

ENGLISH FIRST FRUITS, C. 1535 - 1660

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A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the administration and collection of first fruits by the English Crown between 1535 and 1660. Following an overview of the administration of ecclesiastical taxation, attention is devoted to its social and financial effects upon the beneficed clergy. The process of compounding for payment and the related search for sureties provided useful insight into the social milieu of the lower clergy. The inability of some clerics to meet their first fruits obligations led to a growing problem of debt, which taxed the early modern financial administration. Although the thesis focuses on the burden of first fruits on the lower beneficed clergy, the plight of bishops obliged to meet first fruits payments is also examined. For the Crown first fruits represented a significant source of revenue, while for the English clergy they constituted a serious financial burden.

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List of Abbreviations

- APC Acts of Privy Council, ed. J.R. Dasent, 46 vols. (London: 1890-1964).
- BL Lansdowne British Library London. Lansdowne MSS.
- Bindoff S.T. Bindoff, ed. The House of Commons: 1509-1558. 3 vols. (London: History of Parliament Trust, 1982).
- CSPD Calendar of State Papers Domestic.
- CSP Advance Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Advance of Money: 1642-1656, ed. Green. (London: 1889).
- DNB Dictionary of National Biography. 22 vols. ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917).
- Emden A.B. Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford: A.D. 1501 to 1540. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).
- Hasler P.W. Hasler, ed. The House of Commons: 1559-1603. 3 vols. (London: History of Parliament Trust, 1981).
- LP Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 21 Vols. ed. J.S. Brewer, J. Gairdner et al. (London: 1862-1932).
- Lisle Letters The Lisle Letters. ed. Muriel St. Clare Byrne. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
- PRO E Public Record Office, Exchequer (First Fruits Office).
- PRO SP Public Record Office, State Papers.
- SR Statutes of the Realm. 11 vols. (London: 1810-1828).
- Venn John Venn and J.A. Venn. Alumni Cantabrigienses Pt.I: From the earliest times to 1751. 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922-1927).

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INTRODUCTION

The study of the early modern English church has in the past focused on the upheavals brought about by the Reformation. The changes in theology and ecclesiastical administration after the 1530s occupied the attention of most scholars, at least until the late 1950s. Gradually, however, attention has shifted to the economic and social effects of the sixteenth-century changes. Following on the pioneering work of Christopher Hill in particular, historians have begun to assess the effect of upheavals of the Reformation upon all strata of clergy. The deterioration of the economic status of the clergy following the Reformation had three central causes: Inflation, growing lay power and increased taxation. The last of these, characterized by A.G. Dickens as "a new and heavier financial bondage" has received remarkably little attention.¹

Christopher Hill's study of the economic problems of the English church during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which appeared in 1956, was the first major analysis of the economic problems faced by the clergy.² Economic Problems of the Church focuses on the difficulties of inflation and on lay intransigence to attempts to improve clerical finances. Taxation of the clergy is passed over with little comment. His concern with tithe litigation, lay impropriation of clerical incomes, and especially the open hostility towards Archbishop Laud's attempts during the 1630s to remedy the situation is understandable, since Hill's study was intended to serve a definite purpose -- to help identify the causes of the 'English Revolution'. The significance of Hill's study lies in the fact that he opened up a field of enquiry: the evaluation of economic problems of the church, including taxation.

The role of taxation, including first fruits, has been most fully treated by Felicity Heal, both in her study of the Tudor episcopate and that of clerical taxation during the sixteenth century.³ Clerical taxes, as will be made clear in chapter one, did not become a financial problem for the clergy simply as a result of the extension of first fruits and tenths to all beneficed clergy in 1535. Even before the Reformation the 'charitable subsidies' due to the Crown and the various taxes owed to the Papacy were becoming a burden, especially to the lower clergy. Arrears of taxes grew until by the reign of Edward VI (1547-53) they had themselves become a serious problem.⁴ Clerical taxation compounded the problems of inflation and loss of church lands and income.

While the economic plight of the clergy has received much recent attention from contemporary scholars, including Claire Cross, Margaret Bowker and Rosemary O'Day, taxation and particularly first fruits have not been fully explored.⁵ Many of these studies have concentrated more on the declining economic status of many parish clergy, seeing taxation as only one disincentive, among many, to new clerical recruits. Regional variations existed: clergy in areas like Lancashire or Lincolnshire faced difficulties different from some of their other colleagues. Certain strata of clergy, like the urban clergy and the lowly unbeneficed suffered much greater economic hardship than others. For all beneficed clergy, however, first fruits constituted a significant economic burden, particularly in the years immediately following 1535.

Study of early modern English administration as well has grown significantly in the past quarter century. Following the publication of G.R. Elton's Tudor Revolution in Government, an examination of the crucial role played by Thomas Cromwell in reforming Crown finances and administration

(including first fruits), a few scholars have examined the workings of the financial administration during this period. The work of J.D. Alsop, for example, on sixteenth-century administration and taxation provides insight into the principles behind taxation, and into the personnel of the Exchequer and the financial courts.⁶ However, while the Court of Augmentations and the Exchequer have both attracted considerable interest, the administration of first fruits, their collection and the revenue they generated for the Crown remain essentially unexplored. Walter C. Richardson, in his studies of Chamber administration and of the Court of Augmentations, came closest to a proper study of first fruits. The Court of First Fruits and Tenths (1540-1554) receives substantial treatment in his work, but a full study of its structure and financial affairs was never undertaken.⁷

First fruits, then, have suffered from historical neglect of both the administrative and ecclesiastical sides. Its effects on the economic condition of the clergy and the administrative structure and process which evolved to collect the tax both need further study. It is the aim of this thesis, in some measure, to address this historiographical gap.

The absence of extensive secondary material on first fruits is counteracted, to some extent, by significant primary materials. The earliest of the major documents used in this study is the account of arrears of first fruits, prepared in 1551 as part of a large scale attempt to come to grips with the contemporary fiscal crisis. The account was included in the volumes of the State Papers of Edward VI.⁸ Containing over one thousand entries, this account provides extensive information on each debt, including the value, location of living and the names and occupations of sureties in most cases. Arrears

remained a continual problem, and accounts from 1566 and the period 1604-1653 provide a clear indication of the continuing scope of the problem.⁹

The principal records of the mid-seventeenth century employed in this study are the composition books kept by the clerks in the Office of First Fruits and Tenth. Those clergy unable to pay their first fruits immediately (the overwhelming majority) were obliged to compound. They each provided four bonds, guaranteeing to make equal semi-annual payments commencing six months from the date of composition. The books recorded the details and the names of the sureties who guaranteed payment in the case of default on the bonds. There exist two sets of complete composition books for the period 1639-1651. The first (PRO E334/20 and 334/21) simply records the details, similar in form to the 1551 account of arrears, although the entries are dated and show the dates when payments were due. Unlike the 1551 account, however, these entries are, almost without exception, complete. The second set of composition books is of greater historical interest (PRO E334/34). Containing identical entries to the first set, the marginal notes found in these volumes suggest they were used by the clerks to keep a record of payments and of attempts to collect and the reasons given for non-payment. Further information on clerical procedures, writs and payments are found in the Office miscellaneous books kept during this period (PRO E 336), although many of the entries concern collection of tenths, outside the scope of this study.

Beyond these sources, some material from the First Fruits Office is found in the domestic State Papers, particularly under the Tudors. Privy Council registers and the calendar of Patent rolls provide useful information on appointments in the first fruits administration and on payments made from the

revenue collected. The final significant primary source used is the transcription of records from the Court of First Fruits made in the early seventeenth century and preserved in the papers of Sir Julius Caesar (Chancellor of the Exchequer 1606-1614) and now included in the Lansdowne manuscripts. These include accounts submitted by John Gostwick and Wimonde Carewe which permit analysis of the first, very active years of first fruits collection, including the interval between the passage of the relevant statute in late 1534 and the establishment of the Court in late 1540, during which time the revenue was under the control of John Gostwick, one of Cromwell's personal servants.¹⁰

This study will examine first fruits from two perspectives: that of the economic and social effects upon the English clergy, and the administrative and financial effects upon the Crown. The first requirement is to place the tax into historical perspective, and examine the growth of the financial administration which handled it. Only then can its implications for clerical debt, and the burden of first fruits, be properly assessed. Furthermore, among the clergy one group deserves separate treatment. The episcopate in the early modern period possessed certain advantages over their lesser brethren, including closer contact with the Court, for obtaining more lenient treatment in the matter of first fruits. On the other hand, they generally faced greater societal obligations and financial problems, which first fruits served to complicate. Thus, a separate examination of the episcopate and first fruits is in order. First fruits were a significant source of revenue for the Crown, at least in the beginning, but the damage they caused to the church was substantial. They placed financial burdens on the clergy and were frequently a cause of clerical debt. A study of first fruits provides the opportunity for insight into the administration of

taxation in early modern England, and important information about the economic and social condition of the English clergy. '

Notes: Introduction

¹ A.G. Dickens, The English Reformation. (London: Fontana Press, 1986), 68.

² Christopher Hill, Economic Problems of the Church from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).

³ Felicity Heal, "Clerical Tax Collection under the Tudors" in Continuity and Change, ed. Rosemary O'Day and Felicity Heal, 97-124 (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976); and Felicity Heal, Of Prelates and Princes: A Study of the Economic and Social Position of the Tudor Episcopate, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁴ Heal, "Clerical Tax Collection", 107-8.

⁵ Rosemary O'Day, The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession: 1558-1642, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981); Margaret Bowker, The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland: 1521-1547, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Claire Cross, "The Incomes of the Provincial Urban Clergy, 1520-1645" in Princes and Paupers in the English Church, 1500-1800, ed. Rosemary O'Day and Felicity Heal, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981).

⁶ G.R. Elton, The Tudor Revolution in Government, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953); J.D. Alsop, "Thomas Argall, Administrator of Ecclesiastical Affairs in Tudor Church and State", Recusant History 15 (1980): 227-238; Alsop, "The Structure of Early Tudor Finance, c. 1509-1558" in Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration, ed. C. Coleman and D. Starkey, 135-62 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

⁷ Walter C. Richardson, Tudor Chamber Administration: 1485-1547, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952); and Richardson, History of the Court of Augmentations: 1536-1554, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press).

⁸ PRO SPI0/16,

⁹ PRO SPI2/39/13, an account of debts in the First Fruits Office over 20: PRO E341/II (1604-52).

¹⁰ BL Lansdowne MS 156, fos. 137-39v, 149-50 (Gostwick); fos. 147, 155 (Carewe).

CHAPTER I:
ADMINISTRATION OF FIRST FRUITS

When Henry VIII determined in 1535 to reserve for the Crown all first fruits and clerical tenths, he created a valuable source of revenue. While the resulting royal income declined over the succeeding century, first fruits nonetheless represented a steady source of royal income. To handle this new wealth an administrative structure developed. Initially outside of any formal body, first fruits were placed, after 1540, under the control of an independent revenue court, the Court of First Fruits and Tenths. With the administrative restructuring of 1554, the Court was abolished and first fruits handled instead by a semi-autonomous department within the reorganized Exchequer, the Office of First Fruits. This chapter will examine how the administration of first fruits evolved. It is a case study in the administration of post-Reformation ecclesiastical revenue and a necessary context for a study of the tax's impact on the Tudor and early Stuart clergy.

First fruits had a lengthy history in England before 1535. As one form of annates, they had been collected by both the Papacy and the Crown, although their value was usually no more than half of one year's income from the benefice concerned. The fructus primi anni were originally paid by a clerical incumbent to the grantor of the living, upon taking up the benefice. From the eleventh century onwards, some prelates were appropriating part of the first year's income from their clergy. In 1306 Clement V reserved for the Papacy the first fruits from all benefices in England for a period of three years; subsequently his successor, John XXII, in 1326, permanently reserved all annates, including first

fruits, to the Papacy.¹ Benefices valued at less than twenty-four ducats were exempt, as were those under lay patronage. Collectors appointed by the Papacy compounded with the clergy, who paid in installments. In the period 1485 to 1534 annates paid to the Papacy were approximately £4,800 per annum (a sum which included all forms of annates -- a term which covered various papal taxes including the fructus primi anni).² Some exceptions existed. The clergy of the diocese of Norwich paid first fruits instead to their diocesan bishop, estimated to total £200 per annum. The archdeacons were responsible for obtaining bonds from their clergy, who were given up to four years in which to pay, in semi-annual installments.³ As was to be the case after 1535, arrears were a continual problem. There were complaints that, as a result of incomplete or inaccurate lists of debtors, many debts were uncollectible.⁴

Royal attitudes towards the collection of first fruits were frequently hostile to the papal involvement in England, yet on occasion the Crown benefited directly from papal grants of first fruits to be collected during specific periods. For example, in 1256 Henry III received a grant of all annates, rents, fruits and revenues for a period of five years.⁵ In general, however, papal tax collections served as a point of conflict between Crown and Papacy. Shortly after Clement V's reservation of annates, their collection in England was denounced by the Parliament of Carlisle (1307). Later, Edward III took steps to limit the activities of the papal collectors in England. In a sharp letter addressed to Hugh Pellegrino, the papal nuncio and collector, the King demanded that collections cease: "Nos igitur, hujusmodi Praejudico, Damno, Depessio, et depauperationi praecavere, ac hujusmodi exactiones novas et insolitas, in nostri et dicti Regni nostri Praejudium machinatas, volentes restringere . . ." ⁶ Both Richard II and

Henry IV likewise prohibited the levying of papal taxes within England, expressing concern that these collections were removing wealth from the kingdom and threatening the position of the Crown.

There can be no doubt that the burden of post-Reformation first fruits was far greater than that of previous papal taxation. Before the Reformation combined royal and papal taxation (including annates and clerical subsidies) had been less than £18,000 per annum, while between 1535 and 1547 the church was paying approximately £47,000 per annum to Henry VIII's state. For the parochial clergy the transfer of taxation to the Crown was "little less than a fiscal catastrophe".⁷ The Non-juror Jeremy Collier described the shift in financial arrangements in his 1708 Ecclesiastical History: "As to England, the encroachment of the Court of Rome went on, till the reign of Henry VIII. And even tho' the person was chang'd, the burthen continued, and the church had only the liberty of paying her money to another hand."⁸ This change, ironically, was instituted at least partially at the behest of the clergy themselves, who petitioned in the Canterbury convocation in 1534 to Henry to free them from the burden of papal taxation. In the process, however, members of the clergy found themselves the victims of a strong administration within the realm which sought to increase clerical taxation and make it a significant source of royal income.

Henry VIII, as part of his struggle with the Papacy, had forbidden payment of annates to Rome in 1534. If the clergy believed, however, that this tax relief was to be permanent, they were soon disabused of that thought. During the course of the year, Henry moved to collect the clerical taxes for himself with the passage in November 1534 of an Act concerning the Payment of First Fruits, the preamble of which justified the royal taxation:

For asmoche as it is and of verie dutie ought to be the naturall inclination of all good people . . . considering what greate excessyve and inestimable charges his Highness hath heretofore benne at and systeyned by the by the space of five and twenty hole yeres and also daily susteyne the . . . which cannot be susteyned and borne without some honorable provycion and remedy be founde, provided and ordeyned for mayntenaunce thereof . . .⁹

Under the terms of the statute all benefices were to be valued by commissioners specially appointed for this purpose, and the valuations (compiled in the Valor Ecclesiasticus of 1535) used to determine obligations for first fruits, beginning in 1535. The penalty for evasion was fixed at double the value of first fruits owed. All first fruits previously paid to the Bishop of Norwich, the Archdeacon of Richmond, and any others were abolished. The same act also established the payment of annual clerical tenths by all beneficed clergy. These were set at one-tenth of the valuations contained in the Valor, and were to be collected and forwarded to the Crown by the bishops. As a concession, benefices valued at under eight marks per annum were freed from the obligation of paying first fruits during the first three years after 1535. Under the terms of the original statute, however, the first fruits were equal to the full value of the living. Moreover, the tenth was levied in addition to the charge for first fruits, even for the first years, when the entire value of the living went to the Crown. This situation was rectified by an act of Parliament in 1536, when the sum owed for first fruits was fixed at the value of the living, less the annual tenth.¹⁰ It seems likely that the original double charge was simply an oversight, since it was corrected almost immediately.

There was substantial opposition to royal collection of first fruits during the period following passage of the 1534 statute. The clergy had previously complained that papal annates led to the impoverishment of bishops,

especially if they died soon after entering a see, that they diverted money from the upkeep of church property and, most boldly, that they approached simony.¹¹ The Crown, not surprisingly, had little interest in clerical concerns. After the clergy had petitioned Henry VIII in 1534 for relief from papal annates, their concerns were quietly ignored. Strype suggests a likely reason for the parliamentary silence on clerical complaints: "and therefore, I suppose, these were not thought fit to be inserted into the Act it being intended not wholly to take away the payment of them (annates), but to divert them from another channel, to wit from the Pope to the King."¹² Soon, however others were voicing opposition to royal first fruits.

In the north of England the ecclesiastical revolution of the 1530s was highly unpopular, and collection of first fruits particularly so. During the Lincolnshire Rising and the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536 hostility towards clerical taxation was openly expressed. One of the rebel leaders, Robert Aske, denounced first fruits on several grounds. The statute had not secured the consent of the York convocation (having been passed by Parliament and approved at the concurrent Canterbury convocation), and in order to meet demands for payment money was being sent out of the North, causing shortages of coin. Aske and others protested that the Church was being impoverished and irreparably damaged by the demands of the Crown, and the Statute of First Fruits was a principal cause.¹³ Indeed, the parson of Conisholm, Lincolnshire, went even further, declaring that "they will deprive us of our benefices because they would have the first fruits, but rather than I will pay the first fruits again I had liever lose benefice and all".¹⁴ Nor were such sentiments confined to the North. In November 1538 a clerk at Chichester Cathedral, George Crofts, described the

Statute of First Fruits as "a very uncharitable law" and "a grievous joyke".¹⁵ The boldest attack on first fruits, however, came in a sermon preached at Paul's Cross on 16 January 1547 by John Feckenham, a chaplain to John Bonner, Bishop of London. Later under Queen Mary, Feckenham helped reestablish the old order as Abbot of Westminster, and carried his opposition to reformed theology and royal control over the church into exile in 1559. In 1547 he criticized recent innovations in the English Church, singling out for special attention the collection of first fruits. The statute made it nearly impossible for clergy to survive in their first year in a benefice: "I pray to look if there be any proviso how the priests shall live for that year."¹⁶ It is clear that opposition to first fruits was strong in the early years, both from clergy and from elements within the laity, like Robert Aske, who saw in the extension of royal taxation to the clergy yet another attack upon the old faith.

