

**Clergy and Commoners: Interactions between medieval clergy and laity in  
a regional context**

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of York

Centre for Medieval Studies

2009

### ***Abstract***

This thesis examines the interactions between medieval clergy and laity, which were complex, and its findings trouble dominant models for understanding the relationships between official and popular religions. In the context of an examination of these interactions in the Humber Region Lowlands during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, this thesis illustrates the roles that laity had in the construction of official and popular cultures of medieval religion. Laity and clergy often interacted with each other and each other's culture, with the result that both groups contributed to the construction of medieval cultures of religion. After considering general trends through an examination of pastoral texts and devotional practices, the thesis moves on to case studies of interactions at local levels as recorded in ecclesiastical administrative documents, most notably bishops' registers. The discussion here, among other things, includes the interactions and negotiations surrounding hermits and anchorites, the complaints of the laity, and lay roles in constructing the religious identity of nuns. The Conclusion briefly examines the implications of the complex relationships between clergy and laity highlighted in this thesis. It questions divisions between cultures of official and popular religion and ends with a short case study illustrating how clergy and laity had the potential to shape the practices and structures of both official and popular medieval religion.

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### **Acknowledgments**

During the Middle Ages, the compiler who collected the works of established authorities and shaped them into something new of his own was held in as much esteem as the author of an original work. I have felt much like a compiler while completing this doctoral thesis because I could not have done it without the efforts and support of many other people whom I now have the pleasure to thank.

Numerous faculty, staff, and colleagues at the University of York's Centre for Medieval Studies have all been incalculably helpful over the years. There are far too many to name without, inevitably, forgetting someone, so I must thank all of them for their interest, questions, advice, and challenges to my project. The Centre's many seminar and discussion groups are a tribute to its vibrant research environment and help to mould excellent future medievalists.

All researchers rely on their libraries as well as on a growing number of online resources, which makes me ever more awed at the efforts of past medievalists who relied on paper files, card catalogues, and long-hand composition. Many sources used in this thesis have been drawn from online databases and projects, which I must acknowledge here: British History Online for making accessible and searchable, among other resources, the *Victoria County Histories*; the Humanities Research Institute's *Taxatio Database*; the University of Iowa for its creation of a fully searchable database of the *Calendar of Patent Rolls*; and the University of Houston O'Quinn Law Library, which is digitising records from the National Archives in London. Much of my time has been spent in libraries and I must acknowledge two in particular. Staff at the library of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies at the University of Toronto have always been helpful and welcoming on my many working holidays at home in Canada. I must give even greater thanks to the staff at the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York who have been tremendously helpful, whether they were helping to find documents or re-spooling dusty microfilms from their excellent collection.

Of the many people whom I should mention personally, I must confine myself to a few. Beyond the walls of the Centre, Fr Elias O'Brien (O.Carm.) at Whitefriars, York provided, variously, insights into interactions between clerics and their flocks at modern parishes, discussions of his own doctoral work, and excellent hospitality. I will not, I think, ever adequately be able to thank my supervisors, Dr Jeremy Goldberg and Professor Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, whose constant attention over the past three years has been, at times, daunting and encouraging, but always superlatively helpful. I owe great thanks to my family, in particular to my parents, without whose support and encouragement I would not have even undertaken this project. Finally, I owe a lifetime of thanks to my wife, Ming Taubman, for her support. She has, with the patience of a medieval saint, endured countless discussions about this project; many impromptu Latin declamations and translations; rainy visits to crumbling monasteries and cold parish churches; and long absences.

All that remains to do is, in appropriate medieval fashion, to apologise to the reader for any errors and faults that are, of course, my own.

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## Conventions and Abbreviations

Long passages of quotations from primary and published sources appear in the original language with a translation in the footnote. Short phrases or words intended to illustrate or clarify meaning appear in the original language in brackets immediately following the English. Generally, no reference appears for these if they have already appeared in a longer passage. No translation is given for Middle English passages.

Punctuation is retained from published editions and added to unpublished material without comment. For consistency, personal and place names but not attributes from published and unpublished material have been capitalised, thus the Blessed Virgin Mary appears in Latin as *beate virginis Marie*. Likewise, i, t, and u are preferred to j, c, and v for all published and unpublished Latin material with the exception of v for initials or in Roman numerals. Anglo-Norman passages follow these conventions while letters in Middle English passages are neither normalised nor transliterated.

References are to the page, unless indicated to refer to the column, line, numbered entry, and so on. Where pagination is continuous in multi-volume works only the page number is included. For all other references (i.e. column) and non-continuous pagination, the volume always appears first, thus: no. 3:121. Where a manuscript and published edition of the same material have been consulted, the published edition retains the name and the manuscript its reference number, thus: *Cart. Bridlington* and BL, MS Add. 40008 for the cartulary of Bridlington Priory. References to published administrative records generally include only the title. Following the conventions of the *Chicago Manual of Style, 15<sup>th</sup> edition*, short references have been used throughout with complete information appearing in the bibliography. The citations and bibliography follow the same order – Primary Sources, Published Sources, Secondary Sources – within which alphabetic order is preferred to publication date.

Citations of unpublished material consulted on microfilm or online collections provide the original manuscript reference, and the collections are mentioned in the Acknowledgements above. Biblical citations are from the *Nova Vulgata Bibliorum Sacrorum* (Vatican City: Vatican Library, 1979).

BIA	York, Borthwick Institute for Archives
BL	London, British Library
Bodl.	Oxford, Bodleian Library
<i>Brev. Ebor.</i>	Lawley, S.W. ed. <i>Breviarium ad Usum Insignis Ecclesiae Eboracensis</i> . 2 pts. SS 71, 75. Durham: Andrews, 1880, 1883. <i>Councils and Synods II</i> Powicke, F.M. & Cheney, C.R. <i>Councils and Synods with other documents relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205-1313</i> . 2 pts. vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964.
CCR	<i>Calendar of the Close Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office</i> . London: HMSO, 1896-
<i>C.Chart.R.</i>	<i>Calendar of the Charter Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office</i> . London: HMSO, 1895-
<i>Cal.Inq.Misc.</i>	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery) preserved in the Public Record Office</i> . London: HMSO, 1916-
CPR	<i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office</i> . London: HMSO, 1891-
EETS	Early English Text Society
HS	Robert Mannyng. <i>Handlyng Synne</i> . ed. I. Sullens. <i>Medieval &amp; Renaissance Texts &amp; Studies</i> 14. Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1983.
JMD	Richard Rolle. <i>An Edition of the Judica Me Deus of Richard Rolle</i> . ed. J.P. Daly. <i>Elizabethan &amp; Renaissance Studies</i> 92:14. Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität. Salzburg, 1984.
LRS	Lincoln Record Society
<i>Missale Ebor.</i>	Henderson, W.G. ed. <i>Missale ad Usum Insignis Ecclesiae Eboracensis</i> . 2 pts. SS 59-60. Durham: Andrews, 1874.
MP	Robert Mannyng. <i>Robert of Brunne's "Handlyng Synne", A.D. 1303, with those parts of the Anglo-Norman treatise on which it was founded, William of Waddington's "Manuel des</i>

- Pechiez*": ed. F.J. Furnivall. EETS o.s. 119, 123. London: Kegan Paul, 1901, 1903 [reprinted as one volume New York: Kraus Reprints, 1973].
- MPb Arnould, E.J. *Le Manuel des Péchés: Études de littérature religieuse anglo-normande (XIII<sup>me</sup> siècle)*. Paris: E Droz, 1940. [Appendix with portions of a critical edition.]
- Reg. Corbridge Brown, W. & Thompson, A.H.T. eds. *The Register of Thomas Corbridge Lord Archbishop of York, 1300-1304*. 2 pts. SS 138, 141. Durham: Andrews, 1925, 1928.
- Reg. Giffard Brown, W. ed. *The Register of Walter Giffard Lord Archbishop of York, 1266-1279*. SS 109. Durham: Andrews, 1904.
- Reg. Gravesend Davis, F.N. et al. eds. *Rotuli Ricardi Gravesend Episcopi Lincolnensis, A.D. MCCLVIII-MCCLXXIX*. LRS 20. Horncastle: Lincoln Record Society, 1925.
- Reg. Gray Raine, J. ed. *The Register or Rolls of Walter Gray Lord Archbishop of York*. SS 56. Durham: Andrews, 1872.
- Reg. Greenfield Brown, W. & Thompson, A.H. eds. *The Register of William Greenfield Lord Archbishop of York, 1306-1315*. 5 pts. SS 145, 149, 151-153. Durham: Andrews, 1931, 1934, 1936, 1938, 1940.
- Reg. Grosseteste Davis, F.N. ed. *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Lincolnensis, A.D. MCCXXXV-MXXLII*. LRS 11. Horncastle: Lincoln Record Society, 1914.
- Reg. Melton Robinson, D. ed. *The Register of William Melton Archbishop of York, 1317-1340*. pt. 2. Canterbury and York Society 71. Torquay: Devonshire Press, 1978.
- Reg. Newark Brown, W. ed. 'The Register of Archbishop Henry Newark Lord Archbishop of York, 1296-1299'. *The Register of Archbishop John le Romeyn Lord Archbishop of York, 1286-1296*. pt. 2. W. ed. Brown. SS 128. Durham: Andrews, 1917. pp. 205-317.
- Reg. Romeyn Brown, W. ed. *The Register of John le Romeyn Lord Archbishop of York, 1286-1296*. 2 pts. SS 123, 128. Durham: Andrews, 1913, 1917.
- Reg. Sutton Hill, R.M.T. ed. *The Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton, 1280-1299*. pts. 1, 3-5, 7. LRS 39, 48, 52, 60, 69. Hereford: Lincoln Record Society, 1948, 1954, 1958, 1965, 1975.
- Reg. Wells Phillimore, W.P.W. & Davis, F.N. eds. *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles episcopi Lincolnensis, A.D. MCCIX-MCCXXXV*. 3 pts. LRS 3, 6, 9. Lincoln: Lincoln Record Society, 1912-1914.
- Rolls Series *Rerum britannicarum medii aevi scriptores; or, Chronicles and memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages*. London: Longman, 1858-1896.
- SS Surtees Society
- TNA London, The National Archives
- VCH Victoria County History
- VCH Lincs. Page, W. ed. *The Victoria History of the County of Lincoln*. vol. 2. VCH. London: Archibald Constable, 1906.
- VCH Yorks. Page, W. ed. *The Victoria History of the County of York*. 3 vols. VCH. London: Archibald Constable, 1907, 1913, 1925.
- VCH Yorks. E.R. Allison, K.J. ed. *A History of the County of York, East Riding*. 7 vols. VCH. London: Institute of Historical Research, 1969, 1974, 1976, 1979, 1984, 1989, 2002.
- VCH Yorks. N.R. Page, W. ed. *The Victoria History of the County of York, North Riding*. 2 vols. VCH. London: Archibald Constable, 1914, 1923.
- YAJ *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*
- YASRS *Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series*

## I. Introduction

On 15 August 1297, Henry Paget, along with several men from the settlement of Wiverton, carried the corpse of John de Crophill to the cemetery of St Andrew's church in neighbouring Langar. Since that day was the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, it was probably a holiday from work in the fields and Crophill's burial was, perhaps, the main event of the day. This may explain why there appear to have been several witnesses to what happened next. According to Henry and others, William, the parish priest of St Andrew's, stopped the men bearing Crophill's corpse from entering the cemetery and refused to permit him to be buried there. In the record of a complaint made against William on account of this event, the witnesses disagree about his motivation for this dramatic action. Only Henry was able to offer an explanation. William, perhaps not wanting to make an already awkward situation worse, may have had a quiet word with Henry who claimed that William would not bury Crophill until the executors of his estate made security for his mortuary payment. How the stand-off ended is not known, but Henry and his companions took away Crophill's corpse and "did whatever ought to be done concerning the burial" (*quicquid debuit circa funus faciebat*). Shortly after this, the inhabitants of Wiverton, who were, presumably, the late Crophill's neighbours, refused to make their customary contribution to the repair of the cemetery walls of St Andrew's, perhaps as retaliation. Thereupon the entire situation was brought before the archbishop of York for adjudication.<sup>1</sup>

According to popular modern notions of the medieval period, this episode includes many stock figures. William is, of course, the grasping parish priest who is more concerned with extracting his income from the laity than the spiritual needs of his flock. Henry and his fellow parishioners are the oppressed peasants who, however, have enough cunning to exact their own revenge on the priest. Later in the record, it becomes apparent that the villagers of

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<sup>1</sup> *Reg. Newark*, nos. 126, 248.

Langar, whose church of St Andrew's was the mother-church to the chapel at the presumably smaller Wiverton, appealed to the archbishop. They become the powerful larger village putting in their place smaller outlying neighbours. The archbishop is suitably distant, intervening only to threaten excommunication upon various parties. The interesting phrase describing the mourner's actions after the stand-off is vague enough to suggest some popular ritual about the corpse – "*funus*" can mean either funeral rites or corpse – performed without the parish priest and indicative of peasant cultures of religion.<sup>2</sup>

Greed, discord, argument, heavy-handed administrative intervention, and popular practice combine in, perhaps, a familiar narrative of relationships between medieval clergy and laity, where opposition and conflict feature at the expense of other possibilities. This study proposes to examine those possibilities, which narratives in the archive often obscure. It will consider modes of interaction between clergy and laity and how, within their relationships, these groups contributed to the construction of local practices of medieval religion. This does not mean that challenges and conflicts between clergy and laity, which are readily apparent in the records, must be ignored, but they cannot be the entire story. Many records of interactions between clergy and laity appear to describe conflict, probably because these records came into being only as a result of ecclesiastical administrative processes that often mediated disputes. In other words, the records describe moments when normal relationships broke down and required external intervention. Although the more prosaic aspects of relationships between clergy and laity are, for the most part, unrecorded, this does not mean that they did not exist. Indeed, medieval legislative, literary, and administrative sources indicate expectations of frequent interactions between clergy and laity and, although these took on myriad forms, they are a fundamental historical truth from which to work.

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<sup>2</sup> "*funus, funeris*" appears to have remained unchanged in meaning from earlier times, with "*funusculum*" and "*funeralia*" as medieval variants. Latham ed., *Latin Word-List*, 204; Morwood ed., *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 59.

The importance of these relationships in the minds of medieval clergy is clear in legislative sources from around the time of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. This council was the culmination of earlier reforms and was a foundation of subsequent medieval ecclesiastical thought. Its doctrinal canon included a description of the clergy's key role in humanity's salvation, which presumes the importance of their interactions with their lay spiritual charges:

Una uero est fidelium uniuersalis ecclesia, extra quam nullus omnino saluatur, in qua idem ipse sacerdos et sacrificium Iesus Christus, ueraciter continentur, transsubstantiatis pane in corpus et uino in sanguinem potestate diuina, ut ad perficiendum mysterium unitatis accipiamus ipsi de suo, quod accepit ipse de nostro. Et hoc utique sacramentum nemo potest conficere, nisi sacerdos, qui fuerit rite ordinatus secundum clauces ecclesiae, quas ipse concessit apostolis et eorum successoribus Iesus Christus.<sup>3</sup>

From the central aim of salvation achieved by the clergy's sacramental interaction with the laity flowed legislation, advice, and literature that tried to order, regulate, manage, and frame necessary consequent social interactions. A number of canons from the council assume or explicitly mention relationships and interactions between clergy and laity, as well as defining these same relationships and interactions. The public dress and behaviour of clergy was regulated (canons 15-16); judicial procedures and protections laid down (canons 8, 47-49); the relationship between ecclesiastical and lay authorities outlined (canons 43-46); and financial relationships between clergy and laity defined (canons 53-56).<sup>4</sup> The famous twenty-first canon of the council, "*Omnis utriusque sexus*," mandated an intimate and annual interaction between clergy and laity in the form of sacramental confession.<sup>5</sup>

Concern with interactions between clergy and laity was at the heart of this council and, both before and after it, similar interest appeared in the diocesan legislation of England.

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<sup>3</sup> "There is indeed one universal church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved, in which Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice. His body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread and wine having been changed in substance, by God's power, into His body and blood, so that in order to achieve this mystery of unity we receive from God what He received from us. Nobody can effect this sacrament except a priest who has been properly ordained according to the church's keys, which Jesus Christ Himself gave to the apostles and their successors." Tanner ed., *Ecumenical Councils*, 230.

<sup>4</sup> Tanner ed., *Ecumenical Councils*, pp. 237-239, 242-243, 253-257, 259-261.

<sup>5</sup> Tanner ed., *Ecumenical Councils*, p. 245

The opening canon from the legatine council held at York in 1195 gave primacy to the saving power of the sacrament effected at the hands of priests:

Cum inter cetera ecclesie sacramenta hostia salutaris premineat, tanto impensior circa eam debet existere devotio sacerdotum ut cum humilitate conficiatur, cum timore sumatur, cum reverentia dispensetur; et minister altaris sit certus quod panis et uinum et aqua in sacrificio ponantur; nec sine ministro literato celebretur.<sup>6</sup>

This ordained priest, who was sacramentally central to salvation, was bound in a relationship to his cares: "*Quia sermo Domini est: sacerdos meus si deliquerit delinquere faciet populum meum*".<sup>7</sup> Having acknowledged the importance of relationships between clergy and laity, this legislation, which anticipated many of the Lateran decrees, regulated interactions between the two groups. Clerical clothing was described (canon 9) and the collection of income from the laity outlined (canon 11).<sup>8</sup> In 1241x1255, similar concerns appeared in York statutes promulgated by Archbishop Walter Gray after the Fourth Lateran Council. Its opening lines give primacy to the pastoral relationship between clergy and laity: "*Rectores ecclesiarum et uniuersi quibus incumbit regimen animarum plebes sibi commissas exemplo bone conuersationis, uerbo exhortationis, in fide recta et bonis moribus diligenter instruant et informant*".<sup>9</sup> The statutes contain regulation for financial (canons 20-22, 28-29), social (canons 7-8), and sacramental relationships (canons 15, 17-19) between clergy and laity.<sup>10</sup> The legislation of the Fourth Lateran Council and its diocesan forerunners and descendants demonstrate an ongoing concern with relationships between clergy and laity. Even if it remains unreliable as a historical description, such legislation indicates the contemporary importance assigned to these interactions. Their theological necessity was an important

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<sup>6</sup> "Since the saving host is pre-eminent among the other sacraments of the church, so a dearer devotion of priests ought to exist around it so that it may be confected with humility, consumed with fear, and distributed with reverence. The minister of the altar may be certain that the bread and wine and water are offered in sacrifice, and it [the sacrament] may not be celebrated without a learned minister." Whitelock ed., *Councils and Synods*, 1048.

<sup>7</sup> "Because this is the word of the Lord: if my priest offends, he will cause my people to sin". Whitelock ed., *Councils and Synods*, 1051.

<sup>8</sup> Whitelock ed., *Councils and Synods*, 1050.

<sup>9</sup> "The rectors of churches and all upon whom rests the care of souls should diligently instruct and inform the people entrusted to them in the correct faith and good morals by the example of good conversation and words of exhortation." *Councils and Synods II*, 485-486.

<sup>10</sup> *Councils and Synods II*, 486-491.

aspect of the doctrinal and mental apparatus of the period, and the records examined here indicate that such interactions were real and numerous rather than theoretical, even if they did not always achieve the ideals set out in legislation. The continued prominence of interactions between clergy and laity in the thinking of ecclesiastical legislators is, perhaps, the most important reason that they are worthy of examination. Of course, this is not a theological study, but the medieval conception of the salvific mission of the Church and its resulting necessary social arrangements, even if admitted only as an ideal goal, was an inescapable idea informing contemporary minds. It affected even heterodox thinkers because heterodoxy, which exists only in relation to orthodoxy, was not outside the mental framework of the time.<sup>11</sup> This ideal presumed the importance of interactions between clergy and their lay spiritual charges.

Apart from the importance of these interactions in medieval minds, two aspects of modern historiography also call for an examination of them. The first is the almost complete absence of significant study of the medieval dioceses of York and Lincoln during the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth century before the Black Death. This thesis focuses on the parts of those dioceses closest to the River Humber, and the details and reasons of this choice are explained throughout the Introduction. For York, the indefatigable Alexander Hamilton Thompson's early twentieth-century surveys of diocesan records are foundational and, for a long time, were almost the only work on the diocese.<sup>12</sup> Barrie Dobson's essays describe the clergy, administration, and politics of the city, diocese, and province of York across a broad period, and several of them now appear in a single volume.<sup>13</sup> One of the most recent substantial studies of the region is Jonathan Hughes' examination of piety in Yorkshire after the Black Death with a particular emphasis on the mystical writings of

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<sup>11</sup> Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Thompson, *English Clergy and their Organisation* (1947); Thompson, 'The Registers of the Archbishops of York' (1934); *VCH Yorks.*, 3: 1-88.

<sup>13</sup> Dobson, *Church and Society in the North of England* (1996); Dobson, 'Later Middle Ages', 44-110.

northern authors.<sup>14</sup> In the same year, Robert Brentano published his final monograph, which, with its comparison of thirteenth-century ecclesiastical structures of York and Italy, is the only substantial study devoted to the diocese of York during this period. His work focuses almost exclusively on diocesan administration and its structures.<sup>15</sup> There is even less literature of monograph length on the medieval diocese of Lincoln. Dorothy Owen's contribution to a county history series remains the standard text. In particular, she examines the administrative development of the diocese and the role of religious houses together with their connections to the local economy and society.<sup>16</sup> More recently, Graham Platts has considered the county's social history for the same series.<sup>17</sup> The only other major scholarship focussing on this region and period remains the *Victoria County History*, which provides excellent local histories and sources but little analysis. These publications are an ongoing project, with a recent series on the East Riding of Yorkshire, but with no substantial work on the regional ecclesiastical context since the second volume on Lincolnshire appeared in 1906, and the third volume on Yorkshire in 1925.<sup>18</sup>

The relative scholarly neglect of the region during this period is particularly surprising given the abundance of published primary sources, many of which have been in print for over a century due to the work of the Surtees Society, the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, and the Lincoln Record Society. Significant attention has been given to the literature produced in the region ever since Carl Horstmann's early work, but this often tends to skip from the age of Bede to the great monastic authors of the twelfth century to the age of Richard Rolle and beyond. Ralph Hanna's recent work, invaluable for, again, the period after the Black Death,

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<sup>14</sup> Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries* (1988).

<sup>15</sup> Brentano, *Two Churches: England and Italy* (1988).

<sup>16</sup> Owen, *Church and Society* (1971).

<sup>17</sup> Platts, *Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire* (1985).

<sup>18</sup> *VCH Lincs.* 2 (1906); *VCH Yorks.* 3 (1925); *VCH Yorks. E.R.* (1969-).

occasionally does reach into earlier periods.<sup>19</sup> Shorter examinations of specific aspects of the region and period are numerous, but these often take the form of articles or references in general or thematic works. Comprehensive reviews of the medieval history of the dioceses of York and Lincoln during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries are, therefore, still waiting to be written. This thesis is only one contribution towards this project, but hopes to illustrate some of the many possible topics available for future examination.

While the present work takes the form of a regional study in order to make a large topic manageable, it primarily aims to investigate medieval religion, in particular the relationships between clergy and laity. The history of these relationships is often examined under the rubric of “popular religion”, which already has an inexhaustible literature and it can be legitimately asked why more work is needed.<sup>20</sup> Simply put, this study is necessary because the interactions between clergy and laity are not normally studied but, rather, are used as assumed points for accessing people whose religious practices occupy the fringes of the historical record. For instance, John Bossy’s review of “traditional Christianity” examines how close the beliefs and practices of laity were to those of clergy. He focuses on the historical development of Christianity emerging from interactions and relationships between these groups but not the dynamics of their relationships.<sup>21</sup> Robert Swanson’s review of religion and devotion in Europe examines the roles of clergy and laity. Among other roles, clergy are positioned as instructors and the laity as acquirers of religion, which assumes a relationship between the groups. This relationship is addressed in the shortest chapter in the volume, although the roles and expectations of clergy and laity struggling for control over medieval religion remain the focus, rather than the relationship itself.<sup>22</sup> Even Eamon Duffy’s

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<sup>19</sup> Horstmann, *Yorkshire Writers* (1895-1896); Hanna ed., *Richard Rolle* (2007); Hanna, ‘Yorkshire Writers’ (2003); Most recently: Hanna ed., *Speculum Vitae* (2008).

<sup>20</sup> Some of the many possible examples, whose titles indicate common terms: Brooke & Brooke, *Popular Religion* (1984); Brown, *Popular Piety* (1995); Swanson, *Religion and Devotion* (1995).

<sup>21</sup> Bossy, *Christianity*, viii, 1-87.

<sup>22</sup> Swanson, *Religion and Devotion*, 42-91, 235-256.

work on late medieval England, which assigns so prominent a position in the arrangement of medieval religion to the laity, focuses on the roles of clergy and laity without a close consideration of the characteristics and dynamics of relationships between them.<sup>23</sup>

The reasons for the tendency to assume a position of two interacting cultures without examining the interactions between them are best seen in the methodological work of Peter Burke and Aron Gurevich. These two historians independently considered the methodologies necessary to study the beliefs and practices of those outside of the “great culture” tradition and relied upon the records of interactions between clerics and laity to do so. Clerics and other “mediators” constructing these records participated in the popular culture and provide a window onto it. Elite and clerically produced records and literature, being records of interactions with popular culture, appropriated and preserved aspects of that culture, which then became available for study.<sup>24</sup> Burke and Gurevich both acknowledge the challenges of this approach, which leaves little space for the role of popular culture as an active contributor to the dialogue they propose. The insights of Burke and Gurevich, however, have influenced, directly or otherwise, subsequent attempts to access the popular culture of the medieval period because their theoretical ideas remain important tools for the study of cultural interactions in the past.

This approach tends to produce studies of the outcomes and effects of interactions between clergy and laity rather than an understanding of those same interactions. In other words, while interaction between clergy and laity is presumed from the records, indeed, the records would not exist without it, the mechanics and characteristics of these interactions remain unexplored. The outcomes of interactions between cultures, especially the preserved observations or appropriations of popular culture, which are sometimes accidental, are the main object of studies into popular religion. This approach, founded upon the premise of two

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<sup>23</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars* (2005).

<sup>24</sup> Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978); Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture* (1988), especially Chapter 1.

interacting cultures, fundamentally presumes a distance or conflict, however benign, between the two. Burke posits an asymmetrical relationship between the cultures, since elites could participate in both the great and popular cultures but commoners were confined to one.<sup>25</sup>

John Arnold notes some of the criticisms of this cultural model and warns against misreading it as a rigid structure, but his privileging of cultural tension as an approach still presumes distance between clergy and laity, however small.<sup>26</sup> This model compromises the laity's ability to determine what makes it into the records produced outside of their culture. Indeed, where the "great culture" has preserved something of the "popular culture", it is often termed an appropriation, eliminating any possibility that the laity participated in or contributed to the great culture processes that permitted such appropriation. The laity is left with almost no role in interactions with clergy except for acquiescence, surrender, or resistance to their demands.

Since the literature of popular culture and practice is too large to review as a whole, a few select examples illustrate some of the results of this hermeneutical approach. At the most extreme, an often cited article by Emma Mason describes English parishioners as almost universally oppressed and exploited.<sup>27</sup> More nuanced works, such as Paul Freedman's examination of medieval peasants, also tend to examine the outcomes of interactions. He does not discuss peasants' relationships with elites but, instead, examines how elite depictions and understandings of peasants evolved from out of these relationships.<sup>28</sup> Andrew Brown's choice to study popular piety within a regional context parallels this thesis. He, however, focuses on difference and distance between clergy interested in orthodoxy and a laity evolving over time towards a more informed understanding of their faith, which tends to suggest an earlier laity acting from beyond official ecclesiastical thought and structures.<sup>29</sup> The scholarship reviewed above is not necessarily held up for criticism because much of it is

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<sup>25</sup> Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, 1-15.

<sup>27</sup> Mason, 'Role of the English Parishioner' (1976).

<sup>28</sup> Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (1999).

<sup>29</sup> Brown, *Popular Piety*, 1-6, 250-251.

excellent work, but additions are needed in order to explain lay roles, let alone lay options and choices, within relationships with clergy. Some scholars have already recognised this need. Miri Rubin acknowledges the complexity of these relationships and their important role in the production of devotional practices, especially at local levels, but the focus of her work is on the historical development of particular devotions.<sup>30</sup> Recent work continues to deal with the complexity of local relationships between elites and peasants, such as Sherri Olson's study of the records produced from economic interactions between lords and tenants. Her work comes closer to studying interactions themselves but focuses on economic and social relationships between lay elites and peasants, rather than the roles that commoners, or laity more generally, might have in relationships with the institutional Church.<sup>31</sup>

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the interactions of clergy and laity and the outcomes of their encounters, and both certainly feature here. This study is, however, different because, while outcomes feature in the discussion, the analysis focuses on the interactions that led to that point. In other words, rather than look at interactions between clergy and laity in order to describe the cultural outcomes for either group, this study will use those outcomes as a means of looking backwards into the interactions. The focus of interest is not on the lay or, indeed, clerical cultures of the period but the less defined spaces in which the two met. The interactions taking place here are important because they constructed, defined, and debated the predominant cultures of the medieval period. The mechanics and characteristics of those interactions affected the cultures on either side of them. They affected the practice of medieval religion. Indeed, the contemporary expectation of interaction and, therefore, mutual participation of clergy and laity within a common framework of ecclesiastical structures suggests a third cultural space shared and participated in by both groups. The eventual understanding of the space in which these interactions took place, a space

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<sup>30</sup> Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 84, 164-185; Rubin, *Mother of God*, 124, 192.

<sup>31</sup> Olson, *Mute Gospel* (2009), especially Chapter 3.

characterised by participation and process, is the purpose of this study. Viewing cultural constructions as an ongoing process is not a new idea, but it is one that scholars have found useful for studying interactions and diverse, even sometimes contradictory, ideas.<sup>32</sup> This fluid space is where the laity might be seen to participate in the great culture and affect its outcomes.

Different interactions provide the material for this study, which is divided into three sections across six chapters. The first section returns to the points highlighted at the beginning of this introduction, namely the expectation, existence, and creative potential of interactions between clergy and laity. The first chapter examines four regional texts useful to those engaged in pastoral care, which was part of a larger process of moral reform and instruction resulting from the Fourth Lateran Council. These texts help to understand the clergy's levels of expectation regarding interactions with the laity and illustrate the potential for less conflicted interactions across the region under examination. The second chapter considers local devotional practices and saints' cults, which are, of course, the outcomes of interactions between clergy and laity. The focus of the chapter is not, however, on the devotions, but on the history and processes of their creation out of interactions between clergy and laity and the contributions of both groups to these processes. Since they had tangible outcomes in the shape of devotions, these interactions provide early indications of some of their creative potential and the influence of the laity. The second section is a single short chapter, which briefly examines hermits and anchorites. It acts as a hinge between the general discussion of the first two chapters and what follows. The hermits and anchorites of the region, whose survival rested upon local interactions, sometimes between clergy and laity but sometimes among just the laity, permit an exploration of the role of both groups and starts to examine their interactions in local contexts. This section makes the shift from the

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<sup>32</sup> Olson, *Mute Gospel*, 19; Sabeian, *Power in the Blood*, 29-30, 94-95.

possibilities suggested in the first section to the realities examined afterwards. The final three chapters are, essentially, detailed case studies of some different possible modes of interaction between clergy and laity occurring at intensely local levels. They explore in a more specific way the characteristics of interactions between clergy and laity and illustrate how these affected real outcomes at local levels. Again, it is the interaction and process that is the focus so that answering the “why” of a particular outcome is less important than addressing the “how”. This examination of several aspects of medieval religion – pastoral literature, regional devotions and cults, and local interactions and outcomes – will contribute towards understanding something of the interactions between clergy and laity in the region and period described below.

#### *CONTEXT: REGION, HISTORY, AND SOURCES*

Most of the examples that will come under examination here are case studies and, in order to draw any conclusions from them, there is a need to demonstrate that they all occurred within a distinct region and period, which require description. This section of the Introduction will, therefore, consider several points: the definition of the region will be explained; the time period of the study and some contemporary historical events will be outlined; and the records relevant to this study will be discussed in reference to both these events.

#### *The Humber Region Lowlands*

A region may be based on natural, political, or economic boundaries. Indeed, these different regional elements all often overlap and facilitate or, at least, regulate, movement into, out of, and through the region, which creates connections between its inhabitants and those of surrounding regions. These connections, historical events, and the elements mentioned above all contribute to the regional self-awareness of the people inhabiting a region.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Brown, *Popular Piety*, 3-4; Scott, *Regional Identity*, 1-8, 46, 73-77.

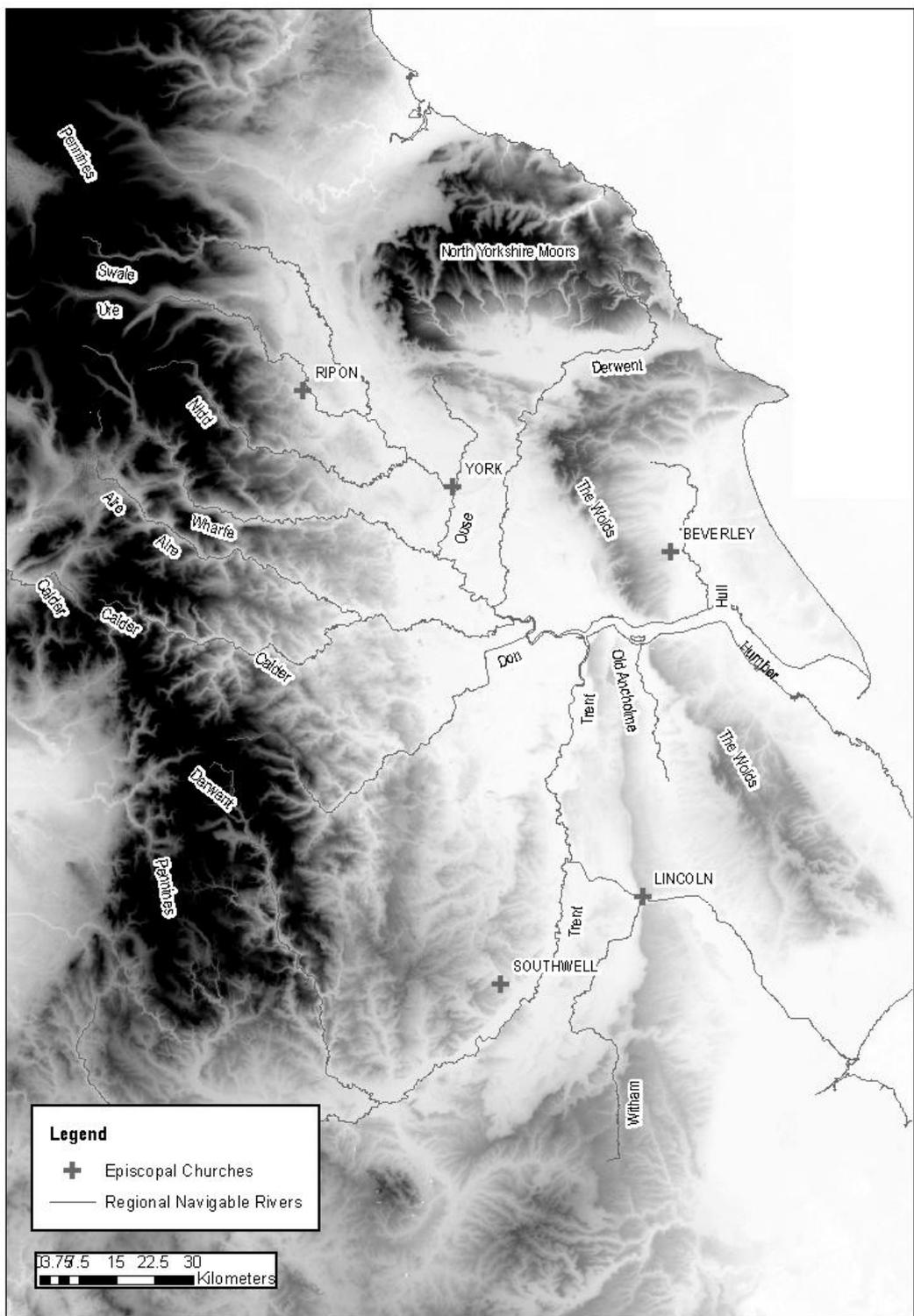


Figure 1: The Humber Region Lowlands

When defining the region for study here, therefore, these elements require consideration. Physical characteristics are the best starting point because they define the land in which people lived and onto which an ecclesiastical administrative overlay was mapped. The River Humber is the central feature of this region because of its many medieval transportation connections. Ferries across the Humber are documented as early as the eleventh century when the Domesday Book noted at least three of them. References to ferries at various points along the Humber, such as at Paull and Hessle, continued throughout the medieval period, and the settlements of North Ferriby in Yorkshire and South Ferriby in Lincolnshire also suggest links across the river.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, with landings along the Humber, it is likely that boats travelled up and down the river as frequently as they crossed it. Although, therefore, the Humber marked an administrative boundary between both the dioceses and counties of York and Lincoln, it also provided connections between them.

The most important feature of the Humber, however, was its connecting river system, which almost exactly defines the region under study. The Humber was only one part of a much larger medieval system of navigable rivers that crossed parts of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, and its estuary might be described as the hub of this system.<sup>35</sup> The Rivers Swale, Ure, Nidd, and Wharfe flowed across Yorkshire from the Pennines into the Ouse, which, along with the Aire, Calder, and Don, emptied directly into the Humber estuary. These rivers connected northern, western, and southern Yorkshire to the Humber. Flowing from the North Yorkshire Moors, the River Derwent in Yorkshire connected the north-eastern and central parts of Yorkshire to the Humber system, while the River Hull provided links in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The river system also had southern links. The River Trent, which marked the administrative boundary between the diocese of Lincoln and the archdeaconry of Nottingham belonging to the diocese of York, flowed northwards into the Humber. Finally, the

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<sup>34</sup> Sayles, ed., *Cases in King's Bench*, no. 42; Clay, 'Medieval Connexions', 3; Darby, *Domesday Eastern England*, pp. 83-84; *VCH Yorks E.R.*, 5:113, 5:121-123.

<sup>35</sup> Edwards & Hindle, 'Transportation System', 126-128, 130.

River Witham linked the low-lying eastern fens of northern Lincolnshire to the Humber. This river system contributes to the definition of the region studied here because it provided both internal connections and external boundaries. Only the Trent and Witham flowed from outside of it and these two rivers may not have been navigable far beyond the region or even connected to river systems in the other parts of England.<sup>36</sup> They mark, therefore, to some extent the southern boundary of the region, while the rivers flowing from highland areas of Yorkshire mark the western and northern boundaries.

The highland areas from which regional rivers flowed mark the western and northern boundaries of this region. The Pennine Hills in the west, which ran through Yorkshire and along the western border of Nottinghamshire, effectively divided the diocese of York into two administratively independent areas. The archbishop of York delegated a great deal of administrative power and responsibility to the archdeacons of Richmond, whose jurisdiction stretched across the Pennines into Lancashire, because travel across them was dangerous and unpredictable, particularly in winter.<sup>37</sup> In the north lay the North Yorkshire Moors and the diocese of York extended only a little beyond these, particularly along the coastline. Transport connections to this area probably bound it closer to the south than to Durham in the north, because travel was probably easiest via portions of the Swale flowing south towards the Humber, or by coastal routes. A coastal road, which connected the area to the south rather than the north, ran across the northern edge of the Moors, skirted the coast – perhaps through Bridlington – before turning inland towards Beverley and then south across the Humber towards Lincoln. The other major road running through this region, and an important connection to other parts of England, was the Great North Road, or Ermine Street, which was easily accessible from Lincoln and ran north through Nottingham, Doncaster, and York

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<sup>36</sup> Edwards & Hindle, 'Transportation System', 126-128, 130.

<sup>37</sup> Hill, 'Visitations of Richmond', 6-11.

towards Scotland.<sup>38</sup> Physical features probably encouraged these north-south connections, which ran through north-south corridors. The Great North Road followed the corridor from Nottinghamshire up through the Vale of York, while the coastal road, once it turned inland, followed the Wolds found on either side of the Humber. There were also north-south continuities in soil types and surface geology, which probably produced agricultural, economic, and, therefore, social similarities between the parts of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire within this region.<sup>39</sup> This region is, then, essentially the low-lying areas bounded by higher areas to the west and north and through which the rivers emptying into the Humber flowed. There is no established term to describe this region but, since the river system and lowlands are its defining features, the Humber Region Lowlands may serve as convenient shorthand for this study.

These physical features and similarities produced economic similarities and social connections within the region. Charles Clay, in 1960, and, more recently, Dawn Hadley convincingly argue that this was a region with distinctive economic and social markers from at least the early medieval period. Under the Danelaw, methods of land tenure, manorial and parish organisation, and legal distinctions between free and unfree peasants may have characterised and distinguished this area, which Hadley calls the Northern Danelaw, from the rest of the Danelaw.<sup>40</sup> As late as the late eleventh century, which would have been on the edge of living memory during the early thirteenth century examined here, there had been claims for a unified ecclesiastical administration over the region. The archbishop of York had claimed ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Lindsey – the northern-most parts of Lincolnshire – and the city of Lincoln before the establishment of the diocese of Lincoln from Dorchester.<sup>41</sup> On the eve of this study, and this is discussed in more detail below in reference to the

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<sup>38</sup> Hindle, 'Medieval Road System', 207-221.

<sup>39</sup> Darby, *Eastern Domesday Geography*, 33; Darby, *Northern Domesday Geography*, 175.

<sup>40</sup> Clay, 'Medieval Connexions', 3; Hadley, *Northern Danelaw*, 22-26, 96-279.

<sup>41</sup> Foster ed., *Registrum Antiquissimum*, no. 7; Hugh the Chanter, *Church of York*, xxxiv, 14-15.

temporal limits of this thesis (pp. 26-36), a bishop of Lincoln, Geoffrey Plantagenet, was elevated to the see of York. Connections remained strong among regional clergy well into the fourteenth century, particularly when close-knit circles of northern clerics from East Yorkshire, Lindsey, and Nottinghamshire dominated royal administration through recommendation and nepotism.<sup>42</sup>

Personal connections across the region were found in some of the most influential local institutions, namely the religious houses and northern families. Many religious houses in Yorkshire held the patronage of churches in Lincolnshire, which would have required communication, travel, and the forming of personal connections within the region. Several of these houses, such as Bridlington, Newburgh, and Drax, were of Augustinian canons who might have served their churches themselves. Indeed, sometimes Yorkshire religious and clergy do appear in these Lincolnshire churches, such as Brother Ralph of York appointed to Edenham by his house of Bridlington, or Thomas of York appointed to Wroot by the Benedictine house of St Mary's, York.<sup>43</sup> Some Lincolnshire houses, such as Kirkstead, were founded from Yorkshire houses and held lands north of the Humber.<sup>44</sup> The most distinctive religious feature of the Humber Region Lowlands was the Gilbertine Order. Its mother-house of Sempringham was on the southern edge of the region and fifteen of its twenty-four successful foundations were in the region.<sup>45</sup> Families also created regional connections and many northern families held land on both sides of the Humber. Some families, including the Lascelles, Paynels, and Vescys to name a few, tended not to have substantial or, indeed, any holdings outside of this region. More influential families, such as the Nevilles, Percys, and Roos, held substantial lands in northern England including lands within this region on both sides of the Humber. Marriage between regional families reinforced internal connections,

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<sup>42</sup> Grassi, 'Royal Clerks', 12-15.

<sup>43</sup> *Reg. Gravesend*, 33, 35, 59; *Reg. Grosseteste*, 33, 35, 93, 144, 151, 146; *Reg. Sutton*, 1:10, 1:136, 1:162; *Reg. Wells*, 1:86, 1:235;

<sup>44</sup> Clay, 'Medieval Connexions', 5-7.

<sup>45</sup> Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, 448-449.

such as Joan, the daughter of Sir Ralph FitzRanulph of Middleham, Yorkshire, who married into the Tattershall family, which descended from a tenant-in-chief of Lincolnshire and had holdings in the honour of Richmond.<sup>46</sup> Such regional family connections were numerous and have been known to scholars for some time but little work has been done on them.<sup>47</sup>

Much detailed work remains to be done examining connections across the Humber but the few examples given here, together with the historical and geographic context, suggest that the Humber Region Lowlands were a coherent region despite the overlaying jurisdictional boundaries that divided it. It must be stressed that at no time does this presume to exclude ties to and influence from other parts of England, only that a number of geographic, historical, and personal factors tended to distinguish this region from other areas of the country. If anthropological terms might be borrowed, this region tended to be endogamous rather than exogamous, but by no means exclusively so. In other words, its inhabitants tended to look more often towards one another than to outsiders. The model for the Humber Region Lowlands is, therefore, not a rigidly defined and bordered area or sphere of influence but, rather, a region that had a number of distinctive internal connections and similarities.

*The Central Middle Ages: The thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries*

The terminal point of the study is more simply explained than its beginning. It is the eve of the Black Death in England, 1348. This is, as with all historical divisions, somewhat arbitrary but, since this study examines social interactions at local levels, the effects of historical events upon these interactions require consideration. Historians commonly consider the Black Death to mark a point of fundamental change in all aspects of medieval life. It caused, or at least coincided with, profound social and economic changes. The mystical and devotional literature

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<sup>46</sup> Bennett, 'Book Designed for a Noblewoman', 166-173; Clay, *Early Yorkshire Families*, 52, 67-68, 71, 86-87, 99-100.

<sup>47</sup> Clay, 'Medieval Connexions', 8-15.

of the period marks shifts in patterns of belief, practice, and devotion.<sup>48</sup> Certainly, some of the findings of this study may extend beyond 1348 but this date introduced a new factor influencing social relationships. Changes in the records used for this study, which receive further attention below (pp. 36-40), also begin to appear around this time. Whether this represents historical change or simply changes in documentary practice is not clear, but the changing records change the quantity and type of information available.

The coincidence of three events marks the beginning of this study as c.1215. The end of the interdict on England, the Fourth Lateran Council, and the beginning of archiepiscopal registers affected the diocese of York in a way unique among other regions, as well as marking the period after these events as different from that before, even if only in the availability of records. These three factors provide reasons to study both this region and period as distinct from others.

Pope Innocent III laid a general interdict upon England in March 1208, as a result of his dispute with King John concerning the appointment of a new archbishop to Canterbury. Innocent did not revoke his interdict until July 1214, over six years later, during which time liturgical and sacramental services offered by clergy were severely limited. Of the sacraments, only the baptism of children and confession for the dying were permitted. Marriage also continued, only because, strictly, it did not require a priest since the sacrament was effected by the exchange of words of consent and consummation. Clergy encouraged the laity to keep fast days, sermons were preached, and extra-liturgical services such as the blessing of candles at Candlemas, the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday, and the veneration of the cross on Good Friday continued. It was, however, the withdrawal of the mass that would have been the most noticeable effect of the interdict. Apart from some limited exemptions granted to religious orders, no public masses were celebrated and burials

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<sup>48</sup> Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, 1-4; Ormrod & Lindley eds., *Black Death* (1996), especially the chapter by Christopher Harper-Bill, 79-123; Ziegler, *The Black Death* (1969).

took place without the spiritual benefits of ritual and liturgy. It appears that the clergy of England, with local variations, broadly accepted Innocent's order and withheld their services on a widespread scale.<sup>49</sup> King John's early reaction to the interdict included punitive measures against the parochial clergy, most notably the seizure of their lands and temporalities, which were, however, soon redeemable upon payment of a fine. Apart from such measures, however, the king seems not to have attacked the ecclesiastical organisation and institutions of England. The daily administration of parishes continued, sometimes under royal caretakers, and patrons continued to make presentations to benefices.<sup>50</sup>

The fines made upon the clergy are interesting because it is not clear how, with their lands seized and unable to earn a living from the altar, they were able to raise money. In the light of this particular thesis, with its focus on interactions between clergy and laity, there is room for some interesting speculation on this topic, as well as much future work. There had always been links of dependence and patronage between clergy and laity, especially between clerics who produced manuscripts and the laity who paid for them, even to the extent that lay requirements affected what clerics produced.<sup>51</sup> The interdict, however, disrupted normal relationships between clergy and laity at every level of society. It was from those relationships that parochial clergy earned an income, so, although vicars of parishes may have been able to come to some arrangement with their rectors, the period must have been difficult for resident stipendiary priests. Besides their stipend, which may have been difficult to claim when they could not perform the services for which it was paid, and any share from glebe lands, stipendiary priests' main source of income was probably their share of gifts collected at now forbidden masses, solemnisation of marriages, and burials. Indeed, given the introductory example of John de Crophill's burial where parishioners linked the issues of mortuary payments, burial, and contributions to repairs, it may have been difficult for clergy to

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<sup>49</sup> Cheney, 'King John and the Interdict', 295-300, 313-317; Cheney, 'Recent View of the Interdict', 162-164.

<sup>50</sup> Cheney, 'King John and the Interdict', 300-310.

<sup>51</sup> Wogan-Browne, 'Our Steward, St Jerome', 134-139, 149.

collect customary oblations, perhaps even tithes, when they had withdrawn so many of their spiritual services. Some clergy may have had savings or negotiated loans but, presumably, the majority of resident parochial clergy would have had to rely on the support or charity of their patrons and parishioners. With a glut of clergy compared to the necessary ecclesiastical services, it would not even be surprising if many rectors and vicars dispensed with their stipendiary priests and retired to their benefice for the duration of the interdict. The laity's reaction to the interdict and the possible financial hardships of their priests is, unfortunately, entirely unrecorded.<sup>52</sup> Much work, therefore, is needed on the relationships between clergy and laity during this period of English history, which may have affected the ways in which clergy and laity interacted and were bound to each other.

The fullest effects of the interdict appear to have fallen, intentionally or not, upon the bishops of England. Some sees were already vacant at its beginning and a number subsequently either fell vacant or into irregular situations when their bishops fled to France leaving their dioceses in the hands of their own or royal administrators. Christopher Cheney admirably summarises the situation of the English dioceses:

When the interdict was published the sees of Canterbury, Chichester, Exeter, and Lincoln lay vacant in the king's hand, while York was administered by royal custodians as a result of King John's quarrel with his half-brother, Archbishop Geoffrey. During the next few months Durham and Lichfield fell vacant. Of these, Canterbury, Durham, and York were not filled until after John's submission in 1213; elections were made in 1209 to the bishoprics of Chichester, Exeter, Lichfield, and Lincoln. The remaining English sees include those of the three executors of the interdict – London, Ely, and Worcester – and of Hereford, whose bishop followed the others into exile in the spring of 1208. The bishops of Winchester and Norwich, and possibly Carlisle, remained in England throughout the interdict; there remained with them until the autumn of 1209 the bishops of Bath, Lincoln, Rochester, and Salisbury.<sup>53</sup>

Diocesan administration seems to have continued despite the disruptions of the interdict, albeit at a reduced rate, perhaps because there was simply less to do. Most bishops had, by this point, instituted administrative officials and structures that allowed their dioceses to function without their personal presence. Even so, the interdict must have caused some interruption to the normal pattern of administration, although administrative systems did not

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<sup>52</sup> Cheney, 'King John and the Interdict', 313-317.

<sup>53</sup> Cheney, 'King John's Reaction', 140-141.

collapse entirely. It is also possible that, despite the growing presence of ecclesiastical bureaucracies, personal episcopal government was still considered the ideal model but one that the interdict disrupted.<sup>54</sup> The situation in England was by no means ideal but it could be managed.

The situation in Lincoln seems to have been relatively calm during the interdict, but the situation in York was unique in its complexity and longevity. Archbishop Geoffrey Plantagenet, the illegitimate son of King Henry II and half-brother to Kings Richard and John, died in 1212, leaving the see of York vacant until after the interdict when Archbishop Gray entered it in 1215.<sup>55</sup> As a result of Geoffrey's almost constant conflict with both his own clergy and his royal half-brothers, an irregular situation in York had lasted much longer than the three-year vacancy caused by his death during the interdict. Geoffrey had been the archdeacon and then bishop of Lincoln during the 1170s, an early indication of connections within the region. He was chancellor of England during the 1180s and made archbishop of York in 1189. After the death of his father, King Henry, Geoffrey became involved in a number of quarrels that, at various times between 1189 and 1191, saw him stripped of his temporalities, reduced in power, and imprisoned. He quarrelled with canons of the York chapter, the bishop of Durham, and King Richard, who confiscated his estates and lands and later fined him for their redemption.<sup>56</sup> Throughout the 1190s, Geoffrey continued to become involved in conflicts: again with his chapter, again with the king, and also with the archbishop of Canterbury. Pope Celestine III finally summoned him to Rome where, fortunately for Geoffrey, the charges made against him collapsed, Celestine died, and Innocent III became pope. Geoffrey's conflicts, however, continued. He continued to quarrel with his chapter, King John demanded payment of old debts to King Richard and, despite a threat of general interdict from Innocent, John attempted to tax the clergy of the diocese. Disputes with

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<sup>54</sup> Burger, 'Archdeacons and Communication', 202; Cheney, 'King John and the Interdict', 311.

<sup>55</sup> Haines, 'Gray, Walter de', 468; Lovatt, 'Geoffrey', 764, 768.

<sup>56</sup> Lovatt, 'Geoffrey', 764-766.

religious houses and ongoing problems with the king continued to such an extent that Innocent ordered an inquisition into Geoffrey's fitness for his position.<sup>57</sup> The disputes with the king subsided briefly in 1205/06 but, in 1207, King John again levied a tax on the clergy of York. In May 1208, therefore, just as the interdict resulting from the dispute over Canterbury was coming into effect, Innocent again threatened John, who confiscated Geoffrey's properties. At this point, the archbishop fled to France. Geoffrey never returned to York, dying in Normandy in December 1212.<sup>58</sup>

Archbishop Geoffrey's long and frequent absences must have affected the administration of the diocese even before the imposition of the interdict. Some of his records suggest that he continued to take an interest in administration, even from exile, and his charters suggest that he patronised scholars and built a household of experts. On the other hand, in 1202, Pope Innocent commanded Geoffrey to institute all presentees who had been awaiting institution for more than four months, which suggests that Geoffrey's disputes had caused him to neglect these parishes.<sup>59</sup> While, therefore, the years of the interdict presented some administrative challenges in other sees, York was unique at the end of the interdict for having had many more years of disruption. Geoffrey's poor relations with the bishop of Durham cannot have helped matters and Durham too fell vacant during the interdict. The bishop of Carlisle may have remained in his see throughout the interdict, but this is uncertain.<sup>60</sup> It is a real possibility that the entire Northern Province was left vacant for most of the interdict, and it certainly lacked an effective metropolitan for much longer. The diocese of York itself had been poorly managed for many years. This long, and perhaps in England unique, period of instability in York makes the provision of a new archbishop in 1215 a good point to begin a study of the diocese.

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<sup>57</sup> Cheney & Semple eds., *Letters of Pope Innocent III*, no. 4; Lovatt, 'Geoffrey', 766-767.

<sup>58</sup> Cheney & Semple eds., *Letters of Pope Innocent III*, no. 35; Lovatt, 'Geoffrey', 768.

<sup>59</sup> Lovatt, 'Geoffrey', 767-768.

<sup>60</sup> Cheney, 'King John's Reaction', 140-141.

The long disturbances in the diocese of York ended during the Fourth Lateran Council when Pope Innocent elevated Walter Gray from the diocese of Worcester to York. Like Archbishop Geoffrey, Gray had been chancellor, holding this office from 1205 until 1214. Interestingly, Hugh of Wells had been Gray's deputy before becoming the bishop of Lincoln in 1209.<sup>61</sup> Gray was a supporter of King John, helping to delay the publication of Innocent's bull of excommunication, and he remained in England throughout the interdict. As a reward for Gray's loyalty, John twice tried to advance him to the see of Coventry, but the papal legate quashed his election both times. John was eventually able to reward Gray by advancing him to the see of Worcester in 1214, whereupon he resigned the chancellorship. Gray was present at John's submission to the pope in 1213, and at Runnymede in 1215, where he was named in the preamble to Magna Carta.<sup>62</sup> A coincidence of royal pressure and papal desire resulted in Gray's elevation to York during the council, which he was attending in his capacity as the bishop of Worcester. Innocent's precise motivations are unclear, but there was some sort of disagreement between the pope and the chapter of York concerning the election to York of Simon Langton, the brother of Stephen Langton, whose disputed elevation to Canterbury had caused the interdict. For unknown reasons, Innocent had personally (*uiua uoce*) ordered Simon not to seek the archiepiscopacy. Innocent may have feared a crisis similar to Stephen Langton's appointment to Canterbury because he said in a letter to the chapter of York, "*ne hac occasione fieret in Anglia error nouissimus peior priore.*"<sup>63</sup> This same letter indicates that the chapter had, nevertheless, elected Simon, who consented to their choice in defiance of the pope's objections. Innocent refused to confirm the election and ordered the chapter to send a representation to the council where they should proceed to

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<sup>61</sup> Foster, 'Lincoln Registers', 1-3.

<sup>62</sup> Haines, 'Gray, Walter de', 466.

<sup>63</sup> "lest the last error in England should thereby be worse than the first." Cheney & Semple eds., *Letters of Pope Innocent III*, no. 81.

choose another archbishop. The order appears in one of Innocent's letters and the chroniclers, who record the outcome, confirm it:

...dominus Papa canonicis praecepit, ut statim in electione procederent ... Tunc canonici, sicut prius prouisum fuerat, postularunt [*Wendover has elegerunt*] Walterum de Grai, episcopum Wigorniensem, propter carnis munditiam, ut asserebant; ut qui ab utero matris uirgo permanserat usque in praesentem diem. Ad hoc [Papa] dicitur respondisse; "Per Sanctum Petrum uirginitatis magna uirtus est, et nos eum damus uobis." Itaque accepto pallio, episcopus memoratus rediit in Angliam, obligatus in curia Romana de decem milibus libris legalium esterlingorum.<sup>64</sup>

The discrepancies between Matthew Paris and Roger of Wendover, and the careful mention of payment, which echoes Gray's payment of £5000 when he received the chancellorship, only adds confusion to the process by which he became archbishop. Nevertheless, he quickly returned to England and took up his position in York, where his long pontificate, which lasted until 1255, finally provided some stability to the diocese. By all accounts, Gray became a model administrator and proceeded to implement the reforms of the Fourth Lateran Council.<sup>65</sup>

The events leading to Archbishop Gray's pontificate in York took place during this council, the aftermath of which also marks this period as a distinct object of study. Pope Innocent, in his encyclical of 19 April 1213, *Vineam Domini Sabaoth*, summoned the cardinals and bishops of Christendom to the council, as well as abbots, general chapters of religious orders, cathedral chapters, and Greek bishops. Several kings sent ambassadors while magnates and other dignitaries also attended.<sup>66</sup> In his letter, Innocent declared that he had two main goals: to organise an expedition to retake the Holy Land, and a general programme of moral reform. His detailed description of the latter listed his several aims as:

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<sup>64</sup> "...the lord Pope ordered the canons that they proceed immediately to an election. Then the canons, as earlier provided, postulated [elected] Walter de Gray, bishop of Worcester, on account of his purity of flesh, as they asserted that he had remained a virgin from his mother's womb until the present day. [The pope] is said to have responded to this: 'By Saint Peter, virginity is a great virtue, and we give him to you.' And so, accepting the pallium, the said bishop returned to England, obliged to the curia at Rome for a legacy of ten thousand pounds sterling." Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, 2:634-635; Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 161.

<sup>65</sup> Gibbs & Lang, *Bishops and Reform*, 94-95; Haines, 'Gray, Walter de', 476.

<sup>66</sup> Foreville, *Latran IV*, 245.

...ad extirpanda uitia et plantandas uirtutes, corrigendos excessus, et reformandos mores, eliminandas haereses, et roborandam fidem, sopiendos discordias, et stabiliendam pacem, comprimendas oppressiones, et libertatem fouendam ...<sup>67</sup>

Despite its ecumenical nature, the council and its discussions dealt with a number of local affairs, such as the primacy of Toledo, the case of Simon de Montfort, and the Albigensian Crusade. Some quite specific matters became decrees of the council, such as the heresy of Abbot Joachim, who had disputed the nature of the Trinity against Peter Abelard.<sup>68</sup> Rome was the appropriate place to deal with matters that bishops had failed to resolve themselves, but Innocent may have encouraged such discussion as a way of determining precisely what reforms needed to be made. His encyclical had requested that those attending the council inquire among prudent men what reforms and corrections were needed: "*Interim uero et per uos ipsos et per alios uiros prudentes uniuersa subtiliter inquiratis quae correctionis aut reformationis studio indigere uidentur*".<sup>69</sup> Innocent's own desires would have shaped the council but, considering the number of local matters brought to Rome, it is not impossible that the provisions of the council reflected the needs of local administration and pastoral care.

The matter of the vacancy at York was one of these local matters considered at the council. Pope Innocent, in his letter to the chapter of York, specifically called the canons to the council rather than to Rome, suggesting that the issue would be discussed as part of the proceedings: "*aliquos ex uobis cum communi omnium potestate ad instans concilium destinetis, qui saltem usque ad kalendas Decembris nostro se conspectui representent*".<sup>70</sup> As this letter indicates, Innocent was certainly aware of the vacancy at York and also, according to his earlier dealings with Archbishop Geoffrey, of the long-running problems in the diocese. Knowing that there was no episcopal representation from York or, indeed, possibly from the

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<sup>67</sup> "...for uprooting vices and planting virtues, correcting excesses, reforming morals, eliminating heresies, strengthening faith, putting to sleep discord, establishing peace, holding back oppressions, and fostering liberty". Migne ed., *Patrologia Latina*, col. 216:834.

<sup>68</sup> *Councils & Synods II*, 231-233; Foreville, *Latran IV*, 261-268.

<sup>69</sup> "Meanwhile, truly, carefully inquire among yourselves and among other prudent men all things which seem to need attention of correction and reform". Migne ed., *Patrologia Latina*, col. 216:825.

<sup>70</sup> "you should send to the forthcoming Council some of your number with power to represent you all, who should appear before us at latest by the calends of December [1 December 1215]". Cheney & Semple eds., *Letters of Pope Innocent III*, no. 81.

entire Northern Province, Innocent may have summoned members of the chapter of York to deal with this issue at the council so that there would be some representation from the diocese.<sup>71</sup> This placed York in an interesting position. The description of Archbishop Gray's elevation does indicate that some members of the chapter obeyed Innocent's letter and went to Rome. Although descriptions of the council suggest that many cathedral canons from across Christendom attended, the York canons are the only ones who appear by name in the sources. These were the precentor, the archdeacon of York, and a canon named Master R. de Arenis.<sup>72</sup> The confirmed presence of members of the cathedral chapter of York at the council may have eased diocesan attempts to implement the decrees of the council, which Gray seems to have done relatively successfully and with a degree of purpose, as did other English bishops.<sup>73</sup> The canons' first-hand familiarity with the council and its intentions would have been of benefit to the archbishop and perhaps even contributed to co-operation between him and the influential cathedral chapter. Indeed, it appears that future members of Gray's administrative household also attended the council, which would have made his own attempts at reform easier. One Godfrey de Craucumbe appears at the council as a proctor for the king. The same name appears as a witness to a charter by Gray, perhaps suggesting that Craucumbe followed Gray from his royal service to York.<sup>74</sup> Together with the lifting of the interdict and Gray's appointment as a new archbishop, the council marks a good starting point for this study.

### *The Records of the Region*

Most importantly, perhaps, the thirteenth century coincided with the appearance in the dioceses of York and Lincoln of a new type of source, which, at the time, distinguished these jurisdictions from others and provides historians a reason to begin a study from this point.

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<sup>71</sup> Foreville, *Latran IV*, 392.

<sup>72</sup> *Councils and Synods II*, 48; Foreville, *Latran IV*, 251-252.

<sup>73</sup> Gibbs & Lang, *Bishops and Reform*, 94-95, 107, 137-165.

<sup>74</sup> Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, 2:633; *Reg. Gray*, 201; Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 159.

These sources are the rolls and registers of the archbishops of York and bishops of Lincoln, which are the earliest surviving documents from England to collect diocesan records into a single source. Although they exist in both rolls and bound registers, they are normally called registers. The earliest English registers begin with the rolls of Hugh of Wells, bishop of Lincoln (1209-1235), in 1214/15.<sup>75</sup> The York series begin under Archbishop Walter Gray (1215-1255) in 1225 and, apart from a break between 1255 and 1266, they survive in some form for every archbishop of York until the nineteenth century. Gray's records exist as rolls rather than bound registers, which do not appear until the pontificate of Archbishop Walter Giffard (1266-1279) in 1266.<sup>76</sup> The records of Gray's first ten years, if they existed, are lost but presumably would have begun upon his elevation to the diocese in 1215. The reasons for the beginning of registration at York and Lincoln, as in other dioceses, are unknown, although it is tempting to link the appearance of registers to the end of a long period of turbulence in York and the return of Gray and Wells from the Fourth Lateran Council, which all occur around the same time. Archiepiscopal records do exist from before this date in the form of episcopal *acta*, some of which are edited, but these survive today in disparate sources rather than in a single collection like the registers. Although the shift to registers after 1215 may represent simply a change in the type of available documentation, an historical explanation seems more likely given the contemporary events.

