



University
of Glasgow

Marritt, S. (2017) 'All this I say against the rage of archdeacons against my poor fellow citizens': archdeacons' authority and identity in twelfth-century England. *History*, 102(353), pp. 914-932.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article:

Marritt, S. (2017) 'All this I say against the rage of archdeacons against my poor fellow citizens': archdeacons' authority and identity in twelfth-century England. *History*, 102(353), pp. 914-932, which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-229X.12523>

This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with [Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving](#).

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/149425/>

Deposited on: 23 October 2017

'All this I say against the rage of archdeacons against my poor fellow citizens': Archdeacons'

Authority and Identity in Twelfth-Century England¹

The English archidiaconate is well suited to a focus on the political culture of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin period because its significance within it has been little explored and because it encapsulates a number of the difficulties historians face in understanding how authority was then constituted, expressed and represented. It has often been defined by contemporary criticism, such as this assuredly rhetorical statement by John of Salisbury, or through the charters, *acta*, of archdeacons themselves, which are dominated by only the administrative processes of the office. At its most extreme, modern commentary has rivalled John's: thus Raoul van Caenegem in 1976, '[archdeacons] were at best apt to be rash and overzealous and at worst to turn into oppressors and blackmailers, imperilling their own souls and making people's lives hell'.² Anthony Trollope's *Barsetshire Chronicles* have also perhaps had a part to play in how archdeacons have been understood. Christopher Brooke opened an important 1985 essay with this from *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867),

'The archdeacon ... loved the temporalities of the Church as temporalities. The Church was beautiful to him because one man by interest might have a thousand a year, while another man, equally good,

I'm very grateful to Kathryn Dutton and Charles Insley for inviting me to contribute to the highly successful symposium from which these papers have developed. Remaining errors of fact and judgement are mine alone.

¹ *Haec adversus archidiaconorum rabiam pro pauper con cive nostre*, W.J. Millor, H.E. Butler and C.N.L. Brooke (eds and trans), *The Letters of John of Salisbury* (2 vols, Oxford, 1979-86), I, no.118.

² R.C. Van Caenegem, 'Public Prosecution of Crime in Twelfth-Century England', in C.N.L. Brooke, D.E.

Luscombe, G.H. Martin and D. Owen (eds), *Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to C.R. Cheney*, (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 41-76, p. 65.

but without interest, could only have a hundred. And he liked the men who had the interest a great deal better than the men who had it not.³

Brian Kemp provided scholars with an exemplary edition of *Twelfth-Century English Archidiaconal Acta* in 2001 and a series of studies of their administration in the preceding decade, but very little work has been done on archdeacons since.⁴ The purpose of this essay is to advertise how archdeacons can

³ C.N.L. Brooke, 'The Archdeacon and the Norman Conquest', in D. Greenway, C. Holdsworth and J. Sayers (eds), *Tradition and Change, Essays in Honour of Marjorie Chibnall presented by her friends on the occasion of her seventieth birthday*, (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 1-19, p. 1. Brooke also quoted *The Warden* and noted that Trollope himself doubted he had ever met an archdeacon.

⁴ B. R. Kemp (ed), *Twelfth-Century English Archidiaconal and Vice-Archidiaconal Acta*, (Canterbury and York Society, 92, Woodbridge 2001); 'Archidiaconal and Vice-Archidiaconal *acta*: additions and corrections', *Historical Research*, 80 (2007), pp. 1-21; 'Archdeacons and Parish Churches in England in the Twelfth Century', in G. Garnett and J. Hudson (eds), *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy: Essays in Honour of Sir James Holt* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 341-64; 'Towards admission and institution: English episcopal formulae for the appointment of parochial incumbents in the twelfth century', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 16 (1994), 155-76. 'Informing the Archdeacon on Ecclesiastical Matters in Twelfth Century England', in M.J. Franklin and C. Harper Bill (eds), *Medieval Ecclesiastical Studies in Honour of Dorothy M. Owen*, ed. (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 131-49. See also, 'The Acta of English Rural deans in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries', P. Hoskin, C.N.L. Brooke and B. Dobson (eds), *The Foundations of Medieval English Ecclesiastical History: Studies presented to David Smith* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 138-58. Kemp's predecessor was A. Hamilton Thompson, 'Diocesan organization in the middle ages: archdeacons and rural deans', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 29 (1943), pp. 153-94. Dr Winston Black has provided a similarly useful grounding of the office in canon law, 'The Medieval Archdeacon in Canon Law with a case study of the diocese of Lincoln', University of Toronto, Phd, 2008.

nevertheless be demonstrated to have been men of considerable significance in local society and even in national matters in the twelfth century, and that a rounded portrayal of their authority needs to incorporate a spiritual dimension as well as administrative and judicial functions, and their own conceptualisation of their office. It is worth emphasizing too that Henry of Huntingdon, Walter Map, Ralph Diceto, Peter of Blois, and Gerald of Wales, amongst the most significant of twelfth-century English writers, were all archdeacons, and while John of Salisbury was not some of his best known comments in letters written on behalf of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury or in his own name have sketched them for historians, and have been enormously influential. In chronicle material the archidiaconate only very rarely occurs as a group, but when it does, the narrative is instructive. In 1141, with King Stephen captured and the Empress Matilda claiming the throne, Henry bishop of Winchester consulted the Church as to its best course of action talking to three groups separately and secretly: the bishops, the abbots, but also the archdeacons.⁵ In the beginnings of the Becket crisis at the Council of Westminster in 1163, it was not just criminous clerks that Henry II railed against, but archdeacons, 'who turned the wrongs of others into profit for themselves, who exacted payment for sins, and used it to cultivate their own excessive luxury, without rendering the correction due to sinners'.⁶ Their jurisdiction occurs too in William the Conqueror's well known removal of spiritual matters from the shire courts, and in Henry II's own Constitutions of Clarendon (1164) and Inquest of

⁵ D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C.N.L. Brooke (eds), *Councils and Synods with other Documents relating to the English Church, I pt II, 1066-1204* (Oxford, 1981), no. 142; E. King (ed.), K.R. Potter (trans.), *William of Malmesbury, Historia Novella: The Contemporary History*, ed. (Oxford, 1999), pp. 90-1.

⁶ J.C. Robertson (ed.), *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury* (7 vols, Rolls Series, London, 1875-85), IV, pp. 201.