With respect to administration, collection of this new revenue was the responsibility of the existing administration of the Lord Chancellor. The central role was played by the Master of the Rolls, Thomas Cromwell. Before collections actually began, on 7 May 1535, John Gostwick, a personal servant of Cromwell, was appointed treasurer and receiver-general of first fruits at a salary of £100 per annum, a sum which was soon increased to £300 per annum.¹⁷ Until the establishment of the Court of First Fruits and Tenths in 1540, Gostwick and his assistant John Hales (appointed clerk of first fruits and tenths in 1537) were responsible for the collection and disbursement of all clerical taxation. During the first five years (1536-40) compositions for first fruits were taken by various officials, including the Lord Chancellor, Thomas Audley, the new Master of the Rolls, Christopher Hales, John Hales, and even Cromwell himself. In all

cases monies collected were turned over to Gostwick. This system enabled Cromwell to maintain control over these taxes through his servant Gostwick, separate from the Exchequer and the other revenue departments.¹⁸

The income from first fruits was treated as ordinary revenue by the Crown. Periodically the monies on hand were delivered to the Cofferer of the King's Household, to defray routine household expense. In 1536 first fruits and clerical tenths so transferred amounted to the very considerable sum of £60,000. In addition, warrants from the Privy Council were used to authorize direct payments from the treasurer of First Fruits for miscellaneous expenses, including royal rewards, construction of fortifications, and the costs of diplomatic missions.¹⁹ In Edward VI's reign, Lady Anne of Cleves, the party to Henry VIII's annulled fourth marriage, received an annuity of £116 from the Court.²⁰ In the financial year ending in Michaelmas 1551, out of a total income within the Court of First Fruits and Tenths of £23,564 (of which first fruits comprised £8,522), £956 was paid in internal administrative expenses, £1,577 went to pay the salaries of various law officers, while £19,865 (84%) was assigned to the Cofferer for the regular expenses of the sovereign's household.²¹

Gostwick proved an active administrator and collector, responsible for collecting outstanding debts and paying out monies as directed. Clearly zealous in pursuing debtors, Gostwick was kept busy in London, pursuing those who refused or were unable to pay. On 31 January 1538 the Abbot of St. Alban's wrote to Cromwell requesting that he intervene with Gostwick in the matter of the Abbot's first fruits. Earlier that day the Abbot had offered a partial payment of £300, but the treasurer demanded the full first payment and threatened to have him imprisoned. The incumbent of a poor benefice, having paid half of the £9

owed for first fruits, looked to Cromwell for assistance in obtaining a reprieve from Gostwick's insistent demands for the remainder.²² Gostwick's rigorous pursuit of debtors is understandable in view of the difficulties already posed in the mid 1530s by arrears, and his complaints to Cromwell about the many "greedy persons" who required payment out of first fruits revenue betray a certain frustration.²³ That Cromwell used Gostwick to maintain direct control over ecclesiastical revenue is clear, and Gostwick depended upon him for support and backing.²⁴

With Cromwell's fall in 1540 the collection of clerical taxes was reorganized and the administrative structure regularized. The statute establishing a separate financial court, or department, with responsibility for ecclesiastical taxation, the Court of First Fruits and Tenths, was approved in the summer of 1540 and the Court began operations in November. Modelled on the Duchy of Lancaster, the Court was to be independent of the Exchequer, with responsibility for all ecclesiastical revenue, excluding temporalities and the ex-monastic land revenues handled by the reorganized Court of Augmentations and the Duchy. First Fruits and Tenths was a proper court of record. The establishment of the Court helped ensure that no single, all-powerful financial body was created, and that the influence of both the Household and the Exchequer were thereby limited. It was also representative of the administrative mindset which treated royal revenue as a collection of distinct units, not a united whole.²⁵

The Chancellor of the new Court for its entire duration was Sir John Baker, although his influence in day-to-day administration appears to have been limited. The second office, the treasurership, was granted to Gostwick, thus

ensuring continuity. Gostwick held the post until his death in April 1545. The third principal officer was the Attorney, John Carell, a member of a prominent Catholic Sussex family. Carell, who served until June 1543, had also acted as Attorney-General of the Duchy of Lancaster prior to his appointment to First Fruits and Tenths. While Gostwick had been actively collecting and taking compositions for first fruits before 1540, his successors as Treasurer appear to have functioned primarily as supervisors. Certainly, Wimonde Carewe (1545-49) and William Petre (1549-54) delegated responsibility to their subordinates.²⁶

The Clerk and the Keeper of the Records of the Court were the two individuals most active in the daily administration of first fruits. The clerkship was held first by Alexander Courthorpe, and following his death in early 1542 it was given to Thomas Godfrey. The post of Keeper of the Records was held by Thomas Argall (appointed officially in 1542, but already active by late 1540). Together Godfrey and Argall (both personal servants of the Chancellor, John Baker) were responsible for taking compositions, receiving revenue and keeping the records of the court, with very little supervision from the Chancellor. With the reestablishment of first fruits in 1554 as a department within the enlarged Exchequer, Argall and Godfrey served jointly as Remembrancers, or supervisors, of first fruits and tenths. Argall held his position until his death in 1563; Godfrey continued on alone until his in 1578. As with the earlier appointment of Gostwick as Treasurer of the Court in 1540, Godfrey and Argall were to provide a measure of continuity during a period of administrative change and upheaval. In addition to the officers outlined, the Court was served by two auditors, a messenger and an usher. (see Appendix A).²⁷

While most business was conducted by officers of the Court in London,

a small number (less than 10%) of the compositions were handled by agents in York. York occupied an important position as an administrative centre and as the seat of both the Council of the North and of the ecclesiastical province of York.²⁸ Even before the establishment of the Court in 1540, Cromwell utilized the York notary William Blitheman in a number of administrative capacities. Blitheman cooperated with other royal agents, including the MP George Lawson, in surveying monastic lands in the North, and in April 1537 was appointed a receiver for the Court of Augmentations, a post he held until his death in January 1544.²⁹ As well as purchasing and disposing of monastic lands, Blitheman acted as a deputy to John Gostwick, the Treasurer of First Fruits. As early as 1535 Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, wrote to Cromwell urging that some arrangements be made for taking bonds for first fruits in the North: "It were also good that some in these parts had authority to take bonds: because many things might fall that would put the party to as much charge to ride up to London, as the fruits would amount to."³⁰ Blitheman and his successors were delegated to undertake this task at York. In August 1538, for example, Blitheman sent Gostwick £108 for first fruits, along with 300 marks owing to the Court of Augmentations. Blitheman's activities as a collector of clerical taxes and agent for Cromwell gained him the open hostility of many. At the time of the Pilgrimage of Grace his country house was attacked, and one of the government's prisoners later wrote to Cromwell, protesting his loyalty and claiming that he himself "was in danger of death as a traitor to the Commons, because he helped to speed Mr. Blitheman in those parts . . ."³¹ Blitheman's active service on behalf of the government clearly made him unpopular, and this is not surprising given the hostility expressed in the North towards the

dissolution of monastic foundations and the collection of first fruits.

With Blitheman's death, responsibility for collection of first fruits passed to a York haberdasher, Richard Goldthorpe. Goldthorpe had previously acted as an agent for Robert Holgate, Archbishop of York and President of the Council of the North. Like his predecessor he was also active in purchasing former monastic lands both in York and outside the city.³² During 1544 Goldthorpe took a total of 91 obligations for compositions for first fruits, as well as £60 in ready money. By 1547 a third individual, Humphrey Colwich, was acting as receiver, when he took bonds for 116 obligations.³³ Goldthorpe nevertheless remained an important figure in York, representing the city as an MP in 1559, the year before his death. In 1560 his estate was estimated to be worth £2,460.³⁴ It is not at present clear whether the office at York continued to function after 1547, and analysis of composition books from the mid-seventeenth century (1639-51) leaves the issue in doubt. As a regional centre for the collection of first fruits York was unique, a reflection of its role as an administrative centre for the North.

The report of the royal commission of 1552 on the state of the Crown's finances, which helped pave the way for a reorganization of the revenue courts, provides some insights into the operations of the Court of First Fruits and Tenths shortly before its termination. William Petre, the Treasurer of the Court, was a member of the commission, but did not sign the final report.³⁵ As well as providing a statement of receipts and payments in the Court for the year ending at Michaelmas 1551, the report pointed out perceived weaknesses in administration. These focussed on a lack of supervision of the clerk's activities by the Chancellor. There was no control to ensure that all composition bonds

taken by the clerk were delivered to the Treasurer, and there was as yet no systematic comparison of the compositions with the Valor by the auditors to ensure that the valuations were accurate. While the Treasurer, Petre, was never accused of speculation, it was recommended that in future he provide security for the substantial sums of Crown money in his formal custody, for at the time no bond was required to safeguard the Crown in the event of personal bankruptcy or malfeasance. All the foregoing were in the nature of basic safeguards, for the commission had uncovered no evidence of wrong-doing. One fundamental problem, however, was uncovered. In the commission's view, Chancellor Baker was neglecting his responsibilities, and as a result numerous sureties lacked sufficient wealth to safeguard the Crown against defaulting clerical debtors. All clergy below the dignity of a bishop, when compounding for first fruits, had to find personal sureties who would guarantee payments in the case of default. The process was meaningless if these sureties were not individuals of adequate means. This situation in turn produced "desperate arrears" (those which, because of the insufficiency of the principal and the sureties, could not be collected). As we will see in Chapter III, these constituted a major preoccupation of government administration in the early 1550s. The commission's concern with retrenchment as the principal means of reform is clear in the report's critical emphasis upon the unapproved growth of fees for Court officers.³⁶

The report of the royal commission of 1552 coincided with the beginning of the end for the Court of First Fruits and Tithes. By October 1552 (even before the delivery of the report) reorganization of the financial courts was being considered by the government. Even as certain specific recommendations, like the bonding of officers, were being implemented in 1552-53, the

amalgamation of both First Fruits and Tenths and Augmentations was already being planned.³⁷ On 23 January 1554 the Court was dissolved, and the following day the duties of the former Court were annexed to the Exchequer. The senior officers received pensions equivalent to their full salaries (the generosity of the provision for Baker and Petre in particular raises serious doubts about the effectiveness of restructuring as a means of retrenchment), while a new Office of First Fruits and Tenths was created in the Exchequer of Audit.³⁸ The Remembrancer of First Fruits was responsible for keeping the records of the dissolved Court, taking compositions, collecting the money for first fruits and paying receipts into the Exchequer of Receipt, where a specific teller frequently was designated to receive and disburse this ecclesiastical revenue. The Office of First Fruits and Tenths, under Argall and Godfrey, and their successors, remained a separate, self-contained department within the Exchequer until 1838.³⁹

The death of Edward VI did not interrupt the dismantlement of the Court of First Fruits and Tenths. While Mary I, encouraged by Cardinal Pole, was anxious to restore first fruits to the Church, her ministers were reluctant to surrender the revenue (approximately £25,000 per annum for first fruits and clerical tenths.)⁴⁰ In November 1555 it was intended that first fruits should be returned to the Papacy, but on 23 November a new bill passed the Lords which made no mention of such plans. Lay opposition to the elimination of royal first fruits, based on fears that such a move might signal the beginning of a general restoration of former church property, made careful parliamentary management essential. Pole summoned Privy Councillors who were members of the House of Commons to encourage them to obtain speedy passage of the bill.⁴¹ On 3

December, on a division the Commons approved the first fruits bill, despite substantial opposition (193 in favour, 126 opposed). In an attempt to ensure approval in the lower house, the doors of the chamber were locked to prevent any further opponents from entering. With the passage of the 1555 Act for the Extinguishment of First Fruits (2 and 3 Philip and Mary, c.4) first fruits henceforth were to be paid to the bishops, not the Crown. The revenue was to be used to pay ex-monastic pensions, hitherto the responsibility of the Crown, and to augment the poorest livings. In time, the ex-monastic pensions would eventually virtually disappear, and the long-term benefit to the English church could have been considerable. There is some evidence that by 1558 this plan was beginning to bear fruit in the improvement of clerical incomes.⁴²

During Mary's reign compositions for first fruits continued, at least until the enactment of the 1555 statute, although the general practice appears to have been to pardon most first fruits owed. Richard Smith, a royal chaplain and incumbent of St. Dunstan-in-the-East, London, and Aston Clynton, Buckinghamshire, neither paid his first fruits nor compounded for them. In April 1555, however, he was granted a pardon, freed from any penalty and granted the two livings without further payment.⁴³ Several bishops and a royal chaplain were freed as well, all before the passage of the 1555 statute. Nor were grants of remission before 1555 confined to favoured clergy only - Francis Mallet, governor of the Hospital of St. Katherine-the-Virgin, London, was excused from payment since the monies (over £ 314) were reportedly needed to support the inmates.⁴⁴ At the same time that new first fruits due were being remitted, Mary's government was active in settling accounts and collecting arrears from the abolished Court. As late as 1557 the widow of Wimonde Carewe, the second

Treasurer of the Court, was attempting to settle her husband's accounts, and the extinguishment of first fruits did not extend to arrears, which the statute specifically retained to the use of the Crown.⁴⁵ The Exchequer office therefore remained in existence, although with a greatly reduced scope.

Upon her accession in November 1558, Elizabeth wasted little time in recovering the revenue which her sister had given to the Church. On 3 January 1559 letters were sent to all bishops and cathedral chapters to ensure that first fruits and tenths would be collected under the existing administration (ie. by royal collectors or those appointed by Cardinal Pole) and on 30 January a bill restoring first fruits to the Crown was introduced into Parliament. In spite of opposition from the Marian bishops and from John Feckenham, Abbot of Westminster, the legislation quickly passed through the House of Lords, and then, with a number of amendments, through the Commons.⁴⁶ The Statute (1 Elizabeth I, c.4) stressed the Crown's need for clerical revenue, in light of the "grete disherison and decaye comitted and doone to the Crowne and Estate Royall". The Act revived all previous statutes governing first fruits, excluding that which established the Court in 1540. Hospitals, schools and the universities were now also to be exempt. The act also established the proportion of first fruits owed should the incumbent die within the first two years following collation to a benefice (one quarter for each half year following collation).⁴⁷

Following the death of Thomas Argall in 1563, the Office of First Fruits and Tenths was invariably under the supervision of a single Remembrancer. The best known of these was the Queen's favourite Christopher Hatton, who received the post in February 1570. Hatton's appointment marked the beginning of a movement away from professional administrators towards courtly sinecurists.

Courtiers were increasingly attracted to all financial offices in the Crown's gift by the opportunities provided for private exploitation. At his death in 1591 Hatton owed the Crown the very sizeable sum of £42,139 for as yet unaccounted for receipts within his office.⁴⁸ Hatton's successor, Edward Stafford, left his responsibilities to be carried out by a deputy, John Taylor, who himself profited from his post in the financial administration during the late 1590s.⁴⁹ Clerical taxation continued to provide a substantial income to the Crown, although first fruits by the mid-1590s had declined to an average of approximately £7,500 per annum. As a source of revenue clerical taxes compared unfavourably to yields of lay taxation, yet clerical subsidies, tenths and first fruits still produced approximately £35,000 per annum towards the end of Elizabeth's reign (see Appendix C).

In comparison to the period 1535–60 the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I saw little changes in administration or procedure. In 1585 a scheme was put forward to farm out the first fruits and tenths. Revenue farming permitted private individuals (frequently courtiers) to rent from the Crown, for a fixed amount, the right to collect certain taxes for their own profit. It is impossible to say how seriously the idea of farming first fruits was considered, but it prompted a memorial from the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, denouncing the plan. In his submission to Lord Treasurer Burghley, the archbishop argued that the farming out of ecclesiastical taxation would lead to great hardship. The idea of permitting one or two individuals to collect the money, in place of the Crown, for their personal profit, was particularly objectionable: "it is worth consideration, whether it be convenient to benefite two or three by the common calamitie of soo many, being so necessarie a part of

this church and Commonweale".⁵⁰ In the end, Whitgift's intervention carried the day, and the scheme proceeded no farther. The strongest argument, for Whitgift, was that the loss of first fruits would be a blow to royal control of the church - a powerful reason, in light of the official attacks on Puritans in the 1580s:

It would also be considered, whether it be not the meaning of the preachers of this suite or some others moving them thereunto, to ring such of the Clergie as pleaseth them into bandage and awe, . . . that they dare not displeaseth them, but be enforced rather to soothe them in all things. Whereby it may come to passe, that the waywarder sorte shall be greatly to be feared . . . that they which could not prevayle in Parliament may this way be revenged.⁵¹

Whitgift raised the fear that control over first fruits might prove a useful weapon for theological reform in the hands of those who had failed to achieve their aims through appeals within Parliament.

Under James there was little change from the Elizabethan organization of the First Fruits Office. The principal figure in the administration was Thomas Watson, an experienced administrator who had served in the royal administration in Ireland before being appointed Receiver of First Fruits in April 1605 (the teller responsible for first fruits). Following Watson's death in 1621, during the process of settling up his accounts, an account of receipts and expenditures was prepared by one of the First Fruits clerks, which clearly shows the means by which monies were disbursed: some by Council warrants, some on Watson's own authority for specific projects, and numerous sums to the royal Privy Purse, for general Household costs. The general principles of payment by warrants for specific purposes and payments of cash to the royal Household had not changed significantly from the time of Gostwick.⁵²

With the Civil War of the 1640s, the Office experienced dislocation. Although the majority of the staff and records remained in London, at the service of Parliament, some officials did go to the royalist centre at Oxford when summoned by the King in December 1642. These apparently included Henry Knollys, appointed Receiver of First Fruits in 1633, for the composition books kept in London during the 1640s indicate that payments were made by some clergy to Knollys at Oxford.⁵³ An Exchequer office was certainly established in February 1643 in Oxford, but without the records from London financial administration must have been difficult. Aylmer, in his study of the early Stuart civil service, suggests that most officials likely stayed in London because to leave would have represented the 'positive step', whereas staying in the city was easier.⁵⁴ Guards were posted by Parliament on the road to Oxford to prevent government records from being transported to the royalist headquarters. Besides Knollys, one of the First Fruits clerks, Matthias Presse, travelled to Oxford, where he died in 1643. His widow petitioned to have the parliamentary sequestration of his estates revoked, but without success: clear evidence of Parliament's attitude towards members of the royalist administration. A second clerk, Nicholas Southcott, did not leave London permanently but was accused of sending a horse and arms to the royal garrison at Winchester, and of visiting there frequently. He was assessed £200 in penalty by Parliament, which he did not pay.⁵⁵ Thus, some clerical taxation continued to be paid to the King, but the revenue was far less than before 1643. In the first year at Oxford clerical tenths totalled £2,200, and total Crown income received has been estimated at 10% of pre-war levels, although comprehensive records do not survive.⁵⁶

The First Fruits Office in London came under the control of Parliament

and in October 1643 Lawrence Swetnam, an Exchequer teller, was appointed Receiver of First Fruits and Tenths. He held the office until his death in July 1648. Swetnam was an active parliamentary administrator, acting as receiver of revenue from the wine license (another post previously held by a royalist who had fled to Oxford).⁵⁷ John Wheeler, previously a clerk in the Office, succeeded Swetnam by 1650. The other principal active official, Thomas Baker, served as deputy Remembrancer, submitting the accounts in 1652 in place of the Remembrancer Joseph Derby. Responsibility for disbursement of the first fruits funds passed under the Commonwealth to the Trustees for the Maintenance of Ministers, to pay the heads of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges, and to augment some poorer livings.⁵⁸ An attempt in 1648 to abolish first fruits was unsuccessful; the financial demands upon the parliamentary government made abolition impossible.⁵⁹

Relations between the First Fruits Office and the Trustees for the Maintenance of Ministers deteriorated during the mid 1650s as each struggled for control over all clerical tax revenue. The battle for control erupted between the Trustees and the deputy Remembrancer and de facto head of the Office, Thomas Baker. Baker had been a clerk as early as 1641 and by the 1650s seems to have been conducting most Office business. His familiarity with ecclesiastical revenue led to his consultation by the Committee for the Advance of Money in July 1654 concerning a proposal to collect synodals and other episcopal dues which had fallen into abeyance a decade earlier.⁶⁰ The struggle for jurisdiction came to a head in late 1655 when the Trustees for the Maintenance of Ministers took steps to prevent payments being made to the First Fruits office, and instead attempted to take charge of the revenue themselves. This prompted Baker to

distribute a printed sheet contradicting the position of the Trustees, informing the clergy that the First Fruit Office (and Baker) was still entitled to collect the revenues (see illustration overleaf). Payment to any others, including the Trustees, would leave the party open to prosecution in the Exchequer.⁶¹ Not surprisingly, the Trustees attempted to obtain the records of the Office from Baker. They prosecuted him in the Exchequer, demanding monies collected for first fruits, as well as ledgers and bonds (the latter of especial significance, since they enabled collection), and secured judgement against him. They were, however, unable to execute this judgement. As a consequence they petitioned the Protector on 6 May 1656, protesting that Baker:

has concealed himself, and he prints and publishes scandalous papers to obstruct us in the receipt of this revenue, and to affright ministers from payment of their first fruits to us. Also by having bonds in his hands, he procures first fruits to be paid to him. Thus the heads of the universities, to whom they are chiefly reserved, cannot receive their augmentation.⁶²

Action was immediate. On the same day, by order of the Council, the First Fruits Office was searched and the books, bonds and other records were seized. Baker immediately petitioned to have his personal papers necessary for this defense returned to him, requesting that the Council rather than the Trustees be given control of the entire matter until jurisdiction was decided. Referees were appointed, and on 26 June they certified that all private papers had been returned and that the first fruits documents had been handed over to the Remembrancer James Rogers, appointed by the Trustees.⁶³ While it seems that in the end Baker lost control to the Trustees, he was still petitioning in April 1658, and an account from the First Fruits Office in 1659 still listed over £200 allegedly lost by Baker's withholding of some bonds.⁶⁴ The battle for control

Thomason 669.f.20 (18)

Illustration: BL Thomason Tracts 669 fo.20(18).



Explained

*A page from the first fruits office about
paying of first fruits*



Whereas a printed paper was lately put forth in the names of some of the Trustees for Ministers maintenance, wherein amongst other things they take upon them without warrant to discharge all Incumbents from whom any First-fruits are due, from paying the same unto

Mr. Thomas Baker at the First-fruits Office in the Strand in the County of Middlesex, These are to give notice to all persons concernd, that they are notwithstanding to apply themselves to the accustomed place and persons, for dispatch of all businesses which have or do belong to the said Office, it being an Office established by several Acts of Parliament never yet repealed nor altered by the present or any former Government, and that they pay their monies there, where their securities remain, which shall be delivered up to them upon payment of the same, and without which they can no way be legally discharged or secured by any other persons upon any pretence whatsoever, nor free themselves from the procefs of the Court of Exchequer, which in discharge of the Officers duty must be issued, to bring all persons concerned to conformity in payment of the States Revenew.

Dated at the First-fruits Office aforesaid, the Eighteenth day of November 1655:



Thomas Baker:

of administration was won by the Trustees, with the support of the Council, but the resulting confusion was clearly not completely resolved by 1660. The Civil War and the intragovernmental quarrels undoubtedly produced considerable disruption and consequent decline in revenue. As we shall see in Chapter III, the problem of arrears was very pronounced in this period.