The nearly simultaneous appearance of registers in two neighbouring dioceses during a period of change and reform strongly suggests processes of historical change within ecclesiastical administrations rather than just a change in available sources. Indeed, a thirteenth-century document from the diocese of Lincoln suggests that there was no single diocesan register of information to consult for precedent before Wells' rolls.<sup>77</sup> Contemporary changes to record-keeping in other jurisdictions, such as royal administration, suggest that

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<sup>75</sup> Smith, *Guide to Registers*, 105-106.

<sup>76</sup> Smith, *Guide to Registers*, 232-234; Thompson, 'York Registers', 245-247.

<sup>77</sup> Foster, 'Lincoln Registers', 8.

men like Gray and Wells who were, respectively, chancellor and deputy chancellor before becoming bishops, could have brought knowledge of these new records to York and Lincoln. Indeed, Gray brought his administrative family from Worcester to York and this move may be the beginnings of the close-knit northern clerical community noted in thirteenth-century royal administration.<sup>78</sup> One of the more intriguing explanations for the shift to registers in York and Lincoln is the relationship between Gray and Wells. Wells had been deputy to Gray during his chancellorship of England and both men were in Rome at the council where they may have been inspired by the papal *regesta*, which began in 1198.<sup>79</sup> The two men may have discussed the administrative needs of their neighbouring dioceses after the interdict, and the administrative necessities of governing the two largest dioceses in England may have impressed upon them the need for new tools. Moreover, having come from royal administration, both men may have been comfortable with borrowing administrative techniques from other jurisdictions.

There are important differences between the registers of York and Lincoln. The Lincoln registers are highly organised from their earliest dates, which tends to reduce the diversity of information in them. In other words, the early use of strict categories meant that administrators included in the registers only information for which a category existed. The registers of Bishops Robert Grosseteste (1235-1253) and Richard Gravesend (1258-1279) record, therefore, mainly institutions to benefices, which are organised by archdeaconry. Thompson goes as far as to say that the Lincoln registers are institution registers rather than general registers recording the acts of the bishop.<sup>80</sup> The Lincoln registers expanded over time to include other items, and the addition by John de Scalleby, registrar to Bishop Oliver Sutton (1280-1299), of a section containing miscellaneous memoranda allowed for a greater variety of information. The Lincoln registers shifted from rolls to bound registers, which were more

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<sup>78</sup> Grassi, 'Royal Clerks', 15-17.

<sup>79</sup> Foreville, *Latran IV*, 392; Foster, 'Lincoln Registers', 1-3.

<sup>80</sup> Thompson, 'York Registers', 247.

efficient to consult, half-way through Sutton's episcopate, perhaps under Scalleby's influence. Nevertheless, the Lincoln registers continued to be highly organised throughout the period under study and primarily recorded institutions and similar routine administrative information.<sup>81</sup>

The York registers, on the other hand, seem to have become more highly organised later than at Lincoln. The early registers, created chronologically and with little categorization, allowed a greater variety of documents into them and may have contributed to the registers' evolution into general rather than specific registers. Gray's rolls appear to be a general chronological record of his pontificate. No registers survive from his immediate successors, Archbishops Sewal de Bovill (1256-1258) and Godfrey de Ludham (1258-1265). They reappear in 1266, in the form of registers rather than rolls, under Archbishop Giffard. Giffard's register is the first indication of some attempt to organise information according to the archdeaconries of the diocese, which system his successor, Archbishop William Wickwane (1279-1285), refined.<sup>82</sup> The register of Archbishop John le Romeyn (1286-1296) became the model for later medieval registers at York. His administrators, perhaps under the influence of John Nassington, who had held a prebend in Lincoln, organised the registers into sections including the archdeaconries, the archbishop's personal jurisdictions, and the archbishop's finances. Except for the incomplete register of Archbishop Henry Newark (1298-1299), this pattern more or less continued through the pontificate of Archbishop Thomas Corbridge (1300-1304) with some additions until a high point of administration under Archbishops William Greenfield (1306-1315) and William Melton (1317-1340). After this point, which falls towards the end of this study, the registers contain less interesting material and, perhaps paradoxically, become less organised throughout the later medieval period.<sup>83</sup> A cursory examination of the register manuscripts tends to confirm that the information contained in

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<sup>81</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, xxvii-xxix; Smith, *Guide to Registers*, 106-113.

<sup>82</sup> Smith, *Guide to Registers*, 234-235; Thompson, 'York Registers', 247-249.

<sup>83</sup> Thompson, 'York Registers', 249-258.

them became routine and, perhaps in the case of York, the decline in both organisation and miscellaneous material was the result of a decline of interest in administration. Interestingly, this date coincides with the decline in influence of northern clerics in the royal administration.<sup>84</sup> It is also possible that, as other documents begin to survive from York, such as probate registers, that material that once would have entered the register was filed elsewhere.

The episcopal registers of England are a vitally important and in some ways underused source for studying society and its interactions. There is a great deal of analytical work to be done on the registers and the introduction to Chapter 4 attempts some beginning at this. In brief, it describes the dialogues that contributed to the production of narratives in the registers. Here, however, it is enough to say that the registers were an attempt to record the deeds of a bishop for the purpose, among many, of creating a historical record of reference and precedent. In recording episcopal acts, registers contain many entries where the laity interacted with him, his clerical administrators, or local clergy subject to him and it is these documents that are of great interest. They tend to appear in the earlier, less well organised York registers, perhaps because there was, at that time, no other place for such documents. As the registers developed and the administration of dioceses became more complex, these documents become increasingly rare. The highly organised Lincoln registers have similar characteristics to these later York registers, but a few interesting documents recording interactions between clergy and laity occasionally appear in them.

Being a regional study, this thesis consults a number of other sources originating from this region. Less familiar sources are introduced when they appear and others, such as cartularies, diocesan legislation, and Chancery records are familiar enough to need no introduction. Two classes of document are particularly important for this study. The first is the

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<sup>84</sup> Grassi, 'Royal Clerks', 24-27.

range of texts offering advice on pastoral care. These began to appear slightly before the Fourth Lateran Council, which spurred their later growth. They were designed primarily to aid clergy in their provision of pastoral care and particularly focussed on the administration of confession. They were distinct from the early medieval penitentials, being less concerned with a catalogue of sin and a tariff of penance than with the priest's reception of the penitent, the penitent's intentions, and the teaching possibilities of the sacrament. The Lateran council, with its focus on pastoral interactions between clergy and the laity and its call for annual confession, resulted in an increase in these types of texts, which ranged from large, almost encyclopedic compendia, to small pamphlets of a few folios. They developed as general and local attempts to educate the clergy involved in pastoral care and, later, the laity themselves.<sup>85</sup> These texts are important here because their use rests upon an assumption of interactions between clergy and laity. Chapter 1 deals extensively with a regional group of these texts.

The other type of document that makes occasional, but repeated appearances, in this study is the cause papers from the ecclesiastical court of York. These are the records of the processes of causes in that court, sometimes with witness depositions. Jeremy Goldberg uses them extensively to investigate the social history of Yorkshire while legal historians, such as Richard Helmholz, use them to understand the legal systems of the period.<sup>86</sup> The causes used here normally describe interactions between clergy or religious and laity, and Chapter 6 makes a detailed study of one of them. The cause papers start in 1300 although there must have been an ecclesiastical court before this.<sup>87</sup> In 1311, Archbishop Greenfield promulgated legislation describing the make-up and purpose of the court and its officers,

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<sup>85</sup> Boyle, 'Manuals of Popular Theology', 30-37; Biller, 'Marriage Patterns', 60-61; Goering, *William de Montibus*, 58-98.

<sup>86</sup> Goldberg, *Communal Discord in the Later Middle Ages* (2008); Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle* (1992); Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation* (1974).

<sup>87</sup> Smith, *Cause Papers at York* (1988).

which seems more likely to be a codification of a system in place for some time than the institution of a new fully-developed ecclesiastical legal system.<sup>88</sup>

#### *METHODOLOGICAL INFLUENCES AND APPROACHES*

Since this thesis concentrates on understanding, in great detail, several case studies, which are diverse in nature, several different documents have been used rather than a single source exhaustively surveyed. As a result of this, no particular methodological approach has been used here but it is fair to admit to influence from three schools of thought. It is important to note that these have influenced but not informed the current study because they have not been applied in detail nor are they discussed in an in depth theoretical manner here. Rather, their approaches have been present throughout the course of research and writing, and helpful when examining the evidence in the sources, since there was no advantage in choosing to apply one over the other. One of these influences has been the school of subaltern theory, which developed from Gayatri Spivak's work on colonial India.<sup>89</sup> The use of subaltern theory in medieval studies is not new and here it has principally served as a reminder that there are certain questions, particularly regarding medieval laity, that can never be answered with certainty. This results, therefore, in a focus on suggestions, likely scenarios, possibilities, and speculation rather than a quest for certainty, which has the advantage of permitting a single situation or document to perform many sometimes contradictory meanings without requiring resolution of any inherent tensions. Secondly, because this study concentrates on interactions between two quite different classes of medieval people, clergy and laity, notions of power and participation have always been prominent. The work of Michel Foucault, another theorist not unfamiliar to medievalists, has been influential here, particularly his ideas about power in relationships being asymmetric,

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<sup>88</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, 409-415.

<sup>89</sup> Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', 271-313.

multivalent, and full of possibility.<sup>90</sup> Again, his work has been influential rather than a guiding methodology. Finally, the work of the *Annales* school has never been far from this study, particularly their ideas about the importance of context in writing history.<sup>91</sup>

While these ideas have influenced this thesis, the overriding approach has been pragmatism since, when examining laity and in particular peasants, sources are often so scarce or tangential that whatever is available must be used. Sources have, therefore, simply been questioned for the purpose of this thesis. In other words, each source for the case studies has been considered for what it might reveal about interactions between clergy and laity. At the beginning of this project, there was no expectation about what might be revealed, which meant that the understanding of the sources constantly changed in the light of subsequent work. This was, however, perhaps an advantage because it helped to avoid exclusions being built into the process of investigation. As the project progressed and it became clear that the sources supposed many unrecorded interactions between clergy and laity, the focus turned to these interactions. These unrecorded interactions were much more complex than the apparently straightforward conflicts appearing in the final records. This conscious avoidance of theoretical imperatives, with a focus on individual stories and “supplements” to the record may be closest to the New Historicism movement.<sup>92</sup>

If, therefore, this study focuses mainly on the complexities of negotiation and co-operation, it is because these aspects of relationships between clergy and laity are less discussed in scholarship rather than out of a desire to deny the existence of conflict. As much as possible, arguments have been made from these sources and complementary documents illustrating their context rather than relying on the work of other scholars. Secondary sources and the work of other historians have been used primarily to establish facts about the primary sources, such as manuscript traditions, or to discuss and explain terms and processes, such

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<sup>90</sup> Foucault, ‘The Eye of Power’, 146-165.

<sup>91</sup> Bloch, *French Rural History* (1966); Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft* (1954); Braudel, *Civilizations* (1994).

<sup>92</sup> Gallagher & Greenblatt, *New Historicism*, 1-19, esp. 16-18.

as the workings of canon law. Where other historians have cited the primary sources used here – particularly the bishops' registers – their references have normally been checked and cited from the original, not out of any mistrust of previous scholars but out of a desire to argue afresh from the sources. The absence of a particular methodological approach, the diversity of records used, and the desire to position sources in regional and local contexts and argue from them has meant that some canonical texts in the field have not been cited. Rather, it is hoped that the sources will reveal more than they say about the events informing them.

## Part II

### **1. Pastoral Care? The regional development and use of pastoral manuals**

The century and a half following the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 was an important period in the production of pastoral literature, which was a key component of contemporary efforts at pastoral reform. Although much is known about the production of this literature, which often emerged from schools and religious houses, challenges remain in understanding its use in the *cura animarum*. At least four pastoral texts emerged from and circulated in the Humber Region Lowlands between the council and the Black Death. They are the anonymous *Manuel des Péchés*, Robert Mannyng of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, William of Pagula's *Oculus Sacerdotis*, and Richard Rolle's *Judica Me Deus*.<sup>1</sup> It is surprising that there is no scholarship on these texts as a group because they all appeared within about fifty years between the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Indeed, three were local productions and all four had a marked regional circulation. The emergence and development of these texts in a concentrated time and place suggests the regional importance of pastoral literature, which is also known as *pastoralia*. Interactions between clergy and laity constituted the pastoral efforts envisaged in this literature, which, therefore, permits an exploration of regional efforts at reform and pastoral care. It is hoped that suggestions about the regional possibilities, expectations, and nature of pastoral interactions between clergy and laity will emerge from this exploration and begin to describe a context within which later chapters can discuss local interactions. This chapter considers two aspects of these texts: what they say about the nature of the pastoral project and interactions in the region; and the participation and efforts of clergy within them.

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<sup>1</sup> There are no critical editions of these texts but references to published editions are found in the Conventions and Bibliography. A critical edition of some parts of the *Manuel* appears in Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, which is cited as *MPb*. Portions of the unpublished *Oculus Sacerdotis* appear in Daly's edition of the *Judica Me Deus*.

## THE REGIONAL PASTORALIA

### *The Manuel des Péchés*

The *Manuel des Péchés* is an Anglo-Norman verse text containing, in its longest form, eleven sections: a prologue, nine books on a range of religious topics illustrated by numerous *exempla*, and an epilogue. Revisions and additions to the presumed original resulted in several different versions of the text, which has a complicated structural history. The original *Manuel* may have included a prologue and five books – the Creed, Commandments, Deadly Sins, sacrilege, and Sacraments – that particularly emphasised the Deadly Sins and the Eucharist. Scholars often suggest that an epilogue, a book on confession, and perhaps also a short book on prayer, were added to the original soon after it began to circulate. From stylistic characteristics, Matthew Sullivan convincingly argues that the original *Manuel*-author wrote the epilogue and the books on confession and prayer, although his suggestion is disputed. A model sermon on sin and prayers to Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary appear to be later additions but they differ from the other books because they lack the didactic content and *exempla* common in the rest of the *Manuel*. Textual instability in the book on confession also creates several difficulties for establishing the development of the *Manuel*. The original *Manuel* most likely dates to c.1260 and the text does appear in several manuscripts from the late thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Some copies of the epilogue include an ascription to William of Waddington, whose toponymic scholars usually accept as referring to the village of Waddington near Clitheroe in the West Riding of Yorkshire. There is also another village in the region called Waddington, which is about ten kilometres south of Lincoln. William of Waddington may have been the author of the original *Manuel*, or the author of some of the revisions, or a scribe associated with particular manuscripts. His biography is unclear because there is no conclusive evidence

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<sup>2</sup> Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 62-105, 253-266, 359-398; Laird, 'Character and Growth', 253-306; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 22-80.

about him outside of the *Manuel*. Sullivan suggests that Waddington may have been a cleric in the household of Archbishop Gray, and even a canon at Beverley and Southwell. He is, however, unidentifiable from the York registers because the name Waddington, in various forms, is not uncommon.<sup>3</sup> Copyists of *Handlyng Synne*, the Middle English translation of the *Manuel*, sometimes attributed the Anglo-Norman text to Robert Grosseteste, the bishop of Lincoln, writing, “*Here begynneth the boke þat men clepyn yn frenshe manuele pecche þe which boke made yn frenshe Roberd Grostest Bysshop of Lyncolne.*” Émile Arnould conclusively shows this ascription to be false.<sup>4</sup> Despite uncertainties about the presumed original version of the *Manuel* and its author, there is no reason to doubt its regional origin. The only people linked to the text were active in the region. Waddington probably came from one of the two regional villages of that name and the ascription to Grosseteste, although false, indicates that contemporaries believed the author of the text to be from the region.

Manuscripts containing the *Manuel* strongly suggest that it had a prominent circulation in the region. Several regional families had connections to manuscripts, especially the Tempest family who owned three from at least the seventeenth century: British Library, MSS Harley 4657 and Harley 3860, as well as Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson F.241. Unlike the majority of their collection, the family did not acquire these manuscripts from Durham Priory after the Dissolution so, perhaps, held them earlier. In fact, the Tempest family became lords of Waddington in Yorkshire in 1268, shortly after the date of the *Manuel*'s composition, and built a chapel there soon after. Interestingly, it is the textual structure of one of their manuscripts, MS Harley 4657,

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<sup>3</sup> Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 245-256; Laird, ‘Character and Growth’, 254-255; Sullivan, ‘Author of the *Manuel*’, 155-157; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 99.

<sup>4</sup> BL, MS Harley 1701, fo. 1r; Bodl., MS 415, fo. 1r; Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 245-256.

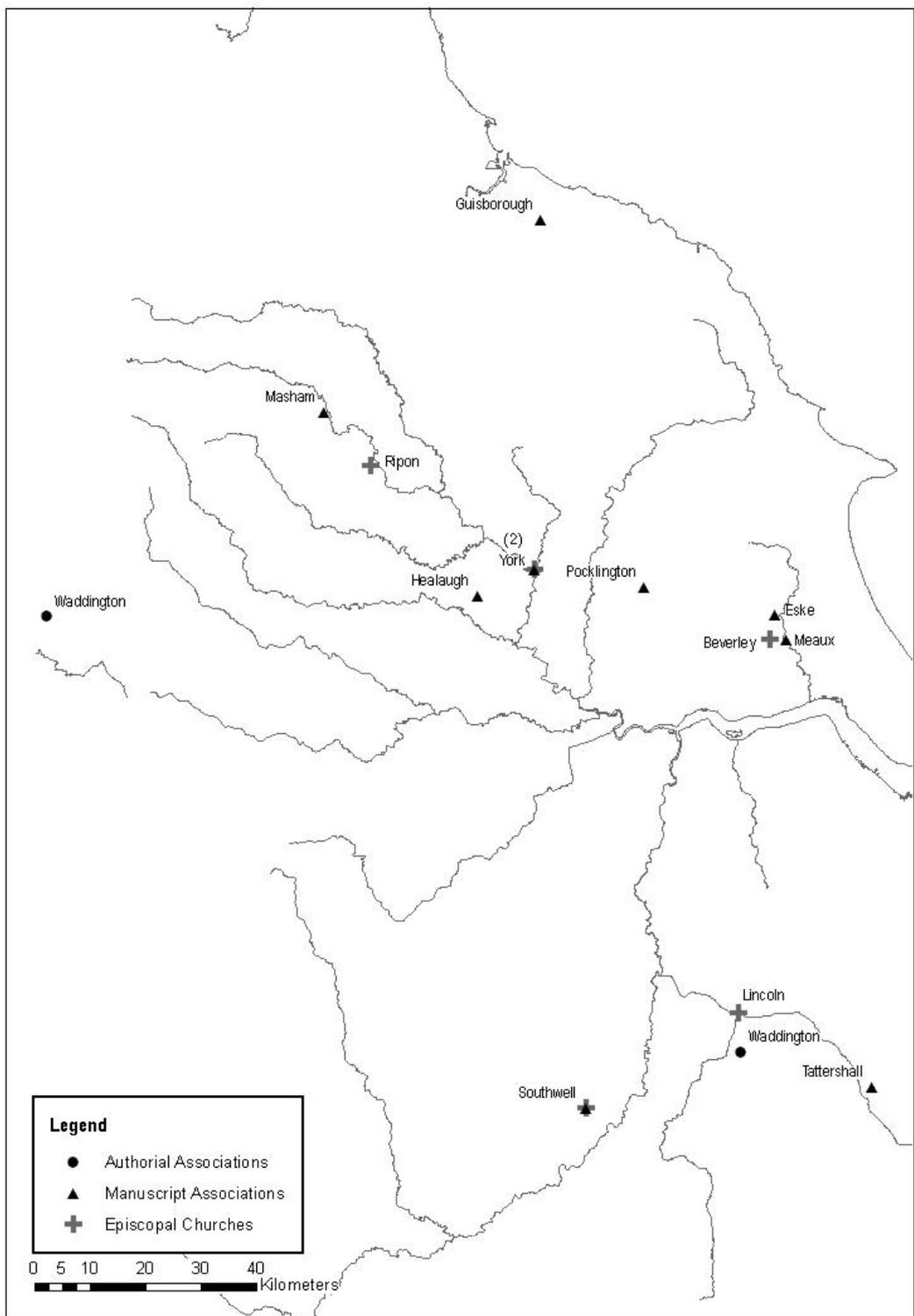


Figure 2: Regional associations with the *Manuel des Péchés*

that is thought to resemble most closely the *Manuel* that Mannyng used for *Handlyng Synne*.<sup>5</sup>

This suggests a regional circulation of the manuscript, its antecedents, and its particular textual structure, which circulation a list of receipts in it appears to confirm:

Ista sunt dona mihi data: de priore xl d; de Mascam xl d; de Gisborn xl d; de Graystayus xl d; de Poklyngton xx d; de Fowne xx d; de Berry xl d; de Esche xij d; de Helaw xx d; de Wessyngton xl d; de Mors xx d; de bursaris xl d.<sup>6</sup>

The appearance of the Yorkshire villages of Masham, Guisborough, Pocklington, Eske, and Healaugh in this list indicates that the manuscript probably circulated in Yorkshire. The owner of the manuscript may have collected these gifts and even travelled through these settlements with it, particularly because there is no apparent manorial connection between these places. Gifts from a prior and bursar could indicate a religious or someone lodging at religious houses. Interestingly, there were Augustinian priories at Guisborough and Healaugh and the *Manuel* would have been a useful resource for any of their canons charged with pastoral care or preaching. These gifts might record donations collected on a canon's travels.

Several other manuscripts have regional links. University of Nottingham, MS Mi.LM.4, which is similar to MS Harley 4657, is a thirteenth-century manuscript that may be from York.<sup>7</sup> Another York manuscript is Huntingdon Library, MS HM 903, which contains the inscription, "*Liber monasterii beate Marie de Ebor' emptus per fratrem Clementam de Warthwyk; qui alienauerit anathema,*" indicating ownership by the Benedictine abbey of St Mary, York.<sup>8</sup> The late thirteenth-century Princeton Library, Taylor Medieval MS 1 is the only copy of the *Manuel* with illuminated miniatures, which illustrate twenty-six of the *exempla*. It was made for Dame Joan Tattershall, the daughter of Sir Ralph FitzRanulph of Middleham, Yorkshire, and wife of

<sup>5</sup> Biggar, 'Review', 969; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 13-14, 107-109; Sullivan, 'Historical Notes', 84-85; Sullivan, 'Readers of the *Manuel*', 239-241.

<sup>6</sup> "These are the gifts given to me: from the prior 40d; from Masham 40d; from Guisborough 40d; from Graystayus 40d; from Pocklington 20d; from Fowne 20d; from Berry 40d; from Eske 12d; from Healaugh 20d; from Wessyngton 40d; from Mors 20d; from the bursar 40d." BL, MS Harley 4657, fo. 104r.

<sup>7</sup> Sullivan, 'Brief Textual History', 342.

<sup>8</sup> "A book of the monastery of blessed Mary of York, bought by Brother Clement Warthwyk; let him who sells it be anathema." Huntingdon Library, MS HM 903, fo. 1r.

Baron Robert Tattershall of Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire.<sup>9</sup> Southwell Minster held an unidentified copy of the *Manuel* – perhaps a lost copy or perhaps Cambridge, St John’s College MS 167, which comes from the surrounding county and archdeaconry, Nottinghamshire – together with the *Pars Oculi* of William of Pagula’s *Oculus Sacerdotis* as well as his *Summa Summarum*. Meaux Abbey in the East Riding of Yorkshire held a manuscript listed in their catalogue as, “*Le Manuel de Pechiez*”, most likely a now lost copy of the *Manuel*.<sup>10</sup> The dates of all these regional *Manuel* manuscripts, as far as can be determined, fall within roughly half a century of its original composition and they account for over half of all the extant copies with a known provenance. These same manuscripts represent the highest concentration of *Manuel* copies from a single region, for the remaining copies come from across England, including Gloucestershire, the Isle of Wight, Norfolk, and Somerset.<sup>11</sup> The manuscript evidence indicates, therefore, that the *Manuel* had a notable regional circulation.

#### *Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s Handlyng Synne*

*Handlyng Synne*, which is a Middle English verse work mostly derived from the *Manuel*, has a much more stable textual history than its exemplar. It begins with a prologue similar to the most common version of the prologue found in the *Manuel*, followed by five books on the Commandments, the Deadly Sins, sacrilege, the Sacraments and confession. The prologue provides the starting point for all research about the date and author of the work. According to this, the author began to write c.1303: “*þe 3ers of grace fyl þan to be/ A þousynd and þre hundryd & þre. 1303.*”<sup>12</sup> There is no indication about when he completed the work but it seems to have been at some point between 1317 and 1330. The author appears to have written the prologue after completing the text. The most notable difference between the

<sup>9</sup> Bennett, ‘Book Designed for a Noblewoman’, 166-173.

<sup>10</sup> Blaess, ‘Les manuscrits français dans les monastères anglais’, 350-351; Sullivan, ‘Author of the *Manuel*’, 156; Sullivan, ‘Brief Textual History’, 341; Sullivan, ‘Readers of the *Manuel*’, 237.

<sup>11</sup> Sullivan, ‘Brief Textual History’, 339-343.

<sup>12</sup> *HS*, ll. 75-76.

content of the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* is the omission in the latter of any discussion of the Creed, which, previously, had appeared in all copies of the *Manuel*. Although *Handlyng Synne* is quite similar in structure to shorter versions of the *Manuel*, it may never be known which *Manuel* manuscript the author of *Handlyng Synne* used. This question is particularly difficult to answer because the earliest known extant copy of *Handlyng Synne* dates from nearly a century after its completion.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Ray Biggar points out that the scribes of *Handlyng Synne* probably consulted different versions of the *Manuel*, introducing further complexities into the relationship between the two texts. Biggar suggests the structure of MS Harley 4657 as the strongest candidate for the version of the *Manuel* that the author consulted.<sup>14</sup>

The self-declared author of *Handlyng Synne* is Robert Mannyng of Brunne, who identifies himself in the text as “*Roberd of Brunne*”. In his second work, a translation of Peter of Langtoft’s *Chronicle*, Mannyng calls himself “*Robert Mannyng*”.<sup>15</sup> Although no manuscripts contemporary to the composition of *Handlyng Synne* survive, Mannyng’s statements about himself appear to be reliable because the text is stable in all the extant prologues. His biographical details are unclear, although there is universal scholarly acceptance of his authorship of *Handlyng Synne*. It is frequently thought that he was a native of Bourne in Lincolnshire and became a Gilbertine canon at either Lincoln or the mother-house of Sempringham, which was about ten kilometres north of Bourne. The identification of Mannyng as a Lincolnshire native and life-long Gilbertine relies on a reference to Sempringham and to known Gilbertine canons in the prologue to *Handlyng Synne*. Furthermore, Mannyng states, in his *Chronicle*, that he spent his later years at the Gilbertine house of Sixhills in

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<sup>13</sup> Crosby, ‘New Biography’, 28; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 139.

<sup>14</sup> Biggar, ‘Review’, 969-970; *HS*, xii-xviii.

<sup>15</sup> *HS*, I, 64; Robert Mannyng, *Story of England*, I, 1:4.



Figure 3: Regional associations with *Handlyng Synne*

Lincolnshire.<sup>16</sup> These statements, however, should not lead to the assumption that Mannyng was a Gilbertine for his entire religious life or, indeed, that he actually resided at Sempringham. Biggar suggests that Mannyng was born in Nunburnholme, then known as Bourne, in Yorkshire and recent research indicates that this is both a plausible and, perhaps, more likely suggestion. Mannyng may have been born at Nunburnholme and joined the Augustinians at Warter before joining the Augustinian house of the Arrouaisian tradition at Bourne, which was close to the Gilbertine mother-house of Sempringham. Dialect characteristics in manuscripts, particularly in rhyming words, support a biography of Mannyng that includes the possibility of his origin in Yorkshire.<sup>17</sup> In either case, he certainly lived, worked, and moved about within the region.

The dates of Mannyng's biography and the composition of *Handlyng Synne* indicate that he wrote it in the region, and manuscript evidence suggests that the text circulated locally after its composition. There are three complete extant manuscripts: British Library, MS Harley 1701; Bodleian Library, MS 415; and Folger Library, MS V.b.236. Dating from c. 1400, the Folger manuscript may be the earliest extant manuscript, and was, perhaps, copied in the diocese of Lincoln. The other two complete manuscripts also date from the early fifteenth century. Portions of *Handlyng Synne*, ranging from *exempla* to longer excerpts, survive in other manuscripts including some *exempla* in the Vernon and Simeon manuscripts, where they are included as part of the *Northern Homily Cycle*. This may indicate a relationship between these texts and suggests a northern circulation for *Handlyng Synne*.<sup>18</sup> Yale University, Beinecke Library MS Osborn a.2 is a long but incomplete copy of nearly nine thousand lines. It is unique in containing the only major difference in the textual tradition, which is an *exemplum* about a drunken priest translated from the *Manuel* but not appearing in

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<sup>16</sup> *HS*, xiii, l. 64; Robert Mannyng, *The Chronicle*, 13-22; Robert Mannyng, *Story of England*, l. 141; Crosby, 'New Biography', 15-28; Sullivan, 'Biographical Notes on Mannyng', 302-304.

<sup>17</sup> Taubman, 'New Biographical Notes', 197-201.

<sup>18</sup> *HS*, xxiii-xxxiii; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 197-211.

any other copy of *Handlyng Synne*. This manuscript is the only one with northern dialect features, which may provide evidence about *Handlyng Synne*'s circulation in the region. The *Handlyng Synne* manuscripts come from across England but the dialect in the Osborn manuscript leads Idelle Sullens to suggest the existence of an earlier northern copy or copies.<sup>19</sup> The still unresolved relationship between the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* also suggests the latter's northern circulation. MS Harley 4657, the best candidate for the structure of the *Manuel* consulted by Mannyng, was produced in the region, as was Nottingham University, MS Mi.LM.4, which has an identical structure and may be from York. Mannyng's use of this structure would, therefore, suggest that he was working in this region and circulated his own text in it.

#### *William of Pagula's Oculus Sacerdotis*

The large number of surviving manuscripts and the testimony of medieval authors indicate the widespread popularity of the pastoral manual *Oculus Sacerdotis* in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England. John de Burgh, the author of the late fourteenth-century *Pupilla Oculi*, which superseded the *Oculus*, wrote: "of all the manuals which have been written out of a zeal for souls, the manual which goes by the name of the *Oculus Sacerdotis* is the most popular."<sup>20</sup> It is, therefore, remarkable that the only scholarship on this text remains Leonard Boyle's unpublished doctoral thesis and a few published articles derived from it. Boyle invented the term *pastoralia* and scholars who mention the *Oculus* in passing regularly cite him without further comment.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, the following is almost exclusively from Boyle's research. The *Oculus* contains three books: the *Pars Oculi*, the *Dextera Pars*, and the *Sinistra Pars*. The *Pars Oculi* is a confessional manual outlining the manner of receiving, interrogating, absolving, and assigning penances to penitents. Much like the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne*,

<sup>19</sup> HS, xxii, xxviii-xxx; McIntosh *et al.*, LALME, 1:68, 1:110, 1:117, 1:146, 1:148, 1:166.

<sup>20</sup> Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 1:385-387, 2:96-97.

<sup>21</sup> Boyle, 'Manuals of Popular Theology', 30-43; Boyle, '*Oculus Sacerdotis*', 81-110; Goering, *William de Montibus*, 58-59.

it discusses key Christian doctrines such as the Creed, the Commandments, and the Deadly Sins; it provides a reference of venial sins, penitential canons, and censures; and it contains a model confession. The *Dextera Pars* is a pastoral aid containing practical advice for instructing parishioners in the Creed, the Sacraments, the Commandments, the Deadly Sins, the Works of Mercy, and the Cardinal Virtues. It also contains a model sermon on the Resurrection and a discussion of ecclesiastical legislation, particularly from the diocese of Salisbury. The *Sinistra Pars* provides theological instruction to priests based on a detailed exposition of the Sacraments. The complete *Oculus* is a confessional manual, a moral teaching aid, and a speculative theological reference. It may seem repetitive in its treatment of topics such as the Sacraments or the Commandments but, in fact, examines these topics from three perspectives and eliminates the need for cross-referencing.<sup>22</sup>

Boyle dates the *Dextera Pars* and *Sinistra Pars* to c.1322, with the *Pars Oculi* following in 1327/8. He arrives at these dates from his biography of William of Pagula, to whom a number of manuscripts ascribe the text. Pagula's toponymic probably refers to the village of Paull in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Paull may have been an important part of regional networks because it was a ferry port across the Humber into Lincolnshire. Meaux Abbey had an exemption from the tolls and the Lincolnshire houses of Thornton Abbey and Nun Cotham Priory both had a ferry there by the thirteenth century, indicating the connections religious houses had to the regional transportation network. The leases and tolls from ferries generated £2 to £5 of the £3 to £10 annual income of the estate of Paullfleet and were probably quite important to the local economy.<sup>23</sup> The port village of Paull and its church of St Mary, which Aumale Abbey held and served through a vicarage, would have been the context of Pagula's earliest childhood experiences with religion.<sup>24</sup> Pagula may have returned to his native Yorkshire after achieving his master's degree from Oxford in 1307/08 and spent some

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<sup>22</sup> Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 1:282-339.

<sup>23</sup> *VCH Yorks. E.R.*, 5:113, 5:121-123.

<sup>24</sup> *VCH Yorks. E.R.*, 5:124-125.

time there because letters dimissory for a William of Pagula, described as “*clericus*”, appear in Archbishop William Greenfield’s register in 1313.<sup>25</sup> From here, Boyle traces Pagula to a parish in Berkshire in 1314, when he entered the vicarage of Winkfield. Pagula subsequently returned to Oxford for his doctorate, likely completing it c.1320, and then probably resumed his parish position. He subsequently undertook some commissions for his bishop and accepted the post of penitentiary for Reading in 1322. His experiences in this position probably inspired the *Pars Oculi*. Boyle suggests Pagula’s birth to be c.1284/5 and that he continued as penitentiary for Reading until his death though, in truth, he simply disappears from the records.<sup>26</sup>

Although Pagula spent most of his life outside the region, his birth and the entry in Archbishop Greenfield’s register suggests that his earliest pastoral experiences were in the region. This may have had some effect on the *Oculus*, which, like the texts examined above, appears to have had a regional circulation. Boyle lists fifty-seven extant manuscripts of the *Oculus*, of which twenty-seven contain all three parts. Eleven of the fifty-seven manuscripts have a known provenance and these have links to over half the counties of medieval England. This indicates the text’s widespread popularity, particularly, according to Boyle’s use of manuscript and will evidence, among parish priests, canons, bishops, and libraries.<sup>27</sup> The provenance of several manuscripts suggests their connection to regional clergy. A complete late fourteenth-century copy of the *Oculus* contains the will of John of Elvyngton, a priest, whose toponymic refers to a village just outside York, and who requested burial in nearby Skipwith. The same manuscript also contains a legal copy of an instrument instituting Robert of Bolton to the prebendal church of Saltmarshe in Howden.<sup>28</sup> These documents do not

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<sup>25</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, 3:197-198n.

<sup>26</sup> Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 1:75-78, 1:123-187.

<sup>27</sup> Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 1:348-370, 2:96-97.

<sup>28</sup> Gonville & Caius, MS 443/440, fos. i-iv; Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 2:115; James, *Manuscripts of Gonville and Caius College*, 2:515-516.

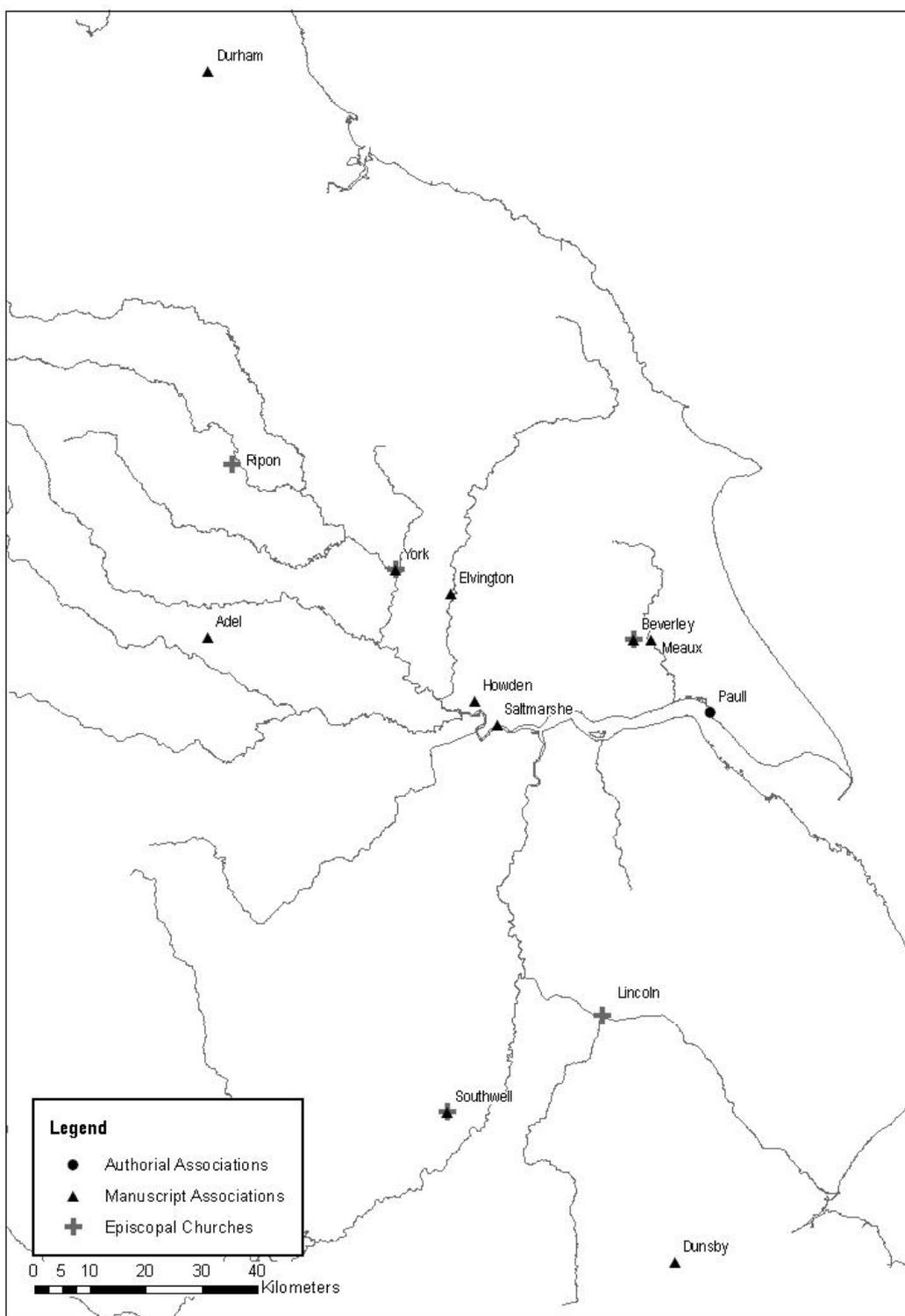


Figure 4: Regional associations with the *Oculus Sacerdotis*

conclusively demonstrate ownership of the manuscript, but they do suggest its circulation among clergy of the East Riding. A fifteenth-century dean of York Minster, Richard Andrew, owned a copy of the *Oculus*, which he donated to Oxford.<sup>29</sup> Cambridge, St John's College MS 93, which is a complete *Oculus*, contains a copy of the 1306 York synodal constitutions, which suggests the interest of this manuscript to regional clergy.<sup>30</sup> Oxford, Trinity College MS 18 contains a list of tithes from the Lincolnshire parish of Dunsby, which was about seven kilometres north of Bourne Abbey. There were two churches in Dunsby. The Gilbertine house of Catley Priory held the church of St Andrew and Bourne Abbey held the church of All Saints. It is possible that one of these houses owned this manuscript because the tithes listed in it would have been of interest to the church's patron, and the *Oculus* itself would have been useful to the canons from either house engaged in pastoral care. The possibility of a link to Bourne Abbey is particularly intriguing because it might indicate that Bourne was a long-standing centre of pastoral training and literature, being the birthplace of the *Ormulum* and having probable links to Mannyng.<sup>31</sup> Boyle notes two lost copies of the *Oculus*, one of which Robert Manfield, the provost of Beverley, bequeathed in 1419, and one owned by the rector of Adel in Yorkshire in 1391. There was also an unknown, perhaps now lost, copy of the *Pars Oculi* at Southwell Minster, where it was held with a copy of the *Manuel*. Finally, the catalogues of the libraries of Durham, Meaux – another community that held a *Manuel* – and the Augustinian friars of York all record copies of the *Oculus*.<sup>32</sup> These manuscripts suggest that the *Oculus* circulated among regional clergy, particularly in Pagula's native East Riding. The *Oculus* is also important to a study of regional *pastoralia* because it was the source for Rolle's *Judica Me*, with which it appears in one manuscript, British Library, MS Royal

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<sup>29</sup> Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 2:169.

<sup>30</sup> Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 2:120.

<sup>31</sup> Astle ed., *Taxatio ecclesiastica*, 61; Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 2:170; *VCH Lincs.*, 196-197; Parkes, 'Date of the *Ormulum*', 125-127.

<sup>32</sup> Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 1:353, 1:363, 1:370; Sullivan, 'Author of the *Manuel*', 156.

8.F.VII.<sup>33</sup> Pagula's Yorkshire origins, the popularity of his text among regional clergy, and Rolle's adaptation of parts of it into his *Judica Me* suggest the necessary inclusion of the *Oculus* in an examination of regional pastoral literature.

#### *Richard Rolle's Judica Me Deus*

The *Judica Me Deus* is a short piece of pastoral writing mainly deriving from the *Oculus*. The complete text has four sections known as *Judica A*, *Judica B1*, *Judica B2*, and *Judica B3*. *Judica A* is the only section not based on the *Oculus* and it focuses on the theme of judgement while defending the eremitic way of life. *Judica B1*, of which about half derives from the *Dextera Pars* of the *Oculus*, is a short letter to a friend of the author describing the priestly office. The author seems quite familiar with his exemplar because he uses excerpts from it out of sequence in order to create a new text. *Judica B2* is the longest portion of the whole work, being a model confession almost entirely taken from the *Pars Oculi* of the *Oculus*, but omitting some of its scholastic distinctions and legal references.<sup>34</sup> *Judica B3* is a model sermon on the Last Judgement, adapted from the *Dextera Pars*, to which the author added three *exempla*.<sup>35</sup> There is general scholarly agreement that the hermit Richard Rolle wrote all four sections, perhaps with the unifying theme of judgement in mind. He almost certainly wrote them at different points in the 1320s corresponding to the composition of the different sections of the *Oculus*. Rolle may have written *Judica A*, which was his own work, as early as before 1322 and probably wrote *Judica B1* and *B3* after 1322 and *Judica B2* after 1327.<sup>36</sup> These dates indicate a rapid dissemination of the *Oculus* from Berkshire.

Rolle is unique among the authors of these four *pastoralia* because he never occupied any ecclesiastical office, rank, or position. The notion of an unsanctioned but devout

<sup>33</sup> *JMD*, xl-xli; Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 2:146

<sup>34</sup> Compare the scholastic references in Gonville & Caius, MS 443/440, cols. 7, 16 to *JMD*, 28, 39, where they do not appear.

<sup>35</sup> Gonville & Caius, MS 443/440, cols. 5-29, 217-223; *JMD*, vi-xi; Watson, *Rolle and Authority*, 76-86.

<sup>36</sup> *JMD*, xi, xlviii-lviii; Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Rolle*, 105; Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 1:187; Watson, 'Rolle as Elitist and Populist', 135.

layman writing and even advising clergy seems so out of place that one modern scholar refuses to accept the possibility, asserting that Rolle must have been clergy: “*On conçoit difficilement qu’un simple laïc, connu d’autre part, pour son humilité et son bon sens, se soit permis de donner des conseils à un prêtre notamment sur la manière de confesser.*”<sup>37</sup> All evidence, however, points to Rolle being a self-appointed hermit and ascetic known for his orthodoxy who did, indeed, offer advice to clergy.<sup>38</sup> He was probably born at Thornton Dale c.1300 and appears to have studied at Oxford under the patronage of Thomas de Neville, the uncle of the future archbishop of York, Alexander Neville. Interestingly, if his biography is correct, Rolle may have studied at Oxford at the same time Pagula returned there for his doctorate and it may not be unrealistic to speculate that the two Yorkshiremen met. Indeed, the possibility that they corresponded with each other, for Rolle is well known as a correspondent, would explain how he adapted Pagula’s texts, perhaps within months of their completion. Rolle became a hermit, most likely in northern Yorkshire, after leaving Oxford without completing his studies, although there is no record of his receiving any ecclesiastical blessing or recognition. His earliest patrons were the Dalton family who provided him with a cell, probably near Pickering, from which he later fled, citing poor treatment by them and disturbances from nearby workers. The location of his second cell is unknown but was most likely in Richmondshire. Rolle somehow came to know a certain Margaret who became an anchoress at Hampole and he possibly moved near there in 1349, the final year of his life.<sup>39</sup>

The text of the *Judica Me* survives in five complete copies and thirteen partial copies.<sup>40</sup> The manuscript evidence suggests that the sections could and did circulate separately, perhaps because medieval users found them to be individually useful.

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<sup>37</sup> “It is difficult to think that a simple layman, known for his humility and good sense on one hand, would have given himself licence to give advice to a priest, especially on the manner of hearing confession.” Marzac, *Richard Rolle: Vie et oeuvres*, 32.

<sup>38</sup> Knowles, *English Mystical Tradition*, 52-56; Watson, *Rolle and Authority*, 41-43, 75-95.

<sup>39</sup> Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Rolle*, 431-466, 511-518.

<sup>40</sup> *JMD*, xxv-liii; Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Rolle*, 93-97.

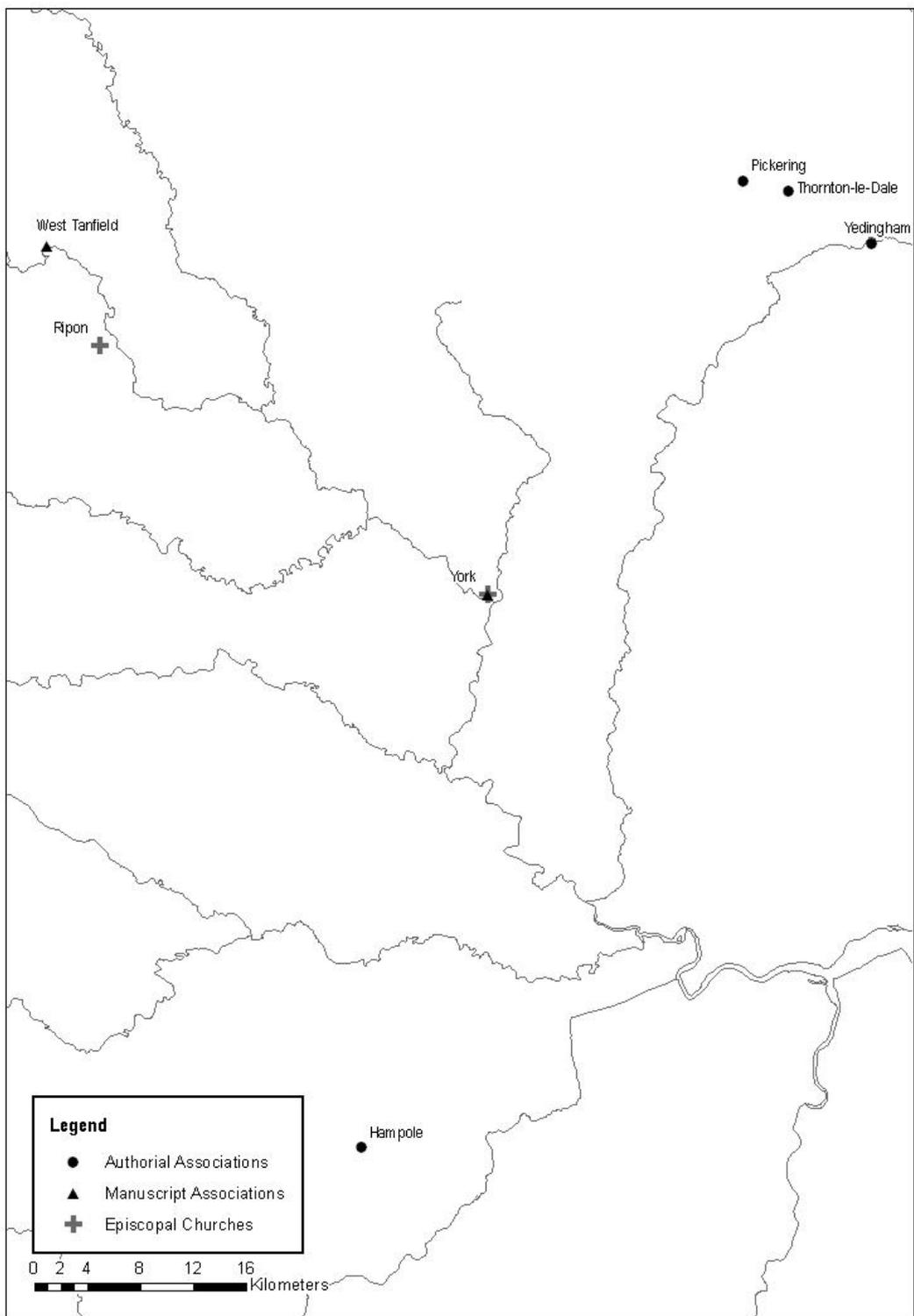


Figure 5: Regional associations with the *Judica Me Deus*

John Daly, who edited the *Judica Me*, assigns a provenance to only two manuscripts.

Cambridge, Emmanuel College MS 25 once belonged to Master John Newton, treasurer of York Minster, while Cambridge, St John's College MS 23 likely belonged to a cleric at Ely.

British Library, MS Royal 8.F.VII, which contained the *Pars Oculi* of the *Oculus*, the complete *Judica Me*, and a pastoral miscellany, was also probably a clerical manuscript.<sup>41</sup> The

Emmanuel manuscript is the only one providing evidence of a regional circulation, but the dates of composition of the *Judica Me* indicate that Rolle was living in the region when he wrote it. Rolle suggests that he and the friend for whom he wrote communicated frequently and that the friend knew something of Rolle's situation and complaints about his first cell:

*"Nam uos scitis et a me sepius audistis me ibi uelle morari et certe de hoc mentitus sum nequaquam quia statim ut Deus scit et uos cognoscitis mutata fuerunt quantum ad me qui ministrare assueuerunt."*<sup>42</sup> It is difficult to know whether Rolle's use of "*audistis*" describes a

frequent written correspondence between the two or personal meetings. The former

possibility could suggest that his friend was at some distance while the latter might indicate a

closer proximity. Rolle's other known correspondents, in Hampole and Yedingham, were from the region so it seems probable that his unnamed friend was also close by and that Rolle's

work found at least one regional reader.<sup>43</sup> Two other manuscripts strongly suggest a regional

circulation of the *Judica Me*. Dublin, Trinity College MS 153 and Bodleian, MS 861 indicate

that they were corrected from a copy held by a hermit in West Tanfield in Yorkshire, who

owned a now unknown copy of the *Judica Me*, perhaps even an autograph of Rolle's.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *JMD*, xxx, xliii; Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 2:146.

<sup>42</sup> "For you know, and you often heard from me, I wanted to remain there. And I certainly never lied about this because, as God knows and you know, how greatly they changed towards me who were accustomed to support [me]." *JMD*, 2; Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Rolle*, 459-463.

<sup>43</sup> Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Rolle*, 449-463, 501-510.

<sup>44</sup> *JMD*, xxix; Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Rolle*, 29-30, 94, 97, *VCH Yorks., N.R.*, 1:384-389.

*Pastoral Literature and Pastoral Care: A regional preoccupation?*

One trend already emerges from the examination of these texts, namely the importance of pastoral literature and care in the region. Three of these texts originated from the Humber Region Lowlands while a Yorkshire-born and trained priest wrote the fourth. It may be too soon to identify the region as a thriving centre for the production of pastoral literature, but it was not devoid of interest in that literature. Indeed, choices to reproduce older texts through translation and adaptation indicate a continued perceived need and a continued response to it. The provenance of all the manuscripts is not known, but those with known histories show, uniquely, ownership of all these texts in the region, for it appears that no other part of England demonstrates the ownership or circulation of all four texts. They were not, however, confined to the region but circulated to other parts of England. Notably, a number of regional owners were clergy, either religious or secular, which suggests, on their part, a particular interest in pastoral care, its tools, and interactions with laity. Other regions of England did not lack such activity but evidence certainly demonstrates the existence of this activity in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. This activity echoes, or even complements, contemporary regional efforts at implementing the Lateran reforms through diocesan legislation.<sup>45</sup> It may even account for later developments, such as Archbishop John Thoresby's *Lay Folks' Catechism*, which may not have been a new development but part of an older regional trend. Indeed, Ralph Hanna's recent research highlights the development of a devotional literary culture in the region during the second half of the fourteenth century. Communities of regional scribes as well as social and physical connections reaching beyond the region facilitated the growth and export of such literature.<sup>46</sup> Hanna notes that, for vernacular literature at least, Worcester and Hereford had been the centre of production during the early fourteenth century before a shift north.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Birkett, 'Lateran IV in the Northern Province', 199-204, 208-219.

<sup>46</sup> Hanna, 'North Yorkshire Scribes', 167-184; Hanna, 'Yorkshire Writers', 91-109.

<sup>47</sup> Hanna, 'Yorkshire Writers', 92.

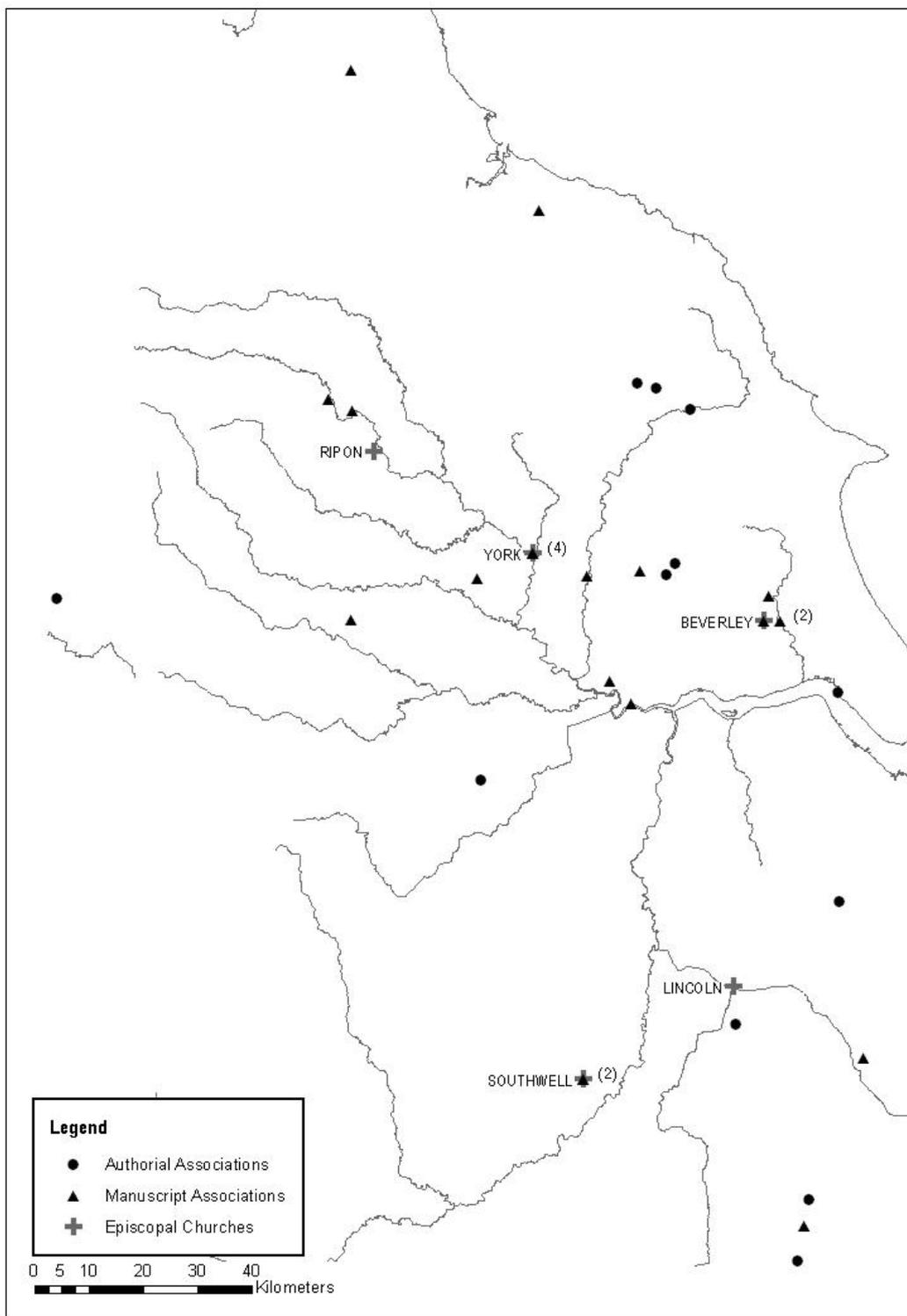


Figure 6: Regional associations with pastoral texts

This is particularly interesting given episcopal connections between York, Hereford, and Worcester during the thirteenth century. Archbishop Gray had been elevated from Worcester while Archbishop Giffard, whose younger brother Godfrey was also bishop of Worcester, had been elevated to York from the see of Bath and Wells, which was close to Hereford. It seems entirely reasonable, therefore, to suggest that these texts may have been part of longer processes of changing patterns of literary production in England. Indeed, the experiences of this period may partly account for the northern literary culture noted by Hanna, and it is to the experiences and effects of these texts that this chapter now turns. An examination of these texts and their relationships to each other gives further indication of interest by regional clergy in the pastoral project and the means by which it was implemented.

#### *TEXTS, USERS, AND MEANINGS IN THE REGIONAL PASTORALIA*

##### *From the Manuel des Péchés to Handlyng Synne*

Although Mannyng openly declares his source to be the “*Manuel des Pecchees*” (HS, l. 82), the relationship between the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* remains one of the major unresolved questions of medieval vernacular literature in England. Scholars normally concentrate on differences between the two works, often focussing on perceived simplicities or even inferiorities in *Handlyng Synne*. Arnould suggests that *Handlyng Synne* was designed as a preaching aid unlike the *Manuel*, which was a learned reference book. Similarly, Sullivan argues that the *Manuel* was an educational tool for priests, while *Handlyng Synne* was a collection of entertaining stories of limited teaching value and circulation.<sup>48</sup> Few scholars, however, have commented on the similarities between the two texts. Durant Robertson suggests that the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* belong to the same penitential literary tradition, but still argues that *Handlyng Synne*’s perceived adaptation for lay audiences reflects larger changes in that tradition, while Pierre Michaud-Quantin only briefly notes some

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<sup>48</sup> Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 295-313; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 126-137, 158-173.

thematic similarities.<sup>49</sup> This privileging of difference has resulted in a surprisingly inadequate examination of the similarities between the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne*, especially considering that scholars universally acknowledge the latter to derive from the former. Sullivan's judgement of *Handlyng Synne* as an inferior local adaptation for "intellectually-limited listeners and readers" with an "idiosyncratic and rambling prologue" is just one example of how an emphasis on difference and inferiority excludes any consideration of similarities, and subsequent scholars have criticised his particularly one-sided approach.<sup>50</sup> It is not the purpose of this thesis to describe conclusively the relationship between the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne*, but it is necessary to consider any similarities between them that might illuminate interactions between clergy and laity. A single-use, single-audience interpretation of these texts based on their differences – such as viewing the *Manuel* as a learned reference for the education of clergy and different from *Handlyng Synne* – ignores manuscript evidence that suggests both texts were used by clergy within a context presuming pastoral interactions between clergy and laity. Only a more open interpretation allowing for the common medieval practice of multiple-uses for medieval texts can account for the variety of lay people, clergy, and religious or secular institutions owning both the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne*.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the tensions inherent in ownership by clergy of both texts can only be accommodated when their similarities are acknowledged, which means that both texts might have contributed to the pastoral project.

Before comparing the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne*, some understanding of the complex textual tradition of the *Manuel* is needed because, while *Handlyng Synne* has a relatively stable textual tradition, there are several different versions of the *Manuel*.

Comparing the contents of various manuscripts of the *Manuel* might seem the best way to

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<sup>49</sup> Michaud-Quantin, *Sommes de casuistique*, 28; Robertson, 'Tradition of Handlyng Synne', 162-164, 183.

<sup>50</sup> Busse, 'Versions of the *Manuel des Pechiez*', 9-11; Schemmann, *Confessional Literature*, 320-330; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 126-173.

<sup>51</sup> Sullivan, *Audiences*, 197-212; Sullivan, 'Readers of the *Manuel*', 233-242; Wogan-Browne *et al.* eds., *Idea of the Vernacular*, 109-115.

understand it, but it could encourage thinking of any differences as omissions from a fixed text when the manuscript evidence strongly suggests a structurally flexible *Manuel*.<sup>52</sup> It is better, instead, to compare the accuracy with which the different prologues of the *Manuel* describe their respective texts. Since the prologue was part of the original *Manuel*, changes to it better reflect the *Manuel* as an open text to which changes and adaptations were made. In other words, unstable, or even inaccurate, prologues suggest a *Manuel* to which additions could be made. This is not an attempt to reconstruct an *ur-text* but, rather, an effort at finding the most common core among several circulating versions of the *Manuel*, which can then be compared to *Handlyng Synne*.<sup>53</sup> The prologue was an important aspect for medieval users of the text because the increasing use of organising features to help users navigate books was contemporary to both the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne*. Indeed, Charlton Laird notes the utility of the *Manuel's* prologue as just such a feature.<sup>54</sup>

	Manuscripts	Date	1.Creed	2.Commands	3.Deadly Sins	4.Sacrilege	5.Sacraments	6.Sermon	7.Confession	8.On Prayer	9.Prayers
I	Camb. Ee.1.20	s. <i>xiv inc.</i>	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
H	Camb. Mm.6.4	s. <i>xiv</i>	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○
K	Camb. St John 167	c. 1300	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Z	Leeds Univ. MS 1	s. <i>xiv inc.</i>	●	●	●	●	●		○	○	○
E	BL Arundel 288	s. <i>xiii ¾</i>	●	●	●	●	●		○	○	
A	BL Harley 273	c. 1300	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
B	BL Harley 4657	s. <i>xiv ¼</i>	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
C	BL Harley 4971	s. <i>xiv inc.</i>	●	●	●	●	●		○	○	○
D	BL Royal 20 B.XIV	s. <i>xiii ex.</i>	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	
G	Oxford Bodl. Greaves 51	s. <i>xiv ½</i>	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
F	Oxford Bodl. Hatton 99	s. <i>xiv ¼</i>	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
L	Paris B.N. Fr.14959	s. <i>xiii ex.</i>	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
O	Rome Lat. 1970	s. <i>xiii ex.</i>	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
N	San Marino Huntington HM 903	s. <i>xiv inc.</i>	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
M	York XVI.K.7	s. <i>xiv inc.</i>	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○

Table 1: Prologues and contents of long *Manuel* versions

<sup>52</sup> Busse, 'Versions of the *Manuel des Pechiez*', 9-19.

<sup>53</sup> Busse, 'Versions of the *Manuel des Pechiez*', 3-19.

<sup>54</sup> Laird, 'Character and Growth', 260; Parkes, 'Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*' 116-123; Rouse & Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia, and Sermons*, 3-27, 40-42.

Table 1 summarises the prologues and contents of extant manuscripts containing what might be called long versions of the *Manuel*. Solid circles show books mentioned in the prologue and appearing in the text while empty circles show books in the text not mentioned in the prologue.<sup>55</sup> The table demonstrates the consistent correspondence of the first five books in all the prologues and manuscripts except in *H*, which Arnould describes as corrupt. This strongly suggests that these five commonly formed the core of the *Manuel*, and, indeed, scholars have long acknowledged their importance.<sup>56</sup> The table also suggests a long version of the *Manuel* circulating without books six and nine, reflected in the *DE* manuscripts. Interestingly, only the prologue of *D* corresponds precisely to its contents, which suggests the existence of a distinct but less common version of the *Manuel* for which the prologue was adapted. Similar reasoning would suggest another distinct long version of the *Manuel* without book six reflected in the *CZ* copies.

