

Episcopal Tombs in Early Modern England

by PETER SHERLOCK

The Reformation simultaneously transformed the identity and role of bishops in the Church of England, and the function of monuments to the dead. This article considers the extent to which tombs of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century bishops represented a set of episcopal ideals distinct from those conveyed by the monuments of earlier bishops on the one hand and contemporary laity and clergy on the other. It argues that in death bishops were increasingly undifferentiated from other groups such as the gentry in the dress, posture, location and inscriptions of their monuments. As a result of the inherent tension between tradition and reform which surrounded both bishops and tombs, episcopal monuments were unsuccessful as a means of enhancing the status or preserving the memory and teachings of their subjects in the wake of the Reformation.

Between 1400 and 1700, some 466 bishops held office in England and Wales, for anything from a few months to several decades.¹ The majority died peacefully in their beds, some fading into relative obscurity. Others, such as Richard Scrope, Thomas Cranmer and William Laud, were executed for treason or burned for heresy in one reign yet became revered as saints, heroes or martyrs in another. Throughout these three centuries bishops played key roles in the politics of both Church and

PRO = Public Record Office; TNA = The National Archives

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¹ For the purposes of this study, I have selected all diocesan and suffragan bishops who held positions in England and Wales and who died between 1400 and 1700. Titular bishops are not included. Although not normally regarded as 'early modern', fifteenth-century bishops have been included in order to get a clearer picture of the changes which occurred in the sixteenth century. Data on bishops, their careers and places of burial are taken from the *DNB* and the Royal Historical Society's *Handbook of British chronology*, ed. E. B. Fryde, London 1986. Information on their monuments has been compiled from Pevsner's *Buildings of England*, and histories of cathedrals, dioceses and counties, especially Browne Willis, *A survey of the cathedrals*, London 1727.

State and, at least theoretically, were engaged in teaching and disciplining clergy and laity toward orthodoxy in religious belief and practice. Yet their social and economic positions were transformed by the Reformation. Their very existence was threatened as the reformed Church of England sought to hold together Catholic structures and Protestant doctrines, and in the mid-seventeenth century the episcopate was abolished altogether for two decades.² It would not be surprising, then, if the ways in which these men were commemorated after death changed profoundly in the early modern period.

Like bishops, monuments were also a point of tension in Reformation England. From the 1530s onwards the function of tombs required redefinition as Protestants attacked imagery in churches on the one hand and prayers for the dead on the other. As roods and statues were dismantled and interiors whitewashed, monuments achieved a new prominence as the last surviving images in English churches besides the compulsory display of the royal arms. Royal proclamations in 1550 and 1560 sought to protect them from further destruction by declaring that their true purpose was to preserve the historical record of noble deeds and virtues, not to aid the passage of souls through purgatory.³ Nevertheless, Nigel Llewellyn has argued that ‘the basic format and function of the monuments and their effigies did not alter radically over the one hundred years or so after the Reformation’.⁴ The onset of the civil wars and radical religion in the 1640s gave rise to a further wave of intense monumental vandalism, but monuments continued to be built in increasing numbers throughout the seventeenth century to proclaim the lineage, status and character of their subjects.⁵

That monuments of bishops mattered is demonstrated in the vandalism to which some were subjected. For example, the shrine at Archbishop Scrope’s tomb at York was an object of reformist zeal in the late 1530s since it was a site of local pilgrimages, and because Henry VIII may have conceived of Scrope, executed by Henry IV, as similar to Archbishop Becket in preferring ecclesiastical to royal authority.⁶ The tomb to Bishop Richard Cox (d. 1581) in Ely Cathedral had already been defaced by 1601. John Harington believed this to be a result of Cox’s poor reputation amongst the local populace, owing to his alleged

² On bishops in early modern England see Kenneth Carleton, *Bishops and reform in the English Church, 1520–1559*, Woodbridge 2001; Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as pastor: the episcopate of James I*, Oxford 1990; Andrew Foster, *The Church of England, 1570–1640*, London 1994, ch. iii; Felicity Heal, *Of prelates and princes: a study of the economic and social position of the Tudor episcopate*, Cambridge 1980; Scott Wenig, *Straightening the altars: the ecclesiastical vision and pastoral achievements of progressive bishops under Elizabeth I, 1559–1579*, New York 2000.

³ Margaret Aston, *England’s iconoclasts: laws against images*, Oxford 1988, 269; Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the dead in Reformation England*, Oxford 2002, 168–72.

⁴ Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral monuments in post-Reformation England*, Cambridge 2001, 271.

⁵ For useful statistics on monumental commemoration in this period see Jonathan Finch, *Church monuments in Norfolk before 1850: an archaeology of commemoration*, Oxford 2000.

⁶ Aston, *Iconoclasts*, 269.

nepotism and aggressive attempts to raise episcopal revenue.⁷ Parliamentary iconoclasm in cathedrals led to the desecration of tombs such as those of Bishop Thomas Dove (d. 1630) at Peterborough, broken up by soldiers in April 1643, and Bishop Edmund Scambler (d. 1594) at Norwich, defaced in the 1640s and not repaired until a descendant took it in hand half a century later.⁸

An examination of episcopal monuments is a useful means of assessing the impact of the Reformation on a number of levels. It must consider both continuity and change in a period when both tombs and prelates were under threat: the new vision of bishops as godly teachers and preachers coexisted with their ongoing high degree of control over the doctrine and practice of the Church of England; the new focus of monuments on instructing the living about the virtues of their predecessors was tempered by their use of traditional forms, images and languages. If monuments were to preserve social order in the face of death by constructing a 'monumental body', and teach the living a set of values practised by the worthy dead, what qualities and acts were modelled on the tombs of bishops? To what extent was a specifically episcopal identity – an 'episcopal body' – constructed through monumental commemoration, and how was the tension between tradition and reform negotiated?⁹ In short, were episcopal ideals of piety, honour and memory distinct from those of wealthier laity in the early modern period, and from those of late medieval bishops?

In order to address these problems, this article will briefly expose the changing role of bishops as superintendents of monuments and then examine several aspects of their own tombs. Llewellyn has argued that historians should read the visual messages of monuments through four discourses: effigy, architectural frame, inscription and heraldry.¹⁰ To these must be added location (not only the kind of building within which a monument is housed, but also the precise place within a church, college or cathedral). As Jean Wilson has demonstrated, a tomb's situation determines how the deceased's identity is presented and which ancestral, geographical and occupational associations are included.¹¹ It is also imperative to highlight what is left unsaid: are explicitly

⁷ John Harington, 'A briefe view of the state of the Church of England' [1606], in *Nugae antiquae*, ed. T. Park, London 1804, ii. 107.

⁸ Aston, *Iconoclasts*, 64–5; Jonathan Finch, 'The monuments', in Ian Atherton and others (eds), *Norwich Cathedral: church, city and diocese, 1096–1996*, London 1996, 467–93 at p. 476.

⁹ The concept of the 'monumental body' is articulated by Nigel Llewellyn in *The art of death: visual culture in the English death ritual, c. 1500–c. 1800*, London 1991, 101–8, building on the work of Kantorowicz and Giesey.

¹⁰ Llewellyn, *Funeral monuments*, 363–4.

¹¹ For some considerations of the location of monuments see David Cressy, *Birth, death and marriage: ritual, religion and the life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*, Oxford 1997, 456–73; Llewellyn, *Art of death*, 105; Peter Sherlock, 'Academic commemoration: monuments at Corpus Christi College Oxford, 1517–1700', *Church Monuments* xiv (1990), 80–7; and Jean Wilson, 'Elite commemoration in early modern England: reading funerary monuments', *Antiquity* lxxiv (2000), 413–23.

Protestant conceptions of the afterlife conveyed by bishops' monuments? Or, to take another example following on from Mary Prior's work on Tudor bishops' wives, do episcopal tombs register lineage and (after the Reformation) marriages and children in the same way as other monuments?¹²

In her study of the Tudor episcopate, Felicity Heal delineated the changes in wealth, status and expectations wrought upon bishops by the Reformation. Whereas fifteenth-century bishops were frequently powerful magnates, equal to lay noblemen, their Elizabethan successors were faced with the new demand of families for whom economic provision had to be made, and reduced estates from which income could be derived. Yet lay expectations of episcopal hospitality remained, and the incumbents of wealthier sees such as York, Canterbury, Durham or Winchester continued to enjoy a relatively high standard of living. By the seventeenth century, episcopal fortunes had recovered somewhat; while the impoverished Welsh bishops might never aspire to a status above that of the modest local gentleman, the wealth and status of the group as a whole received renewed protection with the accession of James VI and I. An air of uncertainty about the office and duties of a bishop still remained in the reformed Church of England. The assertion of traditional prerogatives was a tempting weapon for prelates who sought increased political influence.¹³

Two areas of episcopal power developed in the Elizabethan and early Stuart period were those touching burial and the control of ecclesiastical fabric and furnishings. These two subjects were contested not only by Puritans and traditionalists but also by those who sought to express their status and wealth through burial and the erection of monuments in the arena of parish churches and cathedrals. Even as their own tombs were subjected to the gaze of reformers, so too did bishops preach and police the burial practices of their dioceses during and after the Reformation. In 1572, prior to becoming a bishop, John Whitgift sought a return to burial in cemeteries away from parish churches. Whitgift's argument paralleled Luther's thinking on burial in the 1520s, as both men argued that the use of cemeteries was not only a more hygienic practice but would also ensure the abolition of 'the superstition which hath been of being buried rather in the church, nearer the high altar than further off, the remnants whereof are in a great number of men's hearts yet'.¹⁴

James Pilkington, bishop of Durham, denied that consecrated ground was necessary for decent burial and, like Whitgift, rejected traditional

¹² Mary Prior, "'Reviled and crucified marriages': the position of Tudor bishops' wives", in M. Prior (ed.), *Women in English society, 1500-1800*, London 1985, 118-48.