Following the Restoration the collection of first fruits continued although the administration apparently was lax and corruption increased. The annual yield was only £5,000 to £6,000, and arrears remained a serious problem. In 1682 the solicitor for the excise, John Lawrence, was appointed to prosecute arrears, but without much success.⁶⁵ By this time the revenue raised principally provided pensions for favourites and illegitimate royal offspring. Least popular with the clergy was the introduction of a fifth bond in addition to the four installment bonds, by which they agreed to pay any difference between the Valor valuation and the true income of the living. Since the Valor Ecclesiasticus had been compiled in 1535, the true income of many livings had increased up to six times; as a consequence the first fruits paid by many clergy in the mid to late seventeenth century bore no relation to the true income of their benefices. The system did not have the desired effect of increasing revenue, however, since it was not followed through; a complete revaluation of all livings on the scale of the Valor was really needed but never achieved. A further objection of many clergy was the obligation to pay the administrative fees owed for four installments, even if the clergyman chose to pay the full value as a single payment.⁶⁶

Under Queen Anne reform of the by now long outmoded system began in earnest. Under the scheme known as Queen Anne's Bounty the first fruits

income was surrendered to commissioners who used this revenue exclusively to augment poorer livings. As well, all livings valued at less than £50 were exempt from the payment of first fruits. In 1710, 5,597 of the estimated 10,000 livings in England and Wales fell below this threshold, so this was a reform of considerable consequence. Moreover the minimum value was gradually realised in succeeding years.⁶⁷ First fruits thus ceased to be a general tax on all beneficed clergy, as it was levied on fewer and fewer livings. Mary's government in the 1550s had attempted to use clerical taxes to improve the position of the poorer clergy, but no concrete results survived 1559. During the Interregnum the revenues again were used to augment some clerical stipends, but the Restoration destroyed this scheme. Queen Anne's Bounty provided a more permanent solution, and under the commissioners the revenues were finally applied to the church. The First Fruits Office survived, as did the sinecure post of Remembrancer, until 1838; the Ecclesiastical Commissioners at last abolished first fruits themselves in 1926.⁶⁸

We have seen, therefore, that post-Reformation first fruits at first made a significant contribution to royal coffers. Revenue declined sharply in the century after 1535, from a high of £21,000 in 1536 to an average of less than £6,000 per annum under James I and Charles I (see Appendices B, C and D). Much of this decline must be attributed to the seizure of monastic and chantry wealth by Henry VIII and his son Edward VI. While a short term economic windfall for the Crown, elimination of the many livings connected with monasteries and chantries led to a noticeable decline in future first fruits revenue. The decline in clerical taxation was compounded by inflation, which further decreased the value of first fruits income for the Crown. The administration of first fruits, however, changed little. Up to 1554 under Gostwick and the Court of First Fruits

it maintained a distinct identity and some measure of autonomy. There appears to have been little attempt, apart from those under Mary and during the 1650s, to use the revenue gathered for any specific ecclesiastical purpose. Administration was centred in London, with a provincial office of modest size and business at York, and during the 1640s a rival office at Oxford. The arrangements for compositions, bonds and sureties were generally the responsibility of relatively low-level clerical staff.

Notes: Chapter I

¹ William E. Lunt, Papal Revenue in the Middle Ages, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), I, 94-5.

² Ibid., 96-7; R.N. Swanson, Church and Society in Late Medieval England, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 223.

³ Peter Heath, The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 43.

⁴ Lunt, Papal Revenue, II, 328; Lunt, Financial Relations of the Papacy with England: 1327-1534, (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1962), 373-4.

⁵ Lunt, Papal Revenue, II, 317.

⁶ (Translation) "We therefore, to guard against this sort of injury, harm, oppression and impoverishment, and wishing to restrain these new and strange charges, which contrive to our injury in our realm . . ." Letter dated at Hereford, 20 January 1353, printed in Jeremy Collier, An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain, (London: Samuel Keble and Benjamin Tooke, 1708), vol. I, xvi.

⁷ J.J. Scarisbrick, "Clerical Taxation in England: 1485-1547", Journal of Ecclesiastical History II (1960): 53-3; For medieval lay attitudes to first fruits see W.A. Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 73.

⁸ Collier, Ecclesiastical History, I, 503.

⁹ 26 Henry VIII, c.3 (SR III, 493-99). For an interpretation of this preamble see Stanford E. Lehmborg, The Reformation Parliament: 1529-1536, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 206.

¹⁰ 27 Henry VIII, c.8 (SR III, 537-38); see also Lehmborg, Reformation Parliament, 229.

¹¹ John Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822), 222. I can find no later uses of the argument that first fruits or annates amounted to simony.

¹² Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, I, 222.

¹³ LP XII, i, no.406; M.H. Dodds and R. Dodds, The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Exeter Conspiracy, (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1971), 351.

¹⁴ LP XII, i, no.227: See also Margaret Bowker, The Henrician Reformation: the Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland: 1521-1547, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 153.

- ¹⁵ LP XIII, ii, no.315.
- ¹⁶ LP XXI, ii, no.371: Susan Brigden, London and the Reformation, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1989), 379, 576-7.
- ¹⁷ Lisle Letters, No.349 (Vol. II, 436); G.R. Elton, The Tudor Revolution in Government, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 191.
- ¹⁸ Elton, Tudor Revolution, 197-201.
- ¹⁹ APC, II, 187 (24 April 1548); II, 282 (May 1549); II, 419 (27 Mar. 1550).
- ²⁰ APC, III, 425 (4 May 1550); Walter C. Richardson, ed. Report of the Royal Commission of 1552, (Morgantown: University of West Virginia Press, 1974), 110.
- ²¹ Richardson, Report, 108-110; D. Starkey, "Court and Government" in Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration, ed. C. Coleman and D. Starkey, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 45.
- ²² LP XIII, i, no.182 (31 January 1538); XII, no.1138 (28 November 1537).
- ²³ Gostwick to Cromwell, 1 December 1536. LP XI, no.1220.
- ²⁴ Elton, Tudor Revolution, 195.
- ²⁵ J.D. Alsop, "The Structure of Early Tudor Finance, c.1509-1558" in Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration, ed. C. Coleman and D. Starkey, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 152, 160.
- ²⁶ For Petre, see Frederick G. Emmisson, Tudor Secretary: Sir William Petre at Court and Home, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961; for Carell see Roger B. Manning, Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), 250.
- ²⁷ For Argall, see James D. Alsop, "Thomas Argall, Administrator of Ecclesiastical Affairs in the Tudor Church and State", Recusant History 15 (1980): 227-38; see also Richardson, Report, 108-9.
- ²⁸ For an examination of York's role as an administrative centre, see D.M. Palliser, Tudor York, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).
- ²⁹ Register of Cuthbert Tunstall, 37 (29 August 1531); For Blitheman's activities as a commissioner for monastic lands, see LP XIII, i, no.434; XIII, ii, no.222; XIII, ii, no.1172; as a receiver for the Court of Augmentations see LP XIII, i, no.573; see also LP XIX, i, no.1036 (21 January 1544).

³⁰ Letter dated 20 July 1535, Bishop of Durham (Cuthbert Tunstall) to Cromwell, printed in Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, I, 220.

³¹ Blitheman to Cromwell, 24 August 1538, LP XIII, ii, no.180; also 23 May 1537, LP XII, i, no.1264; Petition of John Dakyn to Cromwell, LP XII, i, no.788.

³² LP XVIII, i, nos.115, 623; LP XIX, i, nos.193, 202; D.M. Palliser, The Reformation in York: 1534-1553, (York: Borthwick Institute, 1979), 15.

³³ Personal correspondence, J.D. Alsop 7 March 1990, citing PRO E336/27/1 and 2.

³⁴ Hasler, II, 202; Palliser, Tudor York, 142.

³⁵ James D. Alsop, "The Revenue Commission of 1552", Historical Journal 22 (1979): 512-13.

³⁶ Richardson, Report, 108-10, 197-98.

³⁷ Alsop, "Revenue Commission", 528.

³⁸ Walter C. Richardson, History of the Court of Augmentations: 1536-1554, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 249-55.

³⁹ Elton, Tudor Revolution, 248-49; Walter C. Richardson, Tudor Chamber Administration: 1485-1547, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 437.

⁴⁰ R.H. Pogson, "Revival and Reform in Mary Tudor's Church: A Question of Money", Journal of Ecclesiastical History 25 (1974): 255.

⁴¹ Norman L. Jones, Faith by Statute: Parliament and the Settlement of Religion 1559, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1982), 29; Jennifer Loach, Parliament and the Crown in the Reign of Mary Tudor, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 135-7.

⁴² Felicity Heal, Of Prelates and Princes: A Study of the Economic and Social Position of the Tudor Episcopate, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 159-60.

⁴³ Brigden, London and the Reformation, 576-7; CPR Philip and Mary, III, 316-7.

⁴⁴ CPR, Philip and Mary, II, 117, II, 225, III, 495.

⁴⁵ 2+3 Philip and Mary, c.4 (SR IV, i, 275-9); CPR, Philip and Mary, III, 316-7.

⁴⁶ APC VII, 37; G.R. Elton, The Parliament of England: 1559-1581,

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 151-2.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth I, c.4 (SR IV, i, 359-64).

⁴⁸ Lawrence Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 423.

⁴⁹ I am grateful to Bill Acres for information on John Tailor and his financial success as deputy to Edward Stafford.

⁵⁰ John Strype, The Life and Acts of John Whitgift, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822), I, 441, III, 173.

⁵¹ Strype, Whitgift, III, 176.

⁵² PRO SPI4/123/74.

⁵³ PRO E334/34; G.E. Aylmer, The King's Servants: The Civil Service of Charles I, 1625-1642, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 410-11.

⁵⁴ John Engberg, "Royalist Finances During the English Civil War: 1642-46", Scandinavian Economic History Review 14 (1966): 85; Aylmer, King's Servants, 411.

⁵⁵ CSP Compounding, 1129 (28 February 1648); CSP Advance, 560.

⁵⁶ Joyce Lee Malcolm, Caesar's Due: Loyalty and King Charles: 1642-46, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1983), 177; Engberg, "Royalist Finances", 83-6.

⁵⁷ William A. Shaw, A History of the English Church: 1640-1660. (New York: Longman, Green, 1900), II, 573-77.

⁵⁸ PRO E336/9 fos.22-29; account provided in Shaw, The English Church, II, 570-3; CSP Compounding, 1520.

⁵⁹ Shaw, The English Church, II, 259-60.

⁶⁰ Shaw, The English Church, II, 573; CSP Advance, 1478 (14 July, 1654).

⁶¹ "A Paper from the First Fruits Office" (18 November 1655) in BL Thomason Tracts 669, no.20(18).

⁶² Shaw, The English Church, II, 236 (printing Lambeth MS 974, 15 January 1656); CSPD Commonwealth, IX, 309 (6 May 1656).

⁶³ CSPD Commonwealth, IX, 311 (8 May 1656): IX, 390 (26 June 1656).

⁶⁴ Shaw, The English Church, II, 579; CSPD Commonwealth XI, 376 (27 April 1658); see also G.E. Aylmer, The State's Servants: The Civil Service of the

English Republic: 1649-1660, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 202.

⁶⁵ C.D. Chandaman, The English Public Revenue: 1660-1688, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 116-17.

⁶⁶ G.F.A. Best, Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Church of England, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 24-5; John H. Pruett, The Parish Clergy under the Later Stuarts: The Leicestershire Experience, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

⁶⁷ Ian Green, "The First Years of Queen Anne's Bounty" in Princes and Paupers in the English Church: 1500-1800, ed. Rosemary O'Day and Felicity Heal. (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981), 233; Best, Temporal Pillars, 27-8.

⁶⁸ 1 Victoria, c.20; Best, Temporal Pillars, 116, 511. The last absentee Remembrancer of First Fruits made a valiant attempt to defend his sinecure before a parliamentary committee, but without success.

CHAPTER II:
COMPOSITION AND THE SEARCH FOR SURETIES

Having examined the evolution of a financial administration to handle the first fruits revenue after 1535, attention must now be focused on the administrative effects of the tax on the clergy themselves. Dealing with the central administration posed problems for many clergy: travel to London or possibly York, arrangement for sufficient sureties and the payment of administrative fees charged for composition. Composition for first fruits, particularly for the lower clergy, could present many difficulties. The process of searching out sureties, and the arrangements made by the clergy provide insight into the social and economic relationships of the English clergy. The study of clerical composition for first fruits also sheds light on one important aspect of the relationship between the central government and the clergy throughout England.

As we have seen, compounding usually took place in London, although an office had been established at York. In general, clergy who had been presented to a benefice were forced to travel to London in order to make arrangements to pay their first fruits. Notice of their presentation was provided to the Court by the diocesan bishop, and the clergy were then responsible for their own arrangements. In February 1539, for example, John Stokesley, the bishop of London, appointed a Dr. Day to a prebendary stall valued at four marks, sending him the following day to compound for his first fruits.¹ Travelling, arranging sureties and compounding in London created difficulties for the clergy and could be costly. As early as 1536 the bishop of St. David's,

William Barlow, requested of Cromwell that his clergy be permitted to compound within the diocese, and thus be spared the cost of travelling to London. Again, in 1539 a petition asked for the appointment of special commissioners to take compositions for first fruits "for the relief of clerks presented to benefices far from London".² Despite these requests, however, all clergy, with the exception of those in the north, were obliged to make the necessary arrangements in London.

All clergy did not wait until after their institution to a benefice before compounding. A comparison of composition book entries with the episcopal registers for Winchester, for the years 1535 to 1558, shows that of those clergy instituted to livings for which complete information is available, half compounded prior to their institution, and the majority of the remainder did so within a few days following. John Cooke, rector of All Saints, Southampton, was instituted to the living on 10 May 1551, having previously compounded (on 5 February) for his first fruits. On the other hand, William Thompson, instituted as vicar of Effingham on 10 June 1551, only arranged bonds for his first fruits two days afterward.³ No clear pattern is apparent from the evidence and composition does not appear to have been dependent upon institution. The close proximity of Winchester (principally Hampshire and Surrey) to London likely made composition easier and quicker than for livings in the north or west, but without comparable information for other dioceses any further conclusions are not possible.

Payment of first fruits imposed heavy financial burden on the lower clergy, a burden which many felt to be unfair. In the 1530s, especially at the time of the Lincolnshire Rising, discontent became especially vocal, as shown

above. Apart from stirring revolt, first fruits also put pressures on the clergy. It may not be entirely coincidental that tithe litigation rose in the 1540s when clerical taxation was at a high level. Many beneficed clergy were forced to prosecute their own debtors in order to alleviate fiscal pressures, including the burden of taxation.⁴ The combined weight of first fruits, tenths and clerical subsidies produced grumbling. It appears that the high level of taxation had other effects as well. Resignation or death within the first several years of incumbency, while first fruits were being paid, was costly. Christopher Hill argued that first fruits compounded the problem of pluralism, since clergy attempted to avoid poverty by securing income from one benefice while paying off first fruits from another.⁵ Many of these concerns were raised by Archbishop Whitgift in his memorial to Lord Burghley attacking plans to farm clerical taxes. He described clerical poverty and the threat to the clerical estate posed by increases in first fruits and tenths, and a decline in individuals entering the clergy because of the lack of economic rewards and security. He concluded that:

great exclamation hath been against an unlearned ministrie; if this suite should be granted, it would encrease the number of unlearned Ministeres, and dryve the learned and other students to some other trade of lyfe more gaynfull unto them. For every waterman on the Thames earneth more by his labour then the greater parte of severall Ministeres in England should doe by their benefices.⁶

A further indication of the poverty of many clerics caused at least in part by first fruits comes from Sir Edward Stafford, appointed Remembrancer of First Fruits in 1591. Protesting his innocence in the face of charges of graft levelled at him, he wrote to Lord Treasurer Burghley, claiming that "in the fyrst frutes office, I never putt oute and nor take peny of any (in fees) I found them so pare (poor)".⁷ While Whitgift may have overstated the case comparing clergy

unfavourably to Thames watermen, first fruits were clearly an aspect of clerical poverty, representing an economic threat to the clerical estate.

Occasionally first fruits could be used as a weapon with which to threaten the clergy. The rector of Boxted, Suffolk, William Welles, complained to the Council in late 1578 that a local gentleman, William Pooley, was attempting "because of some malice he beareth him" to force him to pay first fruits again for his living, alleging that he had not read the Articles "within the tyme limited by statute". Despite letters from the Bishop and Dean of Norwich attesting to Welles's character and the malicious nature of Poole's actions, the latter continued to threaten the rector with a second payment. At last on 29 October 1578 the Council wrote to Pooley, ordering him to cease troubling Welles, or else to come to London to explain his actions. This threat of Council discipline appears finally to have put a stop to Pooley's behaviour, but the case demonstrates how first fruits could be used as a weapon in disputes with clergy, albeit in this case unsuccessfully.⁸

In certain instances clergy were exonerated by royal warrant from payment of first fruits. Generally there was some clear reason for this action, which might include, on occasion, clerical poverty. In July 1604 the vicar of Campsall in Yorkshire, Thomas Wray, was excused from payment of first fruits and subsidies for his living, since it "consisteth only of a little house and a pension of £16 13s 4d by the year."⁹ Usually, however, remission of first fruits formed part of a larger strategy. Exoneration could be used to lessen the impact of the royal seizure of church property. In December 1550 a parish church was established in Spillesby, Lincolnshire, to replace a dissolved chantry. In addition to a £10 annuity granted to support the vicar, Thomas Cooke, the first fruits due

by statute were remitted.¹⁰ Following her accession, Mary made use of remission while working to turn over clerical taxes to the church. As well, the change in religious climate had led to the deprivation of protestant clergy, and in October 1554 those deprived were exempted from payments due to the Crown from their livings.¹¹ Under Elizabeth, deprivations of clergy also occurred, prompting Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London, to suggest that ministers deprived be exonerated from first fruits. In a letter dated 4 June 1566, Grindal argued that the policy would be of great value, since "the deprived must needes confesse thatt greate clemencie is used towards them". As well, it would forestall possible criticism that the deprivations were motivated by royal greed, for "some evill touns shalle be bridled thereby, which otherwise wolde saye: persecutine of this matter is for some gayne, to get duple frutes both off ye predecessors and successors". His "reasonable and charitable" suit was successful, for by royal warrant that same year all those deprived for non-conformity were released from payment of first fruits.¹² Exoneration of obligation for first fruits, then, was a deliberate part of Crown policy, whether to counteract the effects of clerical poverty (in isolated cases) or to show royal mercy to those deprived and so silence some potential critics of the ecclesiastical order.

Evidence concerning the timing of the payment of first fruits is limited. In general payments were noted in the composition books, with the dates of the bonds stroked through when they were voided, but without the exact dates or amounts of individual payments being recorded. Occasionally, however, evidence does exist to show how payment was made.¹³ Firm evidence on payments received is found in a list of payments for the first nine months of 1644 contained in one of the First Fruits Office miscellaneous books. During that period a total

of £696 was collected by the receiver, Lawrence Swetnam, constituting 151 payments. One-third of the payments were for more than one of the four bonds. Those paying for two bonds made up 30.5%, and those making full payments for first fruits were only 1.9% of the total.¹⁴ (see Table 2.1). While 1644 was an extraordinary year politically, the information from the miscellaneous book makes clear that many clergy preferred to pay no more than one-quarter of their first fruits at a time (the legal minimum), or else poverty left them little choice.

Table 2.1 Analysis of Payments: January - October 1644

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Clergy making one payment	101	66.9
Clergy making two payments	46	30.5
Clergy making three payments	1	0.7
Clergy making complete payment	<u>3</u>	<u>1.9</u>
Total	151	100.0

In compounding, clergy paid set fees to the clerks in the First Fruits Office, due regardless of whether payments were completed at one time, or over a period of two years. It appears that there was an additional charge of 6d for approving sureties in the case of a benefice valued at over £40, where approval was required from the Chancellor of the Exchequer.¹⁵ As will be seen below in Chapter III, this latter charge represented a less than successful attempt to exercise greater control over acceptance of sureties in order to avoid default in payments.

In most cases clergy were required at the time of composition to provide sureties to guarantee payment of monies owed for first fruits. Sureties undertook responsibility for the clergyman's first fruit obligations, should payment not be made, and were a standard feature of many early modern financial transactions. First fruits were no exception. In general only bishops were permitted to bind themselves for the payments of their first fruits without sureties, while almost all other clergy gave two sureties; in certain isolated cases only one apparently sufficed.

Those acting as sureties may be classified into two broad categories: those with ties of kindred, patronage or friendship to the cleric, and those without clear ties. In the latter case a fee or gratuity was likely required by the surety for providing this service. Thomas Cromwell was advised by the Bishop of St. David's that, in London, the clergy "can get no sureties, except at great cost".¹⁶ Certainly the presence in composition records of certain names of sureties which reoccur suggests that some individuals, particularly in London, may have made a business of serving as sureties. While this evidence is not conclusive, an occupational and geographic analysis of sureties does shed light on the social and economic relationships of the English clergy. The changes in the profile of sureties from the 1540s to the 1640s also illustrates the transformations in English society, particularly in London.

