

# Church-building and Popular Piety in Early Seventeenth-century Exeter

Nicolas Mole

It is now more than a decade since Diarmaid MacCulloch first drew attention to what he described as a minor “building revolution” sweeping through England’s parish churches from the late 1590s to the 1620s.<sup>1</sup> Challenging earlier assertions of neglect, MacCulloch suggested that parishioners during the period were energetically engaged in repairing and restoring their medieval churches which had been ravaged by the iconoclasm of the mid-sixteenth century reformations. This ‘heroic effort’ was concerned with more than simple repair. Parishioners and the church authorities re-fashioned and re-equipped the churches to suit ‘the performance of reformed worship according to the Book of Common Prayer’.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, MacCulloch argued that this building revolution both predated and conflicted with Laud’s church restoration campaign of the 1630s.

A number of studies have since developed different aspects of MacCulloch’s thesis, most notably Julia Merritt’s work on church-building in London and George Yule’s study of the physical setting of Jacobean worship.<sup>3</sup> However, the aim of this study is to consider how this ‘building revolution’ and lay attitudes to church fabrics in general during the period may develop our understanding of the strength and nature of popular piety. It is the contention of this essay that the surviving records of church repair and refurbishment from this period offer historians a fresh perspective on popular lay attitudes to the Church.

In recent years, historians of the early Reformation have been pre-occupied with analysing the gifts and donations that ordinary parishioners made to church fabrics as evidence of the vitality of late medieval Catholicism.<sup>4</sup> Yet even after the Reformation, church fabrics could provide an outlet for lay piety.<sup>5</sup> Parishioners continued to bear witness to their beliefs through pious gifts of church furnishings or generous legacies towards the upkeep of their local church. Laypeople might also contribute keenly to schemes for improving church fabrics. Through these ‘seemingly

inarticulate actions', ordinary conforming parishioners might express their faith – 'the faith of the many' as opposed to that of a non-conforming minority.<sup>6</sup>

The beliefs and religious habits of ordinary parishioners have become a prime concern for historians of the Reformation.<sup>7</sup> Recent studies have attempted to tackle the question of what motivated the majority of parishioners to adhere to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England as part of the wider debate over the reception of Protestant ideas and practices in the parishes. Those arguing that the Reformation failed to alter parishioners' beliefs significantly have tended to regard lay conformity as simply an empty gesture of obedience.<sup>8</sup> Christopher Haigh once suggested in an article that lay beliefs were often characterised by 'ignorance, indifference and downright antipathy'.<sup>9</sup> G W Bernard notes evidence of parish 'vitality' in this period, such as church-building, but argues that it merely suggests parishioners' conservative, even Catholic, instincts.<sup>10</sup> Yet conformity might also reflect a positive, even enthusiastic attachment to the Church. Judith Maltby's work, in particular, has identified committed conformist parishioners with deep loyalties to the corporate worship of the Prayer Book. For these 'Prayer Book Protestants', conformity expressed their 'sincere and genuine' beliefs.<sup>11</sup>

This study of popular involvement in the church repair and refurbishment of the period, then, promises to develop the debate on the 'unspectacular orthodoxy' of the majority and help historians re-evaluate the motives behind popular conformity. A building effort on the scale suggested by MacCulloch would have necessitated the full mobilisation of this lay support for the Church. Ordinary parishioners would have been called on to fund and contribute to the building work. The laity would have participated in parish plans for refurbishing and reorganising worship spaces, imprinting the new arrangements with their own beliefs about parish worship. Finally, we shall consider the lay response to Laudian church-building, which deliberately challenged earlier attitudes to church fabrics. Can we detect at the parish level the popular resentment towards the Laudian changes that Maltby and others have identified or did the new priorities of the 1630s instead resonate with the religious instincts of many ordinary parishioners?<sup>12</sup>

The locus for this study is the ancient city of Exeter, with reference to the south-west more generally. As the first detailed study of the 'building revolution' beyond London and the south-east, it should allow us to gauge the extent to which MacCulloch's building campaign was indeed a widespread 'revolution'.

Exeter was viewed popularly in this period as 'the heart and head of the West'. Its geographical position made it the political and economic



centre of the south-west. It was also the seat of the Bishop of Exeter whose vast diocese comprised both Devon and Cornwall. Exeter's bishops during the period sought to bring order to their unwieldy and often unruly diocese. William Cotton (1598–1621) spent his early years at Exeter engaged in energetic reform. An able administrator with a strong distaste for puritan nonconformity, Cotton enforced the Canons of 1604 vigorously and operated a diocesan commission to tackle recusancy and nonconformist preachers.<sup>13</sup>

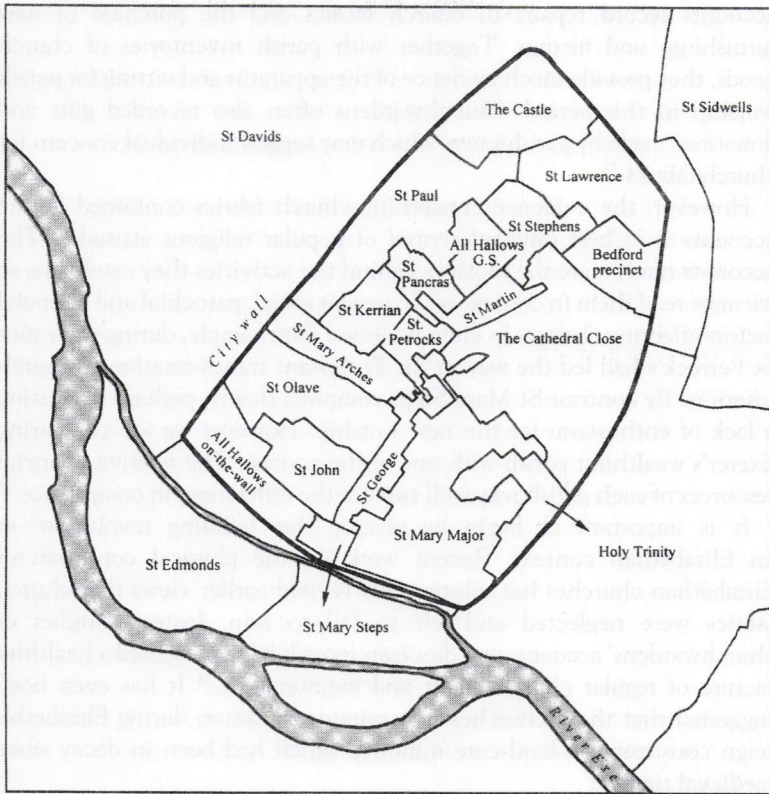
Cotton's successor, Valentine Carey (1621–1626), belonged to the group of Arminian churchmen who rose to prominence in the last years of James' reign. A court bishop, his influence in Exeter appears to have been largely confined to the Cathedral.<sup>14</sup> Joseph Hall (1627–1641) who succeeded Carey, was a moderate evangelical Calvinist. Once a rising star of the Jacobean church, it was Hall's misfortune that his time as bishop coincided with Laud's supremacy in the Church. Hall's moderate position found itself squeezed between the conflicting demands of the new Laudian order and an increasingly radicalized puritanism.<sup>15</sup>

Exeter's historians have tended to focus on the influence of puritanism in the city, particularly amongst members of its ruling Chamber.<sup>16</sup> Certainly Exeter had a taste for 'the hotter sort of Protestant'. Much to the consternation of Bishop Cotton, the city had appointed Edmund Snape, a radical nonconformist preacher, as its first lecturer in 1599. Other civic luminaries included frequent mayor and MP, Ignatius Jurdain, known to history as the 'Arch-puritan' of the West and the radical preacher John Bond who went on to participate in the Westminster Assembly.<sup>17</sup>

However, in the city's parishes differences between puritan and conformist parishioners were less clear-cut than has been previously suggested. Many of the godly chose to work within the parish system to pursue their own evangelical agenda. A good example is John Mico, moderate puritan and author of popular catechisms such as *Spiritual Food and Physic*.<sup>18</sup> A nonconformist minister in the 1590s, he had subscribed in 1604 and went on to enjoy a fruitful pastoral career as rector of St Petrock's, Exeter's leading civic parish.<sup>19</sup> Church-building in the Jacobean period may further highlight the common ground between Exeter's puritan and conformist parishioners.

## I

Exeter's surviving churchwardens' accounts and inventories of church goods provide the chief materials with which to test MacCulloch's thesis of a Jacobean 'building revolution'. Early seventeenth-century Exeter was



Exeter's parishes in the early seventeenth century.  
 Reproduced from M. Stoye, *From Deliverance to Destruction*  
 (Exeter, 1996), p.13.

divided into a patchwork of nineteen parishes (see picture). These ranged from a core of small, wealthy parishes to larger, poorer parishes at the city's edge.