¹³ Heal, *Of prelates*, passim.

¹⁴ *The works of John Whitgift*, ed. J. Ayre (Parker Society, 1851), i. 534-5; Craig Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the dead: death and ritual in early modern Germany, 1450-1700*, Basingstoke 2000, 46-54.

hierarchies of space:

Therefore the papists are both wicked in teaching the people, that one place is more holy than another to be buried in, as in the church rather than in the churchyard, and near the high altar rather than in the body of the church.

He went on to set out three rules for burial: first, 'do not cast out the dead bodies unburied'; second, 'avoid great cost and sumptuousness'; and third, 'no superstition should be committed'. Touching the second, he exhorted the faithful to avoid 'shrines, tombs, tapers, torches' and the like as unprofitable for salvation. Nevertheless he could not override the commemorative ideal which argued that funerary honours were reproductions of political hierarchy necessary to the maintenance of honour and social order:

if civil policy add some solemnity to princes and noblemen, as their coat, armour, flag, sword, head-piece and recognizance, I dare not utterly condemn it; and yet would wish it more moderately used than many times it is. As there was difference in them, while they lived, from the common sort and state; so there may be in their burials for policy's sake, but for no religion or holiness at all.¹⁵

When making his will in 1571 Pilkington was consistent with his own teaching, directing that he should 'be buried with as few popish ceremonies as may be, or vain cost'. Nevertheless his executors thought otherwise, and four months after his relatively humble burial at Bishop Auckland in 1576, Pilkington's remains were translated to Durham Cathedral to rest under a monumental brass in the middle of the choir before the high altar.¹⁶

Elizabeth's 1560 proclamation against defacing monuments made bishops a source of justice for those who sought to protect tombs from iconoclasts.¹⁷ In theory at least, the law protected all monuments from destruction, allowing bishops alone the right of interference in cases of heretical content or unseemly location.¹⁸ The common law protection of monuments was established by a number of legal cases, such as *Ley vs Francis* which came to the common law courts in 1614 and proceeded to Star Chamber in 1615. A window in West Buckland chapel, Somerset, which contained a picture of Christ together with heraldry and a funerary inscription referring to the Ley family, had been demolished by the Francis family, their local rivals. The judgement avoided further controversy by ordering that the royal arms be placed in the window instead of restoring the original, but observed that monuments in the form of tombs, banners and windows were protected against the interference of parishioners, clergy and churchwardens alike. The right of removing such objects was reserved to the

¹⁵ *The works of James Pilkington*, ed. J. Scholefield (Parker Society, 1842), 317. These quotations are from Pilkington's 1575 'Exposition on Nehemiah', published posthumously in 1585.

¹⁶ Cressy, *Birth, marriage and death*, 413; Willis, *Survey*, i, 246.

¹⁷ *Tudor royal proclamations*, ed. P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, New Haven 1964–9, ii, 146–7.

¹⁸ J. H. Baker, 'Funeral monuments and the heir', *Irish Jurist* v (1970), 391–405.

ordinary.¹⁹ The Chief Justice Edward Coke summed up the law as fashioned by this and other cases in his *Institutes*: ‘Concerning the building or erecting of tombs, sepulchers or monuments for the deceased in church, chancell, common chappell, or churchyard ... the defacing of them is punishable by the common law.’²⁰

Bishops might be prompted to take up their power to intervene in the commemoration of the dead for a variety of reasons. Some asked after the content and function of monuments. Few went as far as Bishop Hooper who in 1551 and 1552 instructed the people of Gloucester and Worcester dioceses to ‘take down and remove out of their churches and chapels, all places, tabernacles, tombs, sepulchres, tables, footstools, roodlofts, and other monuments, signs, tokens, relics, leavings, and remembrances, where such superstition, idols, images, or other provocation of idolatry have been used’.²¹ A few bishops inquired after the destruction of monuments as prompted by the 1560 proclamation, although this was more common in the 1620s and 1630s as the ‘beauty of holiness’ ideal began to take hold amongst the episcopate.²²

Outright heresy was another reason for episcopal intervention. In January 1633, after a monument was erected at Boughton Malherbe stating that Edward, Lord Wotton died ‘a true Catholic of the Roman Church’, Archbishop Abbot reported the matter to the king: ‘the Lady Wotten [*sic*] in Kent hath set up a bold epitaph upon her lord’s tomb, and will not be persuaded to take it down’. She was reported to the High Commission and fined £500.²³

Religious concerns could of course be entangled with political disputes. In the mid-1630s Archbishop Laud was drawn into the dispute over the enormous tomb built by Richard Boyle, earl of Cork, at the east end of St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin, to commemorate himself, his wife Katherine and her Weston ancestors. Thomas Wentworth, then Lord Deputy of Ireland, objected to the political message of the monument and refused to be seen ‘crouching to a Dr Weston, to a Geoffrey Fenton, to an earl of Cork and his lady, or if you will to a Kinalmeaky his second son’.²⁴ Laud approved the formation of a committee to decide the tomb’s fate, largely justified by

¹⁹ Day *vs* Beddingfield and others (Noy 104), *English reports*, London 1907, lxxiv. 1070, also recorded as Frances *vs* Ley (Cro. Jac. 366), *ibid.* lxxix. 314–15; TNA: PRO, STAC 8/141/13; Star Chamber, Frances *vs* Ley, *temp.* James I.

²⁰ Cited in Baker, ‘Funeral monuments’, 395.

²¹ W. H. Frere and W. M. Kennedy (eds), *Visitation articles and injunctions of the period of the Reformation*, London 1910, ii. 285. ²² Marshall, *Beliefs and the dead*, 179.

²³ T. Birch, *Court and times of Charles I*, London 1848, ii. 227; *The works of the most reverend father in God, William Laud*, Oxford 1849–60, v. 311; L. E. C. Evans, ‘The Wotton monuments’, *Archaeologia Cantiana* lxxxvii (1972), 15–29.

²⁴ Wentworth to Laud, 18 Mar. 1634, in N. Canny, *The upstart earl: a study of the social and mental world of Richard Boyle, first earl of Cork, 1566–1643*, Cambridge 1982, 12.

Wentworth's claim that it had been erected where the cathedral's altar would once have stood. The monument was duly taken down and placed in packing cases; the earl later negotiated its re-erection in a less prominent location within the cathedral.²⁵

A final case shows the limits of episcopal powers over commemoration. In 1694 Gilbert Ironside, bishop of Hereford, went to Weobley church in his diocese to deface the monument of John Birch (d. 1691), a colonel with Presbyterian sympathies. The minister and churchwardens had called in the bishop, who ordered his workmen to deface the inscription, probably on the grounds that it recalled Birch as a man with 'the character of asserting and vindicating the laws and liberties of his country in war, promoting its welfare and prosperity in peace'. The deceased's son-in-law, nephew and namesake, a lawyer, successfully sued Ironside and recovered £500 in damages. However disagreeable he might have found the Whiggish sentiments of Birch's monument, the bishop was not permitted to destroy objectionable political comments against the family's wishes.²⁶

As monuments came under the oversight of bishops, some patrons began to seek greater protection for their monuments in the form of episcopal licences before erecting tombs in their churches, although this practice did not become widespread until the eighteenth century. Brian Burch's examination of records of the office of the vicar general of London uncovered seven licences issued between 1618 and 1640. As the certificate obtained by Kenelm Digby for his wife's monument at Christchurch, Newgate Street, London, shows, the bishop's permission could not be given without the consent of the clergy and wardens of the church concerned.²⁷ Instead of seeking permission for monuments, it was more common to obtain episcopal licence for the building of a chapel or vault which might house them. In 1618 the bishop of Lincoln granted a licence to the second earl of Salisbury for a family chapel to be built at Hatfield where his father's monument was erected.²⁸

It is evident that bishops had responsibility on the one hand for supervising the religious content of monuments, and for protecting them from harm on

²⁵ On the Boyle monument and the controversy surrounding it see A. L. Harris, 'The funerary monuments of Richard Boyle, earl of Cork', *Church Monuments* xiii (1998), 70–86, and P. D. Sherlock, 'Funeral monuments: piety, honour and memory in early modern England', unpubl. DPhil. diss. Oxford 2000, 89–91.

