The English Parish, c.1290-c.1535

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The late-medieval English parish has attracted considerable but fragmented academic attention, and still lacks a full and comprehensive study. Working on the period roughly between two great national surveys conducted in 1291 and 1535, this project will develop a multi-faceted analysis and interpretation of this fundamental component of medieval England's ecclesiastical, social, and economic fabric.

Examining the parish from assorted thematic viewpoints (as 'the juridical and administrative parish', 'the clerical parish', 'the liturgical and devotional parish', 'the contested parish', etc.), it will reconstruct the parish as a complex social and economic entity, with each of pre-Reformation England's 8-9000 parishes a unique unit. While providing a general synthesis, specific case studies will demonstrate the contextual and structural differences between parishes, among other things contrasting urban against rural, pastoral against arable, coastal against inland, and rectories against vicarages. One specific goal is to assert the clergy's central role in the totality of the parish, against recent scholarship's tendency to treat it primarily as a lay community. The work will draw and build on existing secondary work (including my own), trawling extensively through printed primary material and integrating considerable additional archival investigation to produce a major monograph and a range of subsidiary publications.

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