Unfortunately only a fraction of Exeter's churchwardens' accounts have survived. Eight parishes yield accounts for the period, with only four parishes providing substantial runs of years from 1575–1642.<sup>20</sup> Happily, though, the surviving accounts represent a fair cross-section of the city's parishes from the wealthiest parish St Petrock's, through middle-income parishes such as St Kerrian's and St John's Bow to the poor, over-crowded parish of St Mary Steps.<sup>21</sup>

Churchwardens' accounts, which detail annual parish income and expenditure, shed light on parochial attitudes to church-building. The



accounts record repairs to church fabrics and the purchase of new furnishings and fittings. Together with parish inventories of church goods, they provide much evidence of the apparatus and setting for parish worship in this period. Churchwardens often also recorded gifts and donations made by parishioners which may suggest individual concern for church fabrics.<sup>22</sup>

However, the evidence concerning church fabrics contained in the accounts is at best only inferential of popular religious attitudes. The accounts rarely state the motives behind the activities they catalogue, so we must read them in context and consider social, parochial and financial factors affecting changes in church fabrics. For example, during the 1560s St Petrock's had led the way in the Protestant transformation of church interiors. By contrast St Mary Steps complied slowly, perhaps suggesting a lack of enthusiasm for the new worship. However we are comparing Exeter's wealthiest parish with one of the poorest. The relative financial resources of each parish may well explain the differences in compliance.<sup>23</sup>

It is important to begin by placing the 'building revolution' in an Elizabethan context. Recent work on the physical condition of Elizabethan churches has substantially revised earlier views that church fabrics were neglected and left to fall to ruin. Instead, studies of churchwardens' accounts and diocesan records have presented a healthier picture of regular church repair and maintenance.<sup>24</sup> It has even been suggested that those churches in a ruinous condition during Elizabeth's reign constituted a hard-core minority which had been in decay since medieval times.<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, it would be churlish to deny that the Reformation had brought about a profound change in lay attitudes to church fabrics. While late medieval Catholics had been taught that church-building was a meritorious work, Elizabethan parishioners were warned in the Homilies against the 'superfluous decking' of churches.<sup>26</sup> Protestant preachers such as Hugh Latimer downgraded the importance of the 'giving of ornaments' to the church and instead urged his listeners to 'bestow the greatest part of thy goods' on the poor and needy.<sup>27</sup> This shift in devotional emphasis contributed to a fall in spending on church fabrics after the Reformation.

Ian Archer, in his study of Elizabethan London's parishes, described church repair as 'purely functional' in this period.<sup>28</sup> Parishioners merely sought to maintain existing structures, rather than improve or beautify them. The evidence from Exeter's Elizabethan churchwardens' accounts bears out this analysis. The accounts suggest that from the 1570s Exeter's churches were regularly repaired and maintained. Churchwardens made sure that broken windows were re-glazed, holes in walls and floors patched up and leaky roofs made good. Church bells and clocks received ongoing

attention, with payments recorded for essentials like oil and bell ropes. Some parishes, including Holy Trinity and St Petrock's, even undertook the expensive task of recasting their great bells.<sup>29</sup>

The material of parish worship was also kept in good order. Each parish regularly paid for the 'washynge of the linnen clothes' including, of course, the minister's surplice.<sup>30</sup> The church Bible and prayer books were frequently repaired, suggesting that they were well used. Parishes such as St John's Bow added to their stocks of books and equipment for the services. Items such as hourglasses, prayer books 'for Fasting' and 'a Bagge of velvett' to hold the communion bread were purchased.<sup>31</sup>

New building work was rare in this period and usually occasioned by necessity. At St Petrock's the south aisle was enlarged and re-pewed in 1587/8, presumably in response to an expanding population. When the tower of St Mary Major with its unstable medieval steeple began to threaten the safety of local residents in 1581, the tower was repaired and the steeple simply shorn off. As with Old St Paul's in London there was no attempt to replace the steeple or restore the church to its medieval glory.<sup>32</sup>

In one area, though, churchwardens did undertake substantial building work. During the 1570s and 1580s many of Exeter's parishes remodelled their chancels.<sup>33</sup> This may have been in response to a campaign by reforming churchmen to target these old Mass rooms. Archbishop Grindal's articles of 1576 required not only that altars should be 'clean removed', but that chancel floors and walls should be rebuilt to eradicate their memory.<sup>34</sup> Such fierce iconoclasm necessitated major alterations. At St Mary Major's, for example, the parish decided in 1580 to have the chancel 'newe seeled rounde aboute and the Flower made playne'. The new chancel was levelled and fitted with benches.<sup>35</sup>

Nonetheless, as MacCulloch suggested, it is during the last years of Elizabeth's reign that we begin to see a new attitude to church fabrics. At St Mary Steps, parish expenditure doubled during the 1590s, partly to meet the substantial costs of reconstructing the church's chancel in 1598. The parishioners of St John's Bow parish rebuilt their chancel ceiling and re-glazed the east window in 1601.<sup>36</sup>

This building movement gathered pace during the first decade of the seventeenth century. St Kerrian's parish church was completely renovated and refurbished between 1602 and 1604. 'Somerton the helliar' re-roofed the entire building and also undertook substantial repairs to the church's clock and tower. The church-windows were re-glazed with 'xi foot of new glas att viid a foot'. The church's interior was also completely refurbished with a new reading desk, pulpit, communion table and 'ii dossen of mattes' for the pews. Parishioners equipped the church with



a new Bible, two 'comunion bookes' and a new surplice for the minister. The bill for the year 1602/3 alone came to a colossal £14 17 shillings, compared to the parish's annual average expenditure of just £3.<sup>37</sup>

At St John's Bow parishioners paid for the south-east end of the church to be rebuilt in 1604, more than tripling the parish's average annual expenditure. During 1607/8 the pulpit and screen were expensively painted and a reading desk erected.<sup>38</sup> Other parishes made similar repairs or bought new items of furniture such as the elegant pulpit of All-Hallows Goldsmith Street which survives from this period. Churches also invested in smaller furnishings such as pulpit cloths, font covers and carpets for the communion table.<sup>39</sup>

The rebuilding of St Sidwell's church tower in 1607 was symptomatic of this new desire to beautify and adorn Exeter's churches. The tower, which had been partly destroyed during the siege of Exeter in 1549, required substantial repair work. As this was clearly beyond the resources of the poor extra-mural parish, a collection was organised in the city and across the diocese. Hartland parish in north Devon contributed 3s 4d 'towardses the building of the steeple of St Sidwills neer Exon' in 1605/6. In contrast with the minimal repairs made to St Mary Major's tower during the 1580s, St Sidwell's church tower was fully restored to its former glory and a new steeple added.<sup>40</sup>

MacCulloch has suggested that this new approach to church-building was 'signalled' by Archbishop Whitgift's national survey of church fabrics in 1602. Whitgift had ordered the bishops to report on the condition of local churches and undertake necessary repairs.<sup>41</sup> Although no returns have survived for Exeter, the fact that work began at St Kerrian's that very year may suggest that the survey was important.<sup>42</sup> The enforcement of the Canons of 1604 gave church repair and refurbishment a further boost. Canon 85 required all churches to be 'well and sufficiently repaired', while Canons 80–84 set out new standards for church furniture.<sup>43</sup>

The church authorities' concern about church fabrics may have developed out of the new emphasis leading churchmen placed on 'praise and prayer' in parish worship.<sup>44</sup> Rather than defending the Prayer Book ceremonies as merely necessary for order and decency, Richard Hooker argued that they were 'good and profitable' in themselves. Such 'visible solemnity' he suggested was 'fittest to make a deep and strong impression' on parishioners.<sup>45</sup> Consequently churchmen such as Archbishops Whitgift and Bancroft enforced ceremonial conformity in the Church and as part of that sought to raise the standards of church fabrics.

Church repair and refurbishment was also motivated by revived concern over sacrilege. Whitgift had warned Queen Elizabeth that 'such

sins as profaneness and sacrilege' did exist and brought with them God's curse. He later argued that church repair was necessary to prevent the Church's enemies from thinking it was 'but profanely minded'. With ceremonial conformists increasingly suggesting that sacrilege was a greater sin than idolatry, Jacobean churchman sought to promote order and decency in 'the House of God'.<sup>46</sup>

Bishop Cotton and the church authorities in Exeter appear to have responded energetically to national efforts to encourage church repair. At Stoke Canon village, just outside the city, Cotton personally ordered 'the setting upp of a newe pulpit' and 'the trimyng and adornment of there churche' with scriptural wall texts, the royal arms and new pews in 1605.<sup>47</sup> Parishes that did not repair their churches were penalized. The churchwardens of All Hallows on-the-Wall were presented before the church courts in 1611 for neglecting their church building. Fines began to be levied on churches in poor condition. St Mary Steps had to pay 11d to the Archdeacon's registrar as 'the churche was nott in good order' in 1602. At St John's Bow 15d was paid 'for a citacyon for nott repayinge the chauncell' in 1604. St Kerrian's paid 1s 3d for 'a daye' [delay] to provide 'a Boxe for the poore'. The fine had its desired effect: the following year's accounts record the purchase of a poor box.<sup>48</sup>

Church-building in this period was clearly encouraged and, at times, enforced by the church authorities. For example, Archbishop Abbot's metropolitan visitation in 1612 generated another wave of concern for church fabrics. A number of parishes levied rates that year for church repairs and drew up terriers of church property for the first time.<sup>49</sup> However, we must be careful not to assume that church-building was simply centrally driven. Many of Exeter's parishes were already making substantial repairs in the 1590s, long before Whitgift's survey, which may suggest a renewed concern amongst parishioners about church fabrics that predated the church authorities' activities. An alternative reading of the period might be that diocesan building efforts developed out of a groundswell of support for church repair and refurbishment at a parish level.

Furthermore, church repair and refurbishment continued in Exeter during the later Jacobean period in the absence of significant encouragement from the church authorities. Admittedly, the work was on a smaller scale than before, but this slowdown may simply reflect how much work had already been done earlier to re-edify and furnish Exeter's churches.