²⁶ Anthony Wood, *Athenae oxonienses*, ed. P. Bliss, London 1813, i, p. cviii.

²⁷ Brian Burch, 'Faculty records and church monuments', *Bulletin of the International Society for the Study of Church Monuments* vi (1982), 97–114, and 'Sir Kenelm Digby and Christchurch, Newgate Street', *Guildhall Miscellany* ii (1964), 248–56. Faculties in the early seventeenth century mostly dealt with pewing or the building of small vestries, and it seems that most monuments were erected without episcopal intervention of any kind.

²⁸ Adam White, 'A biographical dictionary of London tomb sculptors c. 1560–c. 1660', in *The sixty-first volume of the Walpole Society*, London 1999, 34 n. 42.

the other, but that these powers were usually exercised only when incidents were brought to their attention. Given that, from 1560, tombs were supposed to mirror social order and to avoid heterodoxy, how were bishops represented in their own monuments?

Llewellyn's major study of monuments identifies seventy-five tombs to bishops dating between 1530 and 1660, and from these he argues that 'the commemorative pattern in relation to bishops was not as well established as it was for the nobility and gentry' while noting the need for 'additional accurate data on bishops' burial places and monuments for several generations preceding and succeeding our period'.²⁹ Having compiled such data for the 466 bishops who held office in the period 1400 to 1700, I argue in contrast to Llewellyn that the commemorative practices of bishops were better established than those of the nobility and gentry, certainly in quantitative terms. The burial places of nobility and their partners are comprehensively recorded in the fourteen volumes of the *Complete peerage*, and reveal that monuments were built for only about one-third of nobles across the three centuries considered by this article. The rate of noble commemoration peaked in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period, but even here no more than half the nobility were memorialised. Even more strikingly, no monuments to monarchs and their consorts were completed in England between that of Elizabeth I and Victoria's mausoleum for Albert.³⁰ These figures compare poorly to the episcopate, for monuments exist or have been recorded for over 300 of the 466 bishops included here (the burial places for seventy-eight of these bishops have not yet been identified).

There are qualitative reasons, too, for thinking that bishops had the strongest sepulchral tradition of any group in early modern England. The modern English tradition of monumental commemoration began in the eleventh and twelfth centuries with the incision of effigies on stone coffin lids, among which bishops and abbots were disproportionately commemorated.³¹ Doctrinally, the idea of apostolic succession could be reinforced by a lengthy series of episcopal tombs in a cathedral, preceding the advent of family chapels deliberately packed with monuments to represent the antiquity of the gentry and nobility interred therein. The popularity of this form is particularly well demonstrated by the series of effigies of Anglo-Saxon bishops erected at Wells Cathedral in the thirteenth century.³² Likewise, in the fourteenth century another series of tombs was erected in Hereford

²⁹ Llewellyn, *Funeral monuments*, 158.

³⁰ G. E. Cokayne and others, *The complete peerage*, London 1910–59. For a comprehensive review of the data on noble monuments see Sherlock, 'Funeral monuments', 243–4, 293. On the absence of royal monuments see Nigel Llewellyn, 'The royal body: monuments to the dead, for the living', in L. Gent and N. Llewellyn (eds), *Renaissance bodies: the human figure in English culture*, London 1990, 218–40.

³¹ Finch, *Church monuments*, 34.

³² N. Pevsner, *The buildings of England: north Somerset and Bristol*, London 1958, 305–6.

Cathedral to represent the early bishops of the diocese and create the sense of an episcopal heritage. Richard Fox made an even grander gesture at Winchester in the early sixteenth century when he gathered up the remains of various kings, queens and bishops of the seventh to the tenth centuries and placed them in inscribed wooden chests on a screen around the high altar.³³

Joel Berlatsky has argued that 'the models of the English prelates of the late sixteenth century were the pre-Reformation bishops, not the reformed clergy of continental Europe'. This was sometimes reflected in burial and commemoration, where bishops might assert in death the status which they sought in life by being buried in the tradition of their predecessors, thereby establishing a continuing equality with their peers in the House of Lords. Matthew Parker, for example, had a burial of such grandeur that it cost over £1,000.³⁴ Heralds continued to rank bishops amongst the nobility for the purposes of funeral etiquette. A late sixteenth-century manuscript entitled 'Thinges necessarie at the buriall of a Bishopp' parallels closely the 'things' appropriate to the funeral of an earl, including a life-size 'hearse of substanciall tymber', heraldic banners, and the requirement that the chief mourner should be a bishop, accompanied by six other mourners who were to be 'doctors or chaplayns of dignitie'.³⁵ Did episcopal monuments, particularly their inscriptions, locations, symbols and forms reflect older traditions, newer beliefs or a desire by bishops to improve their status relative to other elite groups?

Although some Elizabethan and Stuart bishops instructed their flocks on reformed understandings of burial and the afterlife, few did so through their epitaphs. Monumental inscriptions to bishops throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries rarely differed from those of other high-ranking figures in discussing the status of their subjects on earth and their fate after death. Late medieval bishops requested prayers for the dead in language identical to the laity. The Latin epitaph of Bishop Skirlaw (d. 1406) in Durham recited the ever-popular verse 'I know that my redeemer lives' (Job xix.25), and continued 'here lies Walter Skirlaw of good memory', listing his episcopal posts and date of death before concluding with a request to pray for his soul.³⁶ Some bishops' tombs had short verse epitaphs as well as name, date and petition, but these were no different from those of the rest of the population. Little had changed by the end of the fifteenth century when Robert Morton (d. 1497) was memorialised in a Latin epitaph at London's cathedral: 'Pray for the soul of Robert Morton nephew of Cardinal Morton,

³³ Idem, *The buildings of England: Herefordshire*, London 1963, 164; Henry Hyde and Samuel Gale, *The history and antiquities of the cathedral church of Winchester*, London 1773, i. 27; ii. 26–8.

³⁴ Joel Berlatsky, 'The Elizabethan episcopate: patterns of life and expenditure', in Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day (eds), *Princes and paupers in the English Church, 1500–1800*, Leicester 1981, 111–28 at p. 123.

³⁵ Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Ashmole 818, fo. 43.

³⁶ 'Hic jacet bone memorie Walterus Skirlaw': Willis, *Cathedrals*, i. 242.

who, after eleven years seated as bishop of Worcester, closed his days in London A.D. 1497 on whose soul may God have mercy.³⁷

In the subsequent two centuries one difference in episcopal epitaphs did emerge: unsurprisingly, they retained Latin, the elite language of scholars and clerics, while the majority of monumental inscriptions took up the vernacular.³⁸ There were some exceptions, particularly in the early sixteenth century. James Stanley (d. 1515), bishop of Ely, was buried at the collegiate church in Manchester of which he was warden. His brass included some short Latin devotional verses, but also bore an English inscription with the standard beginning ‘of your charity pray’ and ending ‘upon whose sowle and all christien sowles Jesu have mercy’. Nicholas West (d. 1533) was buried in his chapel in Ely Cathedral where his brass, also in English, offered specific rewards to those visitors who prayed for him: ‘Of your Charity pray for the Soul of Nicholas West sometyme Bishop of this See, and for all Christen Soules; in the which Prayer he hath graunted to every Person so doing XL Days of Pardon for every time they shall so pray.’³⁹

Prayers for the dead remained on episcopal monuments right up to the end of Mary’s reign, although their use ceased with Elizabeth’s accession, rather more abruptly than on tombs in general, for variations of phrases such as ‘on whose soul may Jesu have mercy’ could be found as late as the 1570s.⁴⁰ One of the last examples of an episcopal request for intercession was on the tomb of Richard Sampson (d. 1554), bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, buried in the parish of his residence, Eccleshall, Staffordshire. His epitaph closed with a Latin petition: ‘O friendly reader, I ask for potent prayers to God for Sampson.’⁴¹

Verses in forms revived by Renaissance learning were used alongside and instead of prayers for the dead, as in non-episcopal epitaphs, although bishops, often highly educated individuals, were more likely to make use of the new style. When Cuthbert Tunstall died in Parker’s custody in 1559, one such text was penned by Walter Haddon for his tomb in Lambeth parish church. Cast in a humanist mode, the epitaph recalled Tunstall’s international renown, his abilities in rhetoric, mathematics, law and the Church, and described his death with the metaphor ‘he was turned into

³⁷ ‘Orate pro anima Roberti Morton nepotis Cardinalis Morton, qui postquam undecim annos sedisset Episcopus Wigorn diem suum clausit London. A.D. 1497. Cujus anime propicietur Deus’: *ibid.* i. 644.

³⁸ On the adoption of the vernacular in epitaphs in the early sixteenth century see Richard Rex, ‘Monumental brasses and the Reformation’, *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society* xiv (1990), 376–94.

³⁹ Willis, *Cathedrals*, ii. 357.