One of the major sources to which clergy turned for sureties was relatives. Determining kindred from the documents is difficult; for the purposes of analysis, sureties with the same surname may be deemed to have been relatives. Of course this method underestimates the true number of relatives, although by how much is difficult to determine. Bearing in mind that many

clergy were unmarried, particularly in the first (1551) group, the true number of relatives is perhaps 50% higher than the figures below suggest. For the seventeenth century the number is certainly higher (perhaps 75%), due principally to the increase in clerical marriage. In the mid-sixteenth century, of the 1072 debts recorded, 10.5% gave the name of at least one surety with the same surname as the cleric. Michael Zell's calculations for Kentish clergy from the composition books, 1541-1553, provide a figure of 12.5%. By the mid-seventeenth century the composition books demonstrate that the figure had risen, to about 19%. Each of these figures is certainly low, and in the period 1639-51 the true level may have approached one-third of all compositions.¹⁷

Some of the relatives occupied positions of authority within the first-fruits bureaucracy or elsewhere in the financial administration. Alexander Carewe, who owed over £129 for the Archdeaconry of Norfolk, had as his sole surety Sir Wimonde Carewe, treasurer of First Fruits and Tenths. Robert Darknall, one of the tellers of the Exchequer, served as surety for Walter Darknall of Peterborough, for a debt of 66s.¹⁸ Others sought out relatives who were merchants or tradesmen in London, without doubt because they were close at hand when compositions were being made. An excellent example was the leatherseller Robert Mason, who stood bond for Nicholas Mason, presented to the rectory of Chedzoy, Somerset.¹⁹ In the mid-Tudor period the largest number of the relatives came from within the county in which the living was located, as Table 2.2 below makes clear. Approximately one-third were residents of London and the County of Middlesex, and close to half were from within the county of the living. A century later, a distinct shift had taken place, with over two-thirds coming from London and its vicinity. This was a reflection of the growing

economic importance of the metropolitan area. Relations formed a significant source of sureties for clergy, and kinship provided one link between clerics and their guarantors.

Table 2.2 Relatives as Sureties

<u>Identified Residence:</u>	<u>1551</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1639-51</u>	<u>No.</u>
London and Middlesex	37	34.3	320	67.4
Same County as Living	49	45.4	68	14.3
Outside County	12	11.1	88	18.5
Unknown	10	9.2	0	0.0
Total	108		476	

A second important source for sureties, particularly in the mid-sixteenth century, was the royal and magnate households, and the administrative departments of the state. Some of these individuals were relatives of the clerics involved, as was the case with Sir Wimonde Carewe, noted above. Others included Christopher Smith, Clerk of the Pipe in the Exchequer from 1548 to 1589. The first Treasurer of First Fruits and Tenths, John Gostwick, served as a surety for at least three clerks whose debts were unpaid in 1551-52, including the vicar of Willington, Bedfordshire, where Gostwick's estate was located.²⁰ Sureties in the royal household included the herald Fulk ap Howell, the Serjeant of the Pantry John Joslyn, and royal secretary William Paget. Howell served as surety for William Mote, a clerk from the royal household, presented to the wealthy vicarage of Thaxted, Essex. This debt of £21 was still unpaid in

Elizabeth's reign. John Joslyn, the rector of Onolde, Suffolk gave as his surety John Joslyn, Serjeant of the Pantry. One of the most important members of the household, Sir William Paget (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, M.P. and former Principal Secretary) was sole surety for several clergy, acceptable as such likely due to both his standing in governmental circles and substantial means.²¹ In the mid-seventeenth century several officers from the Exchequer stood as sureties. In June 1646 Thomas Chafy compounded for the first fruits of the rectory of Nursling, Hampshire. As his sureties Chafy obtained Arthur Squib and Lawrence Swetnam. Squib was a teller in the Receipt (1624-46) and Swetnam was at the time both Receiver of First Fruits and a teller.²² Nor were members of private households absent from the list of sureties. Members of the Duke of Somerset's household, those of William Paulet, William Paget and others all served as sureties in the mid-sixteenth century. Richard Johns, a yeoman in the household of Sir Richard Rich, the Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations, stood surety for several Welsh clergy.²³ Even the highest officials in government provided sureties on occasion, as Protector Somerset did for Thomas Marshal, incumbent of the valuable living of Tiverton, Devon (£24 per annum). The Protector's fall from power and execution undoubtedly made the debt almost impossible to collect (at least from the surety), hence its inclusion in the account of arrears.²⁴

Members of households and the central administration made up less than 5% of the total number of sureties in the early period, yet they repeated as sureties more frequently than did others. The proximity of many of these individuals to the Court of First Fruits and Tenths clearly had a bearing upon their selection as sureties, and some officials may have made a business of

providing guarantees for clergy. Unfortunately, the records examined do not provide the complete information on compositions necessary to establish the existence of 'professional' sureties. By the next century, sureties were rarely members of royal or noble households, or else they had ceased to identify themselves as such, making comparison over time impossible (see Appendices E and G).

The role of the patron of the living in securing sureties for the cleric is not clear. When discussing composition for first fruits in his study of the clergy in Reformation Kent, Michael Zell speculates that the first surety listed in the records may have been the key to the presentation.²⁵ From the information provided by the Winchester registers in the same period, this suggestion appears rather weak. Most lay presenters did not act as sureties, and the order of sureties in the Court records seems influenced more by social rank than by any other factor. Esquires invariably were listed before gentlemen, who in turn appeared before yeomen, and so forth. This does not mean that holders of the advowson were entirely absent from the list of sureties. In 1545 John Power was presented to the vicarage of Hartley Wentney, Hampshire, (valued at £4 7 1/2 d) and instituted on 24 November. When, less than one month later, on 22 December, he compounded for his first fruits, his patron John Mason, also of Hartley Wentney, stood as sole surety.²⁶ Edward Heydon, instituted in April 1550 to the living of Nutfeld, Surrey (value £14 14s 1d), provided two sureties when he compounded on 9 May 1550: John St. John of Treygose, Wiltshire, esquire and Nicholas St. John of Purleigh, Berkshire. John St. John held the advowson for the rectory, and likely made the necessary arrangements for obtaining a second surety.²⁷

In the case of the majority of compositions, however, establishing clear links between cleric and sureties is not possible. Many sureties were likely friends or acquaintances of the cleric involved, since they were from the same community or county. During the mid-seventeenth century, especially, connections through marriage are a further link which is probable, but generally impossible to establish. The crucial point is this: while relatives, officials and patrons did play an important role as sureties for clergy, ties of friendship and common acquaintance must be included among the principal factors which served to bring together clergy and their sureties.

The occupational and social profile of sureties helps illuminate the economic milieu of the clergy, particularly of the lesser clergy (see Appendices E - H). A word of caution is appropriate, however, in interpreting occupational and/or status designations. An individual described as a draper, for example, may not have worked as such; he was simply a freeman of the Drapers' Company. In addition, many wealthier merchants, if possible, described themselves as gentlemen, further complicating occupational analysis. The fact, however, that these individuals described themselves as gentlemen is valuable in and of itself, since it provides an indication of their relative economic and social standing in the community. In general, the number of different occupations from which sureties were drawn was much greater and more diverse during the 1640s than in the mid-sixteenth century - a reflection of London's expansion and England's economic diversification.²⁸

The percentage of sureties drawn from the ranks of the gentry (knights, esquires and gentlemen) rose from 34.9% of sureties examined in 1551 to 47.9% in the period 1639-51. The numbers of those identifying themselves as yeomen, on

the other hand, declined sharply from 12.4% to 2.6% over the same period. The decline in yeomen, and in particular the rise in those who described themselves as 'gentlemen' (from 26.6% in 1551 to 42.0% a century later) is a strong reflection of the 'rise of the gentry' during this period. During the century 1540-1640, while England's population doubled, the number of gentry tripled, drawing principally from the greater yeomen, many of whom began to style themselves 'gentlemen'; now considering themselves capable of bearing the "port, charge and countenance of a gentleman". Perception of wealth and social standing were crucial, and the social mobility of yeomen who swelled the ranks of the gentry is borne out in the change in clerical selection of sureties during the period.²⁹

Some clergy turned to their fellow clerics for sureties, and in the 1551 account approximately 4.0% of all sureties came from the ranks of the clergy. During the middle 1640s the figure topped 10%. Some of the clerical sureties acted for a neighbouring cleric, or for their successor in a living. The latter was the case with John Meredith, rector of Stamford Rivers, Essex. Prior to November 1641 Meredith had been rector of South Somercote, Lincolnshire. When his successor, Samuel Aylesby, compounded for the Lincolnshire rectory on 15 December 1641, Meredith served as one of the sureties. The other surety in this case, Guy Ayloff, esquire, from St. Mary-le-Savoy outside London had also stood as surety for Meredith himself when he previously compounded for the rectory. Meredith likely arranged for Ayloff to serve as a surety for his successor.³⁰ Other clergy who served as sureties may have been acquainted with those for whom they gave guarantees from time spent studying at the same college, or through service to a common patron, but such links are difficult to verify.

Other sureties identified themselves by their guild or trade. In the mid-sixteenth century the major groups represented were the merchant tailors, mercers and drapers, reflecting the importance of the cloth trade within London's retail and export economy (see Appendix E). Merchant tailors, like John Juxon of Breadstreet, London, comprised 3.5% of all sureties in 1551. Juxon, a relative of the future Archbishop William Juxon, stood as surety for Robert Smythe of Chichester Cathedral. William Juxon's father served as Treasurer of Chichester Cathedral, and the Juxon family had close connections with London's Merchant Tailors' Company.³¹ Among the other prominent trades not directly associated with the cloth trade were the London innholders and goldsmiths. Innholders likely came into contact with clergy seeking lodging and victuals during their visit to London to compound, while goldsmiths frequently served as private bankers in early modern England and would seem natural choices for sureties. A wide variety of occupations are found (albeit fewer than a century later) as well as a considerable social mix. John Smyth, admitted to the vicarage of Fulham, Middlesex, in April 1545, secured a minstrel, Hugh Grene of Old Fishstreet, London, along with Richard Flower, gentleman, of Staple Inn in Holborne.³²

By the seventeenth century the list of occupations held by sureties had lengthened considerably. Merchant tailors remained the largest single group, comprising 4.0% of the total (see Appendix G). Stationers, principally from the London parish of St. Faith, rose in importance and goldsmiths and innholders remained major sources. Indicative of the increased variety of tradesmen represented are William Lingham and Lawrence Twyne. Lingham, a confectioner from St. Martin, Ludgate, was surety for Richard Vines, rector of Walton at

Stone, Hertfordshire, who compounded on 16 October 1651. Lawrence Twyne, from St. Clement's, Dane in the Strand (where the First Fruits Office was located during this period) gave his occupation as instrument maker when he stood surety for Richard Serjeant, rector of Shalden, Hampshire, in October 1646.³³ The principal change in social status was the increase in the percentage of sureties from the gentry, and especially gentlemen. The greater diversity of occupations represented is evidence both of the increased urban character of sureties in the later period, and of the diversification of England's economy during this period.

Sureties for first fruits were, as might be expected, overwhelmingly male. Indeed, of the almost 6,000 sureties examined in the 1551 account of arrears and the composition books from 1639-1651, all but one were male. The lone exception was a widow, Anne Doughtie, of the parish of St. Dunstan in the East, London, who served as surety for Maurice Bohemus of Leicestershire in September; 1651.³⁴ No other female sureties appear, making clear that, just as certain occupations and ranks in society were considered more appropriate than others for sureties, so women were not normally deemed to have been suitable, or acceptable.

During the 1640s compositions for first fruits were greatly affected by the political upheavals and disturbances of the two civil wars. The number of compositions was of course determined in the first instance by the level of presentations, and so any analysis of declining compositions must take into account both a decline in presentations and administrative difficulties caused by war. These two factors are undoubtedly linked. In 1639 there were 373 compositions made at London, a level which remained relatively stable until

1643, when it dropped to 96 (see Table 2.3). By 1645 the volume of business had dropped to barely one-tenth of the 1639 level. Levels of composition rose steadily thereafter, with the exception of 1649-50. No compositions were recorded in the three months following the King's execution in January 1649. Only in 1651 did the number of compositions even begin to approach pre-war levels.³⁵

Table 2.3 Compositions: 1639-1651

<u>Year</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Value</u>
1639	373	£ 5763	1646	114	1779
1640	298	4491	1647	145	1967
1641	309	4575	1648	161	2373
1642	246	6199	1649	95	1442
1643	96	1456	1650	61	831
1644	45	585	1651	184	2581
1645	39	569			
			<u>Total:</u>	2166	34611

(average composition £15 19s 7d; average yearly value £2662.)

An examination of the geographic distribution of livings for which compositions were made illustrates some of the effects of the political instability of this period on the administration and payment of first fruits (see Appendix J). During 1643, 85% of the livings recorded were in Middlesex, the southeast and East Anglia, all areas firmly in the control of Parliament and readily accessible to London. The following year 74% of the compositions were from these areas. Yet the region constituted only 41.5% of all English livings. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the royalist government had set up a first fruits administration at Oxford under Sir Henry Knollys, receiving some

payments (and possibly compositions) from those areas under royal control. Indeed both the west and southwest were greatly underrepresented in the composition records in London. The question of the north's representation is complex. A significant lack of compositions from the northern countries might indicate the continuing presence of a first fruits office at York, as had existed in the mid-sixteenth century. On the other hand, other factors including the presence of a Scottish army in the north, and the difficulties of transportation and communication with the northern counties during the period of civil war, clearly had great influence on the levels of compositions recorded in this period. In fact, the level of compositions is sufficiently close to the percentage of livings in the north that the existence of an office in York during the 1640s seems unlikely.³⁶

The increased prominence of London and the southeast for the business of the first fruits office during the mid-1640s is clearly reflected in the occupation of sureties (see Appendix H). The number describing themselves as gentlemen and esquires declined sharply in 1642, reaching its lowest level in 1644. Whereas in 1639 the combined percentage of the total was 50.9%, in 1643 the corresponding figure was 36.6%, and dropped further to 33.0% in 1644. By contrast, the percentage of five major merchant groups (merchant tailors, haberdashers, grocers, stationers and drapers) rose from 16.4% in 1639 to 19.9% (1643), peaking at 30.6% in 1644. These trends reflect shifts caused by the upheavals of the first civil war - specifically the decline of compositions from outside the home countries and East Anglia. This in turn led to a shift in occupational/social origin of the sureties; most of those identified as gentlemen were from the gentry in the counties, while the merchant community, centred in

London, was able to continue providing sureties, relatively unaffected by the war. By 1651 the pre-war pattern had been established, with esquires and gentlemen composing 47.5% of sureties, while the principal merchant categories outlined above accounted for only 14.4% of the total. The political events of the 1640s clearly had an effect upon the first fruits administration beyond the administrative and personnel changes discussed in the previous chapter. The level of compositions fell drastically, and the social profile of the sureties underwent a marked, albeit brief, shift.

As the economic and administrative centre of England, metropolitan London (including Southwark and Westminster) clearly was a major source for sureties. Many clergy either sought out relatives in the city or else approached merchants and tradesmen when obliged to find sureties. In the 1551 account of arrears a total of 489 names appear as sureties from London and its outlying parishes, and approximately 37% of all sureties are from the city and county of Middlesex. More significant still is the high proportion of these sureties who appear more than once (over 12%). In particular many of the sureties in the mid-sixteenth century were connected with the Inns of Court, especially the Inner Temple, Middle Temple and Gray's Inn. Clearly those in the legal professions were reasonable choices for those entering into bonds and compounding for first fruits.³⁷

In the composition books from 1639 to 1651 the sureties from London are identified by parish, permitting a more detailed analysis. The three parishes with the largest representation, St. Martin in the Fields (11.0% of the London total), St. Dunstan in the West (8.1%) and St. Clement, Danes (6.3%) are all in the west, outside the walls. During the 1640s the First Fruits Office was located in

the Strand, and it appears that the high proportion of sureties from the western parishes may well be related to this fact (see map and Appendix K). The parish of St. Clement, Danes, in the Strand, had as well a high number of repeated sureties (15.2% appearing more than once). A few of these, like the merchant tailor John Cobden and the tailor John Southam (five and nine times respectively) clearly had a professional interest in standing as sureties during the period 1639 - 1643. Many of John Southam's bonds were also guaranteed by George Bleuhassat, a haberdasher from the neighbouring parish of St. Martin in the Fields who stood surety fourteen times in the same five year period. The stationers of the parish of St. Faith, by St. Paul's Cathedral, seem to have provided a similiar service, judging from the frequent repetition of names. From 1639 to 1643 eighteen stationers from St. Faith appear in the composition records, and fully half recur at least once. Indeed, Robert Bostock appears seven times, and Octavius Pulleyn, Humphrey Robinson and the well-known George Thomason (collector of the Thomason Tracts) each stood surety four times. Outside of St. Faith stationers also were frequent choices; in the parish of St. Martin in the Fields the bookseller and stationer Hugh Perry acted four times in the same period. Despite their small overall proportion of sureties, stationers in west London (concentrated overwhelmingly in St. Faith) had the highest frequency of multiple bonds. While the reason for this is not completely clear, nevertheless clergy turned to members of the Stationers' Company as a regular source of sureties.

In assessing the contribution of London as a source of sureties, a comparison with the trades' structure is helpful. Information on admission of freemen to guilds in the city is available for the mid-sixteenth century (1538).³⁸

From this record rough percentages have been calculated for some primary trades, and have been compared to London sureties in the 1551 account of arrears (see Table 2.4). The results of this comparison suggest that merchants and those in the cloth trades were overrepresented as sureties, relative to their numbers within the London society, while less prestigious trades like salters, butchers, cordwainers and carpenters were less likely to be chosen. Two groups noted as major contributors of sureties previously - stationers and goldsmiths - are seen to be significantly overrepresented as sureties. Goldsmiths composed only 2.6% of admissions and stationers 0.9% in 1538, yet they supplied 4.3% and 3.8% of London sureties respectively. Presumably some trades, like carpenters, were underrepresented, likely because visiting clergy would have little contact with these trades. Moreover, some construction trades, for example, would tend to be less prosperous and thus include fewer members eligible to serve as sureties. It must be stressed, however, that in the absence of a complete occupational analysis of London itself, results such as these are merely an indication of trends, and necessarily limited in value in and of themselves.

Table 2.4 Comparison of 1551 London Sureties to Trade Admissions (1538). (Selected)

<u>Trade</u>	<u>Admissions</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Sureties</u>	<u>%</u>
Merchant Tailors	148	14.9	63	18.1
Drapers	56	5.6	32	9.2
Haberdashers	53	5.3	31	8.9
Grocers	48	4.8	12	3.4
Butchers	46	4.6	1	0.3

Mercers	42	4.2	28	8.0
Brewers	40	4.0	5	1.4
Cordwainers	32	3.2	3	0.8
Carpenters	31	3.1	3	0.8
Barbersurgeons	31	3.1	7	2.0
Goldsmiths	26	2.6	15	4.3
Salters	24	2.4	4	1.2
Bakers	26	2.6	5	1.4
Leathersellers	22	2.2	7	2.0
Joiners	17	1.7	1	0.3
Stationers	9	0.9	13	3.8
Plasterers	7	0.7	1	0.3
Total of All Trades:				
	995	100.0	349	100.0

York was next to London in importance as a source of sureties, particularly in the mid-sixteenth century, when it supplied 4.9% of all sureties. During the existence of the Court (1540-1554) and even earlier under Gostwick York had been a centre for composition and collection of clerical taxes. As a consequence of the city's administrative importance and the presence of a regional office in the city, a sizeable number of sureties were residents of York. The names of a number of prominent York merchants and government officials appear in the account of arrears from 1551. The foremost of these is Sir George Lawson (died 1543), the wealthiest and most powerful alderman and public figure in the city. An M.P. and member of the Council for the North, Lawson also had

close ties to Berwick. He stood as surety for Thomas Brown, appointed to a benefice in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Berwick, and was sole surety for another cleric for the living of Weddrington, Northumberland.³⁹ Two other aldermen, John North (died 1558) and John Beane (died 1580) also appeared as sureties. Beane, an innholder, and Peter Ashe, another innholder, served as surety for two clergymen with livings in Yorkshire, valued together at over £29.⁴⁰ First fruits receiver and York haberdasher Richard Goldthorpe and York gentleman John Thorne were sureties for John Colteman, named to a prebend at Absthorpe, Yorkshire (worth £4).⁴¹

In order to examine the occupational composition of York sureties, it is essential to compare their occupations to those of the population of York as a whole, for which we currently possess more reliable evidence than is true of London. The results of such a comparison make several points clear. From the records for admission to trade groups in York from 1520 to 1550, percentages have been calculated which reflect the trade composition of York in 1551, and these percentages are compared to those for the same trade groups in the 1551 account of arrears (see Table 2.5 and Appendix F).⁴²

Table 2.5 Occupational Structure of York

<u>Trade Group</u>	<u>Admissions 1520-1550 (%)</u>	<u>1551 (%)</u>
Clothing	18.7	20.3
Food and Drink	20.7	20.3
Distributive	13.8	14.1
Textiles	8.8	1.6

Building	9.1	1.6
Leather	6.1	3.1
Household	8.5	9.4
Rural	3.2	4.7
Personal	2.5	9.4
Other	8.7	15.6

From these results several points are clear. As inholders and victuallers (Food and Drink) form a large percentage of both sureties and the business community as a whole, their frequency as sureties is an indication of York's function as an administrative centre, providing facilities for many visitors (including clergy) arriving to conduct government business. Given their contact with visitors, the prominence of inholders is understandable, yet it is more a reflection of the occupational composition of York itself. Such a close correspondence between sureties and the trade profile is not found with other groups, however, Textile, building and leather workers are all underrepresented as sureties; this appears reasonable since few clerical visitors would likely have contact with these trades, and they would generally be of lower status. By contrast personal service occupations (especially notaries) are overrepresented; they would likely be involved in legal and financial matters, including first fruits. York, then, provided a large number of sureties for northern clergy. Comparison of sureties' occupations with the trade profile of the city permits an assessment of the role of various occupational groups as sureties.