While the evidence suggests that Exeter's city churches did undergo a 'minor building revolution' in the Jacobean period, church-building outside the city may have been less impressive. Surviving visitation returns for 1624-6 provide a snapshot of the state of the diocese's churches at the



end of James' reign.<sup>50</sup> Most parish churches appear to have been in an acceptable condition, merely lacking smaller items such as prayer books, pulpit cloths and flagons for communion wine.<sup>51</sup>

However, a number of parishes were cited for seriously decayed church fabrics. At St Martin's church, Northlew on the edge of Dartmoor the church-windows were broken, rain poured in through gaps in the roof and the church walls were green with ivy, both inside and out. Perhaps as a result, the pews were 'torne and gone to decay', the commandment boards partly blotted out and the church's books worn and ripped. The Bishop's perculiars in Cornwall were all found to be in a similar state of decay.<sup>52</sup>

These poor, rural parishes simply lacked the finances to carry out expensive repairs to decayed fabrics. For example, at Honeychurch in Mid-Devon the churchwardens protested that the cost of restoring the church's decayed Perpendicular tower would 'farr exceed the abilitie of the inhabitantes to beare'. They pleaded for another year to effect repairs.<sup>53</sup> Many of these remote parish churches would not finally receive attention until the major 'building revolution' of the 1630s.<sup>54</sup>

## II

The picture that emerges from Exeter's churchwardens' accounts is of a vigorous church-building effort gathering pace in the city from the 1590s. As suggested earlier, the role of the church authorities in encouraging and, at times, initiating church repair and refurbishment cannot by itself explain the scale of this effort. Instead, as Andrew Foster and Julia Merritt have both argued, Jacobean church-building appears to have received significant impetus at a parish level.<sup>55</sup> What evidence is there of parish support and enthusiasm for church-building in Exeter and does such support suggest a wider lay affection for the Church?

Major church repairs in this period were largely funded out of church rates levied on parishioners. Although, the accounts suggest that most parishioners paid their rates promptly, this by itself reveals little about lay attitudes. The payment of rates was compulsory and so may mask a range of lay responses from enthusiasm to grudging compliance. More suggestive of lay attitudes are the gifts and donations to churches recorded in wills, parish accounts and inventories of church goods. These voluntary actions by parishioners suggest a genuinely positive response to the church-building effort.

Evidence from Exeter's surviving wills and parish accounts suggest that from the late 1580s parishioners resumed making gifts and bequests to the city's churches.<sup>56</sup> Many gifts were directed towards the general upkeep of the church fabric. Parishioners such as John Anthony of St John's Bow

gave money towards 'the mayntenance of the churche', while others like Simon Knight, a city alderman and resident of St Petrock's, gave generally towards 'the repacion [reparation] of ye parish churche'.<sup>57</sup> Donors also added to parish funds for service equipment by contributing to parish 'stores' or the 'church stocke'.<sup>58</sup>

Many parishioners responded directly to the programmes of church repair and refurbishment undertaken during the period. John Bond of St John's Bow paid for the east window of the chancel to be re-glazed in 1601 as part of the parish's effort to rebuild their chancel. Thomas Wakeman directed his legacy to be spent on the current repairs 'in and about' St Martin's church in 1625. At St Mary Steps a parish collection yielded over £3 'towards amending of the chauncell' out of 'the benevolence of the said parishioners towards the Parson' in 1598. Legally, repair of the chancel was the incumbent's responsibility; here the parishioners appear to have voluntarily helped him out.<sup>59</sup>

Wealthy parishioners might use donations to anticipate and spur on church-building efforts. George Spicer of St Mary Major bestowed a new treble bell on his church during the 1620s, while John Wills, a wealthy baker, left £5 towards 'the newe building of the Tower of Allhallows [on-the-Wall]' in 1615 on condition that it should be built within 10 years of his death.<sup>60</sup>

Nonetheless, it must be noted that despite the increase in donations to church fabrics, parish giving continued to reflect the emphases of post-Reformation piety. Heeding the teachings of Latimer and subsequent generations of Protestant preachers, parishioners ensured that the amounts spent on church fabrics were dwarfed by gifts to the poor. Daniel Baker's bequest of 1615 was typical: the yeoman left 6s 8d to be spent on the fabric of St George's church, but more than twice that amount, 13s 4d, to his parish's poor.<sup>61</sup> Wealthier citizens likewise indulged in funding lectureships and almshouses before turning to church fabrics.<sup>62</sup>

During James' reign, many ordinary parishioners also chose to make gifts of church furniture. At Holy Trinity, Christopher Street gave a 'palle of blacke velvett' and a 'boxe to kepe the Pale and the communione cuppe' in 1610. Katherine Matthew and Alice Tanner later gave two houseling cloths 'to serve att the comunion tyme'.<sup>63</sup> These linen cloths were used to cover the communion rails or kneeling benches as the communicants received the sacrament. At St Mary Steps, Agnes Penny donated a 'Chrimson sattyn cushion for the Pulpitt'.<sup>64</sup> Many of these generous parishioners had been parish officers such as churchwardens. Roger Matthew, a former store warden of Holy Trinity, gave a new 'silke table cloth . . . for the comunyon table' in 1615. John Bond, noted earlier, had been 'hedd warden' at St John's Bow in 1590.<sup>65</sup> Other donors,



though, came from a variety of backgrounds from widows to wealthy merchants.

Parishioners may have felt motivated to give for a variety of religious and social reasons. A sense of neighbourhood and parish identity might prompt parishioners to give generously to the worship of their local church. Churchwardens often gave items to commemorate their period in office, proudly engraving them with their initials and the date. Wealthy parishioners might sponsor church-building to enhance their own prestige. The gallery of 1621 at Whitestone church, near Exeter, still advertises the name of its benefactor, Burrell Townsend. Like the erection of ostentatious funeral monuments and family pews, giving to churches could reflect the social ambition of the wealthy.<sup>66</sup>

Historians have often questioned the religious motives behind such gifts. Christopher Haigh has argued that this support for ceremony and ritual amongst parishioners reflected their religious conservatism. These were the actions of 'parish Anglicans' eager to support any increase in ritual and decoration as a return to the cherished traditions of the late medieval Catholic past.<sup>67</sup> However Haigh's work draws heavily on puritan sources, such as Dent and Nichols, who criticised many Prayer Book ceremonies. Their minority view that lay support for ritual and ceremony in the Church reflected popish back-sliding has been allowed to dominate the historiography.

Judith Maltby, however, has argued that for some parishioners the Prayer Book rituals formed a vital aspect of their own Protestant piety. These 'Prayer Book Protestants' defended the official ceremonies in the church courts, not out of a desire for empty ceremony, but because they believed that 'when they worshipped according to the lawful liturgy, they were worshipping God'.<sup>68</sup>

At first glance, parishioner's gifts of items such as houseling cloths would seem to lend weight to Haigh's ideas. After all, in traditional Catholic practice these cloths were designed to collect the crumbs during the administration of the Host. Furthermore, in the minds of ordinary parishioners the cloths would have been associated with the practice of kneeling to receive communion. Are such gifts, then, simply evidence of parish conservatism?

Certainly that is a possibility. Yet it seems that by this period the cloths had lost their connotations with Catholic piety. Even puritan parishes in the city like St Kerrian's chose to purchase new houseling cloths.<sup>69</sup> These gifts, along with tablecloths and communion plate may instead reflect popular enthusiasm for receiving the sacrament. As Arnold Hunt has demonstrated, sacramental piety, rather than being a token of religious conservatism in this period, was part of mainstream Protestant thinking

and nurtured by Jacobean churchmen and religious writers.<sup>70</sup> Parishioners were taught that the sacraments complemented the preaching of God's Word. As a result, the same parishioner might bequeath new communion plate and found a lectureship.<sup>71</sup>

These parish gifts may, therefore, support Maltby's more positive reading of lay attitudes to the Prayer Book ceremonies. By contributing to the decking of communion spaces with linen for the reception of the sacrament, parishioners associated themselves intimately with their parish's performance of the Prayer Book rite and in so doing expressed their support. The gifts of houseling cloths may also suggest that these parishioners were concerned about kneeling during communion. Historians have often taken the puritan critique of kneeling at face value and suggested that it reflected hankerings for the Mass amongst parishioners. Yet ordinary parishioners often demanded kneeling in accordance with the Prayer Book for fear of receiving irreverently.<sup>72</sup> Their requests merely reflected the views of Jacobean churchmen who stressed the importance of reverence in taking the sacraments.

Exeter's accounts suggest, then, that Maltby's 'Prayer Book Protestants' may have provided a reservoir of support for the church-building effort. However Haigh's emphasis on continuities with the Catholic past is suggestive. Perhaps at heart the same basic religious instinct prompted parishioners to express their faith through giving to churches both before and after the Reformation. These gifts to Exeter's churches may reflect the ability of the Reformation, as in other areas, to harness traditional popular piety and direct it along reformed Protestant lines.<sup>73</sup>

The gifts of furnishings to decorate church interiors also indicate that the reshaping of parish churches in this period was a two-way process. Although churchmen directed changes to church fabrics, it was up to parishioners to fund the work and decide how their churches would be re-ordered. The new interiors they designed reflected not just parish aesthetic tastes, but also parish beliefs and religious practices. As we examine evidence of these new arrangements, we are in a sense, entering into the religious world of the ordinary parishioner.<sup>74</sup>

Evidence from Exeter's churchwardens' accounts suggests that the new church layouts reflected a distinctly reformed Protestant view of parish worship. At Exeter, as elsewhere, the old medieval naves were converted into preaching halls. In the place of greatest prominence stood the pulpit, sometimes along one wall of the nave, most often at the east end towards either the north or south corners. The seating was designed to face it: some parishes even converted their chancels to accommodate listeners. At St John's Bow mats were provided for 'the younge men sittinge in the Chancell' during the sermon.<sup>75</sup>





**Figure 1. Leweston Chapel, Dorset. Built 1616, it is one of the few Jacobean church interiors that have survived unaltered. The communion table is Victorian.**

Pulpits themselves were grand and expensive items indicating the centrality of preaching in parish worship. Few of Exeter's pulpits from this era have survived, but this pulpit of 1616 at Leweston Chapel, Dorset, with its attached reading desk and canopy gives an example of the grandeur of a Jacobean pulpit.

