Abstract
Proprietary chapels have been in existence from 1642 to the present time (2002). There is one in the Diocese of London, another in the Diocese of Southwark and half-a-dozen in the rest of the country. Ministers of proprietary chapels were required to be ordained clergy of the Church of England. The motives for establishing a proprietary chapel varied from wanting to preach the Gospel to finding employment for a particular cleric and also to financial investment. Ethically some of these motives were suspect but no doubt the chapels met a need when the Church of England lacked accommodation for the expanding population. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were more than 500 clergy who held appointments in these chapels in the Diocese of London. Mostly they were highly motivated and the few who were not, either moved to other appointments or had legal proceeding taken against them. The Book of Common Prayer (1662) was in use in these chapels so lessons were read from both Old and New Testaments. Sermons were sometimes preached with variation in quality but, as has been pointed out, Gill (1999: 261) claimed "that churchgoers are relatively, yet significantly, different from non-churchgoers they usually have a stronger sense of moral and civic order and tend to be significantly more altruistic than non-churchgoers." A very positive cost-benefit ratio. Law and ethics will no longer exist in God's Kingdom but here on earth in the congregations of the saved sinners with imperfect minds and attitudes, problems will arise. Some of the problems have been dealt with in chapter 7 (Law, Ethics and Proprietary Chapels) but considering the number of the chapels and their host parishes, the clergy, proprietors and congregations involved, the number of legal cases unearthed is surprisingly small, another positive cost-benefit ratio. In London most of the chapels were situated in the Mayfair and Marylebone districts, both fashionable and wealthy districts housing a large proportion of upper-class people. This contrasted sharply with the East End of London where there were none, probably because the East End residents were so poor that they could not afford pew-rents to make a proprietary chapel profitable for the proprietors. A similar situation existed in Bath. During the life of proprietary chapels in Bath, from 1734 to around 1900, Bath was a very prosperous town and because of its spas waters attracted many wealthy visitors who wanted to worship on Sundays. The Archdeacon of Bath in the 1790s was, with others, instrumental in setting up Christ Church Proprietary Chapel primarily for the "lower order of people" suggesting, as some others do, that proprietary chapels were mainly for the upper middle classes. In the second quarter (1825-50) the number of proprietary chapels began to decline which continued rapidly until the early twentieth century leaving very few extant. The reasons for this decline were several, including religious and sociological factors.

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