Sheriffs (1170).⁷ Because of the limitations of the source material, contemporary criticism has to be one of the main bases for this essay, but this is not an attempt to absolve all twelfth-century archdeacons of all the attacks that have come their way. Criticism was certainly justified in some cases and the problems it highlights were of real concern to contemporaries. As Frank Barlow once noted, criticism and rhetoric like John of Salisbury's if nothing else emphasises that archdeacons' authority was potentially considerable, 'if these upstarts were beginning to be regarded as archdevils, the reputation is proof of their new power'.⁸

Thirty years ago the historiography of the episcopate of this period would have been very similar to that described here, but modern scholarship on the bishop is radically changed. Episcopal spiritual authority, pastoral commitment, support for the learned and contemporary literary and artistic culture, and often bishops' own learning and piety are now considered as much as their ambition for office, support for their families, past and continuing royal service and management of their sees' estates.⁹ Recent pioneering work by Julia Barrow and Hugh Thomas has demonstrated that the twelfth-century secular clergy as a whole, amongst whom archdeacons were prominent of course, can also be explored in this way. Thomas's work is especially important and wide ranging, examining as it

⁷ W. Stubbs (ed.), *Select Charters and other illustrations of English Constitutional History* (9th ed., rev. by H.W.C. Davis, Oxford, 1921), pp. 175-8; *Councils and Synods*, nos, 159, 163; D.R. Bates (ed.), *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum: The Acta of William I 1066-1087* (Oxford, 1998), no. 128.

⁸ F. Barlow, *The English Church, 1066-1154: A History of the Anglo-Norman Church* (London, 1979), p. 139.

⁹ Eg. A. Trumbore Jones and J.S. Ott (eds), *The Bishop Reformed: Studies of Episcopal Power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages* (London, 2007) ; L. Körntgen and D. Wassenhoven (eds), *Patterns of Episcopal Power: bishops in tenth and eleventh century Western Europe. Strukturen Bischöflicher Herrschaft im westlichen Europa des 1. und 11. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 2011).

does clerical intellectual and cultural contributions, education and households as well as more standard subject matter. Debts to both and also to Kemp and Diane Greenway, Henry of Huntingdon's editor and compiler of the biographical registers of the clergy of this period, will be clear throughout.¹⁰

[section break]

Best, first, to provide some sense of the archdeacon's office.¹¹ By the second half of the twelfth century the seventeen English dioceses had a total of fifty one archidiaconates, often coterminous with shires and usually divided into a number of rural deaneries. Here the archdeacon acted as his bishop's administrative and judicial deputy, promulgating episcopal policies, ensuring episcopal decisions and instructions were carried out, and collecting episcopal revenues, but his authority was much more immediate than that of his often distant superior and he often acted with considerable autonomy. New churches were investigated before episcopal consecration, existing ones visited regularly, and transfers of rights of patronage over them confirmed. New priests were inducted and the competence and moral standing of the clergy investigated. While some duties, especially sacral ones, were reserved to the bishop, archdeacons also had their bishops' authority over the moral standing of the laity. Engagement with adultery, marriage legitimacy, excommunication and absolution, oaths and ordeals can all be identified, although, unfortunately, this kind of activity is less likely to survive in the types of source material still extant..

¹⁰ H.M. Thomas, *The Secular Clergy in England, 1066-1216* (Oxford, 2014); J. Barrow, *The Clergy in the Medieval World* (Cambridge, 2015); D. Greenway (I-VII, X, XI), J.S. Barrow (VIII), M. Pearson (IX), C.N.L. Brooke and J. Denton (XI) (eds), *Fasti Ecclesie Anglicanae 1066-1300* (11 vols, 1968-2011).

¹¹ The best brief summaries of the functions of the English archdeacon can be found in C.R. Cheney, *From Becket to Langton* (Manchester, 1956), pp. 145-8, 152-3; M. Brett, *The English Church under Henry I* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 199-211; Barlow, *English Church*, pp. 128-39. See also Kemp's *Acta* edition and essays noted above.

Archdeacons did not have to be priests, being required only to hold the lower grade of deacon.¹² Among those promoted to the episcopate many seem not to have been ordained before their election. Where the diocesan cathedral was secular rather than monastic, archdeacons were canons holding prebends, which were often, but not always, within their archidiaconates. Well into the third quarter of the twelfth century, though less clearly thereafter, archdeacons also seem to have been amongst their bishops' closest advisers and often attendant upon them. Central archidiaconal churches from which and within which they might exercise their authority, and to which those subject to it might be expected to come cannot be identified, and many responsibilities required them to be peripatetic. Much of their known work was carried out in their chapters and courts with the local clergy, often held within the context of a rural deanery's synod. Their cathedral prebends and their often multiple church benefices provided the basis of their income, personal and family resources could contribute too, but much may well have come from the aids, fines, fees, procurations and proportions of revenues gathered that they claimed through their administrative and judicial activity. Thomas has estimated late twelfth-century archidiaconal revenues as ranging from ten pounds to one hundred and forty four pounds *per annum*, and cites Gerald of Wales noting income of one hundred marks from his various benefices. This top level of income would equate to that of a prosperous knight, and where their social background can be discerned, it seems often to have been similar, or within ecclesiastical families of the same status.¹³

[section break]

¹² For contemporary liturgical grades, see J. Barrow, 'Grades of Ordination and Clerical Careers, c. 900 - c. 1200', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 30 (2008), 41-61.

¹³ Thomas, *Clergy*, p. 59.

Contemporary moralistic and satirical writing like John's produced by and for the secular clerical elite has been the subject of considerable scholarship. Doubt and self-consciousness about the moral basis of work in royal and ecclesiastical government, the rewards that came from it, and the ambitions it might feed, alongside a literary culture which prized mastery of the classics, linguistic playfulness, and humour all contribute to its volume and its vigour.¹⁴ Archdeacons were very much part of this community themselves. Henry of Huntingdon dedicated his moralizing *De Contemptu Mundi* to Walter of Leicester, whose death he mourned within it, and castigated his own office in *Common Satire*: 'an archdeacon dares to commit a crime, delighting in fleecing and gnawing away at the priests of the land'.¹⁵

Criticism was also grounded in reality; some archdeacons are notorious. Osbert of Richmond failed to purge himself of the alleged poisoning of the Archbishop of York in 1154, and once deposed held lands by knight service and was survived by at least two sons.¹⁶ John of Salisbury wrote to Pope Adrian IV that Walkelin of Suffolk had named a son in his honour and intended that when his pregnant concubine gave birth the child would be 'Adriana' if a girl, and 'Benevento' if a boy, after the place

¹⁴ Thomas, *Clergy*, pp. 139-153. An early and still important reassessment can be found in A.V. Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 103-6, 214-30.

¹⁵ D. Greenway (ed. and trans.), *Henry of Huntingdon, Historia Anglorum. The History of the English People* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 584-619, 782-3.