One further point must be stressed. It is clear that the importance as sureties of some groups in London and York must be attributed in no small

measure to their prosperity and financial standing. The major merchant companies like merchant tailors, grocers, haberdashers and drapers dominate the list of urban sureties in large part because their members possessed the financial resources and sufficient credit to undertake the role of wealthy as, for example, the merchant tailors, and sufficient means was a clear prerequisite for acting as a surety in early modern England.

In conclusion, in compounding for first fruits, the clergy came into contact with the central administration in London. Obligated to obtain sureties, they sought out relatives or others of sufficient means and standing to guarantee payment. Selection of sureties provides a glimpse into the social and economic relationships of clergy with their patrons, the business communities in London and York. No written agreements between clergy and sureties have been found. At the very least, however, the high incidence of repeated sureties in London suggests that many clergy arrived without sufficient guarantee and were forced to turn to merchants and others in the vicinity of the First Fruits Office. This suggests that a significant proportion of the clergy were either unaware of the customary requirement that they provide two sureties, or else they arrived in London fully expecting to secure one or both sureties within commercial society, presumably as a business transaction. That composition was costly, in travelling and lodging expenses, in fees to the clerks, and possibly in payments to sureties, is clear. Whether compounding for first fruits made the clergy poorer than Thames watermen, as Whitgift alleged, is uncertain, but first fruits clearly were a financial burden, as well as a general inconvenience, for Tudor and early Stuart clergy.

Notes: Chapter II

- ¹ LP XIV, i, no.213 (3 February 1539).
- ² LP XI, no.1427; XIV, i, no.870.
- ³ PRO SPI0/16 No.292; Registrum Johannis Paynet, 1k51; PRO SP/10/16 no.861; Registrum Johannis Poynt, 149.
- ⁴ Margaret Bowker, The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland: 1521-1547, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 135.
- ⁵ Christopher Hill, Economic Problems of the Church from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 189; Bowker, The Henrician Reformation, 132.
- ⁶ John Strype, The Life and Acts of John Whitgift, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822), III, 175-6.
- ⁷ PRO SPI2/259/63.
- ⁸ APC, X, 360.
- ⁹ CSPD James I.
- ¹⁰ CPR Edward VI, III, 264 (22 December 1550).
- ¹¹ CSPD Philip and Mary, I, 63 (20 October 1554).
- ¹² PRO SPI2/40/1. The warrant was issued soon after, see PRO SPI2/40/66.
- ¹³ In 1553 a royal warrant authorized the Chancellor of First Fruits and Tenths to accept from John Payne the manor of Croyston and other lands in Somerset in discharge of monies owed (CSPD Mary, I, 55). The Dean and Chapter of Winchester were discharged of over £160 due for first fruits and tenths in July 1618, as the money was paid instead to Dr. Young, the Dean, who was being sent on royal service to Scotland. The monies went directly to him for his use (CSPD James I. IX, 355).
- ¹⁴ "A note of all the bills sent to Mr. Swetnam", PRO E336/9, fos.22-29.
- ¹⁵ PRO SPI6/487/72.
- ¹⁶ LP XI, no.1427.
- ¹⁷ Michael Zell, "Church and Gentry in Reformation Kent: 1533-1553". Ph.D. diss., (University of California, Los Angeles, 1974), 156-60. Levels

calculated from PRO SP10/16 and E334/20 and 21.

18 PRO SP10/16, no. 766.

19 PRO SP10/16, no. 190.

20 Christopher Smith, PRO SP10/16, no.711; Gostwick was surety for three debtors from Bedfordshire and Kent: SP10/16, nos.40, 144, 920.

21 Howells, see PRO SP12/39/13 and SP10/16, No.871; Joslyn, PRO SP10/16, No.679; Paget, PRO SP10/16, Nos.702, 932 and others.

22 PRO E334/21 for 171 (29 June 1646).

23 PRO SP10/16, Nos.555, 566.

24 PRO SP10/16.

25 Zell, "Church and Gentry in Kent", 159.

26 PRO SP10/16, No.961; Registrum Stephani Gardiner, 124.

27 PRO SP10/16, No.670: Registrum Stephani Gardiner, 132.

28 Stephen Rappaport, Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth Century London, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 92.

29 Ibid., 92.

30 PRO E334/20, fos.104, 106v.

31 PRO SP10/16, No.184; DNB s.v. William Juxon.

32 PRO SP10/16, No.299.

33 PRO E334/21, fos 175v, 253v.

34 PRO E334/21 fos 251v.

35 Calculated from PRO E334/21.

36 See appendix J. 5.8% of compositions were from the North, and of all livings in England 8.4% were found in the same geographic area.

37 Calculated from PRO SP10/16.

38 See Rappaport, Worlds within Worlds, 92.

39 PRO SP10/16, Nos.61, 936; D.M. Palliser, The Reformation in York: 1534-1553, (York: Borthwick Institute, 1979), 5-8.

⁴⁰ D.M. Palliser, Tudor York, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 94-6; PRO SP10/16, Nos.256, 290, 271, 272.

⁴¹ PRO SP10/16, No.242; Palliser, The Reformation in York, 15.

⁴² These values were calculated from Palliser, Tudor York, 156-57. for a full discussion of York's occupational structure, see Tudor York, 146-78.

CHAPTER III:
DEBT AND THE PROBLEM OF ARREARS

Some clergy lacked the necessary financial means to meet their first fruits obligations, resulting in growing arrearages of first fruits. Clerical poverty, untimely death, and imprisonment or exile of clergy all contributed to inability to make payments on time, a situation which was often compounded by the death or 'insufficiency' of sureties. Administrative carelessness and reliance upon local officials for recovery of debts served only to increase the problem of arrears. Only by examining the administrative response to arrears of first fruits is it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of first fruits collection in general, and the value of the tax as a reliable source of revenue to the Crown.

Arrears of first fruits were not a new problem. During the fourteenth century many debts had been uncollectible as a result of inaccurate records and poor collection practices.¹ In the sixteenth century the transfer of ecclesiastical taxes to the Crown did not provide a solution to the accumulation of arrears. During the financial crisis of the last years of Edward's reign, the extent of arrears of first fruits became a matter of active concern, and in 1551 a lengthy account of debts owed in the Court of First Fruits and Tenths was drawn up, signed by the Court's auditors. Its preparation was related to the general enquiry into Crown finances which culminated in the Revenue Commission of 1552.² Little was solved, however, and the extent of outstanding debts under Edward's successor Mary complicated Cardinal Pole's request for the Crown's surrender of first fruits. In the end, the statute which extinguished royal collection of first fruits expressly stated that current arrears were not discharged.³

Under Elizabeth the situation did not improve. By the mid-1560s a further attempt was made to come to grips with the problem. In January 1566 a list of major debts (those exceeding £ 20) was prepared by the Office, with annotations by the clerks explaining why each debt had not been recovered.⁴ This document will be discussed in detail below, but it is noteworthy that many of the debts included in the 1566 account had also been listed in the 1551 account, demonstrating both the ineffectiveness of earlier attempts to recover debts and the current lack of distinction between arrears which were more recent, and hence possessed a greater likelihood of being collectable, and those which were almost certainly lost. Arrears of first fruits were by now a chronic problem. A sheet of notes on problems requiring attention from Lord Treasurer Burghley in November 1597, twenty-five years after he assumed the highest fiscal office in the realm, mentions amongst other items the "debts in ye First Frutes".⁵

The situation changed little in the early seventeenth century. At a meeting held in the Exchequer on 24 November 1641 problems with collecting debts formed a major part of the discussions. Heading the list of concerns about first fruits was the inability of many sureties to meet obligations (an observation reminiscent of the Revenue Commission of 1552), and it was determined that all bonds should be taken from "able and responsible men that may be sufficient for the penalty incurred in case of forfeiture". In an Exchequer case cited at the meeting, lands had been seized from a debtor and his sureties, yet it would be twelve years before the amount owed had been fully recovered, since the debt was twelve times the annual income from the lands. It was not legally possible to sell the lands in most cases, but instead the yearly income only could be sequestered.⁶ The concept of charging interest on overdue debts lay as yet in

the future. The best evidence on the extent of early Stuart arrears comes from an account prepared in 1651-52 in the Office of First Fruits for the period 1604-52. By 1651-52 there were almost 900 debts, some dating as far back as 1604. In many of these cases, including those of the Laudian bishops, recovery of first fruits was highly unlikely as the clergy had been deprived during the 1640s.⁷

The subject of arrears is best approached in the first instance through an examination of the factors which led to the debts being incurred, followed by an analysis of the effectiveness of means used to collect them. The causes of the debts may be classified into two broad categories: those that relate to the clergy, including death, poverty, and imprisonment, and those that stem from administrative practices. Following an assessment of the extent of the problem, the attempts to handle the arrears must be examined. Collection could be carried out by local officials, from the cleric or from his sureties. As well, some enterprising individuals offered to undertake the collection on behalf of the Crown (for a portion of the sum collected).

One of the most frequent causes of arrears encountered was the death of the incumbent and/or his sureties. Under the terms of the Elizabethan first fruits statute, clergy compounding for first fruits were exonerated from any further payments owing should they die within the first two years following the date of composition. Robert Bostock, appointed Archdeacon of Suffolk in April 1640, died in November of that year, with three payments totalling over £60 still outstanding. The debt was at last discharged by plea in the Court of Exchequer during Easter term 1645.⁸ Prior to 1559 death did not assure exoneration; in reality, of course, death of a cleric made recovery much more difficult. Such was the case with Cuthbert Ogle, a noted pluralist, who in 1551 was listed as

owing £9 5s for the vicarage of Appleby, Cumberland, although Ogle had died by February 1546. His sole surety Thomas Dalston, a gentleman and MP from Carlisle, had died in July 1550 (leaving lands worth £73 per annum). Likewise the arrears owed by Thomas Levet, rector of Catsfield, Sussex, from June 1545, may be attributed to his death in the following year.⁹

Clerical poverty (often in conjunction with untimely death) also produced arrears of first fruits. Edward Leighton, Archdeacon of Salisbury from 1539 to 1546, owed £53 for first fruits at the time of his death in November 1549. A royal chaplain by 1533 and later clerk of the Closet (1538-44), Leighton's debt was included in the 1566 declaration of arrears, with a note that he had died in great poverty, thus ruling out any possibility of recovery of the arrears from his own estate.¹⁰ The case of the unfortunate Anthony Methwyn, incumbent of a Somerset rectory a century later, was similar. Arrears of first fruits totalling £8 4s 9d were not to be levied, since Methwyn was both "dead and poore" (making the debt likely uncollectible on two counts).¹¹

Other misfortunes could lead to clerical arrears. The prominent Marian cleric Nicholas Harpsfield, rector of Saltwood, Kent, Archdeacon of Canterbury and Dean of Arches, was deprived of all his livings in 1559. In August 1559, along with his brother John he was committed to the Fleet for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, and died in prison in 1575. In 1566 Harpsfield's arrears of £20 for the first fruits of Saltwood rectory were recorded in the declaration of arrears, and with little hope for his release there was little possibility the debt would be recovered.¹²

In certain other cases, the existence of arrears may be attributed to administrative problems in the First Fruits Office, leading to the recording of

uncollectible debts or the non-collection of those which were potentially recoverable. One notable example of the former case concerns the executed Henrician minister Thomas Cromwell. In the 1551 account of arrears Cromwell is noted as owing ~~£~~185, by far the largest individual debt. Following his attainder and execution in the summer of 1540 this debt was clearly fictitious, and therefore should not have been recorded as arrears.¹³ Cromwell's fate was well-known, and his inclusion in 1551 raises questions.

More insight into clerical behaviour and its effects upon the collection of debts may be gained from the annotated accounts of debts over ~~£~~20 in the First Fruits Office prepared in January 1566.¹⁴ Almost each debt is accompanied by a note in the clerk's hand (some more detailed than others) explaining why the arrearages existed. In many cases the debtors appear to have disappeared and the clerks clearly have given up, simply noting (in a familiar refrain), as in the case of William Trevelyan of the Duke of Suffolk's household, that the debt of ~~£~~26 "cannot be heard of".¹⁵ Frequently the true cause of the difficulty is the death of the debtor, although this is not stated in the account. This was certainly true of John Lympny of London, an MP and sometime Controller of Customs at Chichester. Lympny had died in 1565, while his debt of ~~£~~40 (incurred prior to 1551) was simply noted as "could not be heard of", with no mention of his death.¹⁶

Occasionally the blame for a debt being unrecoverable may be attributed to sheer administrative carelessness. In the 1566 account Sir Thomas Dynham was listed as owing ~~£~~20, and there could be little hope of recovery in this case, for as the clerk explained "because he hath noe adress, I cannot thell whether (whither) to write". This was likely the same Thomas Dynham who during the 1540s and 1550s accumulated lands in Buckinghamshire and

Oxfordshire, with his principal residence at Borestall, Buckinghamshire.¹⁷ Without accurate records (including place of residence) the chances of successful collection were limited. In the case of Dynham the clerical error likely made little difference in the end, since John Dynham of Borestall had died in 1563, leaving a minor as heir (a fact which would further complicate attempts to recover the £20, since the heir could not be held liable for the debt until he attained his majority).¹⁸

While carelessness like that outlined above and the frequent comment that a debt "cannot be heard of" are easy enough to understand, several of the other explanations for debts provided by the clerk raise more serious questions. John Aylmer, the future bishop of London, is noted as owing £21 14s 5 1/4 d for the Archdeaconry of Stowe in Lincolnshire, a position he held from June 1553 until his deprivation in the autumn of that year. During Mary's reign he fled to the Continent, living for a time in Strasburg and then in Zurich. Following Elizabeth's accession he returned to Stowe, and by 1565 was Archdeacon of Lincoln, and also held three prebends. The explanation of the debt provided by the clerk in 1566 stated that recovery had not been possible since Aylmer's "books and goods were taken in Queen Maries days."¹⁹ Aylmer had clearly suffered financial hardship during his exile, yet by 1566 his career was prospering, and the explanation provided seems less than convincing. It may well be that he was trying to avoid payment by pleading continuing poverty even in 1566; more likely however the reason provided by the clerk was simply outdated. A third possibility does exist. If the Crown seized his estate in 1553, and he never recovered it, then Aylmer may have had a case in law, since the Crown had acquired both liabilities and assets, and he could no longer be liable for the

debt.

It is sometimes glaringly apparent that reasons provided in the account do not necessarily reflect the true situation of the debtor. The clearest example of an outdated and inaccurate explanation concerns Anthony Boucher of St. Alban, Woodstreet in London, who owed £19 3s 2 1/2d as a surety for a debt incurred by a Gloucestershire cleric Nicholas Hallsworth. Boucher, a Gloucestershire landowner and commissioner of chantries, had died in 1551 at the age of 31. He left at his death an heir, aged ten. In 1566 the clerk declared that the debt remained uncollected, since "Mr. Boucher is dead, and his sonne within age as yt ys said."²⁰ Yet in 1566 the son would have been twenty-five years old, and no longer a minor. While the possibility exists that the debt may not have been recoverable from the heir in any event, the explanation provided by the clerk is outdated and inaccurate. It strongly suggests that the information on debts was not maintained current by the staff of the First Fruits Office, and more specifically that some of the notations provided in the 1566 declaration of arrears were simply copied from earlier records, and hence are open to question. Given the difficulty of collecting arrears under the best of circumstances, bureaucratic errors and carelessness only served to further hinder their recovery.

The excuse offered by John Aylmer and noted above may or may not have been an attempt to avoid prosecution for the debt. Much more puzzling is the debt of £250 owed by Sir Thomas Speke, sheriff and former knight of the shire for Somerset. Speke had died of the sweating sickness in July 1551 leaving a twenty-one year old son, George, as his heir. Attempts had been made since 1551 to recover the debt in the Court of Exchequer, without success. Thomas

Speke had a successful career, earning £100 per annum as a supervisor of woolen cloth in London and Southampton. The Speke family had accumulated monastic lands in Somerset; in addition Thomas obtained the manor of Eltham, Kent, in 1547. On his death he bequeathed all his "lands, leases, jewelry and cash" to George, and the transfer of lands was confirmed by letters patent in May 1553. George Speke had pleaded, however, that he had received nothing by descent, prompting the Crown's legal counsel to stay proceedings, as they did not "like the matter". The comment is ambiguous; it may be that they accepted George Speke's assertion that he could not be held responsible for his father's debts as he had inherited nothing. Evidence concerning the estate, however, contradicts this, pointing to the likelihood that the Crown's lawyers suspected an attempt to evade responsibility and wished to investigate the matter further. The possibility that the clerk's notation may have been out of date by 1566 does not likely affect the above interpretation, since the dispute centres on inheritance rather than, say, responsibility of minors. Unfortunately the outcome of the dispute is not known, but the incident illustrates an attempt to evade payment of first fruits debts by denying inheritance of assets and hence responsibility for debt.²¹

The Office of First Fruits relied upon local officials to collect outstanding debts and upon local legal advice as to how best to proceed, but this could occasionally create other problems. The debts of George Smith, rector of Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire, provide an example of these difficulties. During the 1640s attempts were made to recover the final payment Smith owed for first fruits. In fact the money had been received by the sheriff, who had not forwarded the payment to the Exchequer. As a result false process was begun

against the rectory for debt; when the true state of affairs was known proceedings against the living were halted, and an attempt was made to recover the amount owed from the sheriff. By means of a writ of scire facias issued against the recalcitrant sheriff, the Office attempted to discover the reason for his withholding the money. Unfortunately the outcome of the investigation is not known, and the true situation was likely more complex than it first appeared.²² It may well be that the sheriff himself believed that he was owed money, and was reluctant to hand over any sum he collected to the central administration. In any case, it is clear that this was not, in fact, an outstanding debt and should not have appeared as a liability against the debtor. Frequently the Office in London utilized local advice and legal assistance in proceeding against debtors. In July 1643 Robert Mercer compounded for the rectory of St. Mary's, Colchester, providing two London merchants as sureties. By the early 1650s the rectory had been sequestrated, while one of the original payments remained outstanding. The clerks began steps to recover the debt from the sureties, but they were instructed to take no action against any parties until having consulted with John Shaw, recorder of Colchester and a barrister of Lincoln's Inn.²³ Advice and cooperation from local officials was often essential in the recovery of arrears, and lack of assistance could complicate efforts to collect.

Before examining the efforts made to deal with the arrears, it is necessary to determine, as accurately as possible, the full extent of the problem. Attempts to determine the seriousness of the arrears for the Crown's finances are fraught with difficulties. John Gostwick declared that for the period 1535-1543 first fruits and tenths arrears totalled £32,000. During these years first

fruits revenues averaged $\pounds 14,000$ per annum, and tenths amounted to approximately $\pounds 25,000$ per annum.²⁴ At this rate the Crown was losing almost an entire year's revenue once every eight years. The Revenue Commission noted that first fruit revenue alone amounted to $\pounds 8,521$ in 1551, while the account of arrears prepared that year's year lists arrears totalling $\pounds 8,241$ - a significant sum at first glance. The comparison is, however, deceptive, since the account of arrears listed all sums owed for first fruits, including those payments for compositions which had not yet come due, but were instead obligations in the future.²⁵ Calculation of the value of first fruits actually in arrears (ie. not paid when due) is almost impossible from the 1551 account. The Elizabethan Office of First Fruits continued to face the same problem, and the declaration of all debts over $\pounds 20$ prepared in 1566 lists arrears totalling $\pounds 2,682$. By the start of James's reign arrears of first fruits still listed for the years from 1535 to 1603 totalled over $\pounds 9,500$, of which one-third had accumulated during Elizabeth's reign. The remainder ($\pounds 6,170$) originated during the reigns of her father and brother. The high number of arrears from before 1553 was a reflection of the decline in first fruits revenue as a whole after the 1540s, as a result of the dissolution of monasteries and chantries, and the loss of taxes from the associated livings. Extensive deprivations during a period of religious upheaval compounded the problem. The reduction in arrearages is by no means indicative of any improvement in collection machinery after 1558.²⁶

The best source for estimating the extent of the early seventeenth century arrears problem is an analysis of the account of arrears from 1604 to 1653. Altogether 1191 debts are recorded, totalling almost $\pounds 17,000$. Examination of the account strongly suggests that the original was prepared

during November 1651, and the final two years were added by 1653.²⁷ The list, then, covers a period of fifty years, and provides some measure of the age of the individual debts (see Table 3.1.).