Book seven on confession has its own complex and still not fully understood history, but its consistent presence in every manuscript suggests its importance alongside the five core books.<sup>57</sup> The prologues of *AD* changed to reflect the presence of book seven, with the prologue of *A* saying: “*Une liure trouerez de confession,/ Qe ert couenable a chescun.*”<sup>58</sup> Not all the prologues explicitly list book seven despite its consistent presence in the text, but the opening lines of every prologue suggest that some material about confession must be included:

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<sup>55</sup> Compiled from Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 359-384; Sullivan, ‘Textual History’, 339-343. The *sigla* are from Arnould. His dates are preferred where they disagree with Sullivan’s, but where Sullivan offers a more precise date consistent with Arnould’s these have been used. The prologue to Princeton University Library, MS Taylor Medieval 1 was unavailable for consultation and is not included in Arnould’s critical edition of the prologue.

<sup>56</sup> Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 103-105; Laird, ‘Character and Growth’, 259-268; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 29-37.

<sup>57</sup> Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 62-63; Laird, ‘Character and Growth’, 302-306; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 22-27.

<sup>58</sup> “You will find a book about confession,/ which is suitable for each person.” *MPb*, II. 32-33.

La uertu del seint Espirit  
 Nus seit aydaunt en set escrit  
 A uus teus choses cy mustrer  
 Dunt hume se put confesser  
 E ausi en queu manere<sup>59</sup>

Book seven is an important contribution to the *Manuel* as a treatise on sin, and its presence in all manuscripts indicates that it was common to all long versions of the text. Book eight on prayer was probably also common to long versions of the text because it appears in every extant manuscript containing a long *Manuel*. Scribes rarely altered the prologue to account for it, perhaps because it was widely seen as an addition that, unlike the book on confession, was not entirely necessary to the project of the text. Manuscripts containing shorter versions or portions of the *Manuel* do not include anything not in the long versions and the prologues in two of these manuscripts – Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.I.1 and York Minster Library, MS XVI.K.13 – do not vary from the prologues already considered.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, there were at least three long versions of the *Manuel*. The *ABFGHIKLMNO* tradition represents the most common and longest version with nine books; *DE*, with their amended prologues, would represent a distinct but less common seven-book version without books six and nine; and *CZ* may be yet a third, eight-book version without book six. The manuscripts with the most certain regional connections, *BN*, belong to the most common tradition and include the structure that Mannyng most likely used for *Handlyng Synne*.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, a comparison between the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* will primarily consider this version of text.

The prologue to the most common version of the *Manuel* explicitly mentions the first five books, and alludes to the book on confession. Indeed, comparing the prologues reflects the contemporary medieval practice of using organising features in texts. This is particularly the case in *Handlyng Synne* because Mannyng is thought to have written the prologue after

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<sup>59</sup> “May the strength of the Holy Spirit/ be an aid to us in this writing/ to expound such things to you here/ about which a man can confess himself/ and also in what manner”. *MPb*, ll. 1-5; Laird, ‘Character and Growth’, 271-279.

<sup>60</sup> Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 384-398.

<sup>61</sup> Biggar, ‘Review’, 969.

completing his text, which would yield a particularly accurate reflection of the structure of his work.<sup>62</sup> The organising portion from the prologue to the commonest version of the *Manuel* and the corresponding portion from *Handlyng Synne* follow:

Primes dirrum la dreyte fey  
 Dunt est funde nostre lay,  
 Laquele ad XII poinz prouez  
 Ke sunt articles apellez.  
 Pus mettrum les commaundemenz  
 Ke garder deyuent tote genz.  
 Pus les VII peches mortaus  
 Des queus surdent tant de maus.  
 Pus i troueret, si uus plest,  
 De seint Eglise les sacremenz set,  
 Par queus ele est tote gouernez,  
 Que en confession ne seint celez;<sup>63</sup>  
 Dount porra uer qui ad trespasses  
 Chescun e amender ses pechez.  
 Ublir ne deuum en nule guise  
 Les dreitures de seint Eglise:  
 Pur ceo de Sacrilege après dirrom,  
 Sicom de maistres apris l'auom.<sup>65</sup>

Of byse þan ys my sawe:  
 Þe comaundementys of þe olde lawe.  
 Þyse ten were fyrst us ȝeuyn,  
 And fyrst we weyln of hem be shreuyñ.  
 Yñ what poyntys þat we falle  
 Yñ opon synne aȝen hem alle,  
 And sybyn of þe seuene synnys,  
 Yñ what þyng þe fende us wyynnys,  
 And sybyn of synne of sacrilege  
 þat ys to holy cherche outrage,  
 And of þe sacramentys seuene  
 þat techyn us to þe blysse of heuene.  
 Sythyn of þe poyntys of shryfte  
 And of þe twelue gracys of here ȝyfte.<sup>64</sup>

These two prologues indicate that, at least in structure, the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* have more similarities than differences. Four of the most stable books from the *Manuel* – the Commandments, the Deadly Sins, sacrilege, and the Sacraments – all appear in *Handlyng Synne*. Book seven on confession, which Mannyng calls “*þe poyntys of shryfte*”, appears in the Middle English prologue. Interestingly, the prologue from one manuscript belonging to the most common *Manuel* tradition, MS Harley 273, explicitly mentions book seven. Moreover, the manuscript whose structure may resemble Mannyng’s exemplar, MS Harley 4657, also belongs to this tradition, which may indicate Mannyng’s connection to a version of the *Manuel* with this structure. Notably, books six, eight, and nine, which are rarely or never mentioned in prologues of this tradition, disappear in *Handlyng Synne*. Mannyng, perhaps, consequently

<sup>62</sup> Crosby, ‘New Biography’, 28; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 139.

<sup>63</sup> MS B] reads *Tute seint cristiente*.

<sup>64</sup> *HS*, ll. 13-36.

<sup>65</sup> “First we will speak of the true faith/ on which our law is based,/ which has twelve points/ which are called articles./ Then we show the commandments/ which all men ought to keep./ Then the seven deadly sins/ from which so many evils spring./ Then you will find here, if it pleases you,/ the seven sacraments of Holy Church/ by which she is wholly governed,/ which are not to be hidden in confession./ Then each who has trespassed/ will be able to see and correct their sins./ Nor ought we forget the rights of/ Holy Church in any way:/ For this reason we will speak of Sacrilege afterwards,/ as we have learned it from the masters.” *MPb*, ll. 13-30.

saw them as additions to the *Manuel* that fell outside the scope of his text. Mannyng's omission of the Creed is notable. This book, however, does share characteristics with the other books that disappear, which will be discussed later (pp. 75-76). It may not, therefore, be differences that explain the relationship between the two texts but, rather, characteristics similar to several books.

In the meantime, the two prologues' indication of other similarities between the texts also suggests that these are more important than their differences. Apart from structural similarities, the authors made similar suggestions concerning the use of their texts to their readers:

Par perogresses iert distinctes  
Ke nus mustrent diuers peches  
Pur ce, nul trop hastiement  
Cet escrit lise nomeement.<sup>66</sup>  
Deu fez le deit rehercer  
Ky s'alme uodra amender,  
La ou il trouera diuers peche  
Si cum il iert perogresse.<sup>67 68</sup>

Whedyr outys pou wylt opone þe boke,  
Pou shalt fynde begynnyng on to loke.  
Oueral ys begynnyng – oueral ys ende,  
How þat pou wylt turne hyt or wende.  
Many þynges þer yn mayst pou lere.  
Pou mayst noust wyþ onys redyng  
Knowe þe soþe of euery þyng.  
Handyl, hyt behouþ þe, ofte syþys:  
To many maner synnys hyt wryþys.<sup>69</sup>

Both prologues suggest repeated readings for practical purposes to their audiences, the *Manuel* in order to correct sins and *Handlyng Synne* in order to learn. An alternate reading from MS HM 903, "*Cest escrit lise mes deuotement*", suggests that the act of reading the *Manuel* could be devotional, most likely repetitive.<sup>70</sup> Both prologues suggest an iterative reading, or perusing, as an approach to these texts. *Handlyng Synne* more explicitly suggests this with, "*Whedyr outys wylt opone þe boke,/ Pou shalt fynde begynnyng on to loke/ Oueral ys begynnyng – oueral ys ende*", indicating that browsing was a suitable manner to approach self-contained passages from the work. The *Manuel* makes a similar suggestion with its use of a "*perogresse*" for every sin discussed.

<sup>66</sup> MB N] reads *Cest escrit lise nus deuotement*

<sup>67</sup> MS B] reads *Si trouera un perogresse pose*

<sup>68</sup> "It will be divided by paragraphs/ which show different sins to us;/ for this reason no one too hastily/ should read this writing in particular./ Anyone who wishes to amend his soul/ ought to repeat [the passages] twice/ where he will find the various sins/ divided into paragraphs". *MPb*, ll. 71-78.

<sup>69</sup> *HS*, ll. 121-130.

<sup>70</sup> "This writing should only be read devoutly." Huntingdon Library, MS HM 903, fo. 1r.

Organisational aids in the two regional manuscripts – MS Harley 4657 and MS HM 903 – also suggest these methods for using the texts. Running titles and paragraph signs throughout both manuscripts suggest the ease with which a reader could have leafed through them, quickly identifying interesting or useful passages. Some scribes of these manuscripts likely intended to incorporate these organisational features because many scribal indicators mark where paragraph signs were to be drawn. Sometimes these indicators remain visible underneath or beside the paragraph signs, and sometimes an indicator is entirely visible where no sign has been drawn over it. Organisational divisions seem particularly important in MS Harley 4657 because the scribes used, with only occasional inconsistencies, alternate colours in sequences of paragraph signs and initials.<sup>71</sup> The later addition of marginal notes and titles, especially in MS HM 903, suggests that subsequent users considered the *Manuel* to be a text suitable for browsing. The titles at the top of each folio indicate the book, the text on it, an *exemplum* on that folio, or both, such as, “*viii mandatum. Narratio de monache qui cogitavit furtum facere.*”<sup>72</sup> The extant manuscripts of *Handlyng Synne* suggest that these divisions continued to be important, although no manuscripts contemporary to its composition survive. The folio titles and decorated initials for sections and subsections in the Bodleian and Harleian manuscripts, which are the most complete copies of *Handlyng Synne*, indicate a high degree of planning. In both manuscripts, the initials at the beginning of sections, such as the Sacraments, are consistently four lines high but the initials at the beginning of subsections, such as Baptism, are only three lines high.<sup>73</sup> This consistency and precision suggests that, unlike the later addition of titles to the *Manuel* manuscripts, scribes of *Handlyng Synne* organised the text for browsing as part of their scribal project. Indeed, the relative cleanness of these manuscripts and lack of marginal additions compared to the

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<sup>71</sup> BL, MS Harley 4657, fos. 5-86v; Huntingdon Library, MS HM 903, fos. 1r-67v.

<sup>72</sup> “Eighth commandment. A story about a monk who thought about stealing.” Huntingdon Library, MS HM 903, fo. 14v; Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 383.

<sup>73</sup> BL, MS Harley 1701, fos. 1r-84r; Bodl., MS 415, fos. 1r-80r; For the importance of these manuscripts see HS, xxiv-xxviii; Biggar, ‘Review’, 969-971.

regional *Manuel* manuscripts suggests that users of *Handlyng Synne* found the scribal design to meet their needs. At the very least, these features may indicate that fourteenth-century copies of *Handlyng Synne* from which the extant manuscripts were copied contained organisational features similar to the *Manuel*.

Insofar as scribes and users of the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* divided and organised their manuscripts into easily perusable texts, it follows that they assumed readers – for listeners could not see the divisions – would look for something in them. The manuscript evidence suggests the *exempla* as this focus. The most prominent organisational feature in the regional manuscripts of the *Manuel*, apart from titles and paragraph markers, are marginal notes indicating the *exempla*. Latin marginal notes in MS HM 903 sometimes also gloss theological points throughout the text, such as the description of the first commandment as “*Dilige dominum super omnia*”, or the roots of simony, “*quod simonia dependis de cupiditate*”.<sup>74</sup> The notes in this manuscript, however, consistently mark the position of *exempla* with “*Narratio*”, often followed by brief description such as, “*de heremita penitente quod tollegit pecuniam*”; a source such as, “*Beda narratio de pigritia et desperantibus*”; a short title such as, “*de Iuliano apostate*”; or a simple “*exemplum*”.<sup>75</sup> MS Harley 4657 also demonstrates the importance of the *exempla* to the organisation of the text. Here, the *exempla* indicators are almost the only marginal notes apart from corrections and scribal instructions, which suggest they were the most important focus of the manuscript. Two different users seem to have marked the *exempla*, one using, “*Nota*”, and the other drawing a pointing hand. Pointing hands sometimes indicate other passages in the manuscript, but they often appear beside “*Nota*”, giving the *exempla* a double indicator. These features suggest

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<sup>74</sup> “Love the Lord above all things”; “That simony depends on greed”. Huntingdon Library, MS HM 903, fos. 6r, 26v.

<sup>75</sup> “About a penitent hermit that stole money”; “A story in Bede about sloth and despair”; “An example”; “About Julian the apostate”. Huntingdon Library, MS HM 903, fos. 19v, 23v, 28v, 59r.

the importance that several users attached to the *exempla*.<sup>76</sup> The illustrated *exempla* in the late thirteenth-century Princeton manuscript are a clear indication of their centrality.<sup>77</sup> A similar trend continues in the manuscripts of *Handlyng Synne* and appears to be part of the original project rather than a later addition because marginal notes in the scribal hand such as, “A tale”, clearly, and generally consistently, mark *exempla*. The occasional scribal sign also suggests that these indicators were part of the original plan of the manuscripts.<sup>78</sup> The focus on the *exempla* should not be surprising because it occurs in what is thought to be the earliest extant copy of the *Manuel*, where “*Narratio*” sometimes appears in the text columns rather than in the margins. Indicators in a number of different hands also suggest that more than one user marked the *exempla*.<sup>79</sup>

The *Manuel*-author and Mannyng both drew attention to the *exempla* in their prologues:

Ke plus en lisant seit delitus,  
Cuntes nus mettrum uus aucuns  
Sicum les seins nus unt cunte,  
Pur plus fere hayr peche.<sup>80</sup>

For many beyn of swyche manere  
þat talys & rymys wyle bleþly here  
Yn gamys, yn festys, & at þe ale,  
Loue men to lestene trotouale,  
þat may falle ofte to uelanye  
To dedly synne or outhr folye.  
For swyche men haue y made þys ryme  
þat þey may weyl dyspende here tyme  
To leue al swyche foul manere  
And for to kun knowe þer ynne  
þat þey wene no synne be ynne.<sup>81</sup>

Both the prologues highlight *exempla*, “*cuntes*” and “*talys*”, as means to instruct readers or listeners to turn away from sin; to hate sin in the *Manuel* and to leave foul manners in *Handlyng Synne*. The importance of the *exempla* to users may be one of the most important similarities between the two texts and help to explain their relationship and even their differences. The author of the *Manuel* may not have intended the *exempla* to become a

<sup>76</sup> BL, MS Harley 4657, examples on fos. 11v, 13v, 29v, 30r, 74v.

<sup>77</sup> Bennett, ‘Book Designed for a Noblewoman’, 163-181.

<sup>78</sup> BL, MS Harley 1701, fos. 1r-84r; Bodl., MS 415, fos. 1r-80r, especially fo. 57r.

<sup>79</sup> BL, MS Arundel 288, fos. 5r-83v, examples on fos. 16r, 29v.

<sup>80</sup> “That it may be more delightful to read/ we will add some stories for you/ as the holy ones have told us,/ in order to make sin more hated.” *MPb*, ll. 79-82.

<sup>81</sup> *HS*, ll. 45-46.

central focus of the work but that they did may not be entirely surprising since it is an extensive and systematic collection of *exempla* in Anglo-Norman.<sup>82</sup> If the *exempla* became the most important part of the *Manuel* for its users, and the above discussion suggests just this, then they may hold an important clue to the structure of the *Manuel*. While the longest version of the *Manuel* is the most common in surviving manuscripts, scholars have long pondered the textual history of books six, eight, and nine. It is interesting, therefore, to note that books six and eight each contain only three *exempla* and book nine contains none. Interestingly, no marginal signs mark the three *exempla* in book six of MS Harley 4657.<sup>83</sup> The Princeton manuscript, whose illustrations draw so much attention to the *exempla*, lacks books six and nine. Moreover, illustration is provided to only one *exemplum* from the book on the Creed and none of the *exempla* from book eight are illustrated.<sup>84</sup> The importance of the *exempla* to the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* may, therefore, suggest a reason for the disappearance of some books in the Middle English text. Mannyng does not include books one, six, eight, and nine from the *Manuel*, which are, in fact, the books with the fewest *exempla*, namely the three each from books six and eight and another two from book one. The centrality of the *exempla* to these texts may, therefore, explain Mannyng's decision not to include book one on the Creed in *Handlyng Synne*.

The *exempla* continued to have an important place in *Handlyng Synne*, especially since Mannyng added a number of them, which scholars frequently note as his most original changes to the text of the *Manuel*.<sup>85</sup> Mannyng, likely using the longest version of the *Manuel*, could have decided that the books with few or no *exempla* obscured what he, and contemporary users of the *Manuel*, thought to be its most useful purpose. This was not a comprehensive exposition of the faith but, rather, a compendium of *exempla*. Mannyng's

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<sup>82</sup> Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 107-111.

<sup>83</sup> BL, MS Harley 4657, fos. 76v-86v; Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne* (1862), 396-413, 426-434.

<sup>84</sup> Bennett, 'Book Designed for a Noblewoman', 174-175.

<sup>85</sup> HS, 381-387; Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 295-305; Sullivan, *Audiences*, 126.

treatment of the *exempla* in his own text suggests their continued importance in the early fourteenth century. There are many cases where he seems to update the *Manuel* by giving more specific authorities to *exempla* than the *Manuel*-author does. For some *exempla* where the *Manuel* gives no source, Mannyng tries to be more specific, for example: the story of the Cursing Mother where he says it was “*tolde/ of a prest þat sagh and fonde*”; the story of Bishop Troilus where Mannyng says, “*Seynt Iohn þe aumenere tellyþ*”; the story of Balthazar’s Feast where Mannyng says the “*prophete danyel*”; the Buried Miner where Mannyng says, “*y fond ones wryte*”. In an instance where the *Manuel* gives only a general source such as “*un liure troua*”, Mannyng writes “*yn þe lyff of seynt Makayre*”.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, both authors mention the use of authorities in their prologues but Mannyng shifts the passage specifically to authorise the *exempla*:

Ore me doynt Deu, par sa pite<sup>87</sup>  
 Confermer par auctorite  
 Les pechez ke yci mettray  
 Si cum de seins estret les ay.  
 Tut ne seint les seins nome:  
 Rien del mien ne y mettray,  
 For si cum je apris les ay.<sup>89</sup>

Talys shalt þou fynde þer ynne  
 And chauncys þat haue happyd for synne.  
 Merueylys, some as y fond wretyn,  
 And ouper þat haue be seye and wetyng,  
 None be þer ynne more ne lesse  
 But þat y fond wrete or hadde wytnesse.<sup>88</sup>

Mannyng may have embarked on a corrective project to update the *Manuel* because, whatever its original purpose, it quickly became a useful compendium of *exempla* to many of its users and Mannyng desired to inscribe this use. The central textual role of the *exempla* may be unsurprising because the purpose of contemporary pastoral literature was instructional and *exempla* were practical stories that illustrated didactic points to many audiences and users.<sup>90</sup>

Mannyng’s adaptation, as it is often called, may not have been an adaptation at all but a refinement, continuance, or updated edition that re-presented the *Manuel* as it had

<sup>86</sup> HS, ll. 1252-1253, 1916, 6915, 9354, 10733. cf. MP, ll. 1853, 2421, 5669, 7023, 7613.

<sup>87</sup> MS B] reads *Pur ceo les uoil ioe de gre*, MS N] reads *Pur ceo le die ieo de gree*

<sup>88</sup> HS, ll. 131-136.

<sup>89</sup> “Now may God, in his mercy, permit me/ to confirm with authority/ the sins that I will set forth here,/ as I have taken them from the holy ones./ Not all the holy ones may be named:/ I will add nothing of mine here/ except as I have learned from them.” MPb, ll. 53-60.

<sup>90</sup> Boitani, *English Medieval Narrative*, 1-3, 23-25; Kemmler, *Exempla in Context*, 91-100, 121, 154.

come to be used, with the *exempla* as the main focus. The circulation of the manuscripts of both texts may indicate that Mannyng, in some sense, completed the *Manuel*, for the production of manuscripts containing it suddenly ceases in the first part of the fourteenth century, at the same time as the completion and presumed circulation of *Handlyng Synne*. This suggests that Mannyng's text was seen to be a broadly similar work. Bella Millett suggests a theory of "*mouvance*" for approaching medieval vernacular literature, which could even include translation.<sup>91</sup> From the evidence presented here, it seems reasonable to suggest that the relationship between the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* was a case of "*une mouvance spectaculaire*". In other words, *Handlyng Synne* replaced the *Manuel* or, at least, meant that there was no need to produce new copies of it, which may have been the result of broad similarities between them. Having such similarities, these two texts could continue to be used by similar people, such as clergy, for similar audiences and purposes. To be sure, they remain highly adaptable texts suitable for a number of contexts, but the similarities between them mean that there can no longer be an insistence upon a shift from a *Manuel* for clergy to a *Handlyng Synne* for laity. This leaves both texts available for use in pastoral care, and suggests the continued interest on the part of regional clergy in pastoral care and in interactions with the laity. The relationship between the two regional Latin pastoral texts suggests similar conclusions and also offers an opportunity to examine links between these texts and pastoral care in the parishes.

#### *Adaptations for the Parish: The Oculus Sacerdotis and the Judica Me Deus*

There is even less scholarly work on the *Oculus* and the *Judica Me* than on the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne*, and the relationship between these two texts remains entirely unexamined. The apparent conclusiveness of Boyle's thesis, the size of the *Oculus*, or the number of extant manuscripts may have deterred scholars from a comprehensive examination of this

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<sup>91</sup> Millett, 'Mouvance and the Medieval Author', 12-13.

text. Similarly, the lack of discussion of the *Judica Me* may be the result of the size of Rolle's corpus or, indeed, the lack of study of its exemplar, the *Oculus*. Only Daly, in his edition, and Nicholas Watson, in an article, discuss the *Judica Me*. Denis Renevey, a foremost Rollean scholar, does not discuss the *Judica Me* in his examination of Rolle's role as commentator, liturgist, and contemplative writer. Scholars often privilege Rolle's Middle English and mystical writings over his Latin and didactic works, which they sometimes dismiss as traditional or unoriginal, and Arnould goes as far as to characterise the *Judica Me* as "amateurish".<sup>92</sup> Malcolm Moyes suggests that this imbalance in Rollean scholarship results from a cult of personality around Rolle that encourages scholars to take more interest in his person and life than his writings in context.<sup>93</sup> This approach has, perhaps, led to neglect of Rolle's so-called traditional works, which may reveal more about his time and place but less about Rolle himself. This thesis cannot hope completely to fill the gaps in Rollean scholarship but it will try to illuminate one aspect of the *Judica Me* by considering its relationship to the *Oculus* within a regional context.

There are obviously large differences between the *Judica Me* and its source, not least because the length of the former takes up anywhere from eight to nineteen folios in its complete form while the complete *Oculus* normally fills more than one hundred folios.<sup>94</sup> Rolle uses portions from the *Pars Oculi*, the confessional manual, and the *Dextera Pars*, the pastoral aid, while completely ignoring the theological *Sinistra Pars*. This suggests that he intended to create a short tract focussing on the practical aspects of pastoral care rather than its theoretical and theological underpinnings. This does not mean, however, that Rolle was incapable of understanding the *Oculus*. In fact, he seems to have been very familiar with the *Dextera Pars* because he adapted its opening to his own purposes, often rearranging the

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<sup>92</sup> Arnould, 'Richard Rolle of Hampole', 134; Renevey, 'Richard Rolle', 63-74, esp. fn. 29; Watson, 'Rolle as Elitist and Populist', 123-128.

<sup>93</sup> Richard Rolle, *Expositio Super Novem Lectiones*, 9-12.

<sup>94</sup> *JMD*, xxvi; Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 2:115, 2:120, 2:169-170.

order of passages.<sup>95</sup> This suggests a confidence gained from a thorough and complete reading and comprehension of the text.

Using his familiarity with the *Oculus*, Rolle kept the words but changed their sequence and, therefore, their meaning in order to create a new text. Where Pagula reflects on the general state of the priesthood, saying, “*Multi sunt sacerdotes et pauci sunt sacerdotes multi sunt nomine pauci in opera*”, Rolle writes a concise and practical description of the duties and office of priests, saying, “*Ista namque tria sacerdoti pertinent, scilicet, bona uita, scientia recta, predicatio discreta*”.<sup>96</sup> When Rolle takes verbatim excerpts from the *Oculus* he focuses on the practical requirement for priests to be knowledgeable in order to avoid misleading their cares and he retains only general authorities from the *Oculus* such as, “*Ideo dicit Augustinus*”; “*Dicit Hugo de Sancto Victore*”; and “*Et secundum Ambrosius in quodam sermone*”.<sup>97</sup> At the same time, Rolle consistently omits the highly abbreviated and detailed references to learned scholastic authorities such as, “*extra de sen. ex.c. eos qui li.vj. hoc no. Ray. in summa sua*”; “*de pe. di.ijj. quauis*”; “*in thi.iiij.xix bia d.c.i.xlvj*”; “*xiiij.d.c. qui suis et cetera diaconi xj.q.ijj.c. qui ergo*”; “*xxxviiij.di.c.i.ij. et ij. etc. nulli sacerdotum extra de constitutionibus x.j.*”<sup>98</sup> These probably refer to Raymond de Peñafort’s *Summa* and either Thomas de Chobham’s or Robert Kilwardby’s *Summa de poenitentia*, which were popular in the period.<sup>99</sup> Joseph Goering notes similar simplifying tendencies in contemporary works popularising canon law and theology.<sup>100</sup>

Pagula’s references suggest that he was both authorising his work and suggesting further reading to an audience with the education, time, and ability to consult a

<sup>95</sup> *JMD*, 18-26. cf. Gonville & Caius, MS 443/440, cols. 217-223.

<sup>96</sup> “There are many priests and there are few priests; there are many in name but few in deed.” Gonville & Caius, MS 443/440, col. 217; “For these three things pertain to the priest, namely, a good life, correct knowledge, and prudent preaching.” *JMD*, 20.

<sup>97</sup> “Therefore Augustine says”; “Hugh of St Victor says”; “And according to Ambrose in a certain sermon”. *JMD*, 20-24.

<sup>98</sup> Gonville & Caius, MS 443/440, cols. 7, 16, 218, 219.

<sup>99</sup> Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 1:214-257, 1:288-295, 1:329, 1:338-339.

<sup>100</sup> Goering, *Popularization of Scholastic Ideas*, 154-159.

comprehensive library or who had a background in the literature he used. Rolle's approach suggests the opposite, namely that he believed his audience lacked these opportunities and would be satisfied with general authorities and the *Judica Me* itself. Indeed, although Rolle omits the references provided by Pagula, he often cites biblical passages to which every parish priest would have access through missals, lectionaries, and other liturgical aids. The *Judica A*, which is entirely original to Rolle, includes only Biblical authorities and he uses at least thirty-four biblical quotations or allusions in the space of 3800 words, or one reference for roughly every hundred words.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, the title of the work from the incipit, "*Judica me Deus et discerne causam meam de gente non sancta*", was just the type of Biblical reference a parish priest would recognise because it was a Psalm to be prayed at the foot of the altar at every mass.<sup>102</sup> Rolle's use and treatment of sources suggest that his text would have been useful for even the most basically equipped priest.

Several scholars have already suggested from internal evidence that Rolle adapted parts of the *Oculus* for a parish priest. Rolle indicates that he compiled information that he thought would be a useful aid for his correspondent, declaring, "*Verumptamen que uestro statui profutura iam uideo compilare studui ut non mihi laus detur sed Deo*".<sup>103</sup> Considering that Rolle thought the inclusion of a model confession and model sermon would be useful, his addressee was almost certainly a priest. Hope Emily Allen and subsequent scholars suggest that this person had a care of souls, perhaps being a secular parish priest or canon in a parish, for passages in the text strongly suggest a parochial context.<sup>104</sup> Rolle's own descriptions of and prescriptions for his addressee mention chastity, preaching, and the care of souls, which all tend to suggest a parish priest as a recipient of Rolle's letter:

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<sup>101</sup> *JMD*, 1-17.

<sup>102</sup> "Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy." Psalms 43(42):1; *JMD*, 18-19, 81; *Missale Ebor.*, 1:165.

<sup>103</sup> "Nevertheless, now that I see fit to compile that which I judged profitable for you, I devoted myself to it, so that praise may be given to not me, but to God". *JMD*, 18.

<sup>104</sup> *JMD*, vi; Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Rolle*, 99-101; Watson, *Rolle and Authority*, 76.

Tu autem qui castitatem Deo sic promiseras ... ad utilitatem legentium in quodam breui compendio redege, ut quod ego nondum in publico predicando cogor dicere, saltem uobis ostendam scribendo, quo necessitatem habetis salubriter predicare ... Vos igitur firma fide, certa spe, uera caritate insigniti, secure ad curam animarum accedite, ut recte instructi etiam alios recte instruere ualeatis. Ista namque tria sacerdoti pertinent, scilicet, bona uita, scientia recta, predicatio discreta.<sup>105</sup>

Rolle copied portions from the *Oculus* that support this suggestion. These phrases do not address the recipient directly, but use terms that make the best sense in a parochial context because they offer practical advice rather than theological instruction:

Ad hoc ergo ut sacerdotes parochiales bene presint, debent esse bone conscientie et habere munditiam uite ... Unde sciendum est quod hoc modo debet sacerdos se habere erga peccatorem uenientem ad confessionem. Primo debet considerare an sit parochianus suus an non ... Verumptamen, si non poteritis pro breuitate temporis et multitudine penitentium hec cuilibet singulariter proponere, in principio Quadragesime debetis publice predicare et facere eis sermonem in generali de uera contritione et confessione et satisfactione ... In istis uero casibus non potest sacerdos parochialis absolue nisi in periculo mortis, sed debet mittere peccatorem ad episcopum seu eius penitentiarium...<sup>106</sup>

The explicit mention of parish priests, a parishioner subject to a priest (*parochianus suus*), and the necessity of Lenten preaching if he could not counsel his charges individually seems to be useful advice to a resident priest with continuing ties to his cares. The emphasis on confession in *Judica B2* suggests that the intended reader of the *Judica Me* was a priest rather than a deacon, sub-deacon, or cleric in minor orders.

Rolle's choices in adapting passages from the *Oculus* tend to confirm that he was creating a tract useful to the average parish priest. His omissions from the *Oculus* make the *Judica Me* a text more applicable to a parochial context, as seen in a list of questions that confessors were to put to penitents:

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<sup>105</sup> "However, for you who thus promised chastity to God ... I have reduced it into a certain brief compendium for ease of reading, so that what I am not yet compelled to say in public preaching I may at least show in writing to you, who have the obligation to preach beneficially ... You, therefore, distinguished by firm faith, certain hope, and true charity, enter into the care of souls untroubled, that correctly instructed you will also be able to instruct others correctly. For these three things pertain to the priest, namely, a good life, correct knowledge, and prudent preaching." *JMD*, 11, 18, 20.

<sup>106</sup> For this, therefore, that parochial priests may rule well, they ought to be of good conscience and have a cleanness of life ... From whence it should be known that a priest should behave in this manner toward a sinner coming to confession. First he ought to consider whether he is his parishioner or not ... However, if you are unable to preach these things to each one individually because of the shortness of time and the number of penitents, you ought to preach publicly at the beginning of Lent and to give a general sermon about true contrition, confession, and satisfaction to them ... But, truly, in these cases the parish priest cannot absolve unless in the danger of death, but he ought to send the sinner to the bishop or his penitentiary". *JMD*, 23, 27, 33-34.

[Oculus Sacerdotis]  
 Quis scilicet utrum peccator ille erat  
 masculus uel femina iuuenis uel senex  
 nobilis uel liber uel seruus indignite seu  
 officiis constitutus an sane mentis uel  
 insanis sciens uel ignorans solutus uel  
 coniugatus claustralis uel secularis clericus  
 uel laicus. Dicit enim Augustinus: Hoc facit in  
 sacerdote illicita cogitatio cum delectatione  
 quod in laico adulterii macula. Item an  
 consanguineus uel affinis notus uel extraneus  
 christianus uel hereticus iudeus uel paganus et  
 similia. Quid scilicet utrum commiserit  
 fornicationem uel adulterium homicidium  
 uoluntarium uel casuale et similia. Item utrum  
 sit occultum uel manifestum nouum uel antiquum.  
 Ubi scilicet in loco sacro uel prophano in domo  
 domini uel alibi...<sup>108</sup>

[Judica Me Deus]  
 Quis sit scilicet ille peccator utrum  
 masculus uel femina iuuenis uel senex  
 sciens uel ignorans claustralis uel  
 secularis clericus uel laycus. Unde  
 Augustinus ait: Hoc facit in sacerdote  
 illicita cogitatio cum delectatione quod in  
 laico adulterii macula. Quid scilicet utrum  
 commisit fornicationem uel adulterium uel  
 homicidium utrum peccatum sit magnum  
 uel paruum occultum uel manifestum  
 nouum uel antiquum. Ubi scilicet uel in  
 loco sacro uel non sacro...<sup>107</sup>

Rolle's omissions eliminate questions to which a parish priest likely knew the answers about his penitents, such as their marital and legal status. Nor was a parish priest, particularly a rural priest, likely to encounter heretics, Jews, or pagans in fourteenth-century England.

These omissions suggest that Rolle embarked on a specific project to bring useful contemporary writing to an audience with less time and fewer resources to devote to study but, rather, who had an urgent need for practical advice in administering pastoral care.

It is likely, therefore, that the person who requested help from Rolle was a resident parish priest. It may never be possible to identify him or his parish, but it is possible to outline some characteristics of these. It has already been mentioned that this priest probably knew Rolle well, not least because Rolle reveals problems with his patrons and makes a defence against those criticising his way of life, which suggests that he knew and trusted his

<sup>107</sup> "Who,' namely, is the sinner, whether man or woman, youth or old, educated or ignorant, cloistered or secular, cleric or layman. Whence Augustine says: An unlawful thought done with delight produces in a priest a thing like the stain of adultery in a layman. 'What,' namely, whether [the sinner] committed fornication or adultery or murder; whether the sin is great or small, secret or public, new or old. 'Where,' namely, either in a sacred or non-sacred place". *JMD*, 38-39.

<sup>108</sup> "Who,' namely, whether the sinner was a man or woman, young or old, noble or free or servile, lacking or having duties, of sound mind or insane, educated or ignorant, single or married, cloistered or secular, cleric or layman. For Augustine says: An unlawful thought done with delight produces in a priest a thing like the stain of adultery in a layman. Item, whether, a relative or neighbour, known or foreign, Christian or heretic or Jew or pagan and so on. 'What,' namely, whether he committed fornication or adultery; voluntary or accidental murder and so on. Item, whether the sin is great or small, secret or public, new or old. 'Where,' namely, whether in a sacred or profane place, in the House of the Lord, or anywhere else". *Gonville & Caius*, MS 443/440, col. 16.

addressee well enough to discuss these topics.<sup>109</sup> He may have been close to either of Rolle's cells, the first in the Dales and the second perhaps in Richmondshire. This would make him, therefore, a rural parish priest.<sup>110</sup> It seems less likely that he was an urban priest surrounded by other clergy whom he might have asked for advice instead of Rolle, or in a cathedral city where he may have had access to any books there, such as the *Manuel des Péchés*, *Pars Oculi*, or *Summa Summarum* held at the altar of St Vincent in Southwell Minster.<sup>111</sup> Likewise, if he was near a religious house or even a canon serving in a parish, presumably he would have had access to books or learned members in his community. His appeal to Rolle, indeed his oral or written correspondence with him, suggests that he was a rural priest with few acquaintances as educated as Rolle.

The existence and need for the *Judica Me* complicates Boyle's suggestion that the *Oculus* found some popularity among parish priests. If this were so, then Rolle's work would have been redundant, especially since he transferred only a small amount of the *Oculus* to a parish and its clergy. Rolle, of course, may have written for priest who lacked access to the *Oculus*, but since they appear to have known each other well, this priest could easily have borrowed whatever notes or copy of the *Oculus* Rolle must have used for his own work. Boyle's conclusions, therefore, require some revision. Since Boyle examined all known manuscripts of the *Oculus* and did not consider the *Judica Me*, it is possible he is correct in saying that parish priests used the *Oculus* but they may have been its least important audience among the different ranks of clergy reading it that Boyle mentions. These include canons, bishops, and librarians who were all more likely to be better educated and to have more time and resources for study than the average parish priest.<sup>112</sup> Regional manuscripts of the *Oculus* described above, such as those held at Durham, Meaux, Southwell Minster, and

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<sup>109</sup> JMD, 2, 81.

<sup>110</sup> Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Rolle*, 449-463, 501-510.

<sup>111</sup> Sullivan, 'Author of the *Manuel*', 156.

<sup>112</sup> Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 1:i-ii, 1:363.

possibly Bourne, as well as those owned by the provost of Beverley and dean of York, tend to suggest ownership among religious or highly placed secular clergy. While, then, Boyle seems entirely correct in concluding that the *Oculus* was popular among a variety of clergy, it is possible that it needed somebody like Rolle to give it a more practical and compact form for those actually engaged in pastoral care in the parishes.

The Gonville & Caius manuscript is an interesting case and, although it only has tenuous links to this study, it must suffice because it is the earliest and most complete regional example of the *Oculus*. Indeed, there are no copies of the *Oculus* contemporary to its composition. The flyleaves of this manuscript contain the fifteenth-century will of John of Elvyngton, vicar of Skipwith, and a copy of the instrument instituting Robert de Bolton in 1393 to the prebendal church of Saltmarshe attached to Howden.<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, the church of Skipwith belonged to the prebendary of Skipwith also in Howden Minster.<sup>114</sup> If these documents provide any clues to the ownership of the manuscript, for neither of them mention the text, then they do not suggest the *Oculus*' popularity among average parish priests but among well-placed clergy associated with prebends in a collegiate church. Indeed, if the prebendary, Bolton, owned this manuscript it is unlikely that he was the resident priest administering pastoral care. Elvyngton, the vicar of Skipwith, may have been resident, but without evidence that he owned this copy of the *Oculus* it could equally have been more closely associated with his patron the prebendary. The double connection of this manuscript to Howden might indicate that it was actually the property of the collegiate community rather than any individual. This could explain the odd position of Elvyngton's will, which was clearly bound into the manuscript rather than written on existing blank folios. Written by the vicar of a prebendal church, a copy of Elvyngton's will probably found its way, perhaps during probate, into the muniments of Howden, which belonged to the peculiar of the bishop of Durham, and

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<sup>113</sup> Gonville & Caius, MS 443/440, fos. i-iv; Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 2:115; James, *Manuscripts of Gonville and Caius College*, 2:515.

<sup>114</sup> *VCH Yorks., E.R.*, 3:89-101.

was bound into the *Oculus* for some reason.<sup>115</sup> The manuscript itself is tidy and well made with decorated initials and a planned colour scheme throughout for paragraph signs. There is no indication of heavy use because there is no obvious damage and marginal notes are rare. This suggests a guarded life in a large collection such as a library rather than among the small collection of a parish priest where it probably would have endured greater use. The Latin is highly abbreviated in places to accommodate its small size of 18.8cm x 12.7cm, which is, perhaps, the only indication of the possibility of a parochial owner because a small manuscript would have been cheaper to produce than a large one.

The *Judica Me*, therefore, appears to be an attempt to bring *pastoralia* directly into the parishes of medieval England. In fact, its links to an unknown parish priest provide the most tangible evidence of the transmission and use of this literature into the parishes where pastoral advice was needed. The adaptation from the *Oculus* suggests just what was most important in the parishes, namely practical advice in the penitential craft focussing on the Commandments and Deadly Sins. This echoes the focus on *exempla*, which were practical and flexible tools in the pastoral care, found in the *Manuel* and in Mannyng's adaptation of it. These four pastoral texts indicate that regional clergy were interested in producing texts to aid efforts in pastoral care, which presumes their anticipation of encounters and interactions with the laity in their charge. The nature of all four texts, which is discussed now, suggests that regional clergy, having an interest in pastoral care, took practical steps to construct these texts into tools that responded to the needs of pastoral interactions.

#### TRENDS IN THE REGIONAL PASTORALIA

These four regional *pastoralia* share a common trait, which, while interesting in itself, also suggests something of the expectations about pastoral interactions held by regional clergy.

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<sup>115</sup> Gonville & Caius, MS 443/440. The will is on fos. i, iv. These originally appear to have been a single folio, with the writing continuing across the binding. Fos. ii-iii, which also appear to have been a single folio are bound between them; *VCH Yorks., E.R.*, 3:89-101.

The *Manuel*, *Handlyng Synne*, the *Oculus* – to a lesser extent – and the *Judica Me* contain a somewhat surprising lack of theological exposition. These works tend, rather, to privilege the more practical aspects and needs of pastoral care. The *Manuel* seems to have been regarded as a compendium of moral *exempla*, which are often associated with preaching. Laird's examination of the physical structure and contents of many manuscripts of the *Manuel* suggests that it would have been a useful reference for clergy, including itinerant preachers.<sup>116</sup> Mendicants, regular canons, or even parish priests may have carried a copy of the *Manuel* or consulted it in libraries as a means of keeping it close to hand and, indeed, lines in the prologue advise readers to keep it close by for reference: "*Le Manuel serra apelle/ Kar en meyn deit ester porte.*"<sup>117</sup> For the devout lay reader, these lines may have encouraged a frequent reference to the text. The sizes of manuscripts, ranging between 18.2cm x 11.5cm and 29.5cm x 19cm, suggest that they occupied a number of different physical locations, such as book satchels and library shelves.<sup>118</sup> Mannyng's continuation of this referential use of the *Manuel* emphasises the practical aspect of the two texts. His description of *Handlyng Synne* suggests that he saw the *Manuel*, then still open to many uses, as a practical text to help to deal with sin and confession:

Yn frenshe þer a clerk hyt sees,  
 He clepyþ hyt manuel de pecchees.  
 Manuel ys handlyng wyþ honde,  
 Pecchees ys synne to undyrstonde.  
 Þese twey wrdes þat beyn otwynne,  
 Do hem to gedyr ys handlyng synne.  
 And weyl ys clepyd for þys skyle,  
 And as y wote, 3ow shewe y wyle.  
 We handyl synne euery day  
 Yn wrde & ded al þat we may.<sup>119</sup>

Mannyng explains "*manuel*" quite literally as engaging with and handling sin "*wyþ honde*". He explains that he will show the "*skyle*" of handling sin, as if it is a body of acquired knowledge.

<sup>116</sup> Laird, 'Character and Growth', 259-260.

<sup>117</sup> "It will be named the Hand-book/ for it ought to be carried in the hand." *MPb*, ll. 63-64.

<sup>118</sup> Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 361-398.

<sup>119</sup> *HS*, ll. 81-90.

This particularly sets up his text as one of use in training clergy and providing them material useful in pastoral interactions with laity, particularly in the skill of hearing confession.

The relationship between the *Oculus* and the *Judica Me* also suggests a desire on the part of regional clergy for practicality. The size and scope of the *Oculus* means that it contains both practical advice and theoretical instruction but, when Rolle compiled the *Judica Me* from it, he privileged the practical aspects of his source. His short and likely inexpensive tract focuses on key practical and pastoral topics. He describes the ideal of priestly life, provides a short tract on hearing confession, and re-arranges a discourse on the Last Judgement from the *Oculus* into what is described as a model sermon in the *Judica Me*.<sup>120</sup> Interestingly, Rolle's description of the priestly ideal having "*bona uita, scientia recta, predicatio discreta*" echoes earlier diocesan legislation exhorting clergy to, "*sibi commissas exemplo bone conuersationis, uerbo exhortationis, in fide recta et bonis moribus diligenter instruant et informant*."<sup>121</sup> Moreover, one of Rolle's original contributions to the *Judica Me* is the addition of three *exempla*, which may indicate the importance of these stories to regional pastoral practice.<sup>122</sup> Rolle's introduction to *Judica B1* expresses his hope that his writing will be of use to his addressee and hints that it would be useful for a wider audience: "*Immo, si uobis uel aliis legentibus dignum uideatur, sciatis quia de uerbis precedentium patrum illud extraxi*."<sup>123</sup> The possibility of a regional audience for practical pastoral handbooks should not, in fact, be surprising because such texts were common throughout thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England and Europe.<sup>124</sup> The concentrated production, adaptation, and circulation of several works with relationships to one another in a short period of time strongly suggest an active population of clergy who were interested in the uses of these texts. The literary

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<sup>120</sup> Gonville & Caius, MS 443/440, cols. 253-254; *JMD*, x-xi, 68-77; Watson, *Rolle and Authority*, 85-86.

<sup>121</sup> "diligently instruct and inform the people entrusted to them in the correct faith and good morals by the example of good conversation and words of exhortation." *Councils and Synods II*, 483-486; "a good life, correct knowledge, and prudent preaching". *JMD*, 20.

<sup>122</sup> *JMD*, 77-79, 114-116.

<sup>123</sup> "Rather, if it seems worthy to you or another reader, know it is because I took it from the words of the early fathers". *JMD*, 18.

<sup>124</sup> Boyle, 'Manuals of Popular Theology', 31-37.

contents and quality of these works may, therefore, be less interesting than what they represent as a group within a regional context. In other words, it is important to consider how far actual pastoral practice drove the creation and adaptation of pastoral literature in this region. Already, it appears that regional clergy had, at least, an interest in the theory of pastoral care and these texts may also provide evidence that clergy went beyond theory into practice. The texts seem to indicate not only that individual regional authors produced works of practical pastoral instruction but that these authors belonged to a population of clergy who formed networks along which such literature and knowledge could move, particularly into the parishes and contact with the laity.

The texts of the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* allude to the existence of such a population. The *Manuel*-author and Mannyng give sources to the majority of the *exempla* that they use, with many coming from older collections such as the *Dialogues of St Gregory* or the *Vitas Patrum*.<sup>125</sup> Both authors normally give the correct sources for their *exempla* such as Bede, the Bible, the *Dialogues*, St Cyprian, Dionysius the Areopagite, and the *Vitae Patrum*. Mannyng, as already noted, sometimes tried to improve upon the accuracy of the references in the *Manuel* where they were vague.<sup>126</sup> These trends strongly suggest the reliability of the authors of the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne*, which makes their occasional references to oral sources particularly interesting. The author of the *Manuel* gives an oral source for four *exempla*. He says, in the *exemplum* of the Undutiful Son, “*Iadiz de vn prodom oy cunter*”; of the Hard Judge, “*Souente feyze ai oi cunter*”; of the Priest’s Wife, “*Vne cunte ai oy cunter*”; and of the Slave’s Confession, “*Qe vn seint hom me dist*”.<sup>127</sup> These *exempla* are also found in Jacques de Vitry’s *Exempla*, Caesarius of Heisterbach’s *Dialogus Miraculorum*, Peraldus’

<sup>125</sup> Examples at *MP*, ll. 937-938, 2568-2569, 1928-1930, 2094-2095, 3290; *HS*, ll. 169-170, 1365-1368, 1547, 2091-2092, 3155.

<sup>126</sup> Examples at *MP*, ll. 937-938, 2094-2095, 3028, 4163, 4583-4584, 6395; *HS*, ll. 169-170, 1547, 2815, 4367-4368, 5238-5239, 8155.

<sup>127</sup> “Formerly, I heard told from a worthy man”; “I have often heard told”; “A tale I have heard told”; “That a holy man told to me”. *MP*, ll. 1591, 4719, 6265, 9030.

*Summae Virtutum ac Vitiorum*, and the collection of over three-hundred *exempla* in British Library, MS Royal 7.D.i.<sup>128</sup> The reliability of the *Manuel*-author suggests, therefore, that he did, in fact, hear these *exempla* rather than read them. The use of “*vn prodom*” and “*vn seint hom*” may point to other clergy, or holy figures such as Rolle, who used and spread these stories in the course of their own pastoral duties, and with whom the *Manuel*-author had ties. The *Manuel*-author may have heard, rather than read, these *exempla* and, even if he recognised their ultimate source, he may have chosen to credit the person from whom he heard it. The *Manuel*-author also claims an oral source for two *exempla* found only in the *Manuel-Handlyng Synne* tradition, which, therefore, may be of regional origin. Tellingly, perhaps, he suggests a religious source or pastoral context for both of these, giving the source of the *exemplum* of the Vine Storms as, “*Vn prodome religius/ Pur verite le cunta nus*”, and the tale of the Proud Lady as “*Cum en vn sermun oy cunter*”.<sup>129</sup>

Mannyng also credits oral sources, especially for those *exempla* which he adds to the *Manuel*, such as the story of Bishop Grossteste where he says, “*as y haue herd*”; of the Cambridgeshire Parson where he says, “*y herd telle of a persoune*”; of a Suffolk Man where he says, “*men seyde*”; and of a Bloody Child where he gives a mendicant source, saying, “*A lytyl tale y shal 3ow telle,/ Pat y herde onys a frere spelle*.”<sup>130</sup> These examples also tend to suggest a population with networks along which stories and knowledge spread, and the example of the “*frere*” suggests at least one friar exercising a pastoral obligation. Finally, Mannyng’s most interesting treatment of sources is where he gives an oral source for *exempla* found in the *Manuel*. Mannyng says, “*Y shal 3ow telle what me was tolde/ Of a prest pat sagh and fonde/ Bys chaunce yn þe holy londe*” of the Cursing Mother; “*A tale y herde a gode man sey*” of the Three Executors; and “*Of a woman y herde onys spelle*” of a Woman

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<sup>128</sup> *HS*, pp. 381-387.

<sup>129</sup> A worthy religious/ told it to us in truth”; “As in a sermon I heard told”. *MP*, ll. 1395-1396, 3359.

<sup>130</sup> *HS*, ll. 4743, 6176, 10406, 687-688.

Penitent.<sup>131</sup> These are interesting because Mannyng insists on giving an oral source for something he must have read in the *Manuel*. However, it may very well have been that he heard these tales, perhaps through clergy and “*prestes*”. Indeed, it is possible that the *Manuel* itself was responsible for the circulation of these tales decades before *Handlyng Synne*, especially considering its own prominent circulation in the region. Mannyng could have heard these stories before writing *Handlyng Synne*, perhaps even as a local child, and was surprised to read them in the *Manuel*. These authors’ claims for oral, and sometimes religious or clerical, sources for their *exempla* suggests the existence of a regional population of clergy interested in both the tools and practice of pastoral care.

The evidence of the authors of regional *pastoralia* might help to understand the networks within this region and its population of clergy. Sullivan argues that William of Waddington was a canon at Beverley and Southwell Minsters and a member of the household of Archbishop Gray, who was noted for his interest in pastoral care.<sup>132</sup> Waddington certainly has some place in the history of the *Manuel* and was, therefore, a cleric involved in the regional *pastoralia* with possible links to the archiepiscopal household. Indeed, this scenario would be unsurprising because Arnould established that the author of the *Manuel* was familiar with the laws and legislation of the English church. This could well describe a member of the York archiepiscopal household surrounded by educated clerics engaged in administrative tasks and linked to clergy across the region.<sup>133</sup> Mannyng’s continuation of the *Manuel* demonstrates that he was a religious interested in the pastoral uses of literature circulating in the region. This, also, is unsurprising considering Mannyng’s possible connections to regional Augustinian and Arrouaisian communities, which seemed particularly involved in the production and circulation of regional literature, especially vernacular literature. Several scholars have suggested that Yorkshire Augustinian houses such as

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<sup>131</sup> HS, II. 1252-1254, 6307, 11853.

<sup>132</sup> Birkett, ‘Lateran IV Reforms in the Northern Province’, 208; Sullivan, ‘Author of the *Manuel*’, 155.

<sup>133</sup> Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 205; Cheney, *English Bishops’ Chanceries*, 7-17.

Bridlington and Guisborough were centres of literary production and, as already suggested above (p. 58), the Arrouasian house of Bourne might also have been part of this trend.<sup>134</sup>

Mannyng's subsequent translation of the *Chronicle* by Peter Langtoft of Bridlington tends to confirm both Mannyng's interest in and ability to access regional writing.

Rolle's use of the *Oculus* neatly illustrates how such a population of clergy with connections across the region might have facilitated the movement of pastoral texts. Rolle reveals that his addressee, most probably a parish priest, requested aid, writing, "*Cupienti mihi petitioni uestre satisfacere*".<sup>135</sup> This suggests that Rolle's addressee was aware of pastoral literature or, at least, thought that Rolle could access knowledge useful to him. This priest's assumptions about Rolle's ability to help him hints at his assumption of a larger network of available, useful, and desirable knowledge to which Rolle had access. Indeed, this is unsurprising considering the suggestion made above that Rolle may have attended Oxford at the same time as Pagula (p. 60). Their meeting and subsequent correspondence would explain Rolle's ability rapidly to adapt sections of the *Oculus*, each time within a year of their completion in southern England. Rolle's response to his priest friend in the form of the *Judica Me* provides rare evidence of how a well-known pastoral manual entered a medieval parish. Rolle, legally a layman, also demonstrates that these networks embraced people who were marginal to formal structures responsible for pastoral care but who were interested in pastoral care despite their ambiguous position. The hermit of West Tanfield, to whom the owners of two manuscripts of the *Judica Me* seem to have turned for corrections to their own manuscripts, suggests that Rolle may not have been a unique figure. Moreover, that these owners of the *Judica Me* knew about this unnamed hermit and thought he could aid them seems to confirm the existence of a population, clergy or otherwise, actively demanding

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<sup>134</sup> Hanna, 'Augustinian Canons and Literature', 27-42; Lawrence, 'A Northern English School?' 145-153; Pouzet, 'L'influence des chanoines Augustins', 169-182, 191-194, 199-206.

<sup>135</sup> "Desiring to satisfy your request to me". *JMD*, 18.

knowledge and pastoral literature.<sup>136</sup> These examples tend to confirm Anneke Mulder-Bakker's suggestions that recluses were centres of local teaching and learning, complementing the role of formal ecclesiastical structures in the movement of knowledge and literature into localities.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, it is not inconceivable that these figures, sometimes not even sanctioned clergy, constitute some sort of "missing link" between pastoral literature and local populations, and Chapter 3 will explore the role of recluses in more detail.

The request of Rolle's friend suggests interesting possibilities about the fluidity of the paths along which pastoral literature and knowledge moved, not always imposed by ecclesiastical hierarchies but responding to perceived needs. The next logical – though ultimately unanswerable – question is what motivated this parish priest's request? Was it his own observation and perception of the needs in his parish or even, perhaps, demands from his parishioners? Two interesting characteristics about the regional *pastoralia* may go some way to suggesting an answer. Firstly, the authors seem to be clergy or figures not engaged in the practice of pastoral care themselves but, rather, encouraging and teaching those who were. Their works were useful compendia from which monastic and parochial instructors could draw and pass on useful materials. The already discussed compendium-like qualities of the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* suggest them as works from which *exempla* could be easily passed on to priests engaged in parochial care as needed. In fact, users of the *pastoralia* might have used the *exempla* as aids for the education of parish priests themselves. This would account for the mix of direct and indirect addresses to both clergy and laity in *Handlyng Synne*, such as men "*infra sacros*"; "*lordyngs*"; "*seriuants*"; "*skoleres*"; "*wymmen*"; parents; and "*mydwyves*".<sup>138</sup> The "*lewed men*" to whom Mannyng referred in the prologue may very well have been a fluid group including clergy and laity.<sup>139</sup> Mannyng associates "*lewed*"-ness

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<sup>136</sup> Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Rolle*, 29-30, 94, 97.

<sup>137</sup> Mulder-Bakker, 'Recluserium as Centre of Learning', 245-254.

<sup>138</sup> *HS*, II. 1049, 2195, 2361, 7977, 9579, 9657

<sup>139</sup> *HS*, I. 43.

with English when he describes his own work as, “*Pogh þat þe langage be but lewed,*” and implicitly opposes it to the Latinate world of the clergy when he instructs priests to instruct penitents in “*lewed speche*.”<sup>140</sup> Mannyng, however, does not exclude the possibility of movement between the two positions because, when he tells priests to use English, he creates a dichotomy that presumes that priests must move out of a sacramental Latinate space into English. “*Lewed*”-ness, therefore, should be understood as a temporary position, probably characterised by the use of English. It probably included the parish clergy, who regularly used English in their lives and only temporarily switched to Latin, of which they may have had just sufficient grasp, during divine services. The “*laye gent*” addressed in the *Manuel* cannot be excluded from a similar model.<sup>141</sup> The flexibility of works such as the *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* was great enough to be adapted to the education and care of both pastors and laity. Rolle’s adaptation of the *Oculus*, which he used as a compendium, for a parish priest demonstrates that such flexibility was not confined to vernacular literature. The regional pastoral literature, therefore, seems to have had a somewhat silent and forgotten audience. Those engaged in pastoral care directly may not have used it for their own benefit, nor was it necessarily addressed directly to the laity for their own self-formation when presented in the vernacular. Instead, these works were, quite possibly, part of a longer chain of instruction that included those middling ranks of clergy who instructed those who instructed the laity. They would have been useful works at the schools for local clergy held by archdeacons, for which there is evidence in York and Lincoln.<sup>142</sup> These texts were, in effect, for the pastors of the pastors.

A second characteristic tends to confirm the importance to, and engagement in, pastoral care and literature of such middling clergy. The *Manuel*, *Handlyng Synne*, the *Oculus*, and the *Judica Me* were not products of the schools, for the authors wrote them from

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<sup>140</sup> HS, II. 10090, 10901.

<sup>141</sup> Goering, *William de Montibus*, 62; Schemmann, *Confessional Literature*, 265-272.

<sup>142</sup> Goering, *Popularization of Scholastic Ideas*, 7-9.

their dioceses or parishes. In other words, the authors did not write them while at school, nor were they scholastic texts written for academics, but, as suggested above, they were practical works written in the midst of populations who used them and perhaps even demanded them. It cannot be known when the authors first conceived of their respective projects but the locations of their writing suggest that they were not written until the authors assumed or perceived a need for such works during their pastoral or administrative duties. Although much remains unknown about the original *Manuel*-author, he certainly seems familiar with the pastoral literature and legislation of thirteenth century England and may have been associated with the York archiepiscopal administration. Although educated clerics likely surrounded the *Manuel*-author, his text is practical rather than scholastic, which, perhaps, reflected the author's experience on the travels of the archiepiscopal household or needs he perceived as a diocesan administrator.<sup>143</sup> Mannyng's life seems to fit a similar description. It is unknown whether he attended a school and, although scholars have suggested he spent some time at Cambridge he never, perhaps tellingly, styles himself as "*magister*". Regardless, his biography suggests that he did not start work on *Handlyng Synne*, much less complete it, until he had returned to his religious community, which, at either Bourne or Sempringham, was probably engaged in pastoral care.<sup>144</sup> Bourne may have been a centre of pastoral education, and the Gilbertines seemed especially interested in education, having established a large number of schools for such a small order, especially in the region.<sup>145</sup> William of Pagula did not start the *Oculus* until after he had left school and Boyle suggested, perhaps entirely correctly, that it was his pastoral and penitentiary work that convinced Pagula of the need for such a work. In comparison, Boyle suggests that Pagula's more theological *Summa*

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<sup>143</sup> Arnould, *Manuel des Péchés*, 185-186, 205; Arnould, 'Two Anglo-Norman Prologues', 249-251; Cheney, *English Bishops' Chanceries*, 7-17; Sullivan, 'Author of the *Manuel*', 155-157.

<sup>144</sup> Crosby, 'New Biography', 21-24.

<sup>145</sup> Orme, *English Schools*, 236-237.

*Summarum* was in progress while Pagula was still at Oxford.<sup>146</sup> Finally, Richard Rolle did not write the *Oculus* until he had abandoned his studies and, even then, only when a request was made for the work. He seems not to have seen any need for his work in an academic setting but responded to a request from the parishes. These regional *pastoralia* might, therefore, better be said to be products of the dioceses and parishes, deriving from a perceived pastoral necessity. They were probably written in a context that allowed their authors, through connections among the regional population, to be in contact with the needs and requests of the priests, religious, and mendicants directly engaged in pastoral care.

Taken together, the *Manuel*, *Handlyng Synne*, the *Oculus*, and the *Judica Me* suggest a regional population of religious and priests who were interested in pastoral education as an active project and responsive to its perceived needs. Their texts had ways to filter down into the parishes and, therefore, suggest that the pastoral project was not always an academic response to a far-off council in Rome but an indication of potentially vibrant and complex interactions between clergy and laity. The texts indicate that pastoral care, which presumed interactions between clergy and laity, was an important and active trend in the region. The histories of these texts indicate that clergy at least perceived needs among their spiritual cares, were willing to respond to them, and, indeed, even expected to interact with the laity. The characteristics of these interactions, including the role of the laity in them, are examined in the next chapter.

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<sup>146</sup> Boyle, *Works of Pagula*, 1:187.

## **2: Interactions and Participation in the Construction of Devotional Practices**

Regional devotions and saints' cults offer a way to begin to explore more deeply the ways in which clergy and laity interacted during the medieval period because, where the *pastoralia* suggested possibilities, the records of historical devotional practices indicate real interactions between both groups. The possibilities evident in regional *pastoralia* have a corollary: namely, if clerical interest in the pastoral project was a response to clergy's perception of lay needs, laity, therefore, had the potential to affect and shape clerical action. This reasoning points to the possibility of dialogue between the clergy and laity, which supposes the participation of both in complex interactions that may have contributed to the construction and operation of official and unofficial regional devotions. As co-participants, both clergy and laity had some interest, control, or power over devotions and, in order to preserve them, the two groups had to negotiate sometimes conflicting interests. After considering a theoretical model describing devotions, this chapter opens with a brief case study on St John of Beverley that shows the potential outcomes of such dialogue. The specific influence of laity within these dialogues is then explored through three case studies of more problematic devotions. When interactions between laity and clergy or the participation of either group were hindered, as these studies will show, devotions faced the possibility of disruption, failure, and disappearance. In other words, the breakdown of dialogue and consequent threat to or failure of a devotional practice shows just how important dialogue and mutual participation were in their construction. These instances, which increasingly take place without involvement by clergy, also show how much lay voices could contribute to interactions with clergy. Moreover, clerical acceptance or at least lack of resistance to these voices indicates that devotions constructed by the laity might participate within officially sanctioned constructions of religion rather than challenge them from a position of oppositional popular religiosity.

Devotions existed at any number of levels, from local unsanctioned practices to officially recognised and promoted saints' cults venerated across all of Christendom. There is

a temptation to examine these different levels of devotion separately, not least because more official levels tended to produce and reproduce administrative, narrative, and material sources for historical study. Local devotions, on the other hand, often lacked official organisation and resources that might produce such records, and might be considered a manifestation of popular practice due to the apparent absence of participation by clergy. Indeed, this lack of sources probably hides many now unknown local devotions. There is little reason, however, not to consider these different levels in a broader comparison because, at their core, they had some similarities. All devotions – small and large, local and universal, unofficial and official – tapped into the desires of their devotees for spiritual intercession through which protection, aid, or salvation for the dead was begged. All devotions rested upon the continuing participation of devotees, either clergy or laity. With this participation went the need for some ecclesiastical intervention, whether tacit acceptance of a devotion, recognition and regulation, or ecclesiastical disapproval and suppression. The participation of clergy and laity in devotional practices was, therefore, a characteristic common to all of them. This makes the interactions of clergy and laity resulting from their participation in devotions a useful category of analysis.

As already acknowledged, devotions took innumerable forms, so some common characteristics between them are needed in order to make comparisons. Diana Webb's account of pilgrimage and indulgences provides an excellent starting point for a comparison of the relationships and interactions common to devotions. She describes saints' cults as, at minimum, three-cornered structures with an ecclesiastical figure having the authority to grant recognition, the proprietor of the shrine, and the pilgrim.<sup>1</sup> Although her definition concentrates on cults as objects of pilgrimage, it can form the basis for a definition applicable to the operation of most devotions because it focuses on relationships between the people involved.

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<sup>1</sup> Webb, 'Pardons and Pilgrims', 262.

The ecclesiastical authority may not only be a figure who could grant recognition to a cult, but one who could withhold or withdraw that recognition. In other words, the ecclesiastical authority was a regulatory figure. The second part or role in this structure, the proprietor of the shrine, may not have been a single person or corporate community because there may have been several, even competing, claims by interested parties. Nor was the shrine always an immobile church or chapel. The central revered object of a devotion could be a portable reliquary, image, text, or any other public manifestation of it. Finally, the pilgrim should not be limited to a person making a journey to this object because this creates a division between those who lived close to a shrine or relic and those who lived far away from it, even though individuals may have had similar motivations for their visit or prayer. Instead, pilgrim could include any petitioner, worshipper, or devotee who appealed to the spiritual power of a particular devotion or cult. The structure of devotions may, therefore, be better examined through these three roles: a regulatory ecclesiastical authority, parties having an interest in the central revered object, and pilgrims. These three roles, even understood in their broadest meanings, neatly illustrate relationships that contributed to the construction of devotions and account for interactions between clergy and laity.

