COMMUNE, COUNTRY AND COMMONWEALTH

THE PEOPLE OF CIRENCESTER, 1117–1643

David Rollison

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Surviving Reformation: the rule of Robert Strange, 1539–70

The manor of Cirencester left the church 'on the morning of 19 December 1539 and was taken into the hands of the Crown', where it remained for eight years. In July 1547 it was granted to Thomas, lord Seymour of Sudeley, who held it until his execution in March 1549.[1] It was then purchased by Sir Anthony Kingston, who died in 1556, another suspected traitor. Elizabeth I granted Abbey House to a more stable proprietor, her physician Richard Master, in June 1564. The aptly named Masters settled down, and were to prove an abiding presence in the turbulent politics of the town for the next two centuries. Thomas Seymour, Anthony Kingston and his successor as lord of the manor, Sir John Danvers, were courtiers. The Masters settled down to become 'gentlemen of town and country'. From the dissolution of the abbey until the 1570s, however, the manor and the parish were run by a small group of local men appointed by the bailiff of courtiers who were too preoccupied with national affairs to have a significant impact on local politics. The lordship of the abbots became, for practical purposes, a bourgeois oligarchy.

In the months following the fall of the abbey the 'custodianship of the site' was granted to a wine merchant named Richard Basing. Problems arose when the crown sold the 'Church Steplee and surplues houses of the late monastery' to a local knight, Sir Anthony Hungerford and his kinsman by marriage, Robert Strange, the late abbot's bailiff. In 1541 these men complained to the king that Basing 'doo dayly and wrongfully interupt and disturb your said supplicants to have and carye away the stones, timber and stuff of the said church steplee ... contrary to all right equite and good concyence'.[2] It seems that Basing was only granted the abbot's manor house and grounds, not the abbey church, with its 'steeplee' (and all the valuable lead), or the 'surplus houses'. Hungerford and Strange were granted the right to demolish, carry away and sell their scrap. Whatever the exact circumstances, it is evident that the abbey was demolished remarkably quickly.

1 Reece and Catling, *Cirencester*, 15.

2 Richard Reece, 'The Abbey of St Mary, Cirencester', *Trans* BGAS 81 (1962), 198–202; the quote, from PRO E321 17/48, is cited on 201–2.

The records of its dispersal testify to the scale of the abbey's lordship. In 1545 John Pollard, 'the king's servant' and William Byrt, yeoman, made a request to purchase 152 messuages, 37 shops, 6 cottages, 27 gardens and other miscellaneous properties previously belonging to the abbey in the town of Cirencester.[3] Edward VI granted Thomas, lord Seymour the site of monastery and all the lands associated with the manor of Cirencester: 458 acres of arable, 27 acres of pasture and 46 acres of meadow attached to the Grange of Spiringate; the Almery Grange, consisting of 283 acres of arable, 7 acres of pasture 'called Hartes', 'Shepehouse close' and 'Pulchams Barn', 33.5 acres of meadow called Southam Almery Close, and other freeholds named Pullensbarn, Olmers Shepehouse, Newclose and Stratton Close. 'The profits of the liberty of the town' included 'outgoings of stalls & stallage with the profits of the 2 fairs' (£4); 'tolls or customs from carts called waynes entering and leaving the town (2s. 4d.); 'tolls on all kinds of good in the market' (20s.); 'rent and toll of resale of wool and leather sold at the fairs and markets' (£8); 'treasure trove with goods and chattels of felons, fugitives, suicides and wainage' (3s. 4d.); 'profits of 2 frankpledges, 24 halimotes and piepowder courts' (£19 6s. 8d.); the views of the hundreds of Crowthorne (30s.), Rapsgate (20s.), Brightwells Barrow (26s. 8d.), Bradley (£4) and Longtree (22s.). From this he had to deduct £6 13s. 4d. annual seneschal fee granted by the abbot to Sir Anthony Kingston for life; the same to the king for 'the office of bailiff of the Seven hundreds'; and 74s. 8d., 'the fee of Robert Strange, bailiff of the liberty of the town by an agreement with the late abbot and convent, conferred upon him yearly for life'.[4]

Strange was appointed bailiff by the last abbot, John Blake.[5] Like that proverbial tycoon of the dissolution, William Stumpe of North Nibley, who purchased the buildings of nearby Malmesbury Abbey and converted them into a weavers' factory, Strange had done well as a 'clothman', and was uniquely well placed to invest in opportunities arising from the selling-off of the abbey estate.[6] He used the stone fabric of the old abbey buildings to build himself a great house just off the market-place ('The Antelope'), another at Chesterton in the suburbs ('a very fair house, outhouses, barns, stables, gardens, orchards & backside, +300 acres'[7]), and in 1554 raised £586 to purchase the manor of Somerford Keynes (Wilts) from the crown, with an estate that included 'two watermills on the Thames'.

3 'Request to purchase by Willam Byrt & John Pollard': Hockaday 155, citing TNA Augm. Book 216.3, 6 Jan., 36 Hen VIII (1545), TNA Augm. of Parts for grants s70.

4 Hockaday 155, citing PRO Parts for Grants 1933 m12, 1 Edw. VI, Lands appointed to the Lord Seymour of the Kings Majestie.

5 Fuller, *ibid*, 340.

6 A document cited in Hockaday 155, Cirencester, dated 5 Oct. 1553, refers to 'Robert Straunge, Clothier'.

7 GA D4871, 'Strange Family'.

There is no evidence that he ever [illegible] and heir certainly did, 'breaking away [illegible] tions' that had made the family's fortun[illegible] The Stumpes and many other clothier[illegible] English social pathway. Historically, th[illegible] that is particularly important in the [illegible] the eighteenth centuries. They demons[illegible] not all the middle-rank merchant fam[illegible] by the dissolution of religious estates Strange was important because he took established mercantile family of the Ti[illegible] included Cirencester) through a trouble

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8 GA D4871.

9 E.g. Thomas Fyfelde, GA GDR 1552 [illegible] to the redeeming qualities of Christ's B[illegible] emphatically protestant, but such referenc[illegible]

10 GDR 1555/81.

11 E.g. the old bailiff, John George, GDR 1[illegible] include reference to saints; Henry Tr[illegible] 1557/166; Joane Titley, GDR 1557/152; GDR 1557/165; and John Munde, GDR [illegible] almighty god and our blessed saint Mary [illegible]

12 It may be significant that the will of [illegible] years, 'Thomas Perpynt, curate', GDR 1[illegible] god and to all the heavenlie companye', [illegible] no explicit reference either to saints or t[illegible]

...the scale of the abbey's lordship. In ...and William Byrt, yeoman, made a ...ps. 6 cottages, 27 gardens and other ...ning to the abbey in the town of ...Lord Seymour the site of monastery ...of Cirencester: 458 acres of arable, ...w attached to the Grange of Spirin... ...acres of arable, 7 acres of pasture ...Williams Barn', 33.5 acres of meadow ...ther freeholds named Pullensbarn, ...n Close. 'The profits of the liberty ...& stallage with the profits of the 2 ...and waynes entering and leaving the ...in the market' (20s.); 'rent and toll ...rs and markets' (£8); 'treasure trove ...es, suicides and wainage' (3s. 4d.); ...and piepowder courts' (£19 6s. 8d.); ...20s.), Rapsgate (20s.), Brightwells ...ree (22s.). From this he had to ...anted by the abbot to Sir Anthony ...the office of bailiff of the Seven ...Strange, bailiff of the liberty of the ...and convent, conferred upon him

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There is no evidence that he ever lived at Somerford Keynes, but his son and heir certainly did, 'breaking away from the commercial and civic traditions' that had made the family's fortune, in favour of a more genteel lifestyle.[8] The Stumpes and many other clothier-gentry families followed this proverbial English social pathway. Historically, the Stranges belong to a class of families that is particularly important in the history of this region from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. They demonstrate, if demonstration is needed, that not all the middle-rank merchant families who moved into the breach created by the dissolution of religious estates were committed Protestants. Robert Strange was important because he took an already successful branch of a well-established mercantile family of the Bristol region (which in the Middle Ages included Cirencester) through a troubled period of change.

As for changes in the religion of the people, historians have used the religious formulae found in the prefaces to wills of the immediate post-Reformation decades to measure the onset of Protestantism. Cirencester wills of the 1540s and 1550s suggest their formulae should be used with caution. The traditional catholic formula, in which the testator bequeathed his or her 'sowle unto allmyghtie god and our blessed ladye sancta marie and to all the holye companie of heaven' continued to be used throughout the 1540s, until a few months after the arrival at Gloucester of the evangelical and extremely conscientious John Hooper, in 1549. From 1549 until 1555 (two years after Hooper had been removed) the more neutral, even perfunctory, 'sowle to allmyghtie god' appears.[9] In the mid-1550s a few minor eccentricities appear, suggesting confusion as to what the authoritative formula was. John Hawle, for example, left his 'sowle to allmyghtie god the lord and giver of all goodness'.[10] By 1557, six years into the reign of the catholic Queen Mary, wills gradually reverted to the catholic formula, with occasionally explicit references to the saints.[11] In all probability the vast majority of testators, many unable to write, most 'sick in body' at the time, were not responsible for the formulae used. Wills use the formulae that the clerics who wrote them judged to be acceptable at the time. They may tell us little or nothing about the convictions of the testators.[12]

8 GA D4871.

9 E.g. Thomas Fyfelde, GA GDR 1552/63; John Manbye, GDR 1554/67; the reference to the redeeming qualities of Christ's blood in Roger Teyll, GDR 1554/110, seems emphatically protestant, but such references are rare at this time.

10 GDR 1555/81.

11 E.g. the old bailiff, John George, GDR 1556/29, and Edmunde Hunte, GDR 1557/69, include reference to saints; Henry Tringham, GDR 1557/81; John Gurney, GDR 1557/166; Joane Titley, GDR 1557/150; John Lyttle, GDR 1557/145; John Dawbury, GDR 1557/165; and John Munde, GDR 1558/123, all use the formulaic 'sowle to almighty god and our blessed saint Mary and all the company of heaven'.