Table 3.1 Arrears of First Fruits: 1604-1653

	<u>No. of debts</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Value (£)</u>	<u>%</u>
1604-1613	17	1.4	169	1.0
1614-1623	78	6.5	934	5.5
1624-1633	127	10.7	2594	15.3
1634-1643	596	46.7	9267	54.7
1644-1653	413	34.7	3983	23.5
Total	1191	100.0	16950	100.0

This table clearly shows that two-thirds of the debts were at least ten years old, and hence unlikely to be recoverable. The existence of debts over twenty years old (almost one-fifth of the total) suggests that some of the arrears in the records were clearly 'lost', and could almost certainly never be recovered. Included in the account are the debts of many bishops who compounded in the late 1630s and were paying first fruits until 1642. The presence of these episcopal debts accounts for the higher than expected value of the debts dating from 1634-1643 (46.7% of the arrears comprised 54.7% of the total value). Indeed, when the eighteen debts over £75 are removed from the table, the total value of the arrears is reduced by one-third, to £11,475, and the average debt

among the remainder is only £9 16s. The bishops' situation with regard to arrears will be treated in more detail in the following chapter.

Several points are clear from an analysis of the accounts of arrears. First, arrears were a significant concern, although considering the age of many of the debts and the standard accounting practice of making arrears cumulative, with no differentiation between those which because of age or other factors could not be collected and those which conceivably could, the level of arrears was not overwhelming. An examination of the sizes of debts in the 1551 account points up another crucial fact: most arrears were for small amounts of money (see Table 3.2). In 1551 over 80% were under £10, and in the period 1604-53 the majority still fell below this threshold. Clearly debt was more a problem for the lower clergy, the vicars and poorer rectors, than it was for the wealthier clerics. Probably, to judge from the 1566 attack upon debtors, the government pursued larger debts first, or perhaps worked harder to prevent them falling into arrears in the first place. In view of the generally modest size of the individual debts, it is little wonder that a collection machinery which was already stretched to the limit did not, or could not, pursue all the small debtors before the sums became desperate. Indeed, in 1551 fewer than 5% of the debts exceeded £20. The fact that during the period 1604-1653, 1.5% of the debtors accounted for almost 33% of the value of arrears suggests that financial pressure on the bishops and deans who composed this small minority had a significant influence on the level of arrears. Poverty and other difficulties faced by the lower clergy led, on the other hand, to large numbers of relatively small debts.

Table 3.2 Analysis of Debts: 1551

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Under £ 5	501	46.8
£ 5 to 9 19s 11d	361	33.7
£ 10 to 14 19s 11d	126	11.8
£ 15 to 19 19s 11d	34	3.2
£ 20 to 49 19s 11d	41	3.8
£ 50 and over	<u>7</u>	<u>0.7</u>
Total	1070	100.0

Having identified the principal causes of arrears of first fruits, and assessed the extent of the problem, our attention must now turn to attempts to collect arrears and deal with the problem of debt. The case of William Nevill of Torkesaye, Lincolnshire, illustrates the difficulties of collecting outstanding debts in the sixteenth century, even in an instance when the debtor was alive and not impoverished. Nevill, who in 1549 had been granted the prebend of Halton, Nottinghamshire (Southwell) and other lands belonging to the prebends and vicars choral of Southwell, defaulted on a debt of £278 5s 7d owed in the First Fruits Office.²⁸ Having entered into a bond for £500 to guarantee payment of his debt, proceedings began against Nevill to recover the penalty. Following a judgement against him in the Common Pleas, which had no effect, process began in the Court of Exchequer. He acknowledged a recognizance to answer for the debt, but in the end did not appear. Nevill's apparent unwillingness to respect the judgments against him prompted the First Fruits Office to issue a writ to the

sheriff of Lincolnshire to levy the £500 on the debtor's lands in the county. The sheriff seized income from land amounting to £15 per annum, and a similar writ was issued to his counterpart in Nottinghamshire, in an attempt to recover more. The inability of the Crown to seize and sell land to recover the debt is amply illustrated in this case, since at £15 or even £30 per annum, recovery would be a slow process. In general, however, this remained the principal means of collecting arrears of first fruits, a situation which did alleviate the problem of individual arrears, but only very slowly. During the 1640s it was noted that recovery could take twelve years or more.

Another means of handling arrears was to attempt to collect the first fruits from the sureties, who were obligated to meet the payments should the cleric default. The close relation of the issue of sureties to first fruits debts was made by the Royal Commission of 1552; many sureties were of insufficient means and were entering into bonds and obligations which they could not satisfy. Similar concerns were raised at the 1641 Exchequer meeting referred to above. Sureties remained a problem for the administration, but the evidence from the mid seventeenth century establishes that sureties were proceeded against when first fruits fell into arrears, and collection from sureties did take place. When the Office encountered difficulties in collecting the first fruits of Anthony Stevenson, rector of Rose, Yorkshire, writs were sent to the sheriff in Kingston upon Hull, Yorkshire, where the cleric's two sureties resided.²⁹ The clerks endeavoured in some cases to track down sureties and levy charges against them when they had moved from their original place of residence (a point which demonstrates that the financial administration could on occasion act with efficiency in dealing with arrears). William Baker, rector of Winstowe,

Huntingdonshire, was ejected from his living in 1641-42, with half of his £9 15s 10 1/4d first fruits unpaid. The clerks were instructed to charge the debt on his sureties, two London businessmen. The second of these two, Robrt Margarets of St. Peter Cornhill, a fishmonger, had moved since the date of composition, and now resided at Ramsey, Huntingdonshire, and writs demanding payment were to be sent there.³⁰

Were any of these attempts to collect from sureties successful in recovering arrears? In some cases the answer is clearly yes; however no general conclusion is possible due to the limited records. Two examples from 1639 do show that some did pay when the clergy did not. George Watts, a Suffolk rector, compounded on 20 March 1639 for first fruits totalling £15 16s 1 1/2d, along with his two sureties from the parish of St. Peter-le-Poor, London: John Brooke, a painterstainer and John Holmes, a haberdasher. Watts, for reasons unknown, made only one payment, and the remainder (£ 11 17s 1/2d) was paid to the Receiver Thomas Baker by the sureties.³¹ The second case is that of Thomas Jones, who compounded for the valuable living of Tinton, Devonshire (£ 24 6s) on 4 May 1639. His sureties, both from London, were Esias Churchman, merchant tailor, and Henry Cooper, gentleman. One payment (likely £6 1s 6d) was never made. There the matter rested for a number of years. Over twelve years later it was noted by the clerk that Churchman was prepared to pay the debt if his fellow surety did not do so by Easter 1652.³² Collection of debts from sureties could take time, but it was possible in some cases at least to recover arrears of first fruits from the original sureties. The principal of using sureties to protect the Crown in the event the cleric defaulted on his first fruits payments did permit collection of debts in some cases; yet the complaints raised by the

Revenue Commission in 1552 and by others in the succeeding century suggests that the system was far from satisfactory.

To what extent did insufficiency of sureties contribute to the problem of debt? Without extensive evidence of sureties' wealth, this issue is difficult to address. Several points are, however, clear. The frequent concerns expressed with the practice of accepting sureties who were of insufficient standing for the bonds they entered (dating back at least to the Report of 1552) suggest that the problem of sureties was a major one. On the other hand, the fact that the percentage of gentlemen and esquires acting as sureties increased substantially between 1551 and the mid seventeenth century (from 33.4% to 47.5%) while arrears continued as a major problem throughout the period makes clear that sufficiency of sureties was not the sole contributing factor in the growth of arrears. The difficulties faced by the first fruits administration in collecting debts may be attributed in part only to poor choice of sureties by the clerics involved.

The continuing problem of arrears occasionally prompted enterprising individuals, mainly among the Crown's creditors, to suggest various schemes for recovery of first fruits debts. Both the Crown and the individual would benefit, it was claimed. For a fee, the petitioner offered to undertake collections as the Crown's agent. One such proposal came from Viscount Conway in 1635, suggesting that he be granted all arrearages in the Exchequer, Duchy of Lancaster, Court of Wards and Office of First Fruits and Tenths which had been incurred since 1631. Owed over £6,000 by the Crown, Conway intended to recover this money from the collected arrears. The remainder would then pass to the Crown. Conway underscored the usefulness of his scheme as a relatively

painless means whereby the Crown could settle its debt to him, pointing out (realistically) that, as the debts were at least four years old, they "will hardly ever be got in by the ordinary way".³³

More enterprising, and possibly more desperate, were those royal creditors who saw arrears of royal taxation as a solution to their own financial problems. In 1638 John Harrison, former royal agent in Barbary, was facing financial hardships arising from the demands of his former position, which caused him "greate inconveniences and extremities". He petitioned the King, pointing out that many debts in the Exchequer, including of first fruits, were neglected when, with some effort, many might in fact be recovered. Harrison offered to undertake their collection, permitting the Crown's debt to him of £3648 to be paid out of one-third of the revenue. The remainder would be retained by Harrison as his income, which he required to alleviate his financial hardship.³⁴ Presumably his attempt to profit from collection of royal taxation was not favourably received, since there is no evidence of authority being granted for such a scheme. It is easy to understand the Crown's reluctance to permit these independent collectors to profit from arrears of taxes like first fruits; the promoters of these schemes were interested primarily in their own financial success. Arrears of first fruits and other taxes proved a tempting target for royal creditors anxious for repayment and those who wished to solve their own financial problems. Their solutions to arrears were frequently unacceptable to the Crown.

Attempts to recover arrears could be influenced by those in authority in the central administration, to improve the chances of successful collection or possibly to protect friends and associates. The best evidence for the role of

financial and government administrators is found in the annotated composition books for the period 1639-1651. Besides the numerous directions from the Receiver and deputy Remembrancer Thomas Baker (frequently identified simply as "T.B."), the influence of others is also visible. John Bradshaw, president of the Council of State, requested that John Edwards, the rector of Marston, Sussex, be released from his debt of first fruits, as he was sequestrated and "very poor".³⁵ In this case Bradshaw's intervention permitted an unrecoverable debt to be removed from the record, thus improving administrative efficiency. More questionable was the intervention of Bartholomew Beale, the Auditor of Imprests in the Exchequer, in the case of Daniel Cawardine, vicar of Yelling, Middlesex. Cawardine had died sometime following his composition in February 1650, and the clerks were ordered to take no action against the sureties for his debts. One of these sureties, Thomas Slater of St. Bartholomew the Great, London, was clerk to the auditor Bartholomew Beale. The clerk's notation suggests that Beale likely exerted some influence in order to protect his servant.³⁶ Intervention from above helped avoid wasted effort on debts which were unrecoverable, but the motives behind the actions may not always have been free of personal interest.

The question of debt and arrears of first fruits engaged the energy of the financial administration and of reformers throughout the early modern period. The growth of arrears was caused by both the economic difficulties faced by the clergy and by administrative problems. Attempts were made to deal with the problem of arrears through legal action of pursuit of the sureties, but recovery remained a slow and uncertain process. The tendency of financial officials not to differentiate between debts which could be recovered and those

which were unrecoverable complicates the issue and makes attempts to evaluate the extent of the problem difficult. Two points are, however, clear. Recorded arrears were substantial, amounting by 1551 to approximately one year's revenue. In addition, the majority of debts were the result of clerical poverty and death, compounded by bureaucratic errors and carelessness. An examination of debt permits an evaluation of how successful collection was in general, and underscores the burden of debt which first fruits placed on many English clergy.

Notes: Chapter III

¹ William E. Lunt, Financial Relations of the Papacy with England: 1327-1534 (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1962), 373-74.

² Account of arrears, PRO SP10/16, signed by the auditors of the Court of First Fruits and Tenths, John Wroth and Thomas Leigh.

³ R.H. Pogson, "Revival and Reform in Mary Tudor's Church: A Question of Money", Journal of Ecclesiastic History 25 (1974): 255.

⁴ PRO SP12/39.13 (6 January 1566).

⁵ PRO SP12/265/22 (29 November 1597).

⁶ Minutes of Exchequer meetings: PRO SP16/485/108.

⁷ PRO E341/11.

⁸ PRO E334/34 fo.50 (21 April 1640); Venn, I, 184.

⁹ PRO SP10/16, No. 1; Bindoff, II, 8; PRO SP10/16, NO.162.

¹⁰ PRO SP12/39/13; Emden, 349.

¹¹ PRO E334/34 fo.67.

¹² PRO SP12/39/13; Emden 261.

¹³ PRO SP10/16, No.929.

¹⁴ PRO SP12/39/13.

¹⁵ PRO SP12/39/13; PRO SP10/16, No.1061.

¹⁶ PRO SP12/39/13; SP10/16, NO.1076; Bindoff, II, 556.

¹⁷ PRO SP12/39/13; CPR Edward VI, I, 49; V, 10; Bindoff, II, 75.

¹⁸ Bindoff, II, 75. Dynham died in 1563, leaving a fourteen year old son, John.

¹⁹ PRO SP12/39/13; DNB s.v. John Aylmer.

²⁰ PRO SP12/39/13; Bindoff, II, 465.

²¹ PRO SP12/39/13; CPR Edward VI, I, 188; II, 337; III, 211; V, 259; Bindoff, III, 360.

- 22 PRO E334/34 fo.105v (4 December 1640).
- 23 PRO E334/34 fo.145v (14 July 1643).
- 24 BL Lansdowne MS 156, fox.137-39v, 149-50.
- 25 Walter C. Richardson ed. Report of the Royal Commission of 1552, (Morgantown: University of West Virginia Press, 1974), 108; PRO SP10/16, No.1032.
- 26 PRO SP12/39/13; BL Lansdowne MS 166, fo.1.
- 27 PRO E341/11. During the course of November 1651 the clerk's hand changes, and fos.29-42 are in a different hand.
- 28 CPR Edward VI, III, 38-9; CPR Elizabeth I, I, 129; PRO SP12/39/13; PRO SP16/485/108 (fo.234v).
- 29 PRO E334/34 fo.196v.
- 30 PRO E334/34 fo.134.
- 31 PRO E334/34 fo.47.
- 32 PRO E334/34 fo.14v.
- 33 CSPD Charles I, IX, 4.
- 34 PRO SP16/408/33I.
- 35 PRO E334/34 fo.145.
- 36 PRO E334/34 fo.230. Bartholomew Beale was auditor of imprests (1644-74).

CHAPTER IV:
"CHARGES CONVENIENT TO THE CALLING OF
A BISHOP": EPISCOPAL FIRST FRUITS

The members of the Tudor and early Stuart episcopate faced serious problems with debt, brought about by inflation, Crown appropriation of lands, the infamous exchanges of properties which the Tudors used to despoil the sees, and the willingness of bishops to raise their immediate income through sale of episcopal property or the granting of long leases at fixed rents to the detriment of their successors. Taxation also helped to undermine the financial stability of bishops, forcing them into debt, and first fruits were an especial burden on many.¹ Many bishops found themselves in the position of Bishop Parkhurst of Norwich, who wrote in 1562 to his friend Henry Bullinger to explain his recent neglect of their friendship:

And that you might not think I had forgotten you . . . I send you a small present. Whenever I shall have paid my first fruits, and extricated myself from debts you shall know who and what kind of a man is your friend Parkhurst.²

In spite of episcopal incomes which were estimated in 1535 to range from £132 for the see of Bangor to £3193 for Winchester, some bishops never managed to escape from debt. These values were of course revised during the century following the Valor Ecclesiasticus of 1535 (see Table 4.1), and the figures provided by the Valor were not necessarily an accurate reflection of episcopal incomes during the later sixteenth century. One group of revaluations, made by William Cecil in 1559-1560, is included in Table 4.1 for comparison. The bishops possessed several significant advantages over their lesser brethren. They could

(and did) petition the Crown individually for relief, and were sometimes able to obtain favourable settlements. While lesser clergy did occasionally obtain

TABLE 4.1: Episcopal Incomes
Valor (1535) and 1559-60

<u>See:</u>	<u>Valor</u>	<u>1559</u>		<u>Valor</u>	<u>1559</u>
Bangor	132		Coventry & Lich.	560	
Llandaff	155		Chichester	677	677
St. Asaph	188		Hereford	769	
Gloucester	315	315	Lincoln	828	895
Bristol	327	383	Norwich	835	899
Rochester	358		Worcester	945	1050
Oxford	382	355	London	1000	1119
Peterborough	414		Salisbury	1385	1368
Chester	420		York	1610	1610
St. David's	426		Durham	1821	1821
Exeter	500		Ely	2135	
Carlisle	531		Canterbury	2683	2683
Bath & Wells	533		Winchester	3193	2491

pardon for first fruits debts, bishops clearly had easier access to and frequently more powerful connections in the Court through whom to press their suits.

Bishops also obtained special privileges when compounding. Most importantly, they were not obliged to provide sureties. In general the bishop himself guaranteed payment. As well, some bishops were granted longer terms or were exonerated from paying some portion of their first fruits. Special arrangements were made by the First Fruits Office, usually on the direction of a specific royal warrant.

If even the bishops experienced difficulties in paying their first fruits, then this was clearly a problem (for both the clergy and the Crown) which extended throughout the Tudor and early Stuart church. Hence, a study of the

bishops and first fruits provides a useful case study. First fruits were a serious financial burden for all clergy. For bishops, privileges like those outlined above may have worked to lighten it, but at the same time these were little compensation for the large amounts owed by some of the episcopate, particularly when taken together with the other charges bishops faced for local administration, hospitality and even providing for a family.

Inflation and the expropriation of lands by the Crown both undermined the ability of bishops to meet their first fruits obligations. Beyond these problems, however, were the demands placed upon the episcopate by society, which served to compound the difficulties of first fruits. The obligation to provide charity and hospitality was made more difficult by the pressure of first fruits payments. Bishops, as major landowners and the chief pastors of the church (the Protestant episcopate focused on the Petrine injunctions to support their position after the Reformation), were expected by society to use their income to provide for the poor, to care for their tenants and offer hospitality, including that to the monarch and Court. Bishops continued to meet these obligations, in most cases, into the early Stuart period, but there were nonetheless many difficulties which stood in the way.³ First fruits certainly complicated episcopal attempts to 'feed their flocks'.

Episcopal marriage was also noted by many contemporaries as one of the principal causes of a decline in hospitality and charitable activity. Those without families to support were often better able to meet the requirements placed upon them, and some like John Whitgift of Canterbury and Lancelot Andrewes of Winchester (both from wealthy sees and both unmarried) attained a wide reputation for liberality. Others, like Bullinger's friend Parkhurst,

attempted to meet the demands for charity placed upon them by the pastoral ideal in the face of serious financial problems including taxes, with the result that these problems became worse.⁴ First fruits were an "appalling burden" for the early modern episcopate at least in part because they hindered bishops from fulfilling the obligation for hospitality placed upon them by English society.⁵ In this way, also, first fruits indirectly damaged the reputation of the bishops, since many were judged by their contemporaries first for their charity and liberality. William Cecil claimed that "the bishops and clergy . . . should by their teaching and devotion and speciallye by hospitablyte and releyvng of the poore men wyn credit amongst the people . . ."⁶ First fruits hampered efforts by the episcopate to live up to this pastoral ideal, and one result was the growing accusations of episcopal greed, identified by Felicity Heal as a "peculiarly uncomfortable dilemma".⁷ The need to justify ecclesiastical wealth through extensive charity, in order to weaken lay calls for expropriation of church lands and incomes, came face to face with the demands of the Crown for lands and taxes including first fruits.

Concern over arrangements for bishops' first fruits began in the summer of 1535, soon after the passage of the original statute. Cromwell had informed Bishop Latimer of Worcester (elected 12 August 1535) and Bishop Hilsey of Rochester (elected 7 August 1535) of the need to make compositions with John Gostwick for the first fruits of their new sees. The two bishops elect visited Gostwick, asking that they be permitted to provide their own guarantees; this the Treasurer was at first apparently reluctant to accept.⁸ Administrative practices were as yet in flux. The bishops also approached another of Cromwell's personal servants, Henry Polsted, who was equally unsure as to what should be

done. On 4 September Polsted wrote to Cromwell, advising that Latimer had visited him to request that his own bond be accepted in lieu of sureties, while Hilsey had not yet appeared.⁹ One week later both bishops were at last prepared to compound, but a further problem has arisen. The valuations of the bishoprics were uncertain. Polsted wrote to Cromwell on 11 September, and again two days later, to obtain Cromwell's authorization for the valuations. Latimer had agreed to compound for £900, and to sign a bond promising to pay any additional charges which the commissioners preparing the Valor might determine (Worcester was to be valued at £945). Rochester had already been valued at £411, yet Polsted seemed reluctant to accept from Hilsey the composition for this amount.