⁴⁰ On intercessory petitions and monuments see David Hickman, ‘Wise and religious epitaphs: funerary inscriptions as evidence for religious change in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire, c. 1500–1640’, *Midland History* xxvi (2001), 107–27; Marshall, *Beliefs and the dead*, 176–8.

⁴¹ ‘O lector amice potenti pro Sampson Deo fundito quaeso preces’: Willis, *Cathedrals*, i. 392.

ashes'.⁴² From the 1560s onwards, many episcopal monuments displayed the sort of lengthy inscriptions criticised by poets and antiquaries, establishing a trend that continued for well over a century. Thomas Cooper (d. 1594), bishop of Winchester, had an epitaph of some sixteen lines, while Robert Pursglove (d. 1579), deprived bishop of Hull, had twenty.⁴³ The vulgar rhyming texts so popular in Elizabethan and early Stuart England were used by only a few bishops. The epitaph of Nicholas Bullingham (d. 1576) in Worcester Cathedral employed the form as a means of emphasising his Protestant, English and scholarly credentials:

Here born, here bishop, buried here,
A Bullyngham by name and stock,
A man twice married in God's fear,
Chief paster late of Lincoln flock.
Whom Oxford trained up in youth,
Whom Cambridge doctor did create,
A painful preacher of the truth,
Who changed this life for happy fate.⁴⁴

Elizabethan epitaphs did not distinguish between bishops and laity when it came to the reformed vision of the afterlife: for both groups, the body was consigned to earth, the soul to heaven and fame to posterity. This widespread view of the new order of existence appeared in Latin hexameters on the tomb of Richard Barnes (d. 1587) in his cathedral at Durham: 'The skies possess his soul, this marble encloses his body; fame gains him entrance to the heavens; children and grandchildren conserve his name; virtue always lives after death.'⁴⁵ At the very highest level of the English Church, epitaphs reflected sentiments about death found throughout early modern society, incorporating both references to antiquity and the assured hope of the resurrection proclaimed in the Book of Common Prayer. Inscriptions commemorating Elizabethan and early Stuart archbishops of Canterbury neither promoted doctrines such as justification by grace nor encouraged brevity and modesty any more than those of gentry, nobility and royalty. The Latin epitaphs at Lambeth for Matthew Parker (d. 1575) and Richard Bancroft (d. 1610) presented their subjects as role models for the living; Parker's concluded 'as

⁴² 'Anglia Cuthbertum Tonstallum moesta requirit, cujus summa domi Laus erat atque foris. Rhetor Arithmeticus Juris Consultus et aequi, Legatusque fuit, denique Presul erat. Annorum satur et magnorum plenus Honorum, Vertitur in Cineres Aureus iste senex': *ibid.* i. 245; Francis Godwin, *A catalogue of the bishops of England*, London 1601, 534.

⁴³ Hyde and Gale, *Winchester*, ii. 86; Mill Stephenson, *A list of monumental brasses in the British Isles*, London 1964, 87. On antiquarian critiques of verbose epitaphs see the discussion in Joshua Scodel, *The English poetic epitaph: commemoration and conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth*, Ithaca 1991, 50–85.

⁴⁴ Willis, *Cathedrals*, i. 647.

⁴⁵ 'astra tenent animam, corpusque hoc marmore clausum; Fama polos penetrat; nomen nati atque nepotes conservant; vivit semper post funera virtus': *ibid.* i. 247.



The tomb of George Abbot, archbishop of Canterbury, Guildford church, Surrey. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage, NMR.

he had lived for God, so he died for God', Bancroft's 'he died ... willingly for God'.⁴⁶ Edmund Grindal (d. 1583), buried at Croydon, had an ill-suited epitaph on the secular theme of the endurance of his name and fame. The text bore no resemblance to contemporary Protestant doctrine, concluding 'since nothing remained here by which he might climb higher, he flew out of the chains of his body, free and blessed to heaven'.⁴⁷ The inscription by Benjamin Carier for John Whitgift (d. 1604), also at Croydon, resembles Grindal's in tone: 'having been exalted to the highest, he gives eternal glory to the office'.⁴⁸ George Abbot (d. 1632) was buried at Guildford in a tomb erected by his brother, his effigy surrounded by allegorical figures and several long Latin texts affirming that the archbishop was indeed in heaven. One set of prominent letters proclaimed 'hence light; here by grace', while a longer text concluded that 'thenceforth he could go no higher on earth, he sought the heavens, full of days and honours'.⁴⁹ Like Grindal, Abbot was already in the heavenly light, although his epitaph did at least acknowledge the role of grace not earthly deeds in getting him there. Overall, this was conventional piety with only a nod towards reformed teaching.

Perhaps the most confident episcopal epitaph in the post-Reformation period was that of John Thornborough (d. 1641), bishop of Worcester, who erected his own monument in 1627. His robed effigy was accompanied by a text defining the tomb's purpose and its subject's fate: 'A monument warns the mind not of flight, but of translation, because we are called not to flee out of life but to rise, and where the sin is buried with the sinner, the sinner will rise without the sin.'⁵⁰ This text took the traditionalist, late medieval understanding of monumental commemoration and turned it on its head, by declaring the justification of sinners at the resurrection.⁵¹

If their epitaphs were largely indistinguishable from those of clergy and laity, bishops were differentiated by their places of burial. Cathedrals were the dominant location chosen, comprising 229 of the 388 known episcopal burial places between 1400 and 1700 (*see* Table 1). Parish churches were

⁴⁶ 'vixerat ille Deo, mortuus ille Deo est'; 'obiit ... volente deo'. Published transcriptions of the epitaphs to the archbishops of Canterbury may be found in John Le Neve, *Lives of the Protestant bishops of the Church of England*, London 1720, and Edward Hasted, *The history and topographical survey of the county of Kent*, Canterbury 1801, 12, from which this and subsequent quotations are derived.

⁴⁷ 'cum hic nihil restaret, quo altius ascenderet, e Corporis vinculis liber ac beatus ad coelum evolavit'. ⁴⁸ 'ad summum evecto aeternum dat lumen honori'.

⁴⁹ 'hinc lumen, hic gratia'; 'inde altius in terris non posset, coelos petiit, dierum, honorum plenus'.

⁵⁰ 'monumentum monet mentem non fugae, sed translationis, non enim e vita fugere, sed exire dicimur, et ubi sepelitur peccatum cum peccante resurgat peccans sine peccato': Thomas Abingdon, *The antiquities of the cathedral church of Worcester*, London 1717, 79–81.

⁵¹ Compare the definition of monuments written *c.* 1529 in the Grey Friars Chronicle, beginning 'A monument is like an admonition to the mind ...': BL, MS Cotton Vitellius F.xii.

Table 1. *Location of episcopal burials, 1400–1700*

Location type	Total	1400–1529	1530–79	1580–1700
Cathedral	229	77	41	111
Parish church	105	8	31	66
Religious house	25	19	5	1
Royal peculiar	12	2	1	9
Chapel	12	—	3	9
Burned	5	—	5	—
Unknown	78	56	14	8
<i>Total</i>	466	162	100	204

second, with 105 burials, followed by thirty-seven interments in religious houses and royal peculiars, and twelve in the chapels of university colleges or episcopal residences. Eight bishops were executed by the state: five (Cranmer, Ferrar, Hooper, Latimer and Ridley) were burned, while three (Scrope, Fisher and Laud) were not, the latter leaving remains that could be decently interred.⁵² When these observations are broken down chronologically, it is evident that fifteenth-century bishops were far more likely to be buried in cathedrals than their successors. During the sixteenth century, parish churches became more popular, particularly those like Eccleshall (Staffs.), Buckden (Hunts.) or Lambeth (Surrey) which served an episcopal residence. This is likely to reflect the potentially endangered status of cathedrals in the wake of the dissolutions of monasteries and chantries in the 1530s and 1540s. In the seventeenth century there was a pronounced return to cathedrals as burial places. Significantly, despite the loss of English religious houses as a possible place of burial,⁵³ post-Reformation bishops were buried in a wider range of locations than their predecessors, making use of university chapels and royal peculiars such as Westminster Abbey and St George's Windsor.

The shift away from cathedrals is most notable amongst the archbishops of Canterbury. Prior to the Reformation they had almost always used Canterbury Cathedral as a burial place, but, after Pole's death and burial in 1558, the reformed archbishops virtually renounced the building, some not even visiting it. Perhaps associations with Becket deterred them. Archbishop Warham (d. 1533) had built his chantry chapel within the Martyrdom itself, his tomb surviving the shrine's destruction despite including Becket's arms alongside Warham and Canterbury. Parker and Bancroft were buried at

⁵² Of the seventy-eight unknown burial locations, the bulk (56) come from the period 1400–1529, and mostly represent men who were little-known Welsh or suffragan bishops.

⁵³ The six bishops listed here as buried in religious houses between 1530 and 1700 were all deprived prelates who retired to monastic institutions in continental Europe where they died and were buried.