A common outcome of these relationships was a momentum towards organising the devotion, which often manifested itself as the management of these relationships, such as between the saint and the petitioner; between devotees and ecclesiastical authorities; and between any others involved. Obtaining authoritative ecclesiastical recognition for a shrine, marshalling pilgrims and recording donations, or producing collections of *vitae* and *miracula* all constituted some form of organisation. Episcopal intervention normally produced the very documents that recorded the operation of devotions. Indeed, surviving records of a devotion are evidence of attempts at management, even if only an attempt to preserve it in writing. These documents provide clues about the people involved and understanding their

interactions with one another may lead to a better understanding of how different parts of society participated in the construction and maintenance of devotional practices.

#### *ST JOHN OF BEVERLEY: A MODEL OF REGIONAL DEVOTION*

With its large canon of texts for a regional saintly cult, the successful cult of St John of Beverley tends to hide interactions between clergy and laity, perhaps because it did not face moments of instability and radical change that required intervention, management, or mediation. Keeping this possibility in mind, the cult of St John might briefly be examined by way of an introduction, acting as a kind of scientific control case. In other words, while the possibility for dialogue between clergy and laity may be most visible precisely when it threatened to break down, the successful cult of St John might illustrate how it worked to its fullest extent. St John first appears in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, which describes him as performing several miracles during his life.<sup>2</sup> He continues to appear in several texts including two *vitae*, four collections of *miracula*, and some administrative records, such as the Beverley Chapter Act Book. These cover a period from the early twelfth century to the late fourteenth century. Material was added, edited, and copied over this entire period, indicating the continued interest in the cult, at least by clergy, and its flexibility.<sup>3</sup> It is the material from the Chapter Act Book that is most interesting in this discussion, particularly because it dates from the first half of the fourteenth century.

The Chapter Act Book records four miracles attributed to St John between 1318 and 1323, two of which also appear in the Cartulary of Beverley Minster.<sup>4</sup> These take the form of charters addressed to all the Christian faithful (*Uniuersis sanctae matris ecclesiae filiis*) that advertise the miracle. Indeed, all four follow a form that has only minor variations. They open with a preamble urging the advertisement of the saint's power:

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<sup>2</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 456-469.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, *St John of Beverley*, 5-18.

<sup>4</sup> Leach ed., *Beverley Chapter Book*, 1:362, 1:400-401, 2:26, 2:32-33; Wilson, *St John of Beverley*, 222-228.

Quum mira uirtutum opera, quae per preces et merita dicti sancti Deus omnipotens per suam inuisibilem potentiam operatur, ad laudem et gloriam ipsius et honorem dicti confessoris sui gloriosi, nec non ad consolationem fidelium expedit esse nota, ut nomen altissimi ubilibet exaltetur, et sua maiestas in eiusdem confessoris ecclesia amplioris uenerationis frequentia laudetur et glorificetur a Christi fidelibus uniuersis.<sup>5</sup>

After this, the miracle is described and a standard conclusion urging greater devotion concludes the letter before the testimony of the event is given (*In cuius rei testimonium*). The consistency of these documents may indicate that scribes referred to the previous miracle but, also, that the clergy of Beverley were well-practiced in advertising St John's miracles to the laity. The form these announcements took, namely a letter, also suggests that the Chapter was keen to advertise the saint. This written advertisement may not have reached into the general population but two references in the cartulary of the Minster indicate that the oral advertisement of St John's miracles was a common procedure:

[1] When this miracle had been pronounced in the proper way, the clergy gave loud praises to God ... [2] When this miracle had been proclaimed in the proper way and also made public at the tomb of the said saint, the clergy gave high praises to God, who in his saints, always is, and is found, glorious.<sup>6</sup>

This suggests that there was an established customary form for dealing with miracles attributed to St John, which ensured that his story was continuously re-presented to the laity.

Such ongoing interactions might account for the continuous production of the saint's texts and miracles throughout the medieval period, unlike most of the texts examined below associated with St William of York (p. 105). St John, on the other hand, generated a repeated production of texts throughout the period, which recorded new miracles and probably played a role in the propagation of his cult. The cult of St William, on the other hand, generated few new miracles after the Pentecost celebrations of 1177, which are the focus of both his *Vita* and *Miracula*. The publicity of St John's cult constantly re-presented it to the laity, whose

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<sup>5</sup> "When almighty God performs wondrous miracles by means of his invisible power, through the intercession and influence of the said saint, they should be made known to his own praise and glory and to the honour of his said glorious confessor, and for the consolation of the faithful, so that the name of the Most High should be exalted everywhere, and that his glory should be praised by all the faithful of Christ by the church being more frequented with greater devotion and veneration." Leach ed., *Beverley Chapter Book*, 1:362, 1:400, 2:26, 2:32; Translation from Wilson, *St John of Beverley*, 226.

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, *St John of Beverley*, 223, 225. The original Beverley Cartulary was not available to me and I have relied on Wilson's translations.

continuing pilgrimages to his tomb seem to indicate their continued re-acceptance of the cult. Indeed, the opening to a collection of thirteenth-century *miracula* explicitly states the need for publicity:

Cum ad fidei corroboracionem, et Christianae religionis incrementum, crebra inter fideles ab omnipotente Deo fiant miracula, timendum est, ne ingratitude arguantur et negligentiae qui ea pertransierunt, conticendo sub arcano silentii quae ad Creatoris laudem et ad fidelium utilitatem in propatulo merentur et exigent praedicari.<sup>7</sup>

It was this publicity that constantly engaged the clergy of Beverley Minster with the laity and helped to ensure the participation of pilgrims in a successful cult.

This interaction may also have led to the inclusion of lay narratives in official records of the devotion. In some miracles of St John, the story tells of how the fortunate pilgrim made their way through the choir to the high altar, even during a liturgical service and sometimes led by cathedral clergy, in order to give their praise to God.<sup>8</sup> This may be an appropriation of the pilgrim's story, giving it official recognition and sanction, and bringing it into clerical spaces and narratives. The re-presentation of this story to the laity as part of the canon of St John's miracles indicates a dialogue between clergy and laity in which both contributed to the construction of narratives of the saint. As records and stories were produced; as officials became involved in cults; as interactions re-produced them and pilgrims re-accepted them, the cult gained new life with new meanings and, thus, it prospered. Pilgrims, normally the laity, played a key structural role in the processes that constructed and sustained saints' cults. André Vauchez correctly points out that a saint was only a saint to and through other people, needing acclaim, recognition, and miracles.<sup>9</sup> These are things that, by and large, lay pilgrims provided. A devotional practice without pilgrims or recorded devotees would not exist historically because there would be no pilgrimages, no offerings, and no one to learn from the

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<sup>7</sup> "Since almighty God performs many miracles amongst the faithful in order to strengthen faith and promote the growth of the Christian religion, it must be feared that those who ignore them, by concealing beneath the secrecy of silence those things that deserve and demand to be preached publicly to the glory of the Creator and benefit of the faithful, will be accused of ingratitude and negligence." Raine ed., *Historians*, 1:327; Translation from Wilson, *St John of Beverley*, 203.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson, *St John of Beverley*, 207, 221.

<sup>9</sup> Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 141-142.

moral example of the devotion and spread its fame. Ironically, it is precisely when this relationship was threatened or disrupted, and ecclesiastical interventions generated records of the crisis, that the role of the laity in contributing to successful dialogues becomes most apparent.

#### *DISRUPTED DIALOGUE: THE CULT OF ST WILLIAM OF YORK*

The cult of St William of York, which is generally reckoned to have been unsuccessful, provides interesting insights into the interactions between clergy and laity that contributed to the construction of devotional practices. Scholars often focus on the life, rather than the cult, of St William and his tempestuous pontificates as archbishop of York are better documented than the cult that developed from the late twelfth century. This is probably related to the fact that the cult itself was never popularly successful compared to St William's more famous contemporary, St Thomas Becket. James Raine published almost all of the surviving records relating to St William's cult but they remain understudied.<sup>10</sup> Most studies are short treatments, often focusing on the cult's physical manifestations, such as the tomb and famous window in York Minster. Other studies of St William focus on his life, mainly his disputed appointment as archbishop, deposition, and subsequent reinstatement.<sup>11</sup> Only recently, with Christopher Norton's monograph, is there a comprehensive study bringing together the life and cult of the saint but this does not extend past the early thirteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries fall between two points of William's cult – its late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century development, and its early fifteenth-century revival marked by the St William window.<sup>13</sup> Apart from an early thirteenth-century *vita*, the cult almost disappears from the records during the intervening period but seems, when it re-emerges in the fifteenth

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<sup>10</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, pts. 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Boertjes, 'Pilgrim Ampullae', 48-63; French, *St William Window*; Knowles, 'Case of St William', 76-97; Nilson, 'Reinterpretation of St William Window', 157-179; Wilson, *Shrines of St William*.

<sup>12</sup> Norton, *St William* (2006).

<sup>13</sup> Norton, *St William*, 202.

century, to have developed new characteristics, particularly in its structure. These points in the cult's history suggest that the intervening period was one of change.

The cult of St William first emerged and developed during a period of change to the regulation of saints' cults. On account of their changes, the roles of different parties participating in the cult are not clearly defined. In particular, the regulatory role of the archbishops of York changed during this period and they probably joined the interested parties of the cult as time passed. The archbishop was certainly the regulator of the cult at its beginning. The Pentecost celebrations of 1177, described in a set of *Miracula*, would have needed some sort of archiepiscopal approval because they constituted a public recognition of sanctity.<sup>14</sup> The archbishop does not appear in the texts associated with St William from this period but recognition of the cult, marked by elaborate ceremonies and celebrations, would have required his approval. The regulatory competence concerning saints shifted from local bishops to the pope in the first half of the thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup> These changes may have encouraged interested parties to obtain a papal canonization, which, in effect, canonized St William a second time. Pope Honorius III promulgated a bull of canonization in 1226 as the result of a formal investigation that had begun in 1223. Elias Bernard, a canon of York and the promoter of the cause, may have written St William's *Vita* as part of this process, perhaps in anticipation of the need for liturgical readings.<sup>16</sup> Since the *Vita* and other texts associated with the cult appeared only after this period, it is possible that the early regulatory role of the archbishop disappeared from the narratives about St William's canonization in order to reflect new realities. The regulation of the cult – not to be confused with its daily management – appears to have required papal intervention from this point and, indeed, popes appear in three other documents connected to the cult. Honorius III took under his protection in 1223 a chapel on the Ouse Bridge dedicated to St William and Pope Gregory IX ratified the

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<sup>14</sup> Norton, *St William*, 149-162.

<sup>15</sup> Kemp, *Canonization and Authority*, 82-88, 97-110; Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 19-41.

<sup>16</sup> Norton, *St William*, 149, 196-201.

endowment of a St William altar in York Minster founded by Elias Bernard in 1230. Pope Nicholas IV granted an indulgence in 1291 to anyone who visited the tomb of St William during his feast.<sup>17</sup> The only major change to the cult during this period that does not record papal involvement was the translation of St William's relics to a new shrine behind the high altar in 1284.<sup>18</sup> This, however, did not change St William's status and, so, did not require papal intervention.

St William solved a problem for the church of York, namely that, even though it was the primatial church of the Northern Province, it had no local saint of its own. Other northern churches had their own saints, such as St Cuthbert at Durham, St Wilfrid at Ripon, and St John at Beverley. Some northern saints were buried in churches outside the diocese, such as St Paulinus at Rochester, St Chad at Lichfield, St Oswald at Worcester, and St Wulfstan at Ely. The lack of a local saintly cult was becoming problematic, especially at a time when these other cults attracted donations to building schemes.<sup>19</sup> The archbishops of York and the Minster chapter had, therefore, both a spiritual and temporal interest in promoting the cause and cult of St William. The archbishops do not seem to have played a major role in this, except for lending their assistance at such times as was required or helpful, such as the 1284 translation or Archbishop Melton's contribution to the construction of a new shrine over the empty tomb in the nave.<sup>20</sup> It is thought that the Treasurer, presumably on behalf of the chapter, had control over the relics and he received candles from any offerings as recompense for maintaining lights on the St William altar during masses.<sup>21</sup> The chapter, perhaps through the Treasurer, probably organised the daily management of the cult. Two miracle stories of St William mention guardians of the tomb (*sarcophagi custodibus; custos*

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<sup>17</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:540-541, 3:116, 3:138-142.

<sup>18</sup> Norton, *St William*, 202.

<sup>19</sup> Norton, *St William*, 157-162.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson, *Shrines of St William*, 12-17.

<sup>21</sup> Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines*, 128-135.

*tumbae*), which was an important site of the cult.<sup>22</sup> The organisation of St William's cult, however, remains almost unknown because few records survive.<sup>23</sup>

Some texts associated with the cult suggest that Minster clergy may have encouraged the devotions and donations of pilgrims to St William. The *Miracula* is a number of documents, mostly posthumous miracles, relating to St William. They survive in an early seventeenth-century manuscript, Bodleian Library, MS Dodsworth 125, which is a transcription of a lost late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century wooden table, which hung in the vestry of York Minster.<sup>24</sup> This table may have been similar to two wooden triptychs with parchment surfaces containing several historical documents associated with York, including chronicles and papal bulls, which the Vicars Choral were required to learn.<sup>25</sup> Like these tables, the St William table would have been a useful resource for clergy who watched over the tomb and their location in the vestry would have been convenient for clerics to study them. Beyond simply inspiring pilgrims to Christian lives by the example of St William, the stories would have advertised St William's power to pilgrims who could spread knowledge of him. Indeed, one story illustrates the role of common fame in the cult because it tells of a woman who, having failed to receive a cure at St Thomas Becket's shrine, came to York "*audiens uero tandem plurimos apud Eboracum per Beatum Willelmum ad sanitatem restitui*".<sup>26</sup> The miracle stories also would have provided clergy with criteria by which they could recognise true miracles. The prayers on the table were taken from different liturgical commemorations of St William, including collects and antiphons.<sup>27</sup> They were short enough to be taught as devotional prayers outside of their anticipated liturgical setting, such as one of the Gospel antiphons for the feast of St William:

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<sup>22</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:286-287, 2:542-543.

<sup>23</sup> Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines*, 163-164.

<sup>24</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:531-543; Norton, *St William*, 150-151.

<sup>25</sup> Purvis, 'Tables of the Vicars Choral', 741-748.

<sup>26</sup> "truly, hearing at length that many people were being restored to health by blessed William at York". Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:537.

<sup>27</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:541-542 cf. *Brev. Ebor.*, cols. 1:179, 2:297, 2:303-304; *Missale Ebor.*, 1:34, 2:42.

O Willelmi pastor bone  
 Cleri pater et patrone  
 Mundi nobis in agone  
 Confer opem et depone  
 Vitae sordes et coronae  
 Caelistis da gaudia.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps after telling pilgrims about St William, the guardians of the tomb might have explained the indulgence available during his feast, also recorded on the table, and encouraged pilgrims to return at that time. The guardians may have encouraged pilgrims to pray these short passages and ask St William for his intercession. Teaching the prayer may have been a kind of sacramental or blessing, or even acted as a pilgrim badge. The acquisition of this prayer, which the pilgrim could take home for private devotions to the saint, marked the piety of the pilgrim, who could even honour the saint and participate in his cult by teaching the prayer to others. Interestingly, pilgrims who learned these passages may have recognised them when sung at a mass of St William. Interactions between clergy and laity at the tomb had, therefore, the potential to be both teaching moments and a means by which lay pilgrims could contribute to the propagation of St William's cult.

Descriptions of the pilgrims to St William are brief. Some more details are available in his miracle stories but these almost certainly do not provide exhaustive evidence of his appeal and cannot be relied upon for any historically accurate typology of his devotees. Only the *Miracula* records the origins of pilgrims and even this does not do so consistently. These stories often describe regional pilgrims, with a few people journeying from further away. Local places mentioned include places in or near York such as Walmgate and Fulford, and places within the region such as Leeds, Pickering, Tadcaster, and Warter.<sup>29</sup> Some pilgrims came from further away such as Sedgefield, Richmondshire, or Beccles in Suffolk.<sup>30</sup> It seems, however, that what appeal St William did have was quite local and the physical

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<sup>28</sup> "O good shepherd William, glorious father and patron, to us in struggle in the world grant aid, do away with the baseness of life, and give the joy of a heavenly crown". *Brev. Ebor.*, col. 2:303; Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:541.

<sup>29</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:531-532, 2:534-537.

<sup>30</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:534-538.

manifestations of his cult originate from the city of York. Pilgrim ampullae found at Coppergate, York depict St William and are some of the few physical manifestations of his cult outside the Minster, which suggest the local nature of his cult.<sup>31</sup> According to a miracle story, a woman who visited the shrine of St Thomas before appealing to St William was a pilgrim from Guisborough. As a narrative device, her story may advertise the power of St William compared to the more famous St Thomas, but it also reveals local perceptions of St William. The woman's decision to travel to Canterbury suggests that even locals might not have ranked St William above saints from outside the region and, even though St William eventually cured her, the pilgrim's initial choice implicitly criticises his intercessory power.<sup>32</sup> While the narratives of St William include some stories of foreigners appealing to him, perhaps to advertise his power, his cult appears to have been based on local pilgrimage. Indeed, as the saint of the primatial seat of the province he probably had a special claim on subjects of the diocese.

#### *Interactions and a split in the cult*

The cult of St William shows very little evidence of interaction between the regulating authority and either the proprietors of the shrine or the pilgrims. After the pope claimed authority over canonizations, he had no interaction with either of these groups apart from his confirmations of indulgences or foundations, such as the St William altar. The miracle stories do not mention either the archbishop of York or the pope. The archbishop (*prelatis*) makes a brief appearance in the translation narratives of 1284 but appears as an interested party to the cult desiring to honour the saint rather than as a regulator.<sup>33</sup> There is no evidence of any interaction with pilgrims by the pope or archbishop, except by virtue of their approval of St William's cult.

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<sup>31</sup> Boertjes, 'Pilgrim Ampullae', 52-55.

<sup>32</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:537.

<sup>33</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:547.

The narrative sources of St William offer the most detailed information about possible relationships between proprietors and pilgrims and suggest that there was little interaction between the two. In fact, the main sources of information about St William, his *Vita* and *Miracula*, suggest that the proprietors of the cult may have tried to separate themselves from predominantly lay pilgrims.<sup>34</sup> The *Vita* survives in only one manuscript, British Library, MS Harley 2, which appears to date from the first half of the thirteenth century and bears an *ex libris* mark from the Augustinian abbey of Thornton in north-east Lincolnshire. As an aside, the fact that the only surviving copy of St William's *vita* survives from a Lincolnshire religious house tends to confirm the internal connections of the region under examination. Norton convincingly argues that the text was composed no later than the 1220s and suggests that what appears in the manuscript is an incomplete copy. Extracts from the *Vita* appear in readings from the York Breviary for the octave of St William's feast.<sup>35</sup> The miracles in the *Vita* do not always correspond to those in the *Miracula*, and it appears that the author of the *Vita* conflated several miracles from the *Miracula* into single narratives. The relationship between the two texts, if any, is unknown as are the sources of the *Vita*.<sup>36</sup>

The *Miracula* from the now lost St William table begin with a short preface followed by thirty-three miracles attributed to the saint. Norton convincingly argues from temporal clauses in these stories that they are a group of miracles that occurred around Pentecost and the octave of the feast of St William in 1177. This group of miracles appears to have been composed as a single text within a decade of the events of 1177.<sup>37</sup> Three more miracles describing events from the early fourteenth century follow this group.<sup>38</sup> The chronological order of the *Miracula* breaks down at this point. The next item describes the cure of a man unjustly defeated in a trial by battle, which may refer to a real duel that took place

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<sup>34</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:270-291, 2:531-543.

<sup>35</sup> *Brev. Ebor.*, cols. 1:179-187, 2:295-307; Norton, *St William*, 180-192.

<sup>36</sup> Norton, *St William*, 186-201.

<sup>37</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:531-538; Norton, *St William*, 151-164.

<sup>38</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:537-539.

1207x1208.<sup>39</sup> The story appears in Pope Honorius III's bull of canonisation in 1226, so may have been reduced to writing before this date.<sup>40</sup> The next item is a version of St William's miraculous saving of many people from drowning when the Ouse Bridge collapsed upon his return to York in 1154. This was likely composed after 1180 when the bridge was rebuilt in stone, since it refers to an earlier bridge "*qui erat tunc temporis ligneus*".<sup>41</sup> Four more miracles follow, which Norton suggests relate events occurring before or during the Interdict of 1208-1213.<sup>42</sup> Several documents follow, including the indulgence from Pope Nicholas IV in 1291 to pilgrims visiting St William's tomb during his feast, a note of an indulgence granted at the translation of his relics in 1284, and liturgical excerpts in honour of the saint.<sup>43</sup> A miracle about a woman cured after being unjustly injured during an ordeal is the final item, which Norton suggests belongs to the same period as the cure for the unjustly defeated man.<sup>44</sup> Table 2, which summarises these items, suggests that the *Miracula* is a compilation of texts composed in at least four different periods, which relate events from five different periods.

Material	No.	Event	Composition	Appears in <i>Vita</i>
Posthumous miracles A	1-33	12-June to 18(?)–June 1177	1177 x 1186	1-11, 13, 16-18, 20-22, 28-31
Posthumous miracles B	34-36	1308, 1318, 1319	after 1319	no
Duel of Ralph and Besing	37	1207 x 1208	before 1226	yes
Ouse Bridge	38	1154	after 1180	yes
Posthumous miracles C	39-42	perhaps 1208-1213	?	no
Pope Nicholas IV Indulgence	n/a	dated 11-August-1291	before 11-August-1291	no
Translation Indulgence	n/a	January 1284	likely 1283/4	no
Prayers from feast days	n/a	Translation: 15 January <sup>45</sup> Feast: 8 June	earliest manuscript appearance mid fourteenth-century <sup>46</sup>	no
Woman cured from ordeal	43	c. 1207-1208	?	no

**Table 2: Miracles of St William**

<sup>39</sup> Norton, *St William*, 169-179.

<sup>40</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 3:129.

<sup>41</sup> "which was wood in that time". Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:539; Norton, *St William*, 166.

<sup>42</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:539-540; Norton, *St William*, 179-180.

<sup>43</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:540-542; *Brev. Ebor.*, cols. 1:179, 2:297, 2:303-304; *Missale Ebor.*, 2:42.

<sup>44</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:542-543; Norton, *St William*, 178-179.

<sup>45</sup> Moved to the first Sunday following Epiphany from 1478. *Missale Ebor.*, 1:xxx; Wilson, *Shrines of St William*, 8-9.

<sup>46</sup> Ker & Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts*, 756-759, 813-815.

The earliest materials relating to St William appear to be the *A*-miracles composed shortly after the events of 1177 and some stylistic characteristics suggest that they were written as a single text, perhaps even by one author. Fourteen of the stories refer to the place of a miracle. Twelve of these stories state that it took place at the “*sepulchrum*”, of St William, two stories (nos. 29, 31) use “*ad Sanctum Willellmum*”, while one miracle (no. 32) uses “*tumulum*”.<sup>47</sup> There is no such consistency when the same miracles appear in the *Vita*, but a variety of terms appear, sometimes in the same story, such as “*sepulchrum*”, “*tumulum*”, “*reliquias*”, or “*sarcophagum*”.<sup>48</sup> The names of pilgrims benefiting from miracles tend not to appear in the *A*-miracles, with only four of the thirty-three stories (nos. 3, 8, 32, 33) recording the names of the fortunate pilgrims.<sup>49</sup> The title accorded to St William, on the other hand, has an unstable usage for there is no consistent reference to him as either “*beatus*” or “*sanctus*”. An honorific for him appears in sixteen miracles, “*beatus*” seven times (nos. 1-3, 5, 13, 19, 21), “*sanctus*” nine times (nos. 7, 8, 10, 15, 25, 27, 29, 31), and one miracle (no. 32) uses both.<sup>50</sup> Since a conventional distinction between the two terms did not emerge until the mid thirteenth century, this inconsistency supports a date of composition in the late twelfth century.<sup>51</sup> The characteristics of the *A*-miracles suggest, therefore, conscious authorial choices marking them as a single group. They mark the earliest texts relating to St William as a single group and differ from later writing about him. Although these could also have been unconscious decisions, the balance of evidence, which will become clearer with comparisons below, suggests that these stories constitute a group.

The *BC*-miracles have different characteristics and, although dating these texts is difficult, they certainly appear after the *A*-miracles and may reflect changes to St William’s cult. The *B*-miracles must have appeared after 1319, which is the latest date mentioned in

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<sup>47</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:531-537.

<sup>48</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:281-285.

<sup>49</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:532, 2:537.

<sup>50</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:531-537.

<sup>51</sup> Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 85-87.

that group, but the *C*-miracles offer no indication about either their occurrence or composition. That neither of these sets of miracles appears in the *Vita* would agree with a single composition date of the early fourteenth century or later. Although Norton suggests that the *C*-miracles recount events from the early thirteenth century, this does not exclude the possibility of a written composition some time after the events.<sup>52</sup> It is also possible that the *C*-miracles, as they survive, represent corrections made at the same time as the composition of the *B*-miracles in the early fourteenth century or, indeed, when the St William table was constructed in the late fourteenth century. Moreover, some characteristics in the *BC*-miracles suggest connections between them and distinguish them as a group from the *A*-miracles. References to the place of miracles shift to a consistent use of “*tumba*” or its diminutive “*tumulum*”.<sup>53</sup> This may be because the early fourteenth-century *B*-miracles occurred after the 1284 translation of St William’s relics, which created two sites of veneration. This will be discussed in more detail shortly, but the empty tomb of St William near the east of the nave remained a focus for pilgrims despite the removal of his relics to the new shrine east of the high altar.<sup>54</sup> The consistent use of one term to describe the tomb, therefore, may reflect a need to distinguish between different cultic locations in York Minster and assign terms to each one. This usage continues in the *C*-miracles, which could support their composition at the same time as the *B*-miracles. The attention given to the names of pilgrims in the *BC*-miracles also differs from the earlier *A*-miracles. Six of the seven miracles recount cures of people while one (no. 34) tells how oil flowed from the now empty tomb in 1308. At an earlier date, Matthew Paris tells a similar story about St William’s tomb.<sup>55</sup> Of the six miracles involving cures for people, five (nos. 35, 36, 39-41) give the name of the cured person, one woman and

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<sup>52</sup> Norton, *St William*, 179-180.

<sup>53</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:537-540.

<sup>54</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:544, 2:548; French, *St William Window*, 6-7; Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines*, 32-33, 55-58; Wilson, *Shrines of St William*, 8-9.

<sup>55</sup> Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, 3:77.

four men. Only a child (no. 42) is not named.<sup>56</sup> This contrasts with the limited use of names in the earlier miracles and suggests another choice by the author or corrector, who might have had access to records preserving this information from earlier periods. Finally, the title given to St William stabilises in these texts. He is named “*sanctus*” in six of the seven miracles, with only one (no. 39) naming him “*beatus*”.<sup>57</sup> This supports a composition or correction date of the early fourteenth century when the terms had developed distinct meanings. “*Sanctus*” referred to those who had received papal recognition and canonisation while “*beatus*” was reserved for unofficial local cults.<sup>58</sup> The characteristics of the *BC*-miracles suggest that they can be read as one text, either written after 1319 or, in the case of the *C*-miracles, corrected at this time.

The apparent differences between the *A*- and *BC*-miracles suggest changes to St William’s cults during the period between these two groups of miracles while instability in the remaining *Miracula* material might also reflect such change. It is difficult to date the events recounted in the remaining three individual miracles and even more difficult to suggest when they were written because they share characteristics with both the *A*- and *BC*-miracles. The stories of the duel and the miracle of the Ouse Bridge might cautiously be suggested to share characteristics with the *BC* group because the use of “*sepulchrum*” is avoided, though the possibility that they reflect the inconsistency found in the *A*-miracles can not be eliminated entirely.<sup>59</sup> One *A*-miracle (no. 32) deserves special attention. Norton categorises it on the basis that it took place in the same feast (*eadem festivitatem*) as the preceding miracles, and his assignment is probably correct.<sup>60</sup> This miracle, however, shares many characteristics with the *BC*-miracles not found in the *A*-miracles. The cured woman is given a name, Albreda; the location of the miracle is called the “*tumulum*” rather than the expected “*sepulchrum*”; and St

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<sup>56</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:537-540.

<sup>57</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:537-540.

<sup>58</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 3:124-126; Norton, *St William*, 192-195; Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 85-87.

<sup>59</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:538-539.

<sup>60</sup> Norton, *St William*, 154-156.

William is referred to as both “*beatus*” and “*sanctus*”.<sup>61</sup> These characteristics do not require its removal from the *A*-miracles but they do suggest some textual instability. Such instability, and the changes observed between the *A*-miracles and the later *BC*-miracles, could very well indicate changes to the cult of St William during the thirteenth century.

As indicated above, the empty tomb of St William remained a site of veneration after the translation of his relics in 1284 and shifts in terms in the miracle stories may reflect this historical change. Indeed, the translation narratives emphasise distinctions between the multiple sites of St William’s cult within the Minster, perhaps evidence of a complex topography of the cult. The greater precision of narrative descriptions concerning the cult may have reflected changing realities and encouraged, or even reinforced, such distinctions. Although the translation narratives survive from a later period, their textual stability, and the survival of breviaries from earlier periods suggests a composition date close to the translation.<sup>62</sup> Nearly identical readings for the feast of St William’s translation from both early and late fifteenth-century breviaries reveal clerical perceptions of differences between the tomb in the nave and the new shrine further east: “*Sic igitur Sancti Willelmi corpus cum solennitate qua deuit ab imo in altum a communi loco in chorum uenerabiliter est translatum*”.<sup>63</sup> These readings differentiate between associations of the cultic sites, one being low and common and the other being high and associated with clergy. The readings make further distinctions between these categories:

...rex ipse cum episcopis qui aderant, capsam in qua errant sanctae reliquiae in humeris suis circa partem unam chori ad locum ubi nunc corpus Sancti requiescit solempniter bajulabant. Non enim in corpus ecclesiae descendere poterant prae multitudine maxima populi.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:537.

<sup>62</sup> Ker & Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts*, 756-759, 813-815.

<sup>63</sup> “And, therefore, the body of Saint William, with the solemnity due to it, was reverently translated from a low place to a high place, from a common place into the choir.” Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:546, 2:550.

<sup>64</sup> “the king himself, with the bishops who were taking part, solemnly carried the casket, in which were the holy relics, on their shoulders around one part of the choir to the place where the body of the saint now rested. Indeed, they could not descend into the body of the church in the face of the great multitude of people.” Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:546, 2:550.

There is, here, an association of a new resting place with the bishops and anointed king carrying St William's relics, as well as a distinction between the liturgically higher choir and the low body of the church into which the relics could not descend (*descendere*). It appears, ironically, that the great devotion drawing the crowd also prevented them from coming close to their devotional goal, namely the relics. The image of crowd, potentially unmanageable and unpredictable, contrasts strongly with the solemn (*solempniter*), reverent (*uenerabiliter*), and prepared (*praeparata*) translation of the relics by bishops and the king.<sup>65</sup> The description of the great crowd may, of course, be a narrative construction designed to suggest St William's popularity, rather than a historically accurate description, but it remains a construction that distinguishes between organisation and potential chaos. It suggests that cathedral clergy saw the cult as something to be organised, even protected, from the potentially unpredictable participation of the people. Barbara Abou-el-Haj indicates this tension between orchestrated and controlled devotion and volatile and unstable public veneration in saints' cults.<sup>66</sup>

It seems, therefore, that two separate cultic sites of St William developed towards the later medieval period. Archbishop Melton contributed to the cost of a new monument above the empty tomb in the early fourteenth century, which suggests the site's continued popularity as a pilgrim destination and archiepiscopal approval of this.<sup>67</sup> The later St William window, however, may be the best record of changes within the cult. Only three, possibly four, of the twenty-three depictions of the tomb in the window show priests and in two, or three, of these cases they appear at its altar.<sup>68</sup> This positions them not as pilgrims or petitioners but as liturgically separate individuals assisting the prayers of the people and orchestrating the cult. Where clergy do appear more often is with the portable feretory containing St William's relics, which is thought to have stood at the more restricted shrine east of the high altar. From the

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<sup>65</sup> Raine ed., *Historians*, 2:546, 2:550.

<sup>66</sup> Abou-el-Haj, *Cult of Saints*, 3.

<sup>67</sup> French, *St William Window*, 7; McCarter, 'Notes on St William', 31; Wilson, *Shrines of St William*, 12-17.

<sup>68</sup> French, *St William Window*, 70, 82, 85, 96, plates 13, 15.

early fourteenth century, free access to the eastern shrine was limited by doors.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the window is awkward to view from either the north or south aisles east of the crossing, along which pilgrims may have approached the shrine. Indeed, the best vantage point for viewing the window is the clerical space of the south side of the steps between the modern choir stalls and high altar. Even from here, stonework obstructs the uppermost panels depicting many of St William's miracles. The most visible portion is the panels depicting his clerical life, perhaps an example to viewing clergy.<sup>70</sup> The window cannot, therefore, automatically be thought to be exclusively for illiterate pilgrims moving along the choir aisles to the shrine. Literate clergy could learn from it, because, just as the study of *pastoralia* recalled that they did not lose their vernacular upon learning Latin (p. 94), so too they did not cease to draw inspiration from pictures when they learned to read.

The split of the cult into two sites, one associated with the laity and one associated with clergy, indicates the accommodation that could exist between clergy and laity. There is no evidence that clergy tried to suppress veneration of St William at his empty tomb, and Archbishop Melton's contribution to a memorial here suggests his acceptance of the practice. Nor is there any evidence of lay reaction against the removal of the primary relics to a relatively inaccessible shrine. These divisions were, to be sure, not absolute and laity probably still had some access to the shrine, but its position and the availability of the tomb most likely resulted in a *de facto* division of the cult. There was likely little interaction between the different parties involved in the cult, not least because of apparently conscious efforts at their separation. The divisions between these sites of St William's cult may have contributed to disruptions in the dialogue between clergy and laity who could sustain their own devotional practices with minimal interaction with the other group. This does, however, show that the laity could make important contributions to devotional practices, and had the potential to

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<sup>69</sup> French, *St William Window*, 95, 97, 102, 103, 106; Nilson, *Cathedral Shines*, 35-42. These doors survive in the workrooms of York Minster's stoneyard.

<sup>70</sup> These observations were made during a visit to York Minster on 31 October 2008.

construct their own practices that operated within official expectations and co-existed with them rather than challenged them.

#### *ORTHODOX POSSIBILITIES: THE CASE OF THE FOSTON VIRGIN*

The case of a small devotional cult in the East Riding of Yorkshire shows how, even with more interaction between clergy and laity than in the example of St William, laity still maintained their position within dialogues with ecclesiastical authorities. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary was, perhaps, the most universal saintly cult of the medieval period. Her patronage and intercession extended to religious orders, churches, and individual petitioners. The universal cult manifested itself in myriad forms at local levels, and its organisation and management were located at these levels.<sup>71</sup> Two early fourteenth-century entries in Archbishop Greenfield's register indicate that an image (*ymago*) of the Virgin in Foston-on-the-Wolds in Yorkshire's East Riding had attracted a cultic following.<sup>72</sup> The sudden emergence of Marian cults, often associated with miracle-working statues or images, was not uncommon in the period and these often ended as suddenly as they began.<sup>73</sup> Nor was a Marian statue in the region attracting pilgrims and votive offerings an uncommon occurrence in the region. A statue of the Virgin in Beverley Minster attracted offerings exceeded only by those made at the shrine of St John of Beverley while another Marian statue with recorded offerings stood in the nave of St Mary's church in Beverley. In the fifteenth-century, a statue to which a group of men made a pilgrimage is recorded at the unidentified settlement of Stanour, probably near Selby.<sup>74</sup> It is not known whether the Foston Virgin was a statue or painting but the management of the cult or, rather, the management of the relationships and disputes concerning it produced an impressive number of records for a local devotion. These appear to indicate a cult of some stability, although it is possible that the fuller documentary

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<sup>71</sup> Rubin, *Mother of God*, 121-282.

<sup>72</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, nos. 3:1576, 3:1597.

<sup>73</sup> Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, 276-279.

<sup>74</sup> BIA, CP F 240; *VCH Yorks. E.R.*, 6:61.

record, lacking for most other Marian cults, reveals a longevity at Foston that may have gone unrecorded in other Marian cults. The records concerning the Foston Virgin indicate a number of conflicting interests in the cult, which reveal the participation of the groups involved.

The cult of the Foston Virgin is not unknown to historians, particularly art historians, who have described it only very briefly and often in relation to discussions about the use of images in medieval religion. Kathleen Kamerick provides a brief, but detailed, survey of most of the documents related to the cult although, since her concern was the use of medieval images, she does not examine the local context or relationships.<sup>75</sup> An inquisition records the early history of the Foston Virgin, which began when, "Thomas de Poynton bought an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the parts of Scotland, and carried it to a chapel in Fraisthorpe, co. York, where it stood for five years in his lifetime."<sup>76</sup> The date of this document, 1280, cannot be correct. It mentions the death of Poynton, who did not die until 1299, and records the sale of the image by his widow, Joan, to Robert Constable, rector of Foston, who was not instituted to that benefice until 1290.<sup>77</sup> The inquisition cannot, therefore, have taken place before Poynton's death in 1299. Joan cannot have sold the image to Constable until after her husband's death and, since the inquisition states that the image stood in Fraisthorpe chapel for five years during his lifetime, the latest it can have appeared there from Scotland was 1294.<sup>78</sup> The Foston Virgin did not, however, remain at Fraisthorpe because the inquisition records that:

The prior [of Bridlington], claiming property in the image, obtained divers writs to the sheriff of York to replevy the same, who sent Geoffrey de Eston with sufficient warrant to deliver it. The said Geoffrey went to the manor of the said Robert, parson of Foston, found the image in his house, and delivered it to William de Wynestowe in the name of the prior.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art*, 107-112; Marks, *Image and Devotion*, 109; Webb, *Pilgrimage*, 147-148.

<sup>76</sup> *Cal.Inq.Misc.*, no. 1:1210.

<sup>77</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:605; Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art*, 226.

<sup>78</sup> *Cal.Inq.Misc.*, no. 1:1210.

<sup>79</sup> *Cal.Inq.Misc.*, no. 1:1210.

Bridlington's claim probably rested on the priory's patronage of the church of Carnaby, mother-church to the chapel of Fraisthorpe, which the priory had held since 1147x1153.<sup>80</sup> The prior of Bridlington may have returned the image to Fraisthorpe upon its successful seizure and delivery in his name, perhaps in the defence of his priory's interests. Indeed, an agreement dividing income from Fraisthorpe, which outlines the division of offerings made to a "certain new image of the said Virgin there", appears in the Bridlington cartulary in 1310.<sup>81</sup> Kamerick convincingly argues that, based on the agreed division of income being identical to that arranged in the inquisition, this was the same image, perhaps refurbished.<sup>82</sup>

Archbishop Greenfield intervened shortly after this. He issued an inhibition on 9 April 1313 against the veneration of a "*quandam ymaginem beate uirginis in ecclesia parochiali de Foston' nouiter collocatam*".<sup>83</sup> The description of the image having been newly placed suggests another movement from Fraisthorpe to Foston. Another inhibition, dated 20 February 1314, indicates that the image, which had formerly stood in the church of Foston, had moved to Bridlington Priory: "*Sententia generalis in omnes illos qui adorant ymaginem beate uirginis in monasterio de Bridelington*".<sup>84</sup> Some violence may have accompanied this movement to Bridlington because the rector of Foston, still Robert Constable, complained against the priory in September 1313. He alleged that Prior Gerard and others, whose names suggest that they were priory officials, had "broke his doors and houses at Foston by Great Kelke, co. York, assaulted him, and carried away an image of the Virgin Mary and other goods of his."<sup>85</sup> Although this complaint mentions the same Geoffrey de Eston appearing in the inquisition, it likely refers to a new instance because two similar complaints followed in

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<sup>80</sup> VCH Yorks. E.R., 2:126.

<sup>81</sup> BL, MS Add. 40008, fo. 340v; Lancaster ed., *Cart. Bridlington*, 448-449; *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:645.

<sup>82</sup> Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art*, 109.

<sup>83</sup> "a certain newly placed image of the Blessed Virgin in the parish church of Foston". *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1576.

<sup>84</sup> "A general sentence against all those who adore an image of the Blessed Virgin in the monastery of Bridlington". *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1597.

<sup>85</sup> CPR 1313-1317, 60-61.

April and November of 1314. These, however, do not mention the image.<sup>86</sup> The dispute seems to subside after this and Bridlington and Constable made an agreement “*pro bono pacis et concordie*”, although there is no mention of the image.<sup>87</sup> The Foston Virgin disappears from records until 1331, when the prior of Bridlington complained that Roger, son of Andrew de Grimston, had broken into the priory in the time of Prior Gerard and carried away to Fraisthorpe “an image of the Virgin Mary worth 60*l.*”<sup>88</sup> This must have happened before Gerard’s resignation in 1315.<sup>89</sup> The following itinerary summarises the movements of the Foston Virgin:

before 1294: located or made in Scotland  
 by 1294: brought by Thomas de Poynton to Fraisthorpe, where it stood for five years  
 1299: sold to Robert Constable, parson of Foston, by Poynton’s widow, Joan  
 1299 x 1310: seized under warrant from Foston by Bridlington Priory and returned to Fraisthorpe  
 1310 x April-1313: returned to Foston church by unknown means  
 April-1313 x February-1314: forcibly (?) returned to Bridlington Priory  
 February-1314 x 1315: forcibly (?) returned to Fraisthorpe

The Foston Virgin’s story may, however, have continued. Thomas Covell, the vicar of Topcliffe, left to the high altar of Bridlington, “*offerendos ad ymaginem beate Marie in eadem ecclesia uocatam Melrose*” in 1463.<sup>90</sup> Melrose, which clearly refers to the image of the Virgin, could very well refer to Melrose in Scotland, perhaps the home of the image brought to Yorkshire nearly two centuries earlier by Thomas de Poynton.

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<sup>86</sup> *CPR 1313-1317*, 60-61, 148, 245.

<sup>87</sup> “for the good of peace and concord”. *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1669.

<sup>88</sup> *CPR 1330-1334*, 203.

<sup>89</sup> *VCH Yorks.*, 3:204.

<sup>90</sup> “offerings to an image of Blessed Mary, called Melrose, in the same church”. *VCH Yorks.*, 3:201.

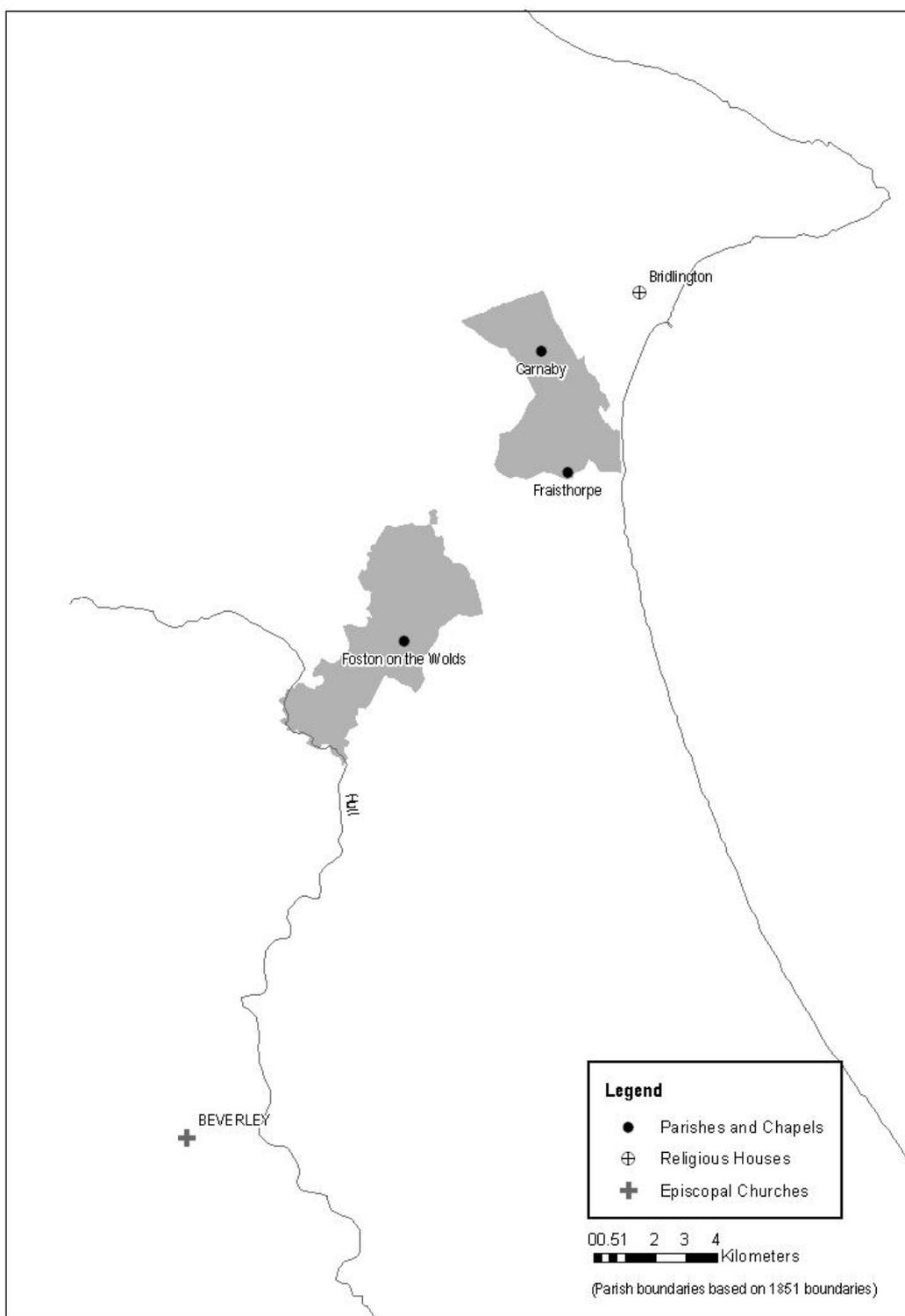


Figure 7: Places associated with the Foston Virgin

The history of the Foston Virgin reveals different people involved in the cult.

Archbishop Greenfield was its ecclesiastical regulator, and two similar inhibitions against veneration of the image indicate his authority:

Sane nuper ad aures nostras peruenit quod ad quondam ymaginem beate uirginis in ecclesia parochiali de Foston' nouiter collocatam magnus simplicium est concursus acsi in eadem plusquam in aliis similibus ymaginibus aliquid numinis appareret, sicque simplices ex concursu huiusmodi in ydolatriam et erroris deuium de facili trahi possent, fueruntque super ymagine predicta inter religiosos uiros priorem et conuentum de Bridelington' et Iohannam relictam Thome de Poyngton' lites et contentiones uarie prius mote ... Volentes igitur ut tenemur huiusmodi tam animarum quam corporum periculosi dispendiis quatenus possumus obuiare, tibi firmiter iniungimus et mandamus quatenus ... inhibeas seu facias inhiberi ne quis decetero pro adoratione dicte ymaginis ad prefatam ecclesiam...<sup>91</sup>

There appear to have been two important issues for Greenfield. The first was the manner of any veneration of the image. He did not suppress the cult but, rather, called for a cessation of its practices until an inquisition (*inquisitionem diligentem*) could be made about the motives (*causis, rationibus et motiuis*) of the people.<sup>92</sup> He appears concerned to ensure that pilgrims had an orthodox understanding of their devotions rather than falling into idolatry. Indeed, the prefaces to both orders echo biblical passages about King Ezekiel's overthrow of idols.<sup>93</sup> Interestingly, Greenfield's description of how people thought something of divinity (*aliquid numinis*) resided in the Foston Virgin echoes a contemporary comment on idolatry by St Thomas Aquinas. St Thomas stated that "*unde putabant in ipsis imaginibus esse aliquid diuinitatis*".<sup>94</sup> Greenfield himself had studied in Paris, perhaps around the time that St Thomas taught there.<sup>95</sup> The archbishop's second concern appears to have been the maintenance and restoration of peace in his diocese because he notes the disputes (*lites et contentiones*)

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<sup>91</sup> "Truly, it came to our ears recently that a great assembly of the simple is drawn to a certain image of the blessed Virgin, newly placed in the parish church of Foston, so that there appears something of divinity in the same more than in other similar images. And so the simple, by gathering together in this way, are easily able to be drawn into idolatry and straying into error. And there have already been set in motion various suits and contests between the religious men, prior, and convent of Bridlington and Joan, the relict of Thomas de Poynton, concerning the said image ... Desiring therefore, as we are bound, to act against the dangerous losses of both souls and bodies in this matter, as far as we are able, we firmly enjoin you and order ... that you henceforth inhibit or cause to be inhibited anyone from approaching the said church in order to adore the said image". *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1576.

<sup>92</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1576.

<sup>93</sup> Num. 21:8-9, 2 Kings 18:1-4; *Reg. Greenfield*, nos. 3:1576, 3:1597.

<sup>94</sup> "whence they thought something of divinity to be in these images." Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 20-21.

<sup>95</sup> Haines, 'Greenfield, William', 590-592.

concerning the image and he wanted to protect against danger to both souls and bodies (*tam animarum quam corporum periculosiis dispendiis quatenus possumus obuiare*). This phrase indicates that Greenfield had two concerns, framing the issue as one of both pastoral care and social harmony. Greenfield did not seek to control or suppress the cult of the Foston Virgin but, rather, to regulate it within the bounds of orthodoxy and ensure that it was not socially disruptive. Otherwise, he appears to have tolerated local devotional practices, acting only in those areas that his position as bishop required.

There were many parties with an interest in the image and the offerings made before it seem to have been a major point of dispute. Archbishop Greenfield forbade the making of any oblations before the image, presumably as a result of his concerns about idolatry, but this would also have removed, however temporarily, a major point of contention and have aided the restoration of peace.<sup>96</sup> Two documents record that Bridlington Priory and the rector of Carnaby, the mother-church of Fraisthorpe, reached an agreement concerning the division of any offerings, indicating that these had indeed contributed to disagreement.<sup>97</sup> The interests of the priory and rector of Carnaby may have been similar, both parties wanting the image returned to a location under their influence. Greenfield's order also mentions Joan, the widow of Thomas Poynton who first brought the image from Scotland, saying that she was litigating against the priory.<sup>98</sup> This was her first appearance in the records since her sale of the image to the vicar of Foston. Her re-appearance and action against the priory may indicate her defence, in support of the rector of Foston, of her right to have sold the image, rather than a desire to own it herself. The main dispute, therefore, appears to have been between Robert Constable, rector of Foston, and Bridlington Priory. This dispute over the Foston Virgin may have been part of wider local issues, such as a predatory attitude towards the parish of Foston on the part of Bridlington. Foston did not have the protection of an ecclesiastical

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<sup>96</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, nos. 3:1576, 3:1597.

<sup>97</sup> BL, MS Add. 40008, fo. 340v; *Cal. Inq. Misc.*, no. 1210; Lancaster ed., *Cart. Bridlington*, 448-449.

<sup>98</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1576.

patron and, indeed, several lay claimants disputed the patronage of the church in 1290.<sup>99</sup> This left it in a confused and vulnerable state. Bridlington Priory had, in fact, settled a dispute concerning tithes in the church of Foston in 1280, before the advent of the Foston Virgin, despite the fact that it appears to have had no claims to or rights in the parish. This may have reflected earlier patterns of Bridlington's history where it deliberately attempted to acquire lands and churches rather than relying on bequests.<sup>100</sup> The evidence, therefore, suggests local issues between the priory and the church, of which the Foston Virgin was just one point.

There is little information about the pilgrims who venerated the Foston Virgin, but the evidence, particularly of offerings, is interesting. Pilgrims made offerings wherever the image travelled, which suggests a regular number of pilgrims. It may even be that the cult spread beyond the parishes of Bridlington, Carnaby, and Foston. The arrangements about the division of offerings between the prior of Bridlington and the vicar of Carnaby suggest income beyond that anticipated from the parish, which local custom or charter probably managed. This was, perhaps, unexpected income from pilgrims travelling to the image from outside the parish. Archbishop Greenfield's mandates also suggest that the image had a wide reputation because his first inhibition was to be published throughout the entire rural deanery of Dickering:

... tibi firmiter iniungimus et mandamus quatinus tam in dicta ecclesia de Foston' quam in aliis ecclesiis collegiatis et parochialibus infra dictum decanatum ubilibet constitutis omnibus parochianis nostris tam clericis quam laicis singulis diebus dominicis et festiuis publice et in genere auctoritate nostra inhibeas seu facias inhiberi ne quis decetero pro adoratione dicte ymaginis ad prefatam ecclesiam uel alibi ubi eam transferri contigerit accedat ...<sup>101</sup>

This indicates that Greenfield perceived a need for the distribution of his order beyond the parishes involved, probably in order to reach a larger cultic following. Greenfield's second

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<sup>99</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, nos. 1:605, 1:619.

<sup>100</sup> BL, MS Add. 40008, fo. 331v; Lancaster ed., *Cart. Bridlington*, 440; Burrows, 'Monastic Property in Medieval England', 81-82; *VCH Yorks. E.R.*, 2:180-188.

<sup>101</sup> "we firmly enjoin you and order that, publicly and by our general authority, you henceforth, to all our parishioners, both clergy and laity, on every Sunday and feast in both the said church of Foston and in other collegiate and parish churches wherever established within the said deanery, inhibit or cause to be inhibited anyone from approaching the said church, or other place where it may come to be transferred, in order to adore the said image". *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1576.

mandate largely repeated his first but was expanded now to address the archdeaconry of the East Riding and, additionally, conventual churches (*conventualibus*) of religious communities.<sup>102</sup> His mandate suggests that he perceived the cult to be larger than he initially thought, requiring a more widely published inhibition. The Foston Virgin's appearance in Bridlington may have spurred growth in the cult because the nave of the conventual church, or presumably altars in it, served the parish.<sup>103</sup> The combination of an easily accessible conventual church in a market town may have provided an encouraging environment for the growth of a larger cult. Links between the Augustinian houses of the East Riding, discussed above (p. 92), may also have aided the cult, and Greenfield's decision to expand publication of his inhibition to conventual churches could well reflect this. Greenfield's mandates are not necessarily evidence of his fear of the growth of the cult but, rather, of his desire to engage with what he perceived to be a large population of devotees. The Foston Virgin, therefore, appears to have been a fully fledged local saintly cult in which a number of clergy and laity with conflicting interests participated.

#### *Interactions and the acceptance of the cult*

The case of the Foston Virgin suggests that the regulator had very little interaction with interested parties or pilgrims. Although Archbishop Greenfield's mandates are the Foston Virgin's first appearance in diocesan records, disputes and agreements about her had already appeared in royal and local religious records. Initially, therefore, the cult appears to have operated without any intervention, either approval or disapproval, from Greenfield. He tolerated the cult or, in the absence of complaints, was ignorant of it. Greenfield only became involved when problems, namely concerns about litigation, violence, and the manner of pilgrims' veneration arose. His threat to intervene may have encouraged the disputing parties to reach a settlement and, indeed, the earlier agreement between Fraisthorpe and Bridlington

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<sup>102</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1597.

<sup>103</sup> Caley ed., 'Survey of Bridlington Priory', 271-272; Farrer ed., *Early Yorkshire Charters*, nos. 1135, 1151.

concerning income illustrates that a settlement without archiepiscopal intervention was possible, if not normal. The later agreement “*pro bono pacis*” between the rector of Foston and Bridlington may have been the result of Greenfield’s threat to investigate the situation. Interestingly, there is no record of this promised investigation, perhaps because local negotiation and resolution of the situation made it unnecessary.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, even this settlement, agreed just over a fortnight before Greenfield’s death, probably needed his involvement less than his approval of negotiations already concluded. The interested parties would have had an interest, particularly a financial one, in assuring the archbishop that the cult’s pilgrims had the correct motives. Indeed, like the tomb custodians at saints’ shrines, the clergy at Foston, Fraisthorpe, and Bridlington may have instructed pilgrims in the correct manner of veneration and devotion to the image.<sup>105</sup> The canons at Bridlington, or members of its community at Fraisthorpe, may have been well placed to offer such instruction, perhaps inspired by the *pastoralia*. There is very little direct or indirect evidence, therefore, for a great deal of interaction between the nominal regulator of the cult of the Foston Virgin and its proprietors and pilgrims.

There is no evidence of how the interested parties themselves interacted with pilgrims to the Foston Virgin at its many locations. There was certainly interest in the image on the part of the proprietors because of the offerings that appear to have been a chief concern and the main point of dispute. The role of the Foston Virgin’s proprietors was probably limited to advertising the cult but even this, however, may not have been onerous or necessary, for pilgrims continued to approach the image wherever it went. This suggests that they knew of it and followed it independently of any clerical publicity, particularly after Greenfield’s inhibition, despite which pilgrims still appeared. As pointed out above, it is possible that clergy retained in the various locations of the Virgin acted as a kind of guardian

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<sup>104</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, nos. 3:1576, 3:1597; 3:1669.

<sup>105</sup> Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines*, 132-133.

or custodian, encouraging donations and talking to pilgrims. This may have been especially the case at Bridlington Priory where there was no lack of available clergy. Otherwise, it seems most likely that knowledge of the cult spread through the region by parishioners' and pilgrims' word of mouth.

Archbishop Greenfield's suppression, had it happened, of the cult of the Foston Virgin would probably have severely damaged it. Traditions of pilgrimage and donations associated with it would have declined because any pilgrims who continued to venerate the statue would have fallen outside the bounds of orthodoxy and accepted practice. The image becoming worth a great deal less financially, the disputes over it would probably have ended and the cult disappeared from official records. As it was, this did not happen and there is every indication that the cult continued after the inquisition, which, if made, must have found the practices associated with it acceptable. The dispute over the statue in 1331 suggests that it still had financial value, probably through the attraction of offerings and there is the tantalising possibility that it survived at Bridlington until the fifteenth century.<sup>106</sup>

The Foston Virgin illustrates how the laity could construct their own devotional practices and, even within interactions with ecclesiastical officials, maintain them within acceptable parameters. It was a layman, Thomas Poynton, who acquired the statue and set it up in a chapel.<sup>107</sup> He may have received approval from the chaplain there but, considering the lay responsibility to care for the nave, it is possible that he did not. It is apparent from the cult's subsequent development that this chaplain did not disapprove. It is not known how this particular image came to attract offerings and acquire a reputation for divinity among the local laity, but it seems to have been without overt intervention by clergy. There was also some attempt on the part of Bridlington Priory to appropriate this devotion into more official structures, which suggests that there was no great distance between the religiosity of clergy

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<sup>106</sup> *CPR 1330-1334*, 203; *VCH Yorks. E.R.*, 3:201.

<sup>107</sup> *Cal.Inq.Misc*, no. 1210.

and laity. Indeed, interactions between clergy and laity in which both groups participated could bring about the construction of local devotional practices. This is apparent in the disputes over ownership and the subsequent proposed inquisition of the archbishop. It should be noted that there was no conflict in these matters. Archbishop Greenfield was interested in discovering and, if necessary, correcting the motives of the pilgrims but there is no evidence that they resisted his authority, which points to the possibility of a dialogue with them. The Foston Virgin, therefore, is an example of official structures attempting to exert control over existing lay practices. This control should not be understood in a negative way because, in light of the continued operation of the cult, it seems simply to have been the desire of the archbishop to assert his right to regulate cults and to give his approval to acceptable practices constructed by the laity.

#### *SHAPING DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES WITHOUT THE CLERGY: TWO INDULGENCES*

Two indulgences offered in the diocese of Lincoln illustrate not only the possibilities of tolerant dialogue between clergy and laity, but negotiations among the laity themselves over the construction of officially sanctioned devotional practices. The conditions commonly attached to indulgences, which often included pilgrimage, intercessory prayer, and pious donations, generated several devotional practices. Indeed, the relationships necessary for indulgences, namely an ecclesiastical authority regulating them, interested parties securing them, and pilgrims fulfilling their terms, resembles the structure of relationships in other devotional practices. Many indulgences appear in the Lincoln episcopal registers before the Black Death and, working from these records, Robert Swanson has begun to re-evaluate them. He argues that prayer rather than money was the currency most commonly used to obtain the benefits of indulgences offered. He demonstrates the importance of this pious exchange within devotional practices of early fourteenth-century England, noting also that pilgrimage to and prayer at the burial place of the person who secured the indulgence from a bishop was

sometimes a common practice.<sup>108</sup> Two indulgences issued by Bishop Sutton of Lincoln in 1293 and 1294 are particularly interesting because they are examples of wider practices, indicate the regional connections described in the Introduction, and suggest ways that the laity contributed to the creation of devotional practices.<sup>109</sup> In both cases, a pilgrim was required to travel to and pray at specific locations dedicated to saints. Subjects of the diocese of Lincoln had to make a long journey in order to obtain these indulgences because the destinations were in the diocese of York. The journeys required by these indulgences, having a spiritual purpose, might properly be called pilgrimages.

The earlier offer of the two, dated 2 May 1293, granted forty days of indulgence to all those praying for several souls at a cross and chapel in Easingwold in the archdeaconry of Cleveland:

Indulgentia. Eisdem die, anno et loco apud Lond'. Concessit episcopus xl dies indulgentie omnibus, per crucem de Easingwold Ebor' diocesis in honore omnium sanctorum erectam, et capellam in honore beate Marie uirginis constructam, tantum seruitibus ibique orationibus pro animabus quondam egregiarum Anglie reginarum, dominarum Allianore matris et Allianore consortis domini Edwardi Dei gratia illustris Regis Anglie, domini Iohannis de Vescy militis ac Willelmi dicti Griuel de Easingwold.<sup>110</sup>

The second indulgence, dated 16 October 1294, is in a longer form but offers a similar remission from sins to those who, also travelling to Cleveland, made a donation at a hospital in Lazenby near Northallerton and prayed for its founders and all the faithful departed:

Indulgentia de Lythegreyns ... Cum igitur dominus Iohannes de Lythegreyns miles in quodam hospitali apud Leysingby iuxta Northallerton' Ebor' diocese per ipsum nouiter fundato quamdam capellam in honore beatissime uirginis Marie erigi fecerit ... omnibus parochianis nostris et aliis quorum diocesani hanc nostrum indulgentiam ratam habuerint, de peccatorum suorum maculis uere penitentibus et confessis, qui ad capellam memoratam causa deuotionis accesserint, et ad sustentationem dicti hospitalis ac capellanorum aliorumque ibidem Deo seruientium de bonis sibi a Deo collatis grata contulerint subsidia caritatis, necnon pro salubri statu domini Iohannis domineque Alicie uxoris sue dum uixerint, et pro aniabus eorum post obitum suum, ac animabus omnium fidelium defunctorum

<sup>108</sup> Swanson, 'Indulgences for Prayers', 197-219; Swanson, 'Praying for Pardon', 215-220.

<sup>109</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 4:81, 5:35-36. The 1293 indulgence is calendared rather than printed in full. The full version appears in Lincoln, LAO, Episcopal Register 1, fo. 72r.

<sup>110</sup> "An indulgence. At the same day, year, and place in London. The bishop granted forty days of indulgence to all those praying by the cross erected in honour of all the saints in Easingwold in the diocese of York, and in the chapel constructed in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to those devoutly serving there, for the souls of the ladies Eleanor and Eleanor, formerly eminent queens of England, the mother and consort of lord Edward, by the grace of God, illustrious king of England; for Lord John de Vescy, knight; and for William called Grivel of Easingwold." Lincoln, LAO, Episcopal Register 1, fo. 72r.

orationem dominicam cum salutatione dicte uirginis dixerint mente pia, quadraginta dies de iniuncta sibi penitentia misericorditer relaxamus.<sup>111</sup>

The records of these calls to spiritual action make it possible to examine in detail some of the people involved and to consider their relationships within the operation of these devotions.

