols*, no. 456; Robbins, *Secular Lyrics*, no. 25. "O Lord, So Swett Ser John Dothe Kys": *IMEV* 2494; Greene, *Early English Carols*, no. 456.1; "As I Went on Yol Day": *IMEV* 377; Greene, *Early English Carols*, no. 457; Robbins, *Secular Lyrics*, no. 27; Duncan, *Late Medieval English Lyrics and Carols*, no. 129; Davies,

“My Death I Love, My Life I Hate,” they were meant to be sung at holidays and dances. These songs and carols were meant to be entertaining, but they also express cultural anxiety about sexual misbehavior by both men in minor orders and ordained priests.

As with many medieval texts, we cannot determine how widely these songs were disseminated, but two elements suggest that this was a well known trope in popular literature. Although the five songs each survive in only one version, each is contained in a *different* manuscript, usually within a group of other popular songs or carols. Second, each manuscript was composed in a different area of England – from Oxford to Suffolk to East Anglia. This wide distribution suggests that the clerical figures in these songs were not simply a popular figure among medieval writers, singers, and revelers throughout England.

Most of these songs share a similar narrative: the object of the cleric’s affection is a young, unmarried girl; the cleric seduces her through flattery and gifts; at the end of the song, the betrayed maiden reveals she is pregnant. Although there are small differences between these songs, the clerical suitor is always successful, and he never marries the pregnant young woman.

Two songs feature men in minor orders, an ambiguous status in terms of clerical celibacy because they have not yet taken a vow of chastity. “Led I the Dance a Midsummer’s Day” casts a holy-water clerk, Jack, as the seducer. A young maiden attends a midsummer festival; Jack dances with her, kisses her, whispers in her ear, and lures her to his chamber with the promise of a pair of white gloves, a common gift in courtship. When they arrive, he

Medieval English Lyrics, no. 73. For a discussion of the female voice in these and other lyrics, see Judith M. Bennett, “Ventriloquisms: When Maidens Speak in English Songs, c.1300-1550,” in *Medieval Woman’s Song: Cross-Cultural Approaches*, ed. Anne L. Klinck and Ann Marie Rasmussen (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 187-259.

seduces her and they spend a merry night together. When she returns home at sunrise, her mistress scolds her, “Say, you bold strumpet, where have you been?” – a slur that condemns the girl for her promiscuity, but also implies that she has behaved like a prostitute. In “The Other Day I Met a Clerk,” a young woman encounters a clerk who encourages her to listen to him and learn from his wisdom. When he brings her to bed, she lacks the resolve to refuse him and lets him have “all his will.” Now, her girdle “will not meet” and she vows not to let another clerk dally with her.

As Patricia Cullum has argued, clerks in minor orders posed a problem in medieval society. These young, adolescent men were expected to be celibate if they wanted to be promoted to the major orders of subdeacon, deacon, and priest, but some of them would choose to forgo ordination and marry instead, remaining parish clerks. Cullum states, “The trouble with the minor clergy was not that they could not marry, but that they could. A promise of marriage was all too easily believed by inexperienced young women, because there were married clergy around.” These songs, then, can be read as cautionary tales to young women, expressing society’s concerns about these young clerks who might seduce a girl by promising to marry her, then be promoted to priesthood and leave her pregnant and dishonored.⁷⁶ Documentary evidence confirms this anxiety: in the diocese of Hereford in 1397, a recently promoted priest was accused of having made a contract of marriage with a woman before his ordination.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ P.H. Cullum, “Clergy, Masculinity and Transgression in Late Medieval England,” in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D.M. Hadley (New York: Longman, 1999), 178-96, quotation at 192. Cullum also notes the ubiquity of married parish clerks by the date of this lyric (c. 1450).

⁷⁷ Herefordshire Cathedral Archives, A1997, f. 10v. The charge reads: “Next, that Richard Stokke, lately promoted to holy orders, keeps a certain Isabel Waren, with whom he had a contract before taking ordination, and he asserts that a marriage between them is not yet solemnized however.”

Three songs explicitly referred to ordained priests. “The Last Tyme I the Wel Woke,” a lyric from the late fifteenth century, tells the story of a young woman who encounters a priest at the well. After making her swear not to reveal his behavior, Sir John lays her on the ground, “strikes” her maidenhead, and tears her cloak – a double entendre that slyly references the girl’s lost virginity. Afterwards, the priest visits her home, courting her with gifts and flattery; they spend a merry night together, and Sir John tells her she was “gracious” to bear his child.⁷⁸ The song concludes, however, with the maiden lamenting her pregnancy and promising to curse Sir John unless he provides milk and porridge for their baby. The other songs follow a similar trajectory: priest woos maiden, with or without gifts; maiden is beguiled; priest has (voluntary or forced) sex with maiden, with or without a pregnancy.

Five lyrical examples might not seem convincing evidence of a cultural stereotype, but there are more medieval references to cleverly seductive clerics and their naïve lovers. “The Miller of Abington,” the best known as a version of the French fabliau that served as Chaucer’s source for “The Reeve’s Tale,” included a cleric named Jankin who seduces a maiden: “The miller was jolly in his works all; / He had a daughter fair and small. / The clerk of the town loved her above all, / Jankyn was his name.”⁷⁹ The formula was also a popular element of social and religious critiques. “A Lutel Soth Sermon,” a thirteenth-century satirical poem, singles out “those proud maidens that love Jankin” as one of the many categories of people who will be damned (along with thieves, slanderers, dishonest brewers, and priests’ wives). And John Wyclif complains that “strumpets and thieves praise Sir Jack

⁷⁸ The word choice here is, perhaps, a bit sarcastic. “Gracious” meant both “honorable” (which an unmarried, pregnant girl was certainly not) and “filled with God’s grace” (which, she literally was, in a sense, since she was carrying a priest’s child).

⁷⁹ “The Miller of Abington,” in *Anecdota Literaria, A Collection of Short Poems in English, Latin, and French*, ed. Thomas Wright (London: J.R. Smith, 1844), 160.

or Hobbe or William the proud clerk, how small [short] they sing their notes.”⁸⁰ Whether in entertaining lyrics or serious appraisals of society, Jankin and his maiden appealed to a wide and varied audience.⁸¹ While the light-hearted mood of these popular lyrics was certainly a result of their genre, they also tacitly condoned these witty, seductive clerics.

Priests and their sexual partners held a prominent role in the medieval imagination, perhaps because clerical concubines were such useful figures for demonstrating lust. These women served as paragons of female lechery, and pastoral literature reduced them to their sexual function, disregarding their economic, social, and maternal roles. A clerical concubine could be described and depicted in a variety of ways – as a whore, a harlot, or the devil’s mare; as a temptress or an unrepentant sinner – but what links all of these terms, stories, and representations is the steady certainty that lustful sexuality was her defining attribute.

Unchaste priests were viewed with far more tolerance than their lovers; concubines, not their clerical partners, bore the brunt of criticism in these texts. Even though unchaste clerics were sometimes condemned, they still maintained their authoritative roles as confessors, intermediaries, and priests. And while priests who seduced women could be humorous and innocuous, women who seduced priests were unequivocally condemned.

⁸⁰ “A lutel soth Sermun,” in *An Old English Miscellany, Containing A Bestiary, Kentish Sermons, Proverbs of Alfred, Religious Poems of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Richard Morris, EETS OS 49 (London: N. Trübner & Co, 1872), 189, ll. 55-56; “Of feigned contemplative life,” in *The English Works of Wyclif, Hitherto Unprinted*, ed. F.D. Matthew, EETS OS 74 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1880), 192. Alison, the narrator of “Kyrie, so kyrie,” also admires her clerk’s singing: “Jankyn at the Sanctus trilled a merry note /... Jankin trilled notes, a hundred on a knot [in quick succession] / And [both] he chopped them smaller than herbs to the pot.”

⁸¹ Here, as elsewhere, it is often unclear whether the seducing cleric was a priest or merely a man in minor orders. “Jankin,” a surname, was originally a diminutive of John. According to P.H. Reaney, the name meant, at least in some cases, “Young John.” So the use of Jankin/Jankyn in these songs may have been meant to signal a clerk in minor orders – a young secular cleric – rather than an ordained priest, a “Sir John.” P.H. Reaney, *Dictionary of English Surnames*, rev. R.M. Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 254 (s.v. “Jenkin”).

Literary representations of priests and their wives or concubines had another, unintentional consequence: even if clerical marriage was beyond the memory of any living cleric or layperson, these *exempla* kept clerical marriage present in late medieval imaginations. Medieval writers, readers, and listeners were often told that priests had had legitimate wives under “the old law”; they were also reminded that – in all but name – some priests still did. In the next chapters, I turn to the lived experiences of these priests and their “wives.”

Chapter 5: “Just as the Priests Have Their Wives”: Clerical Concubinage in the Diocese of Hereford

Pastoral literature condemned clerical incontinence, and vernacular literature winked at it, but what documentary evidence do we have for clerical concubinage? England’s medieval ecclesiastical courts held jurisdiction over moral infractions, including those committed by the clergy, and in their records we can find abundant information on priests and their sexual partners.

In October 1491, Owen ap Griffith, the vicar of the village of Meole Brace in southern Shropshire, was summoned before the church court of the diocese of Hereford to respond to the charge that he lived with his concubine, Joan Grindilston, and that she was pregnant with twins. Owen failed to come to court when originally summoned, but finally appeared before the judge seven months later, in May 1492, to respond to the charge. He clarified that the woman’s name was Alice, not Joan; he explained that she was no longer pregnant, having just given birth to twins in the vicarage; and he confessed that they already had eight children together.¹

¹ Herefordshire Record Office (HRO), HD4/1/105, f. 91 (October 1491). *Dominus Owinus ap Gryffythe vicarius de Meole Brace incontinens est cum quadam <Johanna Grinlyston quam in domo vicarie sue> tenet ex qua procreavit ii proles que iam secum cohabitavit in domo sue et ex eadem uno partu procreavit ii proles pariles.* HRO, HD4/1/105, f. 101 (May 1492). *Dominus Owinus ap Griffith vicarius de Mulebrace predicta incontinens est cum quadam Alicia Grindilston. Vir personaliter comparet et prestito juramento de veritate dicendo fatetur se suscitasse ex eadem viii proles et iam nuper predicta Alicia peperit et paruit duas proles in uno partu in vicaria de Meole Brace predicta. Unde propter huiusmodi sua confessatum predictus vicarius in spiritualibus generalis dictum dominum Owinum a celebratione divinorum suspendebat in scriptis. Ulterius interrogatus et impetitus an cognovit eandem Alicia infra vicariam predictam. Et idem vicarius negavit articulum et habet ad purgandum se in proximo apud Stretton in the Dale videlicet xxiii die mensis predicti cum iiii sacerdotis et iiii laicis honestis de sua parochia.... Et pro confessatis habet iiii fustigationes nudis*

As with most medieval parish priests, we know little about Owen ap Griffith's life. There is no certain record of his ordination; the first time he appears in a document from the diocese of Hereford is at the time of his appointment to Meole Brace in 1475.² But he was well acquainted with the church courts of Hereford by the time of his confession in 1492, for this was not his first run-in with ecclesiastical officers. A decade earlier, in April 1482, he had been charged in Hereford's consistory court with the crime of incontinence with a woman named Joan "whom he held," and who lived in the remote village of Church Stoke, some twenty miles away on the Welsh-English border. Owen never appeared in court, and neither did Joan, but the charge was dismissed the following July when a church court officer reported that she had left the diocese.³

Five years later, in November 1487, Owen was again summoned to court; this time, he was accused of two crimes. The first charge – that he had solemnized, without license, a clandestine marriage in the nearby town of Shrewsbury – was not prosecuted.⁴ The second charge read: "Sir Owen ap Griffith is incontinent with a certain Anne Schowe, his concubine, who now resides next to the bridge commonly called 'Meole's Bridge.'" In April 1488,

pedibus capite et toga induta et incuncta circa ecclesia de Pontesbury cum cereo i libri cere in manu etc. cum monitione consueta etc. sub pena excommunicationis maioris et sub pena privationis beneficii. Cui injunxioni dictus vir voluntarie submitit et promisit.

² HRO, AL19/11, f. 14v. A man named Owen ap Griffith ap Lewys from the diocese of St. David was ordained as acolyte on 25 February 1464, as deacon on 16 April 1464, and as priest on 26 May 1464. (HRO, AL19/11, ff. 124r, 124v, and 125r.) Owen ap Griffith is an uncommon name, so it is possible that these entries refer to the same man. If so, he would have been born no later than 1440 (24 was the age of entry for priestly ordination), making him at least 35 years old when he was appointed to Meole Brace and 75 when he retired in 1515. (See HRO, AL19/12, f. 94v for his resignation.) P.E.H. Hair has found a handful of priests who were in their seventies at the end of their clerical careers. Hair, "Mobility of Parochial Clergy in Hereford Diocese c. 1400," *TWNFC* 43 (1979): 164-80.

³ HRO, HD4/1/101, ff. 132, 136, 140.

⁴ HRO, HD4/1/103a, ff. 98, 100.

Owen appeared before the court at Hereford, confessed to the crime, and received a customary warning to abstain from his sin. The judge assigned him a typical penance of floggings “in penitential appearance”: two floggings around his small parish church and – for better publicity – two floggings around the large parish church of Pontesbury and two more around Hereford Cathedral. Like most priests, he immediately commuted his penance to a fine, paying 7s for Anne’s penance as well as his own.⁵

Despite Owen’s generosity, his relationship with Anne seems to have soon ended. On 16 January 1490, he was again charged with concubinage, once more with a woman named Joan, possibly the same woman who was his concubine in 1482, but not necessarily, given the popularity of her forename. Again, he admitted their relationship to the judge, also confessing that he had fathered two children with her. This time, he received a lighter penance – three floggings around Pontesbury church – but a more ominous admonition: “that he shall refrain from sexual union and each suspicious place under penalty of major excommunication and deprivation from his benefice.” He did not appear in court again that year, and there is no record that he fulfilled or commuted his penance.⁶

It was eight months later, in October 1491, that the church court again targeted Owen and his concubine, at which time he admitted that he and a woman named Alice were living together in the vicarage with their ten children. As before, both he and Alice were assigned corporal penances of three floggings each. As before, he was warned not to commit the sin under penalty of major excommunication. And as before, the clerk did not record whether

⁵ HRO, HD4/1/103a, ff. 98, 100, 103. *Item dictus dominus Owenus ap Griffith incontiens est cum quadam Anna Schowe concubina sua que iam trahit moram iuxta pontem vulgariter vocatum Maylesbrige* (f. 98).

⁶ HD4/1/104a, ff. 118, 121, 124, 128. ... *Vir personaliter comparet et fatetur articulum habet iii fustigationes circa ecclesiam parochialem de Pontesbury et quod abstineat se a carnali copula et omni loco suspecto sub pena excommunicationis maioris et deprivationis beneficii sui, etc.* (f. 118).

they fulfilled their penances. Owen and Alice were not prosecuted again in Hereford's consistory court, at least not in any act books that have survived. Nor is there evidence that ecclesiastical officers were ever successful at separating the couple, and Owen ap Griffith remained vicar of Meole Brace until 1515, when he resigned with a pension.

Owen's decade-long involvement with Hereford's consistory court illustrates the difficulty of enforcing clerical celibacy, and his long-term union with Joan/Alice suggests that clerical unions were accepted, to some extent, in late medieval Hereford.⁷ In this chapter, I examine the documentary evidence of clerical sexual misconduct in Hereford's ecclesiastical courts, arguing that clerical fornication and concubinage were as common in the diocese as they were in continental Europe, that clerical concubinage closely resembled secular marriage, and that clerical couples were roughly tolerated within the diocese.

First, I draw on Owen ap Griffith's court appearances to illustrate how clerical incontinence was detected, prosecuted, and punished in medieval ecclesiastical courts, which had their own set of specialized processes and legal jargon. Just as the the court's procedures can be difficult to decipher, so too is the terminology of church court records. I next discuss how ecclesiastical courts charged clerics with sexual misbehavior and lay out my method of discerning short-term sexual liaisons from on-going relationships. Using Hereford's fourteenth-century visitation and fifteenth-century act books, I then analyze the evidence for clerical incontinence in the diocese of Hereford and discuss its chronological, geographic, ethnic, and socio-economic patterns. Lastly, I identify parallels between concubinage and

⁷ Owen ap Griffith appears to have been in a relationship with a woman named Joan in 1482, with Anne Schowe in 1487-88, and with Alice (whom the court initially identified as Joan) in 1491-92. It seems quite likely that Joan of 1482 and Joan-cum-Alice of 1491 were one and the same: Owen confessed, after all, that they had ten children in 1491. Using a standard demographic birth interval of 2.5 years, it seems likely that their relationship had been going on some twenty years. Perhaps Owen and Alice were separated for a time, or perhaps he was bigamous.

secular marriage in the everyday lives of priests and their families, examining both the intolerance and acceptance of clerical concubinage.

Prosecuting Clerical Incontinence in the Consistory Court

By Owen ap Griffith's time, ecclesiastical courts had evolved into highly structured institutions. Although William I had separated ecclesiastical courts from local secular courts in the late eleventh century, it was not until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – as church law became more sophisticated and distinctions between secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions were more clearly defined – that ecclesiastical courts developed on their own. By the later middle ages, England's church courts had a defined jurisdiction, an ordered hierarchy with a system of appeals, and a set of standard procedures.

The scope of the ecclesiastical courts was based on the church's role in maintaining "the health of the soul." As such, the church held jurisdiction over all spiritual matters, over testamentary issues about personal property (but not land), and over matters connected with marriage, defamation, perjury, and breach of contract. Any crime of ecclesiastical concern (church maintenance, the theft of church goods, violation of consecrated ground) as well as disputes over church revenues and tithes also fell to the church courts. The courts held disciplinary jurisdiction over the laity for sins that were not punishable as crimes in most secular courts: sexual crimes, religious offences, and a wide variety of other sins, including usury, drunkenness, sorcery, and assault on a cleric. Most relevant to the topic of clerical concubinage, ecclesiastical courts claimed authority over the criminal behavior, spiritual duties, and morality of secular clerics, monks, and nuns, although their authority over felonies such as theft and murder was often disputed (most famously between Thomas Becket and Henry II). Church courts also supervised pastoral care, regularly admonishing

priests who neglected their duties, did not reside in their parishes, celebrated mass more than once in a day, dressed improperly, or revealed their parishioners' confessions. Lastly, they corrected the moral failings of the clergy – gambling, drunkenness, and unchastity.⁸

Charges of sexual misconduct against clerics were heard in all levels of the church courts, but the best evidence in Hereford comes from the bishop's consistory court. At the bottom of the hierarchy of ecclesiastical courts were what L.R. Poos has usefully termed "lower ecclesiastical jurisdictions," including courts of the deanery and the archdeaconry. The jurisdiction of these lower courts varied, but many heard charges of clerical incontinence which resulted from episcopal visitations.⁹ At the top were the provincial courts of the Archbishops of York and Canterbury, which heard appeals from consistory courts, probate matters, and some litigation between individuals, including cases of clerical sexual misconduct.¹⁰

In between the supervision of rural deans, at one end, and archbishops, at the other, lay the jurisdiction of bishops. Each bishop in England and Wales held a consistory court for

⁸ There are many studies of England's church courts in the late medieval and early modern periods. I have primarily consulted: R.H. Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974); R.H. Helmholz, *The Oxford History of the Laws of England, vol. I, The Canon Law and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction from 597 to the 1640s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 206-36; Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-69; L.R. Poos, ed., *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in Late-Medieval England: The Courts of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln, 1336-1349, and the Deanery of Wisbech, 1458-1484* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Brian L. Woodcock, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952).

⁹ There are relatively few extant medieval documents from these courts, and none from the diocese of Hereford. L.R. Poos has edited the records of a deanery in the diocese of Lincoln in *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions*.

¹⁰ The Court of Rome was the highest court and heard appeals from all ecclesiastical courts until 1533. This neat hierarchy was, naturally, messier and more complex in practice. See Helmholz, *Canon Law and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction*, for some of the variations among ecclesiastical courts in English dioceses.

his diocese and was the primary judicial authority there, although he often delegated his authority to an Official Principle, Commissary General, or Vicar General who presided over the proceedings.¹¹ Unlike some, Hereford's consistory court was itinerant, traveling around the diocese and sitting for one-day sessions at a parish church within each of the diocese's thirteen deaneries.¹² Hereford was a fairly large diocese, with some parishes in Shropshire located fifty or sixty miles from the Cathedral; the court's perambulation made attending a court session easier for these far-flung parishioners. It repeated this two- to three-week circuit every three weeks from early October until July, sometimes remaining at Hereford Cathedral during August and September.¹³

The business and procedures of consistory courts were fairly standard, falling into three broad categories: probate (the proving and administration of wills), instance (the hearing of disputes between parties, initiated "at the instance" of individuals), and *ex officio* (corrections of the faults of clergy and laity initiated by the bishop or judge by virtue of his "office"). Consistory court judges spent quite a bit of their time dealing with probate matters and tithe disputes, or hearing suits about marriage, debt, or breach of contract (this was usually the "court of the first instance," that is, the first venue in which litigation between

¹¹ For a discussion of the evolution of episcopal consistory courts, see Jean Scammell, "The Rural Chapter in England from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century," *English Historical Review* 338 (1971): 1-21.

¹² Consistory courts in other dioceses tended to hold sessions in one venue, the diocesan cathedral, during the entire year.

¹³ The court's yearly schedule corresponded to law terms, avoiding harvest-time, Lent, and the major festivals of Christmas and Easter. The circuit of Hereford's court was not always fixed: cases from one deanery might be heard in another, and the small deanery of Weston was visited less often towards the end of the sixteenth century. The court's travels were also interrupted by plague and warfare. See Michael Faraday's introduction to his calendar of wills for a more detailed description of Hereford's consistory court; M.A. Faraday and E.J.L. Cole, eds., *Calendar of Probate and Administration Acts 1407-1541 and Abstracts of Wills 1541-1581 in the Court Books of the Bishop of Hereford, 1407-1581*, British Record Society 2 (London: British Record Society, 1989), viii-xxiv.

parties was heard). But most of the business of the court involved correcting the spiritual and moral faults of the clergy and laity. The prosecution of clerical incontinence, like other sexual crimes, were usually brought *ex officio*. The bishop himself, however, rarely initiated these charges in practice. Instead, court officers found out about clerical misconduct through networks of official inquiry and informal gossip.

Detecting clerical offenders

Owen ap Griffith and Alice Grindilston, his concubine, were summoned to court in 1491, but the records of their case do not reveal how their misbehavior became known to court officers. Perhaps their relationship was discovered during a visitation of the diocese, perhaps they were reported to the bishop by a churchwarden, rural dean, or another priest, or perhaps the relationship between Owen and Alice was a popular topic of gossip that eventually reached a court officer. In medieval church court records – and Hereford is no exception – the mechanism by which most crimes were detected is unclear.

Owen and Alice may have been reported during a visitation. During a visitation, a church official (bishop or archdeacon) traveled through his jurisdiction, holding inquests in each parish to determine the state of local affairs.¹⁴ He or his representative went through the diocese, parish by parish, examining local clergy, churchwardens, and lay juries about the maintenance of their parish church and the moral lapses of their peers. Churchwardens or lay juries were given a set of questions in advance; during the official's visit, they – and parish

¹⁴ The obligation of church officials to visit their jurisdictions developed in England in the thirteenth century, an outgrowth of the synodal legislation that proliferated after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Bishops were encouraged to make visitations every three years, though it seems that they occurred far less frequently, and archdeacons had the right to visitation during the years in which there was no episcopal visitation. We have little evidence about how often these visitations occurred in practice. Helmholz, *Canon Law and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction*, 219-21; Ingram, *Church Courts*, 44-45; R. N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 158-66.

clergy – were asked to exhibit written bills of presentment or make oral reports in answer to these articles of inquiry.¹⁵ By statute, parish priests and churchwardens were required to report any misbehaving parishioners or clerics, although in practice, they may have used more discretion. And parish priests had a special duty to report clerical concubines: “If a priest, in whose parish the concubine of any such [cleric] resides, does not report this to the archdeacon or his officer, he shall be suspended and shall be subject to grave penance....¹⁶ The visiting official then chose which offenses to disregard and which to prosecute. Some infractions were immediately resolved through confession and correction; others were later heard at the bishop’s consistory court. In Hereford’s 1454-55 court book, for example, a number of charges are preceded by the phrase *visitatio archidiaconi*, showing that the crimes were first discovered during the archdeacon’s visitation.¹⁷

¹⁵ The office of churchwarden was an administrative position held by a layman (or, much less frequently, a laywoman). A prominent but non-elite member of the parish, he served as a liaison between the parish and the bishop. Christopher Harper-Bill has characterized the churchwarden as a moral representative of the community and a means of social control who “declar[ed] the common opinion of the neighbours of the accused.” Christopher Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England, 1400-1530*, rev. ed. (New York: Longman, 1996), 55. For a thorough description of the office of churchwarden, see Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), especially 68-98.

¹⁶ “Decree for the Province of Canterbury,” F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, eds., *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205-1313*, vol. II, parts 1 and 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 154. *Item, sacerdos in cuius parochia concubina alicuius talium moratur, si hoc non ostenderit archidiacono vel eius officiali, suspendatur et priusquam relaxetur gravi penitentiae subiaceat.* It seems likely that churchwardens made deliberate choices about whom to present: Martin Ingram found, for example, that they might decide not to present a poor neighbor if the court fees would be a financial burden; the same might be true for poor parish priests. Ingram, *Church Courts*, 58. Churchwardens and jurors who failed to make presentments at a visitation might be summoned to a session of the church court. During an episcopal visitation in 1468, four parishioners from the town of Knighton were summoned to the consistory court and suspended for failing to present “sins and defects” during a recent episcopal visitation. They eventually complied, presenting two couples for adultery, two others for fornication, and one man for failing to attend church. HRO, HD4/1/94, ff. 74 and 78.

¹⁷ HRO, HD4/1/91, ff. 63, 133, 140.

Even if there was no formal inquiry, clerical misbehavior could be reported on an *ad hoc* basis. Parish clergy and churchwardens were specifically required to make a full report during a visitation, but they could make presentments on the religious and moral state of parishioners and parish clergy at any time. These formal statements were the most frequent means of detection used by ecclesiastical officials, but canon law also allowed the prosecution of an offender on the basis of rumor. If their offense was notorious or known of “by common fame,” a clerical couple might be summoned to respond to answer to the suspected crime.¹⁸

Appearing in court, admitting guilt, and proving innocence

Regardless of whether an *ex officio* charge was made during a visitation, reported by a churchwarden or cleric, or prosecuted by the court on the basis of “common fame,” court procedure was the same: the defendants were summoned, appeared in court, and either admitted or denied their charge.¹⁹ When Owen ap Griffith was accused of committing incontinence in 1491, he was summoned to appear in court on 8 October. Most likely, an apparitor – a layman, often literate and appointed to the office by the bishop, who likely held the post in addition to his occupation – personally served his citation. If a person could not be located, the citation was affixed to the door of the defendant’s house or the parish church; an apparitor was expected to summon individuals even if the court did not know their name.²⁰

¹⁸ See L.R. Poos, *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions*. Poos further explores the role of rumor in the church courts in “Sex, Lies, and the Church Courts of Pre-Reformation England,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 25 (1995): 585-607.

¹⁹ The same legal procedures were used during parochial visitations as in the church courts. See Helmholz, *Canon Law and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction*, 219.

²⁰ R.B. Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts, 1500-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9-10; Woodcock, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Courts*, 68-71. See Woodcock, Appendix VIII, for a transcription of instructions for an *ex officio* citation c.

After being summoned to appear in October, Owen eventually appeared in court on 6 May 1492. The record of his appearance that day demonstrates many aspects of church court procedure and is worth quoting in full:

Sir Owen ap Griffith, vicar of aforesaid Meole Brace, commits incontinence with a certain Alice Grindilston. He appears in person and, by sworn oath to speak the truth, he confesses that he had begotten eight children from her and that quite recently the aforesaid Alice gave birth to two children in one birth [twins] in the vicarage of aforesaid Meole Brace. From which, on account of such confession, the aforesaid Vicar General had, in writing, suspended said Sir Owen from the celebration of divine services. Lastly, he was questioned and accused whether he carnally knew that Alice within the aforesaid vicarage, and the same vicar denied the article and has to purge himself in the next court at Stretton-in-the-Dale, that is, the 23rd of the aforesaid month [May], with four priests and four respected laymen of his parish. Lastly, he was warned to begin repairs on his home of the vicarage within two months following, under penalty of law. The said man appears 23 May in the church of Stretton-in-the-Dale and by sworn oath, et cetera, he was absolved [of his suspension] and as to his compurgation, it was continued until the next court. And for his confession he has four floggings around the church of Pontesbury, barefoot, bare-headed, clothed in a cassock, [and carrying] in his hand a candle made of one pound of wax, et cetera, with customary warning, et cetera, under penalty of major excommunication and under penalty of deprivation of his benefice. To which injunction said man willingly submitted and promised.²¹

1509. For a more in-depth explanation of the duties of an apparitor, see Carson I.A. Ritchie, *The Ecclesiastical Courts of York* (Abroath: The Herald Press, 1956), 40-45. The most well-known literary depictions of apparitors, also known as summoners, appear in the “General Prologue” and “The Friar’s Tale” in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales; The Riverside Chaucer*, ed Larry P. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 23-36 and 123-28. Louis Haselmeyer provides a history of the office of apparitor, the functions and duties of the office, and medieval attitudes towards summoners in “The Apparitor and Chaucer’s Summoner,” *Speculum*, 12 (1937): 43-57.

²¹ HRO, HD4/1/105, f. 101. *Dominus Owinus ap Griffith vicarius de Mulebrace predicta incontinens est cum quadam Alicia Grindilston. Vir personaliter comparet et prestito juramento de veritate dicendo fatetur se suscitasse ex eadem viii proles et iam nuper predicta Alicia peperit et paruit duas proles in uno partu in vicaria de Meole Brace predicta. Unde propter huiusmodi sua confessatum predictus vicarius in spiritualibus generalis dictum dominum Owinum a celebratione divinorum suspendebat in scriptis. Ulterius interrogatus et impetitus an cognovit eandem Alicia infra vicariam predictam. Et idem vicarius negavit articulum et habet ad purgandum se in proximo apud Stretton in the Dale videlicet xxiii die mensis predicti cum iiii sacerdotis et iiii laicis honestis de sua parochia. Ulterius monitus est ad incipiendum reparaciones circa mansum vicarie sue infra ii menses sequentes sub pena juris. Dicitur vir personaliter comparet xxiii die Maii in ecclesia de Stretton in the Dale et prestito juramento etc. absolutus est et quo ad purgationem suam continuatur ad proximum.*

The sequence of procedures here is fairly standard: the judge presented the charge; Owen took an oath to give an honest answer, confessed to the crime, and was assigned penance. Rather unusually, the Vicar General, who held episcopal authority, suspended Owen from celebrating mass. (Suspension was typically used as a punishment for contumacious priests who refused to appear in court to fulfill their penances.) Often, a defendant was required to take an oath that he would perform his penance; in Owen's case, it seems he merely promised to obey the court's injunction.²²

Although Owen confessed to the initial charge of incontinence with Alice, the judge also interrogated him about whether he and Alice had had sex in the vicarage. Owen denied this second accusation and was asked to prove his innocence via the process of canonical compurgation. When a defendant denied that he had committed a sin, he was usually ordered to undergo compurgation, that is, to produce in court a specified number of honest neighbors – usually four or eight, but up to twelve for serious offenses – who would take an oath that they believed his sworn denial. Owen, like most priests, was ordered to produce both clerical and lay witnesses (in his case, four of each).²³

Et pro confessatis habet iiii fustigationes nudis pedibus capite et toga induta et incuncta circa ecclesia de Pontesbury cum cereo i libri cere in manu etc., cum monitione consueta etc., sub pena excommunicationis maioris et sub pena privationis beneficii. Cui injunxioni dictus vir voluntarie submisit et promisit.

²² Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, 44-46; Outhwaite, *English Ecclesiastical Courts*, 9-10; Poos, *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions*, xlvi-xlvii; Woodcock, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Courts*, 68-71. Although records of court sessions were written in Latin, most of the *ex officio* proceedings (the statement of charge, oaths, assignments of penance, etc.) were conducted orally and in the vernacular. R.H. Helmholz, "Judges and Trials in the English Ecclesiastical Courts," in *The Trial in History, Volume I, Judicial Tribunals in England and Europe, 1200-1700*, ed. Maureen Mulholland and Brian Pullan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 102-16; Ingram, *Church Courts*, 47.

²³ Lay men and women were ordered to produce compurgators of their own sex; priests might be asked to produce male neighbors, parishioners, or other priests.

There were two stages to a compurgation. Before it was conducted, a proclamation was read in the parish church inviting anyone objecting to the purgation to appear in court. If there was an objection, if the defendant did not appear for his compurgation, or if he did not bring enough (or any) compurgators to court, he was pronounced guilty and ordered to do penance. If the required number of witnesses appeared and swore to the truthfulness of the defendant's oath of denial, the compurgation was successful and the charge was dismissed. Although Owen appeared at the next court, his compurgation was continued to the following session. As in many cases, the outcome of Owen's compurgation – if he completed it – was not recorded.

Compurgators were not swearing that they had personal knowledge of the defendant's innocence, merely that they believed he had sworn truthfully. Compared to modern criminal court procedure, compurgation seems like an unreliable means of establishing innocence. But, as Ralph Houlbrooke has pointed out, it “was a useful means of avoiding conflict and maintaining social harmony.”²⁴ In this way, compurgation was more a reflection of a defendant's standing among his peers than proof of his innocence.

Disciplining and reforming offenders

Penance, too, was a means of social control and a source of community cohesion.²⁵ According to synodal law, priests who were incontinent or held concubines should be suspended “from office and benefice,” that is, temporarily prohibited from performing their

²⁴ James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (New York: Longman, 1995), 147; R.H. Helmholz, “Crime, Compurgation and the Courts of the Medieval Church,” *Law and History Review* 1 (1983): 1-26; Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, 45-46; Ingram, *Church Courts*, 51-52; Outhwaite, *English Ecclesiastical Courts*, 9; Poos, *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions*, xlvii.

²⁵ Penance, in this context, refers only to the punishment enjoined on offenders in the church courts, not to penance imposed after confession.

clerical duties or taking income from their benefices. Some statutes declared that a *clericus concubinarius* lose his clerical status altogether, be permanently removed from his benefice, suffer excommunication, or even be transferred to secular authorities.²⁶ In reality, however, priests rarely faced such harsh punishments. If punished at all, an incontinent priest was most likely ordered to perform penance, ranging from a fast to a ritual flogging.²⁷

If a priest admitted a crime or failed his compurgation, he was (usually) assigned penance, either private or public. Private penances included fasting on bread and water, reciting psalms, or performing a pilgrimage, usually to the shrine of St. Thomas in Hereford Cathedral. The object of the court was not only to correct and reform offenders, but also to set an example for the community, and so the penance most often assigned by church court judges – to both the laity and clergy – was a ritual public flogging. The form of this ritual followed a general outline (with some variations among dioceses), and Owen ap Griffith’s penance was a standard one.

The judge ordered Owen to undergo four *fustigationes*, or floggings; other offenses might call for only one flogging, while some penitents were assigned up to twelve. Most floggings took place in the sinner’s parish church, but Owen was sentenced to be flogged in Pontesbury, a large village about ten miles away.²⁸ During the liturgical procession on

²⁶ Chapter 18 in “Statutes of Exeter II,” *Councils and Synods II*, part 2, 1013-15 (quotation at 1014); for similar statutes, see “Canons of the Legatine Council of London” (1237), c. 16, *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 252-53; “Statutes of Lincoln” (123?), c. 10, *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 269; and “Statutes of Salisbury” (1217x1219), c. 8, *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 62.

²⁷ Both laypeople and clerics were assigned public and private penances. However, a priest was far more likely to be given a private penance rather than a humiliating public flogging, to commute his penance to a monetary fine, or to receive no penance at all. Later in this chapter and in the next, I discuss the discrepancies between the punishment of priests and laymen, and between priests and their concubines. In this section, I focus on the form and meaning of public penance.

²⁸ It is possible that there were no other clerics in Meole Brace to oversee Owen’s penance, but just as likely that Pontesbury was chosen as a site that would provide a larger audience. Priests

Sunday (or, in Owen's case, on four successive Sundays), the parish priest or curate read out a penitent's crime in front of the congregation; sometimes the offender also confessed his sin and asked forgiveness from God. Laypeople, including clerical concubines, were instructed to be barefoot, bare-legged, and bare-headed, wearing only white penitential *lineos*, clothing, rags, or a "sheet"; Owen and other priests would also have worn a cassock or surplice, markers of clerical status. Penitents customarily carried a candle of a prescribed weight or value as an offering to the church: Owen's was supposed to contain one pound of wax. Sometimes, although not in Owen's penance, an offender also wore a placard or symbol that explained his sin. The placard on the chest of one sixteenth-century penitent in Gloucester read, "This I doo suffer for the keypyng of ii wyffes"; a butcher who was guilty of selling meat on Sunday carried a candle in one hand and a shoulder of lamb in the other.²⁹ Owen would have walked at the front of the procession, before the cross, as it perambulated around the church, being flogged by a priest or dean during the procession.³⁰ At the end of the

and laypeople alike were sometimes sent to Hereford Cathedral for their penances, a venue that must have been chosen for its heightened visibility. In 1488, Owen had confessed to incontinence with his concubine Anne Schowe and was given a penance of six floggings, including two around the Pontesbury church and two around Hereford Cathedral. (HRO, HD4/1/103, ff. 98, 100, 103.) Village markets were also used for penitential processions, particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but rarely for priests. See Dave Postles, "Penance and the Market Place: A Reformation Dialogue with the Medieval Church (c. 1250-c. 1600)," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 54 (2003): 441-68.