Lambeth; Grindal, Whitgift and Sheldon at Croydon; and Abbot in his native parish of Guildford, all in Surrey. Laud and Juxon chose St John's College, Oxford, and Sancroft, the deprived non-juror, his parish of retirement, Fressingfield (Suffolk), while Tillotson was buried in the London church of St Lawrence Jewry where he had been appointed to a lectureship in 1664.

England's other archbishops did not abandon their cathedral so spectacularly at the Reformation, yet they already possessed a tradition of burial in other locations. Archbishops William (d. 1464) and Laurence Booth (d. 1480) were buried as dictated by their wills at Southwell, in the collegiate church near the episcopal palace.⁵⁴ Thomas Savage (d. 1507) was buried at York Minster, but his heart was interred separately at Macclesfield, his birthplace. Cardinal Bainbridge (d. 1514) was buried in the English College at Rome, having been poisoned by his own steward while resident in the city.⁵⁵ Of the later archbishops, only Edwin Sandys, George Montaigne, Samuel Harsnett and John Williams were buried away from York, the first choosing Southwell like his predecessors. Montaigne chose his birthplace of Cawood, Yorkshire, also the site of an episcopal palace; Harsnett his former parish (and wife's resting place) of Chigwell, Essex; and Williams the place of his forced retirement during the Interregnum, Llandegai, Caernarfonshire.

The most dramatic change in the places used for episcopal burials occurred in the mid-seventeenth century with the abolition of episcopacy. Six bishops died in 1640 and 1641, all of whom were buried according to tradition in their cathedrals or in the parish churches adjacent to their palaces. Between 1642 and early 1645, five bishops died. Two of these, Parr of Sodor and Man and Westfield of Bristol, were buried in cathedrals. Wright of Coventry and Lichfield was buried at Eccleshall, Staffordshire, next to his palace, and Potter of Carlisle was buried in the parish of his London residence, St Paul's Covent Garden. The fifth bishop was Laud, executed on 10 January 1645 and interred at All Hallows', Barking, near the Tower of London.

Commemorative practice changed significantly following Laud's death. Sixteen bishops died between 1645 and 1660, of whom ten were buried in the churches of the parishes to which they had retired to live with relatives or patrons. Four (Thomas Howell of Bristol, John Towers of Peterborough, John Owens of St Asaph, Roger Manwaring of St David) were still buried in their cathedrals. Archbishop James Ussher, who from 1642 was titular bishop of Carlisle, was buried at Westminster Abbey with Cromwell's permission, while Ralph Brownrigg of Exeter was interred in the Temple Church, where he was chaplain. During these years, then, the number of bishops buried away from the two traditional locations – the cathedral, or the parish of an official residence – was at its greatest at any time in the early modern period.

⁵⁴ Willis, *Cathedrals*, i. 41.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* i. 43.

At the Restoration, the renewal of episcopal orders included the belated commemoration of some of these bishops in traditional style. George Coke (d. 1646) was buried at Eardisley, Herefordshire, but his brother erected a cenotaph at Hereford Cathedral amongst his predecessors. Likewise, John Williams (d. 1650), archbishop of York, was provided with a monument at Llandegai by his nephew. Most notable of all, in 1663 Laud's remains were removed to his Oxford college, St John's, although no monument was erected over the vault of the controversial prelate. Monuments were also erected to earlier bishops. In 1669 the High Church bishop John Cosin placed a bust, epitaph and 'posuit' inscription in Norwich Cathedral for his former episcopal master John Overall (d. 1619).⁵⁶ Cosin's deed reflected the episcopal triumphalism frequently expressed on monuments from 1660, at least prior to the Whig victory of 1688. In these decades some bishops revived practices not seen since the Reformation. As we shall see, the effigies of many late seventeenth-century bishops used a combination of traditionalist vestments and novel postures to express abundant if short-lived confidence in their social and political position. Meanwhile Bishop William Fuller (d. 1675) of Lincoln erected a monument over what was supposed to be the grave of St Hugh, whose shrine had been destroyed in the reign of Henry VIII. This would double as Fuller's own tomb, and bore an inscription recording his care for the remains not only of Hugh but also of Bishop Remigius.⁵⁷

The tendency to bury bishops away from their thrones in the centuries after the Reformation was noted by Browne Willis, the eighteenth-century surveyor of England's cathedrals. He was struck by the number of cathedrals that had received almost no episcopal tombs in two hundred years, their bishops being buried elsewhere or having no monument. At Durham, he counted only three bishops' monuments between 1457 and 1720 (James Pilkington, Richard Barnes and William James). At Chester, one of the abbeys converted into a diocesan seat by Henry VIII, there was only the monument of Bishop Stratford (d. 1707). Willis's survey of Lichfield Cathedral concluded that 'except Bishop [John] Hacket, there has not been one Bishop interr'd here since 1531 now near two hundred Years ago'.⁵⁸ The occasional erection of a cenotaph in a cathedral when the bishop was buried elsewhere confirms Willis's opinion that the cathedral remained the expected if not actual location of episcopal commemoration.

A consideration of the bishops of Winchester, a wealthy and powerful see, shows how form and size, like location, were also affected by the religious upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Winchester Cathedral was the sole place of burial for its fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century bishops. These men created a magnificent series of chantry chapels

⁵⁶ Francis Blomefield, *Topographical history of the county of Norfolk*, London 1806, iii. 565.

⁵⁷ Willis, *Cathedrals*, ii. 71.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* i. 248, 337, 394.

throughout the building, usually built in their own lifetimes and reflecting contemporary architectural developments. The first chapel was that of William Edynton (d. 1366), followed by those of William Wykeham, Henry Beaufort, William Waynflete, Thomas Langton and Richard Fox and ending with one of the latest examples of the genre in the kingdom, the chantry built by Stephen Gardiner.⁵⁹ The only bishops not commemorated in such style were Peter Courtenay (d. 1492), who made do with a tomb chest in the chancel, and Thomas Wolsey, who merely held the see *in commendam* for two years.

While most Elizabethan and Stuart bishops continued to be buried at Winchester, they were commemorated in a far more modest style than that of their predecessors. The Catholic bishop John White (d. 1560) was deprived of the see in 1559, and was buried in the cathedral without a monument: he had already erected a brass effigy and lengthy epitaph *c.* 1548 at Winchester College where he had been warden.⁶⁰ Robert Horne (d. 1580) requested burial before the pulpit, a choice intended, no doubt, as a deliberate contrast with the traditional focus around the high altar and choir. For a monument he had only a black marble gravestone with a short, Protestant epitaph in Latin: 'The excellent Robert Horne, Doctor of Theology, formerly exiled for the cause of Christ, subsequently bishop of Winchester who died faithfully in the Lord, June 1 1580 in the nineteenth year of his episcopate.'⁶¹ His successor John Watson (d. 1584) had a slightly longer epitaph, but still neither heraldry nor effigy. The next bishop, Thomas Cooper (d. 1594), had a simple tomb chest in the choir.

William Wickham (d. 1595) held the see only briefly, and was buried at St Mary Overies in Southwark, the parish of the London residence of the Winchester bishops, where Bishop Gardiner's bowels were interred. Wickham's tomb, erected by his sister-in-law Frances Matthew in 1600, was like Horne's a plain gravestone with inscription.⁶² His successor and brother-in-law William Day (d. 1596) likewise held the see for less than a year; his burial place is unknown. Thomas Bilson (d. 1616) died at Westminster and was buried at night in the ambulatory of Westminster Abbey, his grave marked with only a small brass inscription. In contrast, James Montague (d. 1618) erected a substantial monument for himself at a cost of £300 that included a life-size effigy of himself in Garter robes on a tomb chest between four impressive obelisks. This was placed at Bath Abbey, however, where Montague had been bishop for most of his career, and so he was uncommemorated at Winchester.⁶³

⁵⁹ D. Lloyd and N. Pevsner, *The buildings of England: Hampshire*, London 1967, 675–85.

⁶⁰ Stephenson, *Brasses*, 168.

⁶¹ 'Robertus Horne Theologiae Doctor eximius, quondam Christi causa exul, deinde Episcopus Winton pie obiit in Domino Jun. 1. 1580. Episcopatus sui Anno 19': Hyde, *Winchester*, 37. ⁶² John Stow, *The survey of London*, ed. A. Munday, London 1633, 452.

⁶³ Clare Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual in early modern England*, London 1984, 185.

Like Montague, Lancelot Andrewes (d. 1626) also had an impressive monument away from Winchester, situated in the bishop's chapel at the east end of St Saviour's Southwark and St Mary's Overies. This also displayed his effigy in Garter robes, wearing a simple skull-cap underneath a canopy surmounted by the arms of Winchester impaling Andrewes, supported by figures of Justice and Fortitude. Andrewes' successor, Richard Neile, was translated to York in 1632. The next bishop, Walter Curll (d. 1647), was retired by Parliament to his sister's residence at Soberton, Hampshire, where a small monument was erected. Brian Duppa (d. 1662) took up the see at the Restoration but, like his predecessor Bilson, chose burial in Westminster Abbey where a small tablet in the east aisle of the north transept records his life. Finally, George Morley (d. 1684) returned to pre-Reformation tradition with burial in the cathedral. Although his monument was merely an inscribed black marble slab near the nave behind the pulpit, it was placed opposite to the chantry chapel of Bishop Edynton, and Morley's mitre and crozier were hung from the pillar above as a funeral helm, where they remain.