Oliver Sutton, the bishop of Lincoln, was clearly an ecclesiastical regulatory authority in both of these instances. It is unclear, however, to what degree other authorities might have been involved. The fourth Lateran Council legislated against bishops offering indulgences of more than forty days except at the dedication of basilicas, and bishops, including the pope, invariably followed this rule: "*hunc quoque dierum numerum, indulgentiarum literas praecipimus moderari ... cum Romanus pontifex, qui plenitudinem obtinet potestatis, hoc in talibus moderamen consuerit obseruare.*"<sup>112</sup> A bishop's offer was available only to his own subjects and required ratification by other bishops in order for it to be canonically effective for the subjects of other dioceses.<sup>113</sup> It is entirely possible, however, that, hearing about indulgences, people tried to take advantage of offers not canonically effective for them out of pious hope or desire. Indeed, the carefully controlled system of this period began to break down in the later medieval period.<sup>114</sup> The contemporary registers of the archbishops of York do not mention these two indulgences so the offer may have remained canonically effective only for pilgrims from the diocese of Lincoln. The indulgence offered in return for prayers for John Lythe granes does, however, include a clause anticipating the possibility of ratification by

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<sup>111</sup> "The Lythe granes Indulgence. Since, therefore, Lord John de Lythe granes, knight, caused a certain chapel in honour of the most blessed Virgin Mary to be erected in a certain hospital newly founded by him at Lazenby by Northallerton in the diocese of York ... we mercifully relax forty days of penance enjoined to all our parishioners and others whose diocesans have ratified this our indulgence who, having truly confessed and done penance for the stain of their sins, go to the above chapel for devout reason and contribute, from their own goods gathered by the grace of God, charitable support to the sustenance of the said hospital and of the chaplains and others serving God there; and who also say the Lord's Prayer and Salutation to the said Virgin in pious mind for the health of Lord John and Lady Alice, his wife, while they live, and for their souls after their death, and for the souls of all the faithful departed." *Reg. Sutton*, 5:35-36.

<sup>112</sup> "We order that letters of indulgence ... are to fix this number [forty] of days, since the Roman pontiff himself, to whom obtains the fullness of power, is accustomed to observe this moderation in such things." Tanner ed., *Ecumenical Councils*, 264; Swanson, *Indulgences in Medieval England*, 11-12.

<sup>113</sup> Webb, 'Pardons and Pilgrims', 241-243.

<sup>114</sup> Swanson, 'Indulgences for Prayers', 225-229.

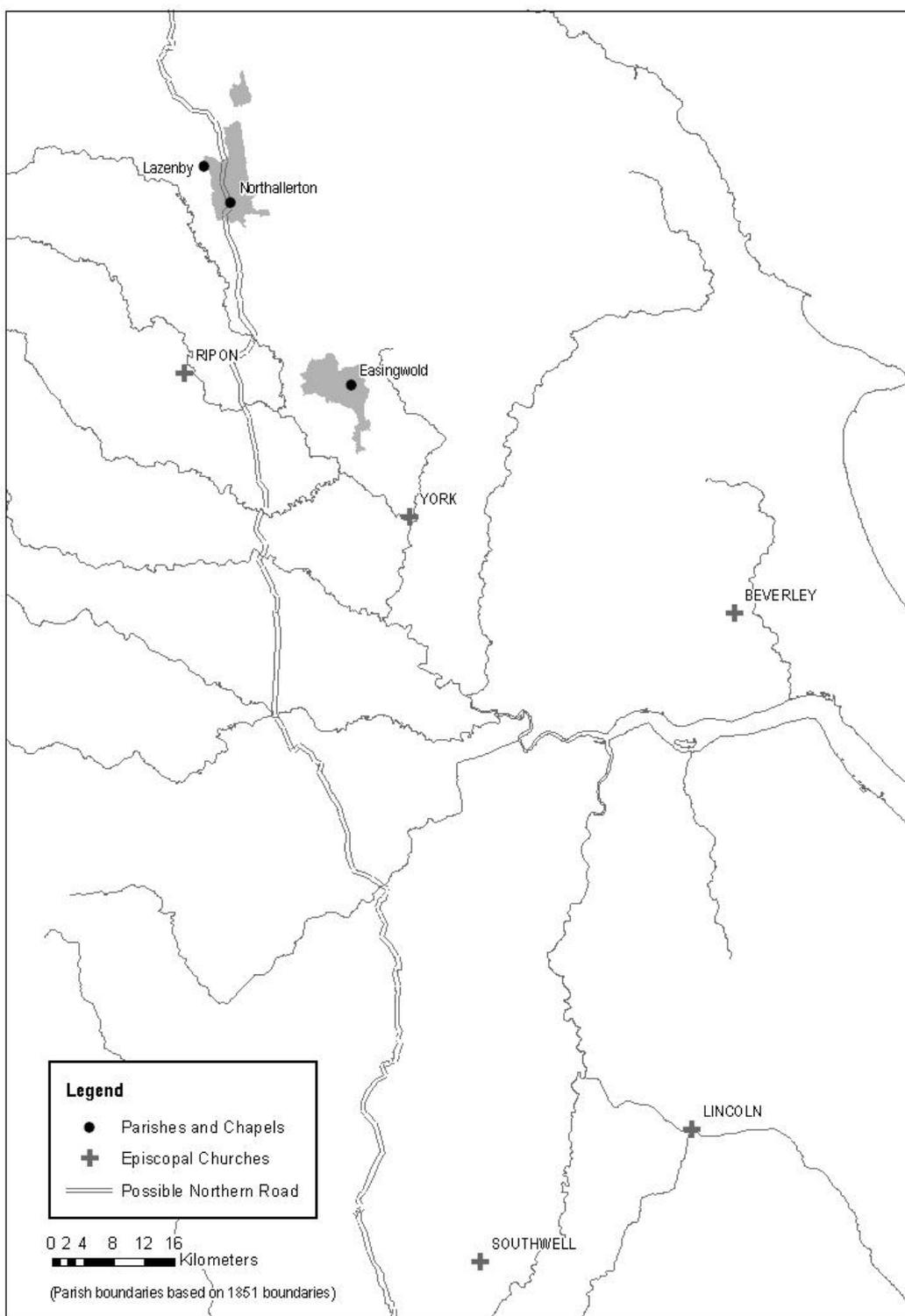


Figure 8: Indulgence destinations in Yorkshire

other bishops (*et aliis quorum diocesani hanc nostrum indulgentiam ratam habuerint*). This may indicate that such ratification had already occurred or might occur in the future. Although no record of this indulgence appears in the York registers, this does not mean that it was never offered there, for the appearance of so many indulgences in the Lincoln registers may have been the result of different registration practices. Indeed, even the Lincoln registers do not consistently record all indulgences.<sup>115</sup> It is possible, if not likely, that the archbishop of York did ratify these indulgences because the interested parties were from Yorkshire and it seems unlikely that they would have limited the potential spiritual benefits of prayers for their souls by securing the offer only for willing pilgrims from the diocese of Lincoln.

The 1293 indulgence to those journeying to Easingwold indicates two interested parties involved in securing it, namely William Grivel of Easingwold and Lord John de Vescy. Grivel was a local royal official. The king granted the bailiwick of the forest of Galtres, within which some parts of the parish of Easingwold lay, together with the lands of “Ingoldethweyt and Alwaldtoftes” to him in 1292 upon the death of John de Eboraco, the previous incumbent.<sup>116</sup> Grivel died soon after this, by 1295, when the king granted the same office and lands to John Hayward.<sup>117</sup> Since Bishop Sutton granted the indulgence in 1293, Grivel may have secured it in anticipation of and preparation for his own death. The influential Vescy family may have aided Grivel in this matter because there is a link between him and John de Vescy, the other named beneficiary of any prayers gained through the indulgence. Vescy appears as a justice of the forest north of Trent on the same date in 1292 that Grivel received his office and lands, Vescy having made an inquisition into an assart in the forest of Galtres.<sup>118</sup> Since Grivel was a bailiff in this forest and Vescy a justice hearing cases concerned with it, it is quite likely that the two men met in the course of their administrative

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<sup>115</sup> Swanson, ‘Indulgences for Prayers’, 199-205.

<sup>116</sup> *CPR 1281-1292*, 505.

<sup>117</sup> *CPR 1292-1301*, 145.

<sup>118</sup> *CPR 1281-1292*, 505.

duties. Vescy was the only legitimate son of William de Vescy, the senior member of the family after the death of his elder brother without heirs in 1289. The king had granted the position of justice of the forest to Vescy in 1290, when his father had relinquished it in order to become justiciar of Ireland. Vescy died in Wales in 1295 and may have helped to secure this indulgence in anticipation of his journey there. It is also possible, but less likely, that he sought prayers for his deceased uncle, also named John, the elder brother of his father.<sup>119</sup> The prayers requested for the souls of the two queens may have had something to do with this older John de Vescy, who, apparently, was close to the royal household.<sup>120</sup>

John de Lythegranes and his wife, Alice, are the only people mentioned in connection with the 1294 indulgence and probably the people responsible for securing it from the bishop. Indeed, a marginal note describes the indulgence by their name: "*Indulgentia de Lythegreyns*".<sup>121</sup> Almost nothing is known about Lythegranes or his family, although he appears to have been an administrator in the region. Archbishop Romeyn appointed him as seneschal in 1286 on account of his faithfulness and proven diligence (*fidelitate et probata industria*), which suggests previous administrative work, and the king appointed him to the office of escheator beyond Trent in 1295. He is mentioned as guardian of the vacant see of York in 1296, which suggests that he was well connected and of some local importance. He died before November 1303.<sup>122</sup> Lythegranes held land in Lazenby, the location of the hospital mentioned in the indulgence, of the bishop of Durham who held it in chief of the king.<sup>123</sup> Unlike the men benefiting from the prayers of the 1293 indulgence, it is unlikely that Lythegranes anticipated his own imminent death because he expected the spiritual benefits of prayers during his life: "*pro salubri statu domini Iohannis domineque Alicie uxoris sue dum*

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<sup>119</sup> Waugh, 'Vescy, William de', 388-389.

<sup>120</sup> Tout, 'Vescy, John de', 387-388.

<sup>121</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 5:35.

<sup>122</sup> *CCR 1288-1296*, 480; *CPR 1292-1301*, 140; *Reg. Romeyn* no. 2:1216.

<sup>123</sup> Skaife ed., *Kirkby's Inquest*, 103.

*uixerint, et pro animabus eorum post obitum suum.*<sup>124</sup> Nothing is known about the date of his wife's death so it is possible that he secured the indulgence in anticipation of it, although the couple equally could have obtained it for other reasons. Indeed, Lythegranes may have hoped for assistance in supporting his foundation, endowed 1289x1292, because the indulgence called for pilgrims to make a donation. Later indications of financial difficulties tend to support this suggestion. The enterprise may have started as an attempted collegiate foundation because its charter describes a community of clerics offering masses for several beneficiaries. The institution is described as a hospital shortly after this, which was not an uncommon transition for small collegiate foundations to make. Colleges and hospitals were popular endowments among new aristocracy because they were flexible institutions capable of harnessing the intercessory prayers of the poor, the sick, and clergy attached to the foundation.<sup>125</sup> Considering the lack of information on Lythegranes' family, he may very well have belonged to this social group, and the conditions attached to the indulgence certainly called for intercessory prayers. The endowment was eventually deemed to be insufficient to support the community there, and the king transferred it to Jervaulx Abbey in 1443.<sup>126</sup>

The lack of information about pilgrims approaching Easingwold and Lazenby is unsurprising. After bishops issued an indulgence, there was no need at the diocesan level to maintain any records of the pilgrims who fulfilled its terms because these were outlined in the indulgence. For instance, the Lythegranes indulgence stated that, apart from making the already noted pilgrimage, prayer, and donation, the pilgrim should have made a proper confession (*uere penitentibus et confessis*).<sup>127</sup> Grivel, Vescy, and Lythegranes might have engaged someone to keep track of people who arrived to pray but this would have had little

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<sup>124</sup> "for the healthy state of Lord John and Lady Alice, his wife, while they live, and for their souls after his death". *Reg. Sutton*, 5:35-36.

<sup>125</sup> Cullum, 'Medieval Colleges', 141-152.

<sup>126</sup> *C.Chart.R. 1257-1300*, 413-414; *CPR 1281-1292*, 347; *CPR 1441-1446*, 227; Slingsby ed., *Feet of Fines Yorks.*, 72-73; Brown ed., *Yorks. Inquisitions*, no.70; *VCH Yorks.*, 3:364.

<sup>127</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 5:35-36.

practical spiritual effect beyond comforting them or their heirs, since penance and satisfaction were, canonically, private matters between individuals and God.<sup>128</sup> In other words, a record of prayers offered by pilgrims had no spiritual effect. Some conjectures about pilgrims might, however, be made. The Easingwold indulgence, even if also issued in the diocese of York, probably remained a very limited spiritual attraction, although a response from local inhabitants should not be discounted. Easingwold lay on the edge of the forest of Galtres and on no major road or navigable river. It held a Saturday market and an annual three-day fair around the Nativity of the Virgin, which indicates the potential to attract outsiders to the village, which must have had practicable routes.<sup>129</sup> The Lythegranes indulgence had the potential for a better response. Lazenby was near Northallerton, which lay between Boroughbridge and Darlington on Ermine Street running to Durham in the north, and being easily accessible from Lincoln in the south. Northallerton also had a fair and market.<sup>130</sup> The Lythegranes' foundation may have benefited from casual passers-by and, indeed, hospitals often relied on such people for part of their income.<sup>131</sup> Although the institution had financial difficulties by the fifteenth century, the indulgence's call for donations may have aided the solicitation of money and helped its survival until that period, which would suggest that it successfully attracted pilgrims and income. Apart from these suggestions, however, there is little to say about pilgrims to either destination. There were probably three categories of pilgrims: those setting out to fulfill the indulgence, perhaps the smallest group; local inhabitants taking advantage of a new devotion arranged by a local influential person, such as Vescy; or visitors to the settlements, most likely to the fairs or markets, who were informed of it.

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<sup>128</sup> Swanson, *Indulgences in Medieval England*, 13-16.

<sup>129</sup> *C.Chart.R. 1257-1300*, 389; English ed., *Yorks. Hundred Rolls*, 265; Butlin ed., *Atlas of North Yorkshire*, 102-103.

<sup>130</sup> Butlin ed., *Atlas of North Yorkshire*, 102-103.

<sup>131</sup> Rawcliffe, 'Topography of Suburban Hospitals', 254-261.

*Lay interactions and the construction of multiple meanings*

An interesting similarity between these three categories of pilgrim is that clergy, apart from participating in the advertisement of the indulgence, would have had little interaction with them. Bishop Sutton does not appear to have dealt with the interested parties Grivel, Vescy, or Lythegranes after approving their request for an indulgence. Their interaction was probably limited to a single meeting or exchange of letters and, indeed, may even have been executed by Sutton's administrators. Grivel, Vescy, and Lythegranes probably paid a fee to cover the administrative costs of issuing, recording, and advertising their indulgence.<sup>132</sup> These three interested parties, who stood to gain spiritually from the prayers for their own health and salvation, may, in turn, have had no interaction with any pilgrims. Grivel and Vescy died shortly after securing their indulgence, which would have continued to gain spiritual benefits for them. A resident chaplain at the chapel dedicated to the Virgin in Easingwold may have told pilgrims of the indulgence and explained its terms to them. The situation at Lazenby was probably similar, with passers-by solicited by the clergy of the college and, later, hospital.

These indulgences do not appear to have become widespread devotions, perhaps due to the lack of participation by clergy, which otherwise may have been of some advantage. The following discussion, however, will highlight the ways in which laity could participate in shaping devotions approved by ecclesiastical authorities. Indeed, lay participation in these approved practices suggests that laity were not confined to a popular culture apart from and in conflict with official structures but participated in those structures. Interactions between clergy and laity to which the latter actively contributed may have been essential to constructing and shaping more successful devotions. The existence of established practices at Easingwold and Lazenby may have been the cause for the lack of interaction between clergy and pilgrims. Instead, interactions between different levels of laity already familiar with

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<sup>132</sup> Swanson, *Indulgences in Medieval England*, 113, 120-129, 161-164.

devotional practices may have shaped the indulgences. The Easingwold indulgence best illustrates this process. The cross at Easingwold was standing at the time of the indulgence and may have already played a part in the devotional lives of local people. The 1293 indulgence describes the cross as being dedicated to All Saints (*in honore omnium sanctorum erectam*).<sup>133</sup> This probably reflects the meaning that Grivel and Vescy associated with it because they, or their agents, must have informed Bishop Sutton of the name. On the other hand, the Yorkshire Hundred Rolls describe the cross as Paulinus' Cross in 1274/5.<sup>134</sup> This probably reflects the opinion of villagers, who informed the process of collecting information for the Hundred Rolls. These two names, less than twenty years apart, indicate that the cross had at least two meanings or its meaning was changing. The nearby Paulinus' meadow may indicate a name from a previous owner, but a saintly association is likely because St Paulinus had been an archbishop of York and preached in the north, an activity often associated with crosses during this period.<sup>135</sup> A saint's name for the cross pre-dating the indulgence suggests that it already had a role in the devotional life of the village. Indeed, crosses, as places of prayer, boundary markers, sites associated with saints' cults, memorials, or votive offerings, often had different or simultaneous meanings. Repairs and redecorations meant that their meaning could change to suit new spiritual needs in the community around them.<sup>136</sup> Grivel and Vescy, therefore, may have tried to appropriate existing devotional practices for their own spiritual benefit. This may have conflicted with existing practices, especially if pilgrims from outside Easingwold brought different appreciations of the cross although these may have been compatible with current practices. The indulgence did result in ecclesiastical approval being given to one meaning of the Easingwold cross but previous meanings were not suppressed and there is every reason to

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<sup>133</sup> Lincoln, LAO, Episcopal Register 1, fo. 72r.

<sup>134</sup> English ed., *Yorks. Hundred Rolls*, 82-83.

<sup>135</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 162-167, 182-193; English ed., *Yorks. Hundred Rolls*, 82-83; Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, 195-203.

<sup>136</sup> Moreland, 'World(s) of the Cross', 196-199.

think that they co-existed with the new meaning. It was, therefore, lay negotiation over the meaning and use of the site that shaped practices associated with the indulgence.

A similar process might have occurred at Lazenby but this is less clear than at Easingwold. An inquisition in 1289 indicated that Lythegranes planned to found his institution in an existing chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which may have been on his own manor. It may also have been related to the chantry he endowed in honour of the Virgin in the chapel of St John the Baptist in 1290.<sup>137</sup> Regardless, it appears that Lythegranes attached his foundation and subsequent indulgence to existing liturgical sites in the village, perhaps adding new meanings and devotional opportunities to them.

It is possible that financial interactions increased pilgrims' encounters with agents or clergy, although there may simply have been a donation box.<sup>138</sup> Pilgrims to Easingwold fulfilled the indulgence by praying at a cross dedicated to All Saints and a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary and, although there was no call for donations, pilgrims may have left a small gift. There was a chapel in Raskelf dedicated to the Virgin, which was dependant upon the church of St John the Baptist in Easingwold but neither Grivel nor Vescy appear to have had any connection to it.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, it stood over four kilometres away from the cross in Easingwold. Interestingly, an ancient cross pedestal survives in the modern market of Easingwold, not far from the church and within sight of Chapel Lane.<sup>140</sup> The cross, perhaps the medieval Paulinus' cross, may have had connections to Grivel's family, who may have tried to claim offerings made there.<sup>141</sup> It stood next to land held by William Peitevin in 1274/5. One Hugh Grivel acquired this land, called "*Paytfinclos*", from a Richard Paytfin, which is probably an alternate spelling of Peitevin, before 1345. Hugh Grivel appears as early as 1313

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<sup>137</sup> *CPR 1281-1292*, 347; Brown ed., *Yorks. Inquisitions*, no. 2:70; *VCH Yorks. N.R.*, 1:424.

<sup>138</sup> Swanson, *Indulgences in Medieval England*, 129.

<sup>139</sup> *VCH Yorks. N.R.*, 2:128-133.

<sup>140</sup> *VCH Yorks., N.R.*, 2:128.

<sup>141</sup> English ed., *Yorks. Hundred Rolls*, 82-83.

in records, and may have been a descendant of William Grivel.<sup>142</sup> The Lythegranes' indulgence explicitly called for a donation towards the support (*sustentationem*) of his foundation, which indicates a definite financial interest in the success of the indulgence.<sup>143</sup> Any resident chaplains, with this in mind, may have been assiduous in explaining the indulgence and its terms to pilgrims. These possibilities raise the likelihood of interactions at the indulgence sites between laity and clergy. The clergy at these sites were probably already associated with them in other roles, such as chaplain, and their role was probably limited to informing people of the indulgence and administering any gifts received. Moreover, local laity already frequenting these locations, who probably constituted the majority of the pilgrims, may have spread knowledge of the indulgence by word of mouth without further involvement by clergy.

These two indulgences and the practices associated with them illustrate how pilgrims, mainly the laity, could adopt new devotions and incorporate them into their lives with little or no interaction with the clergy. They also illustrate how involvement by clergy might give implicit approval or support to these practices, such as the recording of one of the names for the Easingwold cross. What is apparent is that clergy did not always interfere in lay construction of even the most orthodox devotions.

#### *TRENDS IN THE DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES*

All three roles within a devotional practice – regulator, proprietor, and pilgrim – had a part to play and the examples discussed suggest that interactions between these groups, often clergy and laity, were essential to the success of a practice. Only within these interactions was the devotional practice constructed and/or maintained, and these interactions were not possible without the participation of several groups. A low level of interaction – or dialogue –

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<sup>142</sup> *CPR 1313-1317*, 65; *CPR 1343-1345*, 453; *VCH Yorks. N.R.*, 2:131-132; English ed., *Yorks. Hundred Rolls*, 82-83.

<sup>143</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 5:35-36.

between these groups could lead to tolerated devotions, sometimes appropriated into approved practice, but never popularly successful. Distinct manifestations of a cult might arise, as in the case of St William. Interestingly, he does not appear to have gained the popularity of St Thomas Becket, even though he may have died in more sacrilegious circumstances, his chalice apparently being poisoned at mass.<sup>144</sup> The Foston Virgin, although locally successful, faced extinction on account of disputes between interested parties and concern over the manner of public veneration. It is unclear whether pilgrims ever took up the indulgences offered by Bishop Sutton because there are only possibilities that they ever came to Yorkshire to pray. In these cases, no one party had control over the cults, although some parties might be more influential than others. Perhaps, then, power and control is not the best approach with which to consider cults but, rather, interaction and how the different contributions of each role were necessary for a cult to thrive and continue to exist. Without such co-operation, each group's contribution to the cult remained isolated and the devotional energies of all involved were divided.

The challenges faced by the devotional practices examined here illustrate the importance of considering them as constructions resulting from interactions between laity and clergy because, without acknowledging these interactions, the histories of these practices become very different. The historiography of St William, who, without an abundance of pilgrims at his principal shrine, shows how an officially promoted saint without popular appeal might never develop into a successful cult. In this scenario, the laity almost entirely disappears and St William becomes a cult of political expedience devoid of any lay participation. Had Archbishop Greenfield made permanent his inhibition against veneration of the Foston Virgin, the cult may have disappeared entirely, ending whatever traditions were associated with it. Remaining pilgrims would have strayed beyond the boundaries of

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<sup>144</sup> Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, 3:203; Norton, *St William*, 144-148.

ecclesiastically sanctioned orthodoxy, perhaps to be treated by historians as challenges to ecclesiastical authority or even heretics. No known recorded cult or devotional tradition developed at Easingwold and Lazenby because there are no traces of pilgrims fulfilling the indulgences. If they did, they were probably local people and small in number. Despite the recording of the indulgence offers, historians might relegate resulting devotions to the realm of local and popular practice, separate or even in opposition to officially sanctioned led practices. It is only when dialogues with clergy in which the laity participated are acknowledged that the history of these devotional practices becomes both more complex and, perhaps, more accurate.

The space between what might be called popular and official was, therefore, fluid and easily changeable. Having appropriated a popular devotion into the official, a cult might then be re-presented to the laity with the authority of official religion. This would account for the records of popular devotions, as regulators sought to understand, regularise, and organise these devotions into official structures of worship, liturgy, and piety. This was not suppression, representing opposition between clergy and laity, but the possibility of co-operation between the two groups who each had a necessary role. These appropriations and re-presentations also required, if a cult was to continue in a new form, their re-acceptance by the laity. It should not be assumed that a popular devotion, once regularised and re-presented, was automatically accepted. The act of organising, writing down, and even adding enforcing measures tended to fossilise devotions. Indeed, it may be an error to see popular religion as unchanging when the opposite might be true, with official religion relying on writing and precedent, which had fossilising tendencies, and popular religion constantly changing. Historical records might not record history but, perhaps, the moment of change, written down in order to reinforce it. Moments of change to a cult or devotion were moments of crisis and potential; of chaos and threat. A cult might require a new type of interaction between clergy

and laity, without which it was likely to wither away. The removal of St William's relics may have made the cult less popular, but a lay site of veneration apparently continued. Under the control of Bridlington Priory, the Foston Virgin may have had less appeal than at a local parish altar. Hedged about by official guidelines, the cross at Easingwold may have become unattractive altogether or the new devotions ignored. It might be accurate to say that these cults were not unsuccessful in themselves but that a dialogue involving appropriation, re-presentation, and re-acceptance of the cult broke down or existed at very low levels in these cases. If, on the other hand, all parties remained interested the cult might continue, thrive, and change as this dialogue and negotiation gave it new forms. This recalls the opening case of the cult St John of Beverley, which, with its long history of changes, illustrates that dialogue between clergy and laity is not just a narrative device but reflects historical processes central to the construction of medieval cultures of religion.

### Part III

### **3: *The Relationships of Solitaries***

Where the regional *pastoralia* indicate the possibilities of interactions between clergy and laity, and regional devotional practices show the constructive potential of these relationships, hermits and anchorites, known collectively as solitaries, are a move towards the concrete. As such, this short chapter acts as a hinge between the preceding discussions, which described general trends at a regional level, and the subsequent chapters, which explore them at local levels. A discussion of solitaries is a useful turn towards this exploration because records indicate their presence across the region and allow some examination of them in local settings. It is important to recall that these discussions do not focus on the outcomes of the situations created by interactions between clergy and laity but, rather, focus on the processes of those interactions themselves. In other words, why these interactions and relationships led to a particular outcome is less important than how they did so and what their characteristics reveal about them. This is a short chapter because any examination of anchorites and hermits in their own right would be beyond the scope of this thesis, not least because considering the many complexities of solitaries' lives and place in medieval society would be lengthy to the point of constituting another thesis altogether. Solitaries occupied ambiguous points on most measures of the medieval world. They were not always clergy, although ordained or religious solitaries were not uncommon, but their solitary ascetic lives, sometimes defined by solemn vows and episcopal regulation, distinguished them from the majority of the laity. They sought the solitude of a metaphorical desert and might even be physically immured but their need for charitable support meant that they necessarily lived in or in contact with settlements. Solitaries were alive but, like the saints, could intercede with God for miracles, protection, or aid. They acted as mediators between the spiritual and earthly realms, as well as between people and this social aspect of solitaries is the focus here.

The interactions and relationships that constituted dialogues between clergy and laity contributed to the support and maintenance of solitaries, and there are several indications of

solitaries' importance in the region. Aelred of Rievaulx's twelfth-century *De Institutione Inclusarum*, written for his sister, became one of the most copied and circulated works of guidance for solitaries and several shorter rules drew upon it into the fifteenth century. These include two Middle English translations, one of which dates from, at the latest, the late fourteenth century and whose earliest tradition probably also came from northern England. Its manuscript, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 423, contains extracts from writings of the hermit Richard Rolle, as do related manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> Rolle himself lived and worked in the region while producing influential literary works, and had connections to other regional solitaries, such as Margaret of Kirkby and the hermit of West Tanfield (p. 63 above). Finally, according to the records compiled by Rotha Mary Clay, solitaries were particularly prevalent in the Humber Region Lowlands. Her sources indicate that the highest number and concentration of solitaries in England found homes in this region. Only Norfolk had as high a concentration, with the levels in these counties sometimes being double that of other parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> This consideration of solitaries' relationships stands, like the solitaries themselves, at an ambiguous point between the broad and the specific. The focus of the discussion here is on anchorites because, by and large, they resided in communities and their social interactions are better documented in the ecclesiastical sources of the period than the royal records wherein hermits often appear, and which outline their duties and privileges but not their social relations.

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<sup>1</sup> Aelred, 'De Institutione', 636; Ayto & Barratt eds., *Aelred's De Institutione*, xi-iv; Oliger, 'Regulae tres inclusorum', 156-159.

<sup>2</sup> Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, 227-229, 255-261; Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*, 161; Warren, *Anchorites and Patrons*, Appendix I.

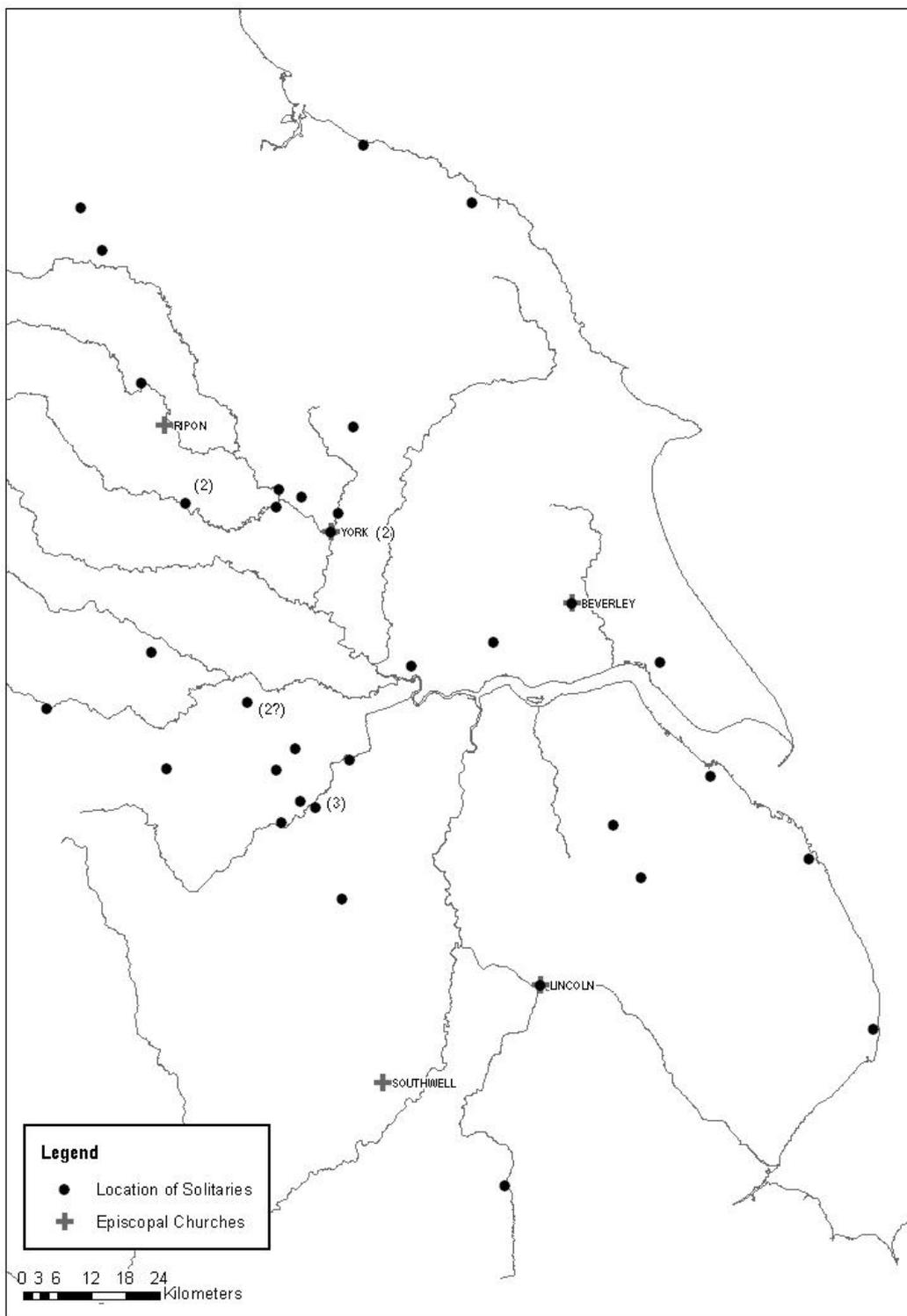


Figure 9: Regional hermits and anchorites before 1348

### EPISCOPAL REGULATION

Scholars have long recognised that hermits and anchorites were some of the least solitary people of the medieval period but, rather, were intimately connected to and reliant upon surrounding communities for their survival. Drawing on studies of late antiquity by Peter Brown, Henry Mayr-Harting demonstrates, in his still indispensable article, the central social position solitaries could hold in the twelfth century. He describes the recluse Wulfric of Haselbury as an important arbitrator within his community, closely connected to local secular and religious clerics as well as to laity. Susan Ridyard, revisiting this article, describes similar characteristics in the life of Godric of Finchale, while Ann Warren's work explores relationships between solitaries and their patrons.<sup>3</sup> These studies provide an important social aspect to knowledge about medieval solitaries who, often, have been studied as mystics and occasionally have suffered from ahistorical treatments.<sup>4</sup> This research has thoroughly explored the relationships between solitaries and their immediately surrounding communities and patrons. Less attention, however, has been given to the evolution of solitaries' relationships to ecclesiastical administrative structures and the implications of these relationships. Most current literature mentions that bishops had responsibility for solitaries, taking greater care and notice of them in the later medieval period, but it seems that many were unsupervised in earlier periods.<sup>5</sup> The ambiguous position of solitaries within ecclesiastical hierarchies is not fully explored, although these ambiguities may explain scarce records and the apparent inconsistencies of episcopal supervision appearing in them.

Bishops stood at the spiritual and administrative centre of every diocese, which position seems to have left them with responsibility for those, such as solitaries, who had no obvious immediate ecclesiastical superior as religious or laity had in abbots or parish priests.

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<sup>3</sup> Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Recluse', 337-352; Ridyard, 'Functions Revisited', 236-250; Warren, *Anchorites and Patrons* (1985).

<sup>4</sup> Jones, 'Langland and Hermits', 68.

<sup>5</sup> Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, 85; Jones, 'Canons and Hermits', 153-154; Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Recluse', 341-347; Warren, *Anchorites and Patrons*, 22-27.

Indeed, the early inconsistency of episcopal regulation over the lives of solitaries may have a great deal to do with ecclesiastical structures since lay solitaries were subject to their parish priests and, legally, they remained parishioners. It may not be too much to speculate that bishops became increasingly involved in regulating solitaries as the vocation attracted more clergy whose legal and spiritual ties were to him. The supervisory role of bishops appears to have been undefined in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, so it makes sense to consider their relationship to solitaries. Scholars have long considered, sometimes even assumed, that aspiring solitaries required episcopal approval for their vocational choice. Recent work has begun to refine this position, pointing out that bishops tended to take an increasingly active interest in the spiritual lives and well-being of solitaries only towards the later medieval period. Solemn professions by solitaries do not appear consistently in episcopal registers until the fifteenth century, and none appear in the York registers before Archbishop William Zouche (1342-1352), which suggests that regular episcopal oversight of the vocation did not begin much before this period.<sup>6</sup> A few references to solitaries survive in thirteenth-century diocesan legislation, none of which is from York or Lincoln. Concerned with solitaries' behaviour and local relationships, most notably that they not entertain guests of the opposite sex, the legislation does not outline their relationships to the bishop, nor does it mention any need for episcopal approval of their lifestyle.<sup>7</sup>

Evidence from the York registers suggests that, when he did become involved with solitaries, which does not appear to have been consistent, the archbishop had a passive regulatory role. The record of the earliest solitary mentioned in the York registers, Cecily the anchoress (*inclusa*) of Darton, confirms a grant of two crofts but says nothing about her lifestyle or archiepiscopal interaction with her.<sup>8</sup> The next record appearing in the registers concerning a solitary, called only "a certain anchorite" (*quadam anakereta*), illustrates, for the

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<sup>6</sup> Davis, 'Rule of St Paul', 206-209; Jones, 'Canons and Hermits', 153-154; Jones, 'Historical Context', 13-14.

<sup>7</sup> *Councils and Synods II*, 35, 86, 145-146, 165-167, 201, 359, 379, 443, 465.

<sup>8</sup> *Reg. Gray*, no. 1:281.

first time, a characteristic of the relationship between the solitary and the archbishop that almost always appears until at least the early fourteenth century:

Pro quadam anakereta. W., etc., dilecto filio T., archidiacono Notingeham, salutem. Accessit ad nos latrx presentium affectuose petens heremitagium sibi assignatum in qua vitam anakoritae suo perpetuo ducere posset, liberius Deo seruitura.<sup>9</sup>

From this record until part way through Archbishop Greenfield's pontificate, all references concerning the regulation of solitaries indicate that it was they who, through an intermediary or in person, approached the archbishop. Terms such as "present petitioner" (*latrx presentium*) or "humble supplicant" (*humiliter supplicans; humiliter supplicauit*) consistently position the solitary as requesting assistance from the archbishop. The records often explicitly frame these petitions as approaches to the archbishop (*accessit ad nos*), or in phrases that are less explicit but still suggest a process of petitioning him (*nobis ... agentis*). Occasionally, the archbishop appears to offer a reply to some unrecorded but implicit petition, such as to the laudable proposition of a solitary named Agnes (*laudabili propositio Agnetis*).<sup>10</sup> Three entries from the early fourteenth century refer to a licence granted by the archbishop. In 1310 and 1315, Greenfield refers to a licence granted to an anchorite by the bishop of St Andrews (*sui ordinis licentia; licentia praelati*), and, in 1320, Archbishop Melton refers to the licence of a recluse named Margaret (*licentia domine Margarete*). Both of these anchorites were nuns and the use of the term licence probably refers to permission granted in response to a petition for release from their communities and subsequent enclosure rather than a formal system of licences.<sup>11</sup> None of these records seem to indicate a regular system by which the archbishop regulated solitaries but, rather, suggest that he responded to requests from individuals who had the need, ability, or initiative to approach him. Interestingly, there are no references to the known solitaries of northern Lincolnshire in the Lincoln registers. This could, as described in

<sup>9</sup> "For a certain anchoress. W[alter], etc., to his dear son T., the archdeacon of Nottingham, greetings. The present petitioner approached us earnestly petitioning the assignment of a hermitage to herself, in which she could lead the life of an anchoress for her entire life, to serve God more freely." *Reg. Giffard*, no. 664.

<sup>10</sup> *Reg. Giffard*, no. 403; *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 2:1069; *Reg. Romeyn*, nos. 1:349, 1:388, 2:20; *Reg. Wickwane*, no. 235.

<sup>11</sup> Raine ed., *Northern Letters*, no. 123; *Reg. Melton*, no. 2:37.

the Introduction (pp. 37-40), be the result of different registration practices but it could also indicate similarly ambiguous and inconsistent relationships between the solitaries of the diocese and their bishop.

If, as it seems, anchorites approached the archbishop for approval rather than relied upon his active regulation, then it is possible that their relationship to him and the ecclesiastical administration was not as clear as normally thought. A twelfth-century pontifical from the southern province, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian D.xv, does contain instructions for the enclosure of anchorites, which indicates that bishops could be involved in the life of solitaries in a ceremonial capacity, but their further involvement does not seem to have been mandatory.<sup>12</sup> Relations between solitaries and the ecclesiastical administration may, instead, have been self-imposed, voluntary, or even optional. Discrepancies between royal and ecclesiastical records appear to support this possibility. Almost half of the known solitaries living in Yorkshire during this period appear in royal records but not in ecclesiastical records, which may indicate that they never received archiepiscopal approval.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, only the anchorites of Doncaster appear in both types of record.<sup>14</sup> This argument from silence is certainly not conclusive, but two pieces of evidence, which are not obscure examples, suggest that the existence of solitaries lacking any sort of archiepiscopal recognition was not unusual. Aelred's *De Institutione Inclusarum*, still circulating in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, does not mention the need to approach authorities for permission to lead a solitary life. Aelred mentions local priests in a supportive spiritual role to those already solitaries, but only mentions bishops as people to whom an anchorite might speak without licence from their priest-advisor: "*Cum nullo itaque aduenientium praeter episcopum aut abbatem uel magni*

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<sup>12</sup> Warren, *Anchorites and Patrons*, 97-99.

<sup>13</sup> *Ancient Deeds*, no. A.5074; CCR 1237-1242, 232, 258; C. *Chart.R* 1257-1300, 444-445; CPR 1232-1247, 435; CPR 1281-1292, 137; CPR 1313-1317, 177; CPR 1327-1330, 146, 252; CPR 1330-1334, 1, 359, 464; CPR 1334-1338, 154, 313; CPR 1338-1340, 315; CPR 1340-1343, 13; CPR 1345-1348, 447; CPR 1348-1350, 63; VCH N. Yorks., 1:384-389.

<sup>14</sup> CPR 1327-1330, 315; Reg. *Greenfield*, no. 2:1129.

*nominis priorem sine ipsius presbyteri licentia uel praecepto loquaris*".<sup>15</sup> Aelred's composition of his rule and its subsequent popularity suggests the need of solitaries for guidance in the absence of any formal ecclesiastical interaction during this period. The story of Richard Rolle provides positive indication that a layman might become a hermit entirely through local arrangements without any episcopal, or even ecclesiastical, involvement. An office composed in his honour describes how he made a habit for himself and preached during mass in a certain chapel. After the mass, a knight (*armiger*) ate a meal with Rolle before interviewing him:

Postquam autem predictus armiger eum in secreto examinasset, et ex perfectis evidenciis cognouisset sanctitatem sui propositi, uestiuit eum sumptibus suis iuxta uoluntatem suam uestibus conuenientibus heremite, et ipsum in domo sua diu retinuit, dans sibi locum mansionis solitarie, et prouidens sibi de omnibus necessariis sui uictus et uite.<sup>16</sup>

Having received a place from the knight, Rolle was given everything he needed to pursue his vocation and there is no evidence that he ever received any subsequent episcopal approval. If local means were available, it seems that there was no need for ecclesiastical regulation in the life of the solitary.

#### *PATRONS AND LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS*

Without consistent regulation or support from the archbishop it is likely, as seen in the case of Rolle, that solitaries made their own arrangements. Would be anchorites particularly would have needed to arrange for some means of support and income before their enclosure. Aelred suggests that they live by their labour and, if unable to do so, arrange for their lives before enclosure: "*...de labore manuum suarum uiuat: hoc enim perfectius. Si uero aut infirmitatis aut teneritudo non permittit, antequam includatur certas personas quaerat, a*

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<sup>15</sup> "You may speak, therefore, with no one approaching except for a bishop or abbot or prior of great name without the licence or command of that priest". Aelred, 'De Institutione', 642-643.

<sup>16</sup> "Indeed, after [the meal] the said knight examined him [Rolle] in private, and, from perfect evidence, understood the holiness of his proposition. From his wealth, according to his will, he clothed him in clothes appropriate to a hermit and kept him for a while in his house, giving to him a place of solitary abode, and providing to him all the necessaries for his sustenance and life." *Brev. Ebor.*, col. 2:794.

*quibus singulis diebus quod uni diei sufficiat humiliter recipiat*".<sup>17</sup> The need to make arrangements before enclosure was probably particularly true for anchoresses, whose options for legitimate income-earning labour after enclosure were quite limited. Solitaries who chose to approach the archbishop also probably had to make arrangements for their life before making their petition because the normal response appears to have been to order an inquisition into the petitioner. These inquisitions were interested in their life and morals (*uita et moribus et conuersatione*), but also sometimes inquired about their practical means of support. In 1267, Archbishop Giffard asked whether Alice de Falketon would have adequate sustenance (*an sustentationem habeat competentum*) and many inquisitions are concerned that an appropriate space (*loco honesto et apto*) was available.<sup>18</sup> Some solitaries may have approached the archbishop in hope of his personal charity in these matters but none of the records indicate any such action or make a response to any plea. Archbishops might, occasionally, give or recommend support to a solitary but, according to the few records available, this was normally to help existing rather than aspiring solitaries, such as the alms (*elemosina*) given to several anchorites by Giffard. In 1315, Archbishop Greenfield also offered assistance to an anchorite who, having left her Scottish nunnery on account of war, had adopted an anchoritic life in Doncaster.<sup>19</sup> Orders to inquire into solitaries' lives suggest bishops expected or hoped to find that the solitary had already made their arrangements among neighbouring communities. Indeed, the ability of an aspiring solitary to arrange their own affairs may have caused the archbishop to view their petition favourably.

In order to make such arrangements, the solitary had to have close ties to networks of support. Some entries in the York registers suggest that solitaries made their arrangements with local parties. The confirmation of a grant by the rector of Darton, Roger de Notton, to the

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<sup>17</sup> "...she may live by the labour of her hands: for this is most perfect. Truly, if not permitted [to do so] by infirmity or tenderness, she may, before being enclosed, enquire among certain people from whom she may humbly receive each day that which is sufficient for one day". Aelred, 'De Institutione', 639.

<sup>18</sup> *Reg. Giffard*, no. 403; *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 2:1069; *Reg. Romeyn*, nos. 1:349, 2:20; *Reg. Wickwane*, no. 235.

<sup>19</sup> *Northern Letters*, no. 123; *Reg. Giffard*, nos. 459, 503; *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 2:1169.

first solitary recorded in the York registers mentions that he made the gift with the assent of the church's patron, Peter de Bechwait.<sup>20</sup> A later record also indicates that parish clergy and their patrons could work together in order to support a solitary:

Nouerint uniuersi quod nos, Iohannes, etc., concessionem, factam Agneti Muscegro per dominum Iohannem de Melsa et Beatricem, uxorem eius, ac Gilbertum, rectorem ecclesiae de North Caue, ad inhabitandum in cimiterio de North Caue, iuxta ecclesiam ... approbamus.<sup>21</sup>

The examples of Bechwait and Muscegro indicate that clergy and laity might collaborate in support of a solitary. Their actions may have been an expression of their personal piety, but it illustrates that such action took place, probably informally, at local levels. The only known intervention of the archbishop was confirmation of an agreement resulting from local interactions between clergy and laity. Several archiepiscopal mandates to inquire suggest that the arrangements of aspiring solitaries might include the wider community beyond those with rights in the parish church. Archbishop Romeyn twice mentioned that the consent of interested parties was part of the process of approving the solitary. At Doncaster he mentioned the consent of all interested parties (*prius assensu omnium quorum interest*) and at Kirkburton he mentioned the consent of interested parties and the rector of the church (*de rectoris dicte ecclesie et aliorum quorum interest uel interesse*).<sup>22</sup> Although the archbishop was involved with these solitaries, his order to inquire into the consent of interested parties indicates that local inhabitants had probably come to some arrangement before his involvement. Two archiepiscopal orders mention inquiries made among trustworthy men (*uiros fidedignos*) who were to provide an account of the aspiring solitaries, who may have wanted to gather support among their neighbours before the inquisition. Interestingly, these are the only two mandates to inquire for which a mandate to enclose, indicating a successful

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<sup>20</sup> *Reg. Gray*, no. 2:281.

<sup>21</sup> "May all know that we, John, etc., approved the grant made by Lord John de Melsa and his wife Beatrice, and by Gilbert, the rector of North Cave, to Agnes Muscegro for living in the cemetery of North Cave, by the church." *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:554.

<sup>22</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, nos. 1:349, 1:388.

petition, is appended in the register.<sup>23</sup> The lack of such orders attached to other inquisitions could be due to administrative or historical inconsistencies in the records, but could also indicate an unsuccessful petition, perhaps as a result of unfavourable findings among local inhabitants.

The ability of aspiring solitaries to make arrangements for themselves suggests their need for connections to influential and supportive members of their community, such as patrons. As mentioned above, scholars have long known that such social ties were important to solitaries but they have often focused on the spiritual ties developed from the cell or hermitage, viewing these ties as outcomes of the solitary vocation. Recalling the focus of this thesis, however, it is also useful to consider that the ability to establish that lifestyle was itself an outcome of previous processes and interactions among local communities, which can be examined. Rolle's story provides an interesting example of how ties to a patron, who could then support a hermit, might be forged before enclosure and, indeed, be necessary for it. Shortly after fashioning his habit, Rolle, fortuitously or by design, happened to appear in the same chapel as his soon-to-be patron's sons, who were schoolmates of Rolle's father: "*...filii predicti armigeri, qui erant scolares et in uniuersitate Oxonie studuerunt, habentes ipsius notitiam dixerunt quod ipse esset filius Willelmi Rolle, quem in Oxonia agnouerunt.*"<sup>24</sup> Rolle's ability to connect with locally important patrons reflects the experience of other solitaries. Examples mentioned above included rectors of churches and local landowners, such as Lord John de Melsa and his wife. Magnates such as the Percy family might endow a hermitage, as they did at Mulgrave, which they then granted to the abbey of Whitby. In this example, it is unclear whether the family retained the right to present an inmate to the hermitage or whether the right passed to the abbey but, regardless, any solitary hoping to live there would have

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<sup>23</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 2:1069; *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 2:20.

<sup>24</sup> "...taking notice of him, the sons of the said knight, who were scholars and had studied at the University of Oxford, said that he was the son of William Rolle, whom they had known in Oxford." *Brev. Ebor.*, col. 2:791.

needed connections to either of these influential patrons.<sup>25</sup> Patrons might petition the archbishop on behalf of their client and these patrons, as the example of the apparently well connected Alice de Angrum shows, could even be royalty:

Supplicauit nobis [archiepiscopo] serenissima domina, domina Isabella, Dei gratia regina Anglie, domina Hibernie et ducissa Aquitanie, quod Alicie de Angrum licentiam et consensum iuxta ipsius desiderium ut recluse esse possit apud Eboracum de speciali gratia concedere dignaremur.<sup>26</sup>

The archiepiscopal records suggest that patronage could also be intensely local and diffuse, not always involving wealthy or influential individuals, but the community as a whole. Orders to inquire into the reputation of candidates, which, interestingly, echo inquisitions into and expectations of presentees to benefices, were opportunities for local opinion to testify about solitaries.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, given that evidence about solitaries' lifestyles was provided by local people, candidates had an interest in cultivating good relationships with them, similar to patrons. One particularly detailed order to inquire illustrates the role of local opinion:

Volentes, igitur, de eiusdem mulieris uita, conuersatione, et moribus, ac cuius opinionis et fama in partibus unde oriunda existit habeatur ... tibi firmiter iniungendo mandamus quatinus super singulis predictis articulis, et an locus competens et aptus fuerit, an etiam uirgo dicata, an coniugata, uel uidua fuerit, et an aliquis se ratione persone, loci aut alias se opposuerit seu opponere uoluerit, necnon de aliis circumstantiis que occurrerint in hac parte, per fidedignos qui dicte mulieris dudum habuerint notitiam, et per illos presertim inter quos est plurimum conuersata, inquiras diligenter ueritatem.<sup>28</sup>

The mention of inquiry into local opinion and whether anyone opposed the project indicates the importance of local support to the solitary before they ever entered their cell. It also indicates local lay participation in and contribution to dialogues with clerics who administered the diocese.

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<sup>25</sup> Atkinson ed., *Cart. Whitby*, nos. 2:577-578.

<sup>26</sup> "The most serene lady, Dame Isabella, by the grace of God queen of England, lady of Ireland, and duchess of Aquitane, entreated us [the archbishop] that we would deign to grant, as a special grace, licence and consent to Alice de Angrum that, according to her desire, she might be able to be a recluse in York." *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 2:1069.

<sup>27</sup> cf: *Councils and Synods II*, 487, 602; *Reg. Giffard*, no. 109.

<sup>28</sup> "Desiring, therefore, [to know] about the life, conversation, and morals of the same woman; in which opinion and fame she is held in the place from whence she comes ... we command, firmly enjoining you, that you diligently seek out the truth about each of the above articles through trustworthy men who have recent knowledge of the said woman, and especially through those among whom she frequently converses: whether there is a good and appropriate place; and whether she is said to be a virgin, married, or a widow; and whether there is any other reason, person, place, or thing opposing her or wishing to oppose her; and also about any other circumstances occurring in this matter." *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 2:20.

The importance of these local and sometimes personal relationships to the ability of solitaries to continue their lifestyle is apparent when they break down. These moments often appear in records during times of change and crisis, sometimes recorded when a solitary tried to enforce an existing arrangement. For instance, in 1240 and again in 1244, the king ordered the administrators of the lands of the late earl of Lincoln to continue payments to Muriel, the recluse of Campsall, which she had been accustomed to receive during the earl's lifetime. Likewise, the administrator of the rebellious earl of Lancaster's estates received orders to continue payments to an anchoress at Pontefract.<sup>29</sup> The interruption in support to the solitary when these estates were administered in the absence of their benefactor suggests that some relationships between patrons and solitaries could be quite personal, rather than simply part of larger patterns of public piety, although it would be dangerous to make a generalisation about all such relationships.<sup>30</sup> Given the importance of local arrangements, however, and in the absence of much official regulation, it does seem that personal relationships between solitaries, their patrons, and communities were of paramount importance. Rolle's life, once again, illustrates the importance of these relationships. Although the knight, John de Dalton, examined Rolle and arranged for his support, Dalton's wife may have played an important role in the relationship. She, and her retinue (*multi alie persone cum ea*), are the only named visitors to Rolle in his first cell; he comforted her on her deathbed; and he left the cell after her death.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, in his *Judica Me Deus*, Rolle claims that some change in attitude by his patron was the cause of his flight from his first cell:

Nam uos scitis et a me sepius audistis me ibi uelle morari, et certe de hoc mentitus sum nequaquam, quia statim ut Deus scit et uos cognoscitis mutatae fuerunt quantum ad me qui ministrare assueuerunt. Propter quod mihi grauis fuit ... Porro, ut mihi uidebatur, paruum uel nichil de me curauit.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Cal. Memo*, no. 2167; *CCR 1237-1242*, 232; *CPR 1232-1247*, 435.

<sup>30</sup> Warren, *Anchorites and Patrons*, 155-267.

<sup>31</sup> *Brev. Ebor.*, cols. 2:796, 2:799-800; Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Rolle*, 467-470.

<sup>32</sup> "For you know, and have often heard it from me, that I wanted to stay there. And certainly I never lied about this, because as God knows and you know those who were in the habit of helping me were suddenly changed insofar as [pertained] to me. For this reason I was very seriously disturbed ... Moreover, as it seemed to me, he cared little or nothing about me." *JMD*, 2, 81-82.

Rolle indicates both a change in attitude and emphasizes Dalton's lack of interest in him, which may indicate that Dalton's wife was the driving force behind the relationship and her death changed its dynamic. Some fifteenth-century evidence, which is beyond the time frame of this thesis, also suggests that women could play important roles in ties of local patronage, a theme that will be addressed again in the final chapter (p. 258). Margaret Tattersal, whose thirteenth-century ancestor Joan had commissioned a *Manuel des Péchés*, seems to have supported an anchorage near Doncaster.<sup>33</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS

The processes and relationships through which solitaries constructed a place in communities suggest several conclusions. Firstly, they permit expansion upon previous work that examined their role in communities as self-fashioned individuals. Brown describes the holy man of late antiquity as the epitome of the stranger who fashioned his influence, power, and connections through his own spiritual and physical battles. Mayr-Harting, influenced by Brown, sees similar trends in the twelfth-century life of Wulfric of Haselbury, who forged a place for himself within the community, and Ridyard's treatment of Godric of Finchale highlights similar processes.<sup>34</sup> In a period where solitaries could not always rely on official ecclesiastical support, their need for a relationship to communities and its individual members, such as patrons and parish priests, suggests, however, that they were not always strangers needing to win a place in the community. Instead, it was equally likely to be local inhabitants who could see opportunities for living the solitary life and could gather sufficient local support for their cause. Even in the case of strangers, it was probably close links to patrons that allowed aspiring solitaries to recognise opportunities that they would otherwise miss. The construction of the solitary vocation in a community was a combination of the

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<sup>33</sup> Smedley, 'Free Chapel of Ancres', 505.

<sup>34</sup> Brown, 'Rise and Function of the Holy Man', 91-97; Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Recluse', 337-341; Ridyard, 'Functions Revisited', 236-240.

individual seeing an opportunity and a community willing to support them through their testimony and pledges of material aid. Indeed, communities and patrons could potentially undo solitaries by withdrawing their support, as Rolle's did.

Secondly, these local arrangements have implications that are mentioned briefly here but will be expanded upon in subsequent chapters. These arrangements and relationships worked with existing ecclesiastical structures rather than positioning hermits or anchorites in opposition to them and some, such as Rolle, were noted for their doctrinal orthodoxy despite their unorthodox arrangements. The co-operation and approval of local clergy and laity could be as essential to aspiring solitaries as that of bishops. It was often solitaries, sometimes through their patrons, who reached out to bishops for aid or confirmation, which suggests that episcopal regulation was not always imposed but could be responsive. The ability to reach beyond the community and call upon the archbishop indicates that local relationships contributed to and participated in official ecclesiastical structures in the pursuit of personal devotion and piety. Even when the ecclesiastical administration increasingly reached into the parishes there seem to have been few impositions on locally made arrangements. Local lay participation in inquisitions considering the suitability of aspiring solitaries, a participation discussed further in the next chapter, suggests that local relationships with official structures were not always ones of complaint but of participation, co-operation and even, perhaps, manipulation. These local relationships, for which regional *pastoralia* show the potential, participated in dialogues between clerics and laity, which, as the preceding chapter demonstrated, had creative potential. These dialogues between clergy and laity, to which both groups might contribute, may have been asymmetric at times but functioned with the participation of both groups. Clergy and laity contributed to the construction of local practices and, as the following chapters will show, operated in a variety of modes including contest, negotiation, and co-operation.

## Part IV

#### ***4: Narratives of Interaction between Clergy and Laity: Complaints***

The previous chapters examined the potential for interactions between clergy and laity and began to demonstrate their complexities. Clergy encountered the laity in pastoral situations and might even perceive demands from them; dialogues between clergy and laity affected the construction of local devotions; and these interactions could have roles in official ecclesiastical processes at local levels or even take their place. Two related characteristics of interactions between clergy and laity begin to appear from these discussions: the laity could participate in, or, at least, contribute to, official ecclesiastical structures and processes, which implies the possibility that the religious cultures of the two groups were not always separate or in conflict, but interacted and, perhaps, sometimes co-operated. The remainder of this thesis will test the records of the regional ecclesiastical administrations in order to explore and understand the possible modes of interaction between clergy and laity. To be sure, these interactions involved both negotiation and conflict but these, in fact, may be related to one another and both suggest the participation of local laity in official ecclesiastical processes.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the registers of the archbishops of York and bishops of Lincoln, which record the business of those administrations, including interactions between clergy and laity, are particularly important sources. Historians have long used episcopal registers as historical sources but have rarely attempted to theorise or problematise them in any detail. It is beyond the scope of this study to outline a complete theory of the registers, but some discussion is necessary. The purpose of this is to present ways, or modes, of interaction between clergy and laity and explore their implications. Many entries in the registers suggest interactions between clergy and laity and the particular examples examined here were chosen because they recorded such interaction or positively suggest it. Moreover, these entries are either well-documented in the registers or externally, or concern issues arising in contemporary legislation and writing, which allows for comparisons between ideals and reality. These examples, being chosen on the basis of documentary survival, are,

therefore, somewhat random and, although they may not be exhaustively representative, their randomness may allow broader suggestions to be made from any emergent similarities. No particular methodological approach has been applied apart from a reasonable assumption that these documents served a purpose and, therefore, probably involved some narrative construction, which has been sought and questioned. The narratives in them normally portray interactions between clergy and laity as straightforward encounters of command, obedience, and sometimes challenge. They do not reveal lay voices verbatim, but they do give some indication of the influence laity could have on the processes of administration by which the dioceses of York and Lincoln were governed. Examining these narratives and considering the processes, rather than recorded outcomes, that they document may provide new understandings of interactions between clergy and laity. Using the chosen examples, this chapter considers some of the theoretical issues arising in register entries and then examines them in two short case studies. These cases are: parishioners' complaints about chantry masses in a chapel at Houghton; parishioners' contests over oblations paid at the parish of Warter; parishioners' complaints over the lack of contributions by clergy to the costs of a chapel at Stittenham; and several villages' complaints against the nunnery of Swine. All four of these cases and their details appear in the discussion below. The second part of this chapter describes and considers the cases at Warter and Houghton in further detail, and uses them to illustrate the implications of the dialogues and narratives described in the first part of this chapter. The following chapter, building on this one, presents two longer case studies using the theoretical approaches developed here.

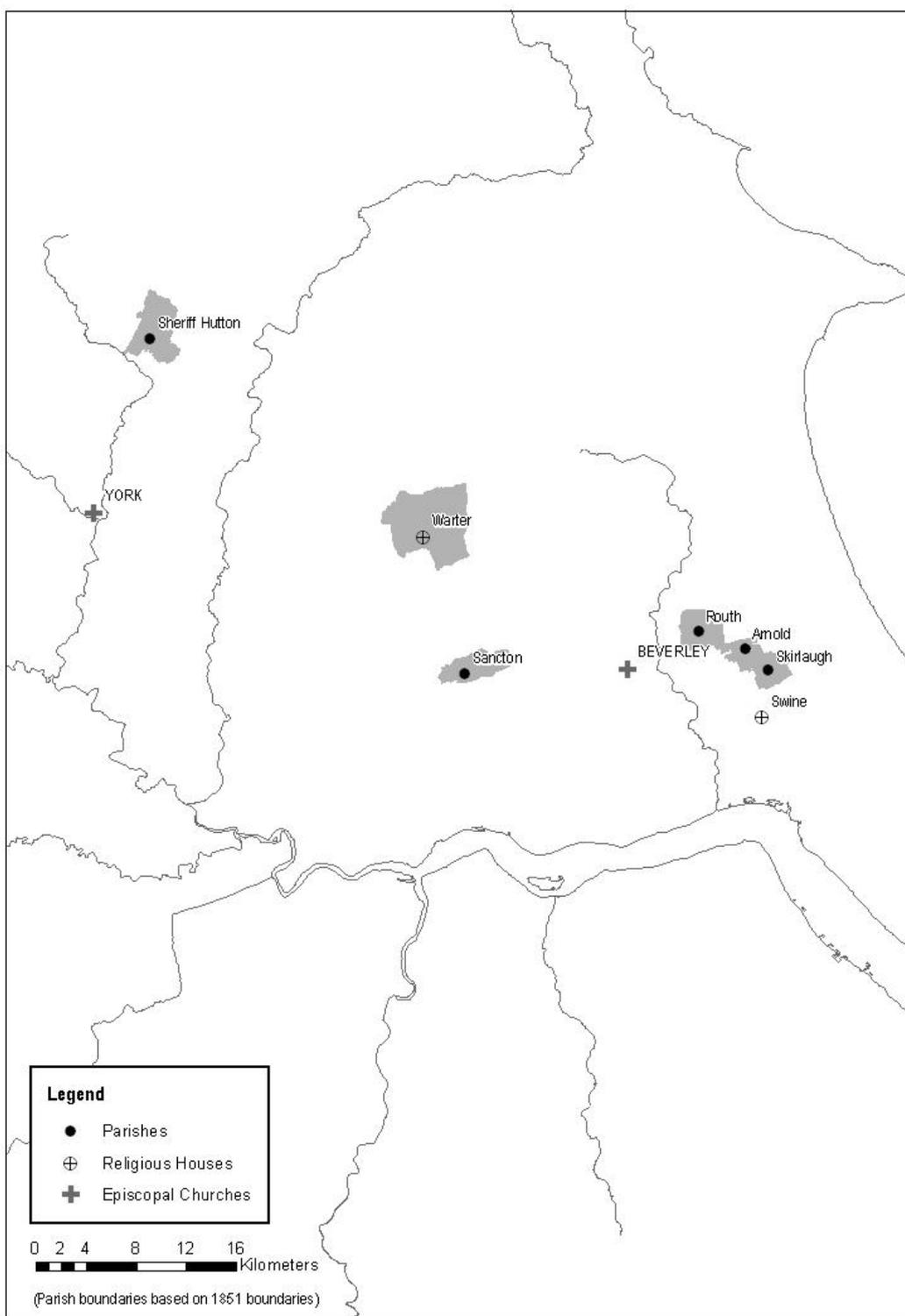


Figure 10: Locations of Chapter 4 case studies

*NARRATIVES IN REGISTER ENTRIES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS*

Currently, there is almost no theoretical consideration of the York registers or, indeed, of any of the registers from the dioceses of England as documents having a narrative purpose.

Moreover, historians infrequently consider the processes by which information for the registers was collected. Alexander Hamilton Thompson surveys the York registers in an article and describes changes in their form and organisation from Archbishop Gray to the nineteenth century but, beyond generalities, does not examine their purpose or creation.