12 It may be significant that the will of one of the men who wrote the wills of these years, 'Thomas Perpynt, curate', GDR 1563/152, bequeathed 'my soulle to all mightye god and to all the heavenlie companye'; the reference is quite perfunctory and there is no explicit reference either to saints or to the Virgin Mary.

However, the wills of the 1550s do reflect the confusing religious changes that the town, like the rest of the country, was going through at the time. The secular rule of Robert Strange may have represented a reassuring continuity, at least for a few years.

We know him only from a dozen or so sources showing that he was a key figure in the political and religious life of the town up to the 1580s. He was probably a descendant of the Thomas Straunge who was pardoned in 1414 for his involvement in the Guild Merchant movement, and later served as the abbot's bailiff.[13] Another Robert Strange served as mayor of Bristol in 1474, 1482 and 1489, and died in 1491.[14] Connections between Bristol and Cirencester abounded: most significant Bristol merchants maintained agents at Cirencester, and vice versa; similarly with London, an even more important trade orientation in the sixteenth century than it had been earlier.[15] David Harris Sacks refers to 'well-known men of affairs' who became leaders, first, of Bristol, and then of London. We saw earlier that a member of the Canynges family was among the 'twenty poor men of Cirencester' in 1342. Sacks mentions George Monox, member of another family with a branch at Cirencester.[16] Wherever commodities were manufactured and marketing outlets existed, these families had connections.

There is little evidence of evangelical religion until the fifteen-sixties. Robert Strange and his brothers were what John Bossy, criticizing the use of the phrase 'old religion', called 'survivalists'. 'Being a predominantly social sentiment ("survivalist" catholicism) could persist only where there was a social institution to support it,' writes Bossy.[17] The dissolution of Cirencester Abbey did not mean the dissolution of the secular liberties it had engrossed. Throughout the sixteenth century these were administered on behalf of absentee lords by a small cabal of manorial managers centred on the bailiff and his relations by marriage, the locally prestigious Georges of Baunton. Strange associates all seem to have shared a belief in the 'survival' of the old ways. In 1551 Strange let 'The Antelope', his house at Cirencester, to another wealthy inhabitant, John Chapperlen.[18] Stranges and Chapperlens are emphatically linked with Catholic activity at Cirencester region later in the sixteenth and early seven-

[13] Fuller, 'Guild Merchant', 50–1.

[14] 14 missing? Allow one line?

[15] 'Two great merchant families, Strange of Siston and Strange of Cirencester, had a common ancestor who was bailiff of Cirencester early in the reign of Henry VI and was an armigerous gentleman. He was the great-grandfather of Robert': GA D4871, 'Strange Family'.

[16] D.H. Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy 1450–1700* (University of California Press 1991), 30–1.

[17] John Bossy, 'The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism', in T.H. Aston (ed.), *Crisis in Europe 1560–1660* (London 1965), 223.

[18] GA D4871; GA D2957/(P98) 205A; the parish registers record that Chapperlen was buried on 2 April 1574; in his will, dated that year, Chapperlen describes himself as 'gent'.

teenth centuries. We know from an[illegible] parish church was still, for practical [illegible] so until 1570, as we shall see. A [illegible] before, managed by the same people as [illegible] committee of merchants and local gen[illegible] tion and manage the affairs of the [illegible] centuries under succeeding abbots. R[illegible] little oligarchy of local men who m[illegible] Blake retired to Fairford.[19]

Strange carved a gentleman's patrim[illegible] dissolved abbey he had once served.[illegible] family with long kinship connections [illegible] knowledge of the manor and its record[illegible] marry daughters into gentry and knight[illegible] gentleman. The Stranges were by n[illegible] to take advantage of opportunities [illegible] Abbey and take his own branch of the [illegible]

We get a sense of the muscular style [illegible] in his prime, from a Star Chamber case [illegible] the dissolution of the abbey.[23] The [illegible] Clerk, who believed that boss Strange [illegible] crossing the market-place from the [illegible] Strainge Bayley of the town of Cicester [illegible] Strange huffily explained, Porte 'dema[illegible] the Strange entourage felt was not be[illegible] Strange took offence, called Porte knav[illegible] continued in his demands, he (Strange [illegible] would do him 'bodily harm and... kill [illegible] on the nose (gave him a *blessed*). Hence [illegible] wayte for Richard Porte as he was com[illegible] that 'the said Richard Porte for feare [illegible] highwaie and bide by a back lane to h[illegible]

[19] Robert Strange reported to Privy Coun[illegible] persons had been kept in Cirencester and [illegible] Gloucestershire in 1573: GA D4871, 'Strang[illegible]

[20] 'Thomas Straunge for lands in Myntie. Ri[illegible] in Myntie, with Thomas Straunge of Chester[illegible]

[21] 'Anthony Straunge of London, Gent' [illegible] Strange was mayor of Bristol in 1474, 1482 [illegible] that Robert was the son of a Cirencester m[illegible] early part of the fifteenth century': GA D[illegible] 50–1.

[22] For an account of the new post-dissol[illegible] below, Chapter 12.

[23] TNA, Stac 2/19/38, 36 Henry VIII.

teenth centuries. We know from another source that in 1551 Cirencester parish church was still, for practical purposes, catholic. It probably remained so until 1570, as we shall see. A declining range of services continued as before, managed by the same people as before, but now for absentee lords. A committee of merchants and local gentlemen continued to run the administration and manage the affairs of the town, as they had most probably done for centuries under succeeding abbots. Robert Strange was the leader of the tight little oligarchy of local men who moved into the breach when Abbot John Blake retired to Fairford.[19]

Strange carved a gentleman's patrimony out of the fabric and estate of the dissolved abbey he had once served.[20] The Stranges were an old Cirencester family with long kinship connections in London and Bristol.[21] He used his knowledge of the manor and its records to make money, convert it into land, marry daughters into gentry and knightly families and acquire the status of a gentleman. The Stranges were by no means 'new rich', but Robert was able to take advantage of opportunities arising from the dissolution of St Mary's Abbey and take his own branch of the family into the gentry.[22]

We get a sense of the muscular style of Strange's government, when he was in his prime, from a Star Chamber case relating to years immediately following the dissolution of the abbey.[23] The bill was presented by one Robert Porte, Clerk, who believed that boss Strange owed him money. One day Porte was crossing the market-place from the church when he 'came unto one Robert Strainge Bayley of the town of Ciceter'. 'Then and there, openly in the street', Strange huffily explained, Porte 'demanded certayne money', a public act that the Strange entourage felt was not befitting dealings between 'gentell men'. Strange took offence, called Porte *knave priest* and threatened that if the priest continued in his demands, he (Strange) and his companion, Robert Ingram, would do him 'bodily harm and... kill him'. Ingram allegedly punched Porte on the nose (gave him a *blessed*). Henceforth Strange's gang took to 'lay[ing] in wayte for Richard Porte as he was coming to his house'. Witnesses confirmed that 'the said Richard Porte for feare of bodily hurt was fayne to leave the highwaie and bide by a back lane to his lodging'. Porte was a man of regular

19 Robert Strange reported to Privy Council that watch for vagabonds and disorderly persons had been kept in Cirencester and the Seven Hundreds; he was high sheriff for Gloucestershire in 1573: GA D4871, 'Strange Family'.

20 'Thomas Straunge for lands in Myntie. Release of tenement with lands called Scarletts in Myntie, with Thomas Straunge of Chesterton, Gent.' GA D205A (1.2).

21 'Anthony Straunge of London, Gent' is mentioned in the above deed, *ibid*; Robert Strange was mayor of Bristol in 1474, 1482 and 1489; 'there seems no reason to doubt that Robert was the son of a Cirencester man as Thomas Strange was living there in the early part of the fifteenth century': GA EN, R. Strange 1970; Fuller, 'Guild Merchant', 50–1.

22 For an account of the new post-dissolution gentry and nobility of the region, see below, Chapter 12.

23 TNA, Stac 2/19/38, 36 Henry VIII.

habits. One day on his way home (perhaps from the church) he spied Strange and another associate waiting for him in the market-place. Porte fled up an alley and ducked into a tavern run by Thomas Taylor. Also present was John Daubney 'of Ciceter ... yeoman', who testified 'that he was drinking at the Inne of John Taylors when John Colne came in and said to the plaintiff [Porte] these words, "I wolde advis[e] you take the afterway homeward and go for youre owne safety."' Porte fled by the back door leading into 'a back lane sometimes called Gosse Ditch' just as Strange and his companion, one Grenewood, burst in through the front door. Strange and Grenewood were called before the justices to answer Porte's allegation that they had threatened and constantly harassed him by standing 'in the high road if ... Porte should passe to his mancon house and if they did for what cause they did so'.

Strange was examined in November, 1544. He admitted owing Porte three pounds, confessed that he had been at Taylor's inn, but denied any harassment or threats. He admitted that 'on the first Monday in Lent last past (when) Porte passed by' he made some disparaging remarks to a companion, but suggested they were only words. He openly admitted 'reviling' Porte, in his view a creature beneath contempt who had brought charges against him 'only to put [him] to costys, charges and expenses'. It is possible but unproven that Porte was persecuted by Strange because, after his appointment as curate, he had displayed protestant leanings.

Strange was a well connected 'survivalist'. His brother, John Strange, had been a canon at the abbey; at the dissolution he was granted the old abbey rectory of Shipton Moyne, which he served until his death in 1566. There is 'good evidence that he preferred the old religion, but he did not allow the successive changes in the religious establishment to interrupt his own career'.[24] John Hooper suspected him to be an enemy of reform; during Hooper's brief, evangelical episcopate, some of his neighbours accused John Strange of continuing to live in sin with his housekeeper, rather than marrying her, as he was now entitled, indeed, in Hooper's eyes, obliged, to do.[25] Robert Strange the bailiff conformed successively to the orthodoxies of the abbots, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I, continuing to occupy 'the 14th seate, South the North Side' of the parish church, which 'antiently belonged to the family of Strainges', until his death in 1588.[26] His religious sympathies are not definitely known, but his past inevitably left him tangled in old loyalties, and in 1570 he was directly accused of being a 'papist'.