¹⁶ Greenway, *Fasti, VI, York* (1999), pp. 47-8; C. Norton, *St William of York* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 102-3, 146. See also W. Farrer (vols 1-3) and C.T. Clay (vols 4-12) (eds), *Early Yorkshire Charters* (12 vols, 1914-16 and 1935-65), III, no. 1718, VI, nos 68-9.

where Walkelin had met the pope.¹⁷ Bridlington Priory complained to Pope Innocent III that one of Osbert's successors at Richmond had visited a parish church with ninety seven horses, twenty one hounds and three hawks.¹⁸ Henry II's first criticism of the office was of a case from Scarborough where a rural dean had falsely accused a man's wife of adultery in expectation of bribes for himself and his archdeacon.¹⁹

These last two examples best reflect the focus of the majority of both criticism of the archidiaconate and ecclesiastical legislation: corrupt revenue and hospitality demands. Innocent III cited in his reply to Bridlington the Third Lateran Council of 1179 which laid out that archdeacons' entourages were to be limited to five to seven horses, cardinals' twenty to twenty-five, bishops' twenty to thirty, archbishops' forty to fifty, and rural deans', two. There ought to be neither hawks nor hounds. Such numbers were only permitted where local resources could sustain them, but where that might prove difficult fewer were to be used. Those used to smaller numbers already were not to assume wider powers and increase them. Rich banquets were not to be expected, what was offered should be humbly received, and receipt of charges and taxes by deans and archdeacons and of procurations by bishops, was forbidden. Ambition and careerism were also accusations levied against archdeacons.²⁰

¹⁷ *Letters*, I, nos 14-15. This case has been cited as an example of archidiaconal failings beyond the specialist literature, I.S. Robinson, *The Papacy 1073-1198: Continuity and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 195.

¹⁸ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, V, no. 396.

¹⁹ *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, III, 44.

²⁰ M. Chibnall (ed. and trans.), *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* (6 vols, Oxford, 1969-80), II, p. 269.

While abuse most certainly occurred, it is perhaps less prominent in ecclesiastical legislation and archiepiscopal mandates than might be assumed given such extensive contemporary and modern commentary. Christopher Cheney, whose *From Becket to Langton* has been influential, looked in the main to two especially comprehensive church councils held by Archbishop Hubert Walter in 1195 and 1200, but earlier legislation against archidiaconal practices is more piecemeal.²¹ Celibacy and willingness to accept gifts to ignore clerics' marriages occur in early legislation, but thereafter most common is prohibition of payment of fees for spiritual services and other procurations.²² These were objectionable to the reformed church of the twelfth century, but they were also often of very longstanding and necessary in simple functional terms. Most importantly though, their ending, which was never completed, was a process and these legislative texts can as well be ascribed to that process as witness to corruption and abuse.²³

That is not to say that there were not examples of individuals seeking to circumvent or ignoring regulations or introducing new claims. Representatives of Froger of Derby, almoner to Henry II and eventually Bishop of Sées, forced vicars to pay fees to be inducted into churches, charged for chrism and withheld letters ordering them to desist, while Thomas Becket, as archdeacon of Canterbury, was asked to end the 'second aid' his predecessor had introduced.²⁴ Other specific cases, however, relate not to the levying of fines, charges or hospitality as such, but to often complex jurisdictional boundaries. As early as the 1080s, Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury complained to Bishop Stigand

²¹ Cheney, *Becket to Langton*, pp. 152-4.

²² *Councils and Synods*, nos 113, 116, 130, 132, 134, 183.

²³ Cheney, *Becket to Langton*, pp. 152-4.

²⁴ *Letters*, I, nos 22, 107.

of Chichester that while he had been willing to agree that his clerics within that diocese should attend its synods, jurisdiction over them and any resulting penalties were still reserved to him and should not have been collected by Stigand's archdeacons.²⁵ In 1198 a rural dean was ordered to restore fines paid by a woman accused of adultery only because she was properly subject to another jurisdiction, not because of any corrupt practice.²⁶ Between 1170 and 1189 Jeremy, archdeacon of Cleveland, acknowledged that he had demanded an annual procuration for hospitality from what he had assumed was a church, but since he had now been informed that it was actually only a chapel he would remit his claim.²⁷ Between 1189 and 1194 the archdeacon of Richmond confirmed the freedom of all the churches within his archidiaconate gifted to the cathedral prebend of Masham by Roger de Mowbray from archidiaconal claims to hospitality, aids and synodals, but this reads more like a concession towards the development of the prebend or a pious benefaction rather than one forced out of him by litigation, especially so because elsewhere the same archdeacon was careful to ensure his rights were reserved and the responsibilities for them defined.²⁸

Pursuit of exemption from archidiaconal jurisdiction was not uncommon. Abuse, financial penalties and hospitality were likely often the cause of such requests, as at St Frideswide's Priory, Oxford, where the archdeacon's entourage was to be limited (though here this was in the aftermath of a major fire

²⁵ M. Gibson (ed. and trans.), *The Letters of Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury* (Oxford, 1979), no 30.

²⁶ Kemp, 'Acta of English Rural deans', no. 11.

²⁷ *Archidiaconal Acta*, no. 270.

²⁸ *Archidiaconal Acta*, no. 282. For reservation of his rights, nos 279-80, 282. His predecessor did the same, no. 275.

which also brought forth other concessions).²⁹ In some cases, however, bishops granted exemptions to help develop houses and recognise ancient liberties,³⁰ while in others the archdeacon was incidental to monastic claims to exemption from their bishops' authority. Thomas of Marlborough in his instructions to the monks of Evesham Abbey was insistent that they should not let the archdeacon enter the abbey's precincts, even if he was in the company of the king, a papal legate or an archbishop. They had done so once in a spirit of friendship, and it had been treated as a precedent by their bishop.³¹ Archdeacons' legitimate exercise of their authority might be the cause too. At St Mary's College Warwick, where the archdeacon and the patron, the earl of Warwick had recently combined to try and impose a new dean of their choice, the canons sought the advice of the dean of Salisbury on how to construct their constitution so as to exclude him, testament to the potential influence of the office rather than its abuse.³² As much as some cases like these do demonstrate the veracity of contemporary criticism then, what others also illustrate is authority and influence, perhaps to be avoided, but considerable and not illegitimate.

[section break]

²⁹ S. Wigram (ed.), *The Cartulary of the Monastery of St Frideswide at Oxford* (2 vols, Oxford Historical Society Record Series, 28, 31, Oxford, 1895-6), I, nos 37-9.

³⁰ Eg, D.M. Smith (ed.), *EEA, I, Lincoln 1067-1185* (Oxford, 1980), no. 161; F.M.R. Ramsey (ed.), *EEA, X, Bath and Wells, 1061-1205* (Oxford, 1995), no. 244; M. J. Franklin (ed.) *EEA, 14, Coventry and Lichfield 1072-1159* (Oxford, 1997), nos 12, 33.

³¹ J Sayers and L. Watkiss (eds and trans), *Thomas of Marlborough, History of the Abbey of Evesham* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 369-70.

³² C.R. Fonge (ed.), *The Cartulary of St Mary's Collegiate Church, Warwick* (Woodbridge, 2004), no. 68, p. xlii; Wells cathedral may have sought similar advice, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells, I*, 1907, pp. 30-1.