Exeter's pulpits would have been carved with elaborate strap work and fashionable 'Jacobean' motifs. Parishes also decorated them with colourful cloths and cushions. The accounts often record large payments for the 'painting of the pulpett'.<sup>76</sup> This work may have included inscribing Bible verses on the pulpit to emphasize the importance of preaching. The pulpit of 1613 at Lyme Regis church reminds listeners that 'Faith is by hearing.'

If the Reformation had transformed the nave into a preaching hall, then the chancel had become a communion room designed to suit Prayer Book services.<sup>77</sup> During the late Elizabethan period, parishes increasingly



Figure 2. Leweston's pulpit and reading desk.

chose to leave the table in the chancel rather than carry it into the nave for communion. Consequently, as noted earlier, many churches remodelled their chancels during this period so that parishioners could now literally 'draw near in faith' to receive the sacraments there.

In some churches, like St Mary Arches, the chancel would have been too small to use as a separate room and so communion continued to be administered in the nave. However, most parishes set the table permanently table-wise in the midst of the chancel and surrounded it with seating.<sup>78</sup> At St Mary Major the chancel contained 'seeting and



bynches [benches] of Joynd worke all Bounde about' the communion table. St John's Bow paid for the 'making of seates in the chancell' in 1576 and installed new benches in 1601.<sup>79</sup> Communion seating was often built into wainscot panelling which stretched all around the chancel walls including the east end.<sup>80</sup> Kneeling benches and mats were also provided so that the communicants could kneel when they received, as required by the Prayer Book rubric.<sup>81</sup>

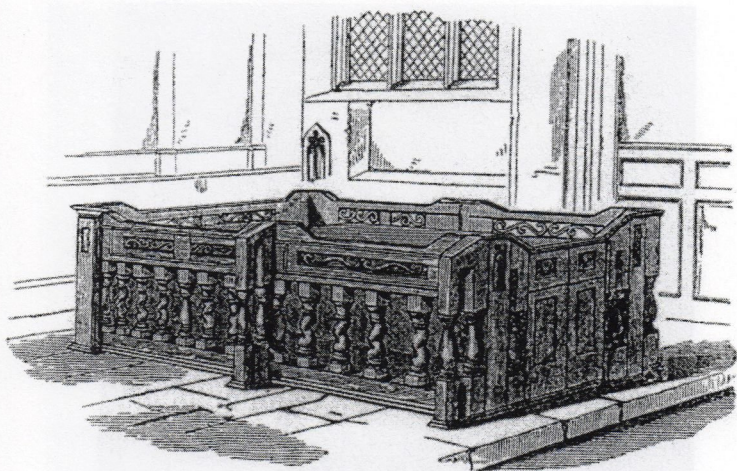
Many churches kept their medieval roodscreens as a convenient divide between nave and chancel.<sup>82</sup> These screens were shadows of their former selves, shorn down to the crossbeam and whitewashed of their medieval iconography. Although chancel screens would feature prominently in later Laudian church arrangements, during James' reign they merely served to fence off the communion space from the preaching area.<sup>83</sup> Hence even the godly parish of St Kerrian's built a new screen during this period.<sup>84</sup>

George Yule has noted how the church authorities encouraged the development of communion rooms during James' reign.<sup>85</sup> In particular, the Canons of 1604 required that communion be held where 'the minister may be more conveniently heard of the communicants in his prayer and ministration'. Seated chancels fulfilled this role, allowing parishioners to sit and pray with a full view of the minister performing the service.<sup>86</sup> Although Yule has suggested that these rooms reflected the concerns of James I and his bishops for the reverent administration of the sacraments, we should not, however, overlook parish involvement in their development. The fact that Exeter's parishes were already redesigning their communion spaces from the 1570s may suggest that the desire for orderly and reverent communions was equally present at the parochial level.

By the 1620s, many of Exeter's parishes had also purchased communion rails with which to fence the table. The use of rails further suggests that the city's parishioners were concerned about disorderly communions. They may have shared similar sentiments to parishioners at Lambeth, Surrey, who encompassed their table with a new rail in 1620 so that communicants might receive the sacraments 'in a more decent Manner'.<sup>87</sup>

It is important to note that these rails differed both in shape and function from later Laudian rails used during Charles' reign. Laudian style rails fenced off the table at the east end of the chancel like a medieval altar, reflecting Laudian beliefs about the real presence in the eucharist. By contrast, what we might term 'traditional style' rails, were designed to surround a table set table-wise in the midst of the chancel.<sup>88</sup> These rails of c.1660 at Ermington, south Devon, illustrate such an arrangement.

The accounts suggest that Exeter's communion rails also fitted around the table. St Petrock's accounts talk of 'railes for the comunyon table',



COMMUNION TABLE IN ERMINGTON CHURCH.

Figure 3. Engraving reproduced from W. Cotton, 'On the churches of Cornwood, Harford and Ermington', *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society*, first series, vol. 6 (1861), p.294.  
Property of the West Country Studies Library.

while St Kerrian's refers simply to 'the reales of the comunion table'.<sup>89</sup> Four-sided rails may have been common elsewhere before the 1630s. During the 1640s, contemporaries deliberately distinguished between traditional rails 'as they were 50 years last past' and Laudian rails of '4 or 5 years last past'.<sup>90</sup>

'Traditional' rails acted as guards for the table, protecting it from sacrilege and indecent use. Jacobean church court records reflect parish concern on this subject. Churchwardens increasingly presented parishioners 'for abusing the com[munion] table' with secular uses such as counting money.<sup>91</sup> These attempts by churchmen and parishioners to separate sacred uses from the profane may mirror the wider divorce of the sacred and secular which Patrick Collinson has suggested characterised the conservative, 'secondary phase of the English Reformation' from the 1580s.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, Exeter's accounts reveal that Jacobean churches, rather than being the drab schoolrooms they are so often depicted, could be both colourful and decorous.<sup>93</sup> The walls of the church, though whitewashed, were not entirely devoid of ornament. Parishes decorated them with scriptural texts, like this one at Puddleton, Dorset (below) and set up commandment boards, tables of the degrees of matrimony and, of course,



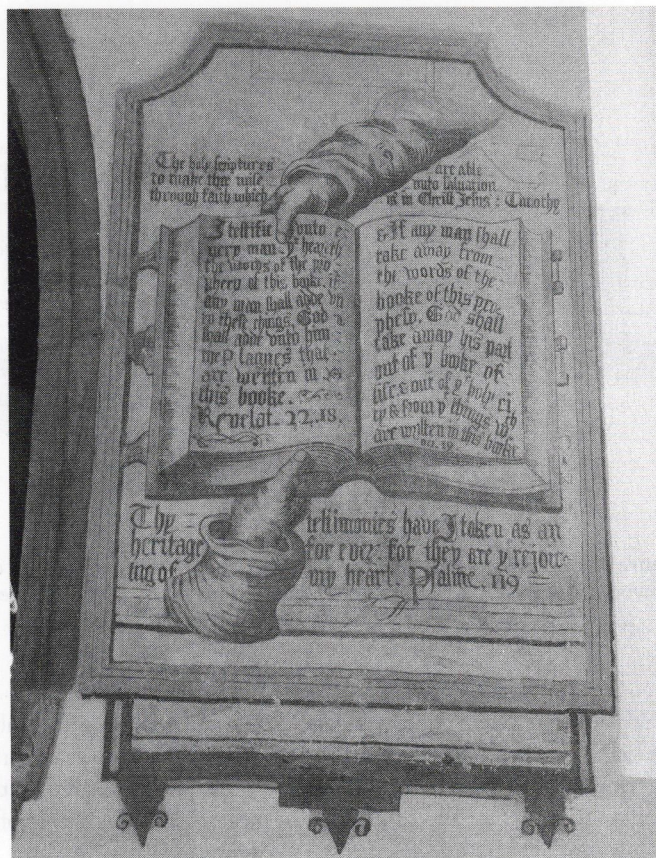


Figure 4. A seventeenth-century wall text at Puddleton, Dorset.

the Royal Arms. Exeter's parishes slowly replaced Elizabeth's arms with James' during this period.<sup>94</sup> At St John's Bow parishioners also set up the 'Citties Armes' in an interesting display of civic pride.<sup>95</sup>

Smaller furnishings added colour to Exeter's churches. Reading desks were adorned with 'ymbroddered cushions' and cloths. Parishes built new font covers or decorated them with colourful cloths. Communion tables were covered with a carpet or a linen tablecloth for the service time. St Mary Major's 'olde silke' communion carpets were particularly grand with 'ymbroiddired Birds' depicted upon them.<sup>96</sup>

Despite the prevalent Calvinist distaste for religious imagery, some pictorial art could also be found in Exeter's churches. Funeral monuments employed colourful secular and classical imagery such as cherubs and

skulls. Many church windows still contained medieval stained glass, even those at St Mary Arches church – ‘the spiritual centre of Exeter puritanism’.<sup>97</sup> The test for an image appears to have been whether it could lead one into idolatry. Chancel windows depicting the deity or crucifixion were often replaced with clear glass, as apparently happened at St John’s Bow in 1601. However other windows depicting the saints or Old Testament stories were less offensive and often survived.<sup>98</sup>

Exeter’s newly refurbished parish churches, then, with their preaching halls and communion rooms were the fruit of the ‘minor building revolution’. Evidence from the city’s accounts supports MacCulloch’s view that churches were not only repaired during the period but also redesigned according to the pattern of reformed Protestant worship. The important role that the laity played in this work, both individually and collectively, may suggest that some of Exeter’s parishioners wholeheartedly identified with these new priorities.