The 'papists' formed a tight-knit little group. Christopher George, the lord of the manor of Baunton, married Robert Strange's eldest daughter, Anna. His

[24] 'Strange Family Pedigree', GA D2930/3 (61); cf. also GDR PCC 37, Will of Richard Fowler of Cirencester, in which 2 calves were left 'to my cousin Parson Straunge'; GA D4871.

[25] GA, GDR 6.15, 30–1: John Straunge v John Crippes Defamation; Office v John Straunge incontinency.

[26] GA P86, CW4.1, 'Cirencester Seate Booke'.

brother, John George, was married
by his first marriage.[27] John Ge
Edward Chapperlen, the son of the
'The Antelope', in 1551.[28] Christ
the parish, and all of them, as
the appointment of rector and curate
that governed the town for thirty
the habits of the burgher oligarchs
church. Both of Robert Strange's
faith.

Another Chapperlen, John,
in the 1570s, 'read Catholic books
Thomas Strange, lately returned
Elizabeth, he was released on the
at Cirencester. The historian of the
notes that when Chapperlen return
Strange again planned a joint escape
from Rome, and he desired to fight
was probably a son of Edward Chapp
Robert Strange leased 'The Antelope
great-grandson, his mother being
between John George and Robert

Except for the fact that he was
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Strange of Chesterton (the bailiff's
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house of Bridget Strange at Cirence
contemporary Catholic source descr
catholic.... She hath been much and
tion, and yet liveth a most resolute C
her husband dare not keep her.'[30]

[27] GA, 'Pedigree of Strange', D2930/3.

[28] GA D4871.

[29] Patrick McGrath, 'Gloucestershire and
Elizabeth', *Trans* BGAS 88 (1969–70).

[30] GRO D4871, 'Strange Family'.

[31] McGrath, 'Gloucestershire and the
The Seminary Priests: Elizabeth 1558–

[32] It is difficult to know what to make
Ciceter' gave 5 pounds and 'Mris Strange
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... Chippes Defamation; Office v John

brother, John George, was married to Elizabeth, Strange's youngest daughter by his first marriage.[27] John George's daughter, Elizabeth, was married to Edward Chapperlen, the son of the man to whom Robert Strange had leased 'The Antelope', in 1551.[28] Christopher George had a share of the tithes of the parish, and all of them, as manorial officials, would have a strong say in the appointment of rector and curates. In this sense, the interconnected cabal that governed the town for thirty years after the dissolution simply continued the habits of the burgher oligarchs who had built and maintained the parish church. Both of Robert Strange's brothers seem to have remained in the old faith.

Another Chapperlen, John, studied rhetoric at Cheltenham and Eton in the 1570s, 'read Catholic books and was finally converted by his cousin Thomas Strange, lately returned from Rome', in about 1590. Imprisoned under Elizabeth, he was released on the accession of James and returned to his family at Cirencester. The historian of the Counter-Reformation in Gloucestershire notes that when Chapperlen returned to Cirencester, 'his kinsman Thomas Strange again planned a joint escape.... His cousin and the Jesuits had sent him from Rome, and he desired to fight heresy and be an ecclesiastic.'[29] Chapperlen was probably a son of Edward Chapperleyn, and grandson of the man to whom Robert Strange leased 'The Antelope' in 1551. If so, he was Robert Strange's great-grandson, his mother being Elizabeth George, the daughter of a marriage between John George and Robert Strange's daughter Margaret.[30]

Except for the fact that he was from Cirencester, it has not been possible to trace Thomas Strange's family connections with certainty. His family must have been wealthy. When he became a Jesuit he made the Society of Jesus a gift of £2,000. The most likely explanation is that he was a son of Thomas Strange of Chesterton (the bailiff's cousin, thirty years his junior), whose wife first appears in a recusancy list dated 1577 as 'Mistress Strange of Chesterton'. John Sandys and Stephen Rowsham, two Catholics, were captured at the house of Bridget Strange at Cirencester and executed in 1586 or 1587.[31] A contemporary Catholic source described her as 'a most ancient and perfect catholic.... She hath been much and long chased into many shires for persecution, and yet liveth a most resolute Catholic where she can thrust her head, for her husband dare not keep her.'[32]

27 GA, 'Pedigree of Strange', D2930/3.

28 GA D4871.

29 Patrick McGrath, 'Gloucestershire and the Counter-Reformation in the Reign of Elizabeth', *Trans BGAS* 88 (1969–70), 21–2.

30 GRO D4871, 'Strange Family'.

31 McGrath, 'Gloucestershire and the Counter-Reformation', qf. Godfrey Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests: Elizabeth 1558–1603*, 296.

32 It is difficult to know what to make of the information that in 1625 'Mris George' of Ciceter' gave 5 pounds and 'Mris Strainge gave ten pounds' to the evangelical Calvinist Feoffees for Improriations, money used to purchase the presentation at Cirencester. Either

When he died in 1594, her husband, Thomas, left his sheep to his servants, and to his wife the now relatively meagre sum, after the inflation of the previous fifty years, of £40 per annum 'on condition that she gave up her obstinate refusal to attend church', which, on her own admission, she had refused to do for thirty years.[33] On this interpretation, Thomas Strange the Jesuit simply followed his mother's example – but not that of his father or grandfather, the old bailiff, who may well have been privately Catholic, but outwardly conformed to whatever regime ruled in church and state. Thomas was arrested after the Gunpowder Plot and held in prison until 1617.[34] However, by this time committed Romanists were a persecuted minority. Our concern for the moment is with the decades in which the transformation from catholic to protestant took place.

There is, then, enough circumstantial evidence to suggest that an aura of old religion clung to the little oligarchy of interconnected families who continued the everyday management of the town after the abbey went. In religion and social management they practised 'survivalism' through the reigns of Henry, Edward, Mary and continued to govern the key institutions of the market and the parish church into the first decade of the Elizabethan settlement. The key change brought about by the dissolution of Cirencester Abbey was that the lordship, with all the practical liberties it had engrossed over the centuries, was in the hands of new lords who, unlike the abbots, did not have the management of local affairs at their fingertips. Men like Robert Strange knew all the rules, and knew exactly where to lay their hands on some old document that established the legitimacy of this or that practice. He and his fellow oligarchs also knew which local estates once belonging to the abbey were worth purchasing; they had the money and credit to buy them. The abbey was gone, but the 'liberties' it had appropriated, and the system of government it had imposed on the town, had not been diffused very far.

the salesman failed to tell them what the money was for, or the matriarch survivalists changed their views after their husbands were dead. Isabel McBeath Calder, *Activities of the Puritan Faction of the Church of England 1625–33* (London 1957), 38.

33 McGrath, 'Counter-Reformation'.

34 *Ibid*; GA D4871, 'Strange Family'.

'The tyranny of … called papists': … under challen…

there is more tyranie nowe in …
Rober…

Robert Strange's position as bailiff … by marriages of his daughters, was … We can assume on the basis of … continuous if amorphous existence … evidence. Cirencester was too small … was communing with whom, and what … Edward VI not died in 1553 and … is possible that Strange's control … would have been challenged earlier. … first visit to Cirencester in the person … the death of Edward VI and the accession … heretic. He was burned at the stake … in 1555.[2]

In 1551–2, Hooper turned Glou… In two extraordinarily busy years, he … into the state of the clergy, church … one of the 350 or so parishes in his … detailed illumination of a region of … of momentous, enduring change. John …

1 F.D. Price (ed.), *The Commission for … and Gloucester*, BGAS Records Section …

2 Hooper was influenced by Zwingli through … of Henry VIII, and his continuing correspondence … Norman Birnbaum, 'The Zwinglian Reformation' … 1959), 36–9, indicates the importance … Morals Court' and observes that Zwingli's … masters' and 'simple journeymen against … 'petty and middle bourgeois rising up into …

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9

'The tyranny of infected members called papists': the Strange regime under challenge, c.1551–80

there is more tyranie nowe in these daies used than ever there was.
Robert Whiting, butcher of Cirencester, 1574[1]

Robert Strange's position as bailiff, and the network of connections set up by marriages of his daughters, was the strategic core of his political machine. We can assume on the basis of the past that opposition factions had a continuous if amorphous existence even when they generated no direct evidence. Cirencester was too small a place for everyone not to know who was communing with whom, and what the issues were. Had the evangelical Edward VI not died in 1553 and been replaced by the Catholic Mary, it is possible that Strange's control of the manor and, especially, the parish, would have been challenged earlier. Evangelical protestantism had paid its first visit to Cirencester in the person of Bishop John Hooper, in 1551, but the death of Edward VI and the accession of the Catholic Mary made him a heretic. He was burned at the stake under the walls of Gloucester Cathedral in 1555.[2]

In 1551–2, Hooper turned Gloucestershire inside-out and upside-down. In two extraordinarily busy years, he visited and made systematic enquiries into the state of the clergy, churchwardens and congregations of every one of the 350 or so parishes in his diocese. His records provide vivid and detailed illumination of a region of the commonwealth of England at a time of momentous, enduring change. John Hooper's visitation and court records

[1] F.D. Price (ed.), *The Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes Within the Dioceses of Bristol and Gloucester*, BGAS Records Section (Gateshead 1973), 78.

[2] Hooper was influenced by Zwingli through his residence at Zurich in the latter years of Henry VIII, and his continuing correspondence with Bullinger, Zwingli's successor; Norman Birnbaum, 'The Zwinglian Reformation in Zurich', *Past and Present* 15 (April 1959), 36–9, indicates the importance at Zurich of 'the Marital Court ... in effect, a Morals Court' and observes that Zwingli's reforms ranged 'merchants, prosperous artisan masters' and 'simple journeymen against patricians'; his main allies at Zurich were the 'petty and middle bourgeois rising up into entrepreneurial roles'.

bear detailed witness to one of the most remarkable social experiments of the English Reformation. They make it possible to follow a great reformer's plans and movements on a day-to-day basis. They matter in this context because they not only framed and conditioned what came next across the whole of Cirencester's greater region to the west, they also refer directly to (and affected) every one of Gloucestershire's communities, not least the town that is the subject of this book.