This is true too of other critical material including John of Salisbury's letters, so important for how historians have characterised archdeacons, but often presenting less commonly cited alternative representations. The case of the representatives of Froger of Derby, for instance, was entrusted to another archdeacon for resolution. One of the best known legal cases of this period is the Anstey case because one of the parties kept a record of his expenditure and John detailed the case for the papacy on behalf of Archbishop Theobald. Part of the case depended on whether an archdeacon had properly annulled a marriage or had been corrupted and bought off. It has been said that John was highly critical of the archdeacon, but he was not, he only reported the accusations made against him (and a bishop) by one party.³³ Roger I of Norfolk was summoned to appear before Archbishop Theobald because he had helped Ralph Lestrangle to 'rob' a cleric of his church. John also castigated him for rumours of his incontinence and his excommunicated son-in-law who had killed a priest. Roger was clearly by no means an ideal archdeacon, but it was his bishop who had determined that Ralph was the rightful holder of the church and Roger had been carrying out his duties properly here at least.³⁴ John's letter to Bartholomew of Exeter from which the quotation which opens this paper is taken was not an official letter on behalf of the archbishop. It was personal, playful and witty, and touched on many other topics of mutual interest. John was not at all convinced that the complainant was telling

³³ *Letters*, I, no. 131; R.C. van Caenegem (ed. and trans.), *English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I*, (Selden Society, 106-7, 1990-1) II, no. 408; P.M. Barnes, 'The Anstey Case', in idem and C.F. Slade (eds), *A Medieval Miscellany for Doris Mary Stenton* (Pipe Roll Society, n.s. 36, 1962 for 1960), pp. 1-24, and P. Brand, 'New light on the Anstey Case', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 15 (1983), pp. 68-83. For a recent discussion of the letter, see D. Luscombe, 'John of Salisbury and Courtiers' Trifles', P. Dalton and D. Luscombe (eds), *Rulers and Rulership in the Anglo-Norman World: Essays in honour of Professor Edmund King* (Farnham, 2015), pp. 141-161, p. 156.

³⁴ *Letters*, I, nos 78-79.

the truth and was quite clear that the investigation had to be seen to be taking place because the king had interested himself in the case. No archdeacon was to be investigated, but the case was entrusted to one, Bartholomew. John's comments here then are possibly a play on Henry II's minor obsession with archidiaconal abuse noted above.

John's attack on Walkelin also occurs in a personal letter. Its official counterpart is more moderate, makes no mention of children and focusses on Walkelin having attended the curia to try to circumvent proceedings against him in England. Other archdeacons were also among the religious men who had testified against him.³⁵ Around 1168, John also wrote a personal letter to Walkelin in which he expressed his delight at being able to converse with him again, and he appears, unnamed, in a further letter properly conducting a vacancy case.³⁶ Baldwin of Norfolk, 'a man conspicuous for his malice, guile and skilled mendacity' in a letter to Adrian IV, was also written to in very friendly personal terms.³⁷ Brooke, John's editor, was surely right to suggest that this type of double portrayal can be ascribed to his fascination with human nature, but it might also be that these vitriolic letters to a pope John knew well were rhetorical devices gauged to influence his engagement with the cases their official counterparts discussed.³⁸

³⁵ *Letters*, I, no. 14.

³⁶ *Letters*, II, no. 253; I, no. 81. Walkelin's proper fulfilment of his duties can also be seen in *English Lawsuits*, I, no 569.

³⁷ *Letters*, I, no. 46; ii, no. 240.

³⁸ C.N.L. Brooke, 'John of Salisbury and his World', in M. Wilks (ed), *The World of John of Salisbury* (Studies in Church History, Subsidia 3, Oxford, 1994), pp. 1-20, pp. 2-3. For John's relationship with Adrian, see idem,

John could rely on Bartholomew, and other archdeacons, in difficult cases and he was not the only letter writer to trust to them, and to write to them in friendly terms.³⁹ Gilbert Foliot, Becket's opponent, and successively abbot of Gloucester, bishop of Hereford and bishop of London, asked Godfrey of Worcester to try and restrain his bishop from his attacks on Evesham Abbey. He had earlier asked the same bishop to allow his archdeacon to hear a case in his court if he did not have time to hear it himself, and sought another archdeacon's forgiveness for requiring some of his clerks to take part in a legal hearing.⁴⁰ Foliot also responded to a request for advice from Matthew of Gloucester regarding whether a woman accused of adultery should be required to take an oath to her innocence as had been the ruling of a court or to take the ordeal of hot iron as she had promised her husband she would.⁴¹ John of Salisbury would write on behalf of Archbishop Theobald to Robert of Lincoln in response to a long list of worries: clerics living with female relatives; a cleric living with a former concubine justifying it because the woman was a servant of his father; local customary oaths taken on ordination; use of unsuitable chalices; vestments in need of repair; and the post mortem purification of a cleric's concubine who had died without confession or communion.⁴² Peter of Blois, also well known for his letters and for his criticism of clerics and courtiers, would write in similar terms to an

'Adrian IV and John of Salisbury', in B. Bolton and A.J. Duggan (eds), *Adrian IV The English Pope* (Farnham, 2003), pp. 3-13.

³⁹ *Letters*, I, no. 47.

⁴⁰ A. Morey and C.N.L. Brooke (eds), *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot* (Cambridge, 1967), nos 8, 80, 126, 204.

⁴¹ *Gilbert Foliot*, no. 237.

⁴² *Letters*, I, no. 100.

archdeacon of Dorset on confession, penance, homicide and adultery.⁴³ Much earlier Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury had given William of Canterbury instructions on haircuts and sodomy, and confirmed sentences he had passed on clergy with concubines in his synods. He also wrote to Stephen of Winchester ordering him to prohibit the nuns of Romsey from honouring an unnamed saint.⁴⁴ These letters engage with the same issues as more critical ones, but archdeacons here were trying to navigate complex legal and local issues to do their work effectively. It was also in these contexts that much English ecclesiastical administration situates archdeacons; much more legislation required them to act than was aimed at stopping their abuses.

Similar themes can also be found in Gerald of Wales *Gemma Ecclesiastica* which laid out for the clergy of his archidiaconate what was required of them and their churches. Robert Bartlett is characteristically thought provoking on this text: 'it may not have been particularly radical but as a social programme, reform 'in the field' could be explosive and divisive'. Gerald's attempts to enforce tithe payments required excommunication and his lay relatives' support; he restored to the parson of Hay the full revenues of his church which the parson had hitherto shared with his brother and when he attempted visitation of one rural deanery a crucifix was held up in front of him to bar his way.⁴⁵

⁴³ E. Revell (ed.), *The Later Letters of Peter of Blois* (Oxford, 1993), no. 61. For Peter criticising an archdeacon, see J.A. Giles (ed.), *Petri Blesensis Bathoniensis archidiaconi opera omnia* (4 vols, London, 1847), I, no cxviii.