At the same time, Bishop Hilsey addressed a letter to Cromwell complaining of the administrative confusion: "I have conferred with Mr. Gostwyke, and he says you have not appointed him to take my sureties for the first fruits, nor can Mr. Polsted tell what they (first fruits) are."¹⁰ The following day Cromwell wrote to Polsted with the necessary directions to resolve the problems. Unfortunately Cromwell's recommendation for Hilsey is not known, but in the case of Ridley his arrangements have survived. In late September 1535 Cromwell directed that the income owing to Ridley for the past year be paid, one half to the bishop and one half to Gostwick for the first fruits of the see.¹¹ Cromwell's role in directing his subordinates Gostwick and Polsted and clearing the administrative confusion points to his personal control of first fruits and the need to have the issues settled at the highest level within the royal administration. Direct intervention from senior officials and the Crown was to be a recurring theme in episcopal first fruits.

During the lifetime of the Court of First Fruits and Tenths the policy

towards bishops' first fruits appears to have been to deal with each case individually. Some bishops were exonerated by letters patent, as was John Hooper of Worcester in 1552.¹² At the same time the Privy Council often wrote directly to the Chancellor of the Court to set out conditions for composition or pardon arrearages. On 24 April 1550 the Chancellor was directed to accept the bishop of Norwich's own bond and to permit the first fruits obligation to be paid in five annual installments. A year later the bishop of Rochester, John Scory (1551-52), compounded without sureties and was permitted to delay the first payment for two years.¹³ Occasionally lands or other financial guarantees were required to cover the payments owed. One year after his presentation to Rochester, Scory was translated to Chichester, and the Council directed that arrears owing for the original first fruits were to be pardoned; in addition the tenths due for one year from the see of Chichester were also pardoned.¹⁴ As individual terms of composition varied, it appears that each case was evaluated separately, with the general allowance that a bishop's own guarantee was sufficient. The Privy Council involved itself in the regular administration of episcopal first fruits because the bishops petitioned directly to the monarch or council for special, favourable arrangements.

In general under Mary episcopal first fruits, excluding debts, were forgiven, although this policy was not universal. Several new bishops were released from their obligations during 1555, prior to the passage of the Act for the Extinguishing of First Fruits, including the bishops of Worcester and Coventry and Lichfield. The case of John Holyman, bishop of Bristol (1554-58) is less clear, since he was only exonerated by letters patent dated 11 March 1557.¹⁵ He may have been unable to meet any obligation for first fruits in the

preceding three years, or he may have waited until he was pursued by the administration for non-payment, and only then took the trouble to acquire letters patent granting exoneration.

With Elizabeth's accession the policy of selective remission of first fruits continued, although on a lesser scale.¹⁶ There is reason to believe that each request was considered on an individual basis by the Crown, taking many factors, including royal service, financial status and previous arrangements for the see into consideration. The arrangements made for the bishops of Chester bear out these points. In 1597, prior to the appointment of Richard Vaughan to the see, John Taylor, the deputy to Remembrancer Stafford, prepared a document which provides a description of arrangements for first fruits made with previous Elizabethan incumbents of the see: William Downham (1561-77), William Chaderton (1579-95) and Hugh Bellott (1595-96).¹⁷ A similar document, also prepared by Taylor, exists for Exeter.¹⁸ Downham compounded in May 1561 and was pardoned the first payment of £63 as a reward for his service and attendance on the Queen as one of her chaplains. Bishop Chaderton was given five years to pay first fruits. Chaderton subsequently petitioned Secretary of State Walsingham in October 1580, requesting release from all first fruits, but apparently without success.¹⁹ His successor, Hugh Bellott, held the see for less than one year before his death in June 1596; he had, like Chaderton, been granted five years to make his payments. All three men were permitted to compound upon their own surety. Under Elizabeth the general practice was to make the first installment due approximately one year following arrangement for composition. In May 1595, for example, Toby Matthew was granted permission to compound, without sureties, for the bishopric of Durham over four years. The

£1,639 was to be paid beginning at Easter 1596.²⁰ Anthony Watson, bishop of Chichester, was given six years to pay his first fruits in July 1597, with the first installment due on 30 April 1598.²¹ The Elizabethan regime was more willing to compromise over the timing of payment of episcopal first fruits than it was to grant remissions. Under the early Stuarts remission was seldom granted. One of the few exceptions was John Bridges, bishop of Oxford in 1604; there is little evidence of special arrangements for compounding.²² Under Charles spreading first fruits over six or seven semi-annual payments was the rule, and sureties were not required.²³ There is no evidence of warrants to pardon episcopal first fruits after the early years of James's reign.

Extended time for payment helped the bishop to spread the burden over a longer time, so that it did not fall primarily in the first few years. From the Crown's perspective, the principle that bishops paid first fruits in full except for unusual circumstances was thereby safeguarded. Since interest was not charged on the outstanding sums, delays were certainly a liability for the Crown, although in relation to the total income the amounts involved were not large.

Numerous petitions requesting special terms and consideration in compounding were submitted by bishops to the Council. Often, as in a 1551 letter sent from John Taylor, bishop-elect of Lincoln, to William Cecil, the request for deferment was simply included amongst other requests for favours or patronage which the author was making.²⁴ A half century later, Cecil's son Robert (and his eventual successor as Lord Treasurer) was also receiving many petitions for permission to defer payment of first fruits. A most amusing example concerns William Barlow, bishop of Lincoln (1608-13). In April 1609 Barlow wrote to Cecil, asking that the first installment of his first fruits be

remitted, a payment which was due in the summer of 1609. Unless some arrangements were made he would suffer "much distresse". The bishop concluded by referring to the generosity shown by Cecil towards the poor in his diocese, where many of Cecil's estates were located - an attempt at flattery and likely a calculated reference to Cecil's regard for the poor, whoever they might be.²⁵ Barlow's servant returned to his master with a message from Cecil, prompting a second letter from the bishop on 26 April. He expressed his hope that his suit was "not immoderate, neither . . . importunate". For "the necessitie of this yeere (when he was obligated to pay his first fruits) doth pinch mee neerely".²⁶ Negotiations continued, and in the following spring Barlow wrote again to Cecil, apologizing for his slowness in sending a proposal to the Treasurer.²⁷ He had apparently sent a covering letter, but neglected to include the mentioned proposal (possibly a deliberate tactic to delay payment). The outcome of the negotiations is not known, although since special arrangements rather than complete remission was being sought, success is fairly likely. Bishops like Barlow made use of their episcopal status to obtain favourable treatment in the exaction of first fruits.

A further example of a successful petition concerns William Day, bishop of Winchester (1595-96). Day petitioned for special terms to pay his first fruits, arguing that his houses were in disrepair, and the lack of nearby woodlots, pastures and orchards meant that he was forced to pay cash for his household provisions. Relief from immediate payment and generous installment terms were needed, "that he maye have a competente measure of maintenaunce to support his chardge and callinge, as in dutye towards God, her Majesty and Country it best becomethe him". Day clearly felt that first fruits threatened his

ability to fulfil the obligations placed upon him by society. His suit was successful, and he was permitted to compound over five years, with the first payment not due until November 1596.²⁸ Alas, these arrangements were for nothing, as Day died on 20 September 1596, before his first payment was due.

Royal exoneration of episcopal first fruits was frequently part of a complete policy towards episcopal revenue and church wealth. In return for agreement to exchanges of property between individual bishops and the Crown (to the advantage of the latter) first fruits were often remitted, or at least more generous terms for payment granted. John Hooper, who became bishop of both Gloucester and Worcester in 1552, surrendered certain episcopal manors to the King, receiving pardon for all his first fruits in return.²⁹ This improved Hooper's personal financial position by undermining the long-term fiscal strength of the sees. Four years previously his colleague, William Barlow, bishop of Bath and Wells, had granted manors to the King, diminishing the value of the see, which was henceforth set at £479 15s 1 1/2d, instead of £533. In return for this grant to the Crown, Barlow was pardoned of all first fruits owed and granted some lands of lesser value by the King.³⁰ These exchanges had a detrimental effect on first fruits revenue, and on the ability of bishops to meet their obligations. While exoneration of first fruits owed by the grantor helped make these exchanges more palatable to the incumbent bishops, it did little to help the financial position of their successors, and furthermore the revaluation of some sees which resulted meant that future episcopal first fruits would be worth less to the Crown.

The case of Exeter illustrates clearly the decline in episcopal first fruits. In 1551, Miles Coverdale was exonerated from his first fruits for Exeter

because the bishopric was "very much impoverished and the temporalities of the same alienated, wasted and decayed". Coverdale's predecessor John Veysey (1519-1551) had granted lands to the Crown when asked to do so, and the annual value of the see declined from £1,566 in the original Valor to less than £500. The value for calculation of first fruits was fixed henceforth at £500.³¹ Reductions of two-thirds in the value of sees, as in Exeter, decreased first fruits substantially; the exchanges of land which were so profitable for the Crown in the sixteenth century served to undermine future first fruits revenue.

Although bishops were not obliged to provide sureties when compounding, many necessarily turned to acquaintances and relatives to obtain the necessary funds to meet this substantial charge. John Jewel, upon his elevation in 1559 to the see of Salisbury (valued at £1,383), borrowed £207 from a friend to help pay his first fruits. Others, like Bishop Goodrich of Ely (1534-54), tried to raise money by leasing some episcopal lands to family members. Even with this expedient, however, Goodrich was unable completely to pay his first fruits, and in 1538 the final portion owing was remitted by the Crown.³² Some bishops felt that their diocesan clergy should share the burden of episcopal first fruits. Scambler of Norwich (1585-94) requested a benevolence from his clergy to aid in meeting his first fruits payments; if no voluntary assistance were forthcoming he threatened to hold an episcopal visitation. This would raise the necessary funds through imposition of fines for clerical offenses. In 1614 Bishop Neile used the same tactic in Lincoln, demanding a 'voluntary' benevolence to meet his first fruits obligation.³³ While these tactics may have helped to reduce a bishop's debts, this was only accomplished by transferring the burden on to the lower beneficed clergy of the diocese, who already faced their own first fruits

payments.

Bishops often cited their first fruits obligations as justification for their inability, or unwillingness, to contribute towards special causes, or as a principal cause of their general poverty. Some argued that they were unable to meet the calling of a bishop. As with all suits pleading poverty some allowance must be made for exaggeration, since the suitor sought to escape present obligations and future payments by virtue of his penury. Even by the late 1530s, when the long-term decline of episcopal incomes brought about by inflation and exchanges of lands was only just beginning, first fruits were already being cited as a principal cause of episcopal poverty. A friend of Richard Sampson, bishop-elect of Chichester, wrote to Lord Lisle in 1536 requesting assistance from Lisle in arranging payment of the bishop's first fruits. The bishop "hath so, what with his great charges, loans and gifts, straited his substance that scarce shall he be able to maintain his poor estate . . . by reason of the great burden of his first fruits . . .".³⁴ Bishop Gardiner of Winchester, facing payments in 1539, had claimed to be unable to provide for certain of his servants.³⁵ Debts arising out of first fruits could also provide a means to avoid payment of benevolences and special charges on the episcopacy. Richard Cox, bishop of Ely (1559-81), wrote a penitent letter to Secretary of State William Cecil in June 1563, after having offended the Council by not paying his voluntary share for the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral. Cox professed surprise that his colleagues had contributed: "Truly I knew not so muche". He protested that he was not aware of his obligation, and claimed that "I am forced presently to remayne in debt". The reason? He had borrowed heavily to meet his first fruits and other expenses in 1559, and as well had received no compensation for dilapidations from the time of his deprived

predecessor Thomas Thirlby.³⁶

A further illustration of the burden of first fruits may be found in June 1596. A petition was presented to the Council on behalf of the orphaned children of Richard Fletcher, bishop of London (January 1595 - June 1596), likely by the bishop's brother and executor Giles. The bishop's debts for first fruits and tenths were so great that repayment would leave his children destitute; a situation which would be a great discredit to the church. The principal cause of the debts was Fletcher's rapid promotion: "He grew into debte by no other means then by his preferments, whearby he was kept in contynual payments of his first fruits and tenths, having paied into the xchequer within three yeares the sum of £3,000 or thereabouts . . .".³⁷ Compounding the problem were £2,000 in gifts, made at the behest of the Queen, to prominent members of the Court. Bishop Fletcher had earlier been removed from his post as Almoner, and had fallen into disfavour at Court, but Robert Cecil intervened as a favour to the bishop's brother Giles. By July 1597 some action was taken to provide relief for the estate. Giles Fletcher was released from responsibility for all debts owing to the Crown, including £509 owed for two payments of first fruits.³⁸ By the 1590s most bishops had clauses inserted into their composition agreements removing liability for payments in the event of early death, but these would not necessarily be of help in those cases in which an individual borrowed from others to meet first fruits payments, and died soon after. The resulting debts would not be so easily dealt with. Such may have been the case with Bishop Fletcher.³⁹

Royal debts owed by bishops for first fruits, while individually larger than most other arrears administered within the First Fruits Office, were relatively rare. Many bishops were pardoned, or freed from their obligations by

translation to another see, so that debts did not continue in the accounts for long periods, unlike those of less well-connected clergy. Indeed only two episcopal debts are included in the 1551 account of arrears, and both may be easily explained. John Ponet, bishop of Rochester, owed £65 in first fruits, and Edmund Bonner of London had arrears totalling £125 for his see. Ponet was in Rochester for a single year, from June 1550 until 1551, when he was translated to Winchester. It is not completely clear why this debt had not been removed from the account, but as each bishop needed to petition for release upon translation, Ponet may not have taken this step by the time the account was drawn up. Bonner had been bishop of London from 1539 until his deprivation in October 1549, when he was imprisoned for opposing the Crown's religious policy. His fate made collection almost impossible.⁴⁰

In the 1566 account of arrears over £20, four bishops are recorded as debtors: Thomas Bentham of Coventry and Lichfield (1560-79), Richard Davies of St. Davids (1561-81), John Best of Carlisle (1561-70), and Robert Horne of Winchester (1561-80). Bentham owed £158, Davies £68 9s, Best £79 13s 8 1/2d, and Horne the vast sum of £1121 3s 3d.⁴¹ Horne clearly faced financial problems as bishop of Winchester, and at his death his goods were seized by the Crown for debts. Prior to coming to Winchester Horne had held the prebendary stall of Burgthorpe (presented 27 April 1552) and still owed over £30 for his first fruits. The clerk preparing the account records that the bishop "hath been written to by the Counsell" about the latter debt, although no record exists in the Privy Council registers of such a letter.⁴² For whatever reason, Horne had been in debt from a point years before his elevation to the episcopacy, and these debts continued to dog him throughout his career. His episcopal first fruits

simply compounded his difficulties. In the case of Thomas Bentham the situation was resolved more satisfactorily for the bishop. Bentham had suffered financial hardship as a result of exile under Mary's regime, and he was unable to pay his first fruits. Fortunately he possessed powerful connections at Court (including Cecil), and was able in the end to secure at least partial remission of his first fruits.⁴³ Under Elizabeth episcopal first fruits remained a significant cause of episcopal debt, although some bishops were able to utilize their contacts and friends at Court to alleviate their plight.

The first fruits records and account of arrears for the late 1630s and 1640s reflect the increasing difficulties faced by the episcopacy during a period of turmoil and anti-Laudian reaction. During a time of growing attacks on the episcopate and the church, first fruits complicated the difficulties faced by the ecclesiastical leadership. In the seventeenth century bishops were given at least four years to compound, meaning that many bishops appointed after 1637 owed sums by the start of the Civil War, and since most of these became royalists, many of these debts became uncollectible. The largest debt in the 1604-53 account of arrears was that of Joseph Hall, appointed bishop of Norwich in December 1641, who owed the entire first fruits of his see, £ 834 11s 7 1/2d.⁴⁴ He compounded in the autumn of 1642, so his payments were interrupted by the war, seizure of episcopal lands and the subsequent abolition of the episcopacy. One of Hall's predecessors, Richard Corbet (1632-35) died owing one payment, totalling £ 208; his final installment due was never discharged. The effect of the Civil War and sequestration of bishops may be seen in the fact that almost £2,100 were in arrears from episcopal first fruits arranged in 1642.⁴⁵ The appointees of the year never had any opportunity or desire to make their payments, and the

abolition of the episcopacy in 1646 meant the loss of this revenue.

First fruits placed a heavy burden on bishops, one made worse by other royal policies which weakened the financial health of the episcopacy. The Crown's depredation of the bishoprics, particularly under Edward and Elizabeth, caused acute problems for some. Even after the Reformation bishops were still expected by society to provide assistance to the poor and to maintain a household of appropriate size, an expectation which was made more difficult to meet by first fruits obligations. Bishops did, however, have several advantages over their lesser brethren. Having greater access to the Court, many used these opportunities to petition for remission, or more often for extended payment schedules. Petitions for the latter were generally more successful. As well, members of the episcopate were permitted to compound without providing sureties. Nevertheless, for many bishops, as for the clergy beneath them, first fruits were an onerous financial burden. The particular difficulties posed by episcopal first fruits may differ from those examined in previous chapters, but the end result of all first fruits remains the same: the impoverishment of the church and of her clergy.

Notes: Chapter IV

¹ See Rosemary O'Day, "Cumulative Debt: The Bishops of Coventry and Lichfield and their Economic Problems", Midland History 3 (1975): 77-93; Felicity Heal "The Tudors and Church Lands: Economic Problems of the Bishopric of Ely during the Sixteenth Century", Economic History Review (2nd Series) 26 (1973): 198-217; and Heal, Of Prelates and Princes: A Study of the Economic and Social Position of the Tudor Episcopate. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

² Bishop John Parkhurst to Henry Bullinger, 28 April 1562. in The Zurich Letters: 1558-79. Parker Society vol. 51, 107.

³ Kenneth Fincham, Prelate as Pastor: the Episcopate of James I, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 75.

⁴ Felicity Heal, Of Prelates and Princes: A Study of the Economic and Social Position of the Tudor Episcopate, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 246-47, 259-60.

⁵ Ibid., 250.

⁶ Felicity Heal, Hospitality in Early Modern England, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 256. (Quoting PRO SP12/184/50).

⁷ Ibid., 256.

⁸ Gostwick to Cromwell, 29 August 1535, LP IX, no.203.

⁹ Latimer to Cromwell, 11 September 1535, LP IX, no.272; Polsted to Cromwell, 4 September 1535, LP IX, no.273.

¹⁰ Polsted to Cromwell, 11 September 1535, LP IX, nos.342, 359, Hilsey to Cromwell, 13 September 1535, LP IX, no.360.

¹¹ Polsted to Cromwell, 15 September 1535, LP IX, no.372; LP IX, no.470.

¹² CPR Edward VI, III, 226; APC IV, 61.

¹³ APC, III, 12, 265.

¹⁴ APC, IV, 53, 63.

¹⁵ CPR Philip and Mary, III, 495; II, 291; D.M. Loades, "The Bishops of the Restored Catholic Church under Queen Mary", Miscellanae Historiae Ecclesiasticae 8 (1987): 351.

¹⁶ Elizabeth remitted the first fruits of only eight bishops in full. See

Felicity Heal, Of Prelates and Princes: A Study of the Economic and Social Position of the Tudor Episcopate. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 249.

17 PRO SP12/262/160.

18 PRO SP12/253/77.

19 PRO SP12/143/7 and SP12/143/11.

20 CSPD Elizabeth I, IV, 47.

21 CSPD Elizabeth I, IV, 454.

22 CSPD James I, VIII, 93.

23 See the numerous examples in the composition books for 1639-42: Pro E334/20.

24 BL Lansdowne MS 2, fo.197.

25 PRO SP14/44/84.

26 PRO SP14/44/85.

27 PRO SP14/54/39.

28 PRO SP12/256/102; CSPD Elizabeth I, IV, 215.

29 CPR Edward VI, IV, 226.

30 CPR Edward VI, II, 128.

31 CPR Edward VI, IV, 37, 77.

32 Heal, Of Prelates and Princes, 250; Felicity Heal, "The Tudors and Church Lands: Economic Problems of the Bishopric of Ely during the Sixteenth Century", 214.

33 Patrick Collinson, The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 68, 123.

34 Lisle Letters, No.724 (Vol.III, 422).

35 Ibid., No.1441 (Vol.V, 521).

36 BL Lansdowne MS 6 fo.133 (12 June 1563).

37 PRO SP12/259/47.

38 CSP(D Elizabeth I, IV, 454. I am grateful to Bill Acres for information on Cecil's relationship with Giles Fletcher, Treasurer of St. Paul's Cathedral.

39 Heal, Of Prelates and Princes, 252.

40 PRO SP20/16, Nos. 757, 1007.

41 PRO SP12/39/13.

42 PRO SP12/39/13; No record of the mentioned letter exists in APC, vol.I-IV; DNB s.v. William Horne.

43 Rosemary O'Day, "Cumulative Debt: The Bishops of Coventry and Lichfield and their Economic Problems", 82-3.

44 PRO E341/11. fo.24.

45 First fruits of Henry King, bishop of Chichester (1642-69), £533; Joseph Hall of Norwich (1642-56) £834; and Thomas Winniffe of Lincoln (1642-54) £725. PRO E341/11 fos.23-4.