The lavish monuments to the pre-Reformation bishops in Winchester Cathedral show more confidence in style, location and size than those of their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century successors who were also buried at Winchester. Colour, too, was an important factor, the earlier tombs incorporating many heraldic symbols, while the later monuments were monochrome black ledgerstones with two-dimensional coats of arms etched into the stone. Gardiner's chantry chapel is a particularly noteworthy turning-point, unashamedly creating a ritual space abolished by Edward VI and revived by Mary. It was constructed in high renaissance style, with classical niches and shell-motifs on the interior, and strapwork panels and cartouches outside. It was, in this regard, well ahead of the rest of the realm, reflecting the practice of popes and cardinals in Italy, and cost over £1,400, a sum worthy of a great noble or monarch.⁶⁴ Yet it reflected local tradition as well: Gardiner placed his chapel on the north side of the high altar, mirroring that of Fox, and, like his predecessor, incorporated a cadaver into the exterior, public facade of the edifice. Some of the disparities between the earlier and later episcopal monuments can be explained by choice of location, as those like Montague and Andrewes did have sizeable tombs in other places. It is also conceivable that some post-Reformation bishops neither could nor desired to compete with the scale of their predecessors' chantry chapels and the consequent emphasis on intercession for the dead. What is notable is that bishops commemorated by gravestones alone were overshadowed by the nobility and gentry who from Elizabeth's reign onwards began to erect large tombs in cathedrals, often in the prominent spaces vacated by altars.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Berlatsky, 'Elizabethan episcopate', 123.

⁶⁵ Stanford Lehmborg, *The reformation of cathedrals: cathedrals in English society, 1485-1603*, Princeton 1988, 273-5.

Along with style and location, the imagery used on bishops' monuments changed in the mid-sixteenth century. This was most obvious in the vestments depicted, but also in the abandonment of forms such as the cadaver tomb, and the wider range of postures adopted by effigies. Almost all fifteenth-century monuments depicted bishops in their eucharistic vestments, including the distinctive mitre, ring and crozier. These remained the staple symbols of episcopacy until the Edwardian Reformation, and were taken up again during Mary's reign. Elizabethan and early Stuart bishops continued to be depicted in episcopal robes as allowed by the monarch, but these were now cassock, rochet, chimere and cap instead of cope and mitre.⁶⁶ A significant number of bishops buried in the first half of Elizabeth's reign avoided the issue by dispensing with effigies altogether and are commemorated instead by plain brass inscription plates or tomb chests such as those at Winchester. William Barlow (d. 1568) had an unadorned tomb chest at Chichester, John Jewel (d. 1571) a brass inscription at Salisbury, and Miles Coverdale (d. 1568) – who had not resumed an episcopal role on Elizabeth's accession – a brass inscription at St Bartholomew's behind the Exchange, London.

Nevertheless, copes, mitres and croziers did not disappear. They remained powerful symbols of traditionalist belief in the sixteenth century, and became controversial assertions of episcopal authority in the seventeenth. Marian bishops proudly wore traditional dress on their tombs. John Harman or Veysey (d. 1554) was retired from the bishopric of Exeter by Edward and called back to his see by Mary. At his death (when, his epitaph claims, he was 103 years old) his monument was erected at the parish church of his birth and residence, Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, bearing a three-dimensional effigy wearing cope, mitre, crozier and episcopal ring. Robert Pursglove or Sylvester (d. 1579) was appointed suffragan bishop of Hull in 1538 by Henry VIII, and deprived by Elizabeth in 1559. His brass at Tideswell, Derbyshire, depicted him in eucharistic vestments bearing a mitre and crozier, surrounded by lengthy inscriptions in Latin and English recalling his ecclesiastical ranks.

After 1579 the next monument to show a bishop in traditionalist vestments was the bizarre monumental brass of Samuel Harsnett, archbishop of York, erected according to his will after his death in 1631. He requested burial at Chigwell, Essex, where his wife Thomazine had been buried in 1601. His will directed that he should have 'only a marble stone laid upon my grave, with a plate of brass molten into the stone an inch thick, having the effigies of a bishop stamp'd upon it, with his mitre and crosier staff'. Harsnett was fully aware of the controversial nature of his effigy, and so protected it from attack. He went on to provide an epitaph, elaborating on brief details of his career

⁶⁶ K. A. Esdaile, *English church monuments, 1510 to 1540*, London 1947, 103.

only to emphasise his ever-increasing unworthiness (*indignus, indignior, indignissimus*) in contrast to the splendour of his vested effigy. His executors added the date and an explanatory sentence, ‘out of abundant humility, the most Reverend Bishop ordered this epitaph itself to be placed by his testament’.⁶⁷

Harsnett’s monument was unique for its period as far as stone and brass memorials are concerned, but a similarly remarkable representation of the episcopal office, arguing for its apostolic authority, appeared in glass. The last abbot of Osney and first bishop of Oxford, Robert King (d. 1557) was buried in his cathedral with a fine altar tomb, canopy and brass inscription. His great-nephew was John King (d. 1621), sometime dean of Christ Church and bishop of London, who was himself father of Henry King (d. 1669), eventually bishop of Chichester, and John King (d. 1639), a canon of Windsor. Henry and John commissioned a window for the cathedral from the glazier Van Linge in the 1630s, which showed the first Bishop King in cope, mitre, crozier and ring standing in front of the ruins of Osney Abbey, surrounded by the arms of King, Osney and Oxford diocese. The same relatives took down the window in 1651 to preserve it from destruction, and restored it to its former place in 1660, affirming the family’s place in English episcopal history.⁶⁸

The Laudian fashion for traditionalist dress seen in the King and Harsnett memorials presaged the 1670s. Mitres appeared on several episcopal tombs after the Restoration, including those of Robert Creighton of Bath and Wells (d. 1672, buried Wells), Gilbert Sheldon of Canterbury (d. 1674, buried Croydon), Richard Sterne of York (d. 1673, buried York), Ralph Brideoake of Chichester (d. 1678, buried St George’s Windsor), Peter Gunning of Ely (d. 1685, buried Ely), John Dolben of York (d. 1686, buried York) and Thomas Lamplugh of York (d. 1688, buried York). The tombs of Bishops Guy Carleton (d. 1685) and Robert Grove (d. 1696) in Chichester Cathedral included the mitre as an abstract object borne up to heaven by cherubs. John Sharp (d. 1714), the High Church archbishop of York, also wore the mitre on his tomb, but there are few other examples from that time until the late nineteenth century.⁶⁹ For the most part, the Glorious Revolution put an end to the use of traditional vestments on monuments, which retained papist associations and continued to irritate the hotter sort of Protestants. The mitre

⁶⁷ ‘quod ipsissimum Epitaphium ex abundantia humilitate sibi poni curavit testamento Reverendissimus Praesul’. On Harsnett’s will and monument see Fincham, *Prelate as pastor*, 248–9.

⁶⁸ N. Pevsner and J. Sherwood, *The buildings of England: Oxfordshire*, London 1974, 80; Anthony Wood, *The history and antiquities of the University of Oxford*, ed. J. Gutch, Oxford 1796, iii. 466.

⁶⁹ K. A. Esdaile, *English monumental sculpture since the Renaissance*, London 1927, 45–6. Esdaile also notes the monument of Archbishop Sharp (d. 1679) at St Andrew’s, Scotland. On Brideoake’s monument, overlooked by Esdaile, see S. M. Bond, *The monuments of St George’s chapel Windsor*, Windsor 1958, 24–5 and plate 10.

had never vanished entirely from tombs, however, for it continued to be used in episcopal heraldry throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries appearing as such on the monuments of Giles Thompson of Gloucester (d. 1611), John Davenant of Salisbury (d. 1641) and Joseph Hall of Norwich (d. 1656).⁷⁰

As well as altering dress, effigies of bishops changed their posture in the late sixteenth and sixteenth centuries, again paralleling broader developments in funerary sculpture. Llewellyn and Wilson have separately demonstrated that the form adopted by monuments, particularly effigies, is of significance in understanding which particular aspects of the identity of the persons represented was being emphasised.⁷¹ One form which one might expect to find in episcopal tombs was the 'scholar' or 'epitaph' monument, being an upright demi-effigy in a niche mounted on a wall.⁷² Although employed widely in academic and ecclesiastical contexts from the 1570s onwards, almost no bishops availed themselves of the form. The scholar monument at St George's Windsor for Giles Thompson (d. 1612) reflects his position as dean of that chapel. Thompson was consecrated bishop of Gloucester in 1611 but never entered his diocese.⁷³ Likewise, a scholar monument was erected in Hackney for David Dolben (d. 1633), who died shortly after becoming bishop of Bangor. John Gauden (d. 1662), briefly bishop of Worcester, was commemorated by a bust over his grave, clutching a copy of the *Eikon basilike* of which he claimed to be the author. In commissioning this monument, his widow Elizabeth unsuccessfully sought to partake of the revenue from future sales of this renowned volume, not to promote her husband's scholarship for its own sake.⁷⁴ The only scholar monument to a bishop of longer standing was that in Hereford Cathedral for Theophilus Field (d. 1636), a bishop since 1619.⁷⁵