As soon as he arrived at Gloucester in May 1551, an introductory 'Letter to the Clergy', composed in advance, was copied and sent out to every deanery of Gloucester diocese, for transmission to the parishes. Two kinds of ministers had nothing to fear from reformation, he wrote: 'the one, if they be of sound doctrine apt to teach and to exhort after knowledge, and able to withstand and confute the evill sayers'. The other 'if their life and maners be unculpable', meaning 'sober, modest, keeping hospitality, honest, religious, chaste, not dissolute, angry, nor given to much wine, no fighter, no covetous man, such as governeth well his own house, and giveth an example of vertue and honesty unto other'. The 'dignity and Maiesty of the Order of Priests and Pastors [had] fallen in decay', in Hooper's opinion. The days of priests who 'nourish and keepe a whore or Concubine at home in thy house, or els doth defile other mens beds', hunt with hawk and hounds, get drunk and be a 'haunter of Alehouses and Taverns, of Whores, Cards, Dice, and such like', were at an end. Hooper demanded a return to the exemplary 'Old Priests and Pastors of Christ's Church, [who] did by their truth and gravity subjugate, and bring under the hard necked, and stiff stubborne Ethnickes and cause them to have the same in fear.' Most if not all Gloucestershire districts had at least one notorious priest.

> Let every one of you therefore take good heede to approve your selves faithfull and wise Ministers of Christ, so that when I shall come to visit the Parishioners committed to my Cure and faith from God, and the Kings Maiesty ye be able not only to make answer unto me in that behalfe, but also unto our Lord Jesus Christ ... a very streight revenger of his Church. Thus fare you well unto the day of my coming unto you.[3]

The letters were accompanied by three detailed 'interrogatories': one each for ministers, churchwardens and parishioners. By following up the letters with

[3] GCL, Hockaday (General), Vol. 33 (1551). Hockaday transcribed it from a manuscript in the Roger Morrice collection at the Williams Library, Gordon Square, London, headed 'A true coppey of Bishop Hooper's Visitation Booke Made By him in AD 1551,1552'. Hockaday thinks it was originally part of GDR no. 5, a hundred pages of visitation records that were originally part of a bound volume, dismembered, thought Hockaday, 'before 1721', probably by Archdeacon Furney. The following account of Hooper's activities is based on my reconstruction of his day-to-day itinerary from Hockaday 33 (GCL) and the records of the ensuing consistory court meetings in the Gloucester Diocesan Registers.

a systematic visitation of all parts of [illegible]
anyone – gentry, ministers, notables. [illegible]
failed to live out Hooper's detailed [illegible]
practice would be called to answer [illegible]
court at Gloucester Cathedral. If the[illegible]
Hooper ordered them to perform [illegible]
parish church, local markets and [illegible]
and Cirencester. No attempt to fill [illegible]
monasteries and chantries, and the [illegible]
near to matching the systematic [illegible]

Unlike the bishops who served [illegible]
was no respecter of persons. If he [illegible]
transgressed, he was summoned to [illegible]
the bishop. If Hooper was not sat[illegible]
perform public repentance just like [illegible]
swearer of oaths and breaker of [illegible]
did not endear him to the gentry. [illegible]
the year following 1 June 1551, he [illegible]
deanery and most other significant [illegible]
In 1551–2 he presided over 511 [illegible]
women of all ranks. A third of the [illegible]
Processions of penitents became [illegible]
markets of Gloucestershire.

Hooper visited Cirencester on Wed[illegible]
Awaiting him were the minister[illegible]
Gurney[4] and John Penyngton, and [illegible]
Fowler, Thomas Webbe,[6] John Saun[illegible]
John Keele. Also present were minis[illegible]
district. The crowd of curious church[illegible]
Bagendon; 3 from North Cerney; [illegible]
from Duntisbourne Abbots; 4 from [illegible]
from Farmington; 2 from Hampnett; [illegible]
from Cotes; 2 from Siddington St Peter[illegible]
Cerney; 2 Driffield; 2 Harnhill; 2 Pre[illegible]
1 Coln Rogers; 3 Compton Abdale; [illegible]
2 Ampney Crucis; 2 Ampney Peter; [illegible]
CW); 3 Hatherop; 2 Coln St Aldwyns[illegible]

[4] If this is the same John Gurney presente[illegible]
(GDR 20.57 1563 Visitation), the church[illegible]
[5] *Military Survey 1522*, Abbot Street, 4[illegible]
[6] Hockaday 155, 1545: 'Sergeant of the [illegible]
[7] GDR 2a.45: Original Bond to John H[illegible]
Strange Clerk & John Walker of Cirncester[illegible]
Shipton Moyne).

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and giveth an example of vertue
and Maiesty of the Order of Priests
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a systematic visitation of all parts of his diocese, Hooper soon established that *anyone* – gentry, ministers, notables, 'better sort' and 'common people' – who failed to live out Hooper's detailed reconstruction of religious thought and practice would be called to answer to the bishop himself at the consistory court at Gloucester Cathedral. If they proved at all ignorant or recalcitrant, Hooper ordered them to perform humiliating public penance in their own parish church, local markets and central towns like Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Cirencester. No attempt to fill the gaping hole left by the dissolutions of monasteries and chantries, and the confusing changes of state policy, came near to matching the systematic overhaul Hooper set in motion.

Unlike the bishops who served the diocese for the next century, Hooper was no respecter of persons. If he found evidence that a gentleman had transgressed, he was summoned to answer the allegation in person, before the bishop. If Hooper was not satisfied, the gentleman was required to perform public repentance just like every common or garden adulterer, swearer of oaths and breaker of public morality and religious peace. This did not endear him to the gentry. No place escaped Hooper's attention. In the year following 1 June 1551, he personally visited every market town and deanery and most other significant centres of population or misdemeanors. In 1551–2 he presided over 511 consistory court cases involving men and women of all ranks. A third of the cases resulted in public penance orders. Processions of penitents became commonplace in the parish churches and markets of Gloucestershire.

Hooper visited Cirencester on Wednesday 10 and Thursday 11 June 1551. Awaiting him were the minister, William Phelpes, churchwardens John Gurney[4] and John Penyngton, and seven parishioners, William Stone,[5] John Fowler, Thomas Webbe,[6] John Saunders, John Walker,[7] John Rogers and John Keele. Also present were ministers, officials and parishioners from the district. The crowd of curious churchwardens and parishioners included 2 from Bagendon; 3 from North Cerney; 3 from Stratton; 3 from Daglingworth; 2 from Duntisbourne Abbots; 4 from Duntisbourne Militis; 4 from Northleach; 2 from Farmington; 2 from Hampnett; 2 from Chedworth; 2 from Rendcombe; 2 from Cotes; 2 from Siddington St Peter; 2 from Siddington Mary; 6 from South Cerney; 2 Driffield; 2 Harnhill; 2 Preston; 3 Ampney Mary; 1 Coln Denis; 1 Coln Rogers; 3 Compton Abdale; 2 Bibury; 4 Fairford; 6 Maiseyhampton; 2 Ampney Crucis; 2 Ampney Peter; 2 Down Ampney; 2 Quennington (no CW); 3 Hatherop; 2 Coln St Aldwyns; 2 Shurborne; 2 Kempsford; 4 Lechlade;

4 If this is the same John Gurney presented in 1563 for 'getting his servant with childe' (GDR 20.57 1563 Visitation), the churchwarden had experienced a fall from grace.

5 *Military Survey 1522*, Abbot Street, 40s.

6 Hockaday 155, 1545: 'Sergeant of the town'.

7 GDR 2a.45: Original Bond to John Hooper Bp of Worc in the sum of £100 by John Strange Clerk & John Walker of Cirncester clothier on his institution to the Rectory of Shipton Moyne).

2 Burthroppe; 2 Southroppe; 2 Eastleach; Painswick 8 yeonomi; Bisley 9 cw; Salperton 4 cw; Miserden 7 cw; Edgeworth 4 cw; Winston 4 cw; Cowley 4 cw; Elkston 6 cw; Brimpsfield 4 cw; Eastington 10 cw; Coberley 3. Robert Strange was not listed, but his sergeant, Thomas Webbe, was there, and Strange took a personal interest in at least one of the cases arising from Hooper's visitation. It concerned his brother John, lately canon of Cirencester Abbey and now rector of Shipton Moigne. On 27 June 1551, 'John Cryppes a witness sworn and examyned saieth [to Hooper] that he hath harde saye that Mr Straunge shuld lyve viciouslye withe oon Katherine Daw by the saying on Henrie Saverie and Thomas Sway and John Davisse.' A month later John Strange called upon four compurgators to exonerate him, but by then the damage was done.[8] No smoke without fire.

Hooper dined at Cirencester the day before his burning at Gloucester in 1555, and it is said that one, at least, of the townspeople was converted by his saintly demeanour.[9] Strange probably observed his arrival and departure from a discreet distance. Strange would remain a dominant force in town affairs until his death in 1588; this chapter will show that cracks began to appear in the 1560s. The Middle Ages would finally end at Cirencester with the deaths of Strange and his 'co-regent', Christopher George, son of Strange's predecessor and lord of the nearby manor of Baunton (d.1597). This chapter tells a tale of the slow death of the old and the emerging contradictions of the new.

By accident or design, Elizabeth I's restoration of a limited Protestant ascendancy meant that 'The machinery of the church', as Christopher Hill once put it, was 'now entirely at the disposal of the crown.' It 'offered itself as an instrument of government independent of Parliamentary control, and with a long tradition of prestige and authority behind it.' And yet, as Hill pointed out, 'if the church was to be of any use to the crown as an instrument of government its prestige must be restored and maintained'.[10] The fly in the ointment was that the diocese of Gloucester never recovered from Mary's removal and execution of Hooper, undoubtedly one of the most visionary and energetic of English reforming bishops. Hooper's successor, the catholic James Brooks, had the courage of his convictions: he later refused to conform to the Elizabethan settlement, and died in prison. His

[8] Office v John Straunge incontinency, countered by John Straunge v John Crippes Defamation, 27 June 1551, GDR 6.15, 30–1.