²⁹ Outhwaite, *English Ecclesiastical Courts*, 11; Woodcock, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Courts*, 97-98. Penitents sometimes carried a white rod as well as a candle, but I have seen no references to this practice in Hereford. A Hereford court book from 1508-09 includes, unusually, a description of the penitential procession in English: "This is the penance enjoined to Katherine Tyler of Bosbury in the diocese of Hereford. Memorandum that the said Katherine and Ellen her daughter upon Sunday next in a month, which shall be the sixth day of August, in her parish church must go before the cross on procession barefoot and bare-legged. And when [the] procession is done, the curate must declare the cause of their penance openly in the church." HRO, HD4/1/111, f. 238.

³⁰ Rosalind Hill has suggested that whippings were rarely performed within a church, but instead took place outside the door of the church. Hill, "Public Penance: Some Problems of a Thirteenth-Century Bishop," *History* 36 (1951): 213-26. Whipping penitents during the procession

procession, Owen would have placed his candle before an image or taken it to the high altar during the offertory.³¹

The rich symbolism of this ritual underscores its function as a public ceremony of repentance and communal discipline. Ideally, it humiliated the offender, corrected his or her sin both corporally and spiritually, discouraged others from the sin, and gave satisfaction to the congregation that the sinner had been rehabilitated. The reality was less communal and more profitable, as many people chose to pay a fine instead: at the request of a penitent, a judge might commute the public penance into a monetary payment, usually earmarked for charitable use; the size of the fine varied from a few pennies to ten shillings or more, depending on the severity of the crime and the defendant's economic status.³² In one of Owen's prior court appearances – when he and Anne Schowe were charged with incontinence – he confessed and was given six floggings, but commuted the penance and paid 7s in lieu of both his and her corporal punishments.³³

became less common during the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, but it is difficult to tell from the records whether physical punishment was used. Sixteenth-century reformers lamented earlier times when bodily flogging was common, which suggests that it had fallen out of use. Marjorie McIntosh, however, found that whippings were used in the diocese of Durham in the fifteenth century. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 113-14. The description of Katherine Tyler's penance, above, contains no specific mention of corporal punishment (though it might be assumed), possibly supporting the argument that it had been phased out by the early sixteenth century.

³¹ Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, 46-47; Ingram, *Church Courts*, 3 and 53-54; Outhwaite, *English Ecclesiastical Courts*, 10-11; Poos, *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions*, xlvii-xlviii. To date, the best study of the history and forms of medieval penance is Mary C. Mansfield, *The Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); for varieties of public penance, see 124-29. For further discussion of clerical discipline, see Peter Heath, *English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 104-19.

³² Poos, *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions*, xlvii-xlviii; Woodcock, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Courts*, 98-99.

³³ HRO, HD4/1/103, ff. 98, 100, 103.

Enforcing discipline

Charging a priest and his concubine with incontinence was one matter; enforcing discipline was another. Church court officers had limited means of compelling obedience (they could not imprison offenders, for example), but they did have one weapon at hand: excommunication. By the twelfth century, canon law distinguished between two degrees of excommunication – lesser and greater – and ecclesiastical officers in Hereford imposed both types. Sentences of lesser excommunication (called “suspension” in Hereford’s court books) were frequently imposed for any type of contumacy, usually a failure to appear in court or undertake penance. Greater excommunication (simply called “excommunication” by Hereford’s clerks) was reserved for the second or third non-appearance in court, or for particularly stubborn offenders.³⁴

In 1492, after confessing that he held Alice Grindilston as his concubine, Owen ap Griffith was suspended from his office (*ab officio*) by the Vicar General.³⁵ This sentence of lesser excommunication meant that Owen could not enter a church, hold the cure of the souls, or carry out any clerical duties, such as celebrating mass, performing baptism, or solemnizing marriage. In some cases, the court officer also suspended a cleric from his benefice (*ab officio et beneficio*), thus depriving him of the income from his benefice for the duration of the suspension.

For a priest’s concubine, like any layperson, lesser excommunication meant an exclusion from church services. She was, literally, prohibited from entering a church

³⁴ Ecclesiastical officers also had another form of censure: admonition. This light sanction formally warned the offender not to repeat the sin, usually under penalty of lesser or greater excommunication.

³⁵ HRO, HD4/1/105, f. 101.

(*suspensio ab ingressu ecclesie*) and could not witness mass or receive any of the sacraments. Although Alice was not suspended, other clerical concubines were. In 1481, Isabel Du, the concubine of a curate named John ap Gwilim, was suspended for failing to come to court. After receiving the letter of suspension, a parish cleric (in this case, possibly her lover) issued a formal denunciation, announcing the sentence to the congregation on Sunday during Vespers or mass, then sending a letter back to the court certifying the denunciation.³⁶

Owen ap Griffith never faced a sentence of major excommunication, although other misbehaving priests did. In cases of clerical incontinence, major excommunication was usually imposed only after an offender had already been suspended and still refused to appear in court or committed a further sin. For clerics and laypeople alike, major excommunication (often referred to as “anathema” by canon lawyers) imposed full social and religious exclusion.³⁷ Any contact with an excommunicate was a sin; a priest who served mass to an excommunicate himself incurred excommunication. As with a suspension, a parish cleric denounced the excommunicate in front of the parish during mass; sometimes, these denunciations were repeated on the first Sunday of each month and on holidays.³⁸

³⁶ HRO, HD4/1/101, f. 89.

³⁷ Major excommunication brought with it legal and economic penalties, as well. For a comprehensive history of excommunication, see Elisabeth Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

³⁸ If a defendant remained contumacious, the sentence could be aggravated (excommunication *cum communicantibus*); an aggravated sentence was also announced in the presence of the parish congregation, but was more of a spectacle, including cursing the excommunicate in the vernacular. John Mirk describes the ceremony of “The Great Sentence” in his handbook for parish priests; see Gillis Kristensson, ed., *Mirk’s Instructions for Parish Priests* (Lund: Gleerup, 1974), 104-7. If a particularly stubborn offender remained excommunicated for forty days or more, the bishop might, by virtue of the royal writ *de excommunicato capiendo*, authorize the capture and imprisonment of the excommunicate by secular officials.

For the laity, major excommunication was the limit of the church's disciplinary actions. For clerics, however, bishops could undertake two additional procedures – deprivation and deposition. Although the threat of deprivation was frequently used by church court officials, depriving a priest of his benefice happened infrequently: Hereford's episcopal registers record only twenty-eight deprivations over a 160-year period.³⁹ Owen ap Griffith's predecessor, John Glover, had been deprived of the rectory at Meole Brace because of his relationship with his servant, and Owen himself had been admonished in 1490 to abstain from having sex with his concubine under penalty of major excommunication and deprivation from his benefice. Despite Owen's failure to comply, the bishop never followed through on his threat.⁴⁰ Owen ap Griffith's encounters with the consistory court of Hereford illustrate the procedures by which priests were prosecuted for sexual misbehavior; in the next section, I examine the language used by court officers to describe different types of clerical relationships.

Decoding Concubinage

In cases of sexual misbehavior, ecclesiastical courts had a limited selection of charges in their arsenal. Because church court officers did not specifically charge priests with concubinage, it can be difficult – and sometimes impossible – to tell if a clerical relationship was short-lived or more permanent.⁴¹ Court officers could charge lay people with fornication

³⁹ Between 1375 to 1535, three secular priests were deprived for incontinence, seven for non-residence, one for both incontinence and non-residence, and seventeen for unknown reasons.

⁴⁰ HRO, AL19/11, f. 14; HD4/1/104, f. 118.

⁴¹ As Ruth Karras has noted, accusations of adultery or fornication probably cloaked ongoing lay relationships, too. Karras, "The Latin Vocabulary of Illicit Sex in English Ecclesiastical Court Records," *The Journal of Medieval Latin*, 2 (1992): 1-17.

and adultery, clerics with incontinence, and both with sodomy and incest.⁴² Although a charge of clerical incest was sometimes used in the modern sense (describing a sexual relationship between two people related by blood or marriage), when it was brought against a cleric it most often referred to a relationship between a parish priest and his “spiritual daughter,” that is, a woman over whom he held the cure of the souls.⁴³ Other sexual offenses fell under the umbrella charge of “incontinence,” which described any other form of clerical sexual misconduct: a one-night stand, sex with a servant, an ongoing affair with a married woman, or a quasi-marital union.⁴⁴ By grouping together all sorts of sexual sins, the term “incontinence” obscures the many variations of clerical relationships.

Although neither clerics nor laypeople were charged with concubinage in medieval church courts, the term is not an anachronistic one. Medieval thinkers struggled with the definition of concubinage, but most agreed that it was a stable relationship between a man and a woman who were not married to each other, habitually had sexual intercourse, and

⁴² Charges of sodomy were rare in the courts at Hereford and elsewhere. I have only come across three examples, two of which involved laymen accused of having sex with an animal (HRO, HD4/1/107, ff. 265 and 314) and one from 1525 in which a priest was charged with sodomy with children (HRO, HD4/1/118, ff. 121, 123, 126): *Dominus Thomas Butteler vicarius de Much Wenlock committit crimen sodomitarum contra naturam cum pueris iacentibus secum in lecto tempore nocturno*. Butteler was also charged with incontinence with Elizabeth Wilcockis, with celebrating mass while under a sentence of suspension, and with failing to return a mandate of the court.

⁴³ The 1213-14 Statutes of Canterbury, for example, specifically warned priests against sinning with women whom they confessed or baptized. “Statutes of Canterbury I,” F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, eds., *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 26.

⁴⁴ Clerics who had sex with a married woman were occasionally charged with adultery, but this seems to have been used either by mistake or when the charge was actually directed at the woman involved (usually because the cleric lived outside the court’s jurisdiction). Rarely, priests were charged with the crime of lechery, as in this entry from 1469: *Dominus Johannes Mott, presbiter celebrans in ecclesia de Rock, luxuriatur cum Emota uxore cuiusdam Lodowici de Edgton* (HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 72). It is unclear exactly what this ambiguous term meant, but it may have been used in cases that lacked good evidence of sexual misconduct. (The 1239 Statutes of Lincoln similarly exhorted clerics to flee “the sin of lechery and every willing lust of the flesh.” *Councils and Synods* II, part 1, 269.)

sometimes lived together. Some canonists emphasized the *affectio maritalis* – defined as a continuing feeling of mutual affection and dependence – that was present in these irregular relationships. In the later middle ages, the term “concubine” was used for any woman who either lived with a man in a domestic partnership or who was kept by a man, even if they lived apart.⁴⁵ Although ecclesiastical court records rarely provide explicit information by which we can neatly categorize sexual relationships, church court officers recognized differences between short- and long-term relationships. And while they could not specifically charge priests with concubinage, they found ways of making distinctions between mere fornication and quasi-marital relationships.

Articles of inquiry for an episcopal visitation of 1252 in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield show that clerical incontinence took two recognized forms. These instructions directed lay jurors to ask about many different facets of parish life and pastoral care, including the usual concerns of whether markets were held on Sundays or if the cemetery was properly enclosed. The set of articles posed only one inquiry about lay sexual misconduct: Were there any cases of adultery and other open crimes (*criminal publica*) to be corrected? The articles provided more specific questions, however, about the sexual behavior of the local clergy, attempting to elicit details about their relationships:

Were their rectors, vicars, or chaplains incontinent (*incontinentes*), and with whom did they commit incontinence? Were any of the clergy who held benefices or were in sacred orders married (*uxorati*)? Did any of their clerics visit female religious houses often, without a good reason? Did any cleric hold [live with] any woman related to him, or any other woman about whom

⁴⁵ James A. Brundage, “Concubinage and Marriage in Medieval Canon Law,” in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, ed. Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982), 118-28; Ruth Mazo Karras, “Marriage, Concubinage, and the Law,” in *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, ed. Ruth Mazo Karras, Joel Kaye, and E. Ann Matter (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 117-29. Karras also discusses the legal status of concubines under canon and civil law.

evil suspicion arose? Did any cleric harbor, in his lodging, the concubine (*concupina*) of a priest, cleric, or layman?⁴⁶

The author of these articles was intensely interested in all priestly sexual misconduct and also sought to differentiate between clerics who had simply committed fornication and those who lived as if they were married. Church officers recognized – and made – a clear distinction between incontinent and “married” clergy, and they expected that parishioners did, too.

These articles also demonstrate that more than 100 years after clerical marriage had been outlawed, bishops were *still* looking for married priests and asking their parishioners to distinguish between “incontinent” and “married” clergy.⁴⁷ There are no extant articles of inquiry for Hereford’s 1397 visitation, but based on the popularity of Grosseteste’s articles and the many existing versions of them (including those used in the neighboring dioceses of Worcester and Coventry and Lichfield), we can reasonably assume that the bishop of Hereford issued a similar set of questions. And a distinction similar to Grosseteste’s demarcation between incontinence and marriage appears in Hereford’s visitation returns. Compare these two presentments from the parishes of Brampton Bryan and Dinchope:

⁴⁶ “Annales de Burton,” in Henry Richards Luard, ed., *Annales Monastici*, vol. I (London: Longman, Green, et al., 1864), 296-98 and 307-10. In another version of these articles, written a year later, this question reads slightly differently: Did any layman or cleric harbor, in his lodging, the concubine of a cleric? (*An aliquis laicus seu clericus teneat in hospitio concubinam clericus*; “Annales de Burton,” 309.) In my mind, this phrasing makes more sense, given the context of clerical, rather than lay, misconduct. There is a brief discussion of these articles in C.R. Cheney, *Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries in the Thirteenth Century*, rev. ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 72-74.

⁴⁷ The Coventry and Lichfield articles were modeled after articles written by Bishop Grosseteste in 1239 for the diocese of Lincoln which, in turn, were based on the 1237 legatine canons of London. Articles from the diocese of Worcester included similar content, and there is good textual evidence that this set of questions, with variations, was well-known throughout England and Wales. (There are twenty-five extant manuscripts containing Grosseteste’s articles; see *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 265-78.) Grosseteste’s articles of 1239 phrased the incontinent/married distinction using similar words, but were more succinct: jurors should determine, “Insofar as they [priests] are continent. Insofar as they are not married.” *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, 276.

They say that Sir Brian Brompton, a chaplain celebrating divine services at Ludlow, is incontinent with Margaret Puton.
They say that Sir William Westhop is incontinent with a certain Joan Stake, whom he keeps in his house continuously.⁴⁸

In both cases, the priests were charged with incontinence; in the second presentment, however, the lay jurors – either freely or after being prompted by the visitor – added details describing the nature of the relationship. Brian Brompton and Margaret Puton fornicated (perhaps only once), but William Westhop and Joan Stake lived together in a more permanent situation. Hereford’s visitation returns did not use the term *uxoratus* to describe a cleric in a quasi-marital relationship, but they did describe priests and their concubines as living like married couples. The parishioners of Chirbury, for example reported that “Sir Richard Gledwyn and Nest, lately his concubine, live together in one and the same house and at the same table as man and wife.”⁴⁹ This entry clearly states their cohabitation, alludes to the economic aspect of marriage, and perhaps obliquely references what a canon lawyer might have termed their “mutual dependence.”

Officers of the consistory court also had ways to distinguish between fleeting and long-term relationships. Although the distinction is not always clear, I have found five ways by which court clerks discerned concubinage from mere fornication. Most forthrightly, a woman in a relationship with a priest was unambiguously referred to as “his concubine” (*concubina sua*). In 1487, for example, Elizabeth Dudum was described as the “concubine”

⁴⁸ Hereford Cathedral Archive (HCA), A1779, ff. 21r and 22v. *Dicunt quod dominus Brianus Brompton capellanus celebrans divina apud Ludlow incontinens est cum Margareta Puton* (f. 21r). *Dicunt quod dominus Willelmus Westhop incontinens est cum quadam Johanna Stake quam tenet in domo sua continue* (f. 22v).

⁴⁹ HCA, A1779, f. 25v. *Parochiani dicunt quod dominus Ricardus Gledwyn et Nest nuper concubina sua cohabitant [simul in] una et eadem domo et mensa ut vir et uxor.*

of William Rogers, a parish priest in Ludlow.⁵⁰ John ap Meiric, a layman from the parish of Welsh Newton, was charged in 1487 with fostering lewdness between the rector of Llanvetherine and his concubine (*inter rectorem de Llanvetherine et concubinam dicti rectoris*).⁵¹

An officer might also indicate an ongoing relationship by accusing the couple of sinning *in recidivo*, meaning – much like the modern term “recidivism” – that they had previously been charged with incontinence, had perhaps been corrected, but nevertheless relapsed into sin. In 1454, for example, a priest named John Baker was charged with incontinence *in recidivo* with Isabel Gentill, with whom he was living, despite having already been admonished by the consistory court judge.⁵² And in 1487, the judge stated that John Smyth, rector of Montgomery “is incontinent and relapses into crime with Gwenlean verch Lello, from whom he has begotten two children.”⁵³ This phrase, however, does not appear

⁵⁰ HRO, HD4/1/103, f. 265. *Edmundus Hodnett de Henley infra parochiam de Bitterley conjugatus adulteratur cum quadam Elisabeth Dudum concubina domini Willelmi Rogers sacerdotis parochialis de Ludlow....*

⁵¹ HRO, HD4/1/102, f. 167. The term *concubina* was also used to refer to women in relationships with laymen.

⁵² HRO, HD4/1/91, ff. 14 and 15. The couple had appeared in court in the past, when Baker had received a formal warning “to abstain from the sin and any suspicious cohabitation with the said woman under penalty of 20s and suspension from office and benefice.” *Dominus Johannes Baker rector ecclesie parochialis de Byford incontinens est in residivo cum Isabella Gentill quam tenet non obstante monitionibus alias sibi legitime factis. Videlicet quod abstineat a peccato et omni suspecta cohabitatione cum dicta muliere sub pena xx s. et suspensionis ab officio et beneficio* (f. 14).

⁵³ HRO, HD4/1/103, f. 93. *Dominus Johannes Smyth rector ecclesie parochialis de Montgomery incontinens est et redicit in criminem etc. cum Gwenlean verch Lello de eadem ex qua procreavit ii proles.* The couple had been charged and corrected the previous year; see HRO, HD4/1/102, f. 114 for their court appearance in October 1486 and f. 128 for an accusation in April 1487 that they had already resumed their relationship.

consistently throughout the act books; it was used occasionally (at least in Hereford) throughout the fifteenth century, becoming common in the 1480s.⁵⁴

Even when a court officer did not specify that the crime had been committed *in recidivo*, an ongoing relationship sometimes becomes evident because a clerical couple was repeatedly summoned to court over the course of a few years, or even decades. Thomas Nasshe, the rector of Munsley, was brought into court on charges of sexual incontinence with Joan Mawndfeld in 1442, 1445, and again in 1454. Although Joan was never described as Thomas's concubine – nor were they charged *in recidivo* – it is clear that their relationship was on-going.⁵⁵ In other cases, the clerk explicitly recorded the length of a relationship, as in a charge from 1471 in which a chaplain named William Huntyngton was accused having a ten-year relationship with a woman.⁵⁶

Evidence of children is my fourth indicator of a stable union. Court officers were particularly careful to record details about clerical relationships – whether a couple lived together, how long their relationship had lasted, and if they had children. Any recognition of a child suggests some sort of relationship, although one child might certainly have been the result of a dalliance rather than a domestic partnership. Two or more children, however, strongly suggests an enduring liaison. As Ruth Karras has firmly stated, “Relationships that

⁵⁴ According to Andrew Finch, court officers in the diocese of Rochester described a continuing sexual relationship as *fornicatio indurata*. A.J. Finch, “Sexual Morality and Canon Law: The Evidence of the Rochester Consistory Court,” *Journal of Medieval History* 29 (1994): 261-75.

⁵⁵ HRO, HD4/1/88, f. 85; HD4/1/89, f. 108; HD4/1/91, f. 136. There is no mention in any of the entries that they had previously been charged. The earliest charge against Nasshe and Mawndfeld (in the 1442-43 act book) is in a form used when a case was carried over from the previous year. Although the 1441-42 act book is not extant, it is probable that they were originally charged in 1441.

⁵⁶ HRO, HD4/1/95, no folio number. This manuscript is damaged and the woman's name is illegible.

engendered more than one child were clearly long-term.”⁵⁷ After being summoned to court in 1480 on a charge of incontinence, John ap Gilim, a chaplain from Knighton, confessed not only that he already had a child with a woman named Isabel, but that she was also currently pregnant.⁵⁸ There is no direct statement that Isabel was John’s concubine, but it seems more likely than not that they had an on-going relationship.

These four indicators – the descriptor *concupina*, a charge of recidivism, repeated court appearances, and multiple children – are conventional ways that historians have used to identify concubinage. There is another, more subtle clue, one which has been less recognized: the addition of the phrase *quam tenet*, or “whom he holds,” to an entry. When a charge of sexual misconduct was straightforward, referring to what had been a brief sexual encounter, the court clerk simply stated the act, as in this entry from 1456: “John Donne, vicar, was incontinent with Margery Skaltocke.”⁵⁹ Often, however, the clerk added a descriptor to the charge, as this charge from 1468: “Master Thomas Pygott, the vicar of the parish church of Eardisley, is incontinent with a certain Agnes, whom he holds (*quam tenet*).”⁶⁰ The phrase *quam tenet*, I argue, was used to specify a longer-term relationship and distinguish between *incontinentes* and *uxorati*.

⁵⁷ Ruth Mazo Karras, “Invisible Women,” *Medieval Feminist Forum* 39 (2005): 15-21, quotation at 18.

⁵⁸ HRO, HD4/1/100, ff. 127, 131, 133, 136, 139, 142, 145. *Idem dictus dominus Johannes incontinens est cum quadam Isabel de qua genuit prolem quam tenet publice in domo sua que est impregnata iam per eundem* (f. 127).

⁵⁹ HRO, HD4/1/92, f. 40. *Dominus Johannes Donne vicarius ecclesie de Leintwardine incontinens est cum Margeria Skaltocke*.

⁶⁰ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 8. *Magister Thomas Pygott vicarius ecclesie parochiali de Eardisley incontinens est cum quadam Agnete quam tenet*.

Despite the fact that the phrase *quam tenet* appeared in visitation returns and act books throughout England (although perhaps more frequently in Hereford than in other dioceses), there has not been substantial exploration of what it meant in practice. Ruth Karras, in her article on vocabulary in ecclesiastical court records, has translated the phrase as “whom he maintains,” arguing that it indicates long-standing fornication or adultery or, possibly, a quasi-marital arrangement. Larry Poos and Sandra Parker came across the phrase in consistory court records from the diocese of Rochester and have suggested that it refers to “situations tantamount to concubinage or to clandestine and other irregular marriages.”⁶¹

Karras and others interpret *tenere* to mean “to maintain” or “to keep.” I contend, however, that “whom he holds” is a more useful and accurate translation for *quam tenet*, in part because the verb “to hold” is more flexible and accommodates the various uses of the phrase. Moreover, a unique scrap of paper in a Hereford act book unmistakably establishes that “to hold” was the Middle English equivalent of *tenere*. Clerks in Hereford’s church courts often reused citations or other documents as scratch paper. On the backs of these retired scraps of parchment, they took notes on court proceedings or kept lists of people who needed to be summoned to the next court. Many of these notes can still be found tucked into the act books, and one small strip of paper lies between two pages in the act book of 1494-95. It lists four couples from the deanery of Clun who were to be summoned to court; the first entry is in Latin, the others in English:

⁶¹ Karras, “Latin Vocabulary,” 4-5; Sandra Lee Parker and L.R. Poos, “A Consistory Court from the Diocese of Rochester, 1363-1364,” *English Historical Review*, 106 (1991): 652-65, quotation at 654.

Jevan Lloyde et Annis quam tenet

Lewis ap David ap Jevan ap Howell and Joan that he holde

Jevan ap Bedo ap Howell and Joan verch Howell that he holde

Thomas Werkeman and Marget that he holde⁶²

Here is clear documentary evidence, then, that the verbs “holden” and *tenere* were interchangeable.`

In Middle English, the verb “holden” carried connotations of possession, control, and support. While it was frequently applied to the ownership of property or goods, it was also specifically used in the phrase “haven and holden to wif,” that is, to have a woman as a wife.⁶³ The phrase *quam tenet* and its English equivalent “that he holde” denoted concubinage and, at the same time, associated concubinage with marriage. Concubinage was already linked to marriage in canon and civil law; the use of the term “hold” and its translation into the phrase *quam tenet* confirm this connection in everyday situations.

“To have and hold a wife” was a common expression in medieval England (and is still used today in some wedding vows), but the phrasing could also be applied to illicit relationships, both clerical and lay. According to the *Middle English Dictionary*, “to hold” could refer to keeping a wife, a mistress, or a concubine.⁶⁴ Literary texts echoed this wording. The author of *An Alphabet of Tales*, the fifteenth-century collection of sermon stories we saw in Chapter 4, opened an *exemplum* about confession with this description of an adulterous priest: “We read how, at one time, there dwelt in a town a knight, and he had a

⁶² HRO, HD4/1/106, f. 118c.

⁶³ *MED*, s.v. “holden.”

⁶⁴ *MED*, s.v. “holden,” 8a and 8b.

fair wife; and the priest of the town held her.”⁶⁵ John Wyclif railed against priests who left their parishes to go to university because they “did not dare hold their lemmans [lovers] at home for clamor of men.”⁶⁶ Court records, too, show that men “held” their concubines: the parishioners of the village of Whitchurch complained in 1397, “William Fox, a married man, commits adultery with Joan Hardyng, whom he holds in concubinage.”⁶⁷ “To have and hold” may have been most frequently used to refer to marriage, but it could be applied to concubinage or other illicit relationships, too.

Church court clerks explicitly used this terminology to refer to concubinary relationships between laypeople and to characterize their illicit marriages as marriage-like. In the 1397 visitation, for example, Walter Tyler and Agnes Frunde were charged with having had a clandestine marriage solemnized, despite Walter’s pre-existing marriage contract. Walter, the clerk wrote, held Agnes “as a wife” (*tenet ut uxore*) even though they had not been properly married according to ecclesiastical laws.⁶⁸ A layman named Charles Saddeler, the court alleged in 1469, “held a certain Elizabeth in his house as his wife (*ut uxore*), but it is rumored that she is his concubine.”⁶⁹ Jankyn Berde was charged during the 1397 visitation

⁶⁵ *An Alphabet of Tales: An English Fifteenth Century Translation of the Alphabetum Narrationum of Etienne de Besançon*, ed. Mary MacLeod Banks, EETS OS 126 and 127 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1904-05), 124, ll. 10-11.

⁶⁶ John Wyclif, “How the Office of Curates is Ordained of God,” in *The English Works of Wyclif, Hitherto Unprinted*, ed. F.D. Matthew, EETS OS 74 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1880), 156.

⁶⁷ HCA, A1779, f. 5v. *Parochiani dicunt quod Willelmus Fox conjugates adulteratur cum Johanna Hardyng quam tenet in concubinam.*

⁶⁸ HCA, A1779, f. 6v. *Item quod Walterus Tylor et Agnes Frunde quam tenet pro uxore fecerunt matrimonium clandestine solemnizari inter se....*

⁶⁹ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 47. *Charlis Saddeler de eadem [Leominster] tenet quandam Elizabetham in domo sua ut uxorem sed diffamatur quod est concubina sua.* See HD4/1/94, f. 60 for a similar charge: *Johannes Peynter de Ludlow tenet quandam Johanna ut uxore sua sed creditur quod est concubina euisdem.*

with adultery with a woman named Isabel, “whom he holds conjugally.”⁷⁰ There is also some evidence that concubinage was viewed as a precursor to marriage among laypeople. When charged in 1468 with fornication with Tanglust, “whom he holds,” William Mylly confessed to the sin but stressed his intention “to marry his concubine.”⁷¹

The language of the ecclesiastical records equated *clerical* concubinage with marriage, too, despite the mandate of celibacy. Both court officers and parishioners often used marital terms to describe clerical couples. A case from the parish of Llanwarne explicitly connected concubinage and marriage, linking “holding” a woman to having a wife. John ap Adam, a chaplain, was charged with incontinence in the 1397 visitation. He confessed to sinning with Cecily Veyr, “whom he holds in his house day and night as if they were man and wife.”⁷² The parishioners of Llandinabo were suspicious about the behavior of their rector, “who holds a certain Susanna, his former concubine, with him in his house, but whether they sin together or not they do not know.”⁷³ These complaints plainly link “holding” with concubinage, and concubinage with marriage. One hundred years later, the metaphor of marriage remained pertinent: Roger Homme, the vicar of Canon Frome, was summoned to court in 1501 for incontinence with a woman named Isabella “whom he holds,

⁷⁰ HCA, A1779, f. 3r. [*Parochiani dicunt*]... *quod Jankyn Berde adulteratur cum Isabella quam tenet conjugater.*

⁷¹ HRO, HD4/1/94, ff. 4 and 5. *Willelmus Mylly de parochia de Erdisley fornicatur cum quadam Tanglust quam tenet* (f. 4). *Vir comparet, fatetur peccatum, dicit tamen quod intendit desponsare concubinam suam* (f. 5).

⁷² HCA, A1779, f. 4r. *Item [parochiani] dicunt quod dominus Johannes ap Adam capellanus parochialis ibidem incontinens est cum Cecilia Veyr quam tenet in domo sua die noctuque ut si essent vir et uxor.*

⁷³ HCA, A1779, f. 4r. *Parochiani dicunt quod dominus Rhys rector de Llandinabo tenet quandam Susanna quondam concubinam suam secum in domo sua an peccant invicem vel non nesciunt.*

from whom he produced a child, as if he married her.”⁷⁴ This example, plainly illustrates that the phrase *quam tenet* signified concubinage and that concubinage was closely linked to marriage, both linguistically and in practice.⁷⁵

Marriage and concubinage had similar external markers: couples – married or not, clerical or lay – loved each other, lived together, had children, and shared economic resources. Concubinage also shared a symbolic function with marriage: control over female sexuality. “Holding” a woman indicated more than just an enduring relationship. The term – in both Latin and English – also hinted at the containment of female sexuality. Just as a married woman was governed by her husband, so a concubine was governed by her lover. The verb “hold,” of course, signified possession, ownership, and control and was frequently used to refer to the ownership of property, as a tenant “held” a piece of land. It might also denote the ownership and supervision of livestock, as in an accusation made against residents of Hereford in the city’s tourn court of 1442, who “have and hold wandering pigs in the king’s way here at Hereford, who destroyed their neighbors hedges and pastures.”⁷⁶ But while marriage was a respectable outlet for female sexuality, clerical concubinage was not, a discrepancy I explore in Chapter 6.

⁷⁴ HRO, HD4/1/108, f. 182. *Dominus Rogerus Homme vicarius de Canon Frome incontiens est cum Isabella Herford quam tenet ex qua procreavit prolem ut ipsam duxit.* I have translated “*duco*” as “to marry,” because in medieval Latin, the verb “*duco*” was specifically used in the phrase *duco in uxorem*, to take as a wife, with the sense of leading a woman to the doors of the church or to the altar.

⁷⁵ Didactic authors also used marital metaphors to describe clerical couples. In *Handlyng Synne*, Robert Mannyng described a lecherous priest who “for the most part of his life / held a woman as his wife.” *Robert Mannyng of Brunne, Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens, (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1983), 201, ll. 7991-92.

⁷⁶ HRO, BG11/4/1, unnumbered membrane. *Item dicunt quod Williamus Webley, glover, [and fourteen other women and men] continue hoc anno habent et tenent porcos vagarantes in regiis strata hic apud Hereford qui destruunt sepes gardinorum vicinorum ibidem et herbagia eorum ibidem....*

It might seem like a stretch to compare priests and their concubines in rural England to male homosexuals in fifteenth-century Florence, but the connections between the language used in these Italian prosecutions is illuminating. The gendered aspect of “holding” is particularly explicit in prosecutions of homosexuality by the Office of the Night, a magistracy devoted to prosecuting sodomy. Florentine officials characterized a man who was sodomized by another man as passive, as female: it was reported to the Office, for example, that a man named Simone Grazzini “maintains his man-servant in his home like a woman.” Florentine records were recorded in the vernacular, but the verb used – *tenersi*, to keep or maintain – stems from the Latin *tenere*. According to Michael Rocke, the term *tenersi* implied an ongoing relationship, usually including emotional commitment and material exchange: it “clearly intended a steady, ongoing exchange of a boy’s sexual favors for financial support, gifts, or other benefits from his suitor(s), similar to men maintaining a mistress or courtesan.” Rocke notes that these relationships were often construed as marriages, with some men described as keeping their lovers “like wives.”⁷⁷ Even within a vastly different type of illicit relationship, “holding” was explicitly linked with marriage.

My estimate of the frequency of concubinage in the late medieval diocese of Hereford is based on these five criteria: women who were described as concubines; couples that were charged with recidivism, couples that were repeatedly summoned to court; couples that had more than one child; the use of the phrase *quam tenet* in the charge. In the next section, I use these criteria to analyze documentary evidence of clerical fornication and concubinage from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries.

⁷⁷ Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 101-11, 167-71.

Clerical Incontinence in the Diocese of Hereford

Neglected until fairly recently, ecclesiastical records have, in the past few decades, been recognized as an untapped and fruitful source of evidence about medieval marriage and the family. Scholars have scoured act books and depositions for evidence of courtship, betrothal, marital litigation, and the formation and dissolution of marriages.⁷⁸ But these records are just as informative about irregular marriages and marital-like unions, including relationships between priests and concubines.

The best data about clerical concubinage in the diocese of Hereford comes from a fourteenth-century visitation of the diocese. From April to July 1397, Bishop Trefnant and his representatives traveled through the diocese, recording and prosecuting clerical and lay misbehavior. Some parishes reported that all was well (*omnia bene*), but others provided detailed descriptions of the physical condition of the parish church and the moral condition of the parish community. The parishioners of Peterchurch, for example, alleged that they lacked a breviary in their church (the rector's fault), that their vicar was too sick to say divine services and attend to his parishioners, that the churchyard was not properly enclosed (also the rector's fault), and that the rector failed to provide chaplains for two outlying chapels.

⁷⁸ For examples of scholarship on church courts and marriage, see Andrew Finch, "*Repulsa Uxore sua*: Marital Difficulties and Separation in the Later Middle Ages," *Continuity and Change* 8 (1993): 11-38; P.J.P. Goldberg, "Gender and Matrimonial Litigation in the Church Courts in the Later Middle Ages: The Evidence of the Court of York," *Gender & History* 19 (2007): 43-59; Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation*; Martin Ingram, "Spousals Litigation in the English Ecclesiastical Courts c.1350-c.1640," in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R.B. Outhwaite (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 35-57; Shannon McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); L.R. Poos, "The Heavy-Handed Marriage Counsellor: Regulating Marriage in Some Later-Medieval English Local Ecclesiastical-Court Jurisdictions," *American Journal of Legal History* 39 (1995): 291-309; and Michael M. Sheehan, "The Formation and Stability of Marriage in Fourteenth-Century England: Evidence of an Ely Register," *Medieval Studies* 33 (1971): 228-63.

They also accused three couples of committing adultery and two others of being in illicit relationships (*illegitime copulati*) because of pre-existing marriages.⁷⁹

One of only a few surviving medieval visitation returns, Hereford's is especially detailed and complete. Although some pages have been lost, the manuscript includes complete returns from 244 parishes or vills in the diocese and fragments from a few more. The entries are terse and to the point: most simply provide the name of the offenders, the charge, and the judgment, if any. Some entries are ruefully brief, like this one from the parish of Bacton: "Also, they [the parishioners] say that Sir Walter Bunte, vicar, is incontinent with Alice Torr. Denies at the time of correction, to purge at the next."⁸⁰ Others provide more details about the circumstances of the charge or the court's actions: John Smyth was accused of celebrating mass twice in a day, of keeping a woman named Maiota Watcok, and of being a drunkard. Maiota was suspended, while John denied the charges of incontinence and inebriation and vowed to purge himself.⁸¹

Some historians have been skeptical of the usefulness of medieval visitations, particularly because of what has been characterized as their subjective nature and inaccurate depiction of actual parish life. Margaret Bowker has argued that visitation returns are untrustworthy because they rely on the perceptions, complaints, and opinions of parishioners:

But the limitation to visitation material, in particular, is that it relies on complaints. The visitor is told what the parish thought to be wrong. It shows, therefore, the tolerance or exasperation of the parishioners rather than the

⁷⁹ HCA, A1779, f. 2.