⁴⁴ F.S. Schmitt (ed.), *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia* (6 vols, Edinburgh, 194-51), IV, nos. 236, 257, 370. For Romsey see, P.A. Hayward, 'Translation Narratives in Post Conquest Hagiography and English Resistance to the Norman Conquest', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 21 (1999), pp. 67-93, p. 92.

⁴⁵ R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 28, 31-3.

Visitation could thus be fraught and archdeacons' authority contested and in need of both spiritual and familial support, but it also had a significant purpose and, potentially, a major impact.

Archdeacons' own *acta* are not as forthcoming. Kemp identified 211 of the 285 documents in his edition as dealing with parish church administration, thirty eight deal with similar ecclesiastical matters, and most of the remainder are private land transactions.⁴⁶ Even routine aspects of archdeacons' duties might hide tensions though. When the prior of Walden Abbey heard that a clerk had been presented by a village's lord to an archdeacon for induction into a parish church in which he claimed rights of patronage he reacted immediately and contacted all the priory's influential connections.⁴⁷ The *acta* also represent processes and rituals which might illustrate archdeacons' authority and place in society. For instance, in the 1150s, Aldhelm of Dorset notified the relevant rural chapter that in his presence, in chapter at Newton, a patron had given a church to an abbey in the person of the abbot, through the archdeacon's hands. The next day, the incumbent priest promised to pay an annual pension to the abbey and, in Aldhelm's presence again, received the church from the hand of the abbot. About three days later, in chapter again, this time at Dorchester, the archdeacon invested the abbot with the church by handing him the keys. Aldhelm also noted he had received letters from the sister of the earl of Devon regarding the grant of a further church to the abbey. Not all of this information can be found in the archdeacon's own *actum*, it must be combined with the

⁴⁶ *Archidiaconal Acta*, pp. xlii-xliii.

⁴⁷ D. Greenway and L. Watkiss (eds and trans), *The Book of the Foundation of Walden Monastery* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 60-1.

charters of the donor and the abbot.⁴⁸ Nicholas of Bedford remembered in the late twelfth century that he had first known one Ascelin as the parson of Apsley church, then inducted Robert the clerk at the behest of the church's lay patrons, had been present when Bishop Robert de Chesney had received the prior of Dunstable into the right of patronage, and now had inducted Nicholas the clerk into the vicarage at the request of the prior. Nicholas had thus been involved with this church over many years, and explicitly acknowledged a similar length of engagement elsewhere.⁴⁹ In a further text kept by Dunstable he recorded that he had inducted the prior into possession of a church in accordance with a papal judge delegate's mandate, and that the local dean, who had been in dispute with the priory about it, had sworn before him in his synod to keep faith with the prior.⁵⁰ Towards the end of the century, William, brother of Mathilda of Bayeux, swore in the hands of Master Alexander of Stow to preserve the agreement his sister had made with a nunnery to allow her to worship in her private chapel due to her infirmity and age. William's son swore in the hands of the rural dean.⁵¹ Even Osbert of Richmond notified the steward of the earl of Richmond that he and two laymen had been present when Godreda, daughter of Hermer acknowledged and confirmed her father's gift to an abbey.⁵² In examples like this the archdeacon can be seen to have been one of the foci of local religious and social

⁴⁸ W.H.R. Jones and W.D. Macray (eds) *Charters and Documents illustrating the history of the cathedral, city and diocese of Salisbury in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*, ed. (Rolls Series, 1891), nos 30-33;

Archidiaconal Acta, no. 236.

⁴⁹ *Archidiaconal Acta*, nos 48-9.

⁵⁰ *Archidiaconal Acta*, no. 50.

⁵¹ *Archidiaconal Acta*, no. 194.

⁵² *Archidiaconal Acta*, no. 274.

networks. Varied groups required or sought his involvement in their pious activities as well as their transactions.

Archdeacons can also be found in this broader context in other lay charters. Robert of Stafford II recorded a case heard in his court between Ernard of Walton and Stone Priory. Some of the disputed possessions were ecclesiastical and so three representatives of the bishop, all archdeacons, were present to determine that element. The final composition was made in the church of Stone itself, at the altar with the three archdeacons attending.⁵³ The Darley Abbey cartulary includes a record of an inquest held at Henry II's order before Ranulf sheriff of Derbyshire, Froger archdeacon of Derby and Peter of Sandiacre in the house of Hugh the dean of Derby, in which twenty four men recognised that the church of St Peter in the town had been built on Hugh's patrimony and the advowson belonged to him. Twelve of the twenty four were burgesses of Derby, four were knights and four priests were among the remainder.⁵⁴ Walter archdeacon of Oxford was a close friend of a burgess of Oxford named Ermenold and acted as one of his sureties and mediators alongside a layman in a dispute between him and Abingdon Abbey.⁵⁵

Episcopal mandates can demonstrate archdeacons' spiritual authority as well as their administrative duties. St Hugh of Lincoln ordered his archdeacons and other officials to cause the faithful of every

⁵³ *English Lawsuits*, II, no. 325.

⁵⁴ R.R. Darlington (ed.), *The Cartulary of Darley Abbey* (2 vols, Derbyshire Archaeological Society, 1945), no. a12.

⁵⁵ J. Hudson (ed. and trans.), *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis. The History of the Church of Abingdon* (2 vols, Oxford, 2002-7), II, pp. 204-5.

household to be moved to more regular observance of Pentecostal professions.⁵⁶ William archdeacon of London was ordered by Henry of Winchester to anathematize those who taught in the city without licence.⁵⁷ William de Vere of Hereford ordered his archdeacons, rural deans and priests to excommunicate those who molested the possessions of Leominster Priory, and his priests to excommunicate those molesting the monks of Flaxley in the Forest of Dean. In this second text, neither archdeacons nor rural deans were to absolve those so punished.⁵⁸ This prohibition occurs elsewhere too and suggests that, normally, this would be a capacity archdeacons did have. It might be inferred as being critical, but it seems instead to have been about the advertised seriousness of cases (just as absolution could be reserved to the pope) or the proper jurisdiction in which they should be resolved.⁵⁹ Likewise ordeals, where Henry of Huntingdon confirmed that his predecessors had neither exercised power in nor received anything from ordeals undergone in the Isle of Ely.⁶⁰ Papal judge delegates' decisions can provide similar evidence: the archdeacon of Canterbury was ordered to denounce a chapel as accursed and worthy of destruction and to suspend from divine service all those who worshipped therein in 1191.⁶¹ When St Hugh Bishop of Lincoln's estates were sequestered by the king, he ordered his archdeacons and rural deans to assemble the local priests as soon as the escheators appeared, ring the bells, light the candles and excommunicate those who ordered or helped in the process.⁶²

⁵⁶ D.M. Smith (ed), *English Episcopal Acta* [henceforth *EEA*], IV, *Lincoln 1186-1206* (Oxford, 1986), no. 92.