[9] Richard Jefferies, 'History of Cirencester', *Wilts and Glouc Standard* (29 October 1870, citing 'Mr Froude's... history of this period' wrote that 'In the course of his journey [from the Fleet Prison in London to his execution at Gloucester, Hooper] stopped at one of the Inns... to dine', where he encountered 'a woman... who had always hated the truth and spoken all evil she could of him.' Upon meeting him 'she found that both in him and his creed there was more than she supposed... perceiving the cause of his coming she lamented his case with tears and showed him all the friendship she could'.

[10] Christopher Hill, 'From Grindal to Laud', in Hill, *Religion and Politics in 17th Century England* (Brighton 1986), 64.

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North Cerney were still telling their
'had said mass and did trust to say
word of God but doctrine of the church
a minister lived a decent life, did not
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but they came to court in the first
Hooper did not invent the neighbour

[11] For the decay of Gloucester diocese
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and exclusions (GDR 6.1–131); from
328 cases, 177 failures to appear and 84
31/10/70 (Powell) 723 cases, 437 failures
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(GDR 37.148–77). Price found that pen
to 1 in 40 under Powell (53). See also
Trans BGAS 60 (1938), 51–151; Price,
the Dioceses of Bristol and Gloucester, 15
the Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes
express purpose of restoring order in an
broken down' (137).

[12] GA, GDR, 6.14, 6.25.

[13] Price, 'The Commission for Ecclesiast

...Painswick 8 yeonomi; Bisley 9 cw; ... 4 cw; Winston 4 cw; Cowley 4 cw; ... 10 cw; Coberley 3. Robert Strange ...ebbe, was there, and Strange took a ...ses arising from Hooper's visitation. It ... Cirencester Abbey and now rector ... John Cryppes a witness sworn and ... harde saye that Mr Straunge shuld ... the saying on Henrie Saverie and ... later John Strange called upon four ... the damage was done.[8] No smoke

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successor, Richard Cheyney, left diocesan government to a succession of avaricious, incompetent or corrupt chancellors, whose historical achievement was to feed grass-roots anticlericalism, and confirm criticism of prelatical religion with interest. The corruption and (under Bishop Goodman in the decades before the civil wars) waywardness of Gloucester diocese is notorious among historians: there is no reason to think it was not notorious at the time. It was one ingredient feeding a third, popular, wave of reformation. This involved the emergence, naming and gradual routinization of sects and strategies for reform from the local bottom up. Diocesan neglect and corruption became a factor in persuading the 'poor townsmen' of Cirencester, as they had been persuaded in the past, that they alone could make their town a Christian commonwealth.[11]

Hooper understood that effective church government depended on respect for the clergy, which meant rooting out notorious bad examples, like Roger Grene, rector of Stratton, who, in 1551, was accused by his parishioners of living an evil life, was admonished by Hooper and ordered to remove a certain woman from his company.[12] Grene kept his head down until Hooper went. In September 1574, parishioners reported that Grene was still 'oftentime overcome with drinke and the parsonage in great decay'.[13] Catholic contemporaries like John Baron of Siddington St Mary and Thomas Taylor of North Cerney were still telling their stoic parishioners in the 1570s that they 'had said mass and did trust to say mass again and that the gospel is not the word of God but doctrine of the church'. Hooper had been generally satisfied if a minister lived a decent life, did not actively defy Hooper's reforms, and lived with his neighbours in peace. He was much concerned with the doctrine of the dozens of Gloucestershire ministers who appeared in his courts in 1551–2, but they came to court in the first place because of the 'decent life' clause. Hooper did not invent the neighbourly abuse, scandals and rumours of sexual

[11] For the decay of Gloucester diocese, the work of F. Douglas Price remains both exemplary and indispensable: figures cited in Price, 'The Administration of Gloucester Diocese 1547–1579', B. Letters, Keble College, Oxford 1939, regarding cases in Gloucester Consistory Court are telling. In the period 1/6/51 to 1/6/52 Hooper heard 511 cases; in only 54 cases did the accused fail to appear and there were only 13 suspensions and exclusions (GDR 6.1–131); from 1/6/61 to 31/12/61 (Chancellor Powell) there were 328 cases, 177 failures to appear and 84 susp. and excl. (GDR 18.13–51); from 1/11/69 to 31/10/70 (Powell) 723 cases, 437 failures to appear, 225 susp. and excl. (GDR 26.5–149); from 27/3/77 to 11/7/79 (Powell) 285 cases, 205 failures to appear, 77 susp. and excl. (GDR 37.148–77). Price found that penance orders varied from 1 in 3 cases under Hooper to 1 in 40 under Powell (53). See also Price, 'Gloucester Diocese under Bishop Hooper', *Trans BGAS* 60 (1938), 51–151; Price, 'The Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes for the Dioceses of Bristol and Gloucester, 1574', *Trans BGAS* 59 (1937) shows clearly that the Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes was 'a body set up by the government for the express purpose of restoring order in an area where local ecclesiastical jurisdiction had broken down' (137).

[12] GA, GDR, 6.14, 6.25.

[13] Price, 'The Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes', 145.

incontinence, adultery and drunkenness that he found in many parishes and every district of his diocese. The intention was to raise communal standards. Had he been allowed to complete his mission, Hooper may well have created, on the scale of an English shire, the kind of communalist discipline that Calvin, Zwingli and Bullinger achieved in the compact, urban communities of Geneva and Zurich.

After Hooper, the Gloucester diocese became what the reformers had always said of the medieval church: indifferent to the everyday lives of ordinary people, incompetently administered, corrupt and unjust. Decay at the top had its grass-roots counterparts in the localities. In 1567 parishioners of Cirencester complained to the bishop that pastoral care was being neglected. The accumulated bequests and donations that once paid the wages of a dozen or more chantry priests had disappeared into the royal treasury twenty years earlier. Their provision of an organist and choirmaster may have lapsed too. The music and singing were silenced – not by communal hostility or indifference to such 'visible signs' as music, but by the sudden dissolution of their mode of production. The manorial cabal did little to fill the vacuum. The tithes of the high altar were sold off piecemeal and the impropriators, who included Christopher George and a local tradesman named Giles Selwyn, were cutting costs to make their investments pay. 'We have but one priest to serve that great cure,' parishioners complained, 'wheras it hath bene alwaies accustomed to have two priests and a deacon' serving the rectory alone.[14] Another depressing sign was that the roof of the chancel (the part of the church belonging to the manorial lord, now to the men to whom they had sold the tithes) was 'ruinous'. Parishioners complained to the bishop 'that for more than a year no one can sit there because the rain comes in'. On 28 July 1570, the bishop's chancellor admonished 'Selwyn, farmer, as he asserts of the rectry' and ordered him to repair the part of the church for which he was responsible.[15]

Giles Selwyn, is described in various records dating from 1557 to his death in 1597 as a 'yeoman', 'butcher', 'clothier' and – in his will – 'vintner'. Inherited status as a yeoman and trade, not craft, was Selwyn's *métier*. He was a middleman who turned his buying and selling skills to grain, vegetables, meat, cloth and wine. If anyone knew Cirencester's various sources and markets, he did. His fortune may have fluctuated: structurally, he belongs with the 'middling' taxpayers in the lists of 1327, 1522 and 1560. At the time of the sudden anti-catholic push in 1570, he was head of a family consisting of his wife Emmot and three daughters, Margaret (aged 9), Alice (4) and Elizabeth (6 months). A son, Giles, and two further daughters each died within weeks of their births in 1563, 1565 and 1569. He was substantial enough to have domestic servants, the death of one of whom is recorded in the burial registers for 1563.[16] Selwyn

[14] GDR 20, 57.

[15] GDR Vol. 26, 135.

[16] Daughter Jone, bap 4/9/63, bur 19/9/64; s. Giles bap 25/8/65, bur 1/9/65; d. Elizabeth bap 1/3/68–9, bur 28/8/70: GA P86; in his will (GA GDR 1598/33), Selwyn commended

made no fewer than ten appearances
1570.[17] One of these at least may
(among whom Selwyn would certainly
purposes of appeals to the state) who
the 'papist' oligarchy in 1570. He
in order to challenge the cabal: he
He appears again in the 1580s, as
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Responsibility for enquiring into
Thomas Powell, appointed chancellor
Hooper, Cheyney rarely sat himself
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We know only that Powell's judgem
full court (he) showed manifest
saying that he could not get justice
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the judge were as true a subject as
'that he would not tarrie till he sawe
him manifestly contumacious, and...
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revival of the Guild Merchant.[20]

The hold of the manorial cabal was
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1569–74, at first before Chancellor

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sanctifier and my body to bee decently
[17] GDR Vol. 11, 34, 42, 47, 51 (1557);
(1566); Vol. 24, 508 (1569), 723 (1570);
[18] Price, 'Commission for Ecclesiastical
[19] Hockaday, 'Cirencester 1570'; GA
[20] See below, Chapter 11.
[21] See below, Chapter 10.

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made no fewer than ten appearances in diocesan courts between 1557 and 1570.[17] One of these at least may relate to the 'poore people of Cirencester' (among whom Selwyn would certainly have included himself, at least for the purposes of appeals to the state) who were to complain to Privy Council about the 'papist' oligarchy in 1570. He may have purchased a share in the 'rectry' in order to challenge the cabal: he certainly represented the trade community. He appears again in the 1580s, as leader of an attempt by this 'middle sort' of retailers and craftworkers to revive the Guild Merchant.

Responsibility for enquiring into the activities of Giles Selwyn devolved on Thomas Powell, appointed chancellor by Richard Cheyney, in 1565. Unlike Hooper, Cheyney rarely sat himself as judge in the consistory court, and his appointee, Powell, instituted a regime marked by laxity and corruption in the form of commutations in exchange for money.[18] Unlike Hooper, they left the gentry to their own affairs and were willing to let offenders off the public acts of penitence upon which Hooper had always insisted, in exchange for fines.