⁸⁰ HCA, A1779, f. 2. *Item dicunt quod dominus Walterus Bunte vicarius incontinens est cum Alicia Torr. <Negat a tempore correctionis, ad purgandum in proximo.>*

⁸¹ HCA, A1779, f. 5v. *Item dicunt quod dominus Johannes Smyth celebrat bis in die videlicet apud Goodrich Castle et apud Honsham. Item quod idem Johannes Smyth incontinens est cum Maiota Watcok <suspense> quam tenet. <Vir habet diem ad purgandum apud Ross.> Item quod idem dominum Johannes est ebriosus. <Negat. Habet diem ad purgandum.>*

actual state of affairs. A visitation return does not indicate where the priest had deviated from the canonical norm; it indicates only where the parishioners were dissatisfied with him.”⁸²

Paul Hair, too, has speculated that village quarrels and personal animosities were at the root of many visitation presentments and doubts “whether the allegations of medieval parishioners can be accurately evaluated.”⁸³

Are visitation returns less trustworthy than other medieval documents? To my mind, it is not the canonical norm, nor deviations from it, nor the accuracy of presentments that matters. More interesting are the social and cultural norms of medieval parishes. Jurors and churchwardens responded to specific articles of inquiry, and they must have held some measure of agreement in the presentments. Perhaps what visitation material may best reveal is what *communities* held to be appropriate behavior, and when parishioners and clergy transgressed those boundaries. In this way, the “subjectivity” of these records may be more of a benefit than a defect.⁸⁴

Of course, as with all medieval records, there is a degree of uncertainty: we cannot know how many transgressions slipped through the net of the visitation, or whether a presentment was valid or malicious. What we do know, however, is what was reported. Table 5.1 shows secular and regular clerics charged with sexual incontinence during the 1397 visitation and distinguishes between charges that indicate fornication or concubinage.

⁸² Margaret Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495-1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 3.

⁸³ P.E.H. Hair, “Defaults and Offences of Clergy and Laity in Hereford Diocese, 1397,” *TWNFC* 47 (1993): 318-50, see fn. 4, 34.

⁸⁴ As Katherine French has pointed out, though, jurors, churchwardens, and parish clergy reported men’s – not women’s – vision of the conduct and health of the parish. French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion After the Black Death* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 210-11.

Table 5.1: *Individual* clerics charged with incontinence in Hereford’s episcopal visitation of 1379*

	Clerics charged with incontinence indicating fornication	Clerics charged with incontinence indicating concubinage	Clerics charged twice with incontinence, both forn. and conc.	All clerics charged with incontinence
Secular clergy	47	18	2	67
Regular clergy	9	--	1	10
Total clerics:	56	18	3	77

* The category “incontinence” includes all sexual misconduct by priests reported in the visitation returns, including adultery, fornication, impregnating a woman, and suspicious cohabitation. No clerics were charged with incest or sodomy in this visitation.

To put these numbers in context, the medieval diocese of Hereford had perhaps 1000 secular clerics at the end of the fourteenth century. Although Bishop Trefnant’s visitation covered the entire diocese, extant returns survive for only two-thirds of the diocese; there were approximately 470 secular clerics in that portion of the diocese.⁸⁵ In total, sixty-seven secular clerics, approximately 14 percent of the clerical population, were named in cases involving sexual misconduct during Trefnant’s visitation.⁸⁶ The remaining ten clerics named in the visitation were regular clergy (that is, men who lived within monastic houses), totaling 8 percent of the population of regular clergy.

A significant proportion, then, of Hereford’s secular clerical population was implicated in charges of sexual misconduct. This is one way to look at the issue; another is to

⁸⁵ The manuscript lacks returns from the deaneries of Hereford, Burford, Stottesdon, and Wenlock. For a discussion of Trefnant’s itinerary and the missing returns, see Hair, “Defaults and Offences of Clergy and Laity.” I have used population estimates from Hair, “Mobility of Parochial Clergy,” 179, fn. 15. Hair estimates that there were 130 regular male clerics living in the portion of the diocese covered by the extant visitation returns.

⁸⁶ In my analysis of Hereford’s clergy, I have counted as regular clergy only those men who lived within a monastic house. I have counted canons (both secular and regular) as secular clergy, because they lived within the parishes they served.

consider how many parishes had a misbehaving priest in their midst. Out of 260 parishes and chapels reporting in the visitation, fifty-five (or one out of every five parishes) had one or more unchaste priests. Of those, nineteen parishes – one out of every fourteen parishes – reported priests who held concubines. A further nine parishes were homes to women who were accused of having sex with priests who lived in other villages or dioceses. All told, every fourth parish reported an unchaste priest, a priest who held a concubine, or a woman accused of sleeping with a cleric; other clerical couples may have gone unreported. And even those villagers who did not have a misbehaving priest in their midst would probably have known about such relationships, either by coming in contact with a priest and his lover in a neighboring village or through networks of trade or gossip.

Not only were more parish priests charged with sexual incontinence than monks, but regular and secular clerics also had distinct patterns of sexual misconduct. Monks were charged almost exclusively with fornication, with only one man accused of concubinage (if guilty, he was also unfaithful, for he was additionally accused of fornication with another woman). Seventy percent of all secular priests named in cases of sexual misbehavior were charged with fornication, while twenty-seven percent were charged with concubinage, accused of holding a “concubine,” “keeping a woman,” or otherwise indicating a long-term relationship. Secular priests predominantly offended through fornication, but they were still significantly more likely than monks to keep a concubine.

Monks committed fornication almost exclusively, no doubt due – at least in part – to their cloistered living.⁸⁷ Heads of monasteries seem to be the exception to this [trend] of

⁸⁷ It was, however, not impossible for a cloistered monk to economically support a woman: during a 1425 episcopal visitation to Wigmore Abbey, a monk named Thomas Hereford was accused of incontinence with Isabel May. By way of evidence, his brothers told the bishop that he customarily shared his breakfast with her. HRO, AL19/4, ff. 70r.

short-lived relationships. In Hereford’s visitation, the only regular cleric described as having a long-standing liaison was Richard, the abbot of Flaxley Abbey, who had a sexual relationship with Alice Tyburton that had lasted for fourteen years by 1397.⁸⁸ Secular clerics, on the other hand, were more likely to have enduring, marriage-like unions. Not cloistered like monks, they were integrated into their communities; many lived in the parish rectory or vicarage and headed households.

Secular clerics also behaved more like laymen than like monks. Table 5.2 shows charges of sexual misconduct against secular clerics, regular clerics, and laymen. Of the

Table 5.2: All charges of incontinence in Hereford’s episcopal visitation of 1379

	Charges of incontinence indicating fornication	Charges of incontinence indicating concubinage	All charges of incontinence
Secular Clergy	59	21	80
Regular Clergy	20	1	21
Laymen*	316	147	463

*This table includes charges of fornication and adultery against laymen, but not clandestine marriage, bigamy, or abandonment, since those crimes did not have clerical equivalents. (Many men were charged with multiple offenses, so the total number of individuals charged varies from the total number of charges.)

463 charges of sexual misconduct against laymen, 32 percent targeted on-going relationships. Likewise, 28 percent of charges against secular clerics involved concubinage. Parish priests and chaplains, then, behaved differently from monks, but quite similarly to the laymen who were their parishioners and neighbors.

⁸⁸ HCA, A1779, f. 9v. *Item dominus Ricardus abbas de Flaxley incontiens est cum Alicia Tyburton uxore [Nicholai] Colleknafe de Littledean et continuaverunt in peccato xiiii annis.* Evidence from Hereford’s act books bolsters this theory: John Parker, the prior of Clifford, had a long-lasting relationship and two children with Alice Mowbrey. HRO, HD4/1/103, ff. 8, 200.

In the broader context of clerical incontinence in western Europe, the clergy of Hereford seem somewhat average. Although estimates of the number of unchaste priests on the Continent vary widely (as does the methodology used to calculate them), Hereford is within their range. Table 5.3 compares data from Hereford to studies of clerical incontinence in some continental dioceses in the late Middle Ages.⁸⁹ These studies estimate that the number of priests named in charges of sexual incontinence constituted between 4 percent and 34 percent of the total clerical populations, with a rough median of 12 percent.⁹⁰ Despite the claims of some historians that clerical incontinence was not common in England, the parish priests of Hereford do not stand out among their continental peers as exceptionally chaste.

The returns from Bishop Trefnant's 1397 visitation demonstrate that clerical incontinence was widespread throughout the diocese of Hereford, and that many villagers in Herefordshire lived with a sexually misbehaving priest in their parish. Although cloistered men most often committed fornication, parish rectors, vicars, and chaplains acted more like laymen. Marriage-like unions accounted for nearly one-third of all sexual relationships, a surprisingly large number more than two centuries after the imposition of clerical celibacy. When considered parish-by-parish, it becomes apparent that clerical fornication and

⁸⁹ Many continental scholars have discussed clerical incontinence, but few provide estimates of the *proportion* of the clergy that was unchaste. Brigitte Rath, for example, has analyzed a visitation from the diocese of Prague, conducted from 1379 to 1382. She found that more than 50 percent of charges made against priests were for sexual misbehavior (25.81 percent for concubinage; 24.53 percent for other sexual transgressions), but does not estimate the total number of priests in the diocese. Rath, "'*De sacramentis, concubinato et ludo taxillorum...*': Über ein Böhmisches Visitationsprotokoll aus dem 14. Jahrhundert," in *Von Menschen und ihren Zeichen*, ed. Ingrid Matschinegg, Brigitte Rath, and Barbara Schuh (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1990), 41-59.

⁹⁰ This median figure accords well with the thirteenth-century bishop of Rouen, who suspected that about one-eighth (or 13 percent) of the clerics in his diocese were sexually incontinent. James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 403.

concubinage – while not practiced by a majority of the clergy – were ubiquitous throughout the diocese. The notion that the English clergy conformed to the mandate of celibacy while priests in continental Europe flouted it seems difficult to maintain in the face of this evidence.

Table 5.3: Estimated percentages of the secular clergy charged with incontinence in continental European dioceses in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries*

Diocese	Years covered	Estimated percentages of the secular clergy charged with incontinence
Rouen	1248-49	11.7-33.7
Rouen	1261-69	12
Barcelona	1303-04	25
Girona (Barcelona)	1314	30
Geneva	1378-1450	20
Hereford	1397	14
Girona (Barcelona)	1402-03	4
Tournai	1446-1531	5.72-6.51
Liège	1459-79	4.7-6.1

* For statistics for Rouen, 1248-49, see Jennifer D. Thibodeaux, “Man of the Church, or Man of the Village? Gender and the Parish Clergy in Medieval Normandy,” *Gender & History* 18 (2006): 380-99, fn. 10, 396; for Rouen, 1261-69, see Raymond Eichman, “The ‘Prêtres Concubinaires’ of the Fabliaux,” *Australian Journal of French Studies* 27 (1990): 207-13, who quotes Pierre Andrieu-Guitrancourt, *L’Archevêque Eudes Rigaud et la Vie de l’Eglise au XIII^e Siècle d’après le “Regestrum Visitationum”* (Paris: Sirey, 1938). For Barcelona, 1303-04; Girona, 1314 and 1402-03; and Geneva, 1378-1450, see Pere Benito i Monclús, “Le Clergé Paroissiale du Mareseme (Évêché de Barcelone) d’après les Visite Pastorales (1305-1447): Recherches sur le Thème du Concubinage,” in *Le Clergé Rural dans l’Europe Médiévale et Moderne: Actes des XIII^e Journées Internationales d’Histoire de l’Abbaye de Flaran, 6-8 Septembre 1991*, ed. Pierre Bonnassie (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail: 1995), 187-203. For Tournai, see Monique Vleeschouwers-Van Melkebeek, “Mandatory Celibacy and Priestly Ministry in the Diocese of Tournai at the End of the Middle Ages,” in *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe: Studia in Honorem Adriaan Verhulst*, ed. Jean-Marie Duvosquel and Erik Thoen (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1995), 681-92. For Liège, see E.J.G. Lips, “De Brabantse Geestekijkheid en de Andere Sekse,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 102 (1989): 1-30.

Bishop Trefnant’s visitation has provided us with a relatively complete snapshot of the diocese at the end of the fourteenth century. For the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, we must turn to a different perspective: the records of the consistory court.

Because an episcopal visitation was a systematic and, ideally, exhaustive examination of the diocese, Hereford's visitation returns provide the most thorough picture of clerical incontinence in a given year, but consistory court records illuminate trends over time.

Records from Hereford's ecclesiastical courts have some of the same drawbacks and strengths as visitation returns. They, too, relied on the perceptions of parishioners and churchwardens. But, as Ralph Houlbrooke has noted, church court proceedings relied on the cooperative judgment of a community: "The church courts could hardly have performed their correctional work without the co-operation of the representatives of the local communities, who in their presentments had to take their neighbours' opinions into account."⁹¹

Although an episcopal visitation most likely did not catch all transgressions in the diocese, church courts were even less thorough because they relied on parishioners, churchwardens, or local apparitors to report wrongdoing on a more informal basis. Unlike episcopal visitations, church courts were held year-round, but charges were made only when churchwardens, prominent parishioners, or local clergy brought offenses to the court's attention. Prosecutions were begun ad hoc, whenever crimes were reported; surely, many people managed to avoid detection. Since many misbehaving priests went unnoticed or unprosecuted, *ex officio* records almost necessarily underreported misbehavior.⁹²

While the outcome of a charge was frequently, though not always, contained in Hereford's visitation returns, we often cannot know the outcome of an *ex officio* prosecution because of the way church court proceedings were recorded. Hereford's act books record the the cases heard by the court on a day-to-day basis, either during the session or afterward,

⁹¹ Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, 47.

⁹² Woodcock, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Courts*, 30-31.

from notes. A case that was introduced during one court session would be revisited at each subsequent session until it was resolved. It sometimes took months, or even years, to resolve a charge, and many cases were continued into the next year. Some outcomes were never recorded; other resolutions might have been written down in an act book that is no longer extant.⁹³

It is from these charges that I have drawn evidence of concubinage in late medieval Hereford diocese. Historians have rightly noted that church court records are terse, formulaic, and repetitive; while the Hereford court books are certainly no exception, they have much information to offer about priests and concubines. Table 5.4 gives all charges of incontinence made against clerics in the church court, including multiple charges made against individual priests, between 1442 and 1503. It shows a fairly steady increase in accusations of clerical sexual misconduct.

Charges of clerical sexual misbehavior were less common than in 1397, but increased over the course of the fifteenth century. In the 1440s, sixteen priests per year were charged with incontinence, on average. These numbers had more than doubled by the 1480s, when there was an average of forty-one priests charged in each year. And by the 1490s, incontinence charges were even more common, with sixty-three priests on average cited each year.

⁹³ Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation*, 6-11.

Table 5.4: Charges of clerical incontinence in Hereford’s consistory court between 1442 and 1503, selected years*

Dates of Act Book	Charges of incontinence that indicate fornication	Charges of incontinence that indicate concubinage	All charges of incontinence
1442-1443	7	6	13
1445-1446	16	6	22
1447-1448	10	3	13
1453-1454	12	7	19
1468-1469	14	19	33
1472-1473	9	4	13
1479-1480	19	3	22
1480-1481	20	6	26
1481-1482	24	13	37
1486-1487	35	15	50
1487-1488	32	20	52
1488-1489	32	16	48
1489-1490	30	20	50
1490-1491	34	14	48
1494-1495	51	24	75
1499-1500	62	28	90
1501-1502	53	28	81
1502-1503	53	23	76

* This table include data only from act books which are complete or nearly complete; the yearly figures include *all* charges prosecuted during that year, including multiple charges against individual priests. Some of these books are missing sessions for Weston, a small, geographically-fractured (and statistically insignificant) deanery in which courts were held irregularly. For data from all Hereford’s act books, including incomplete and damaged books, see Appendix II. I have tallied charges of spiritual incest under “fornication” or “concubinage,” depending on the type of relationship. The table includes charges brought against all clerics, both secular and regular, because most of the regular clerics summoned for incontinence were either monks serving as parish priests or canons who held parish benefices.

These figures undoubtedly under-report the frequency of clerical incontinence. Evidence from the court books themselves, as well as from other documents, shows that many priests who misbehaved were never charged in the church courts. Sometimes, the court knew about a clerical relationship but did not prosecute the couple, as shown in a handful of cases in which women were described as former concubines of priests. A woman named Cristina, for example, was summoned before the court in 1500 on a charge of fornication with Johannes Hewys, a curate from the parish of Garway; she was described in the court

book as “the recent concubine” (*nuper concubina*) of Richard, a chaplain from the same parish, but her relationship with Richard was never prosecuted in the court books.⁹⁴ Often, the court record acknowledges that it took years, or even decades, before a clerical relationship made it into court. It was three years before John ap Meredith and Agnes Benwyn finally attracted the court’s attention in 1488; with a delay this long, it seems reasonable to assume that some relationships – especially shorter ones – were never prosecuted.⁹⁵ In some situations, it seems court officers deliberately ignored an offense, as in a case from 1517: Anne Decons, a singlewoman, was summoned to court because she was pregnant. She confessed that Christopher Wake, a chaplain in her parish, was the father of her child, and she received four floggings for her sin.⁹⁶ The chaplain was never summoned to court, nor was their relationship formally noted in the court books.

Episcopal registers reveal other clerical relationships that went unprosecuted: they record when the bishop inquired into specific “immoralities” among the clergy of the diocese, or when a priest was formally deprived of his benefice for misconduct. In 1437, William Bradney, the rector of Stockton, was deprived of his benefice because he refused to give up his concubine; Ralph, the vicar of Avenbury, lost his benefice in 1417 after he murdered his concubine.⁹⁷ Neither priest was prosecuted in the church court for his offense. Taken together, these examples reveal that many clerical relationships went either undetected or unprosecuted, and that numbers provided by the court books are minimal.

⁹⁴ HRO, HD4/1/107, f. 238.

⁹⁵ HRO, HD4/1/103, f. 77.

⁹⁶ HRO, HD4/1/113, f. 170.

⁹⁷ HRO, AL19/9, f. 218v; HRO, AL19/8, f. 6r.

Assuming that the population of Herefordshire was roughly stable throughout the fifteenth century, approximately 2 percent of the clergy was accused of sexual transgressions in the 1440s, 4 percent in the 1480s, and 6 percent in 1499.⁹⁸ Although the trend of increasingly frequent prosecution is clear, the reasons behind it are not. Perhaps priests were committing more indiscretions from the 1480s onward, but there are two reasons to suppose that court officers were increasingly interested in prosecuting these cases. First episcopal pressure may have increased in the 1480s. Bishop Thomas Mylling, who presided over the diocese from 1474-92, seems to have been especially concerned with clerical behavior. His register records a strongly worded missive to the dean of Hereford Cathedral exhorting him to more actively police incontinence among priests in the city of Hereford. Mylling also removed John Glover from his vicarage because of his “serious crimes of incontinence, fornication, and incest.” Glover, one of only a few priests deprived of their benefices in late medieval Hereford, had two children with Agnes, his former servant, another child with Margery Browne, and committed incest with one of his spiritual daughters; he spent his income, it was suspected, on his sexual partners instead of maintaining the vicarage.⁹⁹ In comparison to other bishops, Mylling seems to have been quite concerned about the general conduct of his parish clergy: he also deprived two priests for non-residence and seven others

⁹⁸ Hair estimated that there were 1,000 secular clerics in the entire diocese in 1397, and I use this figure as a base-line. There have been no studies of the late fifteenth-century clerical population in Hereford and, given the difficulties of estimating population in the later middle ages, it seems safest to assume that it stayed much the same. I have appended the qualification “approximately” to these estimates because a few priests (though not a statistically significant number) were prosecuted more than once in the same year.

⁹⁹ HRO, AL19/11, f. 14.

for unspecified reasons.¹⁰⁰ Table 5.5 shows how many charges of clerical incontinence were made during the episcopate of each bishop.

Table 5.5: Charges of clerical incontinence prosecuted by the fifteenth-century bishops of Hereford

Date of Act Book	All Charges of Sexual Misconduct	Bishop
1407-1408	5	Robert Mascall (1404-1417)
1442-1443	13	Thomas Spofford (1421-1448)
1445-1446	22	
1447-1448	13	
1453-1454	19	John Stanbury (1453-1474)
1455-1457	14	
1458-1460	6	
1468-1469	34	
1471-1472	18	
1472-1473	13	
1474-1475	4	Thomas Mylling (1474-1492)
1475-1476	7	
1479-1480	22	
1480-1481	26	
1481-1482	37	
1486-1487	50	
1487-1488	52	
1488-1489	48	
1489-1490	50	
1490-1491	48	
1491-1492	37	
1494-1495	75	Edmund Audley (1492-1502)
1499-1500	90	
1501-1502	80	
1502-1503	76	

Second, contemporary legislation on clerical celibacy may also have played a role in the increased prosecution of clerical offenders. Thomas Mylling was bishop of Hereford when the first English parliamentary statute to directly address clerical sexual behavior was

¹⁰⁰ HRO, AL19/11. In comparison, only Bishop Thomas Spofford (1421-48) deprived as many clerics; most deprived either one or none at all.

made in 1485, which explicitly gave archbishops, bishops, and other diocesan officials the capacity to punish clerics guilty of adultery, fornication, incest, or “any other fleshly incontinency” by imprisonment.¹⁰¹ While affirming diocesan jurisdiction over misbehaving clerics, the statute also provided that church officials who punished unchaste priests could not be liable for false or wrongful imprisonment. Prosecutions for incontinence jumped from thirty-seven charges in 1481-82 to fifty charges in 1486-87 and remained high for the rest of Mylling’s time as bishop.¹⁰²

Geographic trends are not as clear as the increased prosecution of clerical incontinence over the course of the fifteenth century, but they show one interesting pattern: parishes in the western half of Hereford diocese produced more accusations against misbehaving priests. Based on four sample act books, Table 5.6 shows the distribution of charges of incontinence, both fornication and concubinage, among Hereford’s thirteen deaneries, labeling the location of each deanery (east or west) and ranking them according to the total number of charges.

With few exceptions, each year brought consistently more charges of clerical incontinence in the western area of the diocese. In 1445-46, for example, 59 percent of priests accused of incontinence lived in western deaneries. In the following decades, the disparity was even greater: in 1468-69 and 1487-88, 73 and 76 percent, respectively, of all priests charged with incontinence lived in the west. The western deaneries – Archenfield, Clun, Leominster, Ludlow, Pontesbury, and Weobley – were located either adjacent to or

¹⁰¹ 1 Henry VII c. 4, *The Statutes of the Realm: Printed by Command of His Majesty King George the Third from Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts*, 9 vols. (London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1810-22), vol. II, 501.

¹⁰² By 1482, however, Mylling had appointed a permanent suffragan, Richard Wycherley, and spent little time in the diocese. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Millyng, Thomas.”

near the Welsh border, and Archenfield, Clun, Leominster, and Pontesbury incorporated Welsh parishes. Although there were both Welsh and English people living in the eastern

Table 5.6: Distribution of charges of incontinence in Hereford’s eastern and western deaneries, selected years

	1445-1446	1468-1469	1487-1488	1501-1502	Totals
Clun (W)	2	7	11	6	26
Weobley (W)	3	2	3	14	22
Archenfield (W)	0	3	8	6	17
Forest (E)	3	1	2	9	15
Leominster (W)	1	4	5	5	15
Frome (E)	2	0	2	10	14
Pontesbury (W)	2	4	7	1	14
Ludlow (W)	5	4	1	1	11
Wenlock (E)	2	1	3	4	10
Stottesdon (E)	1	3	2	2	8
Burford (E)	1	3	1	1	6
Ross (E)	0	0	0	4	4
Weston (E)*	0	1	0	3	4

*Due to its geographic splintering, low numbers in the deanery of Weston may reflect poor policing rather than well-behaved priests.

deaneries of the diocese – Burford, Forest, Frome, Ross, Stottesdon, Wenlock, and Weston – the Welsh population was predictably larger in the west.¹⁰³

Isolating priests charged with concubinage reveals an even clearer trend. Table 5.7 shows charges of concubinage against priests in eastern and western deaneries, using the same four sample years. Prosecutions of concubinage were much greater in the western half of the diocese than in the eastern half. There were twice as many priests charged with

¹⁰³ See chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the ethnic makeup of Hereford diocese.

Table 5.7: Distribution of charges of concubinage in Hereford's eastern and western deaneries, selected years

	1445-46	1468-69	1487-88	1501-02
Eastern Deaneries	2 (33%)	6 (32%)	6 (30%)	9 (35%)
Western Deaneries	4 (67%)	13 (68%)	14 (70%)	17 (61%)

concubinage in these six deaneries than in eastern parishes, and these numbers remained remarkably stable during the fifteenth century. Between 61 and 70 percent of all charges of concubinage were leveled at the western clergy, while only 30 to 35 percent of accusations of concubinage were directed at priests in eastern deaneries.

Traditional patterns of marriage in Wales – where lay concubinage was recognized, and both concubines and their children had rights to inheritance – may have had some influence on high levels of clerical concubinage. So, too, may have prejudice against the Welsh, especially in the wake of the revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr. Yet not all priests in the western part of the diocese were Welsh, nor were their partners; and just because a priest ministered in a western parish did not indicate he was born there – he might hail from a village miles away, or from a different diocese entirely. Perhaps western priests adopted Welsh traditions of concubinage, or perhaps diocesan officials scrutinized western clerics more carefully.

These patterns of geographical distribution also roughly correspond to socio-economic status. Determinations of clerical status are difficult to make; there are many variables and too little information about individual men. But we can roughly estimate the socioeconomic status of Hereford's priests based on whether they held a benefice and, if so, if that benefice was relatively wealthy or poor.

Among the priests charged with incontinence in the 1397 visitation, unbeneficed chaplains were more likely to be charged with incontinence than beneficed priests. Table 5.8 shows charges of fornication and concubinage made against beneficed and unbeneficed priests in the visitation of 1397. There were nineteen charges of incontinence made against

Table 5.8: Charges of fornication and incontinence made against beneficed and unbeneficed clerics in Hereford’s 1397 visitation*

	Fornication	Concubinage	Total Charges
Beneficed Clerics	14	5	19
Unbeneficed Clerics	33	14	47

*In this table, the category of beneficed clerics includes rectors, vicars, and canons. The category of unbeneficed clerics includes chaplains and priests whose titles were not recorded, because it is unlikely that the title of a beneficed priest would not have been written down. I have excluded regular clerics and a clerk in minor orders from this table.

beneficed priests in the visitation; of these, 74 percent were charges of fornication and 26 percent were charges of concubinage. Of the forty-seven charges of incontinence brought against unbeneficed chaplains, 70 percent were for fornication and 30 percent were for concubinage. Proportionally, chaplains were accused of concubinage slightly more often than rectors and vicars, suggesting that they might have been more likely to seek out stable relationships. What is more significant, however, is the discrepancy between the total number of charges brought against rectors, vicars, and chaplains. If there were roughly the same number of beneficed and unbeneficed priests in Hereford, as P.E.H. Hair has argued based on a 1406 subsidy, then chaplains were more than twice as likely to be hauled into court as beneficed, higher status priests.¹⁰⁴ They may have simply been targeted by church officers, but other socioeconomic evidence corroborates this trend.

¹⁰⁴ P.E.H. Hair, “Mobility of Parochial Clergy,” 179, fn. 15.

The deanery of Clun, for example, had consistently high numbers of charges of both fornication and concubinage. A remote area in southern Shropshire, Clun was also one of the poorest deaneries in the diocese. In 1291, Clun's average benefice value was £6 7s 4d, just over half the value of the wealthiest deaneries of Pontesbury and Forest. It did not fare much better in 1535 when its benefice values averaged £7 17s 11d. (By contrast, Leominster, Hereford's wealthiest deanery in 1535, had an average benefice value of £11 9s.) In all sample years, Clun ranked either first or fourth in terms of total charges of sexual misconduct. In 1468-69 and 1487-88, Clun's share of all charges against unchaste clerics was 21 percent.

The deanery of Ross in the more densely populated south-east region of the diocese, ranked third in wealth in 1291 and fifth in 1535. Charges of incontinence against priests in the parishes of Ross were scarce. There were no charges of either fornication or concubinage in 1445-46, 1468-69, or 1487-88. Only in 1501-02 were Ross's clerics summoned to court and even then, these charges made up only 8 percent of all clerical incontinence in the diocese that year. More research is needed to definitively argue that poor, unbeneficed priests were more likely to have relationships with women, but preliminary evidence from Hereford suggests that they were.

Clerical Concubinage, Marriage, and Family

These statistics tell a limited story about late medieval English society: that priests were not always chaste, that some priests had concubines, that clerical celibacy was unenforceable. Whatever the actual frequency of clerical sexual misconduct may have been, these prosecutions have a more complex narrative to relate – not about the corruption of the

medieval church or the immorality of the clergy, but about marriage, family, and community in the English countryside.

Despite their variability, statistics on clerical concubinage indicate that priests and their concubines were, to some extent, socially and culturally accepted in late medieval England. If one out of every four parishes was home to an unchaste priest or a woman who slept with a priest, it stands to reason that these priests and their partners were not being regularly run out of their communities. I suggest that this toleration of clerical relationships stemmed, in part, from their semblance to marriage. Clerical relationships took on a variety of configurations, but many resembled secular marriages, and these similarities may have contributed to the social acceptability of clerical families. Like husbands and wives, priests and concubines had stable, lasting relationships. Like lay couples, they lived together and had children. Priests, like husbands, acted as householders; concubines fulfilled the sexual, economic, and social roles of wives. And clerical families, like lay families, had established presences in rural communities. Far from carving out a distinct, celibate identity, these priests adopted and replicated lay marriage and household structure.

Some of these clerical “marriages” lasted only a few years, but other priests established stable, long-term relationships that lasted for decades. Thomas Nasshe and Joan Mawndfeld were brought into court in 1442, when Thomas was admonished that he might lose his benefice if he continued to consort with Joan. Nonetheless, Thomas and Joan remained together and were summoned to court repeatedly in 1445 and 1454. By the time of their last appearance in the consistory court, they had been in a relationship for at least twelve years (and Thomas remained rector there until his death in 1457). In 1481, Lewis Hoptkyn was charged with holding a woman named Dyddge for more than twelve years. And

as we have seen, Owen ap Griffith lived with his concubine Alice Grindilston in the parish vicarage for perhaps twenty years by the time they were brought into court in 1491.¹⁰⁵

Many, but not all, clerical couples replicated marriage by sharing a home. Even when a priest did not live with his concubine, these women were characterized as being “held.” In these situations, the phrase *quam tenet* may have also referred to financial support or maintenance – albeit in a separate dwelling – as well as a long-standing relationship. This type of living arrangement was not uncommon in the Hereford records, where many clerics were charged with maintaining women in other villages or houses. Thomas Lynke’s concubine, Agnes Willyams, was living in the house of Lynke’s sister at the time they were charged with incontinence in 1486.¹⁰⁶ John Hore, the vicar of Canon Frome, had a child with his concubine, Margery Tirrolde, “whom he held in the house of William Tirrolde,” probably Margery’s father or brother. Priests might even keep (or conceal) their concubines in other dioceses, like William Flemyng, a vicar in the neighboring diocese of Coventry and Lichfield. After he and his concubine, Ellen, had been disciplined by their own bishop, Ellen left Coventry and Lichfield and moved to the diocese of Hereford, where Flemyng “held [her] within the parish of Madley.”¹⁰⁷ A priest from the diocese of Hereford similarly held his concubine in another diocese: in 1522, David ap Howell, the vicar of Tidenham, was charged with relapsing into incontinence with Elizabeth Hoptkyns, despite having already

¹⁰⁵ HRO, HD4/1/88, ff. 85 and 88, HD4/1/89, f. 108, and HD4/1/91, f. 123 (Thomas Nasshe and Joan Mawndfeld); HD 4/1/100, f. 134 and HD4/1/101, f. 90 (Lewis Hoptkyn and Dyddge); HD4/1/105, ff. 91 and 101 (Owen ap Griffith and Alice Grindilston).

¹⁰⁶ HRO, HD4/1/102, ff. 67, 171, 174, 177, 179, 182, 185, 187, 190 (Lynke and Willyams); HRO, HD4/1/111, f. 223 (Hore and Tirrolde).

¹⁰⁷ HRO, HD4/1/102, f. 139. *Dominus Willelmus Flemyng vicarius de Dalley Couentrensis et Lichfeldensis diocesis incontinens est cum quadam Elena quam tenet infra parochiam de Madley que recessit a diocese predicto propter correctionem commissarii ibidem et iam trahit moram apud Madley.*

been corrected and punished. At first he denied that their relationship was still going on, but he eventually confessed that they had four children and that he was keeping her (*custodit*) outside the diocese of Hereford in Wales (and that he wanted to move her to London within a month).¹⁰⁸

Other clerical couples, like Owen and Alice, shared a residence. In 1473, a chaplain named Richard was charged with incontinence with his concubine, also named Alice, “whom he holds with himself in his house” (*quam tenet secum in domo sua*). Thomas Wilmotts and Maud Jeynkyns lived together in the same house, as did the curate of Shrawardine and his concubine. Although a chaplain named Thomas Gogh had been warned in February 1482 to evict his concubine, Margaret Bygolt, he confessed two months later in April – and then again in July – that they were still living together.¹⁰⁹ The vicar of Holme Lacy, William Andrewe, had also received a warning about living with his concubine, but he did not comply and was summoned to court to respond to the charge that he “holds a suspicious woman, named Emmotte, living with him.”¹¹⁰

Like laymen, then, priests lived with their concubines, and like laymen, priests fathered and raised children. Rumors of pregnancies occur frequently in Hereford’s act books: summoned to court in 1494, John Hullyns was accused of incontinence with Agnes

¹⁰⁸ HRO, HD4/1/115, ff. 217, 223, 228, 232, 234. *Item interrogatus de recidivatione criminis <cum muliere> et fatetur procreavit iiii proles ex eadem tamen custodit eam extra diocesem in decanatu de Llandaffe. Et vult remove eam ad London citra festum Michaelis proximum* (f. 234).

¹⁰⁹ HRO, HD4/1/96, f. 60 (Richard and Alice); HD4/1/110, f. 246 (Thomas Wilmotts and Maud Jeynkyns); HD4/1/116, f. 108 (curate of Shrawardine); HD4/1/101, ff. 118, 129, 138 (Thomas Gogh and Margaret Bygolt).

¹¹⁰ HRO, HD4/1/91, ff. 154, 165. Andrewe confessed that they lived together, but denied that they had sexual relations. *Dominus Willelmus Andrewe vicarius perpetuus ecclesie parochialis de Holme Lacy habet mulierem suspectam nomine Emotam secum cohabitantem non obstante injunctionibus diversis alias sibi factis* (f. 154).

Cliff, “with whom he laid for the period of seven or eight years” and who, it was rumored, bore his child.¹¹¹ Other children were known to the court, and young children were often mentioned in the course of a prosecution for concubinage (likely as proof of a sexual relationship). John Davies had two children with his concubine, as did William Church and his concubine, Margaret.¹¹² Some priests even baptized their own children, like the parish chaplain of Clunbury. According to his parishioners, “Sir Edward is incontinent with Alice, daughter of Thomas Eynones, and furthermore he has baptized his own [child] begotten from her, and later he knew her carnally and begot from her another infant.”¹¹³ When parish registers began to be kept in the 1530s, they occasionally recorded the baptism of clerical children: for example, Ralph, the son of Elizabeth Patten and Hugh Holder, a priest, was baptized in the parish church of Bromyard in 1545.¹¹⁴

Like other infants, the children of priests were sometimes sent to live elsewhere. Some clerical couples raised their children, but in other cases they placed their child under the care of a wet-nurse. Henry Mitchel, the vicar of Mansell Lacy, and Agnes Hopkyn had a child who had been sent to nurse with Margaret Catur, one of Henry’s parishioners; Thomas Latewayte, rector of Sidbury, confessed that he sent his child to be nursed in the neighboring

¹¹¹ HRO, HD4/1/106, f. 86. *Dominus Johannes Hullyns vicarius de Bromfield incontinens est cum Agnete Cliffe de eadem ex qua procreavit ut dicitur prolem cum qua concubuit ultra spacum vii vel octo annorum.*

¹¹² HRO, HD4/1/108, f. 197 (John Davies); HD4/1/103, ff. 101 and 103 (William Church and Margaret).

¹¹³ HCA, A1779, f. 24r. *[Dominus] Edwardus capellanus parochialis incontinens est cum Alicia filia Thomas Eynones qui etiam baptizavit [prolem] suum ex ea procreatum et postea cognovit eandem carnaliter et procreavit ex eadem alium infantem.*

¹¹⁴ HRO, MX 113.

village of Middleton Scriven.¹¹⁵ John Carpynter, the vicar of Staunton-on-Arrow, had a child with a woman named Margaret, sent the child to live in the house of Thomas Blake in Bromyard, a town some twenty miles away.¹¹⁶

Priests also took economic responsibility for their partners, another indicator of their role as householders in marriage-like relationships. Once again, direct evidence is hard to come by, but one clue is the payment of fines in the church courts. Many priests paid the fine for commutation for both their penance and that of their concubine. In 1495, John Phelpottis, the vicar of Tarrington, appeared in court to respond to a charge of incontinence with Margery White. Although he denied the sin and purged himself of the charge, he also paid a fine of 6s 8d to commute Margery's penance "for the same incontinence."¹¹⁷ Thomas Wilmottis, too, paid a court fine of 4d for his concubine, Matilda Jeynkyns, in 1508.¹¹⁸ Some women paid their own fines, but in at least some cases, their better-off partners provided this financial support.