### III

During the 1630s a second, even larger, wave of church repair and refurbishment swept through England’s parish churches. Many historians, including Kevin Sharpe and George Bernard, have regarded Archbishop Laud’s church restoration campaign as merely a more energetic continuation of earlier policies designed to encourage ceremonial conformity and decency in worship.<sup>99</sup> However, as Julia Merritt and others have argued, the Laudian restoration campaign not only differed in scale but also in kind from earlier church-building efforts. This reflected the fact that church-building in the 1630s was shaped by the new theological and liturgical priorities of Laudian churchmen.<sup>100</sup>

Peter Lake has shown how Laudians came to regard the church building itself as a sacred object, set apart by the divine presence. Laudian churchmen argued that as churches were God’s ‘presence chambers’ on earth, then a church’s ornamentation and impedimenta should reflect this by glowing with ‘the beauty of holiness’. This key Laudian belief created a powerful incentive for the lavish rebuilding and refurbishment of churches during the 1630s.<sup>101</sup>

Laudians also believed that God’s majesty should be reflected in the Church’s external ceremonies. The Prayer Book ceremonies were more than simply ‘good and profitable’, in their view, they were the defining mark of the true church. Church interiors were rearranged to reflect the importance of ceremonial worship over preaching. The reading desk, as the liturgical centre of the church, was given greater prominence. Desks were often attached to pulpits so that the minister could only enter the



pulpit via the desk. Laudian churchmen often repositioned pulpits further back into corners so that the congregation's view of the east end was not obscured.<sup>102</sup>

The sacraments lay at the heart of the Laudian vision. Laudian writers saw the reception of the eucharist as the pinnacle of a Christian's devotional life for it brought one closest to the divine presence. Nicholas Tyacke has argued that many Laudians, rejecting the Calvinist view that grace was only transmitted through God's predestination, began to view the sacraments as the prime source of potentially saving grace.<sup>103</sup> Laudian churches reflected the belief that the aura of holiness was particularly intense around the font and altar. Communion tables were often raised and set as altars at the east end. Laudian churchmen removed seating and monuments from chancels<sup>104</sup> and ordered parishioners to provide new rails or reshape existing rails to demarcate the holy space around the altar.<sup>105</sup> Fonts gained a similar prominence in Laudian churches. Bishop Carey of Exeter, an early proponent of the new ritualism, extended the requirements of the Canons of 1604 by ordering all parishes to provide font covers.<sup>106</sup> Later Laudian bishops also encouraged parishioners to beautify fonts and even place rails around them.<sup>107</sup>

While nationally Laud and the bishops embarked on this major "building revolution", developments in Exeter during the 1630s were far more muted. There were no 'prestige projects' in the city to compare with the rebuilding of St Sidwell's tower in 1607. Most parishes continued to adjust and improve existing church fabrics. Parishioners at St Kerrian's erected a new west gallery and added a canopy to their pulpit in 1634/5. At Holy Trinity the commandment boards were repainted in 1635. At St Petrock's the pulpit and reading desk were given new cushions and hangings. The nature of these improvements suggests that rather than reordering their churches to reflect 'the beauty of holiness', Exeter's parishes were following precedents established during the Jacobean period.<sup>108</sup>

Exeter's parishes did, though, spend greater sums on improving church furnishings and ornamentation during the 1630s than they had done previously. Holy Trinity paid over £4 to improve 'the Pulpitt & seatts in the Church' in 1632/3. Many parishes, like St Mary Major, invested in more costly communion vessels during the decade.<sup>109</sup> A number of parishes also paid for their churches' interiors to be expensively repainted.<sup>110</sup> This increase in expenditure may have reflected the Laudian drive for 'bigger and better' furnishings nationally.

Although church fabrics continued to improve in the city during the 1630s, it would be misleading to describe this as another 'building revolution'. Exeter's parish churches appear to have largely escaped Laud's national church-building programme. This divergence can probably be

explained by the attitude of Joseph Hall, bishop of Exeter during the decade. Church-building in the 1630s was largely driven by the bishops and their diocesan officials. However Hall, like other Calvinist bishops, was privately critical of the new ritualism.<sup>111</sup> Despite appearing loyal to the King and Archbishop, Hall moderated the Laudian programme in his diocese, filtering out its most contentious elements so that it kept within the bounds of Jacobean orthodoxy. For example, while Laudian bishops used diocesan surveys of church fabrics to enforce the altar policy and rearrange church interiors, Hall's survey of 1636-7 instead concentrated on basic structural repairs. Many remote, rural churches in the diocese were rebuilt and refurbished at this time.<sup>112</sup>

Hall's moderate policies were helped by the fact that Laud's metropolitan visitation of Exeter took place in 1634, before the Archbishop's vicar-general began vigorously directing the railing of communion tables. As a result Hall, like Bishop Skinner of Bristol, was able to avoid enforcing the contentious altar policy, allowing instead each parish to determine the position of its table.<sup>113</sup>

Few of Exeter's parishes appear to have chosen to rail in their tables at the east end. The churchwardens' accounts of St Kerrian's and St Mary Steps are virtually complete for the entire Personal Rule period. Both parishes had 'traditional style' rails before 1629, yet neither set of accounts record the purchase of new rails or the 'removing' or 'cancelling' of the table with old rails during the 1630s. Nor do they refer to accompanying changes such as the removal of chancel seating. St Petrock's accounts, though incomplete, present a similar picture. The absence of railing at St Mary Steps is particularly interesting as it suggests that it was not just godly parishes like St Petrock's and St Kerrian's that avoided the new altar policy.<sup>114</sup>

Only St Mary Major is recorded as purchasing new rails during the 1630s. This large parish church, situated next to the Cathedral, paid £4 for its rails in 1632/3.<sup>115</sup> It is unclear from the terse entry in the accounts whether these rails were used to rail in the table at the east end. However, as Foster has noted, some churchmen were already railing tables 'Laudian style' prior to the test case at St Gregory's, London in November 1633. It may be significant, then, that St Mary Major's minister, Thomas Baker, was disliked by the city's puritans and strongly supported the Laudian church in the early 1640s.<sup>116</sup>

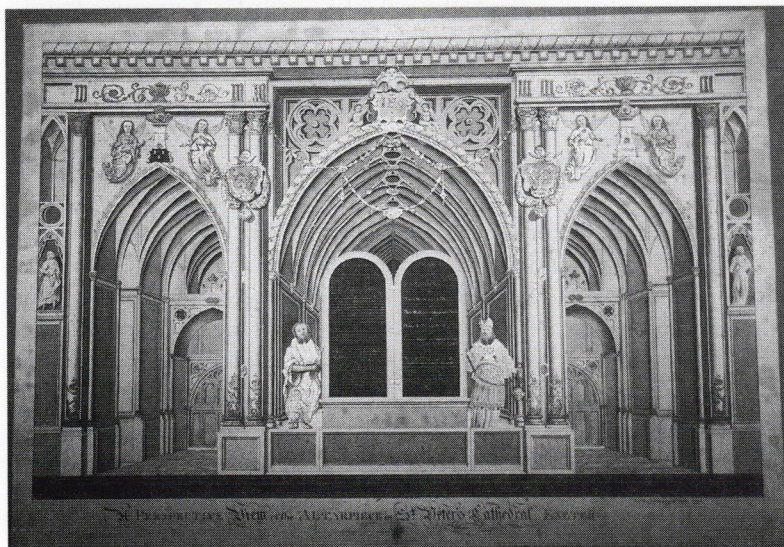
St Mary Major's proximity to the Cathedral also suggests the influence of new Laudian ideas in the parish. While Exeter's parish churches remained largely untouched by the changes of the 1630s, the city's cathedral church was rapidly becoming a beacon for Laudianism in the region. Anti-Calvinist ideas and practices may have been circulating at



Exeter cathedral long before Charles' reign. One of the canons, William Helyar was accused by the Dean during the early 1600s of putting up 'idolatrous pictures' of the saints and Trinity.<sup>117</sup> The fact that Helyar rode out this storm and went on to become a leading figure in the Cathedral suggests strong anti-Calvinist sympathies there.

The arrival of Valentine Carey, as bishop and chancellor of the Cathedral in 1622 further strengthened the anti-Calvinist party. That year a new communion table was ordered with a rail 'for keping of it decently and handsomely'.<sup>118</sup> The fact that the Cathedral had purchased its old table only seven years earlier suggests that the change was motivated by new liturgical preferences rather than wear and tear. The choir was also refitted with new stalls. The table would have been placed at the east end in accordance with the new cathedral practices of the 1620s.<sup>119</sup>

The Cathedral records detail a steady increase in furnishings during the 1630s including new church plate, hangings and altar cloths. A new, more elaborate, altar rail was purchased by Dean Peterson in 1634.<sup>120</sup> In 1639 William Helyar, now Archdeacon of Barnstaple, erected a new reredos at the cathedral's east end (pictured).



The Helyar Reredos of 1639 at Exeter Cathedral  
 William Cartwright's engraving of the east end, dated 1791. Reproduced by permission of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral.