David Smith provides brief practical introductions to them in his catalogue of the registers of England and Wales but, likewise, does not offer any theoretical analysis of their contents or style.<sup>1</sup> The editors of the registers published by the Canterbury and York Society and various county historical societies provide introductions to individual registers and bishops but normally confine themselves to describing, with little analysis, diocesan administration, the registration of documents, and the contents of registers. Rosalind Hill's otherwise excellent introduction to her edition of the register of Oliver Sutton, bishop of Lincoln, compiled by his registrar, John de Scalleby, is one such example.<sup>2</sup> Nancy Warren examines rhetoric occurring in records of episcopal visitations to nunneries, but considers the potential of these records for shaping women religious' identities rather than the processes of their construction and use as administrative documents.<sup>3</sup> Michael Burger's examination of institutions to benefices in thirteenth-century Lincoln registers provides some of the most considered investigations into the use of language and rhetoric in episcopal registers. His work examines the care and precision with which registrars used particular formulae. He considers the historical development of the registers and diocesan administration, and outlines a brief theory of a "rhetoric of command" that appears in them. Burger also outlines how the registrars' practices

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Guide to Bishops' Registers* (1981); Thompson, 'York Registers', 245-263.

<sup>2</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:xxvii-xxix.

<sup>3</sup> Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, 14-25.

suggest their awareness of institutional and social realities in the diocese.<sup>4</sup> The search for narratives in administrative documents, and what they reveal, is not new but the registers are, as just described, an almost unexamined source in this respect.<sup>5</sup> In order to advance this approach, therefore, the following seeks to understand just one of the many narratives appearing in the registers as a result of interactions between clergy and laity, as well as the contributions of both groups to the construction of this narrative. These are narratives of disputes.

The registrars working in the administration of the diocese of York used language and terms to describe people involved in disputes coming to their attention that have consequences for the use of the registers as historical sources. The registrars for a number of archbishops often did not describe individuals involved in disputes but, rather, described groups. For example, a complaint about chantry masses in Houghton, the second case study examined below (p. 191), appears as the complaint of “*hominum et parochianorum capelle de Houetoun*”.<sup>6</sup> Similar language describing a party to a dispute over a chapel at Stittenham in Sheriff Hutton appears in the register of Archbishop Melton, although the registrar does highlight the role of the local lord: “*magistrum Iohannem Gouher dominum de Stutelom et incolas ac inhabitatores eiusdem uille*”.<sup>7</sup> This dispute seems to have been recurring or long-running because Archbishop Romeyn’s register contains a similar entry where, again, the registrar grouped the individuals involved into a single party with their lord: “*domino Iohanne Guer domino de Stitelum et aliis quibusdam parochianis*”.<sup>8</sup> A dispute at Warter, the first case study considered below (p. 186), has similar characteristics. Although Romeyn’s registrar initially records the names of nine plaintiffs complaining about oblations allegedly coerced on

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<sup>4</sup> Burger, ‘Bishops, Archdeacons, and Communication’, 195-206; Burger, ‘Sending, Joining, Writing, and Speaking’, 151-182.

<sup>5</sup> Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 1-6.

<sup>6</sup> “of the men and parishioners of the chapel of Houghton”. BIA, Register 2, fo. 101v. See also *Reg. Giffard*, no. 716 for a published copy but where the editor corrects the Latin to a classical form not found in the register.

<sup>7</sup> “Master John Gower, lord of Stittenham, and the residents and inhabitants of the same village”. *Reg. Melton*, no. 38.

<sup>8</sup> “lord John Gower, lord of Stittenham, and certain other parishioners”. *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:476.

All Saints' Day, he subsequently reduces the group to simply plaintiffs (*querelantes*). Moreover, parishioners who challenged the plaintiffs' complaint never appear as individuals but as a group. Indeed, they appear simply as parishioners of the church (*parochianis dicte ecclesie*) without any names.<sup>9</sup> The use of this language creates a narrative in which it might appear that the entire body of parishioners spoke against the plaintiffs, even though, as the plaintiffs themselves indicate, only small groups might be involved.

This is not to say that the registrars only described people involved in disputes as members of larger groups since named individuals party to the dispute sometimes appear in these same documents. The parishioners at Houghton alleged that their rector, Thomas, was responsible for the chantry masses with which they took issue.<sup>10</sup> The parishioners at Stittenham complained that Henry, the vicar of the mother-church of Sheriff Hutton, had failed to contribute his share of costs towards the chapel, and their predecessors had made a similar complaint about an earlier vicar, Andrew, during the pontificate of Archbishop Romeyn.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, certain types of contemporary documents, such as tax records, emphasised individuals, which suggests that the clerical creators of records had choices among several narrative options to suit their needs and objectives. Indeed, the crafting of libels and positions by clerics of the ecclesiastical courts is an example of documents with carefully fashioned strategic narrative aims. One instance of this will be discussed in the final chapter (p. 270).<sup>12</sup> A more detailed study may, one day, outline the many narrative choices available to clerics of the York administration, for the registers of the diocese, unlike the neighbouring contemporary Lincoln series, contain entries concerning a variety of matters beyond records of institutions to benefices.<sup>13</sup> The diversity of matters appearing in the York

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<sup>9</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

<sup>10</sup> BIA, Register 2, fo. 101v.

<sup>11</sup> *Reg. Melton*, no. 2:38; *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:476.

<sup>12</sup> Brown ed., *Yorks. Lay Subsidy, 1297*; Brown ed., *Yorks. Lay Subsidy, 1301*; Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation*, 13-16.

<sup>13</sup> Thompson, 'York Registers', 247-253, 262.

registers tends to support the notion that registrars, having to deal with several matters, had more than one narrative form at their disposal depending on the issue at hand, such as an institution to a benefice, a mandate to inquire into a church, or mediation in a dispute. The records in these cases had specific purposes: the recording of the appointment of a cleric; the findings of an inquisition; the outcome of a dispute. The need to fulfil these purposes required several different narrative options from which a registrar could choose and, indeed, Warren's work on visitations implicitly suggests the development of different rhetorics.<sup>14</sup> The choice to assign individuals to groups is, therefore, not uniform throughout the registers but it was one available narrative option. It was an important characteristic of entries concerning disputes and has implications for understanding the role of laity in these disputes.

To assign people involved in disputes to groups necessarily simplified, combined, or eliminated any presumed individual voices and opinions within the group. In other words, the clerics registering documents constructed narrative groups with single homogeneous voices lacking any difference, disagreement, or dissent. These voices give the appearance of simplicity to any disputed issues, which appear in the registers as adversarial encounters between plaintiffs and defendants – often, respectively, laity and clergy – who occupy absolute and opposing positions. When, therefore, the registrars recorded that the parishioners at Houghton complained about chantry masses, only one complaint representing a single concern, apparently universal and unanimous, appears in the register. Although acknowledged as plural, the plaintiffs still speak as one in the record (*dicebant*) and historians cannot know the internal dynamics of this group, such as who the leaders and followers were; if any individual ventured an independent justification for the action or dissented; or, indeed, whether or not every resident of Houghton even participated in the process, despite the implication that they did.<sup>15</sup> The record reduces the matter to an adversarial encounter

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<sup>14</sup> Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, 17-21.

<sup>15</sup> BIA, Register 2, fo. 101v.

between two parties, the entire community of Houghton on the one hand and their rector on the other. This privileges descriptions of interactions between clergy and laity as conflicted, with the laity complaining against what appears to be the sole locus of power in the relationship. The framing narrative positions the laity as outside local ecclesiastical structures and, having no power of their own, they must appeal to the archbishop for aid. This tends to deny the laity participation in local ecclesiastical structures, forcing them to petition external aid for a situation in which they have no stake or position.

A similar process occurs in the dispute concerning the chapel at Stittenham:

Uniuersitati uestre notum facimus per presentes quod cum contentio mota fuisset inter magistrum Iohannem Gouher dominum de Stutelom et incolas ac inhabitatores eiusdem uille ex parte una et dominum Henricum uicarium de Schirefhoton ex altera...<sup>16</sup>

The language of the record, namely the use of “*ex una parte*” and “*ex altera*” to identify the groups, explicitly assigns the participants to two opposing parties. The registrar continues this usage later in the complaint, omitting the name of Lord Gower who, presumably, is now included in the group of the residents and inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> This reinforces the identification of the homogeneous group as paramount and prevents the historian from knowing the internal social dynamics of the group. Gower’s disappearance into a group without any particular role that might be expected due to his rank makes it impossible to know whether he enlisted the people of the village to his cause or they him to theirs. The record describes the pursuit of a single cause, obscuring the many potential differences of motivation or interest with which individuals within the group might have identified. The earlier reference to this dispute in Archbishop Romeyn’s register has a similar pattern:

...domino Iohanne Guer, domino de Stitelum, et aliis quibusdam parochianis ecclesie de Schirefhoton, a qua dependet capella de Stitelum, personaliter comparentibus, ex parte

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<sup>16</sup> “We make known to you through these presents that, since a dispute has arisen between Master John Gower, lord of Stittenham, and the residents and inhabitants of the same village on one part, and lord Henry, vicar of Sheriff Hutton, on the other...” *Reg. Melton*, no. 38.

<sup>17</sup> *Reg. Melton*, no. 38.

una, et domino Andrea, eiusdem ecclesie vicario, pro se personaliter comparente, ex altera, predictisque parochianis petentibus...<sup>18</sup>

Again, the record constructs a corporate plaintiff speaking with a single and unified voice despite several people personally appearing before the judge. The record hides any variation in their testimony, silencing individual voices that may have interrupted with encouragement, correction, challenge, or dissent the presumed reading of the petition, to which the record suggests total agreement. This lay group appears in opposition to the vicar and, therefore, is constructed as a group apart with no participation in local ecclesiastical matters beyond complaint to an outside authority.

The record concerning disputed oblations at Warter most visibly illustrates the process of assignment to groups and the construction of narratives of simple adversarial encounters. It shows that this process could even affect the record of a dispute between groups of laity. Nine named individuals who complained about the alleged extortion of oblations quickly became a single group of plaintiffs (*querelantes*). The archbishop ordered an inquisition into the matter before the plaintiffs and parishioners in the porch of the church (*in porticu dicte ecclesie, presentibus dictis querelantibus et astante multitudine parochianorum*) during which other parishioners defended the offering of the oblations.<sup>19</sup> This phrase, incidentally, contributes to the process of assigning the individuals to groups, namely the plaintiffs and parishioners. According to the record, an opposed group of parishioners claimed that all the parishioners, including the plaintiffs, had paid the disputed oblations: "*parochianis dicte ecclesie, predecessibus eorundem conquerentium, et aliis ab antiquo, ac etiam ab eisdem conquerentibus*".<sup>20</sup> The simple opposition between these two groups of parishioners makes the issue difficult for the historian using this record, which does not reveal

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<sup>18</sup> "lord John Gower, the lord of Stittenham, and some other parishioners of the church of Sheriff Hutton, on which the chapel of Stittenham is dependant, personally appeared on one part, and lord Andrew, the vicar of the same church, appeared for himself on the other. And the said parishioners asked..." *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:476.

<sup>19</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

<sup>20</sup> "by the parishioners of the said church, the predecessors of the same plaintiffs, others from of old, and also by the plaintiffs themselves". *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

which of the parties had an advantage in either rank or number. Furthermore, while it reveals obvious tension within the parish, it reduces the internal dynamics of the community to two absolutely opposed factions. It suggests that every parishioner took part in the dispute and eliminates or ignores the possibility of a third group of neutral or disinterested parishioners. The later description of a claim that the parishioners paid the oblations freely, customarily, and voluntarily (*prelibata ... de consuetudine et sponte*) also suggests the simplifying hand of the registrar.<sup>21</sup> It cannot be known whether he chose words from the testimony he heard or summarised the testimony of many individuals with a phrase of his own construction, but it is unlikely that every deponent – and probably not every parishioner spoke at the inquisition – used identical words. A record in Archbishop Giffard’s register of a visitation to a chapel at Selby demonstrates a similar process where the registrar may not have recorded faithfully the testimony of every deponent but summarised the words of several with his own laconic “*concordat cum preiuratis*”.<sup>22</sup>

The practice of grouping together individuals and reducing potentially complex interactions to simple encounters might, at first, appear to be an aspect of a narrative of clerical power over the laity. The fact that the above examples all concern complainants who were most likely peasants, and certainly laity, might support this argument, but such an explanation ignores several issues. The example from Stittenham demonstrates that the registrars could assign local notables to a group just as easily as they did peasants. Moreover, the practice of grouping individuals together in the records was not aimed exclusively at the laity but was, in fact, commonly used to describe religious communities where, for example, the phrases “prior and convent” or “dean and chapter” were universally used. A dispute over the provision of funds for a chapel at South Skirlagh named no individuals but only groups: “*inter incolas et inhabitatores uillarum de Southskirlagh*’,

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<sup>21</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

<sup>22</sup> “he agrees with the previous witness”. *Reg. Giffard*, no. 919.

*Northskirlagh', Arnall, et Routon nostre Ebor' diocesis ex parte una, et Religiosas dominas Priorissam et Conuentum monialium de Swyna dicte dyocesis ex altera*".<sup>23</sup> The record does not even accord the prioress a name and every term, "*religiosas dominas*"; "*Priorissam et Conuentum*"; and "*monialium*", describes a group. The registration of documents and control over their construction was, undoubtedly, an aspect of clerical power but it may have been neither the exclusive nor even the most important reason for the choice of narrative. Rather, this narrative may have been a by-product of administrative needs.

Since the entries in the registers had a purpose, it is likely that the registrars attempted to construct a suitably summary narrative. The register was a record of the acts of the archbishop rather than a comprehensive record or presentation of fact, which contrasting language from two cause papers from the ecclesiastical court of York illustrates. An appeal against a matrimonial decision in 1303 contains the depositions of three witnesses whose recorded testimony was nearly identical, with only minor differences in wording and no substantive differences of fact.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, a plea of assault against a prioress in 1306 records the near identical depositions of two witnesses, with divergence only on whether the accused used a sword.<sup>25</sup> The similarities between the recorded depositions in both causes, and in many others, suggest that the court's scribes did not render testimony into Latin verbatim, since it is unlikely that the witnesses repeated each other word for word. Rather, the scribes probably described the deponents' words in a narrative form. The repetitiveness of their surviving testimony is probably related to the judge's need to search for consistency between witnesses in order to establish truth.<sup>26</sup> The need to preserve comprehensive testimony for judicial examination resulted in every deponent retaining an individual voice in

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<sup>23</sup> "between the residents and inhabitants of the villages of South Skirlaugh, North Skirlaugh, Arnold, and Routon of our diocese of York on one part, and the religious ladies the Prioress and Convent of nuns of Swine of the said diocese on the other". BIA, Register 9A, fos. 395r-396r.

<sup>24</sup> BIA, CP E 1/2.

<sup>25</sup> BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5. This cause is discussed in detail in Chapter 7 below.

<sup>26</sup> Helmholz, *Canon Law*, 338-341.

the record, regardless of any repetition. The registers, on the other hand, recorded decisions and acts already made and became archives for future consultation and precedent, unlike the cause papers that, in a legal system not based on precedent, most likely remained unconsulted for legal argument after final judgement. Put simply, the cause papers recorded testimony in detail in order to inform a decision, while the registers recorded decisions already made in order to preserve them for future consultation. The choice and construction of narrative had to suit this purpose. Decisions and outcomes were important for future consultation, but the fine details and arguments on which the archbishop based that decision were less so.

The dispute at Warter illustrates this because it appears as a memorandum of a decision already made (*memorandum quod*), which only briefly outlines the inquisition, testimony, and decision instead of providing a detailed record. It appears in both the archiepiscopal register and the cartulary of Warter Priory, which suggests its usefulness for future reference to central and local authorities.<sup>27</sup> The entry in Archbishop Melton's register concerning the chapel at Stittenham explicitly illustrates the use of the registers for consultation because the plaintiffs cited an "*ordinationem bone memorie domini Willelmi de Wykewan et pronuntiationem ac declarationem Iohannis Romani predecessorum nostrorum*".<sup>28</sup> Archbishop Romeyn's register does, indeed, contain this pronouncement, which also refers to the older ordinance of Archbishop Wickwane: "*ordinationem bone memorie domini Willelmi, predecessoris nostri; qua ordinatione inspecta et plenius intellecta, pronuntiamus et declaramus ordinationem dicti predecessoris nostri*".<sup>29</sup> The presumed ordinance of Wickwane does not appear in his register but an *inspeximus* of Sheriff Hutton's

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<sup>27</sup> Bodl., Fairfax 9, fo. 15v; *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

<sup>28</sup> "the ordinance of lord William de Wickwane of happy memory and the pronouncement and declaration of John Romeyn, our predecessors". *Reg. Melton*, no. 38.

<sup>29</sup> "the ordinance of our predecessor of happy memory, lord William, which ordinance being inspected and fully understood, we recite and declare the ordinance of our predecessor". *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:476.

appropriation to Marton Priory in Melton's register perhaps retains some of it.<sup>30</sup> The practical requirements of the registers, therefore, shaped the construction of a simplified narrative of events in which the registrars grouped individuals into groups with homogeneous voices lacking complexity and a great deal of historical fact. It is, therefore, impossible to recover the voices of the laity, if by this is meant their precise words. What may be possible, however, is an understanding of how the laity interacted with clerics in order to contribute to the construction of those narratives, by participating in the interactions and processes that informed them and their real outcomes.

The laity appears to contribute to these narratives, but they do so in a particular way. As a record of outcomes and decisions, narratives of disputes appearing in the register privileged those groups whose opinions, arguments, pleas, and voices contributed to the final decision. Outcomes had to be justified with the information gathered in processes leading up to them, and, naturally, only the testimony supporting the recorded outcome needed to be included in a narrative describing that outcome. Opposing or dissenting opinions or arguments rejected by the judge that, therefore, contributed nothing to the final decision had no logical place in a narrative of how he reached the recorded decision. This process placed individuals at a severe disadvantage in narratives of disputes because individuals from both successful and unsuccessful parties potentially complicated issues. Moreover, the processes took place within an administrative-judicial context where clerics were trained to look for consistency between testimonies or, even, to elicit unanimous answers from juries of inquisition. In fact, canon law stated that two witnesses making consistent statements established legal truth, and judges were, if faced with irreconcilable arguments, to favour the larger group.<sup>31</sup> It is true that individuals probably gave their testimony at inquisitions and hearings but their complicating voices did not enter into the final narrative, as is apparent in

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<sup>30</sup> *Reg. Melton*, no. 404.

<sup>31</sup> Donahue, 'Proof by Witnesses', 131.

the description of the dispute at Houghton. The brief acknowledgement that the men and parishioners (*hominum et parochianorum*) of Houghton, and the rector, Thomas, both concluded their cause before the archdeacon of the East Riding is the only indication in the record that both parties spoke at some point in the process. Only the community, however, speaks to the substantive issue in the record, asserting (*asserunt*) that the archdeacon had delayed the cause.<sup>32</sup> It is likely that the rector, Thomas, also spoke, perhaps in order to delay judgment or defend his position. The chantry masses already appearing to be a *de facto* practice, Thomas had little interest in resolving the matter, which might threaten the current state of affairs with which he appears, since he did not complain, to have been pleased. He, however, does not appear in the narrative because, as a record of outcomes and decisions, there was no need to record his now failed objections.

Laity, or indeed clergy, might derive real future advantage from gaining a recorded place in these narratives because the precedents that they preserved eliminated dissent and opposition. The recurring dispute over the chapel at Stittenham illustrates the implications of this. Although parishioners and the vicar both appeared before the archbishop (*comparentibus*) in order to speak to the issue, only the parishioners say anything in the record, petitioning (*petentibus*) Archbishop Romeyn for redress according to an ordinance of Archbishop Wickwane.<sup>33</sup> It appears that Romeyn consulted this ordinance, although it does not appear in Wickwane's register. Romeyn decided in favour of the parishioners, declaring Wickwane's ordinance to be valid and binding the vicar and his successors to provide books, lights, ornaments, and to contribute to repairs.<sup>34</sup> The parishioners having won their argument, only their petition appears in the record even though the vicar most likely objected at some point or attempted to raise an opposing argument. When Archbishop Melton consulted this record during a recurrence of the dispute some fifty years later, he would have read only the

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<sup>32</sup> BIA, Register 2, fo. 101v.

<sup>33</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:476.

<sup>34</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:476.

voice of the community of Stittenham and found no presentation of arguments by the vicar. This very likely put any subsequent vicar at a disadvantage. Writing the earlier vicar's potentially dissenting voice out of the record at an earlier proceeding concerning this issue disadvantaged his successors, who now had no recorded custom to support them. Indeed, since inquisitions attempted to give a hearing to all arguments in order to prevent future discord, it might have appeared to Melton that the earlier vicar had not objected to the arrangements.<sup>35</sup> Melton ordered a new inquisition to inquire into the state and incomes of the church through trustworthy men of the parish and surrounding areas. The description of the inquisition indicates that both parties exhibited their documents (*ordinationes et alia munimenta*) and the judge heard from six men of the village.<sup>36</sup> Whether this group of men overlapped with the complaining parishioners cannot be known, but it is tempting to suggest that these trustworthy men may have been the same village worthies entrusted with the making of the complaint. It is unsurprising, therefore, to find a decision recorded against the vicar where he was so disadvantaged:

...dictumque vicarium et successores suos qui pro tempore fuerint pro rata portionis suae videlicet pro tertia parte, ad refectorem reparationem et constructionem cancelli predictae capelle de Stitlum ac defectuum iminentium in eodem in futurum teneri...<sup>37</sup>

Having a voice in the narrative, by design or accident, laity could have a great deal of influence over the information collected concerning local disputes and, consequently, an advantage in influencing local practices resulting from the interactions wherein clerics collected that information. Individuals, particularly individual parish clergy or small groups of them with, perhaps, few natural local allies, had no such voice.

The clerical administration encouraged the use of corporate voices in the processes of collecting information for the registers, through the use of proctors and jury-like bodies.

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<sup>35</sup> Helmholz, *Canon Law*, 484-487.

<sup>36</sup> *Reg. Melton*, nos. 85, 87.

<sup>37</sup> "and the said vicar and his successors, whoever they might be at the time, will be bound in future for the amount of their portion, namely a third part, for the maintenance, repair, and building of the chancel of the said chapel of Stittenham and of threatening defects in the same". *Reg. Melton*, no. 97.

Attempting to limit the number of matrimonial causes, Archbishop Gray legislated that a group of men should examine and report on witnesses: “*uolumus quod in singulis decanatibus sex uel quatuor fidedigni eligantur et discreti, qui testes producendos diligenter examinant et dicta singulorum integer et fideliter redigant in scripturam*”.<sup>38</sup> This practice of reporting findings through groups or representatives also appears in the documents concerning the inquisition ordered at Stittenham chapel “*per uiros fidedignos et antiquiores tam de parochianis dicte ecclesie de Shirefhoton quam locorum uiciniorem*”, where the parishioners appeared “*per duos comparochianos*”.<sup>39</sup> Records from the mid fourteenth-century court of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln concretely illustrate the role played by local inhabitants in inquisitorial processes. They are often labelled as “*inquisitores*” or under the heading “*nomina inquisitorum*” and made presentments to the court.<sup>40</sup> Instances such as this gave laity the opportunity to observe, learn from, emulate, and conform to the preferences of clerical administrators. From this participation they might have control over the construction of their own corporate voice beyond the defining power of the registrars, a real voice through which they might strategically influence the resulting narrative in the registers. Indeed, the disputing parties at Stittenham may have engaged the single voice of a proctor to speak for them for just this reason: “*Verum quia partes huiusmodi quas ob hoc specialiter euocauimus coram nobis per procuratores suos iudicialiter constitute ratam huiusmodi per nos declarari et distingui petebant instanter*”.<sup>41</sup> The laity may have become familiar enough with these processes to take advantage of them. Contemporary manorial practice frequently called upon villagers to participate in processes of secular administration that collected local information

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<sup>38</sup> “we desire that four or six trustworthy and discreet men be chosen in each deanery, who will diligently examine the produced witnesses and faithfully and wholly return in writing the words of each one”. *Councils and Synods II*, 493.

<sup>39</sup> “through trustworthy and elderly men of the parishioners of the church of Sheriff Hutton and from the neighbouring places”; “through two co-parishioners”. *Reg. Melton*, nos. 95, 97.

<sup>40</sup> Poos, *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction*, 32-248.

<sup>41</sup> “Truly, because the parties to this matter, whom we specially summoned before us about this through their lawfully instituted proctors, presently begged a judgment to be declared and proven by us...” *Reg. Melton*, no. 95.

and customs, preferably by unanimous declaration, so participating in an ecclesiastical inquisition would not have been an entirely alien experience.<sup>42</sup> The men sitting on manorial juries may very well have been the “*uiros fidedignos*” of the ecclesiastical record, and may not have greatly distinguished between providing information to clerics or lay lords.

The example from South Skirlaugh explicitly indicates how a group of parishioners might come together to form their own corporate voice in order to address the clerics of the administration in familiar and acceptable terms. The parties to the dispute both appointed a proctor to appear for them and exhibit letters on their behalf. The parishioners appointed Peter “*clericus*”: “*damus insuper et concedimus Petro Clerico de Routon’ specialem potestatem*”. Swine Priory did the same: “*Petrus clericus de Routon’ dictorum incolarum et inhabitatorum ac dominus Ricardus de Melton rector ecclesie de Brandesburton’ predictarum Priorisse et Conuentus litteras exhibuerunt*”.<sup>43</sup> Through their choice of proctor, the parishioners controlled the power to speak for themselves rather than accepting definition by the registrar. Moreover, the records suggest that the parishioners consciously constructed themselves into a single group in order to speak. Sixty-four of them appended their names to their petition representing a wide range of people including Richard, servant of Thomas; Peter Tailor; John the servant; Robert Swineherd; and Thomas atte Halle. These individuals, perhaps at the instance of their proctor, then defined themselves as “*incole et inhabitatores uillarum predictarum et communitatem ipsarum uillarum*”. They lacked a common seal (*sigillum officii commune non habemus*) but obtained and used that of the Official of the Dean of Holderness: “*sigillum officii Decanatus Holderness procurauimus hiis apponi*”.<sup>44</sup> Their procuring of a seal in place of the common seal that they otherwise lacked, because they

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<sup>42</sup> Beckerman, ‘Procedural Innovation in Manorial Courts’, 212-250; Homans, *English Villagers*, 9-10, 272.

<sup>43</sup> “moreover, we give and grant special power to Peter *clericus* of Routon”; “Peter *clericus* of Routon, exhibited the letters of the said residents and inhabitants and lord Richard de Melton, rector of the church of Brandesburton, those of the said Prioress and Convent”. BIA, Register 9A, fos. 395r-396r.

<sup>44</sup> “residents and inhabitants of the said village and the community of those villages”; “we procured the seal of the Official of the Dean of Holderness to attach to these [letters]”. BIA, Register 9A, fos. 395r-395v.

were not normally a group, gave force to their declaration to be community and also suggests that they formed this community as a temporary strategic measure. They may have done this because they recognised that it was an effective way to position themselves within the narrative of the affair and gain some influence in it. These individuals may have had diverse motives but they recognised the opportunities forming a group gave them and turned what was normally a narrative device to their real and practical advantage. Their co-operation with each other and silencing of internal difference or dissent allowed them to address the administration on its own terms and gain some control over their position in the narrative.

To read the York registers as narratives of decisions and outcomes to which the laity have contributed supposes processes informing the construction of this narrative. The registrars consistently summarised processes through which information was collected, which indicates the importance of such processes to the narrative construction of the registers. Indeed, the summaries of due process not only provided information for future consultation but positioned the archbishop as a pastor and judge bound by precedent, procedure, and law rather than arbitrary whim. This echoes the archbishop's position as regulator of devotional and ecclesiastical practice in his diocese, as the previous chapter outlined. The registers do, therefore, provide detail about how the archbishop collected information and learned about his diocese. For instance, the substantive issue at the disputed chantry chapel at Houghton was a complaint about process gone awry. The parishioners complained about the dilatoriness of the archdeacon of the East Riding, whom they alleged to have unnecessarily delayed their cause.<sup>45</sup> This complaint suggests that both parties had presented their case to the archdeacon who, therefore, had all the information necessary to proceed to judgment. The subsequent mandate of the archbishop to the archdeacon emphasised that the latter should bring the process to a close, presumably because no more investigation was required:

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<sup>45</sup> BIA, Register 2, fo. 101v.

*“Finem, igitur, litibus imponi cupientes discretioni uestrae, mandamus quatinus dictam causam, cum ea qua conuenit celeritate, prout iustum fuerit, terminare curetis”*.<sup>46</sup> This entry describes the administrative collection of information through processes, namely the hearing of a cause, and that procedures existed to bring knowledge of the matter to the archbishop’s personal attention.

The description of process in the dispute at Stittenham makes clear the importance to the archbishop of gathering information before reaching a decision. His registrar recorded that Archbishop Romeyn only pronounced and declared (*pronunciamus et declaramus*) the ordinance of Archbishop Wickwane after the appearance of the interested parties; hearing the petitions of parishioners (*predictisque parochianis petentibus*) for certain items to be provided to the chapel; and inspecting and taking cognisance of the ordinance in question (*qua ordinatione inspecta et plenius intellecta*).<sup>47</sup> It was, presumably, during the appearance of the litigants and the petition of the parishioners that the archbishop heard, collected, and learned the information he thought necessary for reaching a decision. The record suggests that the petition brought the ordinance to Romeyn’s attention because it asked for the provision of books and other items *“iuxta ordinationem bone memorie domini Willelmi”*.<sup>48</sup> When the dispute recurred during the pontificate of Archbishop Melton, his register indicates that, in addition to illustrating different processes of collecting information, information collected could be transmitted through the clerical administration. Information about the dispute reached the archbishop both through a complaint made (*contentio mota fuisset*) and during a visitation by Melton himself: *“ex incumbente nobis pastoralis officii debito uisitationis officium exercentes, comperimus”*.<sup>49</sup> The archbishop, apparently desirous of more information before making a

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<sup>46</sup> “Desirous, therefore, of your discretion we order: a decision to be given to the litigants; that you take care to end swiftly the said cause when it convenes, as is just”. BIA, Register 2, fo. 101v.

<sup>47</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:476.

<sup>48</sup> “according to the ordinance of lord William of happy memory”. *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:476.

<sup>49</sup> “executing the duty of visitation incumbent upon us by the obligation of the pastoral office, we learned”. *Reg. Melton*, nos. 38, 95.

decision, ordered the dean of Bulmer to inquire specifically into the respective responsibilities of the litigants and generally into the value and income of the mother-church of Sheriff Hutton through local people: “*per uiros fidedignos et antiquiores tam de parochianis dicte ecclesie de Shirefhoton quam locorum uicinorum ... inquisitionem facias diligentem*”.<sup>50</sup> The gathering of knowledge by jury was a common tool of medieval bishops and, unlike witnesses, the jury was inscrutable. In other words, it could not be questioned but gave its evidence in the nature of a finding of fact rather than testimony open to further inquiry.<sup>51</sup> Melton ordered the dean to return his findings in writing, demonstrating an expectation of a secure and accurate communication of information: “*hiis que inueneris et feceris in premissis distincte et aperte certifies [nos] per tuas litteras que harum seriem contineant*”.<sup>52</sup> The record of the contested oblations at Warter describes similar procedures, namely the gathering of information through an inquisition and its transmission by letter, as well as the recitation of the findings before the archbishop himself. These examples position the archbishop as mediator and judge in the narrative and provide a historical description, albeit simplified, of the processes by which he and his clerics collected information from participating laity in order to reach decisions.

These processes record one type of interaction between clergy and laity of the diocese, namely disputes between the two. The narrative emerging from these processes of collecting information also returns to the laity opportunities to participate in interactions with clergy that shaped local ecclesiastical arrangements. Indeed, the role of the laity constitutes a common and important trend in these examples, particularly the laity in their parishes. In every case, it is the laity, the villagers, the parishioners in their chapels and churches who provided information to clerics and administrative functionaries. In other words, the clerics of the administration could learn from the laity, who, as already seen, could position themselves

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<sup>50</sup> “you will make a diligent inquisition through trustworthy and elderly men of both the parishioners of the said church of Sheriff Hutton and also of the neighbouring places”. *Reg. Melton*, no. 95.

<sup>51</sup> Donahue, ‘Proof by Witnesses’, 136-141.

<sup>52</sup> “which things you find and do in the aforesaid you will distinctly and openly certify [to us] through your closed letters which will contained the process of these things”. *Reg. Melton*, no. 95.

in order to gain advantage within this process. This process was most often the judicial inquisitorial procedure – not to be confused with later incarnations – which was a common tool of the ecclesiastical administration. Clerics frequently used it to determine the truth of presentations to benefices, the reputations of presentees, and sometimes in cases of church dilapidations.<sup>53</sup> Turning to parishioners was not a last resort but a matter of course and nearly every acknowledgement of a presentation in Archbishop Giffard's register includes a mandate to inquire into the state of both the church and the candidate among the laity.<sup>54</sup> Archbishop Melton's orders to rural deans in advance of episcopal visitations commanded that two or four, and sometimes up to eight, trustworthy men (*duo, tres, uel quatuor uiros fidedignos*) gather from each settlement to render testimony.<sup>55</sup> The laity, therefore, had some control over the information that clerical administrators collected, constructing narratives of their own and, as suggested above, inserting those narratives into official records as far as administrators' questioning allowed. This questioning might be quite broad, as in legal causes, where sometimes inquisitors simply asked witnesses to tell what they knew about a case. Specific questions might be asked but witnesses could still digress and examiners occasionally complain about this.<sup>56</sup>

The registrars might simplify and obscure these lay narratives, and the laity could even co-operate with them in this endeavour by forming corporate voices of their own, but the influence of the laity remains visible in the record. Indeed, the dispute at Warter, discussed in more detail below, illustrates how opposed groups of laity could craft opposing narratives, both factions providing only the information useful to their cause. Although the apparent simplicity of a narrative in the registers hides presumed actual testimony, control over this narrative seems, at the very least, to be disputed and openings for lay influence over and

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<sup>53</sup> Donahue, 'Proof by Witnesses', 136-141; Helmholz, *Canon Law*, 338, 501.

<sup>54</sup> *Reg. Giffard*, nos. 51-211.

<sup>55</sup> *Reg. Melton*, nos. 14, 121-122, 265, 393, 482.

<sup>56</sup> Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation*, 131-132.

participation in the narrative must be acknowledged. Frequent archiepiscopal mandates to inquire among trustworthy men suggest that clerics sought trustworthy sources precisely because they recognised that they had to negotiate, but also rely upon, competing and sometimes contradictory lay narratives and interests. The order by Archbishop Melton to inquire into a dispute at Stittenham explicitly acknowledged that control of the narrative could be influenced by the laity because it asked for the truth of the matter (*rei ueritas*) to be determined, indicating that truth could be found among those who spoke and recorded by those who wrote.<sup>57</sup> This acknowledges lay participation in or even lay primacy over narratives concerning local knowledge. The laity, local clergy, and administrative clerics could and did mediate information appearing in the register but the laity may have had particular control over information about local practices. Their provision of information gave the laity place, and power, in the local processes of ecclesiastical administration. This suggests that, despite disputes over particular issues between clergy and laity, they both participated from positions of power in interactions affecting local practices and arrangements. Supposing constant opposition between their cultures becomes problematic because the laity participated in, indeed were necessary to, official ecclesiastical structures. From here they had the potential to exercise their own power within it. Their popular culture did not contest or complain against the official culture of clergy from a position external to official structures. Instead, lay complaints, seemingly powerless, indicate the laity's position within structures of ecclesiastical culture. Appropriated into officially constructed administrative narratives, information provided by the laity could affect real outcomes and local practices.

#### *DISPUTED OBLATIONS AT WARTER PARISH CHURCH*

The dispute over oblations at Warter parish church is a good example illustrating, in detail, some of the processes outlined above by which narratives were constructed and in which the

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<sup>57</sup> *Reg. Melton*, no. 97.

laity might participate. Nine parishioners from the church of Warter in the East Riding made a complaint to Archbishop John le Romeyn in 1294 concerning oblations for All Saints' Day, which they claimed the Augustinian priory of Warter, which held the advowson of the church, unjustly extorted from them. A memorandum that records the complaint, the process dealing with it, and the decision of the archbishop appears in Romeyn's register and the cartulary of the priory.<sup>58</sup> The names of the parishioners complaining about the oblations appear in both records: Nicholas Biscop; Thomas le Hunter; Thomas, son of Ralph; Nicholas Pye; Nicholas Sutor; Nicholas ad Cross; Henry de Sharnedale; Thomas Papedy; and William Beel. Local records suggest that none of these men were of great importance in the village since none appear as donors or witnesses to any of the documents in the cartulary.<sup>59</sup> The only clue about one of them lies in a foundation charter of Warter that recorded the lands of some of the serfs (*rusticis*) were donated to the priory by William de Roumare, earl of Lincoln, in 1142. Twenty names, many of Anglo-Saxon origin, appear including one "*Radulphus Byscop*".<sup>60</sup> Although this charter pre-dates the register entry by more than 150 years, Ralph Byscop may very well have been an ancestor of one of the plaintiffs, Nicholas Biscop, and, perhaps, they were of similar legal status.

The register contains a description of the archbishop's inquisition into the matter:

...ac super hoc ad mandatum nostrum inquisitio facta fuit per magistrum W. de Blida subdecanum Ebor., die Mercurii, in festo beati Mathie apostoli, anno gratie [1294], in porticu dicte ecclesie, presentibus dictis querelantibus, et astante multitudine parochianorum dicte ecclesie. Per quam quidem inquisitionem, et etiam coram nobis die Sabbati proximo sequente fuit compertum, et etiam in nostra presentia recitatum...<sup>61</sup>

This is a key passage in the record of the process because it is the first indication of the role the laity had in providing information about local practices. The laity participated in the official

<sup>58</sup> Bodl., MS Fairfax 9, fo. 15v; *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677; *VCH Yorks.*, 3:325.

<sup>59</sup> Bodl., MS Fairfax 9, fo. 15v and *passim*; *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

<sup>60</sup> Bodl., MS Fairfax 9, fo. 105v; Denholm-Young, 'Foundation of Warter', 208-212.

<sup>61</sup> "and concerning this, at our order, an inquisition was made about this by Master W[illiam] de Blyth, the subdean of York, on Wednesday the feast of blessed Matthias the apostle [24 February] in the year of grace 1294 in the porch of the said church, the said plaintiffs being present and standing before a great number of the parishioners of the said church. By which same inquisition, and also before us on the following Saturday [27 February], it was known and also recited in our presence". *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

process of inquisition and, therefore, had the potential to contribute to the narrative being constructed. Indeed, other unidentified parishioners, who emerge to contribute to the inquisition but challenge the complaint of the nine plaintiffs, show just how the laity constructed their own opposing narratives of local custom, which might influence the official narrative of the register. These two groups of parishioners recalled different versions of local practice and gave justifications for their particular versions:

<p>[Plaintiffs] Memorandum quod cum Nicholaus Biscopp' Thomas le Hunter, Thomas filius Radulphi, Nicholaus Pye, Nicholaus Sutor, Nicholaus ad Crucem, Henricus de Sharnedale, Thomas Papedy, et Willelmus Beel nobis lohanni permissione etc., de priore de Wartria conquesti fuissent quod idem prior ipsos pro oblatione facienda in festo Omnium Sanctorum in parochiali ecclesia de Wartria indebite compulisset, allegantes pro se quod bone memorie Godefridus Ebor' archiepiscopus, decreuit parochianos eiusdem ecclesie ad huiusmodi oblationem prestandam nullatenus debere compelli...<sup>63</sup></p>	<p>[Other parishioners] ...ac etiam constiterit a parochianis dicte ecclesie, predecessorebus eorundem conquerentium, et aliis ab antiquo, ac etiam ab eisdem conquerentibus, per plures annos, prout iidem querelantes iurati confessi fuerunt, predictam oblationem in festo predicto et et ecclesia prelibata, tanquam a parochianis eiusdem ecclesie, de consuetudine et sponte fuisse prestitam de quiete.<sup>62</sup></p>
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These two different versions of the circumstance at Warter indicate that control over the narrative informing the archbishop was contested. The inquisition goes on to record that Archbishop Godfrey Ludham, presumably the “*Godefridus*” to whom the plaintiffs referred, never issued any ordinance or ruling concerning the oblations at Warter.<sup>64</sup> Following this, the archbishop gave his ruling concerning the oblations:

Nos, ex officii nostri debito, indemnitati animarum et earum saluti consulere cupientes, prefatos querelantes, qui nostro decreto coram eodem subdecano se sponte, pure, et totaliter submiserunt, ac ceteros parochianos sepredictam oblationem de consuetudine, ut premittitur, prestitam, dicte ecclesie in dicto festo teneri in futurum soluere et prestare; et ad

<sup>62</sup> “and it [the inquisition] also established the said oblations to have been customarily, voluntarily, and freely paid by the parishioners of the said church, the predecessors of the same plaintiffs, others from of old, and also by the plaintiffs themselves for many years on the said feast and in the church by the parishioners of the same church, as he sworn plaintiffs themselves confessed.” *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

<sup>63</sup> “It was noted that Nicholas Biscopp, Thomas le Hunter, Thomas son of Ralph, Nicholas Pye, Nicholas Sutor, Nicholas ad Cross, Henry de Sharnedale, Thomas Papedy, and William Beel made complaint to us, John by permission etc., about the prior of Warter, that the same prior compelled them to make unwarranted oblations on the feast of All Saints in the parish church of Warter, alleging, on their part, that Archbishop Godfrey of York of happy memory decreed the parishioners of the same church ought, by no means, to be compelled to pay oblations to the same”. *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

<sup>64</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

hoc, si necesse fuerit, per censuram ecclesiasticam per capellanum parochialem eiusdem ecclesie debere et posse compelli pronunciauimus per decretum.<sup>65</sup>

The archbishop determined, presumably based on the testimony by some parishioners, that the oblations had been freely offered at some point in the past and ordered them to continue, now under threat of ecclesiastical sanction, to be given to the parish chaplain. This was recorded in both the archiepiscopal register and the cartulary of the priory for future reference. This document raises interesting questions about the role of lay knowledge, its effects on administrative processes, and tensions within the community itself.

Although the prior of Warter was the subject of the initial complaint, he had no recorded role in the resulting inquisition and clerical authorities found themselves mediating between disputing laity. The group defending existing custom assisted the ecclesiastical authorities only when they descended upon the parish in the shape of an inquisition resulting from a complaint by those wishing to overturn custom. Custom had its own particular force but the parishioners could not have been ignorant of the scribes recording the process and must have realised that the decision would enter into writing, preserving, but also fossilising, the customary arrangements of their community far beyond their own memory. It is tempting to suggest that, having been drawn into an official process, these individuals came together as a faction, knowing that this could gain them an advantage in the narrative recording the inquisition. The process could help them also to strengthen local custom and shape future action. The inquisition was a public process where knowledge became fact through recitation, performance, or publicity.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the subsequent re-performance of the findings of the inquisition before the archbishop himself – “*et etiam coram nobis die Sabbati proximo sequente fuit compertum, et etiam in nostra presentia recitatum*” – highlights the importance

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<sup>65</sup> “We, desiring to provide for the protection of souls and their salvation out of a duty to our office, pronounce by decree the said plaintiffs, who voluntarily, clearly, and totally submitted themselves before the same subdean for our decree, and the remaining parishioners to be bound to pay and present the often mentioned oblations presented on the said feast to the said church according to the custom as described above. And concerning this they can and ought to be compelled through ecclesiastical censure by the parish chaplain of the same church if it is necessary.” *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

<sup>66</sup> Smail, *Consumption of Justice*, 207-218.

of the process in establishing fact.<sup>67</sup> Held “*in porticu dicte ecclesie ... et astante multitudine parochianorum*”, the inquisition created a public moment sanctioned by clerical authority where the parishioners could publicly recite their own customs, re-inscribe custom in the memories of those present; re-establish factual knowledge before the parish; and guide future action through a canonically sanctioned recollection of obligations incumbent upon the entire community.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the testimony that “*aliis ab antiquo*”; “*predecessoribus eorundem conquerentium*”; “*parochianis dicte ecclesie*”; and “*eisdem conquerentibus*” paid oblations made claims on behalf of the entire parish community happy and unhappy, past and present. This is interesting in light of the above discussion about the advantages groups could gain over individuals within clerically constructed narratives. Moreover, the contented parishioners may have stated “*dictam oblationem sponte soluisse, et sic uelle soluere infuturum*”, in the hope of guiding or binding the actions of future parishioners.<sup>69</sup> These claims show how lay narratives could be part of not only the final written narrative of a dispute, but of the processes shaping local practices.

The creation of both written and oral archives by the testimony at Warter demonstrates one aspect of how local knowledge could participate in official ecclesiastical processes, contribute to the officially constructed narrative, and influence the outcome and arrangements of local devotion. The result of this process is visible in the degree to which the archbishop accepted the role of local lay knowledge in his written regulation. The oblations were determined to have been freely offered and, accepting the narrative of one group of parishioners and reviewing the recorded findings, the archbishop imposed judgment in favour of continuing the payment of the oblations. His judgement, cited above (p. 188), has a telling phrase worth repeating: “*et ad hoc, si necesse fuerit per censuram ecclesiasticam per*

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<sup>67</sup> “and also before us on the following Saturday, it was known and also recited in our presence”. *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

<sup>68</sup> “in the porch of the said church ... and standing before a great number of parishioners”. *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

<sup>69</sup> “that they freely paid the said oblations and so wish to pay them in the future.” *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

*capellanus parochialem eiusdem ecclesie debere et posse compelli*".<sup>70</sup> Not only did he accept one local version of events and adopt it as judgement, the archbishop appropriated the described custom as canonical regulation backed by ecclesiastical censure. This custom moved into writing in the records of the diocesan administration, namely the archiepiscopal register, and also in the records of the local ecclesiastical administration, the cartulary of Warter. Moreover, the archbishop placed the protection of custom into the care of the parish priest (*capellanus parochialem*) who received the duty of compelling what had been custom but was now obligatory and invoking sanctions upon those who did not co-operate. This indicates that diocesan officials could seek information and learn rather than simply dispense knowledge. Indeed, in practice, they regulated existing local custom and mediated between conflicting interests according to universal ideals envisioned in provincial legislation rather than simply imposing those ideals. Upon hearing from the laity they could, much like the changing meanings of the cross at Easingwold (pp. 139-140), appropriate local popular practice into official regulation. The interactions between laity and clerics were possibilities for the laity to participate in and influence official ecclesiastical processes and their resulting local outcomes.

#### *DISPUTED MASSES AT HOUGHTON CHAPEL*

A second dispute illustrates the possibilities for laity, even when their testimony is not recorded in the narrative, to influence official outcomes as a result of their interaction with diocesan officials. The dispute at the chapel of Houghton arose from a complaint by the parishioners at that chapel in 1267/8. The chapel itself, either "*Houetoun*" or "*Houeton*" in the manuscript, is almost unrecorded. The Domesday Book records the settlement as having neither church nor chapel, and Pope Nicholas' *Taxatio* does not mention it. Its appearance in

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<sup>70</sup> "And concerning this they can and ought to be compelled through ecclesiastical censure by the parish chaplain of the same church if it is necessary". *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:677.

Archbishop Giffard's register is its only appearance in the York registers before 1348.<sup>71</sup> Two tax records, the Lay Subsidy of 1334 and Poll Tax of 1381, list Houghton with the parish of Sancton, which agrees with the suggestion of the editor of Giffard's register that the settlement belonged to that parish.<sup>72</sup> The register entry bringing knowledge of the dispute at Houghton to the attention of the archbishop suggests that there was permission to celebrate masses there, otherwise the archbishop, archdeacon, or patron or rector of Sancton likely would have tried to establish the obligations and rights of the chapel. The rector of the chapel, Thomas, was probably Thomas de Stretton mentioned as the rector of Sancton at the same time. Archbishop Gray instituted him to Sancton as a clerk in 1237, when he may have been in minor orders and relatively young. Indeed, Thomas need not have been in major orders because the rectory of Sancton comprised two medieties at the time and the other incumbent, Robert, who was probably older than Thomas because he died thirteen years later around 1250, could have been the priest.<sup>73</sup> When Thomas appears in relation to the dispute at Houghton he was probably in his fifties and sole rector of Sancton and its dependent chapel.

The substantive issue in the recorded complaint was about a delay in dealing with the initial unrecorded complaint about chantry masses causing damage (*spoliatos*) to the chapel:

Querelam hominum et parochianorum capelle de Houeton recepimus, continentem quod, cum ipse Thomam rectorem eiusdem capelle, super cantaria in capella ipsa tribus diebus per ebdomadam habenda, qua se ad capellam ipsam per dictum rectorem contra iustum spoliatos esse dicebant, coram uobis auctoritate ordinare traxissent in causam, uos, causam huius diutius detinentes in suspenso licet anno et amplius iam elapso a partibus esset hincinde in causa conclusum, ad decisionem eiusdem, prout asserunt, procedere non curastes...<sup>74</sup>

This was, therefore, a complaint both about the issue of the chantry masses and the procedure by which the parishioners hoped for resolution. The archbishop ordered the

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<sup>71</sup> BIA, Register 2, fo. 101v; Beresford, 'Lost Villages of Yorkshire', 63; *Taxatio Database*, <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/taxatio/index.html>, accessed 19 May 2008.

<sup>72</sup> Fenwick ed., *Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379, and 1381*, 223; Glasscock ed., *Lay Subsidy of 1334*, 360.

<sup>73</sup> *Reg. Gray*, nos. 1:342, 1:500; *Reg. Giffard*, no. 716.

<sup>74</sup> "We [the archbishop] received the suit of the men and parishioners of the chapel of Houghton contending that, when they brought before you in ordinary authority a cause against Thomas, the rector of the same chapel, concerning a chantry being held there three times a week in the chapel itself by which they themselves said the same chapel to be unjustly spoiled by the said rector, you, as they assert, having held the cause in abeyance for this long, despite a year and more having passed from both parties having concluded their cause, did not take care to proceed to a decision..." BIA, Register 2, fo. 101v.

archdeacon of the East Riding, about whom this complaint was made, to bring the cause to a swift conclusion.<sup>75</sup> It indicates, again, how the laity could participate in official procedures for their own benefit, even if only to bring the cause to a conclusion. There is no indication what was said concerning this matter but the description in the register makes clear that both the parishioners and the rector presented their case to the archdeacon. The presentations of both parties to the cause; the delay of the archdeacon in hearing it; and the archbishop's command that it be concluded are all mentioned. Although, therefore, the parishioners' words are lost, their acknowledged participation in the process might provide some information. Indeed, their complaint about chantry masses suggests that the laity could influence, not just local arrangements, but the mass itself.

It is unlikely that construction of a new chapel or altar prompted the claim of damage at Houghton because there is no indication of such activity and the complaint specifically states that the issue was the holding (*habenda*) of a chantry three times weekly.<sup>76</sup> In the late thirteenth century, chantries were often simply a mass sung at an existing altar for a particular intention, such as for the repose of souls, by a priest engaged for this purpose.<sup>77</sup> A contemporary chantry foundation from 1268 in Lincolnshire illustrates such an arrangement:

...quietum clamasse Deo et altari sancti Thome martiris in capella beate Marie de Barton, et ad perpetuam sustentationem presbiteri pro salute anime mee et Matildis uxoris mee, predecessorum et successorum ac parentum nostrorum ac omnium fidelium defunctorum ad predictum altare sancti Thome martiris perpetuo singulis diebus in anno celebraturi...<sup>78</sup>

It is likely, therefore, that a priest celebrated the chantry masses at Houghton at the high altar because the chapel, which was small enough to have gone almost unrecorded, probably had only one altar. Said by the resident chaplain, these masses would have interrupted the customary pattern of services at the chapel because contemporary legislation permitted him

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<sup>75</sup> BIA, Register 2, fo. 101v.

<sup>76</sup> BIA, Register 2, fo. 101v.

<sup>77</sup> Cook, *Mediaeval Chantries*, 7-12; Thompson, *Growth of the English Parish*, 20-21.

<sup>78</sup> "[I] quitclaim to God and the altar of Saint Thomas the Martyr in the chapel of Blessed Mary of Barton, and for the perpetual support of a priest to celebrate at the said altar of Saint Thomas the Martyr every day of the year in perpetuity for the salvation of my soul and of [the soul] of Matilda my wife; our ancestors, descendants, and parents; and all the faithful departed..." *Reg. Gravesend*, 29.

to say only one mass a day. Pope Innocent III legislated in 1206 that every priest might say only one mass daily, except in the case of necessity, and legislation for the diocese of York echoed this in 1259:

Unde firmiter inhihemus ne sacerdotes in una missa plura officia decantare presumant, quia id sine cupiditatis uitio posse fieri non uidemus. Nec unus sacerdos plures missas una die celebrare attemptet nisi in die Natalis domini uel Pasche uel quando corpus presens in ecclesia propria fuerit tumulandum...<sup>79</sup>

It is possible that another priest sung a second mass at Houghton without much interruption to regular services, but the recorded grievance of the worshippers there suggests a serious inconvenience.

Replacing three masses a week with chantry masses, the priest at Houghton would have reduced the opportunities for the devotions and intentions of the local population and interrupted the regular order of ferial and festal masses. The laity may have distinguished these new masses, assuming they were obit masses, from others because the outward aspects of the obit mass apparent to the laity closely followed the funeral mass, with which they were likely familiar, in the Use of York.<sup>80</sup> The worshippers at Houghton may have objected to an obit mass on theological grounds because the priest said it primarily for the repose of the soul of the benefactor rather than for the living community and its needs, depriving the community of opportunities for intercession and spiritual protection.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, since Houghton was a chapel it is likely that the community had contributed to its erection and maintenance in order to worship there apart from the mother-church at Sancton. They may have viewed changes to the pattern of worship by the priest as an appropriation of their space for his purposes, which were not necessarily of spiritual benefit to them. Lay awareness of and attachment to the spiritual benefits of the mass, or its theology, should not be discounted

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<sup>79</sup> "Whereas, we firmly forbid priests from presuming to sing more than one divine office because we do not regard it to be able to be done without the vice of avarice. Nor may one priest attempt to celebrate many masses in a day unless on Christmas, or Easter, or when a body is present for burial in its own church". *Councils and Synods II*, 606; Jungmann, *Roman Rite*, 1:222-224.

<sup>80</sup> *Missale Ebor.*, 1:183-185.

<sup>81</sup> Cook, *Mediaeval Chantries*, 7-8; Harper, *Western Liturgy*, 125-126; Jungmann, *Roman Rite*, 1:222-224.

because some of the *exempla* circulating in the regional *pastoralia* dealt with this issue.

Robert Mannyng retells the story of Jumna and Tumna from Bede, which recounts how a mass said for a knight thought dead causes his chains to fall off, and a similar story from Gregory's *Dialogues* appears in the *Manuel*. The Anglo-Norman text and its translation both tell of how the mass helped a trapped miner, and how a priest named Felix freed a soul from purgatory by singing the mass.<sup>82</sup> These stories, from texts probably used to train regional clergy, may very well have made their way to the laity.

The business of obit masses also raises an economic question and the opportunities available to the people of Houghton to support and to be seen to support their chapel. It is not known whether a benefactor had already paid for the masses at Houghton, or if the rector reserved them for future masses as a fund-raising opportunity, but both scenarios reduced the gift-giving opportunities of the community, representing a disruption, or even appropriation, of local practices by an individual. The obit masses limited the opportunities for parishioners to patronise the priest and chapel through their own stipends. In other words, with only a limited number of masses available, these chantry masses excluded parishioners from accruing spiritual benefits for themselves or others, and limited their opportunities to participate visibly in the financial support of their clergy and chapel.

The complaints about the holding of chantry masses illustrate how the laity might participate in the local arrangement of officially mandated worship. The rector's alleged action appropriating communal time for individual needs prevented the community at Houghton from acting as one, insofar as they could participate less frequently in communal spiritual and economic action. Communal defence of devotional practices against individual changes may have inspired the cause against the rector, and some attachment to normal practice must be assumed for otherwise there would have been no complaint. The very fact that the

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<sup>82</sup> *MP*, II. 7522-7576, 7585-7602, 7613-7672; *HS*, 10322-10386, 10525-10712, 10733-10794.

parishioners complained to the archdeacon suggests that they had an interest in, and hoped to influence, their priest and his actions. It suggests a perceived grievance or injustice, and a perceived right to seek redress. That they pursued their cause for over a year (*anno et amplius iam elapso*) suggests that neither the archdeacon, nor eventually the archbishop, thought their complaint without cause. The response of the archbishop, perhaps being concerned with maintaining local peace like in the case of the Foston Virgin; perhaps as a regulator of liturgy in the diocese; or perhaps to correct the abuse of procedure by the archdeacon, suggests that he felt the parishioners to have a case and, even, the right to pursue their cause. The ability of parishioners to affect the celebration of the mass at local levels invites some speculation about their ability to guard local traditions of the mass itself. This potential arises from the inherent flexibility of liturgy in a manuscript culture and during a period of both universal and diocesan change to liturgical aids.

The need for multiple liturgical aids, including ordinals, customaries, sacramentaries, and lectionaries, gave way to the use of the single volume missal in the thirteenth century.<sup>83</sup> Diocesan legislation concerning the required books indicates inconsistencies during this period. Archbishop Gray ordered the use of “*legenda, antiphonare, graduale, psalterium, troparium, ordinale, missale, manuale*”, while Archbishop Ludham ordered a short time afterwards, “*Habeatque libros scilicet missale, breuiarium, antiphonarium, graduale, tropharium, ordinale, et psalterium*”.<sup>84</sup> Legislation indicates that flexibility might result from errors in liturgical manuscripts:

Et quia libri abiecti monasteriorum plerisque ecclesiis parochialibus appropriatis regularibus assignantur unde fit quod tam presbyteri quam clerici in ministeriis diuinis errare coguntur, precipimus quod ammotis libris huiusmodi libri secundum usum predictum infra biennium prouideantur...<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Harper, *Western Liturgy*, 59-63; Jungmann, *Roman Rite*, 1:104-112.

<sup>84</sup> “a lectionary, an antiphonary, a gradual, a psalter, a tropher, an ordinal, a missal, and a manual”. *Reg. Gray*, 218; “And it [the church] will have books, namely a missal, a breviary, an antiphonary, a gradual, a tropher, an ordinal, and a psalter”. *Councils and Synods II*, 599.

<sup>85</sup> “And because discarded books of monasteries are distributed to most of the parish churches appropriated to the orders, for which reason it happens that both priests and clerics are driven to err in the divine mysteries, we

The problems with these books are not described but the suggestion of error resulting from their use may indicate that they were in a poor state, especially considering that the monasteries would have used them for some time. The introduction of the regular Uses to parish settings would also have created liturgical variation. A manuscript culture also tended towards variation and flexibility, which extended even to the rubrics of the Canon and variation appears in manuscripts in the Use of York. These rubrics were important because they controlled the bodily gestures and postures of the priest that were visible to the laity, and by which, perhaps, they judged the proficiency of the priest. The opening rubrics to the Canon in a fourteenth century Use of York missal indicated that the priest should kiss the altar and make the sign of the cross over the chalice, while opening rubrics in a contemporary Use of York breviary indicate that he should bow and then make the sign of the cross over both the host and the chalice.<sup>86</sup> The rubrics in the breviary are more numerous and specific compared to the rubrics in the missal, which omit even the elevation of the consecrated host.<sup>87</sup> Different manuscripts might, therefore, have left varying amount of liturgical action open to local practice.

The difference in rubrics indicates the variety of practices prevalent and suggests some assumptions by scribes of liturgical formation on the part of priests. It may have been thought that priests did not need written rubrics because many, especially rural clergy, trained as apprentices with an older priest from whom they learned how to say the mass.<sup>88</sup> This may have been the case at Sancton where the rector Thomas could have learned the mass upon his institution to the church from the older incumbent Robert. This verbal and observational training privileged the role of custom and tradition over the actions of the priest during mass,

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order that books be provided according to the Use [of York or Sarum] within two years in place of books removed of this manner". *Councils and Synods II*, 599; Swanson, 'Medieval English Liturgy', 162-165.

<sup>86</sup> York, York Minster Library, MS XVI.A.9 [Missal], fo. 128r; York, York Minster Library, MS XVI

<sup>87</sup> York, York Minster Library, MS XVI.O.9, fo. 167v. A comparative table of manuscripts is found in *Missale Ebor.*, 1:182-191. The editor appears to have confused his labels. *MS B* is York, York Minster Library, MS XVI.A.9, not, as he notes on p. vi, *MS D*.

<sup>88</sup> Boyle, 'Clerical Education', 20.

extending the possibilities as to who might influence them. In instances where a priest was instituted upon the death, resignation, or transfer of an incumbent there seem to be two possibilities. The new priest may have brought his own customs and liturgical actions with him from his previous benefice. On the other hand, the local minor clerics serving at the altar may have conveyed local traditions to the priest. Indeed, the laity themselves may have done this because a great deal of the mass was probably visible to them, especially in small chapels like Houghton where there may have been little distance between congregation and the priest.<sup>89</sup> A forthcoming publication by Helen Lunnon suggests that the divisions between chancel and nave may have been fluid. Her work on the chancel screens of Norfolk suggests that, during the thirteenth century, laity and clergy began to understand them as allegorical representations of the doors to the kingdom of heaven.<sup>90</sup> Mental constructions of the screen as a door presume the possibility of movement across it and, therefore, interaction between heaven and earth; chancel and nave; clergy and laity. Indeed, Lunnon points out that using the chancel as a door during liturgical services might reinforce key doctrinal concepts. When the priest brought the consecrated host from the chancel to the nave – the Real Presence of God moving from heaven to earth – the interaction between God and humanity, effected through the Incarnation, became apparent. The chancel screen can no longer, therefore, be conceptualised only a barrier between clergy and laity. Instead, its very architecture facilitated, even presumed, visual and physical interactions.<sup>91</sup> It should not be assumed that medieval clergy greatly resisted local practice because they likely thought about the mass in a much different way from today. Where modern priests use standardised and centrally sanctioned liturgical books and train in centrally monitored seminaries, medieval clergy would have used whatever manuscript was available without regard to its similarity to others. The manuscript culture of liturgical aids and the local customary training of priests combined to

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<sup>89</sup> Swanson, 'Medieval Liturgy', 179-181.

<sup>90</sup> Lunnon, 'Form of Chancel Screens' [forthcoming].

<sup>91</sup> Lunnon, 'Form of Chancel Screens' [forthcoming].

make the mass open to local custom. The laity's interaction with clergy and participation in local arrangements of official structures gave them some influence.

### *THE ROLE OF THE LAITY*

The chapter has highlighted that the laity participated in and influenced official ecclesiastical processes and outcomes. The narratives in official documents tend to hide this and often even appear to describe conflicted relationships between clergy and laity. The relationships, however, were much more complex and provided spaces for the laity to play a role in the shaping of their own local practices. Coalitions of laity might collaborate with clerical narrative constructions for their own benefit and influence these narratives, which controlled future action and local practices. These groups of laity and their precise testimony will never be fully known because any attempt to describe details faces the inherent challenge of narratives in the registers, which tend to obscure such details. Understanding the narrative, however, and the processes by which clerics constructed it reveals spaces where the laity might participate in the narrative and were even expected by clerics to interact with ecclesiastical processes collecting information for it. Within these processes the laity could speak and complain to clerics, who could appropriate knowledge, ideas, and practices into official regulation and practices. Recognising the dialogues between clerics and laity gives historians the opportunity to examine the ways that laity interacted with local clergy. Their interactions were by no means straightforward exhibitions of clerical power, control, and oppression against lay impotence, submission, and challenge but much more complicated. It is only the narrative that obscures much more complicated interactions that were probably characterised also by negotiation, collaboration, and co-operation. The laity and clergy were socially mixed groups with diverse interests, and require a nuanced approach capable of accepting social harmony, internal tension, and visible conflict.

### ***5. Narratives of Interaction between Clergy and Laity: Refusals***

Description of interactions between clergy and laity in the form of complaints provided cases for examination in the previous chapter. Narratives of these complaints and resulting disputes, which, at first, appear to be clerically controlled, survive in the York archiepiscopal registers and a careful reading highlighted the opportunities for lay contribution, participation, and influence in them. The ability of laity to position themselves in narratives used by administrative clerics in order to regulate local practices of religion suggests some implications of these interactions. Local practices were not always synonymous with so-called popular religion but included local manifestations of widespread and officially approved practices, such as the rendering of oblations and the mass itself. Moreover, the laity, as a result of their contributions to clerical knowledge, participated, either officially or unofficially, in both the construction and official regulation of such practices. The relationships between clergy and laity resemble, therefore, a model of dialogue more than a model of separate, and often opposed, official and popular religions, particularly because local lay participation was crucial in processes defining the practice of religion.

Lay communities and coalitions remain confined to corporate voices in the recorded narrative, even with a careful reading of the sources, and it does not seem possible always to discern anything of the internal dynamics of these speaking groups. Instead, the influence of such groups on clerical processes of collecting and using knowledge in local practice has been, and will continue to be, an important focus of this study. Laity who complained normally acted on account of perceived injustices or challenges to customary devotional practices, and they formed temporary coalitions to participate in and influence the narratives and processes shaping local practice. Their ability to perceive and use opportunities for influence suggests a strategic awareness on the part of laity, which, indeed, the previous chapter noted, such as when laity formed temporary coalitions.