¹¹⁵ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 24 (Mitchel and Hopkyn): *Item dicitur quod Margareta Catur uxor Johannis Catur de eadem [Mansell Lacy] nutrit quendam puerum predicti domini Henrici [Michell] generatum inter ipsum et Agnetem Hopkyn.* HRO, HD4/1/91, ff. 105 and 106 (Laytwayte): *Dominus Thomas Laytwayte rectorem ecclesie de Sidbury incontinens est cum Johanna nuper commorante apud Overton infra parochia de Stottesden & procreavit i prolem de eadem iam nutritum apud Middelton.*

¹¹⁶ HRO, HD4/1/101, f. 62. *Dominus Johannes Carpynter vicarius perpetuus de Staunton-on-Arrow incontinens est cum quadam Margareta ex qua sussitavit prolem que est in domo Thome Blake de parochia de Bromyard.*

¹¹⁷ HRO, HD4/1/106, f. 249. *Dominus Johannes Phelpottis vicarius de Tarrington incontinens est cum Margeria White de Stoke Edith. Vir comparuit Hereford' ii die Septembris et negat articulum ex quo erat punitus et correctus per dominum Episcopum et purgat se forma ei indicta et dimittitur. ...Et idem vir fecit finem pro dicta muliere pro ecquali incontinentia pro vi s. viii d.*

¹¹⁸ HRO, HD4/1/110, f. 263. *Dominus Thomas Wilmottis iam vicarius solvit feodum pro muliere videlicet iiii d. et dimissa.*

Living with women, raising children with them, and supporting their families, these priests behaved much like husbands and householders. Even the language court officers used to describe these couples suggests that clerical relationships were understood as similar to marriages. Not only did they explicitly compare concubinage to marriage, but the use of the phrase *quam tenet* to indicate clerical concubinage also carried connotations of marriage, house-holding, and economic power. As we have seen, the verb *tenere* had clear overtones of being a householder, a tenant – the economically dominant and socially responsible head of a domestic unit – and in many cases the households of priests resembled lay households, with concubines fulfilling the role of wives.

As with most ordinary people in the middle ages, there is little information about the daily lives of clerical couples. One example from the late fifteenth century, however, demonstrates both a priest's role as householder and the economic function that a concubine might serve. In 1477, Bishop Thomas Mylling of Hereford asked his cathedral dean to look into sexual offenses committed by several clerics and laymen under his jurisdiction. The dean, Richard Pede, reported back in July, assuring Mylling that the offenders had been “punished, corrected, and reformed.” According to Pede's letter, most of the men confessed their crimes and took steps to end their relationships. One priest, however, made a revealing plea. John Devereux did not deny that he was committing adultery with Margery Wynche, the married woman who lived with him. But when the dean warned him to “dismiss [Margery] and expel her from the house of their cohabitation,” John hesitated. He explained that he planned to put her away soon, but that “he cannot renounce her during the present season of autumn without serious harm, because at this time, at least, she is indispensable in

the service of governance of his house and household.”¹¹⁹ He promised, however, to evict her immediately after the feast of St. Michael. John did not claim that Margery was important to him sexually or socially, though she might well have been; instead, he emphasized her essential economic role in his household, a role so indispensable that she was more like a wife than a servant.¹²⁰

Other court cases illustrate even more concretely the economic value of a wife or concubine. In a case from 1468, Richard Regnolde, the rector of Hopton Wafers, was summoned to appear in the church court. He had previously been prohibited from consorting with Anne Brompton and had even taken an oath of abjuration that he would give her up, but he was nonetheless accused of continuing their relationship. The charge reads, Regnolde “is suspiciously involved (*adheret*) with Anne Brompton by removing her from the fellowship of her husband and by giving a gift (*munus*) to her/him.”¹²¹ The clerk’s syntax and word choice

¹¹⁹ HRO, AL19/11, ff. 25v-26r. *Et primo nobilis vir Dominus Johannes Devereux per nos allocutus de crimine adulterii cum Margeria Wynch conjugata non negans peccatum ac per nos admonitus ut ipsam dimittat et a domo cohabitationis sue expellat respondit quod sic facere intendit in tempore brevi sed in hoc instanti tempore autumnali non potest dimittere eam absque gravi dampno quia ipsa est sibi hoc tempore saltem multum necessaria pro regimine domus et familie hoc tempore functo statim post festum sancti Michaelis promisit eam expellere.*

¹²⁰ Michaelmas, 29 September, was considered the end of the agricultural year in England and was also a common – though not universal – day to hire servants for the upcoming year, especially in the Midlands. Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200-1520* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 28; and Larry Poos, *A Rural Society After the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 201.

¹²¹ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 121. *Dominus Ricardus Regnolde rector ecclesie de Hopton Wafers post inhibitionem et abjurationem suam adheret suspecte Anne Brompton ipsam retrahendo a consortio mariti sui et munere eidem donando.* The verb *adhaerere* is difficult to translate. It literally means “to stick/cling to, to be attached to,” but it also has a clear sexual connotation. In 1500, for instance, a woman named Agnes was accused of being a prostitute and of “frequently and suspiciously being involved with [*adherendum*] the regular canons of Wigmore Abbey.” HRO, HD4/1/107, f. 149. And in 1468, Richard Loghton, a chaplain, was warned not to be suspiciously involved with a woman named Helen. HD4/1/94, f. 106. Similar examples of men “attached to” prostitutes occur in a fifteenth-century visitation from Lichfield; see Ann J. Kettle, “Ruined Maids: Prostitutes and Servant Girls in Later Medieval England,” in *Matrons and Marginal Women in*

create ambiguity. The entry could be read that Regnolde gave a gift to Brompton herself, perhaps a present commonly exchanged during courtship (a pair of gloves, a ring, a coin). But *munus* also had the connotation of a reward: Regnolde may have financially compensated Brompton's husband for the loss of his wife. A case heard in Hereford's Quarter Session of 1521 lends credibility to the latter reading. Thomas Hervy, a layman, was harmed by the loss of his servant, Margaret Novon. A chaplain named John Morbom, he alleged, had forcefully entered his house, "carnally known" Margaret and seized her away, removing her from Hervy's service.¹²² Hervy claimed damages for the economic loss he suffered, and perhaps Anne Brompton's husband had felt similarly aggrieved. These two cases not only acknowledge the economic value and function of these women, but also illuminate parallels between wives, concubines, and servants.

Like most medieval households, many priests had servants. Synodal law frequently and firmly warned priests against living with women, female servants in particular, because of both the temptation of sexual relations and the possibility of scandal. A statute from the thirteenth-century diocese of Canterbury, for example, forbade clerics from having female servants in their homes "of whom improper suspicion might deservedly originate."¹²³ John Myrk reiterated this advice in his *Instructions for Parish Priests*: "Women's service you

Medieval Society, ed. Robert R. Edwards and Vickie Ziegler (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1995), 19-31.

¹²² HRO, BG11/5/23, unnumbered folio. *Inquiratur pro domino rege si Johannes Morbom nuper de Lyde in comitatu Hereford capellanus iiii die Decembris anno regni regis Henrici octavo xiii vi et armis videlicet cultellis et baculis clausum et domum Thome Hervy fregit et intravit et cum Margareta Novon serviente dicti Thome carnaliter cognovit et ipsam Margaretam extra servitium dicti Thome cepit pro quod servitium dicte Margarete per longum tempus amisit ad grave dampnum ipsius Thome et contra pacem dicti domini regis.*

¹²³ *Councils and Synods II*, part 1, "Statutes of Canterbury I" (1213 x 14), 26.

must forsake, / of evil fame lest they make.”¹²⁴ Despite these oft-repeated injunctions and the availability of male servants, many clerics chose to employ women.¹²⁵ Although the number of priests who had female housekeepers is, as Patricia Cullum has put it, “significant but unquantifiable,” anecdotal evidence from Hereford’s act books illustrates that priests did have female housekeepers and servants, and that these domestic arrangements could be regarded with suspicion by both parishioners and court officers.¹²⁶ Between 1446 and 1501, twelve priests were charged with incontinence with their servants. Some of these accusations may have been mere rumor or malice. In 1486, Thomas Bullyn, a rector, was accused of incontinence with Elisabeth Mathew, his servant, but court officers never followed up on the charge, perhaps indicating that the accusation was not credible. Thomas had also been charged with cutting hedges, destroying the corn and grain of his neighbors and parishioners, and letting his cattle into their fields and pastures; the rumor of sexual misconduct may simply have been a malicious attack on an unpopular cleric.¹²⁷ One bishop specifically targeted priests’ servants. In his register, Bishop Thomas Spofford recorded a mandate to his commissary general in 1430 to follow up on clerical crimes discovered during a recent

¹²⁴ John Mirk, *John Mirk’s Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. Gillis Kristensson, Lund Studies in English 49 (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1974), 70, ll. 57-58.

¹²⁵ In his study of domestic service in late medieval England, P.J.P. Goldberg analyzed the sex ratios of servants based on poll tax returns from the late fourteenth century. He notes that although female servants may have been underreported, most towns had more male than female servants, though rural areas had more female servants. In 1379, for example, Sheffield reported 200 male servants for every 100 female servants. Goldberg’s sex ratios are far from uniform, but they demonstrate that there was no shortage of male servants in medieval England. P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c.1300-1520* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), see Appendix II, 368-75.

¹²⁶ P.H. Cullum, “Life-Cycle and Life-Course in a Clerical and Celibate Milieu: Northern England in the Later Middle Ages,” in *Time and Eternity: The Medieval Discourse*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz and Gerson Moreno-Riaño (Turnhour: Brepols, 2003), 271-81, quotation at 278.

¹²⁷ HRO, HD4/1/102, f. 151.

visitation. He names six priests, four of whom were accused of having sex with their servants. When the clerics appeared before him, he ordered each to banish and remove his lover-servant or servant-lover “from his home, service, and suspicious association.”¹²⁸

Other employer-servant relationships were well documented. William Shillyng, rector of Humber, appeared in court in 1479 to respond to the charge that he and his servant, Alice Huchyns, had a child. Although the outcome of the case was not recorded in that court book, Shillyng faced the same charge in 1480, but claimed that he had been corrected by the Commissary General the previous year, meaning he had either confessed to the relationship or had been convicted.¹²⁹ Walter Molde confessed in 1517 to incontinence with his servant Alice (*serviens sua*), whom he had brought with him from his home (*a sua patria*), presumably outside the diocese; their mutual relocation implies an enduring relationship.¹³⁰ Scholars have noted the vulnerability of female servants to seduction and sexual exploitation by their masters, and there is every possibility that Alice – and other servants like her – did not willingly enter into sexual relationships.¹³¹ Some of these relationships, however, seem to have been consensual, and in these cases, the distinction between a domestic servant and a concubine was less than clear.

A case from the 1480s demonstrates the easy conflation of domestic service and concubinage. In 1485, John Malron, the curate of Bedstone, was summoned to respond to the charge that he was incontinent with a woman named Rose, whom he held in his house (*quam tenet in domo sua*). He was not corrected for the crime, but Rose received a penance of three

¹²⁸ HRO, AL19/9, f. 143v. *Commissio ad procedendum contra incontinentiam*.

¹²⁹ HRO, HD4/1/99, ff. 54, 58, 63, 79; HD4/1/100, ff. 41 and 75.

¹³⁰ HRO, HD4/1/113, f. 7.

¹³¹ Kettle, “Ruined Maids,” 128.

floggings which the judge remitted in the hope (*sub spe*) that she would reform her behavior. In February 1487, however, John was accused of committing the crime again, and Rose was called to perform her penance. But Rose refused to be flogged in the penitential procession and was therefore excommunicated and publicly denounced by the rector of a nearby parish in May.¹³² In October 1487, John and Rose were once again charged with incontinence, but in this entry Rose was identified as his servant (*serviens sua*). When summoned to court she failed to appear and her sentence of excommunication was aggravated (*cum communicantibus*). Rumor had it that she had left the diocese by July 1488, and the case was dismissed.¹³³ Was Rose in service to John, or was she his long-term sexual partner? Or both? Another possibility is that sexual relations were simply another aspect of domestic service. In her discussion of marginal women, Kettle illustrates the similarities between domestic service and prostitution; to my mind, clerical concubinage might also be a sort of “service industry.”¹³⁴

A case from 1468-69 displays the confusion, suspicion, and disagreement that might result when a priest had a female servant. Thomas Latewayte – who had confessed to having a child with a woman named Joan in 1453 – was once again summoned to court in 1468. During a recent visitation, local jurors had accused Thomas of having a sexual relationship with a woman named Alice. The judge subsequently charged him with “keeping a suspicious woman in his house” and ordered him to evict her. Thomas denied the charge, asserting that because Alice was his servant and relation, his parishioners did not consider their

¹³² HRO, HD4/1/102, ff. 87, 91, 95, 99, 102, 104, 107, 110. The 1485-86 court book in which the couple had originally been charged is lost, but the first entry in the 1486-87 court book includes a summary of their appearances from the prior year.

¹³³ HRO, HD4/1/103, ff. 64, 86, 173.

¹³⁴ Kettle, “Ruined Maids,” 22.

cohabitation suspicious. In response, the judge ordered him to produce parishioners – men who had *not* served as inquisitors during the visitation – to testify on his behalf. During the next court session, he brought two of his parishioners who deposed that Alice was, indeed, his servant and that “they did not consider [her] in any way suspicious, in the opinion of the parishioners there.”¹³⁵ Thomas’s own parishioners disagreed about the nature of his relationship with Alice – some perceiving Alice as Thomas’s concubine, others swearing that she was merely his servant.

Vocabulary used to describe clerical concubines further underscores this uncertainty. For instance, the term *focaria* could be used to denote either a housekeeper or concubine. Strictly defined, the term meant a hearth-mate, servant, cook, or housekeeper. But in the middle ages, it was also used to describe a concubine, especially the concubine of a priest.¹³⁶ In a church council held in 1346, the Bishop of Durham included a section titled, “*De focariis amovendis*,” in which he ordered that priests “in order to live continently and respectably, must send their concubines (*concupinas suas*) far away from their houses.”¹³⁷

¹³⁵ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 112 and 113. *Dominus Thomas Latewayte Rector ecclesie de Sidbury detinet mulierem suspectam nominem Aliciam in domo sua cum qua ipse prius de incontinentia erat diffamatus et per commissarium ut ipsam a se repelleret monitus. Vir citatus et comparet negat articulum asserendo quod mulier videlicet Alicia serviens eiusdem est sibi attingens in tertio gradu affinitatis et in primo gradu cognationis spiritualis unde cohabitatio eorundem non habetur suspecta penes parochianos suos...* (f. 112). *In articulo illo vir produxit Willelmum Lee et Johannem Pulley parochianos suos qui deposuerunt pro eo quod mulier serviens predicti Thome non habetur suspecta quovismodo in opinione parochianorum ibidem et dimissus est* (f. 113).

¹³⁶ The terms *focarius* or *focarista* signified a cleric who kept a concubine, though these were rarely used. J.F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), s.v. “focarista.” and “focaria.”

¹³⁷ David Wilkins, ed., *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, vol. I (London: R. Gosling, etc., 1737), 572-83, quotation at 573.

Here and elsewhere in this council, *focaria* and *concupina* are used interchangeably, further associating (and confusing) concubines with domestic servants.¹³⁸

If female servants posed a danger of rumor, why did priests employ them? Patricia Cullum has argued that “the clerical experience of life-cycle was different from that of lay people” and that many clerics formed all-male families and households, creating “artificial versions” of lay household formation patterns. Although Cullum concedes that a small number of priests established long-term relationships with a women and formed households “indistinguishable from those of their lay neighbors,” she insists that the life experiences of beneficed clergy, in particular, were distinct from those of their parishioners.¹³⁹ Yet the tendency of beneficed parish priests to have female housekeepers – despite repeated injunctions – suggests that they were mirroring lay households. Of the twelve clerics cited for having relationships with their servants, two – a stipendiary, unbeneficed chaplain and a prior – were not well-established in a parish. The rest were beneficed priests with strong ties to their communities: two curates, six were rectors, and two vicars. The preponderance of beneficed priests in this (albeit small) sample implies that they, too, were replicating the households of their lay neighbors, whether or not these women were servants, concubines, or both.

Living as husbands and wives, these clerical couples adopted models of householding and secular marriage. Historians hold divergent views of these clerical families and whether they were shunned or tolerated by late medieval English society. Patricia Cullum has argued

¹³⁸ In early modern Jamaica, the term “housekeeper” indicated a (usually black) woman who was the long-term domestic and sexual partner of a white man. See Linda L. Sturtz, “Mary Rose: ‘White’ African Jamaican Woman? Race and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica,” in *Race, Gender, and Agency in the Shadow of Slavery* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming). I am grateful to Linda Sturtz for giving me a copy of this article prior to publication.

¹³⁹ Cullum, “Life-Cycle and Life-Course,” quotations at 276, 280, and 279.

that “long-term relations of concubinage... did not lead to an enhanced status among one’s peers and family as legitimate marriage and procreation did for lay people.” Ruth Karras, on the other hand, has concluded, “society accepted these partnerships as normal, if not desirable.” Karras’ draws on canon and civil legal documents, while Cullum relies on a few anti-clerical anecdotes.¹⁴⁰ Records of every-day life suggest that, although some clerical relationships were socially disruptive, the presence of priests, concubines, and their children in the late medieval English countryside was widely accepted.

Scholars looking for proof of anti-clericalism in pre-Reformation England have combed the archives for stories about notorious priests and their lovers and have often taken them, without question, as evidence of popular opinion.¹⁴¹ The diocese of Hereford, too, offers some lurid cases, but these notorious examples display not *all* opinions about priestly incontinence, but of one end of a range of attitudes.

This chapter opened with an account of Owen ap Griffith and Alice Grindilston, whose large family lived peacefully, it seems, in the village of Meole Brace for decades. In contrast, John Verne’s relationship with his concubine caused upheaval in his parish. John Verne was a contemporary of Owen, but he and his concubine Katherine were an unpopular couple, intensely prosecuted by ecclesiastical officers.

John Verne entered clerical orders as an acolyte in 1455 and was ordained as a deacon in 1457. He left no trace in Hereford’s ecclesiastical records for the next ten years, but by the mid-1460s he was rector of the parish of Greete, a village in Shropshire less than

¹⁴⁰ Cullum, “Life-Cycle and Life-Course,” 173; Karras, “Marriage, Concubinage, and the Law,” 129.

¹⁴¹ In particular, see Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

forty miles from Owen ap Griffith's home of Meole Brace. John first appeared in the consistory court in May 1468, in a case that had been continued from the previous year.¹⁴² He had been accused of "living incontinently (*incontinenter vivit*) with his concubine, Katherine; had either confessed or been convicted of the sin; and had been assigned a penance. When he came to court, however, he confessed that he had not yet performed his penance and further, that he had habitually known Katherine since he had been corrected by the Commissary.

The judge reiterated John's highly ritualistic penance: to recite the night office seven times on seven successive Sundays between matins and mass, wearing his surplice and standing before the font in the parish church. He should also fast for seven days on bread and water; make a bare-footed pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas in Hereford Cathedral; and distribute three halfpennies to three paupers. The judge's concluding admonition was unequivocal: John should "abstain from sin, cohabitation, and all familiarity and suspicious communication, with the condition that he take in neither the said Katherine nor any other concubine, under penalty of suspension from office and benefice."¹⁴³

Most cases of clerical incontinence ended soon after penance was assigned or were simply left unresolved by the court, whether or not penance was performed, but court officers

¹⁴² There are no extant court books between 1460 and 1468, so it is impossible to tell when John was initially charged with incontinence.

¹⁴³ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 119. *Dominus Johannes Verne rector de Greete incontinenter vivit cum quadam Katerina quam tenet. Dictus vir comparet et fatetur se non peregisse penitentiam... Et etiam fatetur se communiter cognovisse dictam Katerinam citra huiusmodi penitentiam. Vir habet pro penitentia de novo quod dicat per septem dies dominicos septem nocturnos psalterii seriatim, indutus superpellicio apud fontem in ecclesia sua, inter matutinas et missam inchoando die dominica proxima sequenti et sic continuando exceptis maioribus festis in dominicis contingentibus quousque perimpleverit. Et etiam quod jejuset septem sextis feriis in pane et aqua et quod faciat unam peregrinationem ad feretrum sancti Thome, nudus pedes, citra octavam diem festi eiusdem et etiam quod distribuat iii oboli tribus pauperibus. Et monitus est quod abstineat a peccato cohabitatione et omnium famulietate et communicatione suspectis ita quod dictam katerinam nec aliam concubinam decetero recipiat sub pena suspensionis ab officio et beneficio. Et non solvit finem.*

continued to prosecute John and Katherine. Two months later, in July 1468, the judge once again summoned John to court for being openly defamed (*publice diffamatur*) not only of the sin of incontinence, but also that he had been in suspicious proximity (*suspectum accessio*) to Katherine since his last appearance. He denied this charge and promised to undergo compurgation at the next court session, but did not appear and was suspended from celebrating divine services, although he was soon absolved.¹⁴⁴ Neither John nor Katherine came to court when summoned over the next few months, and both were eventually suspended. John was, once more, ordered to undergo compurgation, and when he appeared in front of the judge in March 1469, he was formally admonished under penalty of deprivation from his benefice.¹⁴⁵ He never completed his compurgation, perhaps because he refused, or possibly because he could not assemble enough priests or parishioners to support him.

Despite the warning, he and Katherine continued their relationship, to the disturbance of his parishioners. Brought in June 1469, the next charge seethed with malice:

Sir John Verne, rector of the church of Greete, is openly defamed that he slept with Katherine, his concubine, in the aforesaid church for a night, on a certain bench there, within the altar cloths, since his last correction.¹⁴⁶

The vision of a priest and his concubine having sex on a bench in the parish church and then snuggling under the altar cloths is almost too incredible to believe. Whether or not it was true, the description certainly seems gauged to evoke maximum revulsion and may be calculated to spur the consistory court into action. Nevertheless, the rumor about John and

¹⁴⁴ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 120. *In articulo illo dictus dominus Johannes publice diffamatur tam de peccato quam de suspecto accessione cum predicta Katerina citra ultimam correctionem.*

¹⁴⁵ HRO, HD4/1/94. ff. 122, 123, 124, 125.

¹⁴⁶ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 126. *Dominus Johannes Veron rector ecclesie de Greott diffamatur publice quod concubuit cum Katerina concubina sua in ecclesia predicta per unam noctem in quodam sedile ibidem in pannis altaris citra ultimam correctionem eiusdem.*

Katherine speaks to the disruptiveness of their relationship. Unlike Owen and Alice, who lived quietly in Meole Brace, this clerical couple upset the social order of Greete.

The rumor about John and Katherine's steamy night in the parish church bears more than a passing resemblance to a popular medieval story that was told and re-told in collections of *exempla* and other didactic texts. Although its details varied, the basic narrative went like this: a man (usually a layman, sometimes a cleric) has sex with a woman in a holy place (church, monastery, cemetery, shrine); as punishment, the couple becomes stuck together while copulating and discovered in a compromising position; they remain joined until every member of the community has seen them; and they are eventually freed by the communal prayer of their onlookers (sometimes, though, they die *in situ*).

The parishioners of Greete may well have heard a version of this *exemplum* in a sermon – the story circulated throughout the fifteenth century, appearing in *Handlyng Synne* and other manuscripts. Whether or not they were familiar with the narrative, the accusation that John and Katherine had sex in the parish church transformed their sin into a public offense; the rumor expresses both the sacrilege and damage that their relationship caused. As Dyan Elliott has pointed out in her exploration of these narratives, John and Katherine were committing “a double sacrilege, as the pollution of a holy person was considered more offensive than the pollution of a church.”¹⁴⁷ As a priest, John's ritual purity was violated by Katherine's proximity; as a holy site, the parish church was polluted by the act of sexual intercourse.¹⁴⁸ John and Katherine's use of the altar cloth as a cover further underscores their

¹⁴⁷ Dyan Elliott traces this story from its origins around 1100 through the late middle ages in “Sex in Holy Places: An Exploration of a Medieval Anxiety,” *Journal of Women's History* 6 (1994): 6-34. Quotation at 11.

¹⁴⁸ The pollution of a church was no metaphor: like bloodshed, sex within a church required re-consecration by a bishop. Elliott, “Sex in Holy Places,” 7.

sacrilege, perhaps expressing anxiety over whether an incontinent, polluted priest could effectively perform the sacrament of the Eucharist. In this rumor, then, theirs was a sin made manifest. John and Katherine's relationship had already been known to their parishioners, but their desecration of the church and altar intensified the scandal. Elliott again: "In essence the concept of scandal is a powerful realization of the ramifications of Christian community, and a recognition of the price of interdependence."¹⁴⁹ By scandalizing his community, John Verne abrogated his pastoral responsibility and abandoned his parishioners.

Like so many court cases, we cannot know how – or even if – this one was resolved. But John Verne did not remain in Greete much longer: in July 1470, he resigned the benefice and was replaced by Roger Ware.¹⁵⁰ It is tempting to see Verne's departure as a result of the events of 1469 (and his resignation as, perhaps, involuntary), but we cannot know if he left Greete on account of local resentment.

Other evidence of popular hostility towards erring priests is less communal. In 1486, Bishop Thomas Mylling absolved three men who had assaulted Thomas Bulkyll, the rector of Munsley. Mylling's clerk did not record details of the assault in the episcopal register, but Thomas had been summoned to court that year for having sex with Elena Hoptkyn, who received a penance of eight floggings.¹⁵¹ Was the assault on Thomas related to his sexual misconduct, or was it unrelated? Another clerical assault was more explicitly tied to a priest's

¹⁴⁹ Elliott, "Sex in Holy Places," 19.

¹⁵⁰ HRO, AL19/11, f. 89r. Roger Ware was himself accused of incontinence the following year, although he successfully purged himself of the charge. HRO, HD4/1/95, f. 74.

¹⁵¹ HRO, AL19/11, f. 57r. HRO, HD4/1/106, ff. 127, 129, 131, 166, 135, 136. Their relationship seems to have been long-standing: they were accused in 1487 of continuing their relationship and having a second child together.

sexual misbehavior: David ap Atha was accused of assaulting his vicar, Philip Veyn, whom he discovered having sex with his wife Margaret.¹⁵²

Clerical relationships did not always cause social strife. Proof of the acceptance of priests and their concubines – like proof of intolerance – is often tacit. Perhaps the best evidence of the integration of clerical households into their communities is *lack* of prosecution: clerical couples might live together for years before they were noticed by court officers or presented by their parishioners.

Clerical families were sometimes a long-established part of a community. Owen ap Griffith was the vicar of Meole Brace from 1475 to 1515. The villagers of Meole Brace lived in the company of Owen ap Griffith, Alice, his de-facto wife, and their children for at least twenty years and possibly more. Owen was an established and stable presence in the village, serving as vicar for a total of forty years; Alice must have been a well known neighbor and friend; their ten children would have been all over the lanes and byways of the parish. Yet John Glover, Owen's immediate predecessor, had been deprived of the benefice after having had three children with two different women and committing spiritual incest.¹⁵³ The contrast between the treatment of two men might well have been due to Owen's stable relationship with Alice, as opposed to John's more promiscuous and serious transgressions.

It was not just the villagers of Meole Brace who would have known Owen and Alice (and John and Agnes, before them) as, essentially, a married couple. Late medieval peasants traveled frequently to markets and fairs, typically moving within a fifteen-mile radius of their

¹⁵² HRO, HD4/1/110, f. 43. *David ap Atha de parochia de Bredwardine iniecit manus violantes in dominum Philippum Veyn vicarium ibidem dixendus[?] quod invenit ipsum conjunctendum[?] adulterine cum Margareta uxore sue.*

¹⁵³ HRO, AL19/11, f. 14r. One of Owen's successors was also charged with incontinence in 1527 (HRO, HD4/1/119, f. 55r.).

homes; a circle drawn around the village of Meole Brace encompasses scores of other villages (including the large and important market town of Shrewsbury) whose inhabitants might have directly encountered Owen ap Griffith's family on a regular basis. Others would have heard about them indirectly, through gossip at markets, or as they passed through the village.

Late medieval people would have had knowledge not only of couples like Alice and Owen, but also of their children. Like those discussed earlier in this chapter, some children were sent elsewhere to be wet-nursed or raised. Others lived with their parent or parents: William Phippis, vicar of Great Dewchurch, was charged with maintaining his son, Philip Parla, in his house; Philip's mother, a married woman named Tanglust, confessed that Philip was their child.¹⁵⁴

Adult children of priests, too, were visible in late medieval society, although there is far more evidence about priests' sons than daughters. Priests' sons sometimes followed their fathers into a clerical occupation; because they were illegitimately born, they required a papal dispensation to enter major clerical orders. Episcopal and papal registers regularly record these dispensations, like the one granted in 1433 to David ap Madoc, the son of a priest and a singlewoman, which warned him "not to be an imitator of his father's sexual incontinence, but to live a good life."¹⁵⁵ As with most medieval families, we have little evidence about

¹⁵⁴ HRO, HD4/1/97, f. 8. *Dominus Willelmus Phippis vicarius ecclesie parochialis de Great Dewchurch nuper in visitatione triennali domini.... fuit et detectus quam tenet in domo sua quemdam Philippum Parla filium suum naturalem quem susticavit de quadam Tanglust uxore Johannis Parla de parochia sua.... Comparet dictus vicarius apud Hereford xxvii die Januarii fatetur carnalem copulam inter se et dictam Tanglust fuisse commissam et ipsam asseruit dictum Philippum esse eius filium tamen dicit idem vicarius se fuisse....*

¹⁵⁵ HRO, AL19/9, f. 171v. By the fourteenth century, between 30 and 45 percent of all papal dispensations granted for defects of birth (sons of unmarried laypeople also required dispensations to enter clerical orders) were given to sons of clerics. Laura Wertheimer, "Children of Disorder: Clerical

these parent-child relationships, but some priests maintained close ties with their children, who sometimes served as their fathers' executors. In his will proved in October 1514, for example, Henry Synger, rector of Little Wenlock, appointed his son John as his executor.¹⁵⁶ Other priests made bequests to their nephews (or, as in one Hereford will, to a godson), and such terms sometimes as euphemisms for biological children: a fourteenth-century sermon decried priests who plundered the goods of the church to "provide for their own flesh and blood, namely their nephews and nieces – as they call the crowd of their own daughters and sons...."¹⁵⁷

There was certainly hostility towards incontinent clerics – both those who merely had sex with women and those who held women as wives – yet there were also clerical couples who were tolerated and accepted. The similarities between concubinage and marriage may well have helped integrate priests and their concubines into parish life. In early medieval society, priests contracted and celebrated marriages with women according to accepted customs; in all but name, many priests in late medieval England still did. Despite the resemblance of these relationships to marriage, though, clerical concubines faced real disadvantages, and it is to these women I now turn.

Parentage, Illegitimacy, and Reform in the Middle Ages," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15 (2006): 382-407, at 405.

¹⁵⁶ HRO, HD4/1/112, f. 108.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 244.

Chapter 6: “And of His Own Will, He Promised to Turn Her From Their Home”: Lay and Clerical Concubines in the Diocese of Hereford

On November 8, 1468, Thomas Brockhouse, a married layman, was summoned to appear before the consistory court of the bishop of Hereford. He was charged with relapsing into adultery with a married woman named Rose Watyes. Thomas and Rose were accused of having adulterous sex and living together. Thomas denied the charge and brought in compurgators who swore to his innocence. This successful compurgation would usually have resulted in an immediate dismissal of the charge, but in Thomas’ case, the judge was not quite convinced. He ordered Thomas and Rose to separate and abstain from “any cohabitation or suspicious familiarity,” under penalty of excommunication; Rose was, essentially, evicted from her household. One month later, on December 16, the judge was notified that Thomas and Rose were still living together, and he summoned them to reappear. It was not until April 11 – nearly four months later – that the judge succeeded in forcing Rose to leave. She moved to a village about 25 miles away, and the case was finally brought to a close.¹

¹ Herefordshire Record Office (HRO), HD4/1/94, ff. 41, 42, 48. *Thomas Brokehowse Junoir de parochia de Docklow conjugatus adulteratur <in residivo> cum Rosa uxore Johannis Watyes de eadem* (f. 41). *Thomas Brokehowse de parochia de Dockelowe conjugatus adulteratur cum quadam Rosa quam tenet in residivo. Uterque citati vir comparet negat peccatum fatetur tamen quod cohabitavit in una domo patris predicti Thome et purgat se proprio jurato de peccato. Mulier etiam comparet et moniti sunt quod separentur a cohabitatione et quod abstineat ab omni cohabitatione et familiaritate suspectis sub pena excommunicationis maioris. Et postea xvi die mensis Decembris notificatum est officio quod dictum Thomas et Rosa continue cohabitavit unde commissario misit apparitor ad citandum eosdem ad comparendum in proximo* (f. 42). *Apparitor certificat quod mulier recessit New Radnor* (f. 48).

In many ways, this case typifies the business of late medieval ecclesiastical courts. Charges of sexual misconduct made up much of the business of these courts, and cases often took months (or even years) to conclude – if they ever did. Even when cases were completed, many offenders ignored the judgments and were, like Thomas and Rose, charged in subsequent years for repeating the crime. Thomas and Rose’s case also demonstrates some characteristics of marriage and concubinage that medieval historians have long known: that lay couples often lived together, ran a household, and had children without getting married (or without getting their marriages formally solemnized); and that couples sometimes sought formal separation through church court proceedings, but more often dissolved their marriages informally and took new partners. (With no mention of Thomas’ or Rose’s spouses, it seems reasonable to assume that those relationships had *de facto* ended). The case thus conforms to our conventional understanding of medieval concubinage: that it was a common and unsolemnized form of marriage, a solution for couples who did not want to – or, as in this case, could not – formally marry.

The case of Thomas and Rose is also interesting because it illustrates how information about women involved in these quasi-marital relationships can be extracted from the court records. As with other marginal groups of women, the information we have about concubines is scarce, but the records do offer us substantial hints. Rose Watyes was married to another man, but she committed more than just adultery with Thomas. She was described as his concubine, as *Rosa quam tenet*. Their relationship was ongoing because, having relapsed into sin, they were charged *in residivo*. Rose was living with Thomas, but they probably did not have children, for charges of this sort often mention children or pregnancy, and silence on these matters suggests that Rose was neither pregnant nor the mother of living

children. And finally, we know that Rose was eventually forced to leave her home. In the course of trying to break up this relationship, the court officer used a common tactic – separating the couple – and in this case, as in nearly all others, it was the woman who had to leave their shared home. In terms of life circumstances, the end of their relationship had different consequences for Thomas and Rose.

While marriage and concubinage shared many features, I argue here that characterizing concubinage simply as an irregular form of marriage, as historians have tended to do, has obscured a fundamental distinction: that lay concubines were, culturally and institutionally, more vulnerable than married women.² For clerical concubines, however, this vulnerability was magnified. Always unable to legalize their relationships through marriage, targeted by the ecclesiastical courts, and likened to prostitutes, these were some of the most disadvantaged women in late medieval England.

In the first part of this chapter, I discuss lay concubines, looking at the parallels between concubinage and marriage, the common understanding among historians that concubinage functioned as a means of social or economic advancement for women, and the disadvantages that these women faced. I turn to the partners of priests in the second part, comparing lay and clerical concubinage and examining patterns of socio-economic status and ethnicity among clerical couples. I look closely at the treatment of clerical concubines in the ecclesiastical courts and the specific risks they faced as priests' companions. As I argue, however, their difficulties were not confined to the church courts, for these women also came up against the moral implications of being clerical concubines.

² Here and throughout this dissertation, I use the term “lay concubinage” to describe a relationship between a layman and a woman. All the women discussed were laywomen; my definition of the type of concubinage (lay versus clerical) rests on the man’s status.

Lay Concubines

As James Brundage has defined it in his influential article on concubinage and marriage, concubinage in medieval Europe was generally understood as a stable relationship between a man and a woman who were not married to each other, but habitually had sexual intercourse. They may or may not have lived together; they were often, but not always, sexually exclusive. These relationships were similar to marriage, and because marriage itself was an imprecisely defined process, the distinction between a wife and a concubine was not always an easy one for medieval theologians and canon lawyers to make. The great twelfth-century canon lawyer Gratian characterized concubinage as a relationship with marital affection – an imperfect, informal marriage which lacked legal formalities and protection, but which was, nonetheless, a valid marriage.³ Other canon lawyers, however, defined concubinage as a temporary and illicit relationship, one that lacked marital affection as well as legal formalities and therefore did not constitute any sort of marriage. These ambiguities were further compounded by the existence of clandestine marriages – “secret” marriages that had not been properly solemnized, but were nonetheless binding – which fell into a somewhat ambiguous place between legitimate marriage and concubinage. As a result, medieval churchmen had a difficult time distinguishing between formal marriages, clandestine marriages, and concubinage.⁴

The complex cases about real marriages and real people that were adjudicated in late medieval ecclesiastical courts were a world away from the speculations of medieval theologians, but my research suggests that their speculations were not merely academic.

³ James A. Brundage, “Concubinage and Marriage in Medieval Canon Law,” *Journal of Medieval History* 1 (1975): 1-17.

⁴ Brundage, “Concubinage and Marriage,” 8.

These ambiguities reappeared as hard dilemmas for churchmen who daily attended to the pastoral needs of laypeople. The Hereford court books support Brundage's argument that definitions of concubinage and marriage were so similar as to be profoundly confusing. The cases tell us about long-term – albeit illicit – relationships, about cohabitation, and about the social and economic support that laymen offered their concubines. They also reveal court officers readily applying the language of marriage to relationships that were not technically full marriages.