If it was not thought fit to commemorate early modern bishops with forms designed to emphasise academic above other achievements, it certainly was acceptable to deploy large tomb chests with recumbent effigies like those of the gentry and nobility that emphasised antiquity, tradition and power. Examples include Bishops Godfrey Goldsborough (d. 1604) at Gloucester, Martin Heton (d. 1609) at Ely, Henry Cotton (d. 1621) at Exeter, Robert Creighton (d. 1672) at Wells and Ralph Brideoake (d. 1678) at St George's Windsor. In the seventeenth century only a handful of bishops adhered to

⁷⁰ The mitre could still be controversial even when used in heraldic bearings or episcopal seals: Margaret Aston, 'Bishops, seals and mitres', in Diana Wood (ed.), *Life and thought in the northern Church, c. 1100–c. 1700: essays in honour of Claire Cross* (Studies in Church History subsidia xii, 1999), 183–226.

⁷¹ Llewellyn, *Art of death*, 104–8; Wilson, 'Elite commemoration', 413–23.

⁷² Llewellyn, *Funeral monuments*, 110–14.

⁷³ Bond, *Windsor*, 206–7.

⁷⁴ Mrs Gauden's patronage was noted in a 'posuit' inscription: Abingdon, *Worcester*, 73–4, 112.

⁷⁵ Pevsner, *Herefordshire*, 167.

their own teaching about restraint in burial and commemoration. Archbishop Grindal (d. 1578) had requested burial ‘without any solemn hearse or funeral pomp’, and his memorial was a simple ledgerstone. Some followed the trend for novel postures or forms, such as the monument to Bishop Thomas Bickley (d. 1596) in Chichester Cathedral, which depicted him kneeling above an inscribed tablet. Bishop Henry Robinson (d. 1616) of Carlisle was buried in his cathedral with a brass in the new allegorical fashion, a rare presentation of a bishop in an evangelical idiom.⁷⁶

From 1660 a number of episcopal tombs included bishops reclining on one elbow, or standing upright, their tombs little different from those of the nobility and gentry, dress excepted. The monument in Rochester Cathedral of Bishop John Warner (d. 1666), one of the bishops who lived through the civil wars and Interregnum, was commissioned immediately after his death from the London sculptor Joshua Marshall for £120, and displays his effigy standing proudly underneath a pediment.⁷⁷ The monuments of the archbishops of York demonstrate the growing variety of postures available to sculptors and patrons in the seventeenth century. The rather crude, stiff effigy of Matthew Hutton (d. 1606) lies on its side, raised on one elbow. Accepted Frewen (d. 1664) returned to the traditional recumbent effigy at prayer, but John Dolben (d. 1686) was depicted with mitre, being woken by angels at the resurrection. The monument of Thomas Lamplugh (d. 1691), executed by Grinling Gibbons for £100, showed the archbishop, also mitred, standing fully erect under a canopy.⁷⁸

One form of episcopal monument that did not survive the Reformation was the cadaver tomb, often used by men of learning in the same fashion as the later ‘scholar monument’. The earliest example of this was the tomb of Henry Chichele (d. 1443), archbishop of Canterbury, who erected his monument in 1427 in his cathedral. It was of the double-effigy style, a robed bishop on the upper level and a decaying corpse on the lower. Pamela King has argued that this presentation of the contrast of heavenly glory and mortal decay, reflecting both *memento mori* and resurrection themes, had its roots in Chichele’s Wykehamist training. Bishop Thomas Bekynton (d. 1465), a disciple of Chichele also trained at Winchester and New College, had a similar double-effigy tomb erected in his cathedral at Wells, designed as a tribute to his mentor.⁷⁹ That other great patron of education, Richard Fox (d. 1528), displayed a cadaver on the exterior of his chantry chapel in Winchester Cathedral, an arrangement imitated by Gardiner twenty-five years later.

There is no clear reason why bishops ceased to use the cadaver, for, although it appeared infrequently after the mid-sixteenth century, it was not

⁷⁶ Fincham, *Prelate as pastor*, 248–9. ⁷⁷ White, ‘Biographical dictionary’, 95, 102.

⁷⁸ G. E. Aylmer and R. Cant (eds), *A history of York Minster*, Oxford 1977, 435–47.

⁷⁹ Pamela King, ‘The cadaver tomb in England: novel manifestations of an old idea’, *Church Monuments* v (1990), 26–38.

altogether abandoned by tomb-makers. It was used to full effect, for example, on Maximilian Colt's magnificent double-effigy monument for Robert Cecil at Hatfield.⁸⁰ It may be that the proximity of cadavers to episcopal chantry chapels led to associations with the placement of saintly relics under altars, or that Elizabethan bishops were not confident enough to risk being commemorated by such a grim reminder of mortality. Bishop Robert Bennett (d. 1617) of Hereford left £500 in his will for funeral rites and requested a monument depicting him in his shroud, but the tomb erected by his executors showed him alive and fully robed, contrary to his request.⁸¹ The grandiose monument erected at Guildford for Archbishop Abbot by his brother made a gesture towards the double-effigy tradition by incorporating a *memento mori* in its representation of bones jumbled together in the tomb chest's end.

The last episcopal cadaver tomb erected was the rather confused monument of Paul Bush (d. 1558), first bishop of Bristol. His effigy, a decaying body bearing a crozier with the head resting upon a mitre, was placed on a low base under a six-poster canopy, detailed in a renaissance idiom. The Latin inscription juxtaposed an identificatory passage ending 'cuius anime propicietur Christus' with a six-line verse.⁸² Bush's place of burial was specified in his will: most unusually, he wished to lie near his wife, despite having set her aside in 1553 at the queen's order. Unmentioned on her husband's tomb, Edith Bush was commemorated by an independent brass inscription (since lost) in the choir of the cathedral: 'Of your Charity pray for the soul of Edith Busshe, otherwyse called Ashley, who deceased the 8th Day of Oct. A.D. 1553.'⁸³ Strange as it may seem, the first monument to an English bishop's wife requested intercessions for her soul.

Most of the earliest bishops' wives were uncommemorated after death. Once they were established in Church and society and deemed worthy of honourable memory, questions remained: where were they to be ranked in society, what was appropriate for their burial, and what notice should their husbands' tombs take of them? All we know of the first bishop's wife, Margaret Cranmer, is that she died sometime after 1575. Her place of burial is unknown, although the monument at Camberwell, Surrey, to her third and final husband Bartholomew Scott made mention of her distinctive status.⁸⁴ There do not seem to be any monuments to bishops' wives prior to 1580 besides that of Edith Bush. The next to be erected was a small brass for

⁸⁰ Esdaile, *English monumental sculpture*, 26, 52.

⁸¹ Roger Bowlder, 'The post-Reformation tombs', in G. Aylmer and J. Tiller (eds), *Hereford Cathedral: a history*, London 2000, 352–3.

⁸² Willis, *Cathedrals*, i. 778.

⁸³ *Ibid.* i. 771.

⁸⁴ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: a life*, New Haven 1996, 611; John Aubrey, *The natural history and antiquities of the county of Surrey*, London 1719, i. 174. Recent research by Mary Prior has demonstrated that Cranmer's widow was alive in 1575.

Fridesmund Gifford (d. 1581), wife of Richard Barnes, bishop of Durham, in the chancel of Auckland St Andrew.⁸⁵ The only other example from the 1580s yet discovered is the tomb of the wife of Bishop John Woolton, again a simple brass inscription marking her grave in the choir of Exeter Cathedral near her husband's substantial tomb.⁸⁶

Even mere references to wives in the inscriptions, effigies and heraldry of episcopal monuments themselves were unusual. Mary Prior has pointed out the presence of small figures of wives on the monuments to Archbishop Sandys (d. 1588) at Southwell, and Bishop Thomas Bentham (d. 1579) at Eccleshall, praying on the front of tomb chests alongside their children while their husbands' much larger effigies lie above.⁸⁷ Matthew Hutton (d. 1606), archbishop of York, was married three times, but on his monument in York there were only effigies of himself and his three children.⁸⁸ Even the place where a wife's coat of arms might appear on a monument was already occupied by the husband's, since the senior half of an heraldic shield was reserved for the diocesan arms. The wife of Thomas Westfield (d. 1644), briefly bishop of Bristol, was unusual in placing both her arms and his at the base of his monument in Bristol Cathedral. She also declared her existence at the end of the inscription: 'Elizabeth Westfield, most sorrowful wife, being left behind placed this monument to her much missed husband.'⁸⁹

Not until the seventeenth century was there any expectation that bishops' wives or widows would have a substantial monument of their own, and where these existed they tended to be placed in a parish church, often far removed from their husbands' tombs in a cathedral. Agatha Barlow (d. 1595) was buried and memorialised at her son William's parish of Easton, Hampshire, not with her husband William at Chichester Cathedral.⁹⁰ Cicely Freke (d. 1599) was likewise buried in the chancel of her son's church at Purleigh, Essex, while her husband lay at Worcester Cathedral. Elizabeth Thornborough (d. 1627) was buried at Withington, Gloucestershire, under a stone in the chancel that read simply 'Here lyeth the Body of Elizabeth, the Wife of the Right Reverend Father in God John Thornburgh, Lord Bishop of

⁸⁵ J. G. Waller, 'Notes on some brasses in the counties of Northumberland and Durham (part XII)', *Archaeologia Aeliana* n.s. xv (1892), 81–2.