We know only that Powell's judgement infuriated Selwyn. 'Openly and in full court (he) showed manifest contempt for the judge and his jurisdiction, saying that he could not get justice but injustice in (that) court.' He shouted 'that he would have lawe by them that knowe the lawe ... and that he would the judge were as true a subject as he the said Selwyne is.' He threatened 'that he would not tarrie till he sawe further authoritie'. Powell 'pronounced him manifestly contumacious, and... he was excommunicated in writing'.[19] It is tempting to cast him as a tribune of the middling sort of townspeople: we meet him again in the next chapter, leading the tradesmen and craftsmen in a revival of the Guild Merchant.[20]

The hold of the manorial cabal was weakening, perhaps because their forms of government were unable to deal with problems arising from a growing population, the epidemics and high mortality of the 1550s, and always unpredictable economic conditions.[21] The reference to 'deacons' in 1567 may be an early sign of Calvinist influences that emerged in the 1580s. The sources merely suggest fragmentation of governance into at least four documented factions: catholic, 'proto-Anglican', 'non-separatist Calvinist' and 'separatist-Anabaptist'. The leaking roof of the chancel was symptomatic of decay that affected villages and towns throughout Gloucester diocese. Another sign of the fragmentation of religious community emerges from a series of cases of 1569–74, at first before Chancellor Powell at the Gloucester Consistory Court,

his 'soule into the hands of almighty God my creator, maker, preserver, redeemer and sanctifier and my body to bee decently buryed in the church yeard'; he signed his will.

17 GDR Vol. 11, 34, 42, 47, 51 (1557); GDR B4/1/657 (1557); Vol. 16, 36 (1563), 333 (1566); Vol. 24, 508 (1569), 723 (1570); Vol. 9, 50 (1570).

18 Price, 'Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes'.

19 Hockaday, 'Cirencester 1570'; GA GDR Vol. 26, 139.

20 See below, Chapter 11.

21 See below, Chapter 10.

and then before the powerful gentlemen who served as the queen's commissioners for ecclesiastical causes in Gloucestershire.

The cases involved at least eighteen people who (for differing reasons) were loudly and publicly absenting themselves from church. Radical separatism is signified by two tradesmen, James Ireland and Thomas Bradford, who first appeared before the diocesan consistory court on 23 March 1569/70.[22] They objected to 'abominations' at the parish church, especially the wearing by the priest of 'the coope and the surplice'. Bradford stayed away because he could not 'be edyfied by a godly and learned man' there. Christopher Haigh casts Bradford as the leader of a 'conventicle at Cirencester'. Over the next five years the consistory court and commissioners for ecclesiastical causes in Gloucestershire interviewed, interrogated and imprisoned several other members, whose testimony suggests this was not a sect of leaders and followers. They include several more men and, perhaps most auspiciously, at least five remarkably courageous and articulate women.

Haigh mentions Alice (or Agnes) Long, who 'regarded the meeting as an alternative to church, and told the visitation commissioners that "they should not command her to any parish church, and that she would choose whether she will go"'.[23] Like Bradford and Ireland, Alice Long was a member of the 'sect of disorderly persons' reported to Privy Council in 1578 by four commissioners for ecclesiastical causes, Sir Giles Poole, Henry Poole, Richard Baynham and Richard Grene. Their practice was 'to assemble in a desolate place nere unto a wood side, appointing unto themselves a minister and a private order of service, according to their own fantasies'.

Two months later, in May 1570, the opposition factions were presented with a common enemy. A papal bull declaring the Queen of England an excommunicate heretic was nailed to the door of the bishop of London's palace. News reached Cirencester in as long as it took a horseman or carrier to make the journey; it presented an irresistible opportunity to attack the cabal. A party calling itself 'the poor townsmen' came together and petitioned Privy Council for relief from 'the tyranie of infected members called Papists as toller(at)ed have impoisoned a nomber of good subjects' in the town.[24] The 'chiefest' of men behind these 'execrable doings', they claimed, were 'Nicholas Phillipps common serjeant of the said towne... and servant to Sir Henry Jerningham...

[22] What follows is from Price (ed.), *Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes for the Dioceses of Bristol and Gloucester, 1574*, 61–185.

[23] Haigh, *The Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven: Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation England, 1570–1640* (Oxford 2007), 40, citing GA GDR 40, fo. 164–v; Bradford, Agnes Long and 'John Cox and his wyff' were reported by Bishop Cheyney in 1576: R.H. Clutterbuck, 'State Papers Respecting Bishop Cheyney and the Recusants of the Diocese of Gloucester', *Trans BGAS* 5 (1881), 235.

[24] 'Petition of the Inhabitants of Cirencester to the Privy Council', TNA, SPD Dom. Eliz., Vol. LXXI no. 30; transcribed in Hockaday 156: 'Cirencester', 1570. See also Price, 'Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes', 62.

as also Robert Straunge, Justice of the Peace [and] other their adherents a... the manorial cabal. The 'poor people... late made by one Horton', who preach... the Bible [is] false and full of errors... mete amongst the common people... Horton was not the only defiantly... Roger Grene at Stratton may have... Baron at Siddington St Mary and... have been preaching a similar messa... and execrable opinions as before... 'poore townsmen' stood up in church... with 'imprisonment of bodie, feare and... and called tumultuous rebels'.[25] The... suggest that loyal 'common people' ... cuted by rich, disloyal papists.

Strange's faction had probably ... since 1548; Christopher George had ... ecuted for neglect of the chancel and... In the military metaphor that came ... spoke of social structures, the 'poor pe... the town '*captains* that are most perni... the queen's privy counsellors 'to rem... wicked and traitorous papists ...] from ... Christian people'. There was enough ... common talk that they were catholics... for which was passed down the line ... be relied on. The immediate result ... months a blow was struck for the ... a parliamentary borough with the ... ensued concerning the franchise: wh... and election of candidates? By 157... century were gone. The interregnum ... cabal was drawing to a close.

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[27] Beecham, *History of Cirencester*, 171; see ...

[28] Price, 'Commission for Ecclesiastical Cau...

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Ecclesiastical Causes for the Dioceses

Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation
A GDR 40, fo. 164–v; Bradford, Agnes
ed by Bishop Cheyney in 1576: R.H.
Cheyney and the Recusants of the Diocese

the Privy Council', TNA, SPD Dom.
1570: 'Cirencester', 1570. See also Price,

as also Robert Straunge, Justice of the Pax, Christopher George Clarke of the Peace [and] other their adherents a great number': the heads and subalterns of the manorial cabal. The 'poor people' took particular exception to 'a sermon of late made by one Horton', who preached that 'the sacred word enclosed within the Bible [is] false and full of errors (as untruly translated), and therefore not mete amongst the common people to be reade or taught'. We saw earlier that Horton was not the only defiantly 'survivalist' catholic minister in the district. Roger Grene at Stratton may have been too intoxicated to notice, but John Baron at Siddington St Mary and Thomas Taylor of North Cerney may well have been preaching a similar message. 'Utterly detesting all such erroneous and execrable opinions as before their eyes is daily practiced,' certain of the 'poore townsmen' stood up in church and complained, only to be threatened with 'imprisonment of bodie, feare and death, and confiscation of theire goods, and called tumultuous rebels'.[25] The papal bull offered an opportunity to suggest that loyal 'common people' and 'poor townspeople' were being persecuted by rich, disloyal papists.

Strange's faction had probably controlled the vestry as well as the manor since 1548; Christopher George had a share in the tithes, but was not prosecuted for neglect of the chancel and pastoral care in the consistory court.[26] In the military metaphor that came so naturally to contemporaries when they spoke of social structures, the 'poor people' called the three big men who ruled the town '*captains* that are most pernicious in that commonwealth'. They urged the queen's privy counsellors 'to remove [and] weed out the said persons [... wicked and traitorous papists ...] from having any authoritie or to live amongst Christian people'. There was enough circumstantial evidence and, no doubt, common talk that they were catholics, to justify an enquiry, the responsibility for which was passed down the line to Bishop Cheyney, whose discretion could be relied on. The immediate result of the petition is not clear, but within months a blow was struck for the commonalty when Cirencester was made a parliamentary borough with the right to elect two MPs.[27] A struggle then ensued concerning the franchise: who had a right to a voice in the selection and election of candidates? By 1570 the achievements of the long fifteenth century were gone. The interregnum of 'survivalist' government by the Strange cabal was drawing to a close.

F. Douglas Price identified the Bradford–Ireland group ('puritans') with 'the poore townesmen' who complained about the papists in 1570,[28] but the sources indicate that several factions of wholesalers, craftworkers and tradesmen were brought together momentarily by a common desire to discredit the Strange regime. Giles Selwyn, for example, was never accused of belonging with intran-

[25] The quotes are from the transcription in Hockaday 156.
[26] 'The answer of Christopher George Gent def. to the byll of Complainant of Richard Masters Esq. complt.', PRO Court of Requests 72/61; Hockaday, 'Cirencester 1578'.
[27] Beecham, *History of Cirencester*, 171; see below, Chapter 7.
[28] Price, 'Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes', 36.

sigent separatists like Bradford, Ireland and others, yet he was from the same class of petty traders and shopkeepers. Bradford was called into the consistory court again in 1572, charged with two other shopkeepers, William Whiting and Thomas Restall, that they 'let open their shoppes uppon the ymber dayes as though hit had not ben fyshe dayes'. They were butchers, but with quite different religious views, as would become clear.[29] A warning by the bishop to obey the rector and churchwardens by closing their businesses on holy days and Sundays was ignored, and a year later they were charged by Mr Aldsworth, the curate, with refusing to attend church and continuing to open their shops on 'fyshe dayes'. Restall and his associates made their point and went back to church, but Bradford and Whittinge refused to take 'a corporall othe upon the Evangelist' that they would mend their ways, and were imprisoned at Gloucester Castle.