Although concubinary relationships were not recognized by the church courts as legal marriages, the people involved in them must have often considered them permanent; there is no doubt that couples were sometimes unwilling to end these relationships. Often, this reluctance was passive: couples simply performed their penances and carried on as before, as demonstrated by the frequency of couples being cited *in recidivo*, or in recurrence. Occasionally, there was more active resistance, as with John Bacon. Charged in 1472 with fornicating with Margaret Baker, a married woman “whom he held,” John was assigned a penance of three whippings and warned not to have sex or live with Margaret. He defiantly announced to the court that he did not want to dismiss Margaret, but wanted instead to live with her “as his wife.”⁵

Bacon's retort likens concubinage to marriage, but he was not the only person to describe concubinage using marital terms – so, too, did court officers. As discussed in Chapter 5, a man might be described as holding a woman “as his wife”: William Davys, for

⁵ HRO, HD4/1/96, ff. 75, 77, 78. *Johannes Bacon de parochia de ffroma Episcopi solutus <fornicator> cum quadam Margareta Baker conjugata quam tenet* (f. 75). *Johannes comparet et contumaciter dixit se nolle dimittere predictam Margaretam sed eam velle secum cohabitare ut uxoris sui* (f. 78).

example, was charged in 1448 with holding a woman named Maud *pro uxore sua*.⁶ Other men were described as holding women “under the pretense of marriage.” In 1472, William Cannocke, was summoned to court on the suspicion that he held a certain woman named Elena *sub colore matrimonii*.⁷ Quite frequently, court officers spoke frankly about the difficulty of distinguishing between a marriage and a concubinary relationship. When Meredith ap Youkis was brought before the court in 1447, the officer knew that he held a woman named Isabel “as his wife,” but not whether they were legitimately married.⁸ Sometimes, even a couple’s neighbors were not sure if they were married or not: Charles Saddler was summoned to appear in court in 1469 to respond to the charge that he “held a certain Elizabeth in his house as his wife, but it was rumored that she was his concubine.”⁹

This confusion has an important place in the historiography of concubinage, and many historians have claimed, as Brundage put it, that “the assimilation of concubinage to marriage worked to improve the status of the concubine,” particularly in terms of matters of inheritance and legitimacy.¹⁰ Other historians have argued this even more forcefully. In her monograph on women in early medieval Europe, Susanne Wemple argued that concubinage could serve as a means of upward social mobility for women in Merovingian society. Because concubinage, polygyny, and divorce were widely tolerated among the

⁶ HRO, HD4/1/90, f. 22.

⁷ HRO, HD4/1/96, f. 53a.

⁸ HRO, HD4/1/90, f. 66. *Meredyth ap Youkis de Alurbury tenet quandam Isabellam ut uxorem suam et nescitur an sunt matrimonialiter copulate nec ne.*

⁹ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 47. *Charles Saddeler de Leominster tenet quandam Elizabetham in domo sua ut uxorem sed diffamatur quod est concubina sua.*

¹⁰ Brundage, “Concubinage and Marriage,” 9. See also Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), especially 98-103, 297-300, 444-47, 514-17; Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 100-104.

Merovingians, and because concubinage and marriage were not clearly defined under Germanic law, a concubine could find herself elevated to wifely status. Wemple notes four queens who began their lives as slaves, then became concubines, and ended up as wives of kings; there are less dramatic examples, too, of lower born women who gained a better socio-economic position or even joined the aristocracy through relationships that eventually became marriages.¹¹ Margaret Clunies Ross, too, has emphasized the advantages of concubinage for women in Anglo-Saxon England. For a woman who could not afford a dowry, a concubinary relationship (which required neither a formal betrothal nor marriage gift) could bring economic security. Although concubines lacked legal recognition, they nonetheless had customary rights and their sons were often allowed to inherit property.¹²

Brundage, Wemple, and Ross focused on elite, well born families and the women who joined them as concubines and, sometimes, as wives. My project focuses on more ordinary people, but a similar dynamic may have operated within the socio-economic gradations of the English and Welsh villages in the diocese of Hereford. Some peasants held twenty acres, some only ten, and some even less. For women from land-poor or landless families, concubinage might have been a way for them to link themselves to wealthier peasants. Differences among peasants are hard to trace, in part because of their subtlety, and this difficulty is further compounded by the brief nature of church court records: clerks had little time (or need) to record personal information about individuals, and they rarely noted more than just the forename, surname, marital status, and place of residence of those who

¹¹ Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500 to 900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), see especially 51-74.

¹² Margaret Clunies Ross, "Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England," *Past & Present* 108 (1985): 3-34. There has been little recent work on concubinage in England, and no full-length studies.

appeared before them.¹³ But clerks have left us one critical indicator of the low social status of women who appeared in church courts as concubines: unlike other women, they were often referred to only by their first names.

The Hereford court book of 1447-48, for example, contains 245 charges of lay concubinage.¹⁴ Of these, both men and women were known by their full names (forename and surname) in 58 percent of cases. In 38 percent of cases, the men were fully named, but the women were provided only with forenames. In a further 2.4 percent, the men were fully named, and the women were not identified by name at all – they were known simply as *quedam mulier*, “a certain woman.” In slightly over 40 percent of these cases, then, women were incompletely identified by forename alone or were entirely unidentified.¹⁵ Fourteen percent of the women were known only by their forenames were also live-in servants, a position of economic dependence which further underscores their low socio-economic status.

These naming patterns suggest that concubinage might have been a potentially beneficial institution for many women who were able to ally themselves to better off men and their families. But the social mobility of concubinage was often ephemeral, at best. Some concubines might have been confused with wives, and some might have “married up,” but all concubines faced specific and far-reaching disadvantages that married women did not: the difficulties of single motherhood, damage to their honor, and potential eviction from their homes.

¹³ Unlike the norm in other medieval courts, consistory court clerks rarely recorded an individual’s occupation. The one exception is domestic service: women and – less often – men were noted as *serviens*, most likely as a means of identification.

¹⁴ HRO, HD4/1/90. I chose this court book because it is complete, fully legible, and representative of the other Hereford books.

¹⁵ In only four cases (1.6 percent) were men given only forenames, and there were no men who went completely unnamed.

Although the women brought into court for having illegitimate children were usually described as “single,” many of these mothers were concubines. Some were apparently able to have children without drawing attention to themselves: one couple, Howell ap Thomas and Joan, had seven children together before they were brought into court.¹⁶ But for others, it seems likely that a pregnancy landed them in court. The sexual relationship between Walter Coytef and Emotte, his live-in servant, had gone unnoticed (or, at least, unprosecuted) until she became pregnant with their second child in 1443.¹⁷ Although it is not always possible to tell whether the women who bore illegitimate children were truly single or in long-term relationships, a woman’s pregnancy was often indirectly mentioned in the course of a concubinage case. In 1501, Eleanor Damforde, for example, was excused from a court appearance in a charge of concubinage because she was lying in childbed; in 1455, Alice Gaye, who had confessed to an adulterous relationship that included concubinage, received a postponement of her penance until after she had delivered her baby.¹⁸ While their illegitimate children were not necessarily named in the charges brought against these women, their pregnancy likely made them more visible targets for moral correction.

Concubines who had children faced a two-fold problem. First, a pregnancy sometimes brought a secret relationship into public view. Second, a mother with an illegitimate child was unwelcome in some communities. In her article on mothers and poverty in the medieval English countryside, Elaine Clark has convincingly argued that

¹⁶ HRO, HD4/1/94, ff. 139, 148.

¹⁷ HRO, HD4/1/88, ff. 93, 97.

¹⁸ HRO, HD4/1/108, ff. 176, 183 (Eleanor Damforde); HRO, HD4/1/92, ff. 26, 27 (Alice Gaye).

unmarried mothers faced moral censure, social prejudice, and economic insecurity.¹⁹ Clark tells us, for example, about a young woman who was evicted from her residence in Norfolk because she was pregnant, and two more women who were expelled from the same village soon after giving birth.²⁰ The single mothers of Hereford faced similar problems. They were frequently summoned to court for being pregnant or for having children by an unknown father.²¹ A typical charge from 1453 read: “Joan Pope, a singlewoman, is pregnant and it is not known by whom.”²² Joan Pope and other women like her would typically appear in court, confess the sin, fulfill their penances or pay a fine, and be dismissed. Men, however, were never charged with fathering children. Sometimes, a woman might appear in court and name the father of her child in response to court pressure, but although court officers were often determined to know the fathers, they rarely summoned them.²³

Second, concubines lost honor, an important asset at all levels of medieval society. Historians have long known that medieval people had different perceptions of male and female honor. Philippa Maddern, responding to Mervyn James’ influential work on aristocratic honor, first argued that notions of honor were differentiated by gender: while

¹⁹ Elaine Clark, “Mothers at Risk of Poverty in the Medieval English Countryside,” in *Poor Women and Children in the European Past*, ed. John Henderson and Richard Wall (New York: Routledge, 1994), 139-59.

²⁰ Clark, “Mothers at Risk,” 150-51.

²¹ The charge of bearing a child as a single woman had a parallel in manorial courts, where fines of *leyrwite* and *childwite* were levied on young women for their sexual activity. See Judith M. Bennett, “Writing Fornication: Medieval Leyrwite and its Historians,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 13 (2003): 131-62; E.D. Jones, “The Medieval Leyrwite: A Historical Note on Female Fornication,” *English Historical Review* 107 (1992): 945-53; Tim North, “Legerwite in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” *Past and Present* 111 (1996): 3-16.

²² HRO, HD4/1/91, f. 187. *Johanna Pope de parochia de Bishop’s Frome soluta impregnatur et nescitur per quem.*

²³ A man named as the father of a bastard might occasionally be named in a charge of fornication against the couple, but the court did not systematically follow up on these cases.

men's reputations were based on economic and financial dealings, women's honor was constituted by their sexual behavior.²⁴ Other scholars have further explored the differences and similarities between female and male honor, with most agreeing that sexual behavior was crucial to women's reputations, but less relevant to men's.²⁵ Late medieval conduct poems, songs, and proverbs uphold this conclusion, underscoring both the connection between a woman's sexual reputation and her honor and the importance of maintaining honor in order to make a good marriage.²⁶

This link was not merely hypothetical and literary; medieval court records provide concrete examples of how a loss of honor could have real consequences for women. Consider, for example, a defamation case heard in the consistory court of London in 1497: the plaintiff, Joan Sebar, sued her female neighbor for defamation, charging that she had called Joan a harlot and had accused her of fornication. A male witness who observed the

²⁴ Mervyn James, "English Politics and the Concept of Honour 1485-1642," *Past & Present*, supplement no. 3 (1978); reprint: *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 308-415; Philippa Maddern, "Honour Among the Pastons: Gender and Integrity in Fifteenth-Century English Provincial Society," *Journal of Medieval History* 14 (1988): 357-71.

²⁵ For other analyses of honor and gender in late medieval and early modern England, see Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Laura Gowing, "Gender and the Language of Insult in Early Modern London," *History Workshop Journal* 35 (1993): 1-21; Cynthia Herrup, "'To Pluck Bright Honour from the Pale Fac'd Moon': Gender and Honor in the Castlehaven Story," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6, 6 (1996): 137-59. Garthine Walker has criticized this oppositional model of honor and argued that women's contribution to household economies was an important locus for female honor. Walker, "Expanding the Boundaries of Female Honour in Early Modern England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6, 6 (1996): 235-45.

²⁶ See, for example, two late medieval conduct poems for young women: "The Good Wife Taught her Daughter," *IMEV* 671, and edited by Tauno F. Mustanoja in *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, B 61, 2 (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran, 1948); "The Good Wyfe Wold a Pylgremage," *IMEV* 3363, also edited by Mustanoja in *The Good Wife*.

altercation stated, "...Joan Sebar, who is a young woman and suitable for a husband, is so wounded from the speaking of these words that she will never or only with great difficulty overcome the wounding of her fame." Another witness stated that "he would give her little faith or favor and would more quickly refuse to marry her because of the imposition of this crime on her."²⁷ These depositions show the extent to which even a rumor of unchaste behavior could damage a woman's honor and her opportunities for marriage.

My research in the Hereford church court records also suggests that concubinage – or even a false accusation of it – might have similarly damaging effects on a woman's honor. Certainly, some women cared enough to defend their reputation. In 1468, Avice Crowe purged herself of a charge of fornication with Clement Taylor. After he accepted her compurgation, the judge specifically "restored the aforesaid woman to her pristine good status and reputation."²⁸ That this unusual action was added to the otherwise terse and formulaic entry speaks both to the importance of honor even in the lowest strata of medieval society and to the practical effect an accusation of sexual misbehavior might have on a woman's honor. Interestingly, no such action was made for Thomas, who never appeared in court. We also know about the importance of honor from its inverse: other women were simply treated as tainted. Sometimes, when a court officer presumed but could not prove a sexual relationship, he might accuse a man of having a "suspicious" woman in his home.

²⁷ Shannon McSheffrey, trans., *Love and Marriage in Late Medieval London* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 86-87.

²⁸ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 28. *Commissarius... restituit predictam mulierem ad suos pristinos bonos statum et famam.*

William Lloyd was summoned to court in 1468, but he was not charged with fornication or adultery, simply with “holding a certain suspicious woman named Sybil in his house.”²⁹

Concubines risked the opprobrium of having an illegitimate child, and they risked damaging their honor, but most of all, they risked becoming homeless. Sometimes, a court case reached a more secure conclusion for concubines – if both parties were single, court officers simply pressured the couple to marry. The judge frequently encouraged marriage by offering to postpone their penance conditionally – “under the hope of marriage” (*sub spe nubendi*). If the couple formalized their relationship and became legally married, they would be obliged to fulfill only a small part of their penance or perhaps none at all. After William Cressege confessed to having sex with a woman named Elena in 1447, their penance of three floggings was held “under the hope” that they would marry.³⁰ Other, more recalcitrant couples were essentially forced to marry: the judge required them to abjure their sin under penalty of marriage (*sub pena nubendi*), which meant that further sexual relations would constitute a marriage.³¹ When William Perkys confessed to having sex with Joan Longfeld in 1456, the judge assigned him six floggings and warned him to end their relationship under penalty of marriage.³²

²⁹ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 69. *Willelmus Lloyde de parochia de Brampton conjugatus tenet quandam Sibillam mulierem suspectam in domo sua.*

³⁰ HD4/1/90, ff. 67, 71. *Vir comparuit postea fatetur delictum et habet pro commissis tres fustigationes circa ecclesiam denudatus ad pannos lineos portans cereum dimidi libri cere in manu sua.... Et respectuatur penitentia ad proximum sub spe nubendi... (f. 71).*

³¹ R.H. Helmholz, “Abjuration *Sub Pena Nubendi* in the Church Courts of Medieval England,” *The Jurist* 32 (1972): 80-90; reprint: Helmholz, *Canon Law and the Law of England* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1987), 145-55.

³² HRO, HD4/1/92, f. 39. *Willelmus Perkys de parochia de Clungunford fornicatur cum Johanna filia Rogeri Longfeld de eadem. Vir comparet fatetur articulum unde habuit pro commissis tres fustigationes circa ecclesiam et totidem circa mercatum de Clun. Et monitus est quod abstineat a peccato et loco suspectis cum dicta muliere sub pena nubendi [et] duplicationis huiusmodi penitentie et vi s. viii d. ecclesie cathedrali et parochiali equaliter applicandum et infra.*

But if either party had an impediment to marriage (most often, a living spouse), the judge's strategy for breaking up the relationship could have disastrous consequences for a woman. In such cases, the most frequent solution was to separate the couple, usually by forcing the woman out of their shared residence, as the court did with Thomas Brockhouse and his concubine, Rose Watyes, with whom this chapter began. This was a common way for the courts to try to break up a concubinary relationship, with men frequently warned to throw their lovers out of their houses by a specific deadline, or risk further punishment. In 1453, Griffith ap David Maure was given one month to remove Lleyke (with whom he had committed adultery) "from their cohabitation."³³ Jevan ap John was similarly warned in 1468 "that he should remove his concubine from his company, his cohabitation, and his house," before Pentecost, less than two weeks away.³⁴ Howell Dublett took an oath in 1469 that he would evict his concubine, Wennlean, within just five days.³⁵

Due to missing records or unrecorded outcomes, it is usually impossible to trace whether men and women obeyed the court's orders. Sometimes, however, the act books confirm that these women, like Rose, left their lovers' houses. Some had other homes waiting for them: under duress of court order, Juliana Kery left Jevan ap Gwyllym and moved back

³³ HRO, HD4/1/91, f. 16. *Griffinus ap David Maure de parochia de Kinnersley conjugatus adulteratur cum quadam Lleyke conjugata quam tenet.... Vir comparet... monitus est quod removeat dictam mulierem a cohabitatione sue infra quindenam proximam post festum Nativitatis sancti Johannis Baptista proximum ex tunc.*

³⁴ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 50. *Jevan ap John ap Meredith de Presteigne. In articulo illo vir alias excommunicatus quia non peregit penitentiam et iam comparet et abjurat peccatum et monitus est quod removerat concubinam suam a consortione cohabitatione et domo sua ante festum Pentecoste sub pena excommunicationis maioris....*

³⁵ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 42. *Et postea eodem die vir... juratus est ad removendum concubinam suam a domo et cohabitatione sua citra diem domenica proximo futuro.... Postea videlicet in crastino mulier comparet et abjurat peccatum et habet ad removendum se a consortione viri prout supra.*

to her mother's house after she was discovered pregnant by him. Other women had no clear destination, and this is the most common circumstance encountered in the court books.

William Lloyd, for example, purged himself in 1469 in a charge of adultery; his companion, Sybil, was noted as simply "removed from his cohabitation" (*remota est a cohabitatione sua*).³⁶ This is the last we hear of her, and we can only wonder what happened to women like Sybil who were tainted by an illicit relationship, an illegitimate pregnancy, or a bastard child. The fact that some women, like Rose Watyes, had to move as far as 25 miles away suggests that they might have had a difficult time finding a new home.

Sometimes, concubines were asked not only to leave their lovers' houses, but also to leave their parish or the diocese entirely: Joan Davys was assigned seven whippings in 1472 (a fairly harsh penance, by Hereford standards) for her confession to a concubinary (and incestuous) relationship with her godfather, William Wetheham, but her penance was postponed "under hope of her removal from the diocese within fifteen days."³⁷ Women like Joan sometimes resisted removal orders for a considerable period of time (and it does not look as if Joan honored her agreement), but most eventually gave in.

All told, lay concubinage looked like marriage, but it was different in some critical, practical ways. On the one hand, the informality of concubinage might have allowed some women to improve their social and economic situations. But any advantages were gained at

³⁶ HRO, HD4/1/94, ff. 32, 48 (Juliana Kery and Jevan ap Gwyllym); HD4/1/94, f. 83 (William Lloyd and Sybil).

³⁷ HRO, HD4/1/96, f. 73, 75. *Willelmus Wetheham de parochia de Bromyard conjugatus incestuatur cum quadam Johanna <Davys> quam a diu tenuit et ad huc tenet de Ledbury quiquidam Willelmum levavit prolem predicte Johanne de sacro fonte (f. 73). In articulo illo mulier alias excommunicata et denunciata est et certificatur per vicarium de Ledbury. In crastino mulier comparet apud Hereford fatetur peccatum dicit tamen se abstinisse per mensis et habet pro commissis vii fustigationes circa ecclesiam de Ledbury in forma penitentiali. Et monita est quod decetero abstineat a peccato etc. in forma et respectuatur dicta penitentia sub spe remotionis a diocese infra quindenam.... (f. 75).*

great risk. If a concubine became pregnant or had a child, she was vulnerable to moral censure. If the relationship was a matter of public comment or complaint, her honor might be damaged and her chances of making a good marriage diminished. If the court took notice of the relationship, she and her children might be evicted from their home. On balance, the informality of concubinage might have helped some women, but it likely left many others dishonored, homeless, and burdened with fatherless children. These risks were amplified for women who were concubines of priests.

Clerical Concubines

In the late fifteenth century, Margery Gurney was living with her father, John, in Pontesbury, a village in hilly and remote southern Shropshire. Margery, unmarried and pregnant, caught the eye of a church officer in October 1486, when both she and her father were summoned to court.³⁸ Margery did not appear in court to answer to the charge made against her: “Margery Gurney of the parish of Pontesbury is pregnant, and it is not known by whom.” After repeatedly failing to appear, she was excommunicated. John, accused with “fostering lewdness between [Margery] and Sir Mathew Wever [a cleric] and various other men (*diversos alios viros*),” appeared and confessed to the charge in October. Sentenced to three floggings around Pontesbury church, he refused to fulfill his penance, and he, too, was excommunicated.³⁹ The charge against John was eventually dismissed, but the court

³⁸ Based on the form of the court entry, they may have been initially charged in a prior year, but the act books immediately preceding this one are missing. The relationship between John and Margery was not specified, so he might have been her brother or uncle. Charges of fostering lewdness, however, were most often brought against the parents of young women, so it seems likely that John was her father.

³⁹ HRO, HD4/1/102, ff. 116, 120, 128. There are further entries in this court book, but they are illegible. *Margeria Gurney de parochia de Pontesbury est impregnata et nescitur per quem. Mulier alias suspensa et excommunicata propter suam contumaciam in non comparendo. ...*

continued to beleaguer Margery. Her sentence of major excommunication was eventually heightened “with communicants” (the harshest punishment available to an ecclesiastical court), she was publicly denounced in her parish church, and she was asked (or perhaps coerced) to leave the parish. Sometime in 1487, under the penalty of major excommunication, Margery came to court and took a formal oath “that she would not reside within the parish of Pontesbury.”⁴⁰

The following year, in April 1488, Margery returned to Pontesbury – or, perhaps, she had never left. Once again, she was summoned to court. Margery was a common prostitute (*communis meretrix*), the judge declared, who had returned to Pontesbury in spite of the court’s earlier injunctions. As she had the year before, Margery failed to appear before the judge, who reaffirmed her aggravated sentence of excommunication. By this time, the consistory court had doggedly pursued her for almost four years, but finally, in October 1490, a court officer reported that Margery had left the diocese. The charge against her was dismissed, and she does not appear in Hereford’s records again.⁴¹

Like many medieval records, the account of Margery Gurney’s time in Hereford’s consistory court poses tantalizing questions, yet reveals few answers. We cannot know for certain whether John Gurney was admitting that Margery had had sex with many men, or just with the chaplain, Matthew Wever. Was Margery a prostitute, or was she simply a young

Johannes Gurney de eadem fovet lenocinium inter dictam mulierem et dominum Matheum Wever et diversos alios viros (f. 116).

⁴⁰ HRO, HD4/1/103, ff. 106, 110, 299, 303, 310, 313, 316. The folio on which Margery’s oath was initially recorded is illegible, but an entry from October 1488 refers to it: *Margeria Gurney de parochia de Pontesbury est communis meretrix. Mulier alias comparuit et abjuravit diocese Herefordensis quod non maneret infra parochiam de Pontesbury ac sub pena excommunicationis maioris etc. Que contra injunxiones alias sibi factas reveniebat etc. Ideo Judex eandem excommunicavit....* (f. 299).

⁴¹ HRO, HD4/1/104, ff. 107, 111, 115. 316.

woman whose unexpected pregnancy created a reputation for promiscuity? Was she Matthew Wever's concubine and, if so, what effect did her alliance with him have on her reputation? These questions are provocative and, ultimately, unanswerable, but there are some issues that Margery's case illuminates well. First, priests and their lovers were not treated equally in the ecclesiastical courts: Matthew Wever was never punished – or even summoned to court – for his relationship with Margery.⁴² And second, women who had sexual relations with priests were particularly vulnerable to eviction not only from their homes, but also from their villages, parishes, or the diocese.

In this section, I first use naming patterns of priests and their companions to examine the social status and ethnicity of priests and their concubines. Next, I turn to the treatment of clerical concubines in the ecclesiastical courts and the specific disadvantages they faced as priests' sexual partners. Their difficulties were not confined to the church courts, for these women were also confronted with the moral implications of being a priest's concubine.

Social Standing of Priests and Concubines

As with lay concubines, it is difficult to determine the social status of clerical concubines. But as with lay concubines, naming patterns offer evidence about their standing among their peers. Table 6.1 gives comparative naming patterns for women charged with fornication or concubinage with either laymen or clerics in the court book of 1468-69.

Women partnered with laymen were significantly more likely to be known to the court by

⁴² Matthew Wever was, however, charged with incontinence at other times – with a married woman in 1482 and again in 1488 with his servant – but successfully purged himself of both crimes. By 1488, he was serving as vicar in the parish of Stoke Bliss, forty miles to the southeast. HRO, HD4/1/101, ff. 127 and 132; HD4/1/103, f. 133 ff; HD4/1/104, f. 155.

Table 6.1: Naming data for women charged with sexual misconduct with laymen or clerics, 1468-69*

	Full name	Partial name	Unnamed	Total
Women charged with laymen:	168 (51%)	152 (46%)	9 (3%)	329 (100%)
Women charged with clerics:	13 (39%)	17 (52%)	3 (9%)	33 (100%)

their full names than women who had relationships with priests. Approximately half of the women involved with laymen were fully named, suggesting the other 50 percent of these women were socially unimportant in their communities. In the case of women involved with clerics, the evidence is even more striking. In that year, thirty-three women were accused of sexual misconduct with a cleric; fewer than four out of ten were identified by both forename and surname. The rest – roughly 60 percent – were known by forename only, noted simply as “a certain woman” (*quedam mulier*), or left unnamed altogether, with a blank space in place of a name.⁴³ Women who had sex with priests, it seems, were even more likely to be socially marginal than those involved with laymen.

Perhaps the most noteworthy gap concerns those women who were completely unknown to court officers: only 3 percent of women charged with laymen, but 9 percent of women charged with clerics were unidentified. In one of these entries, Roger Asshell, the vicar of Burrington, was charged with incontinence “with a certain whom he holds in his house” (*cum quadam quam tenet in domo sua*).⁴⁴ The blank space left for his

⁴³ See, for example HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 186.

⁴⁴ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 85.

partner's name is revealing: what matters to the court is the unnamed woman's sexual function, not her individual identity.

A woman in a relationship with a priest was more likely to be socially marginal than a woman who was involved with a layman, and a similar trend holds true for a broad comparison of priests and their partners. As a collective group, women who were summoned to court for clerical incontinence were more likely to be socially marginal than the priests summoned for those same charges.

Aggregate naming data about women and clerics who were charged with incontinence in selected years (1445-46, 1468-69, 1487-88, and 1501-02) shows that clerics were more likely than women to be fully identified by court officers. This discrepancy was sometimes stark: in 1468-69, eight out of ten priests were known by both forename and surname, while less than four out of ten women were. In all of these sample years, fewer than 30 percent of priests were identified only by a partial name. Women, on the other hand, were regularly known to the court only by forename or surname, particularly during the mid-fifteenth century.

Only rarely was a priest's identity unknown to court officers; almost always, they knew either his full name or title.⁴⁵ But some women were so marginal that their names were not known either to court officers or to their neighbors. Parishioners from the parish of Coddington reported that their rector lived with his concubine, but they did not know her name: "Next, that [the rector] openly retains in his house his concubine, whose name is

⁴⁵ Unlike women, clerics who were partially named or unnamed were often identified by their titles, e.g., the rector of Billingsley. Even if a priest's name was not known to the court, his title would have mitigated the significance of an incomplete name – at any given time, there was only one rector in Billingsley.

unspecified.”⁴⁶ Even women who were given full names were not necessarily recognized with certainty: one charge from 1397 reads, “Next, [they say] that Sybil Gyfker fornicates with Sir John Mathewe, as they believe. However they do not know whether she is called this or not.”⁴⁷ And sometimes, women were known only by their occupation as domestic servants, as in this entry from 1489: “John Rogeris, vicar of Birley, is incontinent with a certain his servant, from whom he begat a child.”⁴⁸

This aggregate data describes, with broad strokes, the comparative social status of priests and women who were charged with incontinence. With reliable consistency, women who were accused of having sex with priests were more likely to be partially named, or even completely unidentified, in court records than clerics.

But what about differences in status *within* clerical relationships? Evidence gleaned from naming patterns is even more striking when we examine each clerical couple in isolation. Table 6.2 analyzes the names of each clerical couple accused of fornication or concubinage in Hereford’s consistory court in four sample years. Borrowing anthropological categories of marriage, it classifies three types of clerical relationships: hypergamy (a woman is paired with a higher status cleric, e.g., a partially named woman and a fully named cleric),

⁴⁶ HCA, A1779, f. 11v. *Item quod [rector] retinet in domo sua publice concubinam cuius nomen non specificum.*

⁴⁷ HCA, A1779, f. 2v. *Item quod Sibilla Gyfker fornicator cum domino Johannes Mathewe ut credunt. Tamen ignorant an sic vocatur vel non.*

⁴⁸ HRO, HD4/1/104, f. 242. *Dominus Willelmus Rogeris curatus de Old Radnor incontinens est cum quadam serviente sua quam tenet.*

Table 6.2: Status differences in clerical couples charged with incontinence in Hereford's consistory court, selected years

	Hypergamy	Hypogamy	Isogamy
1445-46 (21 charges)	5 (24%)	5 (24%)	11 (52%)
1468-69 (34 charges)	18 (53%)	2 (6%)	14 (41%)
1487-88 (52 charges)	13 (25%)	7 (13%)	32 (62%)
1501-02 (82 charges)	16 (20%)	2 (2%)	64 (78%)
All years (189 charges)	52 (28%)	16 (8%)	121 (64%)

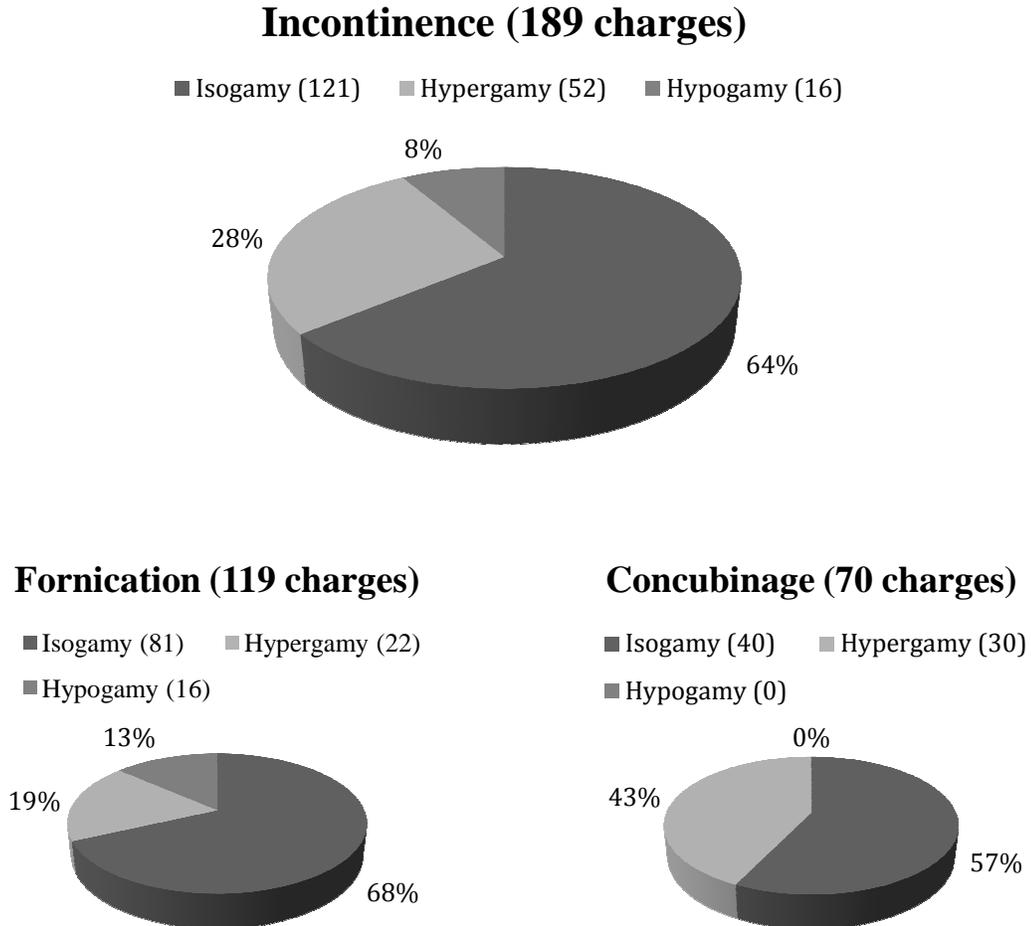
hypogamy (a woman is paired with a lower status man, e.g., a fully named woman and a partially named cleric), and isogamy (a woman is paired with a man of equal status, e.g., a fully named woman and a fully named cleric).

By and large, most of these clerical couples were of roughly equal status, and this trend increased steadily over the course of the fifteenth century. In 1445-56, just under half of these clerical couples were isogamous, but by 1501-02, this proportion had risen to more than three-quarters. Looking closely at relationships between clerics and women of unequal status reveals that women were regularly in hypergamous relationships with clerics, but that hypogamous clerical relationships occurred infrequently. With the exception of 1445-46, in which as many women were paired with higher status clerics as with lower status clerics, hypergamous couples vastly outnumbered hypogamous ones.

The likelihood that a clerical relationship is hypergamous becomes even more pronounced in long-term relationships. Drawing on the same data, Figure 3 separates charges of fornication and concubinage in order to compare proportions of hypergamy, hypogamy, and isogamy in short- and long-term relationships. In these sample years, thirty-eight charges of fornication involved couples of unequal status. Among these, hypogamy was nearly as

common as hypergamy: sixteen couples comprised a woman paired with a lower-status cleric. But that configuration rarely occurred in long-term clerical relationships. Thirty

Figure 3: Status differences in clerical couples charged with fornication and concubinage in Hereford’s consistory court, selected years



couples of unequal status were charged with concubinage, and all were hypergamous – in none of these sample years was a priest coupled with a higher-status woman. The frequency with which stable unions were hypergamous suggests that women might have linked themselves to wealthier men to obtain a secure economic and social berth. This pattern is in line with evidence from continental Europe; Pere Benito i Monclús has argued that priests in late medieval Barcelona often supported their concubines from their income, especially if the

couple lived together, and that “for a certain number of women [being the concubine of a priest] could represent the hope and promise of some economic stability.”⁴⁹

Another aspect of status in the diocese of Hereford was ethnicity. In cases of clerical incontinence, most partners were both English, reflecting the predominantly English population of the diocese.⁵⁰ Table 6.3 provides data on ethnicity for charges of clerical incontinence (both fornication and concubinage) in sample act books. In 1468-69, relatively

Table 6.3: Ethnicity of clerical couples charged with incontinence in Hereford’s consistory court, selected years

	Same ethnicity	Mixed ethnicity	Unknown ethnicity
1445-46 (21 charges)	13 (62%)	4 (19%)	4 (19%)
1468-69 (34 charges)	28 (82%)	3 (9%)	3 (9%)
1487-88 (52 charges)	37 (71%)	12 (23%)	3 (6%)
1501-02 (82 charges)	52 (64%)	20 (24%)	10 (12%)
All years (189 charges)	130 (68.8%)	39 (21%)	20 (10%)

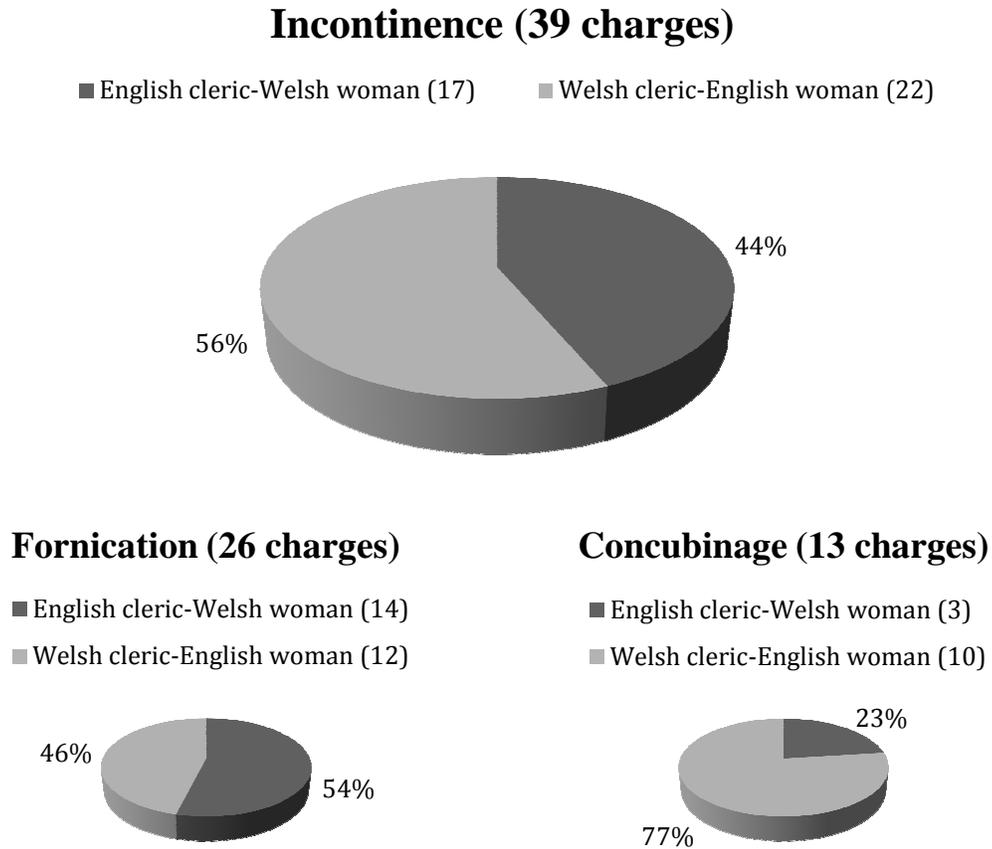
few clerical relationships were cross-ethnic. Leaving out this anomaly, more than 20 percent of clerical couples, on average, were ethnically mixed – a steady trend for most of the

⁴⁹ Pere Benito i Monclús, “Le Clergé Paroissial du Maresme, (Evêché de Barcelone) d’Après les Visites Pastorales (1305-1447): Recherches sur le Thème du Concubinage,” in *Le Clergé Rural dans l’Europe Médiévale et Moderne*, ed. Pierre Bonnassie (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1995), 187-203, quotation at 195. Simone Laqua has also argued that women who lived with priests had a certain level of financial security. Laqua, “Concubinage and the Church in Early Modern Münster,” *Past and Present* (2006), Supplement 1: 72-100.