A strategic awareness implies that the laity could choose from several options in their pursuit of influence, and the complaints made at Warter, Houghton, and other places illustrate just one such strategy available to parishioners for gaining a place in shaping local practice. Complaining lay communities might even collaborate with administrative clerics from outside their villages in local disputes, as at Warter, in order to influence local practice. Since, however, these strategic groups appear to have been able to gain advantages over opponents, who might be local clergy or laity, the individuals involved likely recognised some advantage in speaking. For instance, the inhabitants of Stittenham, whom previous ordinances and inquisitions had favoured concerning their vicar's share of repair costs, probably felt that a lawful appeal to the archbishop would aid their cause better than an act of resistance or refusal to co-operate with local clergy. It seems, therefore, that laity could recognise the benefits of operating through and participating in official legal structures. Indeed, complaints by laity suggest that they consciously chose this option, which may indicate that they knew enough about ecclesiastical procedures in order to anticipate benefits from them or to manipulate them. Clerical encouragement of laity to participate in these procedures through the use of testifying groups, such as during archiepiscopal visitations, suggests that lay ignorance would have been exceptional rather than normal. Indeed, some analysis of York cause papers suggests that lay knowledge and manipulation of legal proceedings was not uncommon.<sup>1</sup> The examples in the previous chapter may, therefore, reveal just one mode of interaction between groups of laity and clergy.

This option, however, tends to emphasise collaboration and co-operation between clergy and laity. It risks limiting historical understanding of the options available to lay communities for dealing with clergy to a single strategy, with the implication that they could only influence narratives and decisions when it was to their advantage to make themselves

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<sup>1</sup> Pedersen, 'Did the Laity Know Canon Law?', 111-152.

heard. Such an understanding permits very little, if anything, to be said about interactions between laity and clergy where a decided disadvantage, even ecclesiastical censure, would descend upon lay communities who spoke out or complained. It tends to eliminate options available to laity that might involve resistance and conflict. Such instances of lay refusals to co-operate with, consent to, or submit to actions by clergy also appear in records and suggest another option available to laity in their interactions with clergy. Lay communities could, in short, maintain their silence but, as this chapter will explore, this does not mean that laity surrendered their place in local processes. This chapter will examine two instances of such action for indications of the meanings of this mode of interaction between laity and clergy. Outright refusals by the laity to co-operate with clergy may appear to indicate more sharply contested relationships than already examined and even give the impression that the laity rarely had the previously suggested potential to influence clerical narratives and their practical results. It may, however, reveal another means by which the laity gained influence and participated in the constructions of local practices.

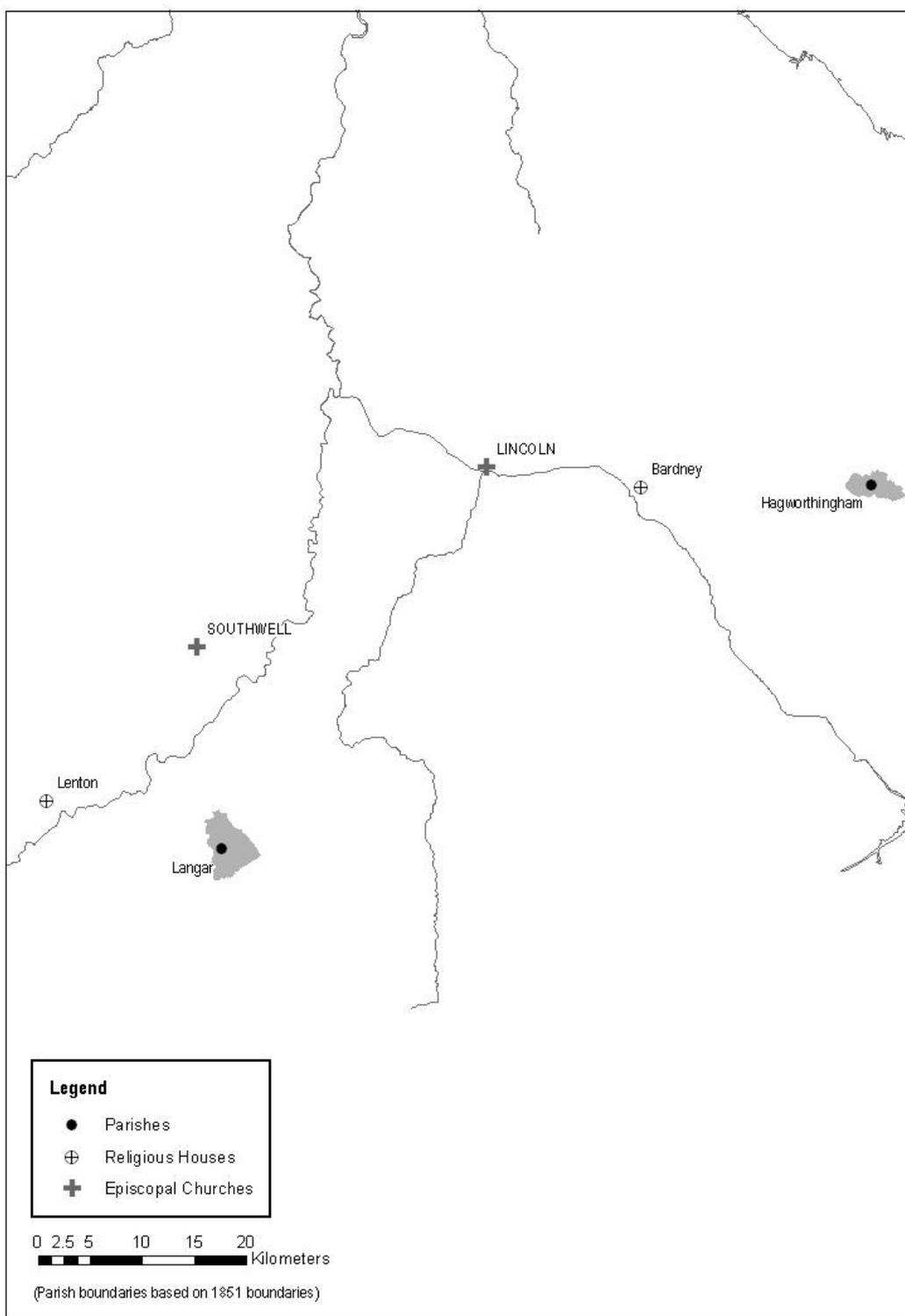


Figure 11: Hagworthingham and Langar

*THE BELL-TOWER OF HAGWORTHINGHAM*

The register of Bishop Sutton of Lincoln provides the first case for examination. By his episcopacy, the Lincoln registers had developed a section for what modern editors label miscellaneous memoranda, which, like the York registers, contain a great deal of material beyond the appointment of clergy to benefices. A series of letters concerning the parish of Hagworthingham from Sutton to the rural dean of Horncastle and Hill, in which deanery the parish was located, indicate a long-running dispute over the collection of contributions for the construction of a bell-tower at that church. The matter first appears in July 1290, when Sutton wrote to the dean that some parishioners (*nonnulli parochiani*) had refused to contribute to the laudably begun (*laudabiliter inchoati*) bell-tower. The letter describes divisions arising within the parish on account of the refusals to contribute because those who had initially contributed to the bell-tower were now unhappy: "*et alii iam pridem contribuentes ex hoc murmurent, quod id quod collectum est ad fabricam suprafatam ad illam non conuertitur sicut deceret*".<sup>2</sup> Sutton commanded the dean to go to the village in person (*personaliter*) and, with moderation and fairness, compel payments towards the construction of the bell-tower: "*prouiso quod in huiusmodi contributione illa moderatio seruetur ut uni in preiudicium aliorum nullatenus deferatur, nec alius uice uersa plus iusto grauetur*".<sup>3</sup> The dean appears to have accomplished nothing in this matter a year later, since Sutton sent another letter to him in October 1291. The bishop noted that it was said (*ut dicitur*) that the dean had ignored the matter and he should proceed against any still recalcitrant parishioners:

Sed uos qua fronte nescimus huiusmodi mandatum nostrum hactenus ut dicitur contempsistis, nota inobedientie dampnabiliter incurrendo. Quocirca uobis in uirtute obedientie si forte adhuc resilire uolueritis a contemptu firmiter iniungendo mandamus quatinus contra prefatos parochianos debitum onus contribuendi fabrice dicte ecclesie seu campanilis eiusdem contumaciter recusantes subire secundum formam prioris mandate

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<sup>2</sup> "and others contributing earlier now mutter on account of this because that which was collected towards the said fabric at that [church] was not used as is fitting". *Reg. Sutton*, 3:25.

<sup>3</sup> "provided that moderation is preserved in the matter of these contributions so that no one is brought down in prejudice to another, nor any burdened beyond justice in turn". *Reg. Sutton*, 3:25.

nostris uobis prius in hac parte directi per censuram ecclesiasticam usque ad satisfactionem condignam efficaciter procedere non tardetis.<sup>4</sup>

Sutton appears to have written in vain, for a third letter appeared in June 1293. It bluntly states that the dean had failed in his duty of obedience, explicitly threatened him with canonical penalty – presumably excommunication – and commanded him to resolve the issue:

Et licet uobis huiusmodi mandatum nostrum nimis tepide exequentibus, immo ipsius executionem potius negligentibus, scripserimus subsequenter quod predictum mandatum executione debite mandaretis, uerumptamen utrumque mandatum surda aure ut uidetur uoluntarie obaudistis. Nos uero mandata nostra canonica ... uobis mandamus in uirtute obedientie et sub pena canonica quatinus mandatum nostrum uobis in hac parte directum saltem exnunc efficaciter exequi resumentes...<sup>5</sup>

The matter does not appear again in Sutton's register, so it might be presumed that contributions to the bell-tower at Hagworthingham resumed.

Although the letters concern the dean's dilatoriness, they also indicate the continued refusal of some parishioners of Hagworthingham to contribute to the construction of their bell-tower for at least three years. It is entirely possible that the dean never attempted to execute Sutton's order, a possibility that will be discussed below (p. 218), but, since some parishioners had made contributions to the project at first, it seems that funds had definitely ceased to be forthcoming. It appears more likely, therefore, that a group of parishioners defied administrative clerics, their local clergy, and their fellow parishioners. This refusal to act or co-operate with either clergy or fellow laity suggests several possibilities about lay interactions with clergy and the management of local pious practices, but some understanding of the context at Hagworthingham is needed before considering these.

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<sup>4</sup> "However you, as is said, and we do not know by what countenance, scorned our command in this matter thus far, falling into notorious disobedience with the risk of damnation. On account of which, firmly enjoining you in virtue of obedience if you yet strongly desire to recoil from contempt, we command that you do not delay to proceed effectively according to the form of our previous order directed to you earlier in this regard, by ecclesiastical censure against the said parishioners arrogantly refusing to accept the burden owed to contributing to the fabric of the said church or the bell-tower of the same until it is worthily completed". *Reg. Sutton*, 3:153.

<sup>5</sup> "Since it pleases you to execute our command exceedingly coolly – more correctly, you preferred to neglect the execution of it – we subsequently wrote that you, in the execution of your duty, carry through the said command, but even so it seems you wilfully disobeyed whatever command fell upon your deaf ears. Truly, by our canonical command ... we command that you, in virtue of obedience and under canonical penalty, at least henceforth execute effectively our command directed to you in this regard". *Reg. Sutton*, 4:75.

*The Parish of Hagworthingham*

Roger, son of Reingot, and his son, Michael, gave to the abbot and convent of Bardney Abbey the right to present to the church of Hagworthingham. This must have occurred sometime between 1141 and 1171 because the abbey's cartulary contains a notice by Robert, then archdeacon of Lincoln, that the gift was made before him and the cathedral chapter.<sup>6</sup> The next charter appearing in the cartulary records the institution to Hagworthingham of, perhaps, its first known priest, Richard, by Peter, then archdeacon of Lincoln, which dates this charter to sometime between 1175 and 1218. This charter also indicates that a pension from the income of Hagworthingham was reserved to the abbey, which Pope Nicholas' taxation later recorded as £8 out of a total income of £20.<sup>7</sup> The Lincoln episcopal registers record institutions to Hagworthingham after this date. The cartulary records subsequent local gifts to the abbey, mostly by three or four families, but nothing further to the church of Hagworthingham itself.<sup>8</sup> There is no evidence that Bardney Abbey ever appropriated the church.

Some early stonework in the nave of the church indicates that it dates to the eleventh century. There were, however, drastic renovations in 1859. The bell-tower, which collapsed in 1972, stood at the west end of the church and its broad base matched characteristics of other post-Conquest bell-towers, perhaps suggesting a construction date of before the late thirteenth century. The upper part was brick with Victorian bell openings and only fragments of a medieval tower survived.<sup>9</sup> Dendochronological analysis has dated timbers inside the tower, perhaps associated with late medieval renovations, to the early sixteenth century.<sup>10</sup> It cannot be known whether the late thirteenth-century work described by Bishop Sutton

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<sup>6</sup> BL, MS Cotton Vespasian E.xx, fos. 106r-106v; Le Neve & Greenway, *Fasti Lincoln*, 25.

<sup>7</sup> BL, MS Cotton Vespasian E.xx, fo. 106v; Astle ed., *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, 60. Le Neve & Greenway, *Fasti Lincoln*, 25.

<sup>8</sup> BL, MS Cotton Vespasian E.xx, fos. 106v-112v.

<sup>9</sup> Everson & Stocker, 'The Common Steeple?', 118; Pevsner & Harris, *Lincolnshire*, 261; Stocker & Everson, *Summoning St Michael*, 57-59; Thompson, *Growth of the English Parish*, 57-59.

<sup>10</sup> Pearson, 'Holy Trinity, Hagworthingham', 12-17.

referred to repairs to an old tower or to the construction of a new tower. Sutton consistently used the term construction (*constructionem*) in three letters over three years, never using repair (*reparationem* or *refectionem*), which sometimes appears in contemporary legislation and regulation. Sutton himself distinguished between these terms in his first letter: "*Sicut iuri est consonum parochianos locorum ad reparationem seu constructionem ecclesiarum nolentes sua sponte per censuram ecclesiasticam ad id preuia ratione compelli*".<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, the phrase "laudably begun" (*laudabiliter inchoati*), which appears in two letters, agrees with the bell-tower itself rather than the work of construction. This suggests that it was the bell-tower that was begun, as if from new, and not the work of construction.<sup>12</sup> Finally, although the recalcitrance of some parishioners clearly affected the amount of time that passed, the three years that Sutton's letters span suggest that the construction was a major undertaking. He granted an indulgence in 1290 to anyone contributing to the building of a bell-tower at Wheathampstead and he declared that the grant was valid for five years, which suggests the amount of time considered necessary for building a bell-tower.<sup>13</sup> It may be cautiously suggested, therefore, that the work at Hagworthingham was that of building a new bell-tower or erecting a substantially new structure on an earlier base rather than making minor repairs to an existing bell-tower.

Some information is available about the clergy involved in this dispute, namely the parish priest and the dean of Horncastle and Hill, and their local roles. William de Heanor is the last recorded priest presented to Hagworthingham before the dispute. The abbot and convent of Bardney had presented him, then a sub-deacon, on 3 March 1282 following the resignation of the man they had initially presented, Hamo Leyk. Bishop Sutton's register does not record the institution of William, by then a deacon, until 30 September 1283 because the

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<sup>11</sup> "As it is agreed in law, parishioners of places not desiring to contribute to the repair or construction of churches of their own accord may be compelled to it by ecclesiastical censure for the above reason". *Reg. Sutton*, 3:35, 3:153, 4:75; *Reg. Gray*, 218; *Reg. Melton*, no. 2:97.

<sup>12</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:25, 4:75.

<sup>13</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:3.

patron had re-presented him to the church after he failed to be ordained a priest within a year of his initial presentation.<sup>14</sup> William, described as the king's cleric in 1283, was involved in local affairs, holding the lands of the late Thomas de Langeton during the minority of Thomas' heir.<sup>15</sup> The Lincoln registers regularly record the succession of William's predecessors at Hagworthingham so, lacking any other presentation until after the dispute, it is likely that he was the incumbent at the time.<sup>16</sup>

It is more difficult to suggest the identity of the contemporary dean of Horncastle and Hill. Sixteen orders directed to him appear in Sutton's register, in addition to the three letters concerning Hagworthingham.<sup>17</sup> None of these entries names the dean, but this may well have been a common practice during Sutton's pontificate because joint orders to several rural deans, including the dean of Horncastle and Hill, do not give the names of these officials. One entry is particularly interesting because it is addressed to three rural deans, those of Holland, Horncastle and Hill, and Gartree and Wraggoe, but the manuscript leaves blanks where their names might have appeared before their titles.<sup>18</sup> Names appearing in three entries from the earlier register of Bishop Wells suggest an interesting possibility about the identity of the dean of Horncastle and Hill: "*R. de Hagworthingham, R. de Kalkewella decanos*"; "*R. decanum de Hagworthingham*"; and "*R. de Hagworthingham decano de Hylle*".<sup>19</sup> These men were unlikely to have been parochial deacons because the consistent use of "*decanus*" instead of "*diaconus*" clearly distinguishes between the office and the clerical rank. These forms of address may indicate a link between the benefice of Hagworthingham and the office of the local rural dean. Interestingly, several witnesses of grants in Hagworthingham appear in

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<sup>14</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 1:21, 1:47.

<sup>15</sup> *Cal. Fine Rolls, 1271-1301*, 174, 179.

<sup>16</sup> *Reg. Gravesend*, 43; *Reg. Grosseteste*, 108, 114; *Reg. Sutton*, 1:10; *Reg. Wells*, 1:147-148.

<sup>17</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:72, 3:108, 4:11, 4:15, 4:116, 4:183, 5:15, 5:45, 5:64, 5:73, 5:155, 5:156, 5:167, 5:198.

<sup>18</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 4:15.

<sup>19</sup> *Reg. Wells*, 1:18, 1:84, 1:50.

charters as “*decanus*” including one “*Radulphus decanus de Hillewapp*”.<sup>20</sup> It remains possible, however, that the title of the dean of Hagworthingham was particular to the above person in a time when the names of rural deaneries were still changing, and subsequent deans may have had no link to the church.

The names of rural deaneries, however, were commonly associated with the mother-church of the deanery, which may explain the usage in Wells’ register.<sup>21</sup> Horncastle and Hill were, in fact, separate deaneries that appear to have been administered together during Sutton’s pontificate and the churches with the largest incomes in the two deaneries were Horncastle and Hagworthingham respectively.<sup>22</sup> The pension paid to Bardney Abbey from Hagworthingham did reduce the income of the church, but perhaps this pension could be borne because the incumbent, as rural dean, could expect other revenues. Moreover, the bishop of Carlisle was the patron of Horncastle, and the bishop of Lincoln may have found it convenient for his rural dean to have links to a local patron, such as Bardney Abbey, and thus preferred the vicar of Hagworthingham.<sup>23</sup> Finally, it is notable that the letters from Sutton to the dean make no mention of any local clergy involved in the dispute, perhaps because the dean himself was the responsible parish priest.<sup>24</sup> It is possible, therefore, that the dean of Horncastle and Hill was also the vicar of Hagworthingham, William de Heanor. Interestingly, a “*Willelmo decano de Hagworthingham*” appears as a witness to an undated charter by Osbert de Langeton, perhaps the unnamed heir of Thomas whose lands William had once administered.<sup>25</sup> This may confirm the link between the office of rural dean and William, the vicar of Hagworthingham, but the dates of these documents, although possibly close, are not certain.

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<sup>20</sup> BL, MS Cotton Vespasian E.xx, fos. 106v, 108r-109v, 111r-v.

<sup>21</sup> Thompson, ‘Diocesan Organisation’, 171-172, 178.

<sup>22</sup> Astle ed., *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, 59-60.

<sup>23</sup> *Taxatio Database*, <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/taxatio/index.html>, accessed 30 September 2008.

<sup>24</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:25, 3:153, 4:75.

<sup>25</sup> BL, MS Cotton Vespasian E.xx, fo. 111v; *Cal. Fine Rolls, 1271-1301*, 174, 179.

*Negotiating the bell-tower*

There are very few legislative documents about the role of parishioners in the construction of bell-towers, but what does survive suggests that those refusing to contribute had neither custom nor law on their side. Parishioners at Hagworthingham refusing to make contributions were, therefore, unlikely to appeal to legal procedures and resistance may have been their most promising option. Bishop Grosseteste promulgated the only contemporary diocesan statutes for Lincoln. These do not mention bell-towers and what appears concerning the issue in provincial legislation from Canterbury is ambiguous.<sup>26</sup> Two sets of “so-called statutes”, so labelled on account of uncertainty about their official promulgation, mention bells and bell-towers only in passing. The so-called statutes of Archbishop John Peckham assigned the provision of “*campane in campanili et corde ad easdem*” to parishioners, while those of Archbishop Robert Winchelsey similarly called upon parishioners to provide “*campanas in campanili et cordas ad easdem*”. Neither of these documents mention the fabric of the bell-tower itself, though one version of Winchelsey’s statutes specify the duty of parishioners to provide “*campanile cum campanis et cordis*”.<sup>27</sup> No relevant legislation exists from the Northern Province except for some injunctions of unknown authority issued by Archbishop Gray assigning responsibility for “*campanae magnae cum cordis suis*” to parishioners. A surviving copy of these injunctions appears in the cartulary of Warter Priory, which indicates some circulation of them in the diocese.<sup>28</sup> The absence of positive legislation concerning bell-towers could suggest that they were a customary matter or, perhaps, governed by a law so commonly known and obeyed that it was almost never recorded. Such infrequent reference to the construction of bell-towers may indicate that existing legislation appeared after the majority of towers were already erected, but this does not account for the lack of guidance

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<sup>26</sup> *Councils and Synods II*, 265-278.

<sup>27</sup> “bells in the bell-tower and the ropes for the same”; “the bell-tower with bells and ropes”. *Councils and Synods II*, 1123, 1385-1386.

<sup>28</sup> “great bells with their ropes”. Bodl., MS Fairfax 9, fo. 2r; *Councils and Synods II*, 485-498, 586-626, 658-659; *Reg. Gray*, 218.

about who should bear the cost of repairs. It is possible that lay responsibility for the nave encompassed bell-towers, particularly those at the west end of churches. Bishop Sutton's first letter may reflect this because he discussed the legal responsibilities for the "*reparationem seu constructionem ecclesiarum*" without distinguishing bell-towers from the fabric of churches.<sup>29</sup> The balance of evidence suggests that custom assigned responsibility for the construction and care of bell-towers to parishioners.

The refusal of some parishioners of Hagworthingham to abide by this custom indicates that it was not immune from contest. The contribution of monies, goods, or services to the construction of the bell-tower imposed financial burdens on the parishioners of Hagworthingham but these were not necessarily onerous. Bishop Sutton commanded the dean of Horncastle and Hill to compel contributions, but using moderation, fairness, and consideration. Sutton's first letter commanded the dean to execute the order, "*prouiso quod in huiusmodi contributione illa moderatio seruetur ut uni in preiudicium aliorum nullatenus deferatur, nec alius uice uersa plus iusto grauetur*".<sup>30</sup> Two years later, Sutton was still advising the dean "*quod huiusmodi sarcinam pensatis conditionibus personarum partari qualiter faciatis*".<sup>31</sup> These commands suggest that the dean would not oppressively extort contributions from those unable to afford them, and the first provision does suggest that nobody was expected to contribute beyond their assigned contribution. In other words, the better-off or more willing villagers were not expected to compensate for any shortfall created by those refusing to contribute. That the issue continued for several years supports this interpretation because over that time it seems that those who initially contributed nothing could have gathered something together and, likewise, those who had already contributed could have made further contributions. The issue does not appear, therefore, to be primarily

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<sup>29</sup> "the repair or construction of churches". *Reg. Sutton*, 3:35.

<sup>30</sup> "provided that moderation is preserved in the matter of these contributions so that no one is brought down in prejudice to another, nor any burdened in turn beyond justice". *Reg. Sutton*, 3:25.

<sup>31</sup> "that you cause the burden in this matter to be divided equally, weighing the conditions of the people". *Reg. Sutton*, 4:75.

about financial considerations but, rather, about the willingness or unwillingness of parishioners to participate in the financing of the tower.

The reasons for contesting customary arrangements may, therefore, have been related to the meaning of the bell-tower rather than its cost. The project of building the bell-tower had a devotional, or pious, aspect to it. Lincolnshire bell-towers, in particular, seem to have played a key role in funeral rites, and the ground chamber of many towers may have provided a kind of chapel-space where a corpse could lie on the vigil of a funeral.<sup>32</sup> The large bells (*campanae*) in bell-towers received special blessings from bishops and an indulgence could be gained by praying at a new bell's first ring. Bells marked moments of prayer and were often attributed with spiritual, even miraculous, powers such as warding off demons, disaster, and foul weather. The bells in Lincoln were said to have rung spontaneously at the deaths of Little St Hugh and Bishop Grosseteste.<sup>33</sup> The bell-tower bell might mark the moment of consecration, allowing all to participate in the mass aurally and, according to Archbishop Peckham's constitutions, even to obtain indulgences:

In elevatione uero ipsius corporis Domini pulsantur campanae in uno latere, ut populares, quibus celebrationi missarum non uacat cotidie interesse, ubicunque fuerint seu in agris seu in domibus, flectant genua indulgentias concessas a pluribus episcopis habituri.<sup>34</sup>

Bishop Sutton's granting of indulgences to those contributing to the bell-tower at

Wheathampstead indicates that participation in the construction of bell-towers was a pious work.<sup>35</sup> The description of the work at Hagworthingham does not mention this pious aspect, apart from Sutton's praise of the laudably begun bell-tower, but the customs described, particularly regional traditions, suggest that the project had a pious aspect.<sup>36</sup> This piety would have been communal in nature because all parishioners hearing the bell at the consecration

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<sup>32</sup> Everson & Stocker, 'The Common Steeple?', 108-114.

<sup>33</sup> Walters, *Church Bells*, 116-117, 160-161, 257-263.

<sup>34</sup> "Indeed, the bells are rung on one side [the outside of the church walls?] at the elevation of the body of the Lord so that the people, for whom there is no opportunity to take part in the daily celebration of masses, may bend their knees wherever they are, whether in fields or houses, to gain indulgences granted by many bishops". *Councils and Synods II*, 894.

<sup>35</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:3, 4:122.

<sup>36</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:25, 4:75.

or using the tower for funeral rites enjoyed the spiritual benefits associated with it whether or not they had contributed to the work. Indeed, Sutton's second letter indicates the communal nature of the project at Hagworthingham because it states that the bell-tower was built "*de consensus et uoluntate communi habitatorum loci eiusdem*".<sup>37</sup> Refusals to participate in the project, therefore, did not threaten only the financial stability of the project but also threatened the prospects of obtaining the spiritual benefits associated with the construction and use of the bell-tower. In particular, these refusals threatened the spiritual benefits anticipated by those more willing individuals of the community who had already made contributions. It was important that every member of the community contributed to the project because those who refused to do so were potential abusers of the commons, spiritually benefiting from a work towards which they had given nothing. Finally, any challenge to the project of building the bell-tower threatened to undermine the customs governing local pious works and devotions.

Like the narratives examined in the previous chapter, Bishop Sutton's letters tend to simplify and obscure probably complex local issues. His focus on recalcitrant parishioners sets up an opposition between them and the ecclesiastical administration in the person of the rural dean. Being concerned with this group of parishioners, Sutton quickly ignores those who made contributions, whose numbers and ranks in the parish are unknown. Although largely removed from the narrative, these parishioners must be brought back into any examination in order to understand the processes occurring at Hagworthingham. The challenges to both local pious desires and wider ecclesiastical customs by the refusing parishioners suggest that their action was unlikely to be a gambit designed to attract the attention of administrative clerics because they could not anticipate a lenient reaction. Instead, it was probably the result of tensions within the parish. The previous chapter illustrated that, while parishioners had every opportunity to make complaints, they tended to do so when they could turn it to their

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<sup>37</sup> "with the consent and will of the community of the inhabitants of the same place". *Reg. Sutton*, 3:153.

advantage. The customs managing the construction and care of bell-towers and the accompanying communal spiritual benefits suggest that it was not in the interest of the refusing parishioners from Hagworthingham to attract attention from outside the parish. Sutton, however, undoubtedly heard about the issue from somewhere but, not mentioning any formal suit or complaint made by other parishioners, it is entirely possible that general fame was his source of information. Sutton himself suggests a vague communication when he chastised the dean of Horncastle and Hill in his second letter, saying he had heard of the dean's disobedience, "as was said" (*ut dicitur*). Moreover, Sutton's descriptions of those parishioners who contributed as muttering (*murmurent*) may indicate that they made some form of complaint.<sup>38</sup> It seems entirely possible that these parishioners tried to take advantage of the dispute to seek the bishop's intervention and mediation in order to apply pressure. In other words, by participating in formal ecclesiastical processes, like at Warter, some parishioners may have tried to manipulate them for their own advantage.

In many ways, this example is not unlike the situation at Warter and a similar approach to its narrative might be helpful. At Warter, a group of parishioners complained to the archbishop because they felt that they faced an injustice in the alleged extortion of oblations. The resulting ecclesiastical judicial process drew in parishioners who were content to pay the oblations, and who appear to have participated in that process in order to manipulate it. The situation is, at least in the narrative, simply reversed at Hagworthingham. Here, the narrative focuses on the group of refusing parishioners who did not position themselves in it and, indeed, their resistance meant that they had little interest in doing so. Nevertheless, they received a position and voice from the bishop who described them as refusing parishioners (*recusantes*) and rebels (*rebelles*).<sup>39</sup> This appears to have been the result of muttering among those whose hopes for the pious project of the bell-tower were

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<sup>38</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:25, 3:153.

<sup>39</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:153, 4:75.

threatened. They may have appealed to the bishop who instigated an administrative process to enforce payments. Simply put, it was the contented parishioners who planned their participation in official processes to gain a local advantage, unlike the reverse at Warter. The refusing parishioners unexpectedly received a voice in the narrative, on the basis of which the bishop could then make decisions and react to them, command them, and negotiate with them. The fact that these parishioners were assigned a voice rather than claiming one themselves, as was entirely possible, suggests that they were not even a concerted group refusing to contribute to the bell-tower but, rather, a number of individuals who had different reasons for refusing to contribute. This would explain why it is uncertain that the willing parishioners made a formal complaint against them because there may have been no one group against which to do so. Challenges to local pious desires and widely acknowledged customs may have been multiple and complex rather than simple, requiring a great deal of negotiation and interaction between all involved parties. Much like those examined in the previous chapter, this complicated and negotiated situation challenges narratives describing relationships between monolithic groups, namely those refusing to contribute to the bell-tower, those upset about this, and seemingly oppressive clergy demanding money. Interactions between clergy and laity were much more complex than what appears in the narrative, particularly when multiple groups of laity were involved. Multiple interests and aims requiring negotiation characterised the management of these relationships, which had effects on local practices and participation in them.

Such a context would help to explain Sutton's reaction to this dispute, which, as it appears in his letters to the dean of Horncastle and Hill, is interesting because he did not react with automatic reprisal or coercion but, rather, initiated a negotiated interaction. The letters to the dean concerning Hagworthingham are unique among the orders directed towards him because they offered a flexibility not found in any of the other instructions that he

received. Sutton's sixteen other letters to the dean directly commanded him to execute a particular action, normally to grant probate to a will or to discharge executors of a testament.<sup>40</sup> Only two orders involved disciplinary matters and these gave the dean no flexibility of action and, moreover, required him to act in concert with his neighbouring rural deans. These commanded the dean to excommunicate certain malefactors, one a man who had committed assault, and the other those who had infringed the rights and liberties of a church.<sup>41</sup> Such precision of instruction to a rural dean is not unusual because they had almost no independent power deriving from their office but were administrative officers executing the will of their superiors.<sup>42</sup>

The letters concerning Hagworthingham, however, granted some discretion to the dean, and commanded him to act relatively independently in a disciplinary matter. The first letter stated that he should compel the parishioners with the threat of ecclesiastical censure if necessary (*per censuram ecclesiasticam si necesse fuerit*) while the second letter authorised him to proceed against the refusing parishioners by ecclesiastical censure until the bell-tower was completed (*per censuram ecclesiasticam usque ad satisfactionem condignam*).<sup>43</sup> This suggests an ecclesiastical sanction ceasing upon the completion of the bell-tower, which could be a more flexible tool in the hands of the dean than a sanction requiring formal episcopal pardon. The letters also encouraged the dean to employ moderation (*mediante ratione; adhibita moderatione*) when compelling offerings from the parishioners. Moreover, as mentioned above (p. 205), the dean was to ensure that no one was prejudiced at the expense of another and to divide the burden equitably, weighing the conditions of the people.<sup>44</sup> Sutton's flexible approach makes sense in a context where there were a number of different interests at issue. Indeed, the continued refusal of some parishioners to contribute to the bell-

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<sup>40</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:72, 3:108, 4:11, 4:45, 4:116, 4:183, 5:14, 5:45, 5:64, 5:65, 5:73, 5:155, 5:156, 5:198.

<sup>41</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 4:15, 5:167.

<sup>42</sup> Thompson, 'Diocesan Organisation', 167-189.

<sup>43</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:25, 3:153.

<sup>44</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:25, 4:75.

tower over a number of years tends to support the suggestion that there were many different concerns not lending themselves to a rapid resolution. Sutton's letters also encouraged negotiation of the local situation because the dean would have to inquire among the parishioners in order to weigh their conditions and determine whether ecclesiastical censures would be necessary. This scenario presumes interaction and negotiation with the people of the village because, as the previous chapter described, any inquisition relied upon the cooperation of the villagers who largely controlled information about local matters.

A flexible approach requiring some knowledge of the parish and situation recalls the suggestion made earlier in this chapter (pp. 210-211), that the dean of Horncastle and Hill was the vicar of the parish. This suggestion might explain one last peculiarity of these letters. The dean was uncharacteristically disobedient in the matter of Hagworthingham because not one of the other documents sent to him from the bishop before or after this matter required repetition.<sup>45</sup> In other words, the dean seems to have been normally obedient and effective. The letters concerning Hagworthingham describe the dean as neglecting to execute the order but, if he was vicar of the parish, it may not have been for any want of trying. Personally involved in the parish, he would have had an interest in reaching a settlement that restored peace and stability rather than imposing a solution that would have left discord and resentment. The "shadow of the future" hung over him as an external pressure that caused him to act out of character and the years spanned by the letters could reflect the time needed to negotiate between a number of different concerns and interests.<sup>46</sup> As it was, the dean only ever suffered the threat and not the actuality of punishment because the issue disappears from the register after the third letter. There are no further complaints and no further refusals, presumably because the matter was resolved to the satisfaction of the parties involved and the contributions to the bell-tower resumed.

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<sup>45</sup> *Reg. Sutton*, 3:72, 3:108, 4:11, 4:45, 4:116, 4:183, 5:14, 5:45, 5:64, 5:65, 5:73, 5:155, 5:156, 5:167, 5:198.

<sup>46</sup> Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, 14-18.

The dispute or disputes about the bell-tower of Hagworthingham mark an uncomfortable moment for historians because, as clergy and laity both participate in the construction of local practices, the distinction between popular and official religion begins to blur. This was not a case of outright refusal against an established custom of the church, nor was it simply a dispute over custom between rival groups of parishioners. It was, instead, a complex matter in which diverse groups participated and which touched upon local piety as well as widely established ecclesiastical norms. This would explain why Bishop Sutton reacted with flexibility and encouraged negotiation rather than punishment. The refusal of some parishioners of Hagworthingham created a narrative of interaction between clergy and laity, which makes it difficult to know whether the bell-tower was a manifestation of popular piety or the enforcement of official practice. This suggests that clergy and laity both participated on the frontier between official and popular religion, which space might be called local religion. Indeed, while the *pastoralia* and devotions described earlier could indicate at a general level the possibilities for complex interactions between clergy and laity, it is the narratives of administrative records that describe local events. The parishioners at Hagworthingham were involved in the management of universal customs at a local level, with real consequences on local pious practices, such as obtaining the spiritual benefits associated with the construction and use of the bell-tower.

#### *THE CEMETERY OF LANGAR AND WIVERTON*

A second refusal by a group of parishioners appears in a set of documents from the register of Archbishop Newark concerning the cemetery of the parish of Langar and a dependent chapel at Wiverton. Several sections, including the archdeaconries of York and Cleveland, are missing from Newark's register compared to what was then the established pattern in the

York registers. Moreover, the entries concerning the parish of Langar are heavily damaged.<sup>47</sup>

The documents remain interesting despite these challenges because they reveal the often obscured testimony that contributed to the construction of narratives in register entries. It is useful to outline the dispute before examining the nature and meaning of these documents in greater detail. The matter first appears in the register in March of 1298/9. Newark commanded the archdeacon of Nottingham to compel the inhabitants of Wiverton, where there was a chapel, to contribute to repairs at their mother-church of Langar, particularly for the wall of the cemetery:

Cum, nuper constitutis coram nobis procuratoribus tam parochianorum uille de Langar quam inhabitatorum uille Wyuerton' eiusdem parochie, ad audiendam prononciationem nostrum super contributione ad reparationem ecclesie matrices de Langar et claustrum cimiterii eiusdem ... uobis mandamus quatinus predictos inhabitatores uille de Wyuerton', parochianos ecclesie de Langar predictae, ad contributiones huiusmodi secundum quantitatem terrarum et facultatum suarum, cum comparochianis suis uillam de Langar inhabitantibus, quotiens opus fuerit, ut premittitur, faciendas, per omnimodam censuram ecclesiasticam, premissa monitione legitima, compellatis.<sup>48</sup>

The year of this entry is uncertain because it falls in March before the feast of the Annunciation. The balance of evidence, however, suggests that this was the first appearance of the matter. It is the first entry concerning the dispute at Langar to appear in the register and the command to make a canonical warning to the parishioners becomes the substantial point of dispute in what must then be a subsequent entry. Moreover, although this entry does not identify either party as plaintiffs or defendants, plaintiffs conventionally appeared first. This convention is met in a context where this document appeared earlier in the dispute because the villagers of Langar complain against the inhabitants of Wiverton, while the inhabitants of Wiverton appear in the second document as plaintiffs appealing the imposition of the

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<sup>47</sup> BIA, Register 5, fos. 30r-v, 32r, 33r-v; *Reg. Newark*, nos. 126, 248; Thompson, 'Registers of the Archbishops of York', 250.

<sup>48</sup> "Since the proctors of both the parishioners of the village of Langar and the inhabitants of the village of Wiverton in the same parish appeared before us recently for hearing our pronouncement concerning contributions to the repair of the mother-church of Langar and the wall of the cemetery of the same ... we command you to compel, by every type of ecclesiastical censure preceded by legitimate warning, the said parishioners of the village of Wiverton, parishioners of Langar, to contribute in this matter according to the size and means of their lands with their fellow parishioners, the inhabitants of the village of Langar, whenever work is done, as written above." *Reg. Newark*, no. 126.

ecclesiastical censure threatened in this entry.<sup>49</sup> The second entry dates from 1298, in March after the feast of the Annunciation, and, therefore, the first entry probably dates from a few weeks earlier in the same year.

The second entry concerning this dispute is a memorandum of an appeal by the inhabitants of Wiverton against ecclesiastical censure, which, they claimed, lacked any canonical warning. This ecclesiastical censure is, presumably, the one mentioned in the instructions to the archdeacon of Nottingham. Archbishop Newark decreed, "*quia forma huiusmodi excommunicationis in dubium reuocabatur*", and ordered an inquisition into the whole matter:

Et inhabitatores predicti ac etiam alii parochiani uille de Langar pro se et comparochianis suis uoluerunt et expresse consenserunt quod nosmetipsi in eorum absentia inquireremus quid [de consuetudine] in nostra diocese communiis fieri consueuit quo ad contributiones faciendas matricibus ecclesiis per parochianos earundem commorantes in uill[is in quibus] capelle cantariam habentes situate existunt.<sup>50</sup>

Two documents, which appear to be insertions into the register, suggest that this inquisition took place. These documents contain sworn testimony made by the inhabitants of Langar and Wiverton in response to a series of articles and may be the findings of the inquisition.<sup>51</sup> They are interesting because they offer insight into the normally hidden processes from which the narratives in the register were constructed, and because the testimony reveals a dispute far more complicated than the refusal of inhabitants of Wiverton to contribute to the repair of the cemetery wall. Like the one at Hagworthingham, this dispute involved clergy and several groups of laity.

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<sup>49</sup> *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

<sup>50</sup> "because the form of the excommunication in these matters is doubtful it was revoked"; "The said inhabitants, and also other parishioners of the village of Langar, desired and expressly consented on their own behalf and for their fellow parishioners that we inquire, in their absence, about what custom was commonly accustomed to be done in our diocese concerning the making of contributions to mother-churches by parishioners of those [churches] dwelling in villages in which there were chapels having a chantry." *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

<sup>51</sup> BIA, Register 5, fos. 32r, 33v; Partially printed in *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

*The parish of Langar, its chapel at Wiverton, and its disputes*

The parish of Langar, with its dependant chapel at Wiverton, lay in the archdeaconry of Nottingham, which, although a different county than Yorkshire, was part of the diocese of York. Indeed, evidence indicates that parishioners understood this and did not consider the county boundary to be a barrier to their ecclesiastical ties to York. In the mid fifteenth century, the Cluniac priory of Lenton claimed a portion of the tithes of Langar and documents concerning this claim appear in a cause paper from the ecclesiastical court of York.<sup>52</sup> One of the documents records the testimony of twelve men, all older than fifty, who describe the customs of the parish. This resembles the inquisitions discussed previously, and shows how elderly and trustworthy men of the village could remember custom and might mediate the knowledge conveyed to clerics. John Othorpe, “*etatis lxx annorum et amplius libere conditionis*”, indicated that he and other trustworthy men, likely his fellow deponents, considered the parish to belong to the diocese of York:

...audiuit a suis aliis fidedignos, quod monasterium seu prioratus sancte Trinitatis fuit et est sitis et situatur infra dyocesis ... et quod ipse rector [de Langar] fuit subditus et subiectus ac obedientarius domino archiepiscopo Ebor' in spiritualibus et ceteris ord[amage] archiepiscopi, et quod dicta ecclesia de Langar fuit et est sitis et situatur infra diocesis Ebor' prefatis...<sup>53</sup>

One of the deponents, whose first name is obscured by damage, Knyght of Wiverton, could be a descendant of the John Knyght who testified for the parishioners at Wiverton in the thirteenth century dispute about the cemetery wall. The appearance of the widow of Thomas Barnfader in the cause paper also suggests links to the earlier dispute when a Roger Barnfader had testified for the parishioners of Langar.<sup>54</sup> It is entirely possible, considering these possible descendants of earlier disputants, that earlier inhabitants of Langar and Wiverton traditionally, and correctly, considered themselves to be part of the diocese of York.

<sup>52</sup> Partially described in Burton, ‘Charters for Lenton Priory’, 13-26.

<sup>53</sup> “aged seventy and more [and] of free condition”; “he heard from his other trustworthy men that the monastery or priory of Holy Trinity was and is situated and was situated within the diocese of York ... and that the rector [of Langar] himself was subordinate and subject and obedient to the lord archbishop of York in spiritualities and other things [amage] of the archbishop, and that the said church of Langar was and is situated and was situated within the said diocese of York”. BIA, CP F 112.

<sup>54</sup> BIA, CP F 112; *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

This scenario also tends to support the suggestion that many lay groups appearing in the narratives in the register were temporary coalitions of individuals. These disputes, which occurred over a century apart, indicate the fluidity of village alignments because the laity of Langar and Wiverton testified together against Lenton Priory but were divided amongst themselves in the earlier dispute concerning repairs to the cemetery wall.

As expected, the narrative in Archbishop Newark's register describes the parishioners of Langar and Wiverton as monolithic and opposed groups, seemingly encompassing the entire body of parishioners at each village: "*comparentibus coram nobis Roberto de Langar pro se et comparochianis suis de Langar ex una parte et inhabitatoribus uille de Wyuerton' per [procuratores] suos predictos ad acta ex altera*".<sup>55</sup> The insertions in the register, however, reveal a more complicated picture because one person, the chaplain of Wiverton, offered testimony for two opposing groups. As noted when this record introduced this thesis, two groups of parishioners had grievances. The inhabitants of Langar complained against their co-parishioners at Wiverton, while the inhabitants of Wiverton made a complaint concerning the burial of John de Crophill:

[Langar]  
 Testes producti per Willelmum, presbiterum de Langar, ad probandum monitionem canonicam factam parochianis de Wyuerton' ante sententiam latam. Dominus Adam, capellanus parochialis de Wyuerton', Willelmus Clericus, Henricus Faber, Robertus filius Henrici, Yvo de Langar, Rogerus Barnfader, Henricus de Cottegraue.<sup>56</sup>

[Wiverton]  
 Testes, producti per communitatem de Wyuerton' contra dominum Willelmum, capellanum de Langar, ad probandum quod noluit permittere corpus Iohannis de Crophull' defuncti ingredi cimiterium, nec illud recipere ad sepulturam, donec fecerint securitatem pro principali seu mortuario: Henricus Pageth, Iohannes filius Walteri, dominus Adam, capellanus de Wyuerton', Iohannes Knycht, Willelmus filius Roberti.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> "Robert de Langar appeared for himself and his fellow parishioners of Langar on one part, and the inhabitants of the village of Wiverton through their said proctors to the court on the other". *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

<sup>56</sup> "The witnesses produced by William, the priest of Langar, for proving a canonical warning made to the parishioners of Wiverton before the sentence was published: Sir Adam, parish chaplain of Wiverton; William Clericus; Henry Faber; Robert, son of Henry; Ivo de Langar; Roger Barnfader; Henry de Cottegrave." *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

<sup>57</sup> "The witnesses produced by the community of Wiverton against Sir William, chaplain of Langar, for proving that he refused to permit the body of John de Crophill to enter the cemetery, or to receive the same for burial until they gave security for the principal or the mortuary payment: Henry Pageth; John, son of Walter; Sir Adam, chaplain of Wiverton; John Knycht; William, son of Robert." *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

The claims made during the inquisitorial process suggest multiple and, indeed, related conflicts rather than the single issue appearing in the simplified narrative of the register, which was the official and supposedly definitive record. The exclusion of the claim about John de Crophill's burial from this narrative does not necessarily suggest a clerical bias against the laity of Wiverton – though this cannot be ruled out entirely – but, instead, recalls previous observations about the purpose of the register and the resulting narratives. As discussed in the previous chapter, registers contained summary descriptions of outcomes and decisions rather than comprehensive details of the testimony and processes informing these. When constructing narratives of disputes, the compilers of the register reduced complicated matters to a narrative of decisions. The parties involved might, through their testimony, influence the dispute, which the relevant bishop used to reach the decision recorded in the register. In this case, however, no recorded decision concerning the substantive issue of the ecclesiastical censure, or the secondary issues of the cemetery wall and Crophill's burial, appears in Newark's register. This could indicate that the parties settled the different issues between themselves but the narrative in the register remains available for examination of the processes in which clergy and laity participated. Examining the secondary issues, particularly that of Crophill's burial, may, in fact, point to quite local interactions of interests and concerns involving both clergy and laity. In other words, this case study allows an examination of interactions between local clergy and laity where previous examples focused on administrative clerics from outside the parishes.

Since the definitive register entry does not record all that appears in the inquisition, it is necessary to outline the likely sequence of events in order to consider their relationships to each other. Inconsistencies in the testimony of deponents for Wiverton suggest that the refusal by William, the parish priest, to bury John de Crophill was the earliest dispute. Henry Paget, a villager of Wiverton, offered testimony about the priest's actions:

...quod die Assumptionis beate Virginis dominus Willelmus, parochialis presbiter de Langar, inhibuit [damage] cimiterii [damage] corpus Iohannis de Crophill' introduceret ad humandum antequam de mortuario executores defuncti [damage] satisfecerint. Requisitus qualiter hoc scit, dicit quod fuit unus eorum qui portabant feretrum et audiuit.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, John, son of Walter, claimed "*quod W[illelmus] presbiter non permisit funus portari in cimiterium per magnum spatium, set causam ignorat.*"<sup>59</sup> The inability of the deponents to agree on William's reasons for his actions suggests that they could think of no single reason, such as their own refusal to contribute to repairs of the cemetery wall, motivating him. The claim that William refused on the grounds of irregularities in the payment of Crophill's mortuary payments may not have been widely known, perhaps being limited to his executors. The inhabitants of Wiverton, of course, would have had good reason not to mention their refusal to contribute to any repairs but, since the substantive legal point was about the proper execution of an ecclesiastical censure, this may have been less of a concern. Paget's testimony that the attempted burial of Crophill occurred on 15 August 1297, the feast of the Assumption, also suggests that this was the earliest event in the series of disputes. Testimony by Adam, the chaplain of Wiverton, claims that he gave canonical warning and delivered the notice of ecclesiastical censure in the chapel in the weeks around Christmas of the same year.<sup>60</sup> This suggests a sequence of events where William refused to bury Crophill in August; the inhabitants of Wiverton subsequently refused to contribute to repairs at the mother-church of Langar; the inhabitants of Langar, perhaps after several months negotiating with the people of Wiverton, initiated an ecclesiastical process against them; this culminated at the end of the year when a process of canonical warning and ecclesiastical censure was begun; and the matter entered the register in March 1298 on the dates given in the entries.

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<sup>58</sup> "that Sir William, the parish priest of Langar, prohibited the body of John de Crophill to enter the cemetery for burial on the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin before the executors of the deceased made satisfaction for the mortuary. Asked how he knows this, he says that he was one of the men who carried the bier and he heard it." *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

<sup>59</sup> "that W[illiam] the priest did not permit the corpse to be carried into the cemetery for a long time, but he did not know why." *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

<sup>60</sup> *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

This sequence of events could indicate a direct link between the priest's refusal to bury John de Crophill and the refusal by the inhabitants of Wiverton to contribute to the repair of the cemetery wall. The villagers' reaction was not necessarily an automatic popular response but could be another example of temporary coalitions of like-minded individuals coming together in order to fight a perceived injustice through negotiation with local clergy. If, indeed, the evidence of the testimony by inhabitants of Wiverton indicates wider local ignorance of the reason for the dispute over Crophill's burial, then the involved villagers would probably have had to consult with their fellow parishioners before taking more concerted action. The small group of men turned away from the cemetery would have had to discuss matters with their fellow villagers, and win their support by convincing them of the rightness of their cause and offering hope for a favourable outcome.

Local legislation certainly offered some hope for their cause because Archbishop Gray had legislated, "*Ad hec firmiter inhibemus ne cuiquam communicatio corporis Christi uel morienti ecclesiastica sepultura pretextu cuiuslibet debiti denegetur.*"<sup>61</sup> Archbishop Ludham's subsequent legislation positioned the issue of burial as one of pastoral care and concern, on account of which no payment was to be solicited:

Cum parentes filiis non filios parentibus tesaurizare conueniat, precipimus quod pretextu consuetudinis cuiuscumque archidiaconi, eorum officiales, uel decani, uel quilibet alius pro exequiis mortuorum uel sepulturis, benedictionibus nubentium, pro installationibus abbatum uel priorum, uel missionibus clericorum in possessionem beneficorum suorum nichil omnino exigent uel extorquere presumant nec pro administrando aliquot sacramento quis quicquam recipiat uel aliquot modo querat, cum id absque nota fieri non ualeat symonie, set omnia absque pactione ac datione pecunie uel receptione libere et absolute conferantur.<sup>62</sup>

It is debatable whether the people of Wiverton knew of this legislation, but their subsequent action of refusing to support their mother-church suggests that they perceived some injustice.

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<sup>61</sup> "We firmly prohibit that any person be denied from the communion of the Body of Christ, or the dead from ecclesiastical burial on the pretext of any debts." *Councils and Synods II*, 489.

<sup>62</sup> "Since parents come together to lay up treasure for their children, not children for their parents, we order that archdeacons and their officials, rural deans, or any other person may exact or presume to extort nothing for performing a funeral or burial, for blessing a marriage, for installing an abbot or prior, or placing clerics into possession of their benefices. Nor may one receive anything or ask for anything for administering any sacrament on the pretext of any custom, but all should be conferred freely and unconditionally without tribute and gift and receipt of money, although when it happens without knowledge, it may not be simony." *Councils and Synods II*, 614-615.

Interestingly, testimony by Henry Paget suggests the perception that some rite was owed to the corpse because he says, "*Et postea quicquid debuit circa funus faciebat si pri[damage]*."<sup>63</sup> This testimony could indicate a pious desire for Christian burial rites and customs was a motivating factor in the villagers' actions.

The larger dispute appears, therefore, as a highly contested series of claims and counter-claims rather than an indication of some deep-seated division between local clergy and laity. Indeed, the complaints arising out of this situation suggests that normal relations had broken down and required external intervention and mediation. The parishioners, carrying Crophill's corpse to the cemetery, clearly expected that the priest would perform the burial. Indeed, the priest's actions may indicate that local negotiation was an entirely normal state of affairs, because his refusal to perform the burial may have been a tactic to apply pressure in order to resolve the issue of the mortuary without invoking higher authority. The parishioners' subsequent refusal to contribute to the repairs at Langar may have created an impasse. It widened the conflict beyond Wiverton and drew in the parishioners at Langar who also had to contribute to repairs of the church wall. This is probably why the inhabitants of Langar complained to outside authorities, not out of some alliance with the priest of Wiverton but, rather, out of their own self-interest and desire to preserve customary arrangements governing contributions to the church wall. The formation of a temporary coalition intent on managing intensely local matters is not unexpected although it is unrecorded in the narrative. These coalitions and retaliations do, however, suggest the villagers' ability to think strategically, apply pressure, and manipulate ecclesiastical administrative processes for their own advantage.

Legislation concerning the maintenance of cemeteries gave the villagers of Wiverton room to negotiate because it privileged custom, much like the regulation concerning bell-

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<sup>63</sup> "And afterwards, whatever he ought to do concerning the burial [or corpse], he did as [damage]." *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

towers. Only one piece of diocesan legislation regarding the protection of cemeteries survives from York, and it is ambiguous:

Nolentes quod cymiteria brutorum animalium sordibus maculentur, precimus quod per ipsos ad quod de consuetudine onus claudendi dinoscitur pertinere, circumquaque muro, sepe, uel fossato claudantur honeste. Et si ipsi qui present propria uel aliena animalia ibidem depascantur, pene subiaceant graviori.<sup>64</sup>

This legislation indicates a flexible response to local situations because it does not mandate a wall for cemeteries but calls for any sort of barrier against the entry of animals. Indeed, pollution by animals seems to be the main concern with penalties attached to those whose animals strayed into the cemetery rather than to those failing to maintain the barrier. A passing comment in an *exemplum* from *Handlyng Synne* about cemetery walls may reflect this:

Fyl hyt so þe knyghtes manere  
Was nat fro þe cherche ful fere,  
And was hyt þan as often falles,  
Broke were þe cherche 3erd walles.  
þe lordes hyrdes often lete  
Hys bestes yn to þe 3erd & ete.  
þe bestes dede as þey moste nede,  
Fyled oueral þere þey 3ede.<sup>65</sup>

The tale ends with a local “*bonde man*” berating the knight who, seeing the error of his actions, “*closed þe cherche 3erd so/ Pat no beste might come þar to*”.<sup>66</sup> In light of the legislation, it would have been in the interests of the owners of animals to fund the maintenance of the cemetery walls. Moreover, Mannyng’s comment that the cemetery walls often lay broken could indicate that their maintenance did rely on local custom, subject to negotiation and contest, which resulted in frequent delays and inaction. The bondsman upbraiding his lord may surprise modern readers but, in fact, this story tends to support the model emerging in this thesis: apparently simple narratives of conflict and dispute inadequately describe, and even obscure, complex relationships between different parts and

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<sup>64</sup> “Not desiring that cemeteries be polluted by the filth of brutish animals, we order that they be enclosed by a decent wall, fence, or ditch on every side, by those to whom the work of enclosing is customarily known to belong. And if local or foreign animals are pastured there by those who have charge of them, they are liable to grave penalty.” *Councils and Synods II*, 601-602.

<sup>65</sup> *HS*, II. 8675-8682.

<sup>66</sup> *HS*, II. 8711-8712.

ranks of society who more often turned to negotiation and compromise. For, in the story, the knight listened to the bondsman and rebuilt the walls. There is certainly a moral imperative driving this particular narrative but the scene does indicate that such an outcome was not beyond the realm of imagination or possibility. As so often mentioned previously, these narratives represent results, outcomes, and decisions flowing from, but only hinting at, highly negotiated encounters between people.

In a context of negotiation between clergy and laity of intensely local issues, Adam, the chaplain of Wiverton, plays an interesting role and his actions may be evidence for just such an interpretation. The preambles to the testimony on behalf of both Langar and Wiverton list him as a deponent although, unfortunately, any testimony he gave in favour of the inhabitants at his chapel does not survive. Adam claims to have communicated the disputed canonical warning, and ecclesiastical censure, to his community at Wiverton:

Ipsemet auctoritate littere officialis archidiaconi, sibi et de Langar et Berneston' presbiteris directe, date in crastino sancti Luce euangeliste post depositionis sue sententiam, monuit in capella de Wyuerton parochianos et inhabitatores eiusdem uille quod ad ecclesiam suam matricem de Langar accederent et ad sustentationem fabricae eiusdem contribuissent. Requisitus quot diebus festiuis, dicit quod per iiij, uidelicet, per tres dies ante Natale, et unum post, antequam sententia fuerat promulgata, et contemplatione domini Rogeri Bret Willelmus, presbiter de Langar, supersedit publicationi sententie usque [blank in MS]<sup>67</sup>

His surviving testimony positions him as an intermediary between the different factions.

Moreover, the delay between the date of the letter in October and his publication of the canonical warning at the end of December may indicate some sympathy for his spiritual cares at Wiverton and a desire to resolve the matter locally.

Such a scenario is not entirely unlikely, for it appears that William, presumably the same priest of Langar who denied burial to Crophill, also delayed the publication of the ecclesiastical censure, although he seems to have had the support of Lord Roger Bret. Bret

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<sup>67</sup> "He himself, on the authority of the letter of the Official of the Archdeacon dated the morrow of St Luke the Evangelist [19 October] after the delivery of his sentence, warned the parishioners and inhabitants of Wiverton in the chapel of the same village, that they go to their mother-church of Langar and contribute to the maintenance of the fabric of the same. Asked on how many feast days, he says four before the sentence was published, namely for three days before Christmas and one after, and William, the priest of Langar, refrained from the publication of the sentence until [based on subsequent testimony, the vigil of the Epiphany] in consideration of Lord Roger Bret". *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

held land in Wiverton and Berneston, which his wife granted to Hugh le Vaus upon his death, and he appears to have held his lands of a tenant in chief, John de Mendham.<sup>68</sup> It is also interesting to note that the parishioners at Wiverton did not make a complaint to the ecclesiastical authorities concerning the disputed burial of John de Crophill, even though they had a strong case, perhaps because they too wanted to come to a local solution. Indeed, the issue of Crophill's burial only arose in the course of an ecclesiastical process forced upon the inhabitants of Wiverton who, until that point, seem to have preferred local negotiation to official confrontation. The apparent delays in process by both William and Adam may have given them some hope of a favourable outcome until their fellow parishioners from Langar intervened.

The evidence described above indicates that the parishioners at Langar were likely the plaintiffs bringing this matter to the attention of ecclesiastical authorities. The refusal of the inhabitants of Wiverton to contribute to repairs at the mother-church certainly would have affected the parishioners living in the village of the mother-church itself. Indeed, the first entry concerning this matter indicates that the inhabitants of Wiverton were to share the costs of the repairs in an equitable manner with their fellow parishioners at Langar, but even this was open to negotiation at a local level because local counsel aided in the assessment of costs:

...ipsos inhabitatores de Wyuerton', parochianos de Langar, ad contribuendum cum aliis comparochianis suis de Langar secundum quantitatem terrarium et facultatum suarum iuxta taxationem de ipsorum omnium parochianorum communi uel maioris parties ipsorum consilio prouide faciendam, ad premissa onera subeunda condempnauerimus, iusticia exigente.<sup>69</sup>

Some villagers of Langar subsequently gave testimony that the ecclesiastical censure against Wiverton had been properly executed but, unfortunately, the testimony itself is heavily damaged.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, there appears to have been little sympathy for the fellow villagers

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<sup>68</sup> *CPR 1313-1317*, 37, 42.

<sup>69</sup> "we convicted the inhabitants of Wiverton themselves, parishioners of Langar, to endure the aforesaid burdens of contributing with their fellow parishioners of Langar according to the size and means of their land according to the assessment made by the provident counsel of the community of all the parishioners themselves, or the greater part of them, as justice demands." *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

<sup>70</sup> *BIA*, Register 5, fo. 33v; *Reg. Newark*, no. 248.

of John de Crophill but this should not be surprising. Like the bell-tower of Hagworthingham, the refusal of one group of people to contribute to repairs potentially financially affected those remaining individuals who still contributed to it. It appears, from the evidence, that different groups within this complicated dispute had different aims and interests and it would be hazardous to assume that all the laity sympathised with each other. Indeed, as the evidence outlined above shows, there were divisions between groups of laity just as often as division between clergy and laity, and coalitions attempting to resolve these issues could draw support from across these boundaries.

The intersection of these several disputes highlights the importance of understanding intensely local conflicts and negotiations that lay behind the final narratives appearing in the register. Different groups assigned different meanings to the dispute. The inhabitants of Wiverton seem concerned with the burial of their fellow parishioner, and the interesting phrase about doing the appropriate things for the burial suggests a pious aspect to their concerns, perhaps associated with a desire for a Christian burial. The sequence of subsequent events further suggests that the people of Wiverton chose to link this issue to the repair of the cemetery. Considering the inconsistencies in the motivations for refusing to contribute to repairs, this strategy likely emerged as an agreed upon course of action rather than an automatic and corporate retaliatory gesture. It might also indicate a pious aspect to the dispute. Since John de Crophill had been denied Christian burial in the consecrated ground of the parish cemetery, his fellow-parishioners were not going to contribute to the upkeep of something of which they were denied use. This suggests a carefully planned strategy of applying pressure and assigning meaning to their refusal. The parishioners of Langar, on the other hand, may well have assigned meanings of rights, responsibilities, and cost to the dispute. Like the possible disputes described at Hagworthingham, therefore, the dispute at Langar stood at the intersection of different interests and meanings, creating a

complex dispute requiring time and negotiation between the parties to resolve. The eventual complaint to ecclesiastical authorities did not concern what seems to be the initial dispute, but came from the party affected by the action of a refusal to co-operate. The sequence of events, therefore, suggests an existing dispute being negotiated, into which the archbishop intervened in his regulatory capacity. This action brought all the parties into participation in an official ecclesiastical process where their local concerns could be arranged.

### *SHAPING DIALOGUES AND NARRATIVES*

It may be that these instances of refusal to co-operate were another mode of interaction between clergy and laity that continues to reveal negotiation as one of their characteristics. Moreover, such negotiation presumes lay participation in dialogues of official processes, which shaped local customs and practices. Having explored some of the implications of the narratives of the registers in the preceding chapter, it is appropriate to close here with some reflections on their wider meaning and the implications for understanding relationships between clergy and laity. It is now apparent that even the labels of complaint and refusal used in this examination are problematic because they tend to produce two false dichotomies. Firstly, these categories are not the opposite of each other, but normally different modes of the same process, and do not represent the entire spectrum of narratives in the registers and medieval documents. Secondly, these labels tend to produce false oppositions between groups, often laity and clergy, which privilege interpretations of conflict and difference over explanations of negotiation. Issues may have entered the record because of a conflict, but this does not mean that conflict was the means by which they were resolved. Read as narratives written for a particular purpose, the records in the register obscure complex, multiple, and overlapping interactions of which only hints and suggestions survive. To understand the narrative purposes of these records – that is, to record outcomes and decisions – brings a realisation that they are highly constructed historical records that cannot

simply be accepted at face value. They are often written as part of official processes mediating between complainants and defendants, which, therefore, present the appearance of highly contested interactions. The simplifying tendencies of the register, arising in the course of constructing a narrative record of outcome and precedent, re-present events without their hidden complexities or indicating the degree of willing lay participation in them. These are records, often of legal standing, of interactions and not full and precise descriptions of the conflicts themselves. The constructed record may suggest bitter conflict and division but the context from which that record is constructed tends to tell a different story.