⁵⁷ M. J. Franklin (ed.), *EEA*, VIII, *Winchester 1070-1204*, (Oxford, 1993), no. 79.

⁵⁸ J. Barrow (ed.), *EEA*, VII, *Hereford 1079-1234*, (Oxford, 1993), nos 191, 212.

⁵⁹ Eg *Lincoln 1186-1206*, no. 91.

⁶⁰ *Archidiaconal Acta*, no. 106.

⁶¹ *Bath and Wells*, no. 106.

⁶² D.L. Douie and H. Farmer (eds and trans), *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis* (2nd ed., 2 vols, Oxford, 1985), II, p.

These particular cases have been cited here because, even though they may have only been carried out through delegation, they emphasise archdeacons' spiritual responsibilities and punishments and must also have involved ritual and charismatic acts, just as did their more prosaic routine duties. Diane Greenway's reconstruction of Henry of Huntingdon's activities shows him present at dedications of new abbey churches and the shire court, and attesting a royal charter, episcopal *acta* and the earl of Northampton's foundation charter for Sawtry Abbey. He visited Bec and Rome and witnessed the bleeding of the walls of Ramsey Abbey during the civil war of Stephen reign. These demonstrate his prominence in local society and at important local religious events.⁶³ Similar examples can be found elsewhere. Henry Mayr-Harting has characterised Master Silvester Archdeacon of Chichester as Gerald of Wales's expert on flying crucifixes in his discussion of the intersection between elite and popular Christian culture.⁶⁴ When a sick man stole money from Evesham Abbey servants it was returned through a 'revered' archdeacon who told the story to the house after the intervention of St Egwin.⁶⁵ When a sceptical woman ignored Sunday working rules and swelled up as a result, the local people told their priest, who told his rural dean, who told his archdeacon, who passed the story on to Gerald of Wales.⁶⁶ Bad archdeacons could of course be punished by saints, as was William de Lavendon one of the many enemies of the monks of Ely, but archdeacons also occur in miracle accounts as

⁶³ *Historia*, pp. clxvi-clxxii.

⁶⁴ H. Mayr-Harting, *Religion, Politics and Society in Britain 1066-1272* (London, 2011), pp. 96-7.

⁶⁵ *Thomas of Marlborough*, pp. 120-1.

⁶⁶ R.M. Loomis (ed. and trans) *Gerald of Wales, The Life of St Hugh of Avalon Bishop of Lincoln 1186-1200*, (1985), p.49.

trustworthy reporters, and occasionally as beneficiaries.⁶⁷ The Life of Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester has him travelling his diocese dedicating altars, coming one evening to a place near where he knew Archdeacon Ailric had just built a new church. He informed the archdeacon that he would dedicate the church the next day, but the archdeacon did not have enough resources to provide hospitality. Bishop Wulfstan assured him all would be well, and the archdeacon would later recount the miraculous abundance.⁶⁸ William of Malmesbury reported two archdeacons cured by his monastery's saint, one of whom was also a dedicatee of a new Life of his benefactor.⁶⁹

[section break]

Archdeacons' authority, then, was neither solely based in their administrative functions nor explainable only in directly transmitted episcopal power. It could also have a spiritual aspect and they could be perceived as having a spiritual life. However, when St Hugh of Lincoln ordered that his archdeacons, their officials and the rural deans cease to use financial penalties because of the dangers of corruption, they protested that these were much more effective than either excommunication or corporal punishment, to which Hugh retorted that they must work harder at making sure penances were carried out.⁷⁰ This may well have been easier said than done. Never mind that Hugh's archdeacons were not saintly Carthusian monks who could talk to kings as equals, they had neither their bishop's sacral status and powers nor his hierarchical standing, cathedral, palace, throne, relics

⁶⁷ E.O. Blake (ed.), *Liber Eliensis* (Camden Society, 3rd Series, 92, 1962), p. 386.

⁶⁸ R.R. Darlington (ed.), *The Vita Wulfstani of William of Malmesbury*, (Camden Society, 3rd Series, 40, 1928), p. 55.

⁶⁹ M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson (eds and trans), *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Pontificum Anglorum. The History of the English Bishops* (2 vols, Oxford, 2007), I, pp. 640-5; II, p. 320.

⁷⁰ *Magna Vita*, II, p. 38.

or saints. Not only did they not have central archidiaconal churches, it is difficult even to identify whether archidiaconates had particular cathedral prebends associated with them for much of this period. Most of the churches and estates that archdeacons can be shown to have held were personal to them rather than belonging to their office. County towns might be dominated by religious houses, especially new Augustinian priories, and also by their rural deans. Several early Lincoln archdeacons seem to have controlled schools in the county towns of their archidiaconates, but were forced to give way to monopolies granted to new Augustinian houses.⁷¹ At Huntingdon, the *Life* of the saintly recluse Christina of Markyate has the prior and the local dean engaging with her dispute with her father, not Henry of Huntingdon.⁷²

Henry's home, which he evidently loved, his estates, and the church which he had built and which his son held after him were at Little Stukeley outside the town. Huntingdon was not a toponym he used himself.⁷³ Baldric de Sigillo of Leicester, had no known Lincoln connections before being provided with a prebend from the Lincoln city farm by King Stephen in the 1140s, but by the 1160s he had estates in Lincolnshire near Kirkstead abbey and was a donor to the house.⁷⁴ Walter of Oxford inherited land

⁷¹ *Archidiaconal Acta*, nos 56, 102; *EEA, I, Lincoln, 1067-1185*, no. 134; J.C. Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into England* (London, 1950), pp. 103-4, 115-7, 125, 144; *Historia*, pp. xlii-iii.

⁷² C.H. Talbot (ed. and trans.), *The Life of Christina of Markyate a Twelfth Century Recluse* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 36-8, 54-66, 78, 88.

⁷³ *Historia*, pp. xxvii-viii, 792-5, 803.