⁵⁰ My analysis likely under-represents Welsh individuals, especially women, who so often lacked a surname. I have counted as English any women with an English forename, but no recorded surname. By the fifteenth century, it was increasingly common for Welsh men and women to have traditionally English forenames (John, Thomas, William, and Richard for men; Katherine, Elizabeth, and Margaret for women) so some Welsh women who lack surnames cannot be identified as Welsh. John and Sheila Rowlands, *The Surnames of Wales: For Family Historians and Others* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1996), 10-12. See Chapter 3 for an explanation of the criteria I used to determine ethnicity.

fifteenth century.⁵¹ More than half of these cross-ethnic couples were composed of a Welsh cleric and an English woman. Figure 4 shows patterns of ethnicity among cross-ethnic couples, separating charges of fornication and concubinage.

Figure 4: Cross-ethnic clerical couples charged with fornication and concubinage in Hereford's consistory court, selected years



Within these mixed couples, short-term clerical relationships were more often composed of an English cleric and a Welsh woman, but the opposite was true of more stable relationships. Just over half of fornication charges were made against more privileged priests who were sleeping casually with less privileged Welsh women. In contrast, more than three-quarters of couples charged with concubinage were composed of a Welsh priest and an

⁵¹ I have not been able to locate comparable statistics for lay relationships.

English woman. These patterns suggest that socio-economic status and ethnicity could intersect in complex ways, so that an impoverished or marginal Englishwoman would be willing to have a lasting quasi-marital union with a Welsh priest.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that many other women who were the lovers or concubines of priests were socially marginal. Some were transients or migrants: “Sir Thomas, rector of Welsh Bicknor, is incontinent with a certain foreigner (*extranea*) from Goodrich.”⁵² Joan Kiste, Roger Parlor’s concubine, was one such outsider. At the same time that she was charged, the court also accused her brother, William, of fostering lewdness, claiming that he brought her from “beyond the River Severn” to Parlor’s house in Much Dewchurch; William confessed and admitted that the vicar had paid his expenses.⁵³ Others were themselves the products of unlawful unions, like “a certain illegitimate daughter of John Hardewike,” who was caught in the room of a rector named Thomas Rees.⁵⁴ And some clerical concubines had formerly been (or still were) in illicit relationships with laymen or other clerics. In 1494, a chaplain named John Moris was charged with incontinence with a woman who was known to the court as “the concubine of William Bronwiche.”⁵⁵ And in 1488, a married layman named Edmund Hodnett committed adultery with Elizabeth Dudum, “the concubine of Sir William Rogers, parish priest of Ludlow.”⁵⁶ That these women were

⁵² HRO, HD4/1/106, f. 187.

⁵³ HRO, HD4/1/113, f. 221. *Willelmus Kyst frater dicte Johanne fovet lenocinium inter eosdem quia ipse vexit eam ultra Zabrinam [the Severn] ad domum vicarii prout alias fatetur quia vicarius solvit pro expensis.*

⁵⁴ HRO, HD4/1/105, f. 145. *Dominus Thomas Rees rector de Peturstow incontinens est cum quadam filia illegittima Johannis Hardewike nuper de Rosse. Erat capta in camera dicti domini Thome per Willelmum ap Gwilym, et Willelmum Vachan, Ricardum Vachan, et Philippum Peturstow.*

⁵⁵ HRO, HD4/1/106, f. 248. *Idem dominus Johannes [Moris, capellanus de Stoke Edith] incontinens est cum ___ Bentheloyde, concubina Willelmi Bronwiche.*

involved in multiple illicit relationships suggests that they may have been unable to make good marriages.

To sum up, women in relationships with priests were more likely to be low status, marginal figures in their communities than women involved with laymen. Many clerical relationships were hypergamous, and although the gap between the status of priests and their sexual partners varied over the course of the fifteenth century, it was always present. Perhaps these women could not make good marriages; perhaps they allied with clerics in order to improve their social status or to gain economic stability. Regardless of the reason behind this pattern, I would like to consider a possible ramification: the vilification of clerical “wives” as venal. Whether or not they were actually achieving financial security, the concubines of priests were accused of drawing money away from the parish and church. This image was a perduring one in medieval literature, and what might have been a beneficial aspect for a woman who undertook a relationship with a priest became transformed into a damaging cultural stereotype.

Clerical Concubines in Hereford’s Consistory Court

Clerical concubines might have gained stability in a long-term relationship or through financial support, but they faced significant disadvantages in the church courts. When Joan Kiste appeared in court in September 1517, the judge charged her with living with Roger Parlor, the vicar of Much Dewchurch. Roger and Joan, the court alleged, had been living together for more than a year and, for a period of four months, Roger had kept Joan in his house “continuously and secretly, so that she could not hear divine services outside the house.” Although both Roger and Joan were summoned, only Joan appeared in court, where

⁵⁶ HRO, HD4/1/103, f. 265.

she confessed to the sin and was sentenced to be flogged three times around her parish church and three more around Hereford cathedral, dressed in the white clothing of a penitent and carrying a candle. The commissary of the court formally warned her, under penalty of major excommunication, to abstain from having sex with Roger. In October, however, a court officer reported that they were still living together, despite the commissary's warning. Roger finally appeared in court to respond to the charge and, in January, cleared himself through the process of canonical purgation. The charge against him was dismissed. Joan however, was temporarily suspended from church services and given eight days to leave the parish. By March, she was living five miles away in a neighboring village.⁵⁷ The next year, however, they were charged for relapsing in sin and, by October, 1523, they had three or four children. Despite being warned that he would lose his benefice and incur a fine of £20 if he did not give up Joan, Roger was not disciplined until six years after their relationship had come to the attention of the court. Even then, he received only three floggings to her six (and there is no confirmation that he ever performed this penance).⁵⁸

Joan's experience with the church court was all too typical of clerical concubines. They were more likely to be punished than their clerical partners, and they were punished more severely. Although priests were often assigned penances they could perform in private, women were always given standard, publicly humiliating penances. Some women received harsh penances even when their partners went unpunished. And unlike lay concubines, who

⁵⁷ HRO, HD4/1/113, ff. 221, 226, 232, 234, 246. *Dominus Rogerus Parlor vicarius de Dewchurch incontiens est cum Johanna Kiste quam habuit in camera et domo sua continue et secreta ita quod non audivit divina servicia extra domo a die Assencionis Domini ultimo usque ad diem Mercurii post festum sancti Batholomei ultimum preteritum* (f. 221).

⁵⁸ HRO, HD4/1/115, ff. 173, 179, and 191; HD4/1/116, ff. 200 and 209.

might be encouraged or coerced into marrying their partners, concubines did not have this option and were, instead, often evicted from their homes.

Unfailingly, women were punished more often than clerics. Table 6.4 shows the penances assigned to each man and woman who either confessed or declared guilty of incontinence (both fornication and concubinage) in four sample years.

Table 6.4: Penances assigned to clerical couples for fornication and concubinage in Hereford’s consistory court, selected years*

Charge	Name of Couple	Man’s penance	Woman’s penance
1445-46			
Fornication	Richard ap David, deacon Joan Wethe	none specified	12 floggings (reduced to 6)
Fornication	Richard Jenkenys Alice Hopton (singlewoman)	none specified	3 floggings
Concubinage	John ap Jenkyn, vicar Amy	none specified	12 floggings (reduced to 6)
Fornication	Thomas Bodelyche, chaplain Margaret Frer (married)	none specified	12 floggings (reduced to 6)
1468-69			
Concubinage	Thomas, chaplain Agnes	none specified	7 floggings
Concubinage	John Carpynter, chaplain Alice	say 3 psalters	[evicted]
Concubinage	John Clamstede, perpetual vicar Agnes Willott	none specified	[evicted]
Concubinage	Lewis ap Hopkyn, curate Dyddgu	say 7 psalters, 7-day fast, pilgrimage	none specified
Concubinage	Griffith ap Meredith Angharad	say 7 psalters	none specified
Concubinage	Roger Asshell, vicar unnamed woman	none specified	[evicted]
Concubinage	John Verne, rector Katherine	say 7 psalters, 7-day fast, pilgrimage, oblations	[evicted]
Fornication	Thomas, curate Joan	say 7 psalters, 7-day fast, offering	none specified
Concubinage	John, chaplain “a certain suspicious woman” (married)	none specified	[evicted]
1487-88			

Charge	Name of Couple	Man's penance	Woman's penance
Concubinage	John Parker, prior Alice Mowbrey (married)	none specified	4 floggings
Fornication	James Eston, rector Matilda Benett	4 floggings	6 floggings
Concubinage	John Guttyns, curate Matilda verch John ap Owen	8 floggings, not called to penance	8 floggings, commuted (3s 4d)
Fornication	John Duppa, chaplain Margaret verch Thomas	none specified	10 floggings
Fornication	Philip ap Owen Grother, chaplain Isy	none specified	4 floggings
Concubinage	Owen ap Griffith, vicar Anne Schowe	6 floggings, commuted (7s)	unspecified floggings, commuted (7s)
Concubinage	Thomas Bulkyn, rector Ellen Hoptkyn	none specified	8 floggings
Concubinage	John Peryn, curate Joan Garlond	3 floggings	none specified
Concubinage	Thomas Rees, rector Joan Garlond	6 floggings	6 floggings
Concubinage	Thomas Lynke, curate Agnes Wilyams (singlewoman)	3 floggings	8 floggings & banished from diocese
Fornication	John Heynys, chaplain Alice Hyll	3 floggings	none specified
Fornication	Henry, curate Margery Snowball	3 floggings, refused to perform	none specified
1501-02			
Concubinage	Thomas Jeralde, rector Agnes Lacer	none specified	3 floggings
Fornication	Thomas Jeralde, rector Agnes Voghan (married)	none specified	3 floggings
Concubinage	Richard Morgan, chaplain Isabel Voghan	none specified	12 floggings
Concubinage	John Taylor, vicar Katherine Pyper [†]	4 floggings, commuted (40s)	3 floggings
Concubinage	Thomas More, chaplain Isabel Wodward	6 floggings, commuted	none specified
Concubinage	John Taland, rector Joan	[man died]	6 floggings
Concubinage	John ap Gwilim, vicar Sisly	unspecified floggings, commuted	unspecified floggings, commuted
Fornication	John Duppa, chaplain Margaret	2 floggings	none specified

Charge	Name of Couple	Man's penance	Woman's penance
Fornication	Walter Blacney, chaplain Margaret Myllyng	4 floggings, commuted	none specified
Fornication	Thomas Myer, chaplain Joan Welbe (married)	none specified	8 floggings, commuted (10s)
Fornication	John Garway, Joan Welbe (married) [‡]	none specified	as above
Fornication	Lewis ap Madoc, chaplain Eleanor Dampforde	none specified	8 floggings
Concubinage	Thomas Lynke, chaplain Margaret	4 floggings, commuted (6s 8d)	none specified
Fornication	Thomas Mustell, chaplain Agnes Wyllies (singlewoman)	none specified	unspecified floggings, commuted (13s 4d)

* This table lists cases only in which penances were assigned to one or both defendants. When I have noted a penance as “none specified,” it means just that. In some cases, it is possible that a priest’s penance was assigned and fulfilled privately (though even this is usually recorded); mostly likely, no penance was ever assigned.

† Katherine Pyper’s penance was not assigned until the following year, on the same day John Taylor commuted his. (HRO, HD4/1/109, ff. 5, 15.)

‡ The two charges against Joan Welbe were punished as one, so I have not counted them separately.

During 1445-46, the judge assigned penances to four clerical couples. While none of the priests involved in these charges was punished, all four women were. Although five priests were punished in 1468-69, they were all given private penances; the six women punished received public floggings. In 1487-88, nine women and eight priests were given penances, and in 1501-02, nine women, but only six priests received penance.⁵⁹ In total, of the individuals assigned penances in these years, twenty-four were women and nineteen were clerics. An additional five women were evicted from their residences; although eviction was not a form of penance, it was certainly a punishment. Sixty percent of those punished, then, were women.

⁵⁹ In contrast, Marie Kelleher found that clerical concubines rarely faced official punishment in the diocese of Barcelona, where priests paid a set fine for their concubines, though clerical couples were often forced to live separately. Marie Kelleher, “‘Like Man and Wife’: Clerics’ Concubines in the Diocese of Barcelona,” *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002): 349-60.

Punished more often than clerics, women were also punished more harshly – both in terms of the types of penances they were assigned and the severity of those punishments. While women were always ordered to undergo corporal floggings, priests might receive a penance they could perform in private. Thirty-seven individuals were given floggings in these years, and only fourteen of them were clerics. Women made up the bulk – 62 percent – of those assigned public, bodily punishment. In 1468-69, five priests were assigned penances for their sin, but they were all private atonements – saying psalters, fasting, and sometimes making a pilgrimage or an offering – unlike the publicly humiliating penance of being flogged around a parish church. In contrast, all but one of the clerical concubines in that year were evicted from their homes.

Even when priests were assigned floggings, they usually received fewer than women did. When John Taylor, vicar of Almeley, and his concubine Katherine Pyper were summoned to court in 1501-02, he confessed the sin and was assigned two floggings which he commuted to a fine; she was given three floggings.⁶⁰ Their case was the only one in my sample years in which the judge punished both individuals, but aggregates confirm the disparity seen in their case. Twelve charges of clerical incontinence resulted in punishment in the court year of 1487-88; eight men and nine women were assigned penance. James Eston was given only four floggings while Matilda Benett received six; Thomas Lykne was assigned three floggings, but his concubine, Agnes Willyams, was assigned eight floggings and banished from the diocese.

The inconsistency between number of floggings given to women and men was consistent over time. On average, priests subject to corporal penance in 1487-88 received 4.5

⁶⁰ HRO, HD4/1/109, ff. 5, 15.

floggings, but women received 6.8. In 1501-02, when the court punished fifteen individuals, men were assigned an average of four floggings, women, six. That year also saw the greatest discrepancy between penances for men and women: the lightest penance assigned that year – two floggings – was given to a priest, and the harshest – twelve floggings – was given to a woman.

The discrepancy between two and twelve circuits around the parish church is obvious enough, but the gravity of this inequality becomes even starker when put into its social context. In 1486, John Smyth, the rector of Montgomery, was charged with incontinence with Gwenlean verch Lello, with whom he had two children. He was assigned a penance of three floggings around his parish church, while Gwenlean was given twelve floggings.⁶¹ Floggings were performed during or after mass on successive Sundays, and John should have finished his punishment within three weeks. But Gwenlean would have been paraded before her parish and community every Sunday for twelve weeks. The ritual of her humiliation – performed weekly for three months – would have reminded her kin, friends, and neighbors of her sin over and over again. Her shame might even have been compounded if John, her rector and lover, was the one wielding the rod.

My sample suggests a growing severity toward misbehaving priests: near the end of the fifteenth century, priests were more commonly assigned corporal floggings, rather than private penances of fasting and prayer. This apparent escalation, however, is offset by priests who either commuted their floggings and paid a fine, or simply were never called to penance. Overall, priests were no more likely than women to commute their penances: six men and six women commuted penances in this sample. But when compared to their own partners, they

⁶¹ HRO, HD4/1/102, f. 114.

fulfilled their penances less often. John Taylor commuted his physical penance in 1487-88, but his partner Katherine Pyper did not. While Matilda verch John ap Owen paid to commute her penance of eight floggings in the same year, the court simply did not call her partner, John Guttyns, to fulfill his.⁶² At the same time, the commutation of penances into fines was becoming more common throughout England's ecclesiastical courts – a shift that historians have linked to the decreasing effectiveness of church courts in the late medieval and early modern periods.⁶³ This trend toward discipline, then, may have been meaningless.

Even more striking than disparate punishments was when a priest established his innocence but his concubine was nonetheless assigned a penance, as in the case of Joan Kiste and Roger Parlor. Theirs was not an unusual situation: other clerics escaped punishment while their partners were punished. In 1487, John ap Meredith, rector of Lydham, was accused of holding Agnes Benwyn as his concubine. Although he was never even summoned to court, Agnes appeared, confessed, and was given four floggings.⁶⁴ When accused of fornication with Eleanor verch Hoell in 1523, Maurice ap Hew appeared in court, denied the charge, and successfully purged himself. Eleanor was not as fortunate. Perhaps she was less savvy about court procedure, or perhaps she could not gather enough compurgators to swear to her character, but, for whatever reason, Eleanor confessed to the crime and was assigned three floggings around her parish church.⁶⁵

⁶² HRO, HD4/1/109, ff. 5, 15 (John Taylor and Katherine Pyper); HD4/1/103, f. 41 (Matilda verch John ap Owen and John Guttyns).

⁶³ Richard Wunderli has argued this point most thoroughly, *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1981).

⁶⁴ HRO, HD4/1/103, ff. 77, 81, 84, 88.

⁶⁵ HRO, HD4/1/116, ff. 85 and 90. Maurice ap Hew, however, did not leave her at the commissary's mercy, and appeared before the court two months later and paid to commute her penance.

Other women suffered even more drastic repercussions. Not only did Joan Kiste, for example, receive a more severe punishment than Roger Parlor, but she was also forced to leave her home. All concubines – lay or clerical – were vulnerable because they were not formally married. But clerical concubines faced a particular disadvantage because they could not marry their partners. The legal practice of abjuration *sub pena nubendi*, designed to combat lay concubinage by using marriage as a penalty for illicit relationships, provided ecclesiastical courts with a tool to encourage or coerce marriage. Since this practice was not applicable in a case of clerical concubinage, court officers took a different approach. Couples who had on-going relationships, but did not live in the same house, were usually given a formal admonition to end their liaison and abstain from sin. In 1456, John Mote, the rector of Aston, was warned to abstain “from each suspicious place and private conversation” with Margery Walle, under penalty of 40s.⁶⁶ Richard Loghton, a priest, was formally warned not to sin with a woman named Helen, and that if he henceforth had “a suspicious sexual connection” with her, he would be suspended from divine office.⁶⁷ But if a priest and his concubine lived together, court officials attempted to separate the couple by evicting a woman from her home, her parish, or the diocese.

Hereford officials had another option. In her research on the thirteenth-century diocese of Rouen, Jennifer Thibodeaux has found that the bishop sometimes forced unchaste

⁶⁶ HRO, HD4/1/92, f. 45. *Vir comparet purgat se secundum formam alias sibi indictam et monitus est quod absteat ab omni loco suspecto et privato colloquio cum dicta muliere sub pena xl s.*

⁶⁷ HRO, HD4/1/91, f. 106. *Et monitus est quod absteat a peccato et quod decetero non suspecte adhereat predicte Helene sub pena suspensionis ab officio.*

priests to exchange benefices in order to separate them from their concubines.⁶⁸ This strategy was not adopted in Hereford, however. Although priests occasionally lost their benefices, as we saw in Chapter 5, only rarely were priests themselves forced to move, and I have found only one case in which a priest was ordered to leave the diocese. When John Peryn, the curate of Garway, confessed to incontinence with Joan Garrold in February 1487, he was given a penance of three floggings around Hereford Cathedral. He took an oath – *tactis sanctis dei evangelis* – that he would not celebrate mass within the diocese after Easter and that he would leave Hereford entirely. Although he did not obey immediately, he had left by the following October.⁶⁹ The court officers of Hereford routinely targeted women, not clerics and it was nearly always the woman who faced eviction and bore the brunt of the court’s force.⁷⁰

The favored solution in Hereford was to force clerical concubines to leave while their companions remained *in situ*, and they had a number of tactics to achieve that end. John

⁶⁸ Jennifer Thibodeaux, “Man of the Church or Man of the Village?: The Conflict of Masculinities among Priests in the Thirteenth-Century Diocese of Rouen” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 2004), 101-2.

⁶⁹ HRO, HD4/1/102, ff. 167, 177, 185; HD4/1/103, f. 139. *Et dictus vir promisit tactis sacris dei evangelis quod recederet a diocese et quod ulterius non celebraret <divina> infra diocesem Hereford post festum Pasche ultimum elapsum etc. Postea certificatum erat quod vir recedit in criminem cum dicta muliere et quod non recessit a diocese. Ideo Judex formam retroactam eundem excommunicavit in scriptis et emanavit executio decano decanatus ad certificandum istis die et loco. Iam certificatum est per decanum quod est sic denunciatus etc. Et ut dicitur recessit a diocese Hereford. Ideo dimittitur usque revenit.* It is unclear why the judge prosecuted John Peryn so vehemently, or why he took the unusual action of forcing a cleric to leave the diocese, especially considering that Peryn was likely a native of Hereford. (The records of his ordination do not indicate that he was from a different diocese; see HRO, AL19/11, ff. 131v. and 132v.). Joan Garrold, who confessed to sleeping with both John Peryn and Thomas Rees, the rector of Peterstow, was also driven out of the diocese (HRO, HD4/1/102, f. 185).

⁷⁰ This strategy was also used, to some extent, in the medieval diocese of Barcelona and more widely in early modern Münster, where ecclesiastical officials regularly ordered clerics to abandon their concubines. Kelleher, “Like Man and Wife”; Laqua, “Concubinage and the Church,” especially 76-79.

Brewer and Margaret Baker, a married woman, lived together in his vicarage at Avenbury. Summoned to court in 1481, Brewer denied that they had a sexual relationship, but the judge nonetheless ordered him to evict Margaret within just two days.⁷¹ It might seem reasonable for court officers to insist that a beneficed priest – living in a parsonage and supporting himself on glebe lands – remove his concubine from these premises, but evictions occurred even when the cleric was merely a chaplain, living by his own earnings and not in church-owned property. In October 1481, for instance, Thomas Gogh, an unbeneficed chaplain, and his concubine, Margaret Bygold, were summoned to court. Thomas appeared before the judge the following February, confessed to the sin, and agreed to evict Margaret or face a penalty of 40s.⁷² But two months later, he again appeared and confessed that they were still living together. The judge gave Thomas a penance of seven floggings, but immediately postponed them. When Thomas appeared in court six months later, he was deemed to be “of good conduct” and was not called to perform his penance; Margaret, it seems, had left his home and was living elsewhere.⁷³

Margaret Bygold was initially given only four days to leave her home, and many other evictions were similarly preemptory. Thomas Wilmottis, the vicar of Bridstow, successfully purged himself of a charge of incontinence with Maud Jeynkyns in 1507. Maud, too, denied the sin and eventually purged herself, but when Thomas appeared in court later that year, the judge warned him to evict Maud from his home within two days, under penalty of major excommunication and deprivation of his benefice. More than two months later, however, he again appeared and confessed that she was still living in his house. This time,

⁷¹ HRO, HD4/1/100, ff. 225, 230 and HD4/1/101, ff. 164, 168.

⁷² HRO, HD4/1/101, ff. 118, 129.

⁷³ HRO, HD4/1/101, ff. 129, 131, 135, 138.

the judge repeated his order, adding that Thomas should forcibly remove Maud's belongings from his house; Maud was given only three days to find another place to live.⁷⁴ John Clamstede, the vicar of Stoke St. Milborough, was given only twenty-four hours to evict his concubine, Agnes Willott, in 1448.⁷⁵

Court officers might force a woman to leave not only her home, but also the parish in which she lived. We have already seen this in the case of Joan Kiste, who had to leave Much Dewchurch in 1517. Other women faced even worse fates, for they were driven out of the diocese entirely. Agnes Willyams was one such woman. Originally from Dinedor, Agnes was living with the sister of her long-standing lover, Thomas Lynke, in St. Weonard's, a village about twelve miles away from her home and five miles from Thomas' cure of Much Birch. When they were summoned to court for incontinence in October 1486, Agnes confessed and was assigned a particularly harsh penance of eight floggings, which she did not fulfill. When she appeared in court again a few months later, the judge essentially bribed her to disappear, offering to postpone her penance if she promised to leave the diocese within a week. But when the court reconvened later that year, she had not left, was still in a relationship with Thomas, and was now pregnant. After being suspended from church services and then excommunicated, she had finally left the diocese by the following February, presumably with a newborn child. As for Thomas, he escaped relatively unscathed, receiving a penance of three floggings when he confessed to the relationship.⁷⁶ In some cases, the court even

⁷⁴ HRO, HD4/1/110, f. 246. *Et Judex precepit eidem remove <citra diem Sabbate proximum extunc> dictam Matildam a domo et a cohabitatione sua sub pena excommunicationis ac sub pena privationis beneficii sui. ... Judex precepit eidem remove bona mulieris a domo sua citra diem Jovis proximum sub pena excommunicationis quia fatetur quod mulier erat in domo ipsius citra ultimam curiam etc.*

⁷⁵ HRO, HD4/1/94, ff. 56, 59.

⁷⁶ HRO, HD4/1/102, ff. 167, 185; HD4/1/103, ff. 139-40, 149.

prosecuted women who left the diocese and later returned. After Thomas Bulkyn, the rector of Munsley, died in 1490, his concubine, Elena Hopkyn, left the diocese and the charge against her was dismissed. But when she returned the following year, she was summoned to court again. When she left the diocese once more, her case was again dismissed.⁷⁷

These cases are particularly interesting because, over the course of a year or more, the court officers used all the weapons in their arsenal – incentives, threats, coercion – to separate clerical couples. These multiple weapons, combined with the court’s tenacity, meant that many priests were eventually forced to evict their concubines. Only rarely do Hereford’s court records provide evidence of where these women went or what happened to them after they were evicted.

Recessit a diocese. “She has left the diocese.” This simple statement is often the only information we have about the fate of a priest’s concubine. Although some clerical relationships continued even after a concubine was ordered by the court to leave her lover, these women were usually left to fend for themselves much of the time. Some relationships continued even when the couples lived apart: Ellen, the concubine of William Flemying, a vicar in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, was living about 100 miles away in a village in Hereford when she was once again accused of being his concubine.⁷⁸ In 1522, Elizabeth Hoptkyns confessed that David ap Howell, the vicar of Tidenham, with whom she had been charged with incontinence, was keeping her and their four children outside the diocese in

⁷⁷ HRO, HD4/1/103, ff. 127, 133, 337, 339; HD4/1/104, ff. 155, 159, 359, 366. *Vir mortuus est et mulier recessit a diocese ideo dimittitur. Iam trahit apud Aylton et emanavit executio curato ibidem erga proximum. Iam trahit moram apud Wormsley ut dicitur.*

⁷⁸ HRO, HD4/1/102, f. 139.

Wales.⁷⁹ These two cases imply some sort of economic maintenance; rarely, more formal financial agreements were recorded in which priests agreed to pay alimony to their former lovers to support their children. In an unusual (and tantalizingly brief) case from 1522, the court clerk noted that the vicar of King's Pyon, had gotten an unnamed woman pregnant and was paying her alimony, although it is unclear whether the payment was voluntary or had been ordered by the court.⁸⁰

But in many cases, the abandoned lovers of priests were on their own. One priest's concubine from Jersey secretly traveled to England after her lover threw her out of his house, because she "for shame durst not come home again amongst her friends, nor be seen in the country."⁸¹ In her research on clerical concubinage in early modern Münster, Simone Laqua found that many concubines moved to neighboring villages, sometimes living with the relatives of their former lovers.⁸² The child of a priest's concubine from the diocese of Barcelona starved to death because its mother received no assistance from the rector who had been her lover.⁸³ Miles Coverdale, a Protestant reformer who denounced clerical concubinage and described priests' concubines as "whores" and "harlots," noted the ease with which these women were cast aside: "And [priests] even with like audacity put [their

⁷⁹ HRO, HD4/1/115, ff. 217, 223, 228, 232, 234.

⁸⁰ HRO, HD4/1/115, f. 239. See R.H. Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 108-9, for a discussion of medieval alimony.

⁸¹ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 153.

⁸² Laqua, "Concubinage and the Church," especially 76-79.

⁸³ Kelleher, "Like Man and Wife."

concubines] away from them again, and shame never a whit.”⁸⁴ Although Coverdale might have been exaggerating, a court entry from 1481 lends credence to his assessment of the ease with which these women were sometimes dismissed. When Thomas Gogh was summoned to court for his relationship with Margaret Bygold, he appeared before the judge, “confessed the crime, and of his own will, he promised to turn her from their home within four days.”⁸⁵

Clerical concubines were among the most vulnerable of late medieval women. On the one hand, the informality of concubinage might have allowed some women to improve their social and economic situations. But any advantages were gained at great risk. A clerical concubine was always subject to moral censure. If the relationship was a matter of public comment or complaint, her honor might be damaged, and her chances of making a good marriage diminished. If the church courts took notice of the relationship, she and her children might be evicted from their home.

Clerical concubines and single mothers were not the only women to be cast out from villages, parishes, and dioceses. Banishment was a common punishment for prostitutes, and it was one of many similarities between the treatment and perceptions of prostitutes and clerical concubines. Concubines faced real disadvantages, such as evictions, lack of financial security, and the inability to inherit, but they were presented with less tangible difficulties, too. Despite the social tolerance of clerical families on the ground, the figure of the clerical concubine was not an honorable one. Clerical celibacy, sexuality, and constructions of

⁸⁴ Miles Coverdale, “The Defence of a Certain Poor Christian Man,” in *Remains of Miles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter*, ed. George Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), 484.

⁸⁵ HRO, HD4/1/101, ff. 118, 129. ...*fatetur articulum et sponte promisit se remove dictam mulierem a cohabitationem suam et a domo infra iiii dies tunc sequentes sub pena xl solidorum* (f. 129).

gender interacted in complex and unexpected ways, shaping both the intangible stuff of late medieval English culture and the lived experiences of ordinary women and men – a convergence that Margery Gurney experienced first-hand when she was called a whore and forced to leave Hereford.

Chapter 7: Gender, Sexuality, Misogyny

In the late sixth century, Gregory of Tours wrote *Liber in Gloria Confessorum*, a collection of stories about Merovingian Gaul. Along with tales of hermits and saints, Gregory related the life of Namatius, a fifth-century bishop of Clermont. Namatius' wife, although unnamed, was known by the title customarily used for the wives of bishops: *episcopa*. A model of piety and humility, she was the donor of a nearby basilica, which she arranged to have painted with frescoes. According to legend, "She used to hold a book in her lap reading the stories of old events, pointing out to the painters what they ought to represent on the walls."¹ Contrast Gregory's reverential anecdote about the *episcopa* of Clermont to Peter Damian's description of Vincentia, the wife of St. Severus, a fourth-century archbishop: Vincentia, an agent of the devil, dominated and verbally abused her husband, "inflicting abusive words and stimulat[ing] her tongue to the injury of biting rebukes."²

The vast disparity between these two descriptions of *episcopae* is emblematic of the transformation of the figure of the priest's wife during the middle ages. In the early medieval period, *episcopae*, *sacerdotissae*, and *presbyteriae* were respected women who sometimes received special blessings at the ordinations of their husbands or performed quasi-sacerdotal

¹ Gregory of Tours, *Liber in Gloria Confessorum*, as quoted in Brian Brennan, "'Episcopae': Bishops' Wives Viewed in Sixth-Century Gaul," *Church History* 54 (1985): 311-23, quotation at 317.

² Peter Damian, "Sermon on Severus," as quoted in Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 98. In earlier accounts of the couple, Vincentia plays a crucial role in the miracles for which Severus was sanctified; Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 87-90.

functions.³ And yet, by the mid-twelfth century, they were “charmings of the clergy..., women of the ancient enemy, bitches, sows, screech-owls, night-owls, she-wolves, blood-suckers..., demi-godesses, sirens, witches.”⁴

According to James Brundage, the church had stopped prosecuting clerical concubines by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: “Much of the fervor seems to have gone out of the campaign against the concubines of clerics, and Church officials during this period at last abandoned the strategy of discouraging clerical concubinage by punishing the women who were really its victims.”⁵ What we have seen in this dissertation, however, is that Brundage was wrong, at least for Hereford. Although concubinage was certainly tolerated in the fifteenth century, the women involved with priests still bore the brunt of punishment for these relationships.

The accepted view that English clerics were chaste in comparison with their neighbors on the Continent is untenable in the face of evidence from Hereford. Consistory court records show that levels of fornication and concubinage among the fifteenth-century clergy in Hereford were typical for western Europe, not exceptional. Data from this diocese might not be characteristic of every English diocese, but Hereford’s rather average demography, economy, and clerical population attest to its usefulness as a representative case-study. Beyond mere statistics about how many priests had sex with women, these records have much to tell us about clerical relationships.

³ Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy: The Eleventh-Century Debates*, Text and Studies in Religion 12 (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 33; Jo Ann McNamara, “Canossa and the Ungendering of the Public Man,” in *Render unto Caesar: The Religious Sphere in World Politics*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet and Donald W. Treadgold (Lanham, MD: American University Press, 1995), 131-50.

⁴ Peter Damian, as quoted in Barstow, *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy*, 60-61.

⁵ James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 405.

Although some priests only had short-term affairs with women, clerical concubinage closely resembled lay marriage. Priests and their concubines were together for years or decades. They often lived together, raising children, and sharing economic resources. Even when they did not share a home, a priest might be described as “holding” his concubine, a term which implied maintenance, financial support, and, perhaps, control. Many (but not all) of these clerical families were tolerated – if not embraced – by rural English society, an integration which might have been eased by the similarities between concubinage and marriage.

Data about the social and economic status of priests and concubines is hard to come by, but court records offer some strong evidence about these women. Naming patterns, cross-ethnic relationships, and anecdotal evidence all point to the low status of women who partnered with priests – particularly those in stable, long-term unions. Clerical concubines faced some of the same disadvantages as lay concubines – unwanted pregnancy, financial insecurity, and social disapproval – but their situation was far more precarious. In the church courts, concubines were punished more often than their partners, and their penances were more severe. Unlike lay concubines, who were coerced into marrying their partners whenever possible, clerical concubines were separated from their lovers, which often translated to eviction. Moral censure of priests’ partners drew on centuries of hatred and denigration of priests’ wives, making the clerical concubine one of the most reviled figures in late medieval culture.

In light of this evidence, I aim to accomplish two things in this conclusion. First, I take a new approach toward the construction of clerical masculinity, arguing that clerical sexuality needs to be factored into scholarly discussions about what it meant to be a priest in

the late middle ages. Second, I discuss a long-term continuity in the portrayal of clerical concubines, tracing one way by which elite ideas about women could affect an ordinary life.

Clerical Sexuality and Masculinity

In 1501, a vicar named Roger Homme was summoned to appear before the church court of the diocese of Hereford. The judge charged him with sexual incontinence, alleging that he was having a sexual relationship with Isabel Herford, a married woman from a neighboring village. Despite Roger's vow of chastity and Isabel's marital status, theirs was no casual affair. According to the charge, the two lovers behaved as husband and wife: "Sir Roger Homme, vicar of Canon Frome, is incontinent with Isabel Herford, wife of James Herford of Munsley, whom he holds [and] from whom he produced a child, as if he married her."⁶

Roger Homme and other priests who had either brief affairs or longer, marital-like relationships with women expose an unexplored issue in the history of the late medieval clergy. Historians, assuming that priests complied with the ecclesiastical mandate of celibacy, have downplayed clerical sexual activity and its ramifications for clerical masculinity. Because the standard markers of lay masculinity – sexual virility, skill in combat, and heading a household – were unavailable to celibate priests, some have argued that they carved out new ways of being masculine. Unchaste priests complicate this straightforward equation, and although they might have been in the minority, they constituted a visible element of the priesthood, especially among the parish clergy. After all, who in the small, remote village of Canon Frome could have been unaware of Roger's relationship with

⁶ Herefordshire Record Office (HRO), HD4/1/108, f. 182. *Dominus Rogerus Homme vicarius de Canon Frome incontinens est cum Isabella Herford uxore Jacobi Herford de Munsley quam tenet ex qua procreavit prolem ut ipsam duxit.*

Isabel? It may seem like common sense that *all* priests were not *always* celibate, but this overlooked aspect of clerical life has particular implications for constructions of clerical identity and masculinity.

Most scholarship on clerical masculinity has focused on the ways by which clerics were *distinguished* from laymen. As discussed in Chapter 2, historians have argued that in the wake of the twelfth-century ecclesiastical reforms, clerical masculinity was redefined in opposition to secular masculinity. Maureen Miller has maintained that after the ban on clerical marriage, the clergy were denied outward markers of lay masculinity. Rather than negating their masculinity, clerics' distance from women helps them define "an extreme masculinity," one more powerful than lay masculinity because "it was not weakened by association with the weaker sex." According to Jacqueline Murray, clerical masculinity and secular masculinity were contradictory belief systems. Secular masculine identity was defined in terms of military prowess and sexual virility, while clerical masculinity "eschewed both." Celibate men, Murray has claimed, attained masculinity by redefining it: clerics (monks, in particular) appropriated military language, framing the achievement of chastity as a battle against lustful temptations and redirecting military values to their spiritual struggles.⁷

Like these continental scholars, historians of medieval England have also argued that clerical masculinity was distinct from secular masculinity. Robert Swanson and Patricia Cullum have both highlighted the incompatibility of lay and clerical models of masculinity. As Swanson has put it, clerics were *male*, but they were not *men*; they were, instead, "emasculine." Having renounced masculinity, clerics achieved a "genderless status." Because

⁷ Maureen C. Miller, "Masculinity, Reform, and Clerical Culture: Narratives of Episcopal Holiness in the Gregorian Era," *Church History* 72 (2003): 25-52, quotations at 28 and 50; Jacqueline Murray, "Masculinizing Religious Life: Sexual Prowess, and Battle for Chastity and Monastic Identity," in *Holiness and Masculinity*, 24-42, quotation at 25.

they could not marry, have children, or carry weapons, parish clergy, were particularly caught between norms of lay masculinity and their status as a third, emasculine gender. Their chastity challenged normal social patterns, “particularly threatening familial and household relationships between men and women as rulers and subjects.” Because they were denied marriage, clerics could also not fully participate in social relationships. Cullum has identified a fundamental conflict between lay and clerical masculinities, arguing that young clergy were forced to make a choice: “to keep their vows and risk their masculinity; or to confirm their masculinity at the expense of their vows.” Clerics were not fully masculine, Cullum has asserted, nor were they socially adults, because they did not marry and become heads of independent households.⁸ Assuming that clerics embraced and practiced celibacy, continental and English scholars have left little room for an exploration of ways in which characteristics of clerical and secular masculinities might have overlapped, especially in terms of sexuality.