⁸⁶ See the 1763 transcription and plan of monuments in Exeter, by which time Mrs Woolton's name and date of death were already partially erased: 'Early graves beneath the choir of Exeter Cathedral', *Bulletin of the International Society for the Study of Church Monuments* vii (1982), 122–3.

⁸⁷ Prior, 'Reviled and crucified marriages', 140–1.

⁸⁸ Willis, *Cathedrals*, i. 4.

⁸⁹ 'monumentum uxor maestissima Elizabetha Westfeild, marito desideratissimo posuit superstes': *ibid.* i. 781.

⁹⁰ S. H. Cassan, *Lives of the bishops of Winchester*, London 1827, ii. 56. This William Barlow is not to be confused with the bishop of Lincoln of the same name.

Worcester, who died *Primo Maij, An. Dom. 1627*.⁹¹ Thornborough's death probably inspired her husband to erect his own tomb in Worcester Cathedral, but it made no mention of Elizabeth.

One of the first substantial monuments for a bishop's wife was that which commemorated Cicely, widow of Archbishop Sandys, who died in 1610 at her family residence, Woodham Ferrers, Essex. Her eldest son Samuel erected a large monument to her in 1619 in the chancel at Woodham, depicting her kneeling at prayer under an arbour of roses with allegorical figures standing on either side. The epitaph detailed her lineage and listed all nine of her children, making sure that esquires, knights and baronets were all given their correct titles. The inscription also noted her 'christian and holy life', that she had 'wisely governed hir familie' and 'charitably relieved the poor'. As later bishops' wives were expected to be, she was pronounced 'a true mirror of a Christian Matron', and the text concluded with the standard declaration that 'hir blessed Soule Assending to the Confort of the Blessed and hir Bodie lyeth here interred expecting the joyfull Resurrection'.⁹² The function of this monument was partly to record the piety and charity beginning to be expected of clerical wives generally, but it also emphasised the gentility of the Sandys family outside the realm of specifically episcopal identity. Sandys himself, as we have noted, was buried at Southwell, a long way from Essex.

The most substantial monument to an early modern bishop's wife was that of Frances Matthew (d. 1629), mounted on the east wall of York Minster above her husband Tobie's recumbent effigy and altar tomb. The unusual prominence accorded to Matthew, born as Frances Barlow, may be attributable to her unique position as the daughter, wife, daughter-in-law and sister-in-law of some seven bishops. The authorities at York could hardly deny Matthew burial in the cathedral, since, as her epitaph recalled, she donated her husband's library to the minster, and she did not suffer from accusations of depriving the church of its wealth as did many episcopal wives. Yet although this tomb displayed a new-found confidence in the role of episcopal consort, Tobie Matthew's monument made no mention of his marriage and children in either its imagery or its lengthy Latin inscription.⁹³

Although from the 1610s monuments such as those to Cicely Sandys and Frances Matthew included the effigies of bishops' wives, they knelt in solitude. Prior to 1700 there seems to have been only one monument that

⁹¹ Ralph Bigland, *Gloucestershire collections*, ed. B. Frith (Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 1989–95), 1497. The church's ledgerstones were removed to the exterior pavement in the nineteenth century.

⁹² Philip Morant, *The history and antiquities of the county of Essex*, London 1768, ii. 34.

⁹³ On Frances Matthew and her monument see Peter Sherlock, 'Monuments, reputation and clerical marriage in Reformation England: Bishop Barlow's daughters', *Gender and History* xvi (2004), 57–82.

incorporated life-size effigies of bishop and wife lying side by side as was commonplace in the monuments of gentry and nobility. This was the tomb of Anthony Rudd (d. 1615), bishop of St David's, buried at Llangathen, Carmarthenshire, the manor which he had purchased for his wife Anne and three sons. Their tomb in the parish church, erected by his widow in 1616, reflected their status as founders of the local manorial family rather than that of bishop and wife.⁹⁴ The only similar example is the monument of George Montgomery (d. 1620), bishop of Meath, at Ardbracon, in county Meath, Ireland, where his remains were brought for burial after he died in London. Montgomery's demi-effigy was shown beside those of his wife and daughter in an unusual composition placed in the church's graveyard.⁹⁵

The next nearest example of joint commemoration is found in the epitaphs to Joseph and Elizabeth Hall at Heigham, Norfolk. Joseph, bishop of Norwich, died in 1656 and was buried in the parish to which he retired after ejection from his see. Hall was interred in the chancel, despite his apparent opposition to intramural burial, but this seems less the fault of his executors than his own choice, for here he was laid next to the body of his wife, who had died in 1652.⁹⁶ A tablet recorded his life in Latin, while a stone below recorded hers in English, the content of the two inscriptions virtually identical: Joseph's concluded 'Vale Lector, et Aeternitati respice', Elizabeth's with the translation 'Farewell reader, and mind eternity'.⁹⁷ This handful of examples of joint commemoration shows that throughout the seventeenth century it remained nearly impossible to represent bishops as married, for monuments always located them first and foremost as ecclesiastical leaders, not as husbands and fathers, and their wives, if memorialised at all, were more often than not buried in an entirely different location.

Episcopal monuments, like bishops themselves, were altered by the Reformation. As with society at large, prayers for the dead were abandoned in place of assertions of the entry into heaven of deceased souls. Cathedrals were no longer the primary place of burial. Mitres, croziers and rings were for the most part put aside in life and in death. Nevertheless tradition remained influential, as some bishops, aware of the history of their particular position in Church and State, tried to express that status in monuments. In the seventeenth century, mitres, generally retained in heraldry, returned to bishops' heads on their monuments, fleetingly in the 1630s, and substantially between 1660 and 1688. After the Restoration, bishops reasserted their importance with the construction of tombs to a number who had died in the

⁹⁴ I have been unable to visit this monument to obtain further information, nor do there appear to be published photographs or engravings of it.

⁹⁵ C. J. Casey and A. J. Rowan, *The buildings of Ireland: North Leinster*, London 1993, 115.

⁹⁶ On Hall's opposition to burial inside churches see Gittings, *Death*, 87.

⁹⁷ Francis Blomefield, *Topographical history of the county of Norfolk*, London 1805–10, iii. 580.

Interregnum, the placing of cenotaphs to them in cathedrals and the deployment of expansive, confident effigies on their own monuments.

Bishops remained a distinctive group throughout the years between 1400 and 1700, despite attacks upon their very existence in the years of religious reform and beyond. In the fifteenth century their tombs marked them out as men of the Church, through placement and costume, in the same way that clergy and religious were set apart from laity. In later centuries, episcopal tombs abandoned most distinguishing features except dress. Their attempts to use the forms common to nobility and gentry failed, however, when it came to marriage – wives were almost entirely absent from the words and images of their monuments, remaining uncommemorated or relying on the provision of separate tombs.

Episcopal monuments were thus largely unsuccessful in their articulation of the status and identity of bishops from the Reformation onwards. Often rejecting tradition while attempting to depict their reformed lifestyle, they did little to raise the social status of bishops or their wives. They rarely represented the theological or moral teachings of these men or the Church they led. Compared to other forms of commemoration, they were irrelevant in preserving the memory of individual bishops. Names such as Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley were burned into popular memory by Foxe's *Acts and monuments*; none of the three had a funeral monument. Historians might recall Matthew Parker through his library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and the circle of antiquaries he fostered. From the 1630s communion rails, vestments and stained glass brought the name of William Laud to mind. The publication of collections of letters and sermons was a much more effective means of distributing a prelate's scholarly work, and these often included a portrait and verse epitaph. Funeral monuments were most adept in commemorating bishops where the tombs had some curious distinction. Chichele's double-effigy tomb at Canterbury, the grand chantries at Winchester, the unexpected vestments on Harsnett's brass or the novelty of substantial effigies of episcopal wives like Frances Matthew caused them to be remembered. The evidence of tombs demonstrates that early modern bishops were caught between past and present, tradition and reform, Church and society.