⁷⁴ Greenway, *Fasti, III, Lincoln* (1977), p. 33; H.A. Cronne and R.H.C. Davis (eds), *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066-1154, III* (Oxford, 1968), nos 478-80; *Archidiaconal Acta*, no. 134.

there from his friend Brityna, and was wealthy enough to be a donor to the new priory at Godstow.⁷⁵ Walter may even have proven his rights to some property by Domesday Book.⁷⁶ Houses and estates were perhaps then important to archdeacons' local status, and certainly gave them a place within local society. Hugh Thomas has demonstrated that the household itself and, ironically, hospitality within those households might be just as significant in this respect.⁷⁷

Entourage, visitation, and hospitality demands may also be understood in terms of how archdeacons could represent their authority. The costs of maintaining their position may well have been extensive, and the benefits of hospitality useful as a result. Gerald of Wales complained that his bishop had decided that he would visit the priests of the diocese though there was no necessity to do so, and he would visit them in their houses, while Gerald would visit, as was essential, the churches – the facilities of the churches left a lot to be desired as compared to the houses.⁷⁸ Peter of Blois complained that while there were 40,000 men and 122 churches in London they did not produce enough revenue to sustain him.⁷⁹ It is not always clear indeed that in the twelfth century that archdeacons controlled all the revenues of their archidiaconate. Several bishops assigned revenues from them to special projects

⁷⁵ *Archidiaconal Acta*, nos 166, 169-71. See also Ralph of Middlesex, Kemp, 'Archidiaconal and vice-archidiaconal acta', nos 211a-d.

⁷⁶ *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis*, II, p. 171

⁷⁷ Thomas, *Clergy*, pp. 196-9.

⁷⁸ Y.F.C. Lefèvre and R.B.C. van Huygens (eds), B. Dawson (trans), *Gerald of Wales, Speculum Duorum* (Cardiff, 1974), pp. 271-3.

⁷⁹ *Petri Blesensis Opera*, II, no. cli; J.D. Cotts, *The Clerical Dilemma: Peter of Blois and Literate Culture in the Twelfth Century* (Basingstoke, 2013), p. 45.

or charitable cases.⁸⁰ Exemptions of course, reduced potential revenues still further. Bishop William Warelwast of Exeter, for instance, granted Plympton Priory freedom from all episcopal and archidiaconal charges, reserving jurisdiction and penitential jurisdiction over the priory's servants to himself and his archdeacon, but granting any financial penalties to the canons.⁸¹

Visitation, hospitality and financial penalties may have been both necessity but also understood by archdeacons as essential to their ability to exercise their power. It is perhaps this which lies at the root of some contemporary comment which is admonitory rather than critical. When John of Salisbury responded to Archdeacon Robert's enquiries he also emphasised, 'that God may be glorified by your zeal and that your ministry may be honoured, keep your hands from the sordid gains of false accusation, lest the office of judge with which God has entrusted you may seem to be a sort of business concern.'⁸² This was a consistent theme of writings on archdeacons. John's letter to Bartholomew shared a quotation with his *Policraticus*, his great work on the ethics and morality of power, wherein archdeacons occur with other judges, both secular and ecclesiastical, and the danger of corruption of justice for gain is discussed, but John stated too that some, as well as some bishops and legates, had managed to find a way to carry out their duties without corruption.⁸³ Thomas, whose work in this area is very important, rightly notes that this implies that many had not, but this theme is repeated in a

⁸⁰ *Anselmi Opera*, IV, no. 380; J Burton (ed.) *EEA*, V, *York, 1070-1154* (Oxford, 1988), nos. 51a, 77; *Bath and Wells*, no. 81.

⁸¹ F. Barlow (ed.), *EEA*, XI, *Exeter, 1046-1184* (Oxford, 1996), no. 20.

⁸² *Letters*, I, no. 100.

⁸³ C.C.J. Webb (ed.), John of Salisbury, *Policraticus sive de Nugis Curialium et de Vestigiis Philosophorum* (2 vols, Oxford, 1909), I, pp. 353-4; Thomas, *Clergy*, p. 149.

letter to Nicholas de Sigillo, a royal clerk recently appointed archdeacon, who had in the past disparaged the office but whose friends must now ‘thank God and the Bishop of Lincoln who have opened your eyes and revealed to you a path’, by which archdeacons could maintain their ethical standards. Thomas, and Mayr-Harting, are surely correct to note John’s humour here, but Nicholas was also one of the most conscientious and effective archdeacons of his day.⁸⁴

There are close similarities too with Gilbert of Sempringham’s well known reasons for refusing an archidiaconate when offered it by his bishop, probably in the 1130s:

‘he knew no more apt or handy path to ruin. By ‘path’ he meant occasion rather than cause: it is not that taking up a responsibility makes sin inescapable, but that it is difficult to perform this kind of responsibility without sinning. Service to the church is useful and beneficial to the man who performs it well but there are few who plead to save men’s souls and many who do so to make money. He feared that access to wealth would increase his share of the blame, and that if he drew more from the well of riches the time would come when he would not be satisfied out of the bucket of avarice. Moreover, he preferred to take good care of the few souls under his authority rather than fail to do what he should do for greater numbers entrusted to his charge.’⁸⁵

While there were dangers inherent in the office then, it could be possible to find a way through them and a spiritual purpose to what was an important religious office not just an administrative one. This might be connected to similar doubts and fears but also the possibility of reconciliation and valuable

⁸⁴ *Letters*, II, no. 140; Mayr-Harting, *Religion, Politics and Society*, p. 18; Thomas, *Clergy*, pp. 149, 151. For Nicholas’s effectiveness see Kemp, ‘Archdeacons and Parish Churches’, p. 302.

⁸⁵ R. Foreville and G. Keir (eds and trans), *The Book of St Gilbert*, (Oxford, 1987), pp. 28-9.

service which courtier clerics were also expressing in this period. Peter of Blois, whose concerns in this regard and whose spirituality have been brilliantly analysed by John Cotts, also wrote on the office of archdeacon.⁸⁶ Practical expression of this conception of the office might be found in Gerald of Wales *Gemma Ecclesiastica* as noticed above, but also in Jeremy of Cleveland's possible authorship of the *Lay Folk's Mass Book* or in Robert son of Gille, John of Salisbury's brother, the author of a penitential.⁸⁷ Thomas has been the first historian to make use of the still unedited sermons of Thomas Agnellus, archdeacon of Wells and author of a number of sermons addressed to the secular clergy.⁸⁸

This possibility of a conception of the office might also be found in identification with the seven biblical deacons and with early martyrs considered to have held the same office, especially St Lawrence. Peter of Blois was troubled by the emergence of the bishop's official, a new office which would to some extent replace archdeacons as bishops' legal deputies in the thirteenth century. Officials, unlike deacons, had no background in the service of church and people, and merely sought money.⁸⁹ When pressured by his bishop into becoming a priest, Peter's reasons for not doing so included the claim that while the bishop was the highest form of the priesthood, the archdeacon was the highest form of the diaconate, so that to become a priest would be a degradation of his office. Deacons too, like

⁸⁶ Thomas, *Clergy*, pp. 151-2; Cotts, *Dilemma*, 131-75 and *passim*.

⁸⁷ For a, rightly, cautious assessment of Jeremy's authorship, see, R.W. Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 460-2; F. Barlow, 'John of Salisbury and his brothers', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 46 (1995), pp. 95-109, pp. 99-100.