The altarpiece featured two full-size portraits of Moses and Aaron flanking the commandment boards. Simple pictorial reredoses depicting Moses and Aaron may have been acceptable church imagery during James' reign.<sup>121</sup> However this reredos, which incorporated huge golden angels and smaller saint figures, would have seemed distinctly Catholic to many parishioners. Also, for many puritans, the sacred monogram, IHS, was tainted with 'popish' associations as it featured prominently on the Jesuit badge.<sup>122</sup> Perhaps the mob violence directed against Helyar during the early 1640s and the attacks on his reredos reflected not only Parliamentary agitation, but also the concern of many ordinary parishioners that Exeter cathedral had become a monument to 'popish' idolatry.<sup>123</sup>

The collapse of Charles' Personal Rule and the dismantling of the Laudian church from November 1640 further evidenced the strength of popular feeling in Exeter against the changes of the 1630s. Exeter's parishes swiftly took Parliament's 'Protestation' oath which in particular defended 'the true Reformed Protestant Religion' against 'all Popery and Popish Innovations' – a thinly-veiled reference to Laud's church policies. Although the oath was not printed and distributed until January 1642, most churches in Exeter appear to have taken it during August 1641, just a month after it was approved by Parliament. St Edmunds-on-the-Bridge like other parishes had the Protestation framed and hung in the church. St Petrock's even paid for the 'gilding' of 'two Frames to hang the protestacon', suggesting a warm response to the oath. Parishes of differing theological persuasions had united to reject Laudianism.<sup>124</sup>

Yet, in the longer term, the changes of the 1630s resulted in the fragmentation of parish worship and practice in Exeter. The experience of Laudianism had radicalized the city's godly faction. During 1641 there were a number of iconoclastic attacks on church windows in Exeter.<sup>125</sup> That September, the House of Commons issued an unprecedented order instructing churchwardens to remove communion rails and stained-glass windows. Exeter's most puritan parishes reacted swiftly. At St Kerrian's parishioners paid 'for taking away of the rayles aboute the communion table' and for 'mendinge the Church windowes'. The communion rails at St Petrock's were also removed at this time.<sup>126</sup> Parishioners at St Mary Arches also paid for 'new Glasinge ye Church windowes . . . where ye olde painted Glasse had bin' during March 1642.<sup>127</sup>

It is important to note that these stained-glass windows and rails were all pre-Laudian. The Laudian changes had fundamentally altered the puritan view of church furniture and pictures. Previously acceptable furnishings like 'traditional' communion rails were now tainted, in godly eyes, as symbols of crypto-popery. Laudian policy had also radicalised



Protestant iconophobia, rendering many formerly acceptable images intolerable.<sup>128</sup>

Exeter's other parishes, though, were less keen on a campaign of parish iconoclasm. Parishioners at St Mary Steps do not appear to have removed either their rails or stained-glass windows. Holy Trinity's rails were still standing in 1651.<sup>129</sup> Significantly, when Exeter fell to the Royalists in 1643 and Henry Painter, radical minister of St Petrock's was ejected, his parishioners re-erected the church's communion rails. The rails were funded out of a parish collection for 'pious usses'.<sup>130</sup>

However, we should be careful of reading conservative responses in the 1640s as evidence of affection for the Laudian church as Peter White has suggested.<sup>131</sup> These parishes may have been simply preserving a ceremonial conformist form of worship that pre-dated Laud's changes. Despite the radicalizing of Exeter's godly minority, popular conformity to a pre-Laudian vision of the church appears to have remained strong. Many Exonians may have supported the Devonshire petition of 1641-2 and its distinctly un-Laudian vision of a church order which for 'many yeares' had encouraged 'conscionable and painefull Preachers'.<sup>132</sup>

#### IV

The developments of the 1630s and 1640s underline this study's picture of church-building and popular religion. Exeter's parishioners were engaged in a substantial effort to rebuild and refurbish the city's churches from the 1590s, supporting MacCulloch's suggestion of a 'minor building revolution' that predated Laud's campaign. Unlike Laudian church-building, the Jacobean effort united parishioners. Godly parishes like St Kerrian's proved just as eager to repair and refurnish as Exeter's more conservative parishes. Church repair before Charles' reign represented another aspect of the Jacobean church agenda upon which both moderate puritans and ceremonial conformists could unite.

However, this study's findings may also serve to qualify MacCulloch's analysis. Although Exeter's churches underwent a 'minor building revolution' during James' reign, elsewhere in the diocese many rural parish churches lay un-repaired until the 'major building revolution' of the 1630s. MacCulloch's parish-based 'building revolution' may have still been slowly spreading from urban areas into the localities when it was eclipsed by Laud's centrally-directed 'restoration' campaign.

The role played by ordinary parishioners in funding, shaping and supporting the building effort suggests a healthier story of lay piety than we are accustomed to hearing about. The new church arrangements, reflecting reformed Protestant beliefs, challenge Bernard and Haigh's

view that lay support for church-building suggests religious conservatism. Nor do the conformist sentiments of these parishioners indicate latent sympathy for Laudianism as Sharpe and White have suggested. Exeter's parishioners showed a marked reluctance to embrace Laudian changes during the 1630s and firmly rejected its innovations as 'popish' on the eve of the Civil War.

Instead, popular involvement in church-building is suggestive of the deep parochial loyalties to the Church's official liturgy and worship that Maltby has characterised as 'Prayer Book Protestantism'. The Reformation, rather than suppressing traditional forms of lay activism had instead reshaped parish piety around its own concerns and pre-occupations. Of course, not all parishioners who supported the building effort were Prayer Book Protestants. Neither were Prayer Book Protestants and 'parish Anglicans' mutually exclusive. Some of those who supported the building work may indeed have harboured conservative sentiments of the type suggested by Haigh. Nonetheless, both the strength and shape of parish support for the minor 'building revolution' suggest that Maltby's enthusiastic conformists formed an important and vibrant grouping within the Church of Elizabeth and James.

## Notes

- \* I would like to thank Patrick Collinson and Kenneth Fincham for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this article and especially my former tutor, Alexandra Walsham, for her invaluable help and assistance in making the writing of this article possible.
- 1. D MacCulloch, 'The myth of the English Reformation', *Journal of British Studies*, 30 (1991), pp.1-19, esp. pp.12-4. Also *idem*, *The Later Reformation in England* (Basingstoke, 1990), p.171. MacCulloch was not, of course, the first historian to note a Jacobean revival in church-building, see T Usher, *The Reconstruction of the English Church*, 2 vols. (London, 1910), II, p.265.
- 2. MacCulloch, 'Myth', p.18.
- 3. J Merritt, 'Puritans, Laudians and the phenomenon of church-building in Jacobean London', *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), pp.935-60; G Yule, 'James VI and I: furnishing the churches in his two kingdoms' in A Fletcher and P Roberts (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.182-208. For a brief national overview of the movement see also A Foster, 'Churchwardens' accounts of early modern England and Wales: some problems to note but much to be gained', in K French, G Gibbs and B Kümin (eds), *The Parish in English Life, 1400-1600* (Manchester, 1997), pp.74-93.
- 4. For examples of this approach see E Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, 1992), and C Haigh, *English Reformations* (Oxford, 1993), esp.ch.1.
- 5. C Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England* (London, 1998), esp. pp.55-69.



6. *Ibid.*, pp.9–12.
7. In particular, P Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559–1625* (Oxford, 1982), esp. ch.5; M Spufford, 'Can we count the 'godly' and the 'conformable' in the seventeenth century?', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), pp.428–38; and J Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998).
8. R Hutton, 'The local impact of the Tudor Reformations', in P Marshall (ed.), *The Impact of the English Reformation 1500–1640* (London, 1997), pp.142–66. Haigh, *English Reformations* . . . , esp. pp.285–95.
9. C Haigh, 'The Church of England, the Catholics and the people', in *idem* (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke, 1984), p.209. For Haigh's more nuanced approach to lay piety in recent years see his 'Success and failure in the English Reformation', *Past and Present*, 173 (2001), pp.28–49.
10. G W Bernard, 'The Church of England c.1529–c.1642', *History*, 75 (1990), pp.195–6.
11. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People* . . . , *passim*. J Maltby, 'By this book: parishioners, the Prayer Book and the established Church', in Marshall, *English Reformation* . . . , p.274.
12. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People* . . . , esp.ch.3. For a useful survey of the debate over the popular reception of Laudianism see A Walsham, 'The parochial roots of Laudianism revisited: Catholics, Anti-Calvinists and "Parish Anglicans" in early Stuart England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 49 (1998), pp.620–51.
13. K Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor* (Oxford, 1990), pp.155, 221–2. For a sympathetic view of Bishop Cotton, see I Cassidy, 'The Episcopate of William Cotton, Bishop of Exeter, 1598–1621' (unpublished Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1963).
14. On Carey, *Dictionary of National Biography*. For his activities in the Cathedral, see pp.26–7 below.
15. The best modern treatment of Hall, is K Fincham and Peter Lake, 'Popularity, Prelacy and Puritanism in the 1630s: Joseph Hall explains himself', *English Historical Review*, 111, (1996), pp.856–81.
16. This is particularly true of W MacCaffrey, *Exeter: 1540–1640: The Growth of an English County Town* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2nd edition, 1975). For a more balanced view see M Stoye, *From Deliverance to Destruction* (Exeter, 1996).
17. Jurdain's biographer of the 1650s recorded this memorable insult. Cited, *ibid.*, p.19.
18. J Mico, *Spirituell Food and Physick* (London, second edition, 1623).
19. On Mico see I Gowers, 'Puritanism in the county of Devon, 1560–1640', (unpublished MA thesis, Exeter, 1970), p.312.
20. D[evon] R[ecord] O[ffice]: Exeter St Edmund's EDRO. PO1; Exeter St George's CC6/109; Exeter Holy Trinity 1718A add/PW1; Exeter St John's Bow EDRO. DD.36772–36773; Exeter St Kerrian's EDRO. PW1; Exeter St Mary Major 2945/A PW1 and 51/1/15; Exeter St Mary Steps 2503 M/A DD.70920–70973; and Exeter St Petrock's 2946/A PW3 and PW4.
21. Financial assessments in this article are based on the subsidy assessments of 1602 and 1629, in W Hoskins, *Exeter in the Seventeenth Century: Tax and Rate Assessments, 1602–99*, *Devon and Cornwall Record Society*, new series, 2 (1957), pp.1–12.