The minister (it is not clear who appointed him, but he may have been installed as a sop to the complainants of 1570) offended at least two groups of parishioners, representing very different 'protestant' factions, united momentarily by common hostility to the Catholicism of the old regime and the contingent pretext of the pope's excommunication of the queen. The survivalists, led for decades by Robert Strange and his chief ally, Christopher George, were now a gentrified and increasingly discredited remnant. They still held the reins of market and police, but could not live forever. Aldsworth may, at first, have shared the martyred Hooper's radicalism with regard to 'visible signs'. Thomas Restall was a leading member of a group from what the next generation would call 'the better sort of inhabitants'. They were orthodox Elizabethans: God- and queen-fearing middle-of-the-road protestants, moderate and willing to compromise with the state and the now chastened oligarchy. They were offended by Aldsworth's insistence that communion bread and wine were only symbolically the flesh and blood of Christ. Now the church was officially recognized to be English, not foreign and overly Latinate, nothing more needed to change. Sturdy supporters of a moderate Elizabethan settlement, Restall, John George, John Morse, Thomas Monox and William Vyner were called before the ecclesiastical commissioners in November 1574, to explain their refusal to attend church. They complained 'that the minister will not minister the communion according to the booke of comen prayer and the injunctions'. Their centre of social gravity was higher than that of the conventiclers: Monox was described as 'gent' once, in a 1559 prosecution in the Hundred court for fighting a duel with John Marshall at nearby Culkerton.[30] Two years later he served as clerk in the market courts, and perhaps for the vestry.[31] The first reference to him in the parish register records the burial of his daughter, Ann, on 25 August 1562. A month later his daughter Elizabeth was baptized. Every two years from 1562

[29] GCL RV 79.7, View of Frankpledge for Borough of Cirencester, 1560.
[30] Beecham, *History of Cirencester*, 168.
[31] GDR Vol. 17, 115, 148, 220, 261, 267, 277.

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[32] GA P86 IN 1/1: 19/9/65, 5/10/67, 19
his wife 'Mistresse Joane Monox, Wydow'
[33] 'Willm Vinar' was listed as a juror in
Tetbury parish church 1548 (GDR 4: 84
5: 24, 176).
[34] GA GDR Vol. 31, 81–7; GDR 26,
[35] 'Most of the lands in the parish did be
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ough of Cirencester, 1560.

to 1572 his wife Joan gave birth to another child, who was religiously baptized at the parish church.[32] Restall, George, Morse, Monox and Vynor were back in their pews as soon as moderation was restored.

For them, the new curate Mr Aldsworth was taking reformation too far. Conformists of the 'better sort', they were sturdy contributors to local civic and religious life.[33] Their objections were taken seriously. The judge summoned Aldsworth to explain himself; he 'confess'd part therof' admitting that 'He ministred the communion with comen bread and... did not weare the surplesse for that he was licensed to do by the High Commission at London.' Aldsworth may have been trying to take up where Zwinglian John Hooper had been cut off fifteen years before. Monox, John George, Viner, Morse and Restall disliked Aldsworth's plain preaching style, lack of ceremonial and demystification of transubstantiation. The commissioners asked to see his licence. Aldsworth relented. By the end of November he had 'lately conformed, for the which (the parishioners) were glad and desired (his) lordship's favour for any offence passed'.[34] The moderates had their say, but as we shall see, circumstances were calling for sterner communal medicine.

Aldsworth was the second in a list of no fewer than eleven ministers who served the parish without being instituted as vicars or rectors from the death of the Catholic Phelps, in 1558, to the end of the century. The high turnover owed something to the fact that since the accession of Elizabeth I the rectory (which had belonged to the abbey, and then passed to the crown) was in the hands of absentee lay owners, like Christopher George, who viewed it as a means of controlling the vestry. Tithes, where they were applicable at all,[35] belonged to the wealthy families who had bought up most of the property belonging to the abbey in the decades following the dissolution. Several were conservative Catholics or (like Monox, Viner, Morse and Restall) 'Anglicans' who believed the key differences between the old church and the new concerned language and leadership. The pope was replaced by the monarch. The abbey was gone. Why change anything else? The wealthy businessmen and gentry who owned the rectory and the tithes had little interest in religious novelty, and might have thought it wise to employ men on short contracts so that they could be dismissed immediately if they caused trouble. Aldsworth lasted another two years, and was replaced by William Woodlande in 1576. He was followed by John Mortimer (1580), John Stone (1581), Nicholas Kekke

32 GA P86 IN 1/1: 19/9/65, 5/10/67, 19/9/65, 5/10/67 (bur 14/10/67), 16/6/69, 30/5/72; his wife 'Mistresse Joane Monox, Wydow' bur 18/2/1615.

33 'Willm Vinar' was listed as a juror in 1560: GCL RV 79.7; John Morse, sidesman at Tetbury parish church 1548 (GDR 4: 84); sidesman at Cirencester 1551 and 1559 (GDR 5: 24, 176).

34 GA GDR Vol. 31, 81–7; GDR 26, 137 (Morse).

35 'Most of the lands in the parish did belong to the abbey, for which reason they are exempted for payment of tithes, which would otherwise be £300 a year': Sir Robert Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire* (Gloucester 1712), 342.

(1585) and Philip Jones (1586). We shall meet Jones, a fiery, class-obsessed preacher, in due course.

Aldsworth was persuaded to moderate his 'Presbyterian' iconoclasm. He was a few years ahead of his time. This reversal may have led to more pressure being applied to the Bradford–Ireland group, who regarded the new regime as little different from the old and absolutely refused to submit to its rules and rituals. They would not attend church, refused to have their children baptized, and insisted on their duty to keep their businesses open on Sundays and feast days. This must have caused quite a stir in the town, especially the paradoxical belief of this sect that it was their religious duty to conduct that most profane of activities, trade, on holy days. These were indeed what Christopher Hill termed 'the industrious sort of people' who believed their ministers should reflect their needs and beliefs.

Obstinate radicals like them had been burned as Lollards a century earlier. Thomas Bradford appeared again in the consistory court in 1570, when he explained that he refused to attend church because 'he cannot be edified by a godlie and learned man' there. Two years later he, James Ireland and others confessed to working on feast days and holy days; Bishop Cheyney admonished and let them go. In November 1573 they were still refusing to close their shops on holy days and to receive communion at the parish church. Their fellow sectarian, William Phelpes, told the commission in 1574 that he 'would have malefactors and papists excluded out of the church', suggesting that catholic influence, at least as Phelpes understood it, remained strong. Thomas Bradford repeated his reasons for not attending church and was sent back to jail: he 'saith for that the minister doth followe men's tradicion and do not minister to Gode's word'. Whiting refused the commission's order to baptize his children, on the grounds that the church font was 'a wicked and abominable trowe'. He 'arogantlie sayd that he would followe the quenes majesties lawes and her highnes proceedinges so far further as the same did agree to gods worde and not otherwyse'. 'He utterlye mislyketh to have godfathers and godmothers to the baptising of children.' The commissioners sent him back 'to (Gloucester) castell ... for his unsemely wordes'.

His wife Elizabeth kept the torch lit: she refused to 'have her child christened for that it is superstitious and not agreeable to Godes word and that it was devised by Pope Pius'. She was in court that day with Joan Arnold, who affirmed she 'would not attend church for that the service of God is not ministred accordinge to the worde, and for that the minister doth bid holidaies and fasting daies'. Ann Bradford failed to turn up on this occasion and was excommunicated. She must have been arrested and sent to the castle, for she remained adamant at a meeting of the court on 21 December and was 'remanded' until 13 January. Elizabeth Whiting was not committed to join her husband in the cells at Gloucester Castle, perhaps because the court was reluctant to imprison a mother with a baby, and hoped she might be turned by an encounter with powerful Cotswold gentlemen. She was ordered 'to repaire to my lord Chandois, Sir Giles Poole and Sir John Tracie, for her enlargement'.

These men, the heaviest of the [illegible] been called in to add secular force [illegible] The commissioners had secular power [illegible] available to the church courts.

In February a fourth woman, Ann [illegible] named John Butler were sworn 'bef[illegible] Esq. and Richard Green' at the [illegible] christening of Whyttinge's child'. 'Fin[illegible] it was therefore ordered that she be [illegible] 10 March, when the gentlemen w[illegible] again refused to 'receyve the comm[illegible] for want of lerning to know what she [illegible] move her'.[37] Asked again on 15 Apr[illegible] that heretofore. And after many w[illegible] not worthy noting' the gentlemen [illegible] her simplicitie ... hopeing she w[illegible] May.[38]

Sir Giles Poole met Elizabeth Wh[illegible] which she seemed to agree to have her [illegible] excuse for not having done so. In Dec[illegible] for having Whiting's child baptized [illegible] two other of the substantiall inhabi[illegible] minister, churchwardens, constable a[illegible] the child themselves to be christened [illegible] jail, proving his obstinacy at another [illegible] the commissioners 'there is more matt[illegible] there was'. The millenarian underm[illegible] he 'cried out with a loud voice and [illegible] uppon the majestrattes, rulers and p[illegible] both prince and people for the mayn[illegible] other abomination and wickedness'. T[illegible] cells were too good for him. He was t[illegible] there to remayne until the said comm[illegible] take further order for his enlargement [illegible] very well mean whippings, or the rack.

A fortnight later later Giles Poo[illegible] Sapperton, where he asked her again [illegible]

36 Price (ed.), *Commission for Ecclesiastical* [illegible] ecclesiastical authority see Price, 'Comm[illegible] the decay of civil authority at this time.'

37 Price (ed.), *Commission for Ecclesiastical* [illegible]

38 *Ibid*, 80.

39 *Ibid*, 134.

40 *Ibid*, 65, 78.

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These men, the heaviest of the heavyweight gentry of Gloucestershire, had been called in to add secular force to the floundering diocesan authorities.[36] The commissioners had secular powers to interrogate and punish that were not available to the church courts.