⁸ R.N. Swanson, “Angels Incarnate: Clergy and Masculinity from Gregorian Reform to Reformation,” in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, 160-177, quotation at 167; P.H. Cullum, “Clergy, Masculinity and Transgression in Late Medieval England,” in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, 178-96, quotation at 183. In other work, Cullum further explores the different life experiences of clerics and lay people, arguing that the clergy had a different life-cycle, due, in part, to their celibacy. Cullum, “Life-Cycle and Life-Course in a Clerical and Celibate Milieu: Northern England in the Later Middle Ages,” in *Time and Eternity: The Medieval Discourse*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz and Gerson Moreno-Riaño (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 271-81. This view of clerics as a “third gender” continues to dominate continental scholarship, as well: see Jacqueline Murray, “One Flesh, Two Sexes, Three Genders?” in *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*, ed. Lisa M. Bitel and Felice Lifshitz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 34-51. To date, only one English historian has addressed clerical sexual misbehavior and taken into account the effects of unchastity on clerical identity. In a recent article, Shannon McSheffrey has compared attitudes towards unchaste clerics in a fifteenth-century conduct book to their treatment in the city’s secular courts. The prosecution of priests’ sexual sins, she argues, showed clerics’ awkward place in their secular communities – they were embedded in their parishes, but also set apart from their lay neighbors, particularly because of their chastity. Shannon McSheffrey, “Whoring Priests and Godly Citizens: Law, Morality, and Clerical Sexual Misconduct in Late Medieval London,” in *Local Identities in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. Normal L. Jones and Daniel Woolf (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 50-70, quotation at 63. I am grateful to Dr. McSheffrey for providing me with a copy of this article prior to its publication.

This dissertation suggests that we should not take clerical celibacy as a given or assume that clerical masculine identity was always distinct from – and at odds with – lay masculinity. Instead, I take into consideration the many priests who violated their vows of celibacy and argue that in their relationships with women, priests often behaved like laymen and adopted elements of lay masculinity. For a few priests, celibacy was not even a component of their *clerical* identity.

Priests who were prosecuted for sexual misbehavior were accused of a variety of sexual misdeeds. Like laymen, priests had brief sexual affairs: John Dyer, a chaplain, fornicated (possibly just once) with a woman named Lusot in 1468. Accused of having sex with Katherine Onislow, Joan Bennett, Alice Coke, and Maud Baghe in 1501, the vicar of King's Pyon seems to have been something of a rake. Like laymen, priests committed adultery: in the same year, a chaplain named Maurice committed adultery with Maud Burton, a married woman. Like laymen, priests got women pregnant: when Anna Decons was summoned to court in 1517 because she was pregnant, she confessed that a chaplain named Christopher Wake was the father. And, like laymen, priests often ignored the warnings of court officers and continued committing their sin: in 1454, for example, John Baker was charged with incontinence *in recidivo* with Isabel Gentill.⁹

Sometimes, priests were discreet (or at least tried to be discreet), like Roger Parler, who secretly kept Joan Kiste in his house. Other times, they were less prudent, like a vicar named Nicholas who was charged with incontinence with his concubine Cecilia, whom he

⁹ HRO, HD4/1/94, ff. 30, 41, 48 (John Dyer and Lusot); HD4/1/108, ff. 2, 267 (John Ball and Katherine, Joan, Alice, and Maud); HD4/1/94, ff. 55, 58, 61, 121 (Maurice and Maud Burton); HD4/1/113, f. 170 (Anna Decons and Christopher Wake); HD4/1/91, ff. 14, 15 (John Baker and Isabel Gentill).

held openly in his house (*quam tenet publice... in domo sua*).¹⁰ Based on the frequency and variety of their sexual misconduct, many priests were indistinguishable from laymen in the Hereford church court records.

The range of sexual misdeeds committed by priests was quite similar to that of their male parishioners. And as we saw in Chapter 5, priests behaved like laymen socially as well as sexually, establishing stable, long-term relationships with women, having children, and acting as householders. In terms of their sexual and social behavior, then, many priests adopted elements of secular masculinity. In fact, what most distinguished priests from laymen in the church court records was not their sexual behavior, but their punishment. Priests were punished less often and less harshly than laymen, and they nearly always avoided the usual penalty for sexual misbehavior – a public flogging. Most clerics were assigned a private penance or allowed to commute their penalty to a monetary fine (see Table 6.4).

Take, for example, the case of Thomas, the curate of Marstow. In 1469, Thomas confessed that he had fornicated with a woman named Joan. For penance, he was assigned not the usual punishment for a layperson – being flogged during a procession around the parish church – but a more private penance. Thomas was required to say seven penitential psalms, fast on bread and water for six weeks, and make an offering of a candle at the shrine of St. Thomas in Hereford Cathedral. This was an extensive and long-lasting punishment, but did not include the ritual public humiliation of a public flogging and was performed almost entirely in private.¹¹

¹⁰ HRO, HD4/1/113, f. 221 (Roger Parler and Joan Kiste); HD4/1/92, f. 16 (Nicholas and Cecilia).

¹¹ HRO, HD4/1/94, ff. 139, 141.

Thomas' punishment was not unusual. Priests were punished less often for their misbehavior, and when they were punished, they received the chance to perform their penance privately far more often than laymen. For example, in a sample of four deaneries during the 1468-69 court session, 181 laymen and eighteen priests were charged with the sexual crimes of fornication and adultery (for laymen) or incontinence (for clerics). Of these laymen, eighty (44 percent) either admitted their sin or were pronounced guilty by the judge and were assigned the penance of being publicly flogged in front of their parishes after Sunday mass. However, only three of the eighteen priests (or 17 percent) were assigned penances.¹² Moreover, charges against laymen were often resolved immediately: David Millewarde was accused of fornication with Isabel Mathowe on 30 May 1468, appeared in court the same day, confessed to the charge, and was assigned a penance of two floggings. Charges against priests, however, were contested, delayed, and often never resolved at all. Although a charge of incontinence was also brought against a chaplain from Bockleton named Thomas and Agnes, his concubine, on 30 May 1468, he was neither summoned nor appeared in court, and it seems as though the charge against him was never pursued.¹³

Priests were punished less frequently than their lay neighbors, and they were also more often allowed to fulfill their penances in private, thereby avoiding the public humiliation of a flogging. In 1468-69, two out of the eighty laymen who received punishment (3 percent) were allowed to perform their penances privately by making an offering or a pilgrimage to Hereford Cathedral. In contrast, all three priests who received punishments in 1468-69 were assigned a private penance. Lewis ap Hopkyn, the curate of Mainstone, was

¹² HRO, HD4/1/94 (Weobley, Leominster, Ludlow, and Clun).

¹³ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 31. Isabel appeared in court the same day and also received two floggings: HD4/1/94, ff. 30, 34, 36. As we saw in Chapter 6, many priests were ordered to evict their concubines but were themselves never punished.

warned to stay away from his concubine and assigned a penance of fasting on bread and water for a week, making a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas in Hereford Cathedral, and reciting the nocturnal office every Sunday between matins and mass for seven weeks while standing bare-headed and barefoot in front of his church font.¹⁴ Although elaborate, Lewis' punishment would have spared him the humiliation of having his sin announced in front of his parishioners during Sunday mass and walking in the penitential procession – an option rarely available to sexually wayward laymen.

Even as some priests abandoned celibacy and adopted norms of secular masculinity, ecclesiastical officers still labored to maintain their spiritual authority and community standing.¹⁵ Priests' *violation* of their vow of celibacy was public knowledge, but the *remedy* for their sin was only rarely a public spectacle. Whether court officers were treating their clerical colleagues indulgently, or were more concerned with reforming – rather than punishing – errant priests, or were simply trying to maintain the spiritual authority of the clergy is difficult to determine.

Errant priests were treated more leniently than laymen and, as we saw in Chapter 6, they were also punished less often and less severely than their lovers. The strikingly different ways in which church court officers treated priests and their concubines may actually have reinforced the conventional masculinity of priests. Ruth Karras has pointed out that although there were many definitions of secular masculinity during the later Middle Ages, laymen – whether knights, university students, or craftsmen – were made masculine by their

¹⁴ HRO, HD4/1/94, f. 71.

¹⁵ As we saw in Chapter 4, so did pastoral writers: think back to Robert Mannyng's vehement insistence that a "false or fickle" priest still says a valid mass. Idelle Sullens, ed., *Robert Mannyng of Brunne, Handlyng Synne* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1983), ll. 2305-6.

heterosexual desire, their status as heads of household, or their dominance over women.¹⁶ So, too, were some of the priests of Hereford. Priests acted like laymen sexually and socially, and they also resembled laymen in another way: in their concubinary relationships, they held a privileged and dominant position over women.

Priests had sex like laymen; they established long-term relationships like married men; they wielded power and privilege over their lovers, as did most men. And sometimes, heterosexual desire eclipsed celibacy as a defining element of clerical identity. Although there is scant evidence of how ordinary men – parish clergy included – viewed their own masculinity, two priests have left evidence of how they thought about their own sexual behavior. Richard Hall, the vicar of Leominster, openly flouted canon law on celibacy. In 1527 and 1528, he was summoned to court twice. In the first charge, he was prosecuted for impregnating Joan Merycke; in the second, he was accused of having had a child with Elizabeth Joyner. Hall denied both charges and promised to clear himself through canonical compurgation, but never did. More than two years later, in October 1530, Hall had still not completed his compurgation and was again summoned to court. He seems to have evaded court officers for another six months, but in April 1531, Hall was summoned and disciplined for preaching that sexual incontinence was a trivial offense. The court clerk considered Hall's words so crucial that he recorded them in English: "Carnal pleasure," Hall proclaimed, "is natural and it is not that thing that God takes vengeance for. For a little confession will easily remove it."¹⁷ Hall's lack of willingness or ability to find compurgators to swear to his

¹⁶ Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

¹⁷ HRO, HD4/1/119, ff. 23r and 26v; HD4/1/121, ff. 33 and 82. *Dominus Ricardus Hall vicarius de Leominster notatur predicare ut sequitur in anglicis* how carnall pleasure was naturall and yt was not that thyng that god taketh vengeans for a lytle confession wolde put it lyghtely away.

innocence implies his guilt, and his characterization of fornication as a peccadillo suggests that he did not take seriously his own vow of celibacy. Some priests may have been torn between different models of masculinity, but Hall was a cleric whose sexuality was firmly a component of his clerical (and masculine) identity.¹⁸

Another Hereford cleric openly took pride in his sexual misdeeds. Edmund Powell, a priest from the parish of Dixton, was charged in 1529 with impregnating a woman named Margaret. He appeared in court and denied the charge, but then declared that he had “carnally known 100 women (*centum mulieres*).” In reply, the judge gave him a penance of one flogging around Hereford Cathedral.¹⁹ Powell’s claim might well have been a deliberate exaggeration, if not an outright boast. His choice of the number 100 was intended, I suspect, to convey an absurdly large or unimaginable number. The number 100 may have functioned more widely in medieval culture as a rhetorical number, and it was sometimes used by court officers in just that way. In one case from 1509, Thomas Wilmottis, the vicar of Bridstow, confessed to having an ongoing relationship (and a child) with Maud Jeynkyns; the judge placed him under an obligation of 100s if he committed the sin again.²⁰ Such a large fine

¹⁸ Hall’s assertion might have reflected contemporary (and increasingly popular) Lutheran views of clerical celibacy, but he was also participating in a long-standing literary tradition that made light of illicit sexual behavior.¹⁸ Robert Mannyng, in his fourteenth-century penitential treatise, laments that the sin of lechery is not taken seriously:

As some of these unlearned men say,
God of Heaven is so courteous
That he shall on Doomsday certainly
Forgive the sin of lechery
Lechery is but light sin –
He will have mercy of all therein.

Handlyng Synne, ll. 589-94.

¹⁹ HRO, HD4/1/120, f. 320. *In articulo illo vir comparuit negavitque articulum unde habet se purgare in xxvii die mensis Maii sua trina manu sed dixit quod centum mulieres cognovit carnaliter....*

²⁰ HRO, HD4/1/111, ff. 239-40, 261, 262, 264.

would have seemed outrageous – at the time, most penances were commuted to 6s 8d – and it seems reasonable to assume that no court expected an individual to pay such a large fine. More likely, the fine was used for rhetorical effect, to emphasize the gravity of the sin committed by Thomas and Maud.²¹ Powell’s tally – whether it was meant literally, rhetorically, or perhaps tauntingly – implied an exaggerated virility, a masculinity bolstered not by the eschewal of women, but by sexual bravado.

Taken together – and placed within the context of clerical fornication and concubinage – the claims of Hall and Powell suggest that, although celibacy was an essential marker of the priesthood in clerical and pastoral literature, it was not a practice of all priests, nor even a concern of some. Priests who flaunted their refusal to be celibate or boasted openly about their sexual virility were rare, to be sure. But they nonetheless show the possibility of a different conception of clerical masculinity, one that was far more conventionally masculine.

In recent years, the field of medieval masculinity has expanded greatly, particularly in terms of lay masculinity. No longer restricted to a simple tripartite model in which masculinity was equated with virility and manhood consisted of “impregnating women, protecting dependents, and serving as provider to one’s family,” historians now discuss diverse and nuanced models of lay masculinity that varied according to socio-economic class, life-cycle stage, marital status, and occupation.²² Studies of clerical masculinity – perhaps too readily assuming that, in matters of clerical celibacy, practice followed

²¹ For a discussion of rhetorical numbers in ancient Greece and Rome, see Walter Scheidel, “Finances, Figures, and Fiction,” *Classical Quarterly* 46 (1996): 222-38.

²² Vern L. Bullough, “On Being a Male in the Middle Ages,” in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees, Thelma Fenster, and Jo Ann McNamara (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 31-45, quotation at 34.

prescription – have failed to take into account priests who did not live celibately. Yet some priests (and perhaps, many priests) behaved both sexually and socially like laymen, participating in their communities as house-holders, fathers, and quasi-husbands. Patricia Cullum has argued that as the lives of clergy and laity became increasingly similar in the later Middle Ages – due, in part, to the employment of clerics in lay occupations and the growth of the vernacular as an administrative language – distinctions between clerics and laymen were eroded. Differences between priests and their parishioners must also have been elided when parish clergy, acting more like laymen than celibate clerics, took on aspects of secular masculinity.

Unchaste priests were not anomalies in late medieval England, and their presence invites a more flexible definition of clerical masculinity. Viewing clerics as a third gender is problematic because by removing priests from the dual-gender hierarchy, these theories obscure a basic element of both lay and clerical masculinity. It is especially in relation to women that we should see priests as men, not as an “emasculine” gender, because – like laymen – they had power over women. As Ruth Karras reminds us, “the subjection of women was always a part of masculinity,” and studying unchaste priests might help elucidate what was quintessentially masculine in late medieval society.²³

Clerical Concubines, Misogyny, and Female Sexuality

The sexual misbehavior of priests, I suggest, expanded notions of clerical masculinity in the middle ages; at the same time, it constricted ideas about female sexuality, paring women down to their lustful, greedy essences. As I remarked in Chapter 4, the topic of priest’s concubines in medieval literature could fill a book. Notions of gender, sexuality, and

²³ Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 11.

misogyny merged in convoluted, contradictory, and often confusing ways in medieval depictions of clerical concubines. Instead of trying to reduce this rich complexity to a manageable (but surely inadequate) analysis, I will briefly explore one of its most troubling and perduring features: the association of clerical concubinage and prostitution. Drawing on ideas about female lechery and venality that were articulated in elite, clerical literature during the central middle ages, the conflation of concubines and prostitutes slowly trickled down through stories and songs and slander, eventually shaping the lives of ordinary women in rural Herefordshire villages.

Throughout the middle ages, clerical concubines were equated – both tacitly and explicitly – with prostitutes. Some of these parallels were long-standing, originating in synodal and canon law.²⁴ As we saw in Chapter 2, some of the words used to denote clerical wives and concubines simply meant “prostitute” or “harlot”: *scortum*, *meretrix*, and *pellex*. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, reforming clerics explicitly equated priests’ concubines with prostitutes, emphasizing both their lascivious sexuality (which contaminated priests’ ritual purity) and their greed (which drained church resources). It will come as no surprise that Peter Damian repeatedly called priests’ wives “whores;” so, too, did the moralist Jacques de Vitry, who referred to priests’ wives as “whorish concubines.”²⁵ Atto, bishop of Vercelli, called priests’ wives “harlots” (*scortum*) and “indecent whores” (*obscenas meretriculas*).²⁶ The conflation of concubines and prostitutes went beyond mere rhetoric:

²⁴ Although Roman thinkers began to differentiate concubines from prostitutes during the late Republic, early Roman law made no such distinctions. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 40.

²⁵ As quoted in Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 121.

²⁶ Atto of Vercelli, *Epistolae*, no. 9, as quoted in Barstow, *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy*, 208, fn. 54.

both continental and English synods prescribed shaving the heads of clerical concubines – a common punishment for prostitutes.²⁷ In Spain, clerical concubines were subject to the same sumptuary laws that governed the way that prostitutes dressed.²⁸

Ruth Karras has found that, in medieval London, prostitutes and women who slept with priests were similarly punished. The *Liber Albus*, a fifteenth-century compilation of London's customary law, directed city officers to expel any prostitutes from their wards and prescribed humiliating and public punishments for prostitutes, including cutting their hair and ritually banishing them from the city with a noisy procession.²⁹ A woman named Joan Bawdewyn who was caught in bed with two priests was similarly punished in 1476: after she had been marched through London and placed on the pillory, she was escorted from the city and permanently exiled.³⁰

Chapter 2 discussed some of the links between promiscuity, venality, prostitutes, and concubines. Clerical concubines, like prostitutes, were characterized as both promiscuous and venal, diverting money from the church and parish to their illegitimate families. But the association of concubines with money and venality is only part of the equation. As Karras

²⁷ Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 405. In London, head-shaving was deployed as a punishment for male and female bawds and the “common courtesan.” For a discussion of the *Liber Albus*, see Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15-16. Barbara Hanawalt also discusses this aspect of the *Liber Albus* in *Of Good and Ill Repute: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 26-27.

²⁸ Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 476.

²⁹ Karras, *Common Women*, 15-16.

³⁰ Shannon McSheffrey, “Whoring Priests and Godly Citizens: Law, Morality, and Clerical Sexual Misconduct in Late Medieval London,” in *Local Identities in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. Normal L. Jones and Daniel Woolf (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 50-70.

has argued, “The notion of public scandal is a key to understanding the category of whore.”³¹ Perhaps another reason clerical concubines were so firmly associated with prostitutes was that they, too, created a scandal – in the village, in the parish, in the Church – that disrupted the social order.

The figurative links between prostitutes and clerical concubines, whether based on sexuality, venality, or scandal, also played out in everyday life. In closing, we return to Margery Gurney, whose encounter with the consistory court of Hereford encapsulates many of the themes of this dissertation: the vulnerability of single mothers, the disadvantages facing women who slept with priests, their harsh treatment by church court officers, the fragility of women’s reputations, and the centuries-long association of clerical concubines and prostitutes. Margery, the woman who slept with a priest, was deemed a “common prostitute” (*communis meretrix*) by the consistory court judge and eventually forced to leave the diocese. Margery’s story, in a sense, puts literature into practice, and suggests just how easy it might have been to transgress the indistinct boundaries between a priest’s concubine and a prostitute. The accusation that she had sex with “various other men” could imply that she had a promiscuous reputation, but it might just as easily suggest that she had created a scandal by having sex with a priest. Or perhaps her pregnancy served as a visible symbol of uncontrolled female sexuality. Her prolonged persecution and eventual banishment from the diocese highlights the harsh and unequal treatment that the partners of priests experienced in the church courts: Mathew Wever, her clerical lover, was never charged, much less summoned to court and punished. Margery’s eviction – not just from her home, but from the diocese entirely – underscores her economic and material vulnerability. And the label of

³¹ Karras, *Common Women*, 138.

“common whore” reveals both the precariousness of her reputation and the ease with which a clerical concubine might be mistaken for a prostitute. For women like Margery Gurney, misogyny had a long reach.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Three late medieval *exempla* about clerical concubines

1. Robert Mannyng, "The Priest's Concubine," *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983), ll. 7937-8100.

But how as ever men preach or spell
Of priests' wives men here ever tell.
Of other wives I will not say:
They do not wrong but all day.
But I dare say as I have heard
On English tongue to all the world:
If there be other maiden or wife
That disturbs the holy life
Of the priest through lechery,
Against her shall call and cry
All that are in paradise
And all that in purgatory lie;
And all that are in this life,
Against her shall arise and strive.
For every priest after the sacre
[consecration],
He parts there the uble [sacramental
wafer] in three
And offers them to the father in heaven,
In this way as I shall repeat:
[description of the three pieces of the
wafer]
Surely she does full much amiss,
The woman that disturbs all this,
For the souls are nothing
Worshipped with that offering,
Neither us to counsel or to read.
Nor it helps not the dead.
All therefore that now are
And that shall be and forth are living
Shall damn that woman to be damned
And curse the time that she was born.
And therewithal nor shall she be quit,
Yet shall here damn her without inwit
[conscience].
That each day that all shall rise
Before Jesus, that high justice,
Look you women what you do:
If you shall behave, do no more so,

Or harder penance with bitter tears
Shall you do here or elsewhere.
And shame it is always anywhere
To be called a priest's mare.
Of such one I shall you tell
That the fiend bore to hell.
This event fell that is so hard
In the time of good Edward –
Edward, Sir Henry's son –
And the tale is well to remember.
There was a priest right amorous,
And amorous men are lecherous.
This priest the most part of his life
Held a woman as his wife,
That no time did he give her up
So thought him the sin sweet.
In sin and in folly desire.
Four children he begat by her.
These children as they grew up,
He sent them to school to learn.
So they learned that the three
Were ordained priests to be.
The fourth son was a scholar;
To learn more he did his power.
When they were priests, their father died –
The priest that I spoke of before.
This yche [desirous] woman left alive
After him, four year or five.
These four children had a great deal
thought
How they were in sin forth brought,
And how their mother lived in
All her life in deadly sin.
They prayed her for under any
circumstances
To be of good repentance,
And repent her misdeed
With sorrow of heart and with fear.
But thus answered she to them all:

“For nothing that may befall
 Shall I never repent me
 While I have you priests three
 That for me can read and sing
 And full well me to bliss bring.
 So may my soul to God be brought
 For any sin that I have wrought.
 But will you all four do
 A thing that I pray you to:
 Keep my body at your might
 Three days and three nights
 In this house when I am dead,
 And I hope be saved from the devil
 Though I have lived a sinful life
 And have been called a priest’s wife.”
 That consented they completely
 Before they departed to do it well.
 Soon afterward she grew ill
 And died sooner than she would.
 Her children, as they had scorned her
 To wake [keep vigil over] her body were
 they set.
 The first night that they should her wake,
 At midnight the bier began to quake.
 Her four sons that saw it stir
 Laid on hand and held the bier.
 The other men had such dread,
 That every man his way went.
 With much dread and hideous sight,
 Escaped they on the first night.
 The second night that the children woke,
 At the midnight the bier quaked,
 And all that sat or thereby stood,
 For dread would have gone mad.
 That night showed he more his ire,
 That his power was much in higher.
 With sorrowful sight and great affray,
 He dragged her body there it lay,
 And to the door the fiend it brought;
 That time, farther might he not.
 Her four sons with much pain
 Once more had the body in again.
 About the body a rope they wound
 And to the bier fast it bound,
 So always the body with them remained
 At that night was it not seized.

The third night most sorrow began to
 happen:
 At the midnight as they all woke,
 Came many fiends with a fearsome
 appearance
 And filled full all the house.
 They took the body and the bier
 With fearsome cry that all might hear.
 And bore it farther that none knew where
 Without end for evermore.
 Her sons said and hoped well
 That body and soul was damned entirely.
 The youngest son that was a scholar,
 He preached this in many a place,
 Through England, in every country,
 He told this tale of great sorrow
 Everywhere as he went about.
 He refrained neither for shame nor fear
 Against women that priests take
 For his own mother’s sake,
 For to damn and destroy that sin,
 That no woman fall therein.
 You women think about this tale
 And take it for no idle trifle.
 God’s vengeance was it and his ire,
 To amend us all for love of her.
 In a proverb tell men this:
 “He knows this, that is aware of this.”
 And wisdom this and fair mastery
 To chastise us with others folly.
 Of priests can I say nothing,
 So said I at the beginning;
 Neither of clerics not at all:
 They know what is ill and well.
 But thus have I heard for certain,
 In the world is none so well shriven,
 Though he were wiser than Solomon
 And more eloquent than was Mercyon,
 And lived in age a thousand years,
 Nor might tell the sorrow and woe,
 Nor the pain that the priest shall suffer
 Who practices the sin of lechery.
 They are vexed when anyone thus
 preaches,
 But the Holy Scriptures us thus tell and
 teach.

2. "Perfect Contrition Fears No Bodily Punishment," M.M. Banks, ed., *An Alphabet of Tales*, EETS OS 127 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1904-5), no. 204.

Cesarius tells how, in those days, when a priest was preaching and talking about sins and the pains of hell, a woman cried out to him and said, "Sir, what shall become of priests' lemman?" And he knew she was but a simple thing and answered half in sport and said, "They shall never be saved unless they crawl into a hot oven." And she was a priest's lemman, and she did not take this words in jest, but one day she was heating a large oven, and nobody was with her; and when it was red-hot, she closed the doors to her room and crawled into it. And, at once, she burned to death. And there was a large group of men and woman standing together outside, near her location, and they thought they saw a white dove fly from her house up to heaven. And they had great wonder thereof, and broke down her doors; and they found her burned to death in the oven, and they pulled her out and buried her in the field, as men do with those who kill themselves. So, afterward, almighty God let it be known that she did not slay herself out of malice nor of ill will, but for penance and obedience; one night there was seen a huge light about her grave. And then they took her up and laid her in a Christian man's burial.

3. "The Devil Carried a Lecherous Woman to Hell," *An Alphabet of Tales*, no. 456.

We read of a priest's concubine who, when she was about to die, she cried out with great urgency to out to those who were around her, and asked them to have made for her a pair of high boots and put them on her legs for they were very necessary to her, and so they did. And on the night after the moon shone bright, and a knight and his servant were riding in the fields together, and there came a woman running fast towards them, crying, and entreated them to help her. And immediately this knight dismounted and handed his man his horse, and he recognized the woman well enough, and he made a circle around himself with his sword, and took her near him; and she had nothing on but her shift and these boots. And immediately he heard a blast of a frightening horn that a hunter blew horribly, and loud barking of hounds, and as soon as they heard, this woman was very afraid. And this knight asked her why she was so frightened, and she told him everything; and he mounted his horse and took the tresses of her hair and wrapped it tightly around his arm, and in his right arm he held his sword drawn. And swiftly this hunter of hell came near [at hand], and then this woman said, "Let me go, for he comes." And this knight held her without moving, and this woman pulled hard and wanted to get away. So, at last, she pulled so hard that all her hair burst out of her head, and she ran away and this fiend followed after and took her, and threw her somewhere behind him on his horse, so that her head and her arms hung down on one side, and her legs on the other side. And thus, when he had his pray, he rode on his way, and by then it was near day. And this knight went in the morning into the town, and he found this woman recently dead, and he told all that he had seen, and showed the hair that was wrapped around his arm. And they looked at her head where she lay, and they found how all the hair was plucked out by the roots. And this happened in the bishopric of Magentyne.

Appendix II: Charges of clerical incontinence in Hereford's consistory court, 1407-1503

Dates of act book	Condition of book	Charges of incontinence that indicate fornication	Charges of incontinence that indicate concubinage	All charges of incontinence
1407-1408	incomplete	4	1	5
1442-1443	incomplete	7	6	13
1445-1446	complete	16	6	22
1447-1448	complete	10	3	13
1453-1454	complete	12	7	19
1455-1457	incomplete	10	4	14
1458-1460	incomplete	6	0	6
1468-1469	complete	14	19	33
1471-1472	incomplete	10	8	18
1472-1473	complete	9	4	13
1474-1475	incomplete	3	1	4
1475-1476	incomplete	6	1	7
1479-1480	complete	19	3	22
1480-1481	complete	20	6	26
1481-1482	complete	24	13	37
1486-1487	complete	35	15	50
1487-1488	complete	32	20	52
1488-1489	complete	32	16	48
1489-1490	complete	30	20	50
1490-1491	complete	34	14	48
1491-1492	incomplete	20	17	37
1494-1495	complete	51	24	75
1499-1500	complete	62	28	90
1500-1501	illegible			
1501-1502	complete	53	28	81
1502-1503	complete	53	23	76

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MANUSCRIPTS

Hereford, Hereford Cathedral Archives

A1779 Depositions from the visitation of Bishop John Trefnant (1379)

Hereford, Herefordshire Record Office

Bishops' Registers:

AL19/4, Registers of Thomas Polton (1420-1421), Thomas Spofford (1422-1448), and Richard Beauchamp (1449-1450)

AL19/6, Registers of John Gilbert (1375-1389) and Robert Mascall (1404-1416)

AL19/7, Register of John Trefnant (1389-1404)

AL19/8, Register of Edmund Lacy (1417-1420)

AL19/9, Register of Thomas Spofford (1422-1448)

AL19/10, Register of Reginald Boulers (1451-1453)

AL19/11, Registers of John Stanbury (1453-1474) and Thomas Mylling (1474-1492)

AL19/12, Register of Richard Mayew (1504-1516)

AL19/13, Registers of Charles Bothe (1516-1535), Edward Foxe (1535-1538), and Edmund Bonner (1538-1539)

AL19/14, Register of John Skippe (1539-1552)

Consistory Court Act Books:

HD4/1/87 (1407-1408)

HD4/1/88 (1442-1443)

HD4/1/89 (1445-1446)

HD4/1/90 (1447-1448)

HD4/1/91 (1453-1454)

HD4/1/92 (1455-1457)

HD4/1/93 (1458-1460)

HD4/1/94 (1468-1469)

HD4/1/95 (1471-1472)

HD4/1/96 (1472-1473)

HD4/1/97 (1474-1475)

HD4/1/98 (1474-1476)

HD4/1/99 (1479-1480)

HD4/1/100 (1480-1481)

HD4/1/101 (1481-1482)

HD4/1/102 (1486-1487)

HD4/1/103 (1487-1489)

HD4/1/104 (1489-1491)

HD4/1/105 (1491-1492)

HD4/1/106 (1494-1495)

HD4/1/107 (1499-1500)

HD4/1/108 (1501-1502)

HD4/1/109 (1502-1503)

HD4/1/110 (1507-1508)
HD4/1/111 (1508-1509)
HD4/1/112 (1514-1515)
HD4/1/113 (1517-1518)
HD4/1/114 (1519-1520)
HD4/1/115 (1522-1523)
HD4/1/116 (1523-1524)
HD4/1/117 (1524-1525)
HD4/1/118 (1525-1556)
HD4/1/119 (1527-1528)
HD4/1/120 (1529-1530)
HD4/1/258 (1500-1501)

Miscellaneous manuscripts:

BG11/8/8, Various court papers, undated
BG11/4/1, Tourn (1441-1537)
BG11/5/23, Quarter Sessions papers (1475-1535)
MX113, parish register of Bromyard (1545-1646)

London, British Library
Royal 7 D. I
15 A. XX (Tankerley story)

London, The National Archives: Public Record Office
Records of the Exchequer, clerical subsidies, Hereford:
E 179/30/7 (1379)
E 179/30/10b (c. 1381)
E 179/30/21 (c. 1406)
E 179/30/94 (c. 1420)

PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES

Apperson, G.L. *English Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases: A Historical Dictionary*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1929.

Banks, Mary McLeod, ed. *An Alphabet of Tales: An English Fifteenth-Century Translation of the Alphabetum Narrationum*. 2 vols. EETS, OS 126-27. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1904-5.

Bannister, Arthur T., ed. *Registrum Caroli Bothe, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MDXVI-MDXXXV*, Canterbury and York Society 28. London: Canterbury and York Society, 1921.

- . *Registrum Edmundi Lacy, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCXVII-MCCCCXX*, Canterbury and York Society 22. London: Canterbury and York Society, 1918.
- . *Registrum Ricardi Beauchamp, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCXLIX-MCCCCCL*, Canterbury and York Society 25. London: Canterbury and York Society, 1919.
- . *Registrum Ricardi Mayew, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MDIV-MDXVI*, Canterbury and York Society 27. London: Canterbury and York Society, 1921.
- . *Registrum Thome Myllyng, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCLXXIV-MCCCCXCII*, Canterbury and York Society 26. London: Canterbury and York Society, 1920.
- . *Registrum Thome Spofford, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCXXII-MCCCCXLVII*, Canterbury and York Society 23. London: Canterbury and York Society, 1919.
- . “Visitation Returns in the Diocese of Hereford in 1397.” *English Historical Review* 44 (1929): 279-89; 444-53.
- . “Visitation Returns in the Diocese of Hereford in 1397.” *English Historical Review* 45 (1930): 92-101; 444-63.
- Bannister, Arthur T., and Joseph H. Parry, eds. *Registrum Johannis Stanbury, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCLIII-MCCCCLXXIV*. Canterbury and York Society 25. London: Canterbury and York Society, 1919.
- Brandeis, Arthur, ed. *Jacob’s Well*. EETS, OS 115. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1900.
- Brown, Carleton, ed. *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939.
- Capes, William W. ed. *Registrum Johannis de Trefnant, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCLXXXIX-MCCCCIV*, Canterbury and York Society 20. London: Canterbury and York Society, 1916.
- Chambers, E.K., and F. Sidgwick, eds. *Early English Lyrics*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1966.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Edited by Larry P. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
- Child, Francis James, ed. *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1962.

- Coverdale, Miles. *Remains of Miles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter*. Edited by George Pearson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846.
- Damian, Peter. *The Letters of Peter Damian, 61-90*. Translated by Owen J. Blum. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992.
- Davies, R.T., ed. *Medieval English Lyrics*. London: Faber & Faber, 1963.
- Duncan, Thomas G., ed. *Late Medieval English Lyrics and Carols 1400-1530*. New York: Penguin, 2000.
- Eadmer, *Historia Novorum in Anglia/History of Recent Events in England*. Trans. Geoffrey Bosanquet. Philadelphia: Dufour, 1965.
- Eccles, Mark, ed. *The Macro Plays: The Castle of Perseverance, Wisdom, Mankind*. EETS OS 262. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Faraday, M.A., and E.J.L. Cole, eds. *Calendar of Probate and Administration Acts 1407-1541 and Abstracts of Wills 1541-1581 in the Court Books of the Bishop of Hereford, 1407-1581*, British Record Society 2. London: British Record Society, 1989.
- Fenwick, Carolyn C., ed. *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379, and 1381, Part I*. Records of Social and Economic History NS, 27. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Gerald of Wales. *The Journey through Wales and The Description of Wales*. Trans. Lewis Thorpe. New York: Penguin, 1978.
- Greene, R.L., ed. *The Early English Carols*, 2nd edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Hall, J., ed. *Selections from Early Middle English, 1130-1250*, part I. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920.
- Haworth, Peter. "The First Latin-English Dictionary. A Bristol University Manuscript." *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society* 45 (1923): 258-75.
- Herrtage, Sidney J.H., ed. *Catholicon Anglicum, an English-Lati Wordbook, Dated 1483*. Camden Society, NS 30. London: Camden Society, 1882.
- Historical Map and Guide: Roman Britain*, 5th edition. Southampton: Ordnance Survey, 2001.
- Hudson, Anne, ed. *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- . *Two Wycliffite Texts*, EETS, OS 301. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Hudson, Anne, and Pamela Gradon, eds. *English Wycliffite Sermons*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983-90.

- Hughes, Paul L., and James F. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-9.
- Ker, N.R., ed. *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*, EETS OS 255. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Luard, Henry Richards, ed. *Annales Monastici*. London: Longman, Green, et al., 1864.
- Lumby, Joseph Rawson, ed. *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, Monachi Cestrensis, Together With the English Translations of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the Fifteenth Century*. 9 vols. London: Longman & Co., 1865-86.
- Madden, F., ed. *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*. EETS, ES 33. London: 1879. Reprint, London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Mannyng, Robert. *Handlyng Synne*. Edited by Idelle Sullens. Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983.
- Matthew, F.D., ed. *The English Works of Wyclif, Hitherto Unprinted*. EETS OS 74. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1880.
- Merle, Abbe. "Visite Pastorale de Diocèse de Lyon (1378-1379)." *Bulletin de la Diana* 26 (1937-39): 217-363.
- Mirk, John. *John Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests*. Edited by G. Kristensson. Lund Studies in English 49. Lund: Gleerup, 1974.
- . *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies by Johannes Mirkus*. Edited by T. Erbe. EETS, ES 96. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1905.
- Moore, Norman, ed. *The Book of the Foundation of St. Bartholomew's Church in London*. EETS OS 163. London: Oxford University Press, 1923.
- More, Thomas. *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, 15 vols. Edited by Thomas M.C. Lawler, Germain Marc'Hadour, and Richard C. Marius. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963-97.
- Morris, Richard, ed. *An Old English Miscellany, Containing A Bestiary, Kentish Sermons, Proverbs of Alfred, Religious Poems of the Thirteenth Century*. EETS OS 49. London: N. Trübner & Co, 1872.
- Mustanoja, Tauno F. *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*. *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae* B 61, 2. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran, 1948.
- Parry, Joseph H. ed. *Registrum Johannis Gilbert, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCLXXV-MCCCLXXXIX*, Canterbury and York Society 18. London: Canterbury and York Society, 1915.