22. On the use of churchwardens' accounts see J Craig, *Reformation, Politics and Polemics* (Aldershot, 2001), ch.3; B Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish: c.1400–1560* (Aldershot, 1996), pp.82–102, and Foster, 'Churchwardens' accounts', esp. pp.76–85.
23. According to the 1602 subsidy, the wealthy parishioners of St Petrock's were rated at £10 4s 8d, while the levy on St Mary Steps parishioners was only 42s: Hoskins, *Exeter* . . ., pp.1–3.
24. Older views are coloured by contemporary accounts such as P Stubbes, *A Motive to Good Workes* (London, 1593). For modern studies see F Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts* (Chelmsford, 1973), ch.8; the surveys in N Yates, *Buildings, Faith and Worship* (Oxford, revised edition, 2000), pp.48–9; Marsh, *Popular Religion* . . ., pp.55–69.
25. Yates, *Buildings, Faith and Worship* . . ., p.49.
26. 'An homilee against the perill of idolatrie, and superfluous deckyng of Churches' in *Certaine sermons appoynted by the quenes majesty to be declared and read* (London, 1623).
27. H Latimer, *Sermons*, ed. G Corrie, Parker Society, (Cambridge, 1846), pp.22–3.
28. I Archer, 'The nostalgia of John Stow' in D Smith *et al.* (eds.), *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London* (Cambridge, 1995), p.28.
29. Exeter Holy Trinity 1718 A add/PW52; C[hurch] W[ardens'] A[ccounts], St Petrock's PW3, f.141.
30. DRO. CWA St Mary Major, 1581.
31. DRO. CWA St John's Bow, 1602–3.
32. DRO. CWA St Petrock's PW3, ff.152–3; CWA St Mary Major 1581.
33. See below, p.17 for further details. St Mary Major's parishioners in 1580 noted the new style chancels at St Petrock's and St Martin's: DRO. PW1, f.21v.
34. Article 4 of Grindal's metropolitan articles: E Cardwell (ed.), *Documentary Annals of the Reformed Church, 1546–1716* (Oxford, 1864), I, p.398.
35. DRO. St Mary Major PW1, f.21v., f.26 and f.28v. (inventory dated 1593).
36. MacCulloch, 'Myth', p.13. DRO. CWA St Mary Steps 1598, DD70950; CWA St John's Bow 1601.
37. DRO. CWA St Kerrian's 1602/3 and 1603/4.
38. DRO. CWA St John's Bow 1604 and 1607/8.
39. Pevsner dates All-Hallows' pulpit to c.1600: B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Devon* (London, 2nd edition, 1989), p.394.
40. B Cresswell, *Exeter Churches* (Exeter, 1908), p.156; I Gregory, *Hartland Church Accounts, 1597–1706* (London, 1950), p.43.
41. MacCulloch, 'Myth', p.13. For surviving returns from the diocese of Lincoln, suggesting an energetic response to the survey, see C. Foster (ed.), *The State of the Church in the Diocese of Lincoln*, vol.1, *Lincolnshire Record Society*, (1926), 23, pp.219–36. Merritt notes Bishop Bancroft's efforts to follow up the survey in London: Merritt, 'Puritans', p.943.
42. Sadly, the Bishop of Exeter's Act Book for 1602/3, which might have contained the diocese's certificates, has not survived.
43. G Bray (ed.), *The Anglican Canons: 1529–1947, Church of England Record Society*, 6 (Woodbridge, 1998), pp.375–81.
44. Archer, 'The Nostalgia of John Stow', p.34.



45. R Hooker, *Works*, ed. by I. Walton, (Oxford, 1890), at p.358 and p.349. The growing confidence of the conformist position is discussed in P Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* (London, 1988) and A Milton, *Catholic and Reformed* (Cambridge, 1995).
46. J Whitgift, *Works*, ed. J Ayre, Parker Society (Cambridge, 1853), III, p.xiii; Whitgift's instructions to the bishops, 1602: *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, 1601-3, (vol.284/39) p.206.
47. DRO. CC181/26 'File of Special Cases': Depositions against Thomas Warren. A Jacobean pulpit, presumably the 'newe pulpit', still stands at Stoke Canon church.
48. DRO. Churchwardens' Presentments Box 12/5: All Hallows on-the-Wall, 1611; CWA St Mary Steps, 1602 DD70955; CWA St John's Bow 1604; CWA St Kerrian's 1604/5 and 1605/6.
49. DRO. Church rates St Martin's 1612 and St Pancras 1612 marked 'stored after box D'. A surviving church rate for St David's marked as c.1613 may also date from 1612; on glebe terriers see Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor* . . . , pp.139-40.
50. DRO. CC170 'Papers Relating to Presentments at Bishop's Visitations 1624-6', unfoliated.
51. As at DRO. CC170, Exbourne, Kenwyn, Meeth; CC134/227, Bishops Nympton.
52. DRO. CC170: 'Articles against Richard Medlande of Northlooe'.
53. *Ibid.*, Letter to Chancellor Goche, dated 27 September 1625.
54. See below, pp.26-7. Stockenham church, described as 'in ruins' during the 1620s, was not repaired until 1636: DRO. CC5; Pevsner, *Devon*, p.766.
55. Merritt, 'Puritans', p.944; Foster, 'Churchwardens' accounts', p.92.
56. Sadly Exeter's probate records were largely destroyed during the German bombing of the city in 1942. My analysis is based on (a) approximately 200 wills by Exeter testators from 1580-1630 as preserved in P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice]. P[re]rogative] C[ourt of] C[anterbury], Wills (PROB 11); (b) 29 Exeter testamentary abstracts from 1580-1630 contained in DRO. Moger Abstracts of Devon Wills (47 typescript volumes). The testators came from a variety of city parishes, although the nature of source material means that the sample is weighted towards members of the city's leading mercantile families.
57. DRO. CWA St John's Bow, 1587; TNA, PRO. PCC. Wills (PROB 11), 65, Rowe f.332. 'Reparation' is used in the sense of general repairs.
58. Moger Abstracts of Devon Wills, 2, Agnes Blight (1620); PRO. PCC. (PROB 11), 125, Rudd, f.146.
59. DRO. CWA St John's Bow, 1601; CWA St Mary Steps, 1598, DD70950 PRO. PCC. (PROB 11), 146, Clarke, f.54.v.
60. PRO. PCC. (PROB 11), 145, Clarke, f.315.v. PCC (PROB 11), 128, Cope, f.175.v.
61. PRO. PCC. (PROB 11), 127, Cope, f.82.
62. For examples of such bequests, see PRO. PCC. (PROB 11), 115, Wingfield, ff.223.v. and 291.
63. DRO. Exeter Holy Trinity: PV1, vestry minute book, unfoliated, inventory (1610); Holy Trinity PV1, inventory (1615).
64. DRO. Exeter St Mary Steps, 72/1/1/6/2 (c.1611).
65. DRO. Holy Trinity PV1, inventory (1615); CWA St John's Bow, 1590.v.

66. For the social dimension to church-building see J Merritt, 'The social context of the parish church in early modern Westminster', *Urban History Yearbook*, 18 (1991), pp.20–31.
67. Haigh, 'The Church of England', p.219; *idem*, *English Reformations*, pp.290–5. See also *idem*, 'The taming of the Reformation: preachers, pastors and parishioners in Elizabethan and early Stuart England', *History*, 85 (2000), pp.572–88, where Haigh argues that this increase in lay support for the material of parish worship represented a rejection of the Church's reformed Protestantism.
68. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, p.4.
69. DRO. CWA St Kerrian's 1623/4. The purchase of houseling cloths appears to reflect parish initiative as these items were not prescribed by any rubric or injunction during the post-Reformation period.
70. A Hunt, 'The Lord's Supper in early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 161 (1998), pp.39–83.
71. *Ibid.*, p.79.
72. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, pp.48–9; on popular concern about receiving irreverently, see D Spaeth, 'Common Prayer? Popular observance of the Anglican liturgy in Restoration Wiltshire' in S Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350–1750* (1988), pp.125–51.
73. On the ability of the Reformation to adapt to popular piety, see A Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2001), esp. pp.326–34.
74. On the theological and liturgical implications of church arrangements in this period see Yates, *Buildings, Faith and Worship*, pp.30–43; P Lake, 'The Laudian Style: order, uniformity and the pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s', in K Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–42* (Basingstoke, 1993), pp.161–85; and on the Jacobean period specifically, Yule, 'James VI and I . . .', esp. pp.180–204.
75. DRO. CWA St John's Bow, 1583. At Groombridge Church, Kent, built in 1625 and dedicated to the failure of the Spanish Match, the pulpit still stands on the south wall dominating the entire church.
76. The inventory attached to DRO. CWA St Mary Steps, 1625/6, records that the parish had two pulpit clothes and a pulpit cushion by 1626; DRO. St George's, 1632/3.
77. On communion rooms in the Jacobean period see Yule, 'James VI and I . . .', esp. pp.192–9.
78. *Ibid.*, p.197.
79. Exeter St Mary Major: DRO. PW1, f.28.v; CWA St John's Bow, 1576 and 1601.
80. This type of Jacobean arrangement stood in St Saviour's, Dartmouth until 1891–3: W Cotton, 'On the churches of Cornwood, Harford and Ermington', *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society*, first series, 6 (1861), p.294. On chancel seating see also C Marsh, 'Sacred Space in England, 1560–1640: the view from the pew', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 53 (2002), pp.287–311, esp. pp.293–5.
81. See St Mary Major, DRO. PW1, f.28.v.
82. For example, St Sidwell's and St Martin's: A Jenkins, *The History . . . of the City of Exeter* (Exeter, 1806), p.342; Cresswell, *Exeter Churches*, p.87.
83. MacCulloch, 'Myth', p.14; Yule, 'James VI and I . . .', p.193.