CONCLUSION

In 1530, almost five years before the passage of the Henrician first fruits statute, the Protestant reformer William Tyndale was engaged in a polemical battle with Sir Thomas More. In his Answer to Sir Thomas More, Tyndale wrote prophetically about the extent of gratitude of subjects to their rulers:

And the offering of their first fruits preached how they had received all such fruits of the hand of God, and that it was God that gave them that land, and that kept them in it; in token whereof, as unto a lord royal (emphasis mine), they brought him the first ripe fruits of their harvest . . .¹

As the ancient Israelites had done, so the clergy were to do. Their subsequent gratitude to Henry, the Supreme Head of the English church, soon became an onerous burden. The consequences of "bringing . . . unto a lord royal . . . the first ripe fruits of their harvest" were to be financial hardship for the clergy, and a valuable source of revenue for the Crown. The principle of first fruits as an offering in gratitude to the giver of the whole had implications for the royal supremacy over the church. If the Crown controlled all ecclesiastical appointments, it was entitled, as the papacy had been, to the first fruits of the clerical 'harvest'.

What then were the effects of first fruits on the English clergy? First fruits were a principal cause of clerical impoverishment, and represented a real financial burden for many. John Feckenham's question to his audience at Paul's Cross in 1547 about how the clergy would survive their first several years in a benefice was not far off the mark.² Beyond the amounts owed for first fruits themselves, the need to travel to London, the costs of food and lodging, and the

fees associated with composition all made the burden heavier. While the financial affairs of the lower clergy were complex and are in need of detailed study in themselves, there can be no doubt that first fruits posed a serious financial problem for many clergy, from the poorest vicars to members of the episcopal bench. Some clergy, as a result, fell into debt, and arrears of first fruits began to accumulate almost from the very beginning. Many of these clergy died in debt, never fulfilling their first fruits obligations.

It is crucial to put the effects upon the clergy into perspective. The lack of any comprehensive revaluation of livings after the original Valor Ecclesiasticus of 1535 meant that the economic position of some clergy improved. For those who were able to take advantage of rising prices to increase their own incomes, fixed first fruits became less of a burden by the early seventeenth century. However, the majority of clergy were not so fortunate, since their real incomes were instead declining; their tithes had been commuted to fixed payments (modi), or lands were let on long leases, with no hope of raising rents to match the price rise. For these unfortunate clergy the fact that first fruits were also fixed could bring only marginal comfort. First fruits were blamed for the poor quality of clerical recruits, since they made a clerical career less attractive.³ While the long-term implications of first fruits for the English church are harder to establish, the connection between clerical taxation and pluralism must be pointed out. The poor endowment of many livings meant that if clergy were to survive financially, holding several benefices was often necessary.⁴ The consequences for pastoral care were clear to many churchmen and to their critics. Royal first fruits were a misdirection of resources from the church which hindered the fulfilment of its pastoral aims.

To the Crown, on the other hand, first fruits represented a valuable source of revenue, particularly in the early years after 1535. Administering this new revenue presented a challenge for the machinery of government, and during the period 1535-1554 first fruits administration underwent several significant changes. Originally controlled personally by Thomas Cromwell through his agent John Gostwick, with Cromwell's fall in 1540 a separate financial court was established, along the lines of the Court of Augmentations and the Duchy of Lancaster. The Court of First Fruits and Tenths existed until 1554, when ecclesiastical taxation was placed under the control of an autonomous Office of First Fruits and Tenths within the reformed Exchequer. Throughout these structural changes, however, administrative procedures and personnel remained remarkably constant.

The value of first fruits as a source of revenue for the Crown declined sharply after the 1530s. In 1536 they generated £21,000 alone, but by later in the century this figure had declined substantially. During the 1590s first fruits amounted to less than £10,000 per annum, and averaged less than £6,000 per annum under James and Charles.⁵ The inflation of the later sixteenth century compounded this situation, since the true value of first fruits declined even more than these figures suggest on the surface. Progressive problems of arrears contributed to falling revenue. Despite several individual cases, like that of Hatton, of large debts owed by First Fruits officials, there appears to be little evidence of widespread corruption diminishing the revenues.⁶ This was despite the charges leveled by the Venetian legate Daniel Barbaro in May 1551. For him the root cause of the decline in receipts was the illegality of the Crown's seizure of church wealth: "From the revenue of these Courts (First Fruits and

Augmentation), the Crown receives annually 800,000 crowns, . . . although there is much usurpation and robbery on the part of the officials, who do not allow the whole account to be seen, ill gained property necessarily making a bad end."⁷

The 'ill gained property' had a further effect on first fruits revenue, although not in the manner Barbara believed. Under Henry VIII and Edward VI the royal policy of seizing monastic and chantry lands and incomes was a financial windfall, but one which had disastrous results for income from clerical taxes - 'killing the goose which laid the golden eggs'. First fruits revenue declined most drastically during the 1540s and 1550s, due to the loss of many benefices associated with the dissolved foundations.⁸ While vast sums flowed into the Court of Augmentations the potential of future clerical taxation was at the same time reduced.

First fruits were a financial burden for the English clergy and a drain on the financial resources of the church. They promoted clerical poverty and debt, and exacerbated the problems of lay attacks and inflation in the early modern period. Their value to the Crown, however, was substantial, despite the harm done to the church. A significant, albeit declining, source of revenue, first fruits were valuable from a fiscal perspective. But their collection by the Crown after 1535 served another broader purpose. First fruits represented one facet of the Crown's control over the English church after the Reformation. It was no accident that one of Elizabeth's first major actions following her accession in 1558 was to reassert the royal prerogative to collect first fruits and tenths.⁹ The right to tax the clergy meant, as it had for her father Henry, far more than the opportunity for financial gain. It represented one element of the royal supremacy; first fruits remained a valuable asset to the Crown, even as their financial worth diminished.

Notes: Conclusion

¹ William Tyndale, An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue, Parker Society, vol.44, 65.

² See the report of the speech by Feckenham in LP XXI, ii, no.371; and Susan Brigden, London and The Reformation, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 576-7.

³ This point was fervently expressed by Archbishop Whitgift in his memorial to Lord Brughley. See John Strype, The Life and Acts of John Whitgift, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822), III, 175-6.

⁴ Christopher Hill, Economic Problems of the Church from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 189.

⁵ See Appendices B, C and D for information on yearly revenue.

⁶ Lawrence Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 423.

⁷ CSP Ven., V, 355.

⁸ Beyond those regular clergy who lost their benefices, the numerous chantry priests also disappear from the first fruits records.

⁹ APC, VII, 37; G.R. Elton, The Parliament of England: 1559-1581, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 151-2.

Guide to Appendices

- A - Officials of the Court of First Fruits, 1540 - 1554
- B - Receipts of John Gostwick, Receiver General of First Fruits, 1535 - 1540
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- I - Geographic Origin of Sureties, 1551
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APPENDIX A:Officials of the Court of First Fruits, 1540-1554Chancellor:

- John Baker 5 Nov. 1540-1554 **

Treasurer:

- John Gostwick 4 Feb. 1541 - April 1545
- Wimond Carewe Apr. 1545 - 1549
- William Petre Oct. 1549 - 1554 **

Attorney:

- John Carell 5 Feb. 1541 - 12 June 1543
- Robert Chidley 13 June 1543 - 1554 **

Auditors (2):

- Thomas Leigh 26 Nov. 1540 - 1554 **
- Richard Mody 26 Nov. 1540 - 1550
- John Wroth Sept. 1550 - 1554 **

Clerk of the Court:

- Alexander Courthorpe 1540 - May 1542(?)
- Thomas Godfrey 18 May 1542 - 1554 **

Keeper of the Records:

- Thomas Argall 1540 (appt. 20 Mar. 1542-1554 **)

Messenger:

- Robert Byby 28 Mar. 1541 - 4 July 1546
- John Wells 12 July 1546 - 1551
- John Byby 4 Aug. 1551 - 1554

Usher:

- Thomas Massey 24 May 1541 - 1554(?)

N.B. Persons marked ** were granted a pension upon the dissolution of the Court in 1554.

APPENDIX B:Receipts of John Gostwick, Receiver General of First Fruits1535 - 1540

	<u>First Fruits</u>	<u>Clerical Tenths</u>
1535	14,035	32,018
1536	21,221	30,549
1537	13,385	29,445
1538	17,646	25,970
1539	13,987	19,857
1540	9,795	18,413
Total Receipts	90,069	156,252

Source: BL Lansdowne MS 156 fo.137-138v (Figures are for year ending December 31).

APPENDIX C:Receipts from Lay and Clerical Taxation: 1594 - 1597

	<u>Fifteenth & Tenth</u>	<u>Lay Subsidy</u>	<u>Clerical Subsidy</u>	<u>Clerical Tenth</u>	<u>First Fruits</u>
1594	54,711	59,342	8,481	12,638	9,294
1595	58,424	84,826	17,447	12,572	8,361
1596	33,881	75,610	18,355	11,993	6,032
1597	32,789	45,622	16,556	14,000	6,324
Total	179,805	265,400	60,839	51,203	30,011
% of Total Receipts:	30.6%	45.2%	10.4%	8.7%	5.1%

Source: Compiled from PRO SP12/263/80. (Figures are for year ending Michaelmas).

APPENDIX D:Average Annual Receipts from First Fruits and Tenths1603 - 1641

	<u>First Fruits</u>	<u>Clerical Tenths</u>
1603-07	4,402	11,595
1608-12	5,782	13,097
1613-17	5,994	12,867
1618-22	5,083	11,481
1623-27	7,782	13,038
1628-32	6,698	10,928
1633-37	7,850	12,425
1638-41	2,471	11,894
Total Receipts	227,841	467,560
Annual Average	5,842	11,989

Source: Compiled from Frederick C. Dietz, "The Receipts and Issues of the Exchequer During the Reigns of James I and Charles I" Smith College Studies in History vol.13 no.4 (1928):136-53.

APPENDIX E:Analysis of Sureties by Status/Occupational Designations,1551 SP10/16 Account of Arrears

<u>Designation</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Knights	29	1.5
Esquires	133	6.8
Gentlemen	520	26.6
Yeomen	243	12.4
Husbandmen	37	1.9
Clergy	73	3.7
Members of Households	67	3.4
Aldermen	6	0.3
Merchant Tailors	68	3.5
Mercers	45	2.3
Drapers	43	2.2
Haberdashers	37	1.9
Innholders	35	1.8
Merchants	33	1.7
Clothworkers	32	1.6
Tailors	27	1.4
Goldsmiths	26	1.3
Skinners	23	1.0
Notaries	15	0.8
Stationers	15	0.8
Other Occupations	243	12.4
Unknown	197	10.1
No Sureties	2	0.1
Total Sureties	1956	

APPENDIX F:Analysis of York Sureties by Trade Group, 1551

<u>Trade Group:</u>	<u>Admission to York Trades</u>		<u>1551 Account of Arrears</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Clothing	318	18.7	13	20.7
Food and Drink	351	20.7	13	20.3
Distributive	235	13.8	9	14.1
Textiles	149	8.8	1	1.6
Building	154	9.1	1	1.6
Leather	104	6.1	2	3.1
Household	144	8.5	6	9.4
Rural	55	3.2	3	4.7
Personal	42	2.5	6*	9.4
Miscellaneous	147	8.7	10**	15.6

Trade Groups are taken from D.M. Palliser, Tudor York.

* Includes notaries.

** Includes gentlemen.

APPENDIX G:Analysis of Sureties by Status/Occupational Designations,1639 - 1651

<u>Designation</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Knights	14	0.4
Esquires	220	5.5
Gentlemen	1665	42.0
Yeomen	105	2.6
Clergy	158	4.0
Merchant Tailors	157	4.0
Grocers	144	3.6
Haberdashers	143	3.6
Stationers	130	3.3
Drapers	97	2.4
Tailors	97	2.4
Goldsmiths	61	1.5
Mercers	60	1.5
Clothworkers	39	1.0
Innholders	38	1.0
Vintners	37	0.9
Apothecaries	35	0.9
Chandlers	32	0.8
Ironmongers	31	0.8
Girdlers	31	0.8
Cordwainers	30	0.8
Barbersurgeons	30	0.8
Scriveners	24	0.6
Salters	23	0.6
Other Occupations	436	11.0
Unknown	238	6.0
Total Sureties	4207	

Calculated from PRO E334/20-21.

APPENDIX H:

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Annual Table of Principal Status/Occupational Designations1639 - 1651

<u>Designation:</u>	<u>1639</u>	<u>1640</u>	<u>1641</u>	<u>1642</u>	<u>1643</u>	<u>1644</u>	<u>1645</u>	<u>1646</u>	<u>1647</u>
Esquires	40 5.9%	36 6.7%	36 6.2%	17 3.7%	4 2.2%	1 1.2%	3 4.1%	8 4.1%	15 5.4%
Gentlemen	302 45.0%	240 44.5%	259 40.8%	189 40.8%	64 34.4%	27 31.8%	24 32.4%	68 35.1%	112 40.3%
Yeomen	14 2.0%	10 1.9%	16 2.7%	12 2.6%	12 6.5%	3 3.5%	2 2.7%	3 1.5%	10 3.6%
Clergy	16 2.3%	12 2.2%	0	7 1.5%	5 2.7%	9 10.6%	9 12.2%	17 8.8%	18 6.5%
Merchant Tailors	21 3.1%	16 3.0%	22 3.8%	20 4.3%	7 3.8%	6 7.1%	4 5.4%	12 6.2%	11 4.0%
Haberdashers	31 4.6%	15 2.8%	32 5.5%	12 2.6%	7 3.8%	5 5.9%	4 5.4%	10 5.2%	6 2.2%
Grocers	14 2.0%	17 3.1%	16 2.7%	22 4.8%	9 4.8%	7 8.2%	2 2.7%	9 4.6%	15 5.4%
Stationers	20 3.0%	18 3.3%	23 4.0%	19 4.1%	8 4.3%	1 1.2%	1 1.3%	7 3.6%	9 3.2%
Drapers	25 3.7%	8 1.5%	12 2.1%	8 1.7%	6 3.2%	7 8.2%	5 6.8%	3 1.5%	5 1.8%
Total Known	671	539	582	463	186	85	74	194	278

(% given are % of annual total of known sureties)
Calculated from PRO E334/20 and 21.

Annual Table of Principal Status/Occupational Designations

1639 - 1651 (Cont.)

<u>Designation:</u>	<u>1648</u>	<u>1649</u>	<u>1650</u>	<u>1651</u>	<u>Total</u>
Esquires	33 10.9%	4 2.3%	8 7.6%	15 4.8%	220 5.5%
Gentlemen	108 35.9%	95 53.8%	43 41.0%	134 42.7%	1665 42.0%
Yeomen	8 2.7%	0	2 1.9%	13 4.1%	105 2.6%
Clergy	25 8.3%	10 5.6%	4 3.8%	26 8.3%	158 4.0%
Merchant Tailors	17 5.6%	7 4.0%	5 4.8%	9 2.7%	157 4.0%
Haberdashers	5 1.7%	5 2.8%	3 2.9%	8 2.5%	143 3.6%
Grocers	14 4.7%	3 1.7%	5 4.8%	11 3.5%	144 3.6%
Stationers	7 2.3%	4 2.3%	5 4.8%	8 2.5%	130 3.3%
Drapers	6 2.0%	1 0.6%	1 1.0%	10 3.2%	97 2.4%
Total Known	301	177	105	314	3969

APPENDIX I:Geographic Origin of Sureties:SP10/16 Account of Arrears

<u>A. Middlesex:</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>E. Midlands:</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
London	582		Derbyshire	9	
Middlesex co.	29		Huntingdonshire	3	
Southwark	27		Leicestershire	7	
Westminster	21		Lincolnshire	36	
Total	750	37.8	Nottinghamshire	27	
			Northamptonshire	10	
			Rutland	2	
			Warwickshire	16	
<u>B. South-East:</u>			Total	110	5.5
Bedfordshire	12		<u>F. West:</u>		
Berkshire	14		Cheshire	11	
Buckinghamshire	9		Gloucestershire	43	
Essex	32		Herefordshire	23	
Hampshire	32		Shropshire	12	
Hertfordshire	21		Staffordshire	12	
Kent	42		Worcestershire	16	
Oxfordshire	24		Total	117	5.9
Surrey	14				
Sussex	22				
Total	222	11.2			
<u>C. South-West:</u>			<u>G. North:</u>		
Cornwall	16		Cumberland	8	
Devonshire	29		Durham	3	
Dorset	19		Lancashire	5	
Somerset	39		Westmorland	4	
Wiltshire	27		Yorkshire	213	
Total	154	7.8	(York)	(98)	
			Total	238	12.0

D. East Anglia:

Cambridgeshire	6	
Norfolk	68	
Suffolk	44	
Total	118	5.9

H. Wales:

Total	129	6.5
Calais	3	0.1
Unknown	167	8.4
<u>Total</u>	1984	

APPENDIX J:

Geographic Distribution of Livings for whichCompositions were made, 1639 - 1651

<u>Region: (as in Appendix I)</u>	<u>1639</u>	<u>1640</u>	<u>1641</u>	<u>1642</u>	<u>1643</u>	<u>1644</u>	<u>1645</u>	<u>1646</u>
Middlesex	12 3.2%	10 3.4%	11 3.6%	11 4.5%	6 6.3%	4 8.9%	0	2 1.8%
South-East	98 26.3%	71 23.8%	85 27.5%	88 35.8%	28 29.2%	17 37.8%	12 30.8%	33 29.2%
South-West	83 22.3%	55 18.5%	47 15.2%	31 12.6%	15 15.6%	1 2.2%	3 7.7%	16 14.2%
East Anglia	41 11.0%	45 15.1%	29 9.4%	20 8.1%	13 13.5%	17 37.8%	17 43.6%	29 25.7%
Midlands	69 18.5%	46 15.4%	74 23.9%	56 22.8%	18 18.8%	5 11.1%	6 15.4%	17 15.0%
West	27 7.2%	19 6.4%	22 7.1%	20 8.1%	9 9.4%	1 2.2%	1 2.6%	3 2.7%
North	24 6.4%	27 9.1%	24 7.8%	14 5.7%	6 6.3%	0	0	8 7.1%
Wales	19 5.1%	25 8.4%	17 5.5%	6 2.4%	1 1.0%	0	0	5 4.4%
Annual Total of Livings Calculated from PRO E334/20 and 21.	373	298	309	246	96	45	39	113

Geographic Distribution of Livings, 1639 - 1652 (Continued)

<u>Region:</u>	<u>1647</u>	<u>1648</u>	<u>1649</u>	<u>1650</u>	<u>1651</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total Livings**</u>
Middlesex	0	5 3.1%	0	1 1.6%	4 2.2%	66 3.0%	167 1.7%
South-East	49 33.8%	52 32.3%	24 25.3%	18 29.5%	69 37.5%	644 29.7%	2623 26.8%
South-West	21 14.5%	22 13.7%	8 8.4%	8 13.1%	24 13.0%	334 15.4%	1442 14.7%
East Anglia	29 20.0%	22 13.7%	13 13.7%	12 19.7%	24 13.0%	311 14.4%	1258 12.8%
Midlands	30 20.7%	38 23.6%	25 26.3%	10 16.4%	49 26.6%	443 20.5%	1679 17.1%
West	7 4.8%	5 3.1%	10 10.5%	6 9.8%	11 6.0%	141 6.5%	1042 10.6%
North	6 4.1%	6 3.7%	3 3.2%	6 9.8%	2 1.1%	126 5.8%	820 8.4%
Wales	3 2.0%	11 6.8%	12 12.6%	0	1 0.5%	100 4.6%	767 7.8%
Annual Total of Livings	145	161	95	61	184	2166	9798

** Total livings in England and Wales, for comparison with annual composition figures. List of all livings taken from BL LansdowneMS 171, fo.240v.

APPENDIX K:Principal London Parishes for Sureties,1639 - 1643

<u>Parish</u>	<u>No. of Sureties</u>	<u>%</u>
St. Martin in the Fields	185	11.0
St. Dunstan in the West	136	8.1
St. Clement Danes in the Strand	106	6.3
St. Andrew, Holborne	62	3.7
St. Gregory by St. Paul's	60	3.6
St. Bride	56	3.3
St. Faith under St. Paul's	51	3.0
St. Sepulchre	40	2.4
St. Mary le Savoy	33	1.9
St. Michael le Querne	24	1.4
St. Michael Ludgate	23	1.4
St. Giles without Cripplegate	21	1.3
St. Benet Paul's Wharf	21	1.3
St. Christopher le Stocks	18	1.1
St. Mary le Bow	18	1.1
St. Anne Blackfriars	17	1.0
St. Lawrence Old Jewry	17	1.0
St. Mary Woolchurch	17	1.0
St. Bartholomew the less	17	1.0
Westminster	93	5.5
Southwark	27	1.6
Total London Sureties	1679	100.0

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