- . *Registrum Roberti Mascall, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D. MCCCCIV-MCCCCXVI*, 21. London: Canterbury and York Society, 1917.
- Poos, L.R., ed. *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in Late-Medieval England: The Courts of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln, 1336-1349 and the Deanery of Wisbech, 1458-1484*. Records of Social and Economic History, NS 32. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Powicke, F.M., and C.R. Cheney, eds. *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205-1313*, vol. II, parts 1 and 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.
- Records Commission. *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae Auctoritate Nicolai IV, c. 1291*. London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1802.
- . *Valor Ecclesiasticus Tempore Henrici VIII*, 6 vols. London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1810-34.
- Robbins, Rossell Hope, ed. *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.
- Rollins, H.E., ed. *Old English Ballads, 1553-1625, Chiefly from Manuscripts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920.
- Ross, Woodburn O., ed. *Middle English Sermons*. EETS, OS 123. London: Oxford University Press, 1940.
- Shinner, John, and William Dohar, eds. *Pastors and the Care of the Souls in Medieval England*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998.
- Skeat, Walter W. *Early English Proverbs Chiefly of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.
- Skelton, John. *John Skelton, the Complete English Poems*. Edited by John Scattergood. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
- The Statutes of the Realm: Printed by Command of His Majesty King George the Third from Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts*. 9 vols. London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1810-22.
- Strange, Joseph, ed. *Caesarii Heisterbacensis Monachi Ordinis Cisterciensis Dialogus Miraculorum*, 2 vols. Paris: H. Lempertz & Co., 1851. Reprint: Ridgewood, NJ: Gregg Press, 1966.
- Strauss, Emmanuel, ed. *Dictionary of European Proverbs*. 3 vols. New York: Routledge, 1994.

- Talbert, E.W. "A Lollard Chronicle of the Papacy." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 41 (1942): 175-93.
- Tilley, Morris Palmer. *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950.
- Way, A., ed. *Promptorium Parvulorum sive Clericorum: Lexicon Anglo-Latinum Princeps*. 3 vols. Camden Society OS 25, 54, 89. London: Camden Society, 1843-65.
- Weatherly, Edward H., ed. *Speculum Sacerdotale*. EETS, OS 200. London: Oxford University Press, 1936.
- Whitelock, Dorothy, Martin Brett, and C.N.L. Brooke, eds. *Councils and Synods, With Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 871-1204*, vol. I, parts 1 and 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.
- Whiting, Bartlett Jere. *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968.
- Wilkins, David, ed. *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, 4 vols. London: R. Gosling, 1737.
- William of Malmesbury. *The Deeds of the Bishops of England (Gesta Pontificum Anglorum)*. Trans. David Preest. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002.
- Wilson, F.P. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, 3rd edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.
- Wright, Thomas, ed. *Anecdota Literaria, A Collection of Short Poems in English, Latin, and French*. London: J.R. Smith, 1844.
- Wright, W.A., ed. *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester. Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 86, part 2. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887.
- Wyclif, John. *The English Works of Wyclif, Hitherto Unprinted*. Edited by F.D. Matthew. EETS OS 74. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1880.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Arnold, John H. "The Labour of Contenance: Masculinity and Clerical Virginity." In *Medieval Virginites*, edited by Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans, and Sarah Salih, 102-18. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Bardsley, Sandy. *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

- Barr, Beth. "Gendered Lessons: The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England." Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004.
- Barrow, Julia. "Athelstan to Aigueblanche, 1056-1268." In *Hereford Cathedral: A History*, edited by Gerald E. Aylmer and John Tiller, 21-47. London: Hambledon Press, 2000.
- . ed. *English Episcopal Acta VII: Hereford 1079-1234*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- . "Clergy in the Diocese of Hereford in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries." *Anglo-Norman Studies* 26 (2004): 37-53.
- . "Hereford Bishops and Married Clergy, c. 1130-1240." *Historical Research* 60 (1987): 1-8.
- Barstow, Anne Llewellyn. "The First Generations of Clergy Wives: Heroines or Whores?" *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 52 (1983): 3-16.
- . *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy: The Eleventh-Century Debates*. New York: E. Mellen Press, 1982.
- Baskerville, Geoffrey. "Married Clergy and Pensioned Religious in Norwich Diocese, 1555." *English Historical Review* 48 (1933): 43-64.
- Beaudette, Paul. "'In the World but not of It': Clerical Celibacy as a Symbol of the Medieval Church." In *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, edited by Michael Frassetto, 23-46. New York: Garland, 1998.
- Benito i Monclús, Pere. "Le Clergé Paroissial Du Maresme (Évêché de Barcelone) d'Après les Visites Pastorales (1305-1447): Recherches sur le Thème Du Concubinage." In *Le Clergé Rural dans l'Europe Médiévale et Moderne*, edited by Pierre Bonnassie, 187-203. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1995.
- Bennett, Judith M. "'Lesbian-Like' and the Social History of Lesbianisms." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9 (2000): 1-24.
- . "Ventriloquisms: When Maidens Speak in English Songs, c.1300-1550." In *Medieval Woman's Song: Cross-Cultural Approaches*, edited by Anne L. Klinck and Ann Marie Rasmussen, 187-259. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
- . "Writing Fornication: Medieval Leyrwite and its Historians." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 13 (2003): 131-62.
- Blamires, Alcuin, et al., eds. *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

- Bloch, Howard R. *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Blumenthal, Uta-Renate. "Pope Gregory VII and the Prohibition of Nicolaitism." In *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, edited by Michael Frassetto, 239-67. New York: Garland, 1998.
- Bornstein, Daniel. "Parish Priests in Late Medieval Cortona: The Urban and Rural Clergy." *Quaderni Di Soria Religiosa* 4 (1997): 165-93.
- . "Priests and Villagers in the Diocese of Cortona." *Richerche Storiche* 27 (1997): 93-106.
- Bowker, Margaret. *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495-1520*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Brennan, Brian. "'Episcopae': Bishops' Wives Viewed in Sixth-Century Gaul." *Church History* 54 (1985): 311-23.
- Bridgen, Susan. *London and the Reformation*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Brooke, C.N.L. "The Diocese of Hereford, 676-1200." In *Churches and Churchmen in Medieval Europe*, edited by C.N.L. Brooke, 19-36. London: The Hambledon Press, 1999.
- . "Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England, 1050-1200." *Cambridge Historical Journal* 12 (1956): 1-21.
- . "Married Men among the English Higher Clergy, 1066-1200." *Cambridge Historical Journal* 12, 2 (1956): 187-88.
- Brook, G.L. *The Harley Lyrics: The Middle English Lyrics of MS. Harley 2253*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1948.
- Brundage, James A. "Concubinage and Marriage in Medieval Canon Law." In *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, edited by Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage, 118-28. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982.
- . *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- . *Medieval Canon Law*. New York: Longman, 1995.
- Bullough, Vern L. "On Being a Male in the Middle Ages." In *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, edited by Clare A. Lees, Thelma Fenster, and Jo Ann McNamara, 31-45. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

- Carlson, Eric J. "Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation." *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992): 1-31.
- . "The Marriage of William Turner." *Historical Research* 65, no. 158 (1992): 336-39.
- . *Marriage and the English Reformation*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994.
- Carruthers, Leo. "No Womman of No Clerk is Preysed: Attitudes to Women in Medieval English Religious Literature." In *A Wyf Ther Was: Essays in Honour of Paule Mertens-Fonck*, edited by Juliette Dor, 49-60. Liège: University of Liège, 1992.
- Cheney, C.R. *English Synodalia of the Thirteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941.
- . *Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries in the Thirteenth Century*. Revised edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983.
- Clark, Elaine. "Mothers at Risk of Poverty in the Medieval English Countryside." In *Poor Women and Children in the European Past*, edited by John Henderson and Richard Wall, 139-59. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Cochini, Christian. *Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy*. Translated by Nelly Marans. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990.
- Cooper, Tim. *The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth Century*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999.
- Cowdrey, H.E.J. "Pope Gregory VII and the Chastity of the Clergy." In *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, edited by Michael Frassetto, 269-302. New York: Garland, 1998.
- . *The Cluniacs and the Gregorian Reform*. Oxford, 1970.
- Cullum, P.H. "Clergy, Masculinity and Transgression in Late Medieval England." In *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, edited by D.M. Hadley, 178-98. New York: Longman, 1999.
- . "Learning to Be a Man, Learning to Be a Priest in Late Medieval England." In *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad*, edited by Sarah Rees Jones, 135-53. Turnhout: Brepols, 2003.
- . "Life-Cycle and Life-Course in a Clerical and Celibate Milieu: Northern England in the Later Middle Ages." In *Time and Eternity: The Medieval Discourses*, edited by Gerhard Jaritz and Gerson Moreno-Riaño, 271-81. Turnhout: Brepols, 2003.
- Cushing, Kathleen G. *Reform and Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.

- Darlington, R.R. "Ecclesiastical Reform in the Late Old English Period." *English Historical Review* 51 (1936): 385-428.
- Davies, Richard R. *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales, 1063-1415*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- . *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- . "The Church." In *The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, edited by Ralph Griffiths, 87-114. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- De Jong, Mayke. "Imitatio Morum. The Cloister and Clerical Purity in the Carolingian World." In *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, edited by Michael Frassetto, 49-80. New York: Garland, 1998.
- Dickens, A.G. "The Marian Reaction in the Diocese of York: Part I, the Clergy." *Reformation Studies*, 93-130.
- . "The Shape of Anti-Clericalism and the English Reformation." In *Politics and Society in Reformation Europe: Essays for Sir Geoffrey Elton on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, edited by E.I. Kouri and Tom Scott, 379-410. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1987.
- Dobson, R.B. *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970.
- Dohar, William J. *The Black Death and Pastoral Leadership: The Diocese of Hereford in the Fourteenth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.
- Dolan, Frances E. *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Dortel-Claudot, Michel. "Le Prêtre et le Mariage. Evolution de la Législation Canonique Des Origines Au XIIe Siècle." *L'Année Canonique* 17 (1973): 319-44.
- Driver, J.T. "The Papacy and the Diocese of Hereford, 1307-77." *Church Quarterly Review* 145 (1947): 31-47.
- Dunning, Robert W. "Rural Deans in England in the Fifteenth Century." *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 40 (1967): 207-13.
- Dwyer, John Patrick. "'As Wee May Live in Peace and Quietnes': Regulation in the Age of Reformation: Hereford, 1470-1610." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Colorado, 2001.
- Dyer, Christopher. *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200-1520*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

- Dyer, Christopher, and T.R. Slater. "The Midlands." In *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. I, 600-1540*, edited by D.M. Palliser, 609-38. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Earley, Joseph E., and Leonard E. Boyle. "Conflict Over the Rectory of Cinel Luachain During the Fifteenth Century." *Breifne: Journal of Cumann Seanchais Bhreifne* 9, no. 35 (1999): 103-13.
- Edden, Valerie. "Devils, Sermon Stories, and the Problem of Popular Belief in the Middle Ages." *The Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 213-25.
- Eichmann, Raymond. "The 'Pretres Concubinaires' of the Fabliaux." *Australian Journal of French Studies* 27, no. 3 (1990): 207-13.
- Elliott, Dyan. "Comment: English Exceptionalism Reconsidered," *Journal of British Studies* 46 (2007): 753-57.
- . *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- . "Sex in Holy Places: An Exploration of a Medieval Anxiety." *Journal of Women's History* 6 (1994): 6-34.
- . *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Everitt, Alan. "The Marketing of Agricultural Produce." In *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol. IV, 1500-1640*, edited by Joan Thirsk, 466-592. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- Faraday, M.A. "Mortality in the Diocese of Hereford, 1442-1541." *TWNFC* 42 (1977).
- Fein, Susanna. "The Lyrics of MS Harley 2253." In *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, vol. XI, edited by Peter G. Beidler, 4168-4206, 4311-61. New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2005.
- Fichtenau, Heinrich. *Living in the Tenth Century: Mentalities and Social Orders*. Translated by Patrick J. Geary. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Finch, Andrew John. "Crime and Marriage in Three Late Medieval Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions: Cerisy, Rochester and Hereford." Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of York, 1988.
- . "Repulsa Uxore Sua: Marital Difficulties and Separation in the Later Middle Ages," *Continuity and Change* 8 (1993): 11-38.
- . "Sexual Morality and Canon Law: The Evidence of the Rochester Consistory Court." *Journal of Medieval History* 20, no. 3 (1994): 261-75.

- Fliche, Auguste. *La Réforme Grégorienne*. Paris, 1924-37.
- Frassetto, Michael, ed. *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*. New York: Garland, 1998.
- . “Heresy, Celibacy, and Reform in the Sermons of Ademar of Chabannes.” In *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, edited by Michael Frassetto, 131-48. New York: Garland, 1998.
- Frazer, Charles A. “The Origins of Clerical Celibacy in the Western Church.” *Church History* 41 (1972): 149-67.
- French, Katherine. *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion After the Black Death*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- . *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.
- Gaudemet, Jean. “Le Célibat Ecclésiastique: Le Droit et la Pratique Du XIe Au XIIIes.” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung Für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung* 68 (1982): 1-31.
- Goldberg, P.J.P. “Gender and Matrimonial Litigation in the Church Courts in the Later Middle Ages: The Evidence of the Court of York.” *Gender & History* 19 (2007): 43-59.
- . *Women, Work, and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c.1300-1520*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Gowing, Laura. *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- . “Gender and the Language of Insult in Early Modern London.” *History Workshop Journal* 35 (1993): 1-21.
- Greenspan, Kate. “Lessons for the Priest, Lessons for the People: Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s Audiences for *Handlyng Synne*.” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 21 (2004): 109-21.
- Gregg, Joan Young. *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories*. SUNY Series in Medieval Studies. Albany: SUNY Press, 1997.
- . “The Exempla of ‘Jacob’s Well’: A Study in the Transmission of Medieval Sermon Stories.” *Traditio* 33 (1977): 359-80.
- Grieve, Hilda E.P. “The Deprived Married Clergy in Essex, 1553-1561.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, fourth series, 22 (1940): 141-69.

- Griffiths, Ralph A. "Wales and the Marches." In *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume 1, 600-1540*, edited by D.M. Palliser, 681-714. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Haboucha, Reginetta. "Clerics, Their Wives, and Their Concubines in the Partidas of Alfonso el Sabio." In *Homo Carnalis: The Carnal Aspect of Medieval Human Life*, edited by Helen Rodite Lemay, 85-104. Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1990.
- Hadley, D. M., ed. *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*. New York: Longman, 1999.
- Hair, P.E.H. "Chaplains, Chantries and Chapels of North-West Herefordshire c. 1400." *TWNFC* 46, part I (1988): 31-64.
- . "Chaplains, Chantries and Chapels of North-West Herefordshire c. 1400 (Second Part)." *TWNFC* 46, part I (1988): 246-88.
- . "Defaults and Offences of Clergy and Laity in Hereford Diocese, 1397." *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* 47, part I (1991): 318-50.
- . "Mobility of Parochial Clergy in Hereford Diocese c. 1400." *TWNFC* 43, Part I (1979): 164-80.
- Hanawalt, Barbara A. *Of Good and Ill Repute: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Harper-Bill, Christopher. "A Late Medieval Visitation: The Diocese of Norwich in 1499." *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 34 (1977): 35-47.
- . *The Pre-Reformation Church in England, 1400-1530*. New York, 1989.
- Haselmeyer, Louis. "The Apparitor and Chaucer's Summoner." *Speculum*, 12 (1937): 43-57.
- Hayes, Gianetta M. "Ordination Ritual and Practice in the Welsh-English Frontier, Circa 1540-1640." *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005): 713-27.
- . "Reforming the Frontier: The Clergy in Wales and the Diocese of Hereford, c. 1540-1640." Ph. D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2004.
- Heath, Dillard. *Daughters of the Reconquest: Women in Castilian Town Society, 1100-1300*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Heath, Peter. *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969.
- Helmholz, R.H. "Abjuration *sub Pena Nubendi* in the Church Court of Medieval England." *The Jurist* 32 (1972): 80-90.

- . “Canonical Defamation in Medieval England.” *American Journal of Legal History* 15 (1971): 255-68.
- . “Crime, Compurgation and the Courts of the Medieval Church.” *Law and History Review* 1 (1983): 1-26
- . “Judges and Trials in the English Ecclesiastical Courts.” In *The Trial in History, Volume I, Judicial Tribunals in England and Europe, 1200-1700*, edited by Maureen Mulholland and Brian Pullan, 102-16. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.
- . *Canon Law and the Law of England*. London: Hambledon Press, 1987.
- . *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England*. Cambridge, 1974.
- . *The Oxford History of the Laws of England, vol. I, The Canon Law and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction from 597 to the 1640s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Herbert, Alisa. “Herefordshire, 1413-61: Some Aspects of Society and Public Order.” In *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England*, edited by Ralph A. Griffiths, 103-22. Gloucester: Sutton, 1981.
- Herbert, J.A. “The Authorship of the ‘Alphabetum Narrationum.’” *Library*, series 2, 6 (1905): 94-101.
- . *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum, vol. 3*. London: Printed by Order of the Trustees, 1910.
- Herrup, Cynthia. “‘To Pluck Bright Honour from the Pale Fac’d Moon’: Gender and Honor in the Castlehaven Story.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6, 6 (1996): 137-59.
- Hill, Christopher. *Economic Problems of the Church from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament*. Oxford, 1956.
- Hill, Rosalind. “Public Penance: Some Problems of a Thirteenth Century Bishop.” *History* 36 (1951): 213-26.
- Hillaby, Joseph. “The Boroughs of the Bishops of Hereford in the Late Thirteenth Century.” *TWNFC* 40: 1 (1970): 10-35.
- . “The Origins of the Diocese of Hereford.” *TWNFC* 42 (1976): 16-52.
- Ho, Cynthia. “Dichotomize and Conquer: ‘Womman Handlyng’ in ‘Handlyng Synne.’” *Philological Quarterly*, 72 (1993): 383-402.

- Hodkinson, Brian J. "A Fifteenth-Century Precentor of Limerick." *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* 35 (1996): 72-75.
- Houlbrooke, Ralph A. *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation, 1520-1570*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Ingram, Martin. *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- . "Spousals Litigation in the English Ecclesiastical Courts c.1350-c.1640." In *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, edited by R.B. Outhwaite, 35-57. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.
- Jack, R. Ian. "Religious Life in a Welsh Marcher Lordship: The Lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd in the Later Middle Ages." In *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H. Du Boulay*, edited by Caroline Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill, 143-57. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1985.
- James, Mervyn. "English Politics and the Concept of Honour 1485-1642." *Past & Present*, supplement no. 3 (1978); reprint: *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England*, 308-415. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Jestice, Phyllis G. "Why Celibacy? Odo of Cluny and the Development of a New Sexual Morality." In *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, edited by Michael Frassetto, 81-115. New York: Garland, 1998.
- Jones, E.D. "The Medieval Leyrwite: A Historical Note on Female Fornication." *English Historical Review* 107 (1992): 945-53.
- Justitz, Gerritdina D. "The Abbot and the Concubine: Piety and Politics in Sixteenth-Century Naumburg." *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 92 (2001): 138-64.
- Karras, Ruth Mazo. "Gendered Sin and Misogyny in John of Bromyard's 'Summa Predicantium'." *Traditio* 47 (1992): 233-58.
- . "Invisible Women." *Medieval Feminist Forum* 39 (2005): 15-21.
- . "Marriage, Concubinage, and the Law." In *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, edited by Ruth Mazo Karras, Joel Kaye, and E. Ann Matter, 117-29. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- . "Sex and the Singlewoman." In *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, edited by Judith M. Bennett and Amy Froide, 127-45. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- . "Sex, Money, and Prostitution in Medieval English Culture." In *Discipline and Desire: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West*, edited by Jacqueline Murray and Konrad Eisenbichler, 201-16. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

- . “The Latin Vocabulary of Illicit Sex in English Ecclesiastical Court Records.” *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 27, no. 1-17 (1992).
- . *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- . *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*. Philadelphia, 2003.
- . *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Kehnel, Annette. “The Narrative Tradition of the Medieval Franciscan Friars on the British Isles, Introduction to the Sources.” *Franciscan Studies* 63 (2005): 461-530.
- Kelleher, Marie A. “‘Like Man and Wife’: Clerics’ Concubines in the Diocese of Barcelona.” *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002): 349-60.
- Kemmler, Fritz. *“Exempla” in Context: A Historical and Critical Study of Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s “Handlyng Synne.”* Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1984.
- Kemp, Brian. “Hereditary Benefices in the Medieval English Church: A Herefordshire Example.” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 73 (1970): 1-15.
- Kent, Bonnie. “Transitory Vice: Thomas Aquinas on Incontinence.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27 (1989): 199-223.
- Kerby-Fulton, Kathryn. *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.
- Kermode, Jennifer. “The Greater Towns 1300-1540.” In *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume 1, 600-1540*, edited by D.M. Palliser, 441-65. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Kettle, Ann J. “Ruined Maids: Prostitutes and Servant Girls in Later Medieval England.” In *Matrons and Marginal Women in Medieval Society*, edited by Robert R. Edwards and Vickie Ziegler, 19-31. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1995.
- Keynes, Simon. “Diocese and Cathedral before 1056.” In *Hereford Cathedral: A History*, edited by Gerald Aylmer and John Tiller, 3-20. London: The Hambledon Press, 2000.
- Kleparski, Grzegorz A. “Despotic Mares, Dirty Sows, and Angry Bitches: On Middle English Zoosemy and Beyond.” In *Global Perspectives on Medieval English Literature, Language, and Culture*, edited by Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. and Richard Scott Nokes, 93-116. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007.

- Lacarra Lanz, Eukene. "Changing Boundaries of Licit and Illicit Unions: Concubinage and Prostitution." In *Marriage and Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, edited by Eukene Lacarra Lanz, 158-94. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Laeuchli, Samuel. *Power and Sexuality: The Emergence of Canon Law at the Synod of Elvira*. Philadelphia, 1972.
- Lander, Stephen. "Church Courts and the Reformation in the Diocese of Chichester." In *Continuity and Change: Personnel and Administration of the Church of England, 1500-1642*, edited by Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day, 215-38. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976.
- Lansing, Carol. "Concubines, Lovers, Prostitutes: Infamy and Female Identity in Medieval Bologna." In *Beyond Florence: The Contours of Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, edited by Paula Findlen et al., 85-100. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Laqua, Simone. "Concubinage and the Church in Early Modern Münster." *Past & Present Supplement 1* (2006): 72-100.
- Lea, Henry C. *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church*. 4th ed. London: Watts & Co., 1932.
- Lees, Clare A., Thelma Fenster, and Jo Ann McNamara, eds. *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- Lips, E. J. G. "De Brabantse Geestelijkheid en de Andere Sekse. Een Onderzoek Naar de Celibaatschendingen Bij de Brabantse Parochiegeestelijken in de Vijftiende en Zestiende Eeuw." *Tijdschrift Voor Geschiedenis* 102, no. 1 (1989): 1-29.
- Lynch, John E. "Marriage and Celibacy of the Clergy: The Discipline of the Western Church. An Historico-Canonical Synopsis." *The Jurist* 32 (1972): Part I, 14-38; Part II, 189-212.
- MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Mackie, F.P. "The Clerical Population of the Northern Province in 1377-1381: A New Estimate." *Northern History* 43 (2006): 39-51.
- Maddern, Philippa. "Honour Among the Pastors: Gender and Integrity in Fifteenth-Century English Provincial Society." *Journal of Medieval History* 14 (1988): 357-71.
- Mansfield, Mary C. *The Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Marshall, Peter. *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

- McHardy, A.K., ed. *Clerical Poll-Taxes of the Diocese of Lincoln, 1377-1381*. Lincoln Record Society 81. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1992.
- McIntosh, Marjorie. *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- McLaughlin, Megan. "The Bishop as Bridegroom: Marital Imagery and Clerical Celibacy in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries." In *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, edited by Michael Frassetto, 209-37. New York: Garland, 1998.
- . "Secular and Spiritual Fatherhood in the Eleventh Century." In *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West*, edited by Jacqueline Murray, 25-43. New York: Garland, 1999.
- McNamara, Jo Ann. "Canossa and the Ungendering of the Public Man." In *Render unto Caesar: The Religious Sphere in World Politics*, edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet and Donald W. Treadgold, 131-50. Lanham, MD: American University Press, 1995.
- . "Chaste Marriage and Clerical Celibacy." In *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, edited by Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage, 22-33. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982.
- . "Herrenfrage : The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150." In *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, edited by Clare A. Lees, Thelma Fenster, and Jo Ann McNamara, 3-29. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- McSheffrey, Shannon, trans. *Love and Marriage in Late Medieval London*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995.
- . "Whoring Priests and Godly Citizens: Law, Morality, and Clerical Sexual Misconduct in Late Medieval London." In *Local Identities in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, edited by Normal L. Jones and Daniel Woolf, 50-70. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- . *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
- Miller, Maureen C. "Masculinity, Reform, and Clerical Culture: Narratives of Episcopal Holiness in the Gregorian Era." *Church History* 72 (2003): 25-52.
- Mills, Robert. "The Signification of the Tonsure." In *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, edited by P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis, 109-26. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004.
- Moie, Lowndes. "The Bishops of Hereford," *TWNFC* 35 (1955-57): 117-33.

- Moore, R.I. "Family, Community and Cult on the Eve of the Gregorian Reform." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th Series* 30 (1980).
- . "Property, Marriage, and the Eleventh-Century Revolution: A Context for Early Medieval Communism." In *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, edited by Michael Frassetto, 179-208. New York: Garland, 1998.
- Morgan, Penelope E. "The Effect of the Pilgrim Cult of St Thomas Cantilupe on Hereford Cathedral." In *St Thomas Cantilupe, Bishop of Hereford: Essays in His Honour*, edited by Meryl Jancey, 145-52. Hereford: The Friends of Hereford Cathedral Publications Committee, 1982.
- Murray, Jacqueline, ed. *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West*. New York: Garland, 1999.
- . "Masculinizing Religious Life: Sexual Prowess, the Battle for Chastity and Monastic Identity." In *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, edited by P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis, 24-42. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004.
- . "One Flesh, Two Sexes, Three Genders?" In *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*, edited by Lisa M. Bitel and Felice Lifshitz, 34-51. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- . "Twice Marginal and Twice Invisible: Lesbians in the Middle Ages." In *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, edited by Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage, 191-222. New York: Garland, 1996.
- Nelson, J.L. "Monks, Secular Men and Masculinity, c. 900." In *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, edited by D.M. Hadley, 121-42. London: Longman, 1999.
- Niermeyer, J.F. *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*. Leiden: Brill, 1976.
- North, Tim. "Legerwite in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries." *Past and Present* 111 (1996): 3-16.
- O'Donnell, Jean. "Market Centers in Hereford, 1200-1400: Some Factors Influencing Development." *TWNFC* 40 (1971): 186-94.
- O'Hara, Diana. *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Outhwaite, R.B. *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts, 1500-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Owst, G.R. *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961.

- Pantin, W.A. *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962.
- Parish, Helen L. *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation: Precedent, Policy and Practice*. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2000.
- Parker, Sandra Lee, and L.R. Poos. "A Consistory Court from the Diocese of Rochester, 1363-4." *The English Historical Review* 106, no. 420 (1991): 652-65.
- Perry, Raymond. *Anglo-Saxon Herefordshire, 410 AD – 1086 AD*. Gloucester: Oxengard Press, 2002.
- Peters, Edward. "History, Historians, and Clerical Celibacy." In *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, edited by Michael Frassetto, 3-21. New York: Garland, 1998.
- Phyllott, H.W. *Diocesan Histories: Hereford*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1888.
- Poos, L. R. "Sex, Lies and the Church Courts of Pre-Reformation England." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 25 (1995): 585-607.
- . "The Heavy-Handed Marriage Counsellor: Regulating Marriage in Some Later-Medieval English Local Ecclesiastical-Court Jurisdiction." *American Journal of Legal History* 39 (1996): 291-309.
- . *A Rural Society After the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991
- , ed. *New Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in Late-Medieval England: The Courts of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln, 1336-1349, and the Deanery of Wisbech, 1458-1484*. York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Porter, Muriel. *Sex, Marriage, and the Church*. Melbourne: Dove, 1996.
- Postles, Dave. "Penance and the Market Place: A Reformation Dialogue with the Medieval Church (c. 1250-c. 1600)." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 54 (2003): 441-68.
- Power, Eileen. "Medieval Ideas about Women." In *Medieval Women*, edited by M.M. Postan, 7-34. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Prior, Mary. "Reviled and Crucified Marriages: The Position of Tudor Bishops' Wives." In *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, edited by Mary Prior, 118-48. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Putnam, B.H. "Maximum Wage-Laws for Priests After the Black Death, 1348-1381." *American Historical Review* 21 (1915): 12-32.

- Rabberman, Kristine L. "Marriage on the Boundaries: Cultural Contact and Marriage Formation on the Welsh/English Border, 1442-1526." Ph. D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1998.
- Rath, Brigitte. "'De Sacramentis, Concubinato et Ludo Taxillorum.'" Über ein Böhmisches Visitationsprotokoll Aus dem 14. Jahrhundert." In *Von Menschen und Ihren Zeichen. Sozialhistorische Untersuchungen Zum Spätmittelalter und Zur Neuzeit*, edited by Ingrid Matschinegg and Barbara Schuch, 41-59. Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1990.
- Raymo, Robert R. "Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction." In *Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, vol. VII, edited by Albert E. Hartung, 3291-3321. New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1986.
- Reaney, P.H. *Dictionary of English Surnames*, rev. R.M. Wilson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Redworth, Glyn. "A Study in the Formulation of Policy: The Genesis and Evolution of the Act of Six Articles." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 37 (1986): 42-67.
- Remensnyder, Amy. "Pollution, Purity, and Peace: An Aspect of Social Reform Between the Late Tenth Century and 1067." In *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France Around the Year 1000*, edited by Thomas Head and Richard Landes, 280-307. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Ritchie, Carson I.A. *The Ecclesiastical Courts of York*. Abroath: The Herald Press, 1956.
- Robertson, D.W. "The Cultural Tradition of *Handlyng Synne*." *Speculum* 22 (1947): 162-85.
- Rocke, Michael. *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Roderick, A.J. "Open-Field Agriculture in Herefordshire in the Later Middle Ages." *TWNFC* 33 (1950): 55-67.
- Rogers, Katherine M. *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966.
- Roper, Lyndal. *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Ross, Margaret Clunies. "Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England." *Past & Present* 108 (1985): 3-34.
- Rowlands, John and Sheila. *The Surnames of Wales: For Family Historians and Others*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1996.
- Rowley, Trevor. *The Landscape of the Welsh Marches*. London: Michael Joseph, 1986.

- Ruggiero, Guido. "The Abbot's Concubine: Lies, Literature, and Power at the End of the Renaissance." In *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, edited by Ellen E. Kittell and Thomas F. Madden, 166-80. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Russell, J.C. *British Medieval Population*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1948.
- . "The Clerical Population of Medieval England." *Traditio* 2 (1944): 177-212.
- Sabaté, Flocel. "Femmes et Violence Dans la Catalogne Du XIVE Siècle." *Annales de Midi* 106 (1994): 277-316.
- Scammell, Jean. "The Rural Chapter in England from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century." *English Historical Review* 86, 338 (1971): 1-21.
- Scheidel, Walter. "Finances, Figures, and Fiction." *Classical Quarterly* 46 (1996): 222-38.
- Schimmelpfennig, Bernhard. "Ex Fornication Nati: Studies on the Position of Priests' Sons from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century." *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 2 (1980): 3-50.
- Schofield, R.S. "The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649." *Economic History Review* 18 (1965): 483-510.
- Schuler, Peter Johannes. "Illegitime Klerikerkinder Im Bistum Konstanz." *Zeitschrift Für die Geschichte Des Oberrheins* 144 (1996): 183-214.
- Schulman, N. M. "Husband, Father, Bishop? Grosseteste in Paris." *Speculum* 72, no. 2 (1997): 330-46.
- Sheail, John. "The Distribution of Taxable Population and Wealth in England during the Early Sixteenth Century." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 55 (1972): 111-26.
- Sheehan, Michael M. "The Formation and Stability of Marriage in Fourteenth-Century England: Evidence of an Ely Register." *Medieval Studies* 33 (1971): 228-63.
- Sherlock, Peter. "Monuments, Reputation, and Clerical Marriage in Reformation England: Bishop Barlow's Daughters." *Gender and History* 16 (2004): 57-82.
- Simplicio, Oscar Di. "Perpetuas: The Women Who Kept Priests." In *History from Crime: Selections from Quaderni Storici*, edited by Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, 32-64. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.
- Slocombe, I.M. "The Government of Hereford in the Sixteenth Century." *TWNFC* 40, pt. 3 (1972): 356-72.
- Smith, H. Maynard. *Pre-Reformation England*. New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963.

- Spielmann, Richard M. "The Beginning of Clerical Marriage in the English Reformation: The Reigns of Edward and Mary." *Anglican and Episcopal History* 56, no. 3 (1987): 251-63.
- Sturtz, Linda L. "Mary Rose: 'White' African Jamaican Woman? Race and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica." In *Race, Gender, and Agency in the Shadow of Slavery*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming.
- Swanson, R.N. "Angels Incarnate: Clergy and Masculinity from Gregorian Reform to Reformation." In *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, edited by D.M. Hadley, 160-77. New York: Longman, 1999.
- . *Church and Society in Late Medieval England*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.
- , and David Lepine. "The Later Middle Ages, 1268-1535." In *Hereford Cathedral: A History*, edited by Gerald E Aylmer and John Tiller, 48-86. London: Hambledon Press, 2000.
- Sylvester, Dorothy. *The Landscape of the Welsh Borderland*. London: Macmillan, 1969.
- Taglia, Kathryn Ann. "'On Account of Scandal.': Priests, Their Children and the Ecclesiastical Demand for Celibacy." *Florilegium* 14 (1996): 57-70.
- Tellenbach, Gerd. *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest*. Translated by R.F. Bennett. Oxford, 1940.
- . *The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Eleventh Century*. Translated by Timothy Reuter. Cambridge, 1993.
- Thibodeaux, Jennifer D. "Man of the Church or Man of the Village? Reform and the Conflict of Masculinities Among Priests in the Thirteenth-Century Diocese of Rouen." Ph. D. diss., University of Kansas, 2004.
- . "Man of the Church, or Man of the Village? Gender and the Parish Clergy in Medieval Normandy." *Gender and History* 18, no. 2 (2006): 380-99.
- Thirsk, Joan. "The Farming Regions of England." In *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol. IV, 1500-1640*, edited by Joan Thirsk, 1-112. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- Thompson, A. Hamilton. *The English Clergy and Their Organization in the Later Middle Ages*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947.
- Thomson, John A. F. *The Early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529*. New York: Longman, 1993.
- Tonkin, J.W. "Religious Houses with Special Reference to Herefordshire." *TWNFC* 44 (1982): 196-201.

- Thrupp, Sylvia. *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.
- Tringham, Nigel J. "The Parochial Visitation of Tarvin (Cheshire) in 1317." *Northern History* 38 (2001): 197-220.
- Tubach, Frederic C. *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*. Folklore Fellows Communications 86, no. 204. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia Akademia Scientiarum Fennica, 1969.
- Van Meter, David C. "Eschatological Order and the Moral Arguments for Clerical Celibacy in Francia around the Year 1000." In *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, edited by Michael Frassetto, 149-75.
- Von Nocklen, Christina. "Some Alphabetical *Compendia* and How Preachers Used Them in Fourteenth-Century England." *Viator* 12 (1981): 271-88.
- Vleeschouwers-Van Melkebeek, Monique. "Mandatory Celibacy and Priestly Ministry in the Diocese of Tournai at the End of the Middle Ages." In *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe: Studia in Honorem Adriaan Verhulst*, edited by Jean-Marie Duvosquel and Erik Thoen, 681-92. Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1995.
- Vodola, Elisabeth. *Excommunication in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
- Walker, Garthine. "Expanding the Boundaries of Female Honour in Early Modern England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6, 6 (1996): 235-45.
- Watt, Helen. "Old Welsh Tax Returns/*Hen Gofnodion Treth*: The Central Government Taxation Records For Wales 1291-1689 Project." *North American Journal of Welsh Studies* 6 (Winter 2006): 19-47.
- Wedeck, Harry E. "Synonyms for *Meretrix*." *Classical Weekly* 37 (1944): 116-17.
- Wemple, Suzanne Fonay. *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500 to 900*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.
- Wertheimer, Laura. "Children of Disorder: Clerical Parentage, Illegitimacy, and Reform in the Middle Ages." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15 (2006): 382-407.
- Whiting, Robert. *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Williams, Glanmor. *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*. Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 1993.
- Woodcock, Brian L. *Medieval Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury*. London: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Wunderli, Richard M. *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation*.
Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1981.

Yost, John K. "The Reformation Defense of Clerical Marriage in the Reigns of Henry VIII
and Edward VI." *Church History* 50, no. 2 (1981): 152-65.