84. Although St Kerrian's accounts do not mention it, a screen of Jacobean date was recorded at the church in the 1870s: J Newnham, 'Some notes on the parish churches of Exeter', *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society*, third series, 1 (Exeter, 1899), p.178. On puritanism at St Kerrian's see M. Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality: Popular Allegiance in Devon during the English Civil War* (Exeter, 1994), pp.107-9, 188.
85. Yule, 'James VI and I . . .', esp. pp.195-9.
86. Canon 82, 1604, in Bray, *Anglican Canons*, p.377.
87. Exeter rails: DRO. CWA St Petrock's, PW4, f.155 (1616); CWA St Kerrian's, 1623/4; and CWA St Mary Steps DD70961 (1629-30) which is a payment for repairing existing rails. C Drew, *Lambeth Churchwardens' Accounts, Part 1*, *Surrey Record Society*, (1943), vol.44, p.219.
88. I would therefore disagree with Kevin Sharpe on this point: K Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, 1993), p.340. See also Lake, 'Laudian Style . . .', p.170-1.
89. DRO. CWA St Petrock's, PW4, f.155; CWA St Kerrian's, 1623/4.
90. Lambeth parish's four-sided rails lost one side when the table was removed to the east end in 1635-6: *Survey of London*, vol.23: *The Parish of St Mary, Lambeth, Part 1* (London County Council, 1951), pp.105-6. House of Lords order, 1641, cited in Maltby, *Prayer Book and People . . .*, p.124.
91. For example, William Hitt of Cove, Devon in March 1621: DRO. Chanter 763, *Libri Ex Officio* (1620-2), unfoliated.
92. P Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (Basingstoke, 1988), p.98. I am grateful to Alexandra Walsham for this perceptive comment.
93. For a fuller account of the furnishings and fittings of Jacobean churches, see Yule, 'James VI and I . . .', *passim*.
94. DRO. CWA St John's Bow, 1607/8; CWA St Kerrian's 1610/11.
95. DRO. CWA St John's Bow, 1618.
96. DRO. CWA St Kerrian's, 1606-7; Exeter St Mary Major PW1, f.32 (inventory dated 1623).
97. Stoye, *From Deliverance to Destruction*, p. 58.
98. M Aston, 'Puritans and Iconoclasm, 1560-1660' in C Durston and J Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (London, 1996), pp.92-121. DRO. CWA St John's Bow, 1601. On the destruction of parish stained-glass windows in the 1640s, see below pp.29-30.
99. On church-building in the 1630s as traditional and un-ideological see Sharpe, *Personal Rule . . .*, pp.317-28; Bernard, 'The Church of England . . .', esp. pp.203-6; and P White, 'The *Via Media* in the early Stuart Church', in M Todd (ed.), *Reformation to Revolution* (London, 1995), pp.78-94.
100. Merritt, 'Puritans', pp.956-7; MacCulloch, 'Myth', p.14; A Foster, 'Church Policies of the 1630s', in R Cust and A Hughes (eds), *Conflict in Early Stuart England* (London, 1989), pp.193-223.
101. Lake, 'The Laudian Style', esp. pp.164-5. For examples of the Laudian church-building programme in the localities see Foster, 'Church policies of the 1630s', *passim*; A Fletcher, *A Country Community in Peace and War* (London, 1975), ch.4; the Buckinghamshire church survey of 1637, PRO. SP. 16/366/79.
102. For examples of these alterations see PRO. SP. 16/366/79, f.51 (Burnham) and f.63 (West Wycombe).

103. N Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution' in Todd, *Reformation to Revolution* . . . , pp.53–70; on the development of anti-Calvinist thought see *idem*, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590–1640* (Oxford, 1987), and P Lake, 'Calvinism and the English Church, 1570–1635', *Past and Present*, 114 (1987), pp.32–76.
104. PRO. SP. 16/366/79, f.10 (Caversfield) and f.31 (Waddesdon).
105. Sharpe, using the Buckinghamshire survey, argues that Laudians accepted a wide variety of rails and cites the rails at Datchet parish, which incorporated whole cupboards. However careful study of the survey reveals that parishes were ordered to purchase new rails or bring existing rails into uniformity with Laudian ones. At Datchet the surveyors actually ordered the cupboards to be removed from the rails: PRO. SP. 16/366/79, f.44; Sharpe, *Personal Rule* . . . , p.341.
106. Canon 81 required only that the font should stand in its ancient usual place: Bray, *Anglican Canons*, p.375. For Carey's injunctions see K Fincham (ed.), *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church*, vol.2, *Church of England Record Society*, 5 (Woodbridge, 1998), p.1.
107. For examples of the Laudian decoration of fonts see D Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death* (Oxford, 1997), pp.145–7. Parishioners at Amersham were commended for the 'faire Raile' around their font in 1637: PRO. SP. 16/366/79 f.66.
108. DRO. CWA St Kerrian's, 1634/5; CWA Holy Trinity, 1635; CWA St Petrock's, PW4, f.166 (1633–4).
109. DRO. CWA Holy Trinity, 1632/3; St Mary Major 1632/3.
110. DRO. CWA St George's, 1632/3; CWA St John's Bow, 1632; CWA St Kerrian's 1634/5.
111. K Fincham, 'Episcopal Government, 1603–1640', in *idem*, *Early Stuart Church*, p.85.
112. Fincham and Lake, 'Popularity, Prelacy and Puritanism', pp.873–4; W Laud, *Works*, ed. W Scott and J Bliss, V (Oxford, 1853), p.357. The accounts suggest that Hall's survey had little impact on Exeter's churches. For the effect of the survey at Woodbury, Devon, see DRO. CWA Woodbury, PW1, ff.453–7 (1636–7).
113. On the enforcement of the altar policy nationally see K Fincham, 'The restoration of the altars in the 1630s', *Historical Journal*, 44 (2001), pp.919–940. Bristol and Exeter were visited in 1634, while enforcement of the rail began in 1635: PRO. SP. 16/260/90; D Underdown, *Fire From Heaven* (London, 1993), p.175; J Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church* (Oxford, 1992), pp.238–40.
114. For a survey of the religious affections of Exeter's parishes on the eve of the civil war, see Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality*, pp.106–10, 188.
115. DRO. CWA St Mary Major, 1632–3.
116. Foster, 'Church Policies of the 1630s', pp.204–5. On Baker see Stoye, *From Deliverance to Destruction* . . . , pp.53–4, 57–8.
117. J Vage, 'The Diocese of Exeter, 1519–1641', (unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1991), p.273. Helyar's pictures may correspond with the early seventeenth-century depiction of the life of Christ adorning the Cathedral's pulpitum screen.
118. S Lehmberg, *Cathedrals Under Siege: Cathedrals in English Society, 1600–1700* (Exeter, 1996), p.16. Gill Selley suggests that the Cathedral's rails of 1622 are currently standing at St Swithun's, Woodbury.



119. Cresswell, *Exeter Churches*, p.75; Lehmberg, *Cathedrals*, pp.7–10.
120. Exeter Cathedral Library, ms.3557, Chapter Act Book 1635–43, *passim*; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p.215.
121. T Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety* (Cambridge, 1991), p.246.
122. See Dowsing's comments in *The Journal of William Dowsing* . . . , ed. by C H Evelyn White (London, 1885), p.31.
123. For a description of these events see Stoyle, *From Deliverance to Destruction* . . . , p.72–4, 187–8.
124. Exeter's surviving Protestations are all dated 22 August 1641: DRO. Exeter St John's Bow, DD36764; Stoyle, *From Deliverance to Destruction* . . . , pp.167–8. CWA St Edmund's, 1640–1; CWA St Petrock's, PW4, f.171 (1641–2).
125. Stoyle, *From Deliverance to Destruction*, pp.47, 53.
126. Aston, 'Puritans and Iconoclasm', p.114; DRO. CWA St Kerrian's, 1641–2; CWA St Petrock's, f.171 (1641–2).
127. T Brushwood, 'The financial diary of a citizen of Exeter, 1631–1643', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 33, 2nd series, 3 (1901), p.262.
128. For similar responses amongst the capital's godly see Merritt, 'Puritans', pp.957–8; Aston, 'Puritans and Iconoclasm', pp.119–21.
129. DRO. CWA St Mary Steps, 1641–44; Exeter Holy Trinity, 1718/A add/PW14 Church rate, 1651.
130. DRO. CWA St Petrock's, PW4, f.173 (1643–4). The wording of the collection is reminiscent of that for the earlier rebuilding of St Paul's.
131. White, 'Via Media', p.91.
132. S Taylor (ed.), *From Cranmer to Davidson: A Miscellany*, Church of England Record Society, vol.7 (Woodbridge, 1999), p.135–6.