⁸⁸ Thomas, *Clergy*, *passim*.

⁸⁹ *Later Letters*, nos 8, 11.

priests had a specific role to play in the church.⁹⁰ Gerald of Wales also cited the original seven deacons of the church, and Henry of Huntingdon wrote of Bishop Remigius founding seven archidiaconates for the seven shires over which he presided, although the diocese included eight and parts of a ninth.⁹¹ Adam of Eynsham, a Benedictine author of a *Life* of St Hugh of Lincoln gave an account of one of his archdeacons, Reimund of Leicester, because the lives of disciples redounded to the reputation of their masters, ‘Thus a valiant archdeacon [*archilevita*] brings honours to his bishop, as, for example Lawrence to Sixtus, Vincent to Valerian, Pontius to Cyprian’.⁹² It may not be coincidence that Bishop Henry of Winchester dedicated a college founded to pray for the souls of the kings of England and bishops of Winchester to Saints Lawrence and Vincent again, and also to Stephen and Quintin.⁹³

John of Salisbury wrote to Nicholas of a *genus* of archdeacons and this can also be seen in their seals, which are extraordinarily uniform despite their numbers and the variety of individuals who held the role, and for which thirteenth century legislation demonstrates the distinctiveness of the office. Bishops, abbots and archdeacons seals had to include both their name and their office, while rural deans had only to include their office, because their possession was not permanent but temporary

⁹⁰ *Petri Blesensis Opera*, I, no. cxxiii.

⁹¹ *Speculum*, p. 151; *Historia*, p. 591. Rutland, a ninth county was not considered as such in this period, J. Green, *English Sheriffs to 1154* (London, 1990), p. 19.

⁹² *Magna Vita*, II, pp. 154-6. For the saints: D.H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (5th ed., Oxford, 2011), pp. 130-1, 311-12, 525; J. Bolland (eds), *Acta Sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur, vel a catholicis scriptoribus celebrantur*, (66 vols in 67, Brussels, 1863-1925), March I, cols 750-51; Aug II, cols. 485-532; Jan II, cols. 393-414.

⁹³ *Winchester, 1070-1204*, no. 80. For Quintin see Farmer, *Saints*, p. 447.

and the seal would be passed on to another.⁹⁴ Rural deans need only be sub deacons as well. This differentiation from those below them may well have been significant to archdeacons. Early on there may have been some confusion as to quite how they ought to be considered. Archbishop Lanfranc was non-plussed when told that Norman bishops were requiring professions before allowing archdeacons to take up office – they were not being ordained priests, so why was this necessary?⁹⁵

Some modern commentators, Cheney in particular, have argued that the archidiaconate was in the main a reward for service and that often an archdeacon was ‘tempted to treat his office purely as a source of income and to pursue a career elsewhere’. This is certainly true of some archdeacons, among whom were some who were sheriffs, and Cheney was concerned especially with the clerks of Archbishop Hubert Walter, but it is worth citing again John’s correspondents Nicholas de Sigillo and Baldric de Sigillo, both ex-royal clerks and the first occasionally involved in royal duties again, but both effective and resident archdeacons for twenty years or more.⁹⁶ In terms of clerical ambition, it was

⁹⁴ F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney (eds), *Councils and Synods with other documents relating to the English Church, II, 1205-1313* (Oxford, 1964), pt. 1, pp. 257-8; W.H. St John Hope, ‘The Seals of Archdeacons’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries* (2nd ser, xv, 1895), pp. 26-35; P.D.A. Harvey and A. McGuinness, *A Guide to British Medieval Seals* (London, 1996), 75; *Archidiaconal Acta*, xl-xlii. For examples of seals, see W. de Gray Birch (ed.), *Catalogue of Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum* ed. (6 vols, London, 1887-1900), I, nos 1386-7, 1674, 1814-15 (a vice-archdeacon), 1824-5, 1838, 1895, 2116.

⁹⁵ *Letters of Lanfranc*, no. 41.

⁹⁶ C.R. Cheney, *English Bishops’ Chanceries 1100-1250* (Manchester, 1950), pp. 14-17, 143-6; idem, *Becket to Langton*, p. 147; Barlow, *English Church*, p. 275. Greenway, *Fasti, III, Lincoln*, pp. 27, 33. For two biographical

more likely that a cleric who had been an archdeacon would become a bishop than if he were, say, a cathedral's dean, but that possibility was still small. Barrow has calculated that seventy eight of 321 bishops between 1066 and 1300 had been archdeacons, some twenty four percent.⁹⁷ If the figures are examined from the position of the archdeacon that percentage can be even smaller: between 1070 and 1200 only about fourteen percent of archdeacons gained promotion to a higher office. Prominent are a very few archidiaconates which seem to have been used regularly by kings and archbishops to support key servants who might then be promoted: Canterbury, the East Riding of Yorkshire, and Oxford.⁹⁸

[section break]

The vast majority of archdeacons then can have had no expectation of promotion to the episcopate. While Gerald of Wales and Peter of Blois may well have been frustrated that they were not promoted, there is no evidence that Henry of Huntingdon, for instance, was at all dissatisfied with his lot or sought further elevation. Accusations of careerism, like archdeacons' 'rage' and other criticism which has so defined twelfth-century English archdeacons are certainly grounded in real examples, but they are also extremely useful in trying to tease out other aspects of the office, and grounded in the doubts and problems that faced archdeacons in attempting to fulfil an office which was more complex in its

studies, see R.V. Turner, *Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Mobility in Angevin England* (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 20-34, 91-106.

⁹⁷ Barrow, *Clergy*, pp. 50-1, 304.

⁹⁸ Like Barrow's these figures are based in the volumes of the *Fasti Ecclesie Anglicanae*. The figure cannot be precise because there is some uncertainty. For the three archidiaconates highlighted see *Fasti, II, Monastic Cathedrals* (1971), pp. 12-14; *Fasti, III, Lincoln*, pp. 35-6; *Fasti, VI, York*, pp. 40-1.

constitution and in the nature of its authority than is sometimes recognised. There is no question but that financial penalties and hospitality demands could be morally problematic, but at the same time they were essential resources in the exercise of archdeacons' authority both materially and in terms of representation, and they may well have been effective. There is too, at least as much evidence of that effectiveness, and of a commitment to the duties of the office as there is of abuse.⁹⁹ Evidence of the self-satisfaction of Trollope's archdeacon is not to be found, but there is evidence to suggest that holders of the office could have a spiritual authority and sought a religious justification and purpose for it. 'Rage' and entourages, adultery cases and miracles as much as administrative routine also attest to the centrality and integration of the archdeacon within society, which therefore perhaps needs to be considered beyond specialist literature more than it has been to date.

⁹⁹ Here I differ slightly from Thomas, who acknowledges his own more 'cynical' approach, *Clergy*, 150-1.