Reading the records in these ways will, hopefully, produce interpretations of the documents that acknowledge and accept complexity and differences without the need to resolve them. They also, perhaps, provide a fuller understanding of the lives of the individuals involved who are now credited with multiple motivations and choices rather than being driven by essentialist definitions of popular or official, lay or clerical. As already suggested, understanding the multiplicity of motives at play begins to break down boundaries between popular practice and official practice so that these were not always in contest with each other, but in dialogue. Moreover, a multiplicity of motives means that popular practice cannot be separated from other local concerns, such as financial considerations. These interactions cannot now be simply seen as reaction, rebellion, or dissent representing some mythic popular practice. The importance of custom in the interpretation of legislation indicates the possibility for negotiation and re-negotiation of local implementation of wider norms. Clergy, despite their spiritual authority, were as likely as laity to engage in negotiation and conciliation. They lived with their people and in their villages, perhaps like the dean of Horncastle and Hill. Probing the narratives of the records of interactions between local laity and clergy reveals less about presumed widespread arrogance on the part of clergy or lay disobedience than about the negotiation of local issues, sometimes assigned multiple

meanings. The boundaries between the official and the popular were fluid, flexible, and porous with clergy becoming involved in the maintenance of popular devotions, and the laity helping to shape official practices in the localities. Indeed, mutual participation in this dialogue was expected. The brevity of many documents may never permit a complete understanding of many of these issues but they do permit for the conception of a new space, not between clergy and laity, but inhabited by both of them from which they negotiated and arranged local affairs.

The extent to which clerical and lay individuals interacted in the construction of local – as opposed to popular and official – religion may be seen in the next chapter, which examines interactions between Cistercian nunneries and their neighbours. The role of these houses was shaped by the interactions they had with local laity, which interactions should now be assumed to be complicated and negotiated. These interactions gave the laity space and opportunity to shape even official religion through their participation in the construction of narrative and meaning.

### **6. Neighbours: The local relationships of two medieval nunneries**

The previous chapters have considered moments where relationships between clergy and laity broke down and required external intervention that generated historical records. From these moments, or crises, it has not been possible to offer anything but possible descriptions of the longer term relationships between clergy and laity. In this final chapter, the involvement of religious houses with their lay neighbours offers an opportunity to explore such longer term relationships because religious communities kept their own records and had long-term interests in their surroundings. The records used here still concern moments of crisis but the ability to study the history of the houses provides additional information for the context in which these encounters took place. The case studies involve two nunneries, about which more will be said later, but, for now, it is important to establish why these women's houses are classified as clerical in this thesis. Although medieval nuns were meant to be enclosed with few external concerns, the reality could be quite different. Nuns did not engage in pastoral care as ordained men did, but they engaged in social care in the pursuit of an ideal monastic lifestyle.<sup>1</sup> They were professed women who had taken solemn vows, stood in a clear ecclesiastical relationship to their local bishop, and followed a daily routine of liturgical celebrations in their communities. From the perspective of laity, therefore, nuns were probably seen as being closer to the clergy although their actual position might be more complicated. Since the term "clergy" has been used fairly widely here, essentially to distinguish from the laity individuals bound by vows and a religious lifestyle, it does not seem inappropriate to include nuns in this category for this study.

Scholars have, understandably, tended to study larger and wealthier nunneries for which records survive, but the history of smaller and poorer nunneries is still accessible despite their sparser albeit more challenging records.<sup>2</sup> Many so-called Cistercian nunneries, a

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<sup>1</sup> Oliva, *Convent and Community*, 138.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, 'Why English Nunneries had no History', 131-143.

label examined below (p. 238), fall into this latter category but a careful study of any available material can provide the basis for a discussion of the history of these houses. In particular, these documents reveal ways that nunneries interacted with and related to the laity around them. These so-called Cistercian nunneries, inhabiting ambiguous legal space, had to negotiate with surrounding communities in order to shape their own existence, and the laity, through these interactions, could contribute to this shape. This chapter will consider two of these houses, Handale in Yorkshire and Stixwold in Lincolnshire. These nunneries make useful case studies because they constituted part of a larger regional trend that saw twenty-one of the twenty-seven Cistercian nunneries in England founded in these two counties – twelve in Yorkshire and nine in Lincolnshire.<sup>3</sup> The documents available from these two nunneries are different in number and quality but in both cases often record their interactions with surrounding lay communities. Records of litigation by Handale and Stixwold help to illuminate particular relationships between the nunneries and local groups, revealing trends about the role of the houses but also the role of the laity in defining them. This chapter begins with a brief description of the litigation involving Handale and Stixwold, which will provide material for later analysis after a detailed examination of the history and context of the houses. Their histories require a detailed outline here because, for the most part, they have not been written. They will, however, permit discussion about the relationships of the nunneries, lead to concluding remarks about the place of nunneries in their localities and, more importantly, the contributions of the laity to the houses' identities. The current chapter builds on the themes of dialogue, participation, and negotiation developed in the previous chapters that call for revision to dominant understandings of relationships between laity and clergy.

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<sup>3</sup> Nichols, 'Cistercian Nunneries and English Bishops', 240.

It is necessary, before turning to this material, to indicate some caveats. The term “Cistercian nuns” is much debated because Cîteaux only ever granted recognition and incorporation into their order to two houses in England, Marham and Tarrant. Scholars have, nevertheless, shown that several nunneries tried to associate themselves with the order, particularly by imitating the Cistercian way of life.<sup>4</sup> The resolution of this debate is not the chief concern here so this chapter will use the term Cistercian, without qualifier, as a term of convenience. The self-identification of the women of Handale and Stixwould is discussed but as part of an examination of their local relationships and self-presentation. It is also important to note that it may simply not be possible to describe a general model for these houses. Their ambiguous juridical status, choices made by individual communities, and the lack of any universal governing body or rule cautions against generalising about them. Coburn Graves, admitting these problems, has compared houses in attempts to discuss their organisation, using material from one to fill gaps in the documentary record at another.<sup>5</sup> His findings certainly have some merit and such comparisons can be useful in discussion about what he usefully terms “English Cistercian nuns”, but the conclusions drawn from one house cannot be applied to another in a way that excludes the possibility of differences. There may be similarities between Handale and Stixwould but these may not hold true for all Cistercian nunneries. These houses did not constitute a religious order but were probably, as will become clear, manifestations of local piety rooted in local affairs and contexts, and disciplined only by the diocesan ordinary. Answers about English Cistercian nuns must, therefore, be located in these contexts, which, as already seen, gave opportunities to the laity to shape local affairs with their clergy.

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<sup>4</sup> Berman, ‘Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns’, 824-864; Freeman, ‘Cistercian Nuns in England’, 110-119; Thompson, ‘Problem of Cistercian Nuns’, 227-252.

<sup>5</sup> Graves, ‘Cistercian Nunnery in Lincolnshire’, 333-334.

*THE LITIGATION OF HANDALE AND STIXWOULD PRIORIES*

As in previous chapters, indications about interactions between clergy and laity emerge in documents that record when those relationships were disputed and required intervention by an outside authority. Records pointing to tensions between Handale in Yorkshire and Stixwould in Lincolnshire and some of their neighbours are the basis for the discussion that follows. The record of an assault on Ivetta, prioress of Handale, survives in a cause paper from the court of York in which the judges delivered sentence on 1 October 1306. The examination of witnesses occurred over several months on 5 February 1305, 23 March 1305, and 7 April 1305 concerning events of late 1304.<sup>6</sup> Ivetta had brought a complaint of assault against two men, Nicholas of Marske and Gilbert, son of Leticia. Two deponents, William of Kirkby and Ralph of Easington, stated, “*quod [priorissa] equitavit apud Suthlofthous’ pro liberatione animalium suorum que imparcata fuerunt apud Lofthous*”.<sup>7</sup> Their depositions continue, and allege that Ivetta argued with the defendant Nicholas, who pulled her horse to the ground:

...cui priorisse dictus Nicholaus sic dixit, quod ipsa non haberet communem cum animalibus suis in campo de Lofthous’. Et hiis sic dictis, assumpsit dictus Nicholaus dictam priorissam per brachium uiolenter, et palefridum dicte priorisse per frenum et ipsum palefridum cum freno repulit et restrinxit, adeo quod idem equus ad terram cecidit.<sup>8</sup>

One of the witnesses mentioned that he saw Nicholas strike the horse with a sword (*cum gladio*).<sup>9</sup> William and Ralph also claimed that they saw Gilbert violently beat Ivetta with a rod (*uirgam*), which he had taken from her hands, so that she was bruised (*inflata erat*). They testified that one Humphrey Pex, described as subject (*subiectus*) to Nicholas, also beat Ivetta on the back with his bow (*arcu*).<sup>10</sup> William and Ralph gave no further description of the

<sup>6</sup> BIA, CP E 3d, CP E 3/4.

<sup>7</sup> “that [the prioress] rode to South Loftus for the liberation of her animals that were impounded at Loftus”. BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5.

<sup>8</sup> “to which prioress the said Nicholas so said that she might not have [right to] common with her animals in the field of Loftus. And so saying these things, the said Nicholas violently took up the said prioress by her arms, and restrained the horse of the said prioress by the bridle, and drove back the same horse with the bridle to such a degree that the same horse fell to the ground.” BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5.

<sup>9</sup> BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5.

<sup>10</sup> BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5.

attack. They may not, however, have been casual witnesses but both men may have had closer ties to Ivetta than their testimony suggests. William testified to having known her for three years and is the only deponent to give her an honorific, when he said, “*que uocatur domina Iuetta*”.<sup>11</sup> Ralph testified to having known Ivetta for five years and, considering that he appears in another record as “*the prioresses cuhirde*”, he was probably a servant of hers.<sup>12</sup>

Two more deponents gave testimony in this case. Richard, son of Simon the forester of Hoton, said that he had not seen the assault but that it was common knowledge (*puplicam famam*) in the vicinity of Loftus and throughout the deanery of Cleveland.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Richard’s claim may indicate that laity could have knowledge of the ecclesiastical jurisdictions to which they were subject. The final deponent, Osbert, the parish chaplain of Loftus (*capellanus parochialis de Lofthous*), said that he neither saw the incident nor knew of any common report, but did say that Humphrey Pex and Prioress Ivetta argued about a week after the alleged assault:

Requisitus si unquam sciuit dictam Nicholaum consentire alicui iniectioni manuum uiolentarium in eandem priorissam facte, dicit quod non, nec unquam sciuit ipsum Nicholaum mandare alicui aliquam uiolentiam dicte priorisse inferre, nec aliquid super premissis articulis scit idem iuratus deponere sicut dicit, nec de fama puplica nec, de aliis in eidem articulis contentis aliter quam deposuit. Sic dicit idem iuratus tamen quod uidit et audiuit Unfredum Pex in campo de Loftus contentere cum dicta priorissa, et eandem meretricem uocare...<sup>14</sup>

Osbert’s claim to have known the prioress for more than six years (*sex annis elapsis et amplius*) is interesting in light of local legislation prohibiting clerics from “*ecclesias monialium uel sororum regularium sine causa honesta et legitima frequentare aut familiare frequenter habere colloquium cum eisdem*.”<sup>15</sup> It may have been that Osbert occasionally assisted with liturgical celebrations at the priory because, presumably, this would have been legitimate

<sup>11</sup> “she who is called Dame Ivetta”. BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5.

<sup>12</sup> BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5; TNA, CP 40/154, mem. 224.

<sup>13</sup> BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5.

<sup>14</sup> “Asked if he ever knew the said Nicholas to consent to any violent assault made against the same prioress, he says no, nor did he ever know Nicholas to order anyone to cause any violence to the said prioress. He the witness does not know anything to depose concerning the above articles other than what he deposed. He the witness says nevertheless that he saw and heard Humphrey Pex to dispute with the said prioress in the field of Loftus, and to call her a whore”. BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5.

<sup>15</sup> “...frequenting the churches of nuns or regular sisters or having frequent familiar conversation with the same without honest and legitimate cause.” *Councils and Synods II*, 604; BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5.

reason for him to attend. It is also possible, seeing that Ivetta seems to have attempted to free her animals by personally going to Loftus, that she was well-known in the villages around the priory from previous visits.

The chaplain of Loftus, Osbert, may have testified in favour of the defendants on account of his ties to a plaintiff in another case against Prioress Ivetta concerning the same matter. Osbert does not appear in the registers as being instituted to Loftus at any time but, as his description as chaplain suggests, was probably a hired stipendiary priest dependent upon the rector of Loftus, John de Lazenby. Lazenby appears in the York archiepiscopal registers as the rector of Loftus and, occasionally, as a sequestrator in the deanery of Cleveland. These duties might explain his frequent absences from Loftus, which probably left Osbert as the resident cleric there.<sup>16</sup> Sometime between 23 January and 12 February 1305, Lazenby, identified as the son of Robert de Lazenby, brought a case against Ivetta in the court of Common Pleas. He claimed that Ivetta, along with the men who testified in her favour in the ecclesiastical cause, William and Ralph, broke his pound where his servant Nicholas de Marske, the defendant in the cause paper, was holding the prioress' animals.<sup>17</sup> It is difficult to determine which party made their claim first. The earliest dated record in the York cause is 5 February 1305 but the laying of positions and citations must have happened some time before this.<sup>18</sup> The first recorded date in the Common Pleas case is Hilary Term, 33 Edward I, or between 23 January and 12 February 1305. Again, preliminary motions such as obtaining writs from Chancery must have preceded this.<sup>19</sup> Since the earliest dates for the cases overlap, no definitive conclusion about the sequence of events is possible and, indeed, the opponents may not have known of the other suit when bringing their own. It is possible that Lazenby began his case in Common Pleas first considering the potentially lengthy process of

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<sup>16</sup> *CPR 1307-1313*, 396; *Reg. Corbridge*, nos. 1:391, 1:398, 1:1269; *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:521.

<sup>17</sup> TNA, CP 40/154, mem. 224.

<sup>18</sup> Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation*, 11-18, 124.

<sup>19</sup> Baker, *Laws of England*, 323-328.

obtaining writs from Chancery for the local sheriff. These cases begin to reveal the complicated relationships and situations that faced Ivetta and Handale Priory.

The litigation involving Stixwould Priory is more straightforward, since it is recorded in one set of sequential records, but concerns similar matters, namely disputes over the use of land, the seizure of the priory's animals, and assaults on its servants. A number of disputes between Stixwould and Robert Godsfield appeared in the records of the court of Common Pleas during the early fourteenth century. Godsfield was a knight who had inherited a manor in the village of Stixwould in the late thirteenth century. He soon made Stixwould the centre of his family's activities and became an important local resident. Like John de Lazenby at Handale, Godsfield was a local power but not particularly influential in the wider world. An early fourteenth-century survey of Lincolnshire residents reveals over ninety knights in the county including Godsfield, who does not appear to have been a tenant-in-chief.<sup>20</sup> The first dispute between Stixwould and Godsfield appears in litigation from 1300, which records that he called upon the prioress of Stixwould to answer his claim of an acre of land in the village. The record, heavily abbreviated and formulaic, indicates that she did not appear (*Et ipsa non uenit*) and was, therefore, in mercy.<sup>21</sup> Subsequent disputes do not refer to this claim and the names of later disputed lands, Esen and Oxpasture, suggest that the priory and Godsfield contested several different and, perhaps, neighbouring holdings in or around the village of Stixwould.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that the parties settled this earliest issue through out-of-court negotiation because there is no recorded outcome. The records of later disputes indicate, however, that the relationship between the priory and Godsfield continued to be poor.

The relationship appears to have become even more strained when, in 1306, Robert Godsfield claimed that two men of the priory, Robert the Granger and Robert atte Fenbothe, broke his close and pastured animals on it to his damage:

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<sup>20</sup> McLane, 'Violence and Litigation', 23-25.

<sup>21</sup> TNA, CP 40/133, mem. 23d; McLane, 'Violence and Litigation', 32.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, CP 40/173, mem. 266; KB 27/184, mem. 38d.

Frater Robertus le Graunger et frater Robertus atte Fenbothe de Stikeswold in misericordia pro pluris defaultis. Iidem frater Robertus le Grauner et frater Robertus atte Fenbothe attachiati fuerunt ad resopndi Roberto de Godesfeld de Sutton de placito quare, ui et armis, clausum ipsum Roberti apud Stykeswald fregerunt, et herbam eiusdem Roberti in eodem clauso nuper crescentem, ad ualenciam centum solidorum, cum quibusdam aueris depasci fuerunt, et alia enormia etc., ad graue dampnum etc., et contra pacem etc.<sup>23</sup>

The priory's animals were bullocks, cows, sheep, and pigs (*bobis, uaccis, bidentibus et porcis*), which indicate the variety of animals owned by the priory, but also suggests its limited resources available for pasture since the animals were not pastured separately.<sup>24</sup> The men, both named brother and one called Granger, were probably lay brothers of the priory, perhaps living or working at a grange in the village of Stixwold itself. They did not deny their actions but, rather, claimed that the land in question was common land. Godsfield denied this, saying, "*quod predictus locus etc. est clausum suum, separale, et nullo tempore anni communa pastura predictae priorisse*".<sup>25</sup> Like the earlier dispute, there is no recorded resolution in this matter. In 1307, the prioress claimed against Godsfield that his servants had removed cattle from her pasture in nearby Horsington but Godsfield claimed that they had been found on his property.<sup>26</sup> The prioress complained again a year later, in 1308, that Godsfield's servants had stolen her cattle from a pasture in Stixwold and taken them to his own land where they were detained and damaged.<sup>27</sup> Allegations of violence against servants of Stixwold were made by the prioress, including an alleged assault by Godsfield's men on Gilbert de Eston, a canon of Stixwold, and Robert de Suthewode, a lay-brother.

Interestingly, another complaint of assault claimed the victims to be Richard Metherynham – Stixwold held land in the nearby village of Metherynham – described as both a monk and lay brother (*conuersus*) of the priory, and Gilbert de Eton, described as the prior, who might

<sup>23</sup> "Brother Robert the Granger and brother Robert atte Fenbothe of Stixwold in mercy for many defaults. The same brother Robert the Granger and brother Robert atte Fenbothe were attached to answer Robert de Godsfield de Sutton concerning a plea why, with force and arms, they broke a close of Robert himself at Stixwold, and pastured certain animals on the recently grown grass of the same Robert in the same close to the value of 100s, and did other enormities etc., to the grave damage etc., and against the peace etc." TNA, KB 27/184, mem. 38d; McLane, 'Violence and Litigation', 32.

<sup>24</sup> TNA, KB 27/184, mem. 38d.

<sup>25</sup> "that the said place etc. is his close, separate, and at no time of the year the common pasture of the said prioress". TNA, KB 27/184, mem. 38d.

<sup>26</sup> McLane, 'Violence and Litigation', 32.

<sup>27</sup> TNA, CP 40/173, mem. 266.

be the same Gilbert de Eston.<sup>28</sup> None of these suits has any recorded result but they do indicate tension between Stixwold and at least one local landlord. Like at Handale, these disputes focussed on the rights of the priory in the community, which may reveal something about local relationships. Handale and Stixwold both faced dispute and violence as they tried to protect their property and rights. These aspects of their local relationships will now be examined in more detail, along with the histories and contexts of the two nunneries.

#### *HANDALE PRIORY IN CLEVELAND, YORKSHIRE*

The west end of the conventual church of Handale was still standing in 1808 but had disappeared by 1846 and, today, there are no visible physical remains of the priory. Handale stood on the eastern edge of a shallow wooded valley, which had a north-south axis and a small stream running through it, on the northern side of the North Yorkshire moors. Today, a waterfall to the south and higher elevations on the east, west, and south distinguish the valley from the surrounding area. Situated at a higher elevation than the coast nearly five kilometres distant, the valley and priory commanded a view of the sea.<sup>29</sup> The names of the priory, recorded as both Grendale and Handale in a foundation document and other records, may indicate continuities between the modern and medieval topography of the area. Handale means “rocky valley”, which may have referred to the unsuitability of the valley for intense agriculture, so Grendale, meaning “green valley”, could have described the presence of woods rather than any other vegetation.<sup>30</sup> The stream would have provided both water and sewage for the priory, and the valley suggests a natural route north towards the open fields of nearby villages. These were Liverton, Loftus, and Easington, which ranged from 1km to 2.5km away from the priory. Loftus seems to have been the largest of the three, the 1334 Lay Subsidy assessing its inhabitants at £2 10s 0d. The people of Easington owed less than half

<sup>28</sup> CCR 1307-1313, 87; CPR 1307-1313, 166; McLane, ‘Violence and Litigation’, 32-33.

<sup>29</sup> Graves, *History of Cleveland*, 345; Ord, *Antiquities of Cleveland*, 282-283; Ordnance Survey, *North York Moors: Eastern Area*.

<sup>30</sup> Atkinson ed., *Cart. Whitby*, no.376; Smith, *Place-Names of the North Riding*, 140-141.

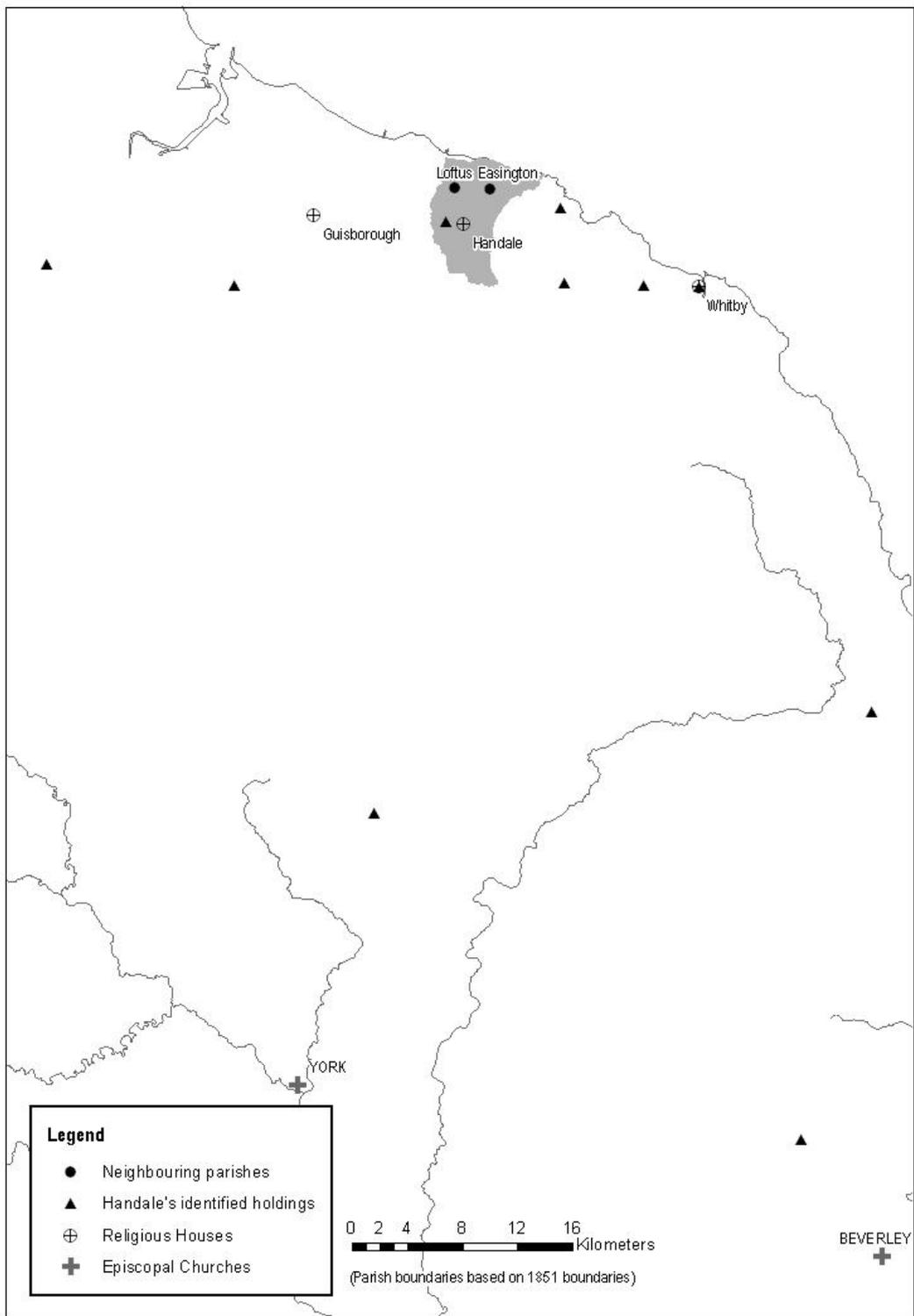


Figure 12: Handale Priory and its surroundings

this, £1 2s 0d, while Liverton was smaller still at only 16s.<sup>31</sup> The Domesday Book records that the sokes of Easington and Liverton belonged to the manor of Loftus. Liverton lacked a church, having, instead, a chapel with parochial rights dependent on the church of Easington.<sup>32</sup> The topography suggests that Handale, like many contemporary nunneries, was somewhat isolated from surrounding settlements by physical features such as the valley and woods, and stood on marginal agricultural land.<sup>33</sup>

A memorandum in the cartulary of Whitby Abbey, which traces the holdings and descent of the Percy family from the time of William the Conqueror, mentions the foundation of Handale. William Percy founded the priory in 1133 in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, endowing it with two tofts at his own seat in Dunsley, ten acres in Staxton-in-Deepdale, and pasturage for two-hundred sheep in the fields of Handale and Dunsley.<sup>34</sup> Like many small nunneries, this endowment probably remained the primary support for the priory and defined its sphere of interest.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, throughout the central medieval period, the priory appeared to part more readily with gifts of land gained subsequent to its foundation than those belonging to its original endowment. In 1254, Handale, agreed to divide and enclose a common it had gained in Ugthorpe, which it shared with the Augustinian priory of Guisborough, and, in 1242, granted all its remaining lands in Ugthorpe to Guisborough for a payment of twenty marks and a perpetual annual farm of twenty-eight quarters of cleaned wheat.<sup>36</sup> The two communities made a similar arrangement in 1269 concerning Handale's lands in Percybigging, for which Guisborough paid annually twenty-six quarters of cleaned wheat and a render of wood (*tres tractus uirgarum de bosco suo*).<sup>37</sup> An undated charter records gifts to Handale in Marton from Engramus de Boynton and Thomas de Scaling, which were also farmed to Guisborough for

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<sup>31</sup> Glasscock ed., *Lay Subsidy of 1334*, 375.

<sup>32</sup> Graves, *History of Cleveland*, 275, 287.

<sup>33</sup> Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, 65-68; Gilchrist & Oliva, *Religious Women in East Anglia*, 24-25.

<sup>34</sup> Atkinson ed., *Cart. Whitby*, no. 376.

<sup>35</sup> Oliva, *Convent and Community*, 11-18.

<sup>36</sup> Brown ed., *Cart. Guisborough*, nos. 943-944.

<sup>37</sup> Brown ed., *Cart. Guisborough*, no. 987.

four quarters of cleaned wheat annually.<sup>38</sup> In 1287, Handale granted all their lands in Loftus and nearby Waupley to Guisborough in return for a portion of moor beside Liverton.<sup>39</sup> A charter from Whitby Abbey indicates that Handale held land in Ayton while disputes involving the priory suggest that it also had lands or interests in Hinderwell, Whitby, and Yarm. At the Dissolution, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* recorded that Handale held additional properties in Lund, Wiganthorpe, “Sandishead”, “Skalmyre”, and “Cotom”.<sup>40</sup> This may not be a complete history of Handale and its holdings because other documents may remain undiscovered, but a search of the published cartularies of the other nearby monasteries of Byland and Rievaulx reveals no further information.

Studies of other nunneries point to their administrative separation from male houses and a correspondingly closer relationship with local settlements but the prominence of Handale’s grants at perpetual farm to Guisborough departs from this model in that these connections with Guisborough were essential to its local relationships.<sup>41</sup> In total, Guisborough owed fifty-eight quarters of cleaned wheat to Handale annually, which was probably sufficient to support the basic needs of the women there. At the Dissolution, Guisborough still owed this farm, which would have provided a little less than six quarters of wheat annually for each of the ten nuns there.<sup>42</sup> Evidence from another small Yorkshire nunnery suggests that this would have been sufficient to feed the nuns at Handale. A fifteenth century account from Marrick, a community that had seventeen nuns in the sixteenth century, shows the women there consuming nearly eighty quarters of wheat annually. If the size of Marrick was unchanged from the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries – which was not unlikely given bishops’ frequent reluctance for nunneries to accept new members on account of poverty – then the Marrick

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<sup>38</sup> Brown ed., *Cart. Guisborough*, no. 990.

<sup>39</sup> Brown ed., *Cart. Guisborough*, no. 881.

<sup>40</sup> Atkinson ed., *Cart. Whitby*, no. 345; *Inq. Post Mortem*, no. 1:800; Caley ed., *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 5:87; Baidon, *Notes on Religious Houses*, 86-87.

<sup>41</sup> Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, 68-69.

<sup>42</sup> Caley ed., *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 5:87; *VCH Yorks.*, 3:166.

totals would have supplied slightly less than five quarters of wheat to each nun.<sup>43</sup> The nuns at Handale may have used their extra quarter of wheat in several different ways, but it is interesting to note that, at the Dissolution, they were distributing over one-third of their income as alms to the poor, mainly in food, for the soul of Richard Percy and the faithful departed.<sup>44</sup> There is no indication whether this was a legacy left by the Percy family or an initiative of the nuns, or how they came to distribute alms in both money and food. Interestingly, however, there was an old monastic tradition of individual religious giving up part of their own rations for distribution to the poor by the almoner.<sup>45</sup> Regardless, Handale's charity would have been a useful strategy that both fulfilled their religious duties and, through the distribution of food to local petitioners, probably gained favour among the neighbouring population who could support the nunnery when needed. Indeed, Caroline Walker Bynum has already demonstrated the strategic and spiritual uses of food by medieval women, and the distribution of Handale's food may have been a concrete example of this.<sup>46</sup>

As a poor nunnery, the surplus food may also have been used to pay any local employees and forge links with local laity, which may explain the possible presence of men at the priory. From the court documents concerning Prioress Ivetta, it appears that there were lay brothers or servants working for Handale. An English phrase in the Latin court of Common Pleas' case against Ivetta describes Ralph de Easington, who supported Ivetta in the ecclesiastical cause, as the "*the prioresses cuhirde*". He also appears in the case of assault against the prioress, where it seems that he had accompanied Ivetta in her attempt to free her animals.<sup>47</sup> It is unclear whether Ralph came from Easington or lived there but it is certain that he was a servant of the prioress. He probably had frequent cause to come to the priory, or

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<sup>43</sup> Tillotson, *Marrick Priory*, 31; *VCH Yorks.*, 3:117.

<sup>44</sup> *VCH Yorks.*, 3:166 gives the figure as £4 9s 2d out of a total income of £13 19s. Oliva, *Convent and Community*, 144-145 gives slightly different figures but indicates the same proportion of income distributed as alms.

<sup>45</sup> Mollat, *Poor in the Middle Ages*, 49.

<sup>46</sup> Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, especially chapter 7.

<sup>47</sup> BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5; TNA, CP 40/154, mem. 224.

even live there, in the course of his work with the house's cows. Indeed, a description of Handale at the Dissolution, which records the presence of a thatched cowhouse and calfhouse, suggests the importance of these animals to the priory's economy. Work with livestock, especially cows and dairying, was common and legitimate work for medieval women.<sup>48</sup> The second man who appears in connection with the priory's animals is William, son of Stephen of Kirkby, described as living (*manens*) at Liverton.<sup>49</sup> As the son of Stephen of Kirkby, who appears to have come from outside Liverton, it is unlikely that the term "*manens*" described William as a serf. Interestingly, the priory held some land on the edge of pasture in Liverton so William could have been a servant living and caring for the priory's animals there.<sup>50</sup> This might even indicate a grange or outpost of the priory established at Liverton. It is not known whether these men were hired servants or participated in the spiritual work of Handale as lay brethren. The possibility that they were lay brothers should not be excluded because it might have been an incentive that helped Handale to retain a male workforce, particularly on low wages, when wealthier employees such as Guisborough or lay lords might have claimed them. The origins of these men, from Easington and Liverton, also indicate that the priory could reach into local communities and provide patronage and opportunities for employment, and even spiritual benefits. This positions the priory as having links to the surrounding lay communities rather than being strictly enclosed and isolated.

At the same time that Handale's use of local patronage may have gained allies, its disposition of lands and management of food may have contributed to the construction of its religious identity. The priory may have farmed land to Guisborough in order to protect it, or to ensure a consistent return, or because it could not muster a sufficient workforce to cultivate it. Indeed, the only two employees identified of the priory appear to have worked with its animals. Regardless of the reason, these arrangements created a link of dependency centred

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<sup>48</sup> Brown ed., 'Buildings of Yorkshire Priors', 209; Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle*, 141.

<sup>49</sup> BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5; TNA, CP 40/154, mem. 224.

<sup>50</sup> Brown ed., *Cart. Guisborough*, no. 881.

on the nunnery's food where Handale relied on Guisborough's prompt payment of the farms. Such a link may not be extraordinary, and Sally Thompson notes occasional ties of dependency by Cistercian nunneries on houses of canons, particularly to the Gilbertines and, in Yorkshire, to the Augustinians.<sup>51</sup> While creating links between Handale and Guisborough, these arrangements would also contribute to Handale's administrative separation from those lands and their communities because, presumably, the women would need neither to supervise them nor become entangled in legal disputes over them. The distribution of holdings of which Handale divested itself also suggests this because the priory tended to withdraw from nearby holdings and retain those more distant. It farmed out land about eight kilometres away in Ugthorpe and Percybigging, and surrendered land about two kilometres away in Loftus and Waupley in exchange for a small portion of moor (*particulam morae*) beside Liverton, which is the only known holding the priory retained within ten kilometres. Hinderwell was also close by but its ownership was disputed.<sup>52</sup> These arrangements would have had the greatest impact on the relationships between Handale and those communities closest to it. While distance isolated the priory from communities further away, the farming out of lands isolated the priory from nearby communities and minimised any involvement with them. Indeed, these arrangements would have helped to reduce tensions with local landowners as well as any resulting litigation. Furthering the isolation its topography already afforded, Handale's administration of its lands provided the beginnings of self-sufficiency in food and isolated the priory from its immediate neighbours in contrast to the reliance on purchased foodstuffs common at other nunneries, which required local relationships.<sup>53</sup>

It may seem simplistic to discuss nunneries' relationships in terms of isolation but, for Handale, the evidence does suggest that the community attempted to construct and live a paradigmatic identity of isolation and charity. The adherence to this style of religious life may

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<sup>51</sup> Thompson, 'Problem of Cistercian Nuns', 247-248.

<sup>52</sup> Brown ed., *Cart. Guisborough*, no. 881; Baildon, *Notes on Religious Houses*, 87.

<sup>53</sup> Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, 68-73.

have been a strategy adopted by English Cistercian nunneries, almost all of which Cîteaux did not recognise and which consequently neither benefited from the Order's exemptions and privileges nor were free from local diocesan jurisdiction.<sup>54</sup> The defining characteristics of the Cistercians were their desire for isolation, for which Yorkshire and particularly the North Yorkshire moors offered an ideal setting, and the second was physical labour. Cîteaux emphasised the former quality of strict enclosure and isolation from lay society for those women's communities it recognised or with which it had a more ambiguous relationship.<sup>55</sup> In the absence of formal recognition, the ability of women to construct themselves as a religious community probably rested on their self-identification as religious bound to each other, and on external local recognition of their members as forming a corporate religious community. The women at Handale may have chosen strict adherence to the manner of living of their adopted Cistercian exemplars as a way to obtain local public recognition.<sup>56</sup> Handale's circumstances may have bound the house to poverty but, perhaps, also offered an opportunity to the women there to take advantage of their situation. They may have had little choice but to maintain poverty, which drove their withdrawal from potentially expensive social contacts including the management of land, but they may have turned this to their advantage by positioning it as a religious poverty. Likewise, their management of their grain supply and keeping of animals, particularly cows, gave them the chance to participate in legitimate women's labour and achieve some self-sufficiency. What few local relationships they had seem to have been based on charity and patronage through employment, perhaps with the additional aspect of offering the spiritual benefits of lay brotherhood. The community at Handale may have had few opportunities, but this situation may very well have helped them to position themselves as a religious community.

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<sup>54</sup> Freeman, 'Cistercian Nuns in England', 110-119; Thompson, 'Problem of Cistercian Nuns', 232-235.

<sup>55</sup> Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 219-215, 229; Thompson, 'Problem of Cistercian Nuns', 239-240.

<sup>56</sup> Thompson, *Women Religious*, 94-95.

The shift to a Cistercian way of life at Handale seems to have begun by the middle of the thirteenth century and the priory's absence from Pope Nicholas IV's *Taxatio* might indicate some success at achieving a local recognition of affiliation to the exempt Cistercian order.<sup>57</sup> Handale's topography and land management already suggest isolating trends, while a surviving contemporary visitation record indicates some success in achieving a fairly strict cloistered life, having only the most limited yet licit interactions with outsiders. Archbishop William Greenfield's injunctions regulating a regime of enclosure along the lines of the bull *Periculoso* should not presume that the nuns acted or desired otherwise. Handale's isolating arrangements occurred before the bull was issued in 1298, which suggests a desire for isolation rather than a need for enforcement. Furthermore, Greenfield considered Handale a suitable destination for recalcitrant nuns from other houses, probably because he believed it to be in a satisfactory state or even a model of behaviour for other houses.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, he did not mention the need to bar secular visitors from Handale, as he did for other nunneries.<sup>59</sup> Handale seems to have had only those contacts with its neighbours considered appropriate and even praiseworthy. The lack of any explicit order to distribute alms, as was given to the neighbouring house of Rosedale, and the high proportion of its income Handale was giving as alms at the Dissolution suggests that the priory was diligent in this duty throughout its history.<sup>60</sup> It is also possible that the infirmary at Handale cared for foreign (*forent*) or outside people according to their needs and the ability of the house.<sup>61</sup> These activities support the idea that the women of Handale attempted to live religious lives of isolation and charitable works.

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<sup>57</sup> Thompson, *Women Religious*, 100-103; *VCH Yorks.*, 3:166.

<sup>58</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, nos. 3:1190, 3:1198, 3:1213, 3:1380; Brundage & Makowski, 'Enclosure of Nuns', 143-155; Tillotson, 'Visitation of Yorkshire Nunneries', 1-21.

<sup>59</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, nos. 3:1219, 3:1269, 3:1327, 3:1441, 3:1524.

<sup>60</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, nos. 3:1379, 3:1380; Oliva, *Convent and Community*, 144-145; *VCH Yorks.*, 3:166.

<sup>61</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1380.

A final indication that Handale pursued an isolated lifestyle with only licit outside contacts are the two masters appointed over the priory. There are two recorded instances of a master being appointed over Handale. Archbishop Giffard appointed William de Bardney, a monk of Whitby, to manage the spiritual and temporal goods (*tam in spiritualibus quam temporalibus bonis suis*) of both Handale and Basedale in 1267/8.<sup>62</sup> No surviving record indicates that Handale had spiritual income from a church or other holding and this formula might suggest otherwise, although it could also be an administrative usage. Regardless, such a church could not have been the local churches of Loftus and Easington, which Guisborough held, and Handale itself was not a parish.<sup>63</sup> No other master is mentioned until Archbishop Melton appointed Thomas de Middlesbrough, the rector of Loftus, guardian of Handale in 1318.<sup>64</sup> It is unlikely that these men permanently resided at Handale. William de Bardney, as master of two houses, may have split his time between them and, as a monk of Whitby, probably had to return there occasionally. Thomas de Middlesbrough could easily have continued to reside at nearby Loftus. It is also unclear whether the position of master was a permanent part of the organisation of Handale but, since the archiepiscopal registers do not list any other masters, it is possible that the archbishop appointed one only when he perceived a need. The role of master may have been to speak for the house and, indeed, a mandate from Archbishop Corbridge suggests that prelates might appoint men to speak for women lacking allies. Corbridge commanded his Official to aid a woman in a matrimonial cause because her opponents were rich and powerful (*pecuniosa et potens*) and she had no resources to litigate against them. The mandate goes on to state that the Official would earn merit in the eyes of God by providing the woman with good counsel and a proctor.<sup>65</sup> The master of Handale, therefore, may have acted as a speaker for the house but it is not clear

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<sup>62</sup> *Reg. Giffard*, no. 185.

<sup>63</sup> *Reg. Romeyn*, nos. 1:514, 1:523.

<sup>64</sup> *Reg. Melton*, no. 35.

<sup>65</sup> *Reg. Corbridge*, no. 1:657.

how much authority he had independent of the prioress and convent. The community at Handale may have welcomed the master in this role because it appears to have had no other well-connected benefactor or representative. The patrons of the house, the Malebisse family, do not appear in any charter, agreement, or records associated with the priory and seem to have been rather absent patrons.<sup>66</sup> The master probably also performed liturgical functions when he was at the priory, but the sparse records do not indicate any further information about his precise role. The need to occasionally have a master at Handale may confirm the priory's success in isolating itself from the world and its entanglements, apart from a few local relationships that were key contributors to the construction of this identity. The strategic choices of the priory will be considered after an examination of Stixwould priory, where, it appears, that similar processes took place.

#### *STIXWOULD PRIORY, LINCOLNSHIRE*

Stixwould Priory shares several characteristics with Handale but, from the evidence of its surviving records, appears to have pursued slightly different strategies. Modern maps indicate that the priory stood less than a kilometre north-west from the settlement of Stixwould in Lincolnshire. The surrounding land is flat, the priory being situated on a slight rise, but there are no other obvious nearby physical features distinguishing the priory from the surrounding area as at Handale. The site, on which there are no visible monastic buildings left, lies one kilometre south-west of Stixwould Wood and nearly two kilometres north-east of the River Witham. The priory's water supply was a spring fed pond and, possibly, wells. The moated settlement of Woodhall lay nearly four kilometres to the south-east; the Cistercian abbey of Kirkstead stood about one kilometre south of Woodhall; the village of Horsington lay 3.5km to the north-east; Bucknall, the priory's closest major holding, was about 4.5km to the north; and the Premonstratensian house of Tupholme was 3.5km northwest. A causeway across the

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<sup>66</sup> *VCH Yorks.*, 3:166.

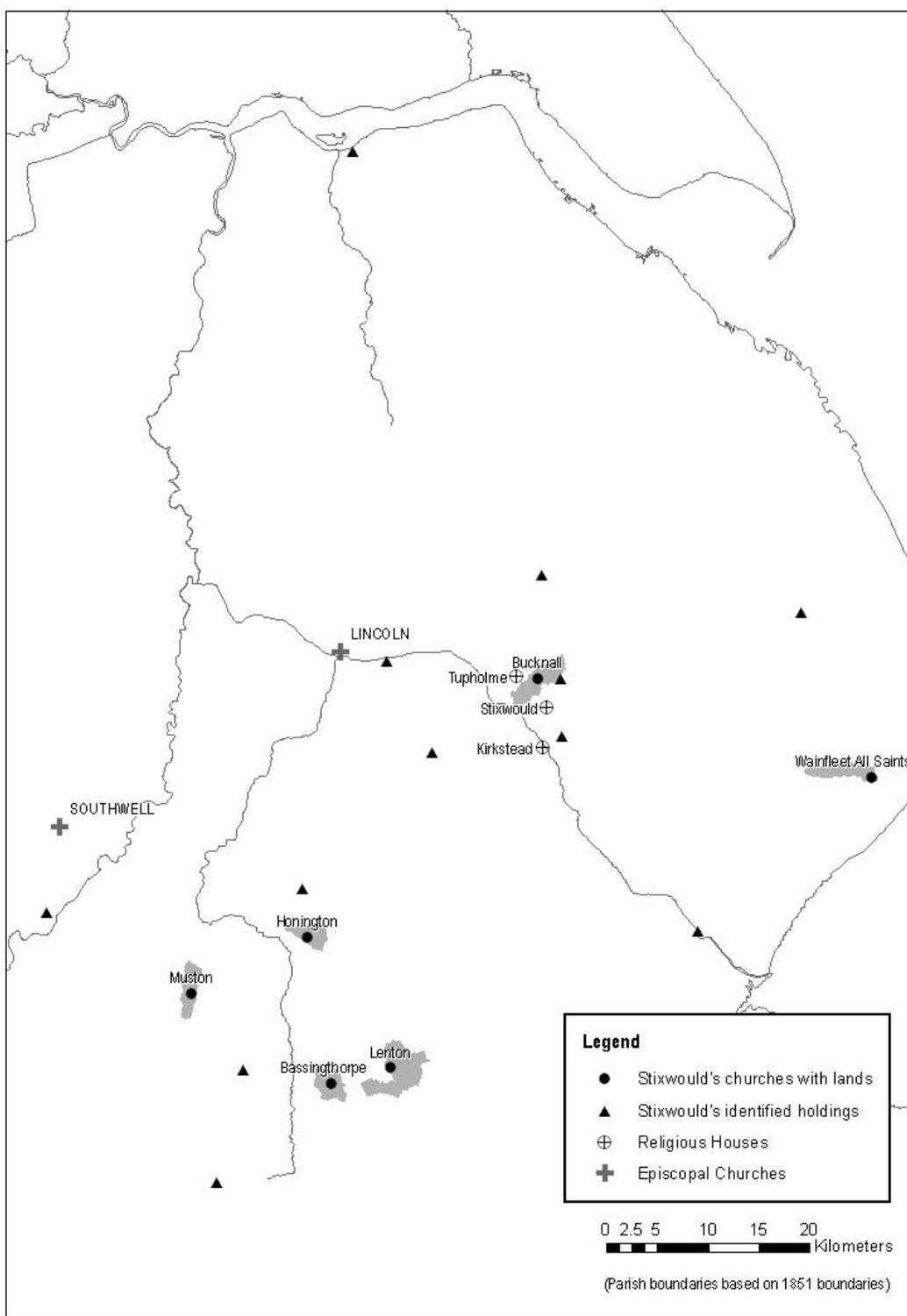


Figure 13: Stixwold Priory and its surroundings

fens led from Stixwold to Tupholme.<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, Stixwold was founded in 1129x1135, before either of its neighbouring religious houses. Kirkstead was founded in 1139 and Tupholme sometime before 1190.<sup>68</sup> Stixwold's earlier foundation may account for the apparent lack of dispute with its neighbouring houses, for there is no indication or conflict over lands and churches. Indeed, there is no evidence of any interaction between Stixwold and these houses apart from the causeway to Tupholme. Peaceable interaction was, perhaps, less likely to be recorded but the apparent lack of interaction could also be a result of Stixwold's desire for seclusion. Apart from the church and lands in Stixwold itself, the church and lands in Bucknall, and a tannery in Horsington, the priory had no holdings in the immediate vicinity and the majority of its important holdings, namely churches and lands, were 20km away and more.<sup>69</sup> It appears, therefore, that distance instead of terrain acted as a barrier between Stixwold and settlements where it had an interest, and the priory retained few interests in its immediate vicinity. This is similar to Handale, which often removed itself from nearby holdings but retained those further away. Interestingly, at both Handale and Stixwold, founders tended to donate property distant from the communities, which may indicate something about their expectations of the characteristics of women's religious communities, namely that they not be too closely involved in managing their lands. It might also have been a strategic move on the part of founders and patrons who may have seen it as a way to help Stixwold avoid entanglements, litigation, and disputes with local landowners. Nunneries may have used this opportunity to pursue laudable lives of isolation and contribute to the construction of their identities as religious women.

Lucy, countess of Chester, founded the priory, and her sons, Ralph, earl of Chester, and William, earl of Roumare, added to her endowment. Lucy gifted her lands, churches, and

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<sup>67</sup> Everson & Stocker, 'The Witham Valley', 9-10; Ordnance Survey, *Lincolnshire Wolds South: Horncastle and Woodhall Spa*; Stocker & Everson, 'Straight and Narrow Way', 275; This section has also benefited from some comments by David Stocker.

<sup>68</sup> Graves, 'Cistercian Nunnery in Lincolnshire', 334; *VCH Lincs.*, 135, 146, 206.

<sup>69</sup> Graves, 'Stixwold in the Market Place', 219-228.

appurtenances in Stixwould, Honington, and Bassingthorpe to the nuns at Stixwould. The Roumare family was also among the earliest patrons, if not the founders, of Warter Priory.<sup>70</sup> No founding charter survives in Stixwould's cartulary, which may suggest that there never was one there. Instead, what appears at the beginning of the cartulary is a letter from Lucy to her sons, informing them that she had made the foundation both for her benefit and for theirs:

Lucia comitissa Ranulpho comite Cestrie et Willelmo de Romere karissimis filiis suis salutem. Sciatis me concessisse et dedisse et, hac mea presenti carta, confirmasse Deo et sancta Maria et sanctimonialibus de Styk', tam futuris quam presentibus, in puram et perpetuam elemosinam liberam et quietam ab omnibus secularibus seruciis et consuetudinibus et exactionibus, et in liberam possessionem sancte ecclesie, totam meam terram de Styk' et totam meam terram de Hundintun' et totam meam terram de [Bassing]torp' cum omnibus pertinenciis suis ... pro salute anime mee et animarum uostrarum et omnium parentum nostrorum, quare precor uos, sicut meos carissimos filios, quatinus istam meam elemosinam et uestram, pro Dei amore et pro salute anime mee et animarum uestrarum, manuteneatis et custodiatis nam utillimum erit mihi et uobis ante Deum.<sup>71</sup>

This document has some interesting emotional appeals, particularly Lucy's statement of hope that her sons will benefit from her gift, and her appeal that they maintain the donation for her sake. The charter's position in the cartulary, the first entry, suggests that the nuns wanted to give it primacy and emphasise the place of Lucy in the house's history.<sup>72</sup> The episcopal registers of Lincoln also indicate the important role that women of the Roumare family seem to have had as patrons of the house. The registers record five elections and licences to elect a prioress. The Earl of Lincoln granted the licence to elect only once while the countess granted it three times. Another licence was obtained from the countess acting for her son who, being identified as the patron, does not appear to be a minor: "*petita prius eligendu licencia et optenta a domina Alesia de Lascy matre nobilis uiri domini Henrici comitis Lincoln'*

<sup>70</sup> BL, MS Add. 46701, fo. 1r; *CPR 1405-1408*, 218; Denholm-Young, 'Foundation of Warter', 208-211; Graves, 'Cistercian Nunnery in Lincolnshire', 334.

<sup>71</sup> "Countess Lucy to her dearest sons Ralph, count of Chester, and William de Roumere, greetings. Know that I have granted, given and, by this my present charter, confirmed all my land of Stixwould, and all my land of Honington, and all my land of Bassingthorpe, with all their appurtenances to God and holy Mary and the holy nuns of Stixwould, both future and present, in pure and perpetual free alms and quit from all secular services, customs, exactions, and in free possession of holy church ... for the salvation of my soul and your souls and of all our ancestors; wherefore, I beg you, as my dearest sons, that you maintain and guard this my alms and yours for the love of God and for the salvation of my soul and your souls, for it will be most useful to me and to you before God." BL, MS Add. 46701, fo. 1r.

<sup>72</sup> June, 'Languages of memory', 347-359.

*patroni domus*".<sup>73</sup> Together with the letter of foundation, these licences from the patronal family of Stixwould suggest that the countesses of Lincoln, rather than their husbands or sons, took an interest in the priory. It also appears that elections were the only times these powerful and influential patrons attended to it. In a trend similar to the absent patrons of Handale, the patrons of Stixwould do not appear in other documents associated with the priory and, unfortunately, the charters in the cartulary generally do not record the names of witnesses.<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, this lack of involvement may echo the gifts of the founders of both Handale and Stixwould, which were far away lands that helped to ensure the isolation of the priories and their avoidance of worldly entanglements.

Later benefactors, including Ralph de Roumare and tenants of Lucy's son, William, gave the churches of Bucknall, Lenton (Lincs.), Wainfleet, and Muston to the priory. The churches were useful possessions for the priory and gave it the opportunity to dispense patronage to clergy local to the villages where the priory had holdings. For instance, the house presented Alan de Stixwould to Hundelby, one of their churches, and Alan de Hundelby to the parish church.<sup>75</sup> Although the priory probably gained the gratitude and loyalty of the clergy they appointed, the churches themselves may not have provided a great deal of income because, where a description of the vicarages survive, the priory bore a number of responsibilities and costs.<sup>76</sup> The majority of the priory's revenues, therefore, must have come from its lands and other holdings, evaluated in the *Taxatio* at £117. Stixwould was twice as wealthy as Nun Cotham, the second-wealthiest women's house in Lincolnshire, and was not included in a list of poor houses by Bishop Robert Gravesend in 1269. Stixwould was certainly much wealthier than Handale, its value at the Dissolution being £114 5s 2½d

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<sup>73</sup> "having first petitioned and obtained a licence for elections from Dame Alesia de Lascy, the mother of the noble man Lord Henry, Count of Lincoln, the patron of the house". *Reg. Gravesend*, 18, 89; *Reg. Grosseteste*, 11, 111; *Reg. Sutton*, 1:100.

<sup>74</sup> BL, MS Add. 46701, *passim*.

<sup>75</sup> *Reg. Grosseteste*, 58; *Reg. Sutton*, 1:73. The similarity in these names appears to be entirely coincidental.

<sup>76</sup> *Reg. Wells*, 3:62-63; Graves, 'Stixwould in the Market Place', 219-221.

compared to Handale's £13 9s.<sup>77</sup> The priory maintained a larger number of nuns than other Lincolnshire nunneries of the medieval period and, for a nunnery, had relatively extensive and diverse holdings. These included lands, pastures, mills, and tanneries in the villages of their churches in addition to holdings at either South or North Ferriby and other locations. Stixwold also held some urban properties in Lincoln and Boston.<sup>78</sup> The priory undoubtedly earned some revenue from the sale of wool, to which there are occasional references.<sup>79</sup>

A comprehensive catalogue of Stixwold's holdings is possible because it is one of only two of the unofficial English Cistercian nunneries from which a cartulary survives, the other being Nun Cotham. British Library, MS Add. 46701 dates from the late thirteenth century and is arranged, for the most part, according to the priory's holdings with some repetitions and miscellaneous documents towards the end.<sup>80</sup> The manuscript may have begun as a presentation piece rather than a working record of Stixwold's land transactions. The first part of the manuscript is carefully titled and rubricated though almost all the charters lack an initial letter. Scribal indications in the margins suggest that these initials were to be decorated but that the work was left incomplete.<sup>81</sup> Catchwords at the bottom of some of the folios also suggest that the manuscript was professionally written in gatherings before being brought together after completion rather than written into a manuscript of blank folios.<sup>82</sup> This careful organisation breaks down towards the end of the manuscript with the repetition of some of the villages, miscellaneous charters, frequent hand changes, and missing titles. There is increased marginal notation in a different hand from the middle of the manuscript.<sup>83</sup> This suggests a later shift to a working administrative document, which, with the charters,

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<sup>77</sup> Graves, 'Stixwold in the Market Place', 216-217; *VCH Lincs.*, 149.

<sup>78</sup> BL, MS Add. 46701, fos. 1r-102v are arranged according to holding; Graves, 'Stixwold in the Market Place', 216-228.

<sup>79</sup> *Cal. Inq. Misc. 1307-1349*, no. 1628.

<sup>80</sup> BL, MS Add. 46701, fos. 1r-125v; Davis, *Medieval Cartularies*, no. 931; Graves, 'Cistercian Nunnery in Lincolnshire', 334.

<sup>81</sup> BL, MS Add. 46701, fos. 1r-102v, with good examples on fo. 35v.

<sup>82</sup> BL, MS Add. 46701, fos. 59v, 71v, 95v, 107v.

<sup>83</sup> BL, MS Add. 46701, fos. 68v-95v, 104r-124v.

could indicate that Stixwould continued to attract donations beyond its original endowment and past the date of the creation of the cartulary. The presence of two folios at the end of the manuscript with fragments from the Anglo-Norman *Le Roman de toute cheualerie*, clearly sewn into the manuscript, suggest links to whoever provided the exemplar or, perhaps, the gift of non-religious books by a benefactor.<sup>84</sup> The decision to commission this cartulary and its appearance as a carefully planned and executed work tends to confirm the relative wealth and status of Stixwould compared to other English Cistercian nunneries.

The records at Stixwould describe its holdings at a particular moment in time, unlike at Handale where documents in Guisborough's cartulary permit some understanding of that priory's ongoing management of resources. Nevertheless, the cartulary suggests that Stixwould, like Handale, was isolated from its neighbouring communities, either by circumstance or by choice. The priory held numerous lands and appears to have been directly involved in their management. Other sources that mention servants on these lands suggest ties to communities providing these men, while the records of litigation indicate an active interest in and defence of their holdings.<sup>85</sup> Most of these holdings were, however, some distance away from the priory. Whether by circumstance or effort, therefore, this isolation may have contributed to Stixwould acquiring a more explicit recognition of their lifestyle than Handale as Cistercian. The king commanded that Stixwould, among other nunneries, be exempted from a tenth collected in 1268 and, in the same note, mentioned that Cistercian houses had this privilege. In 1270, Archbishop Giffard, appointed as collector for this tenth, echoed the king's order in 1270, making a similar but not explicit connection between the house and the order. The king, however, also in 1270, explicitly stated that he had examined the privileges of the house and confirmed that it was Cistercian. The priory's patrons may have helped to obtain this royal declaration but, considering the apparent minimal

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<sup>84</sup> BL, MS Add. 46701, fos. viiir-ixv; Dean & Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, no. 165.

<sup>85</sup> BL, MS Add. 46701, fos. 46r, 105v, 107r; *CCR 1247-1251*, 531; *CPR 1307-1313*, 166; *CPR 1327-1330*, 209, 278.

involvement in the house's affairs by the patrons, this should not be assumed. Indeed, it may be just as likely that the archbishop gave aid to the house considering his appointment of masters at Handale and, as seen shortly, at Stixwould. The king's order stood despite a letter from the abbot of Cîteaux explicitly disavowing any connection to the house: "*abbatisse monialium de Stikeswolde ... licet habitum ordinis nostri portare uideantur, non tamen sunt de ordine nostro nec eidem ordine incorporate.*"<sup>86</sup> Incidentally, this declaration may help to explain why Stixwould seems to have had no interaction with the nearby Cistercian house of Kirkstead. It also indicates that the nuns had associated themselves with the order by adopting the Cistercian habit, but were otherwise in an ambiguous position. It is possible that the commissioning of the cartulary preserving the nuns' muniments was an attempt to present a corporate religious identity to the outside world in pursuit of their recognition as religious women.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, the cartulary demonstrates an interest in the written preservation of the priory's records. The priory also paid for an early fifteenth-century *inspeximus* of privileges granted by earlier kings, indicating that it had the will and resources to use records in its self-definition and presentation.<sup>88</sup>

Where Handale seems to have pursued a lifestyle of isolation and charity, Stixwould appears to have pursued isolation supported by documentation, although this conclusion may be due to the vagaries of documentary survival. The prominence of records, such as those presented for inspection or those that survive in the cartulary, suggests that they played an important role in the priory. They may very well have been an attempt to define themselves as a corporate community when their juridical position was ambiguous. Formula common to all religious houses appear that emphasise the nuns' communal life, such as "*magistrum et moniales de Styk*"; "*priorissa et conuentu de Stikewauda*"; or "*magistro, priorisse, et*

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<sup>86</sup> "The abbess of the nuns of Stixwould ... appear to be pleased to wear our habit but, nevertheless, they are not of our order nor are incorporated into the same order." *CCR 1268-1272*, 301; Graves, 'English Cistercian Nuns', 496-499.

<sup>87</sup> June, 'Languages of Memory', [forthcoming].

<sup>88</sup> *CPR 1405-1408*, 218.

*monialibus de Stikewaud*".<sup>89</sup> Indeed, the appearance of these descriptions in records apart from the cartulary indicates that other people recognised the corporate nature of the house, or that the nuns at least had the influence to insist upon their use. The collection of Stixwold's records into a commissioned cartulary suggests a concern to have power over their own records rather than to rely on others, like Handale did on Guisborough. It is entirely possible that Handale once possessed a cartulary but it does seem to have relied on other houses for its documentation. Its foundation charter survives in the Whitby cartulary and records of several land dealings in the Guisborough cartulary. Handale may have preserved copies as loose muniments but the preservation of the Stixwold cartulary suggests a different strategy. The cartulary was a physical symbolic embodiment of the community and its property, arranged according to holdings, which called attention to the house's wealth and patronage. Moreover, it impressed this message on any who saw or consulted it.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, it is entirely possible that the manuscript was on view to anyone entering the conventual church because books were sometimes kept on altars, such as *pastoralia* at Southwell Minster (p. 50). There is also a reference in Archbishop Greenfield's register to the Red Book of St John on the high altar (*rubrio libro beati Iohannis posito super altari*) at Beverley Minster.<sup>91</sup> The conventual church of Stixwold was not the parish church but there is at least one reference to an altar apart from the high altar that may have been accessible to laity. A cleric left some lands in 1316 to endow a candle to burn on this altar whenever mass was celebrated at the high altar.<sup>92</sup>

A master of Stixwold has already appeared on occasion in these discussions of the priory and it appears that it, more than Handale, incorporated men into its organisation and on a more permanent basis. These were not just lay brothers but ordained priests, although their

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<sup>89</sup> "master and nuns of Stixwold"; "prioress and convent of Stixwold"; "master, prioress, and nuns of Stixwold". BL, MS Add. 46701, fo. 46r; *Reg. Wells*, 1:117, 1:155-156.

<sup>90</sup> Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, 205-206.

<sup>91</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1522.

<sup>92</sup> *CPR 1313-1317*, 401.

precise role is unknown, particularly because the terms used to describe them vary and indicate no consistent status.<sup>93</sup> Of particular interest is the so-called master of the house who may have been responsible for liturgy at the priory as well as administering its goods and interacting with the outside world. It is, however, clear from documents that the prioress retained the prerogative to act independently of him.<sup>94</sup> The master's method of appointment is uncertain. An early entry in the registers indicates that the prioress and convent elected the master: "[Galfrido?] [blank] de Stikeswauda, electo in magistrum domus de Stikewauda a priorissa et conuentu de Stikewauda, qui domino episcopo presentatus est, admissus".<sup>95</sup> His election by the community might indicate a role similar to that suggested at Handale, the master acting as spokesman and being subject to the will of the community. The master of the house was, presumably, the person who sometimes appears in records as the prior of the house and, indeed, a Geoffrey appears as "*Galfridum priorem de Stikeswald*" in royal records around the same time as his election. There is also reference to an abbot (*abbatem*). Men continue to appear at the house with the prior's "monk" mentioned under Edward II and a master in 1338.<sup>96</sup> This variety of terms may be due to differences between royal records and ecclesiastical records. A list of ordinations in Bishop Oliver Sutton's register specifies that men from the priory were in religious orders rather than secular priests. The ecclesiastical records only ever describe the men at Stixwold as "*fratribus conuersis*" or "*canonicis*", and never use the term prior or abbot but always refer to the senior male cleric as master.<sup>97</sup> This could indicate that the ecclesiastical authorities had a clear understanding of the place and role of the master although, unfortunately, it is not apparent now. Nor is it clear what role the clergy played at the priory, although it is probable that they performed liturgical functions.

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<sup>93</sup> Graves, 'Cistercian Nunnery in Lincolnshire', 336-337.

<sup>94</sup> Graves, 'Cistercian Nunnery in Lincolnshire', 337-338.

<sup>95</sup> "[Geoffrey] [blank] of Stixwold, elected master of the house of Stixwold by the prioress and convent of Stixwold, who was presented to the lord bishop [and] admitted". *Reg. Wells*, 1:117.

<sup>96</sup> *CPR 1225-1232*, 165, 210; *CPR 1338-1340*, 37; *CCR 1227-1231*, 53; *CCR 1247-1251*, 531; *CCR 1307-1313*, 87; *Inq. Post Mortem*, no. 5:441.

<sup>97</sup> BL, MS Add. 46701, fos. 46r, 105v, 107r; *Reg. Sutton*, 5:200, 7:48; Graves, 'English Cistercian Nunnery', 337.

They do indicate, however, that Stixwould was not entirely removed from local communities since the master mentioned above, Geoffrey, was from Stixwould. Like at Handale, these men may have spoken for the priory, perhaps as an aid to preserving the women's isolation.

#### *RELATIONSHIPS AND IDENTITIES AT HANDALE AND STIXWOULD*

Handale and Stixwould were very different nunneries, especially in their apparent wealth. They both, however, seem to have pursued strategies that presented to the outside world their identities as houses of religious women despite, or, perhaps, because of, their ambiguous juridical status. The Cistercian order did not recognise them, but local people might recognise them as houses of religious women and, in the case of Stixwould, they might even gain some measure of local official recognition as Cistercian. Indeed, the ambiguity of their juridical status as Cistercian nunneries may have been an advantage because it allowed both houses to craft responses and strategies to their particular situation. Both nunneries chose separation and isolation from their neighbours to help to fashion this identity. The majority of their lands were distant from the community but each exercised some level of patronage over positions available on them. The exercise of patronage also extended to their smaller local holdings, with which, interestingly, their litigation was concerned. This indicates their necessary interactions with neighbours and these relationships and their implication will be examined in detail now.

The litigation of Handale and Stixwould