In February a fourth woman, Ann Cole, and another Cirencester resident named John Butler were sworn 'before Sir [Giles] Poole, Richard Baynham Esq. and Richard Green' at the Poole house at Sapperton, 'concerning the christening of Whyttinge's child'. 'Finding greate obstinacy in the said Anne, it was therefore ordered that she be committed to the gaile of Cirencestre' until 10 March, when the gentlemen would interview her again. A month later she again refused to 'receyve the communion ... because she is not worthy thereof for want of lerning to know what she doth receive until such time as God shall move her'.[37] Asked again on 15 April, Anne Cole 'sayd ... she hathe declared that heretofore. And after many wordes by her uttering touching her opinion not worthy noting' the gentlemen gave her another month 'in consideracon her simplicitie ... hopeing she will receive one this side the next court' in May.[38]

Sir Giles Poole met Elizabeth Whiting privately on several occasions on which she seemed to agree to have her child baptized, only to come up with an excuse for not having done so. In December 1574 Poole assigned responsibility for having Whiting's child baptized to 'the churchwardens, constables and two other of the substantiall inhabitaunts of Cicester'. When this failed 'the minister, churchwardens, constable and *five* parishioners were ordered to take the child themselves to be christened'.[39] Her husband remained in Gloucester jail, proving his obstinacy at another hearing in March 1575, when he told the commissioners 'there is more tyranie nowe in these daies used than ever there was'. The millenarian underpinnings of his belief were disclosed when he 'cried out with a loud voice and said that God would take vengeaunce uppon the majestrattes, rulers and governors of this realm and wuld rote out both prince and people for the mayntenaunce of idolatrie, supersticon and all other abomination and wickedness'. The gentlemen decided that the castle cells were too good for him. He was 'comited to the comon gaile of Gloucester, there to remayne until the said commissioners, or others there colleagues shall take further order for his enlargement'.[40] 'Enlargement', in this context, could very well mean whippings, or the rack.

A fortnight later later Giles Poole had Elizabeth Whiting brought to Sapperton, where he asked her again if her child had been baptized. He had,

36 Price (ed.), *Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes*, 64, 72, 77–8, 141–3; for decay of ecclesiastical authority see Price, 'Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes', 93–4, and for the decay of civil authority at this time, 93, n. 195.
37 Price (ed.), *Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes*, 77.
38 *Ibid*, 80.
39 *Ibid*, 134.
40 *Ibid*, 65, 78.

she said, but not at Cirencester. The child had been baptized 'by one Woodland, minister at Hawxbury, on the lord's day last, as she termed it'. Poole and his fellow commissioners were suspicious. Why would she have travelled across the wolds to the sprawling clothworker parish of Hawkesbury, when the job could be done just as well at Cirencester? Who, they asked, were the godparents? It became clear that all their coercion would not change her views. She said she 'utterly mislyked of and would not have [godparents] so termed, but cauled witnesses to the baptising'. As for the baptism, 'she was not present thereat', it 'being done by the procurement of the ministre contrarye to her husband's will'.[41] Asked why she still refused to take communion, she answered that 'she wyll not be tyed unto tymes and for other causes which she wold wyshe to be reformed'. Poole asked her again and she said 'she was content to receive at the handes of a minister that were a messenger sent from God, the evill being putt away and [the communion being administered only to] sanctes'.

The point made by these early 'dissenters' was that not even the most powerful men in the county would convince them if it went against the inner voice of conscience, something closely resembling the 'inner voice' of the later Quakers. Oddly patient with the women's recalcitrance, Poole ordered them to reform and return a month later.[42] There is even a hint that Poole found himself respecting these quietly defiant and 'simple' women.

Voices like theirs disappear from the sources – though probably not from the town – until, in the 1650s, we encounter the *Sufferings* of Quakers like Theophila Townsend.[43] Stereotyping them along later sectarian lines is reasonable – they probably founded the Anabaptist tradition that resurfaced in the 1630s and is well evidenced at Cirencester in the 1650s. At this time it may be more accurate to describe them as 'seekers' convinced that God, no respecter of persons, spoke exclusively to the private consciences of individual women and men. At the very least it must be said that this 'opinion' attracted some strong women.

Sir Giles Poole was a reputed 'cavalier'. A witness in a gentry divorce case heard before John Hooper in 1551–2 reported Alice Compton, wife of Walter Compton Esq., as saying 'she had lever kepe Sir Gieles Poole's hounds and hawks than to be Walter Compton's wife and that Walter Compton was a lusty child, but Sir Gieles Poole was a frowlicker'. Alice personally confessed 'she had received a bracelet with gold of the said Sir Gieles Poole' and another witness testified 'that he had hard oon Thomas Webb now departed, this depo-

41 *Ibid*, 37, 57–60, 74–6, 81–7; Price, 'Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes', 161ff.

42 Price, *Commission*, 80.

43 For Cirencester Quakers, see Rollison, *Local Origins*, Ch. 7; 'Theophila Townsend's testimony concerning the Life, Death and Sufferings of Amariah Drewet lately deceased', in *Some Testimonies of the Life, Death and Sufferings of Amariah Drewet of Cirencester in Gloucestershire, lately deceased* (London 1687), 8–9, conveys something of Townsend's confident voice.

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Sir Gieles Poole had to do with her
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In Chapter 11 it will be suggested
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under the leadership of Giles Selwy
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44 GDR Walter Compton v Alice Comp
23 Dec. 1551.

45 R.W. Jenkins, 'The Cirencester Contes

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nents fellowe in howsehold in the howse of the said Walter (Compton) saie as they were bothe in bed together and that his dame was a whore and that Sir Gieles Poole had to do with her'. He had also heard 'oon West', formerly servant to Walter and now to Poole, say as they went hunting that his dame was a 'whoor bitch'.[44] Poole may have been past 'frolicking' in the 1570s, but another distinguishing mark of Hooper's short spell as bishop had been a willingness to take on the gentry of the diocese, whom he expected to set a good example. Those who followed him were not so courageous, which may be why Poole's neighbour, Christopher George, was never summoned to answer the allegations concerning the neglect of the parish of Cirencester.

Post-Hooper officials of Gloucester diocese needed the support of the secular magnates to impose the Elizabethan settlement on recusants from the catholic right and the protestant left. The group of 16 men and women investigated by Poole and his fellow commissioners represent the first 'dissenters', the radical, often millenarian, stream of English protestantism that was never to be absent from the town and Seven Hundreds from the 1560s to the 1650s. A more moderate – non-separatist, presbyterian – congregationalism gradually became dominant at Cirencester after the 1580s. Yet religion remained a mercurial and unpredictable ingredient in a complex and shifting, even somewhat chaotic, field of force. One thing is certain: the 'dissenters' came from the middle ranks of the trade and craft community – as, indeed, did tradesmen who filled the minor positions in the government of the town – the Monoxes, Restalls, Viners and Morses – possibly ex-catholics, or subalterns of the survivalist manorial cabal, who applied the most conservative reading possible to the hazy requirements of the Elizabethan settlement. The new occupant of Abbey House, Thomas Master, seems to have become identified as a leader of this conformist branch of the bourgeoisie. Above them was the oligarchy, the powerful but ageing *bons bourgeois* Stranges, Chapperlens and Georges, with their survivalist traditions.

In Chapter 11 it will be suggested that the survivalists' last stand took place in the 1580s. In the wake of the movement to dislodge the 'papist' oligarchs following the papal bull of 1570, the Guild Merchant movement was revived under the leadership of Giles Selwyn. The issues may well have had something to do with national politics, in that the struggle clearly reappeared in the decade after the town had been granted the status of Parliamentary Borough, with what, in the eighteenth century, would be called a 'pot-walloper' franchise: 'the right to vote belonged to every householder who had lived in the town for at least six months and was not receiving alms'.[45] Strange's son, Michael, was now married to the daughter of a knight, Sir Anthony Hungerford, his partner in purchases of the old abbey buildings in the 1540s. Strange

[44] GDR Walter Compton v Alice Compton his wife Divorce 12, 19, 28 Nov., 4, 7, 14, 23 Dec. 1551.

[45] R.W. Jenkins, 'The Cirencester Contest', *Trans BGAS* 92 (1973), 158.

had been appointed as bailiff by the last abbot, and was reappointed by every succeeding lord up to the most recent, Sir John Danvers, who purchased the town in 1563, and with whom the queen lodged when she visited Cirencester in August 1592.[46] Danvers was a member of the earl of Essex's retinue, and was knighted by Essex in 1591. His son was executed in March 1601 for participating in the Essex rebellion.[47] The evidence suggests that Strange was very much the representative of the traditional manorial authority-structures that had maintained their grip on the town, by appointment of the Crown, since the Reformation – and, indeed, since the reign of Richard I.

From the late 1560s to the 1580s a gradually emerging 'party' of businessmen, artisans and retailers, some 'dissenters' and separatists, a majority not, challenged a 'papist' triumvirate. Divisions between survivalist *majores* like Strange and George, and *mediocres* like Selwyn and his supporters meant that, for whatever reasons, the customary duties of the 'better' and 'middle' sorts to work together for communal harmony were, demonstrably, not being fulfilled. In economic and demographic circumstances to be more fully explicated in due course, failure of pastoral care and local government created 'murmuring' among the resident population, threatening dissolution of good order into class struggle of the lower ranks of the commonalty against their employers. The gaps that had always existed between these 'layers' or 'levels' of the trade community were becoming ideological as well as material and political. In the midst of this religious fragmentation was an increasingly millenarian, prophetic element, a conviction that the troubled times through which the town was passing were signs that the *last daies* were imminent. Events at Cirencester in the late 1570s were to suggest they might be right.

46 'Her highness lodged at Sir John Danvers new House …', 'Queen Elizabeth's Progress in Gloucestershire', transcription of 'MS Book in the possession of the Corporation of Gloucester', *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, IV, 379.

47 Baddeley, *A History*, 239–40.

Phoenix arising: 156

Now the red pestil
And occupation

Before considering what eventu
communal revival of the later six
centuries – it is necessary to ex
contexts with which all the inhab
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reconstitute aspects of communal ex
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a relentless series of severe mortali
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This chapter chronicles a continuin
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crises more acute than any since th
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and governance, for as Keith Wrigh
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in the eyes of contemporaries 'the
wrathful displeasure … to the Comm
where it is"'.[1]

In the second half of the sixteenth
grow for the first time since the thirte
from 1570 to 1660, the Seven Hund
crisis comparable with that of 1250–
the townspeople had exploded into

1 'The dystopic vision of the plague ser
deepest anxieties of the time': Wrightson
and the Plague (Yale 2011, forthcoming
59–60; I am grateful to Keith Wrightson
MS, and for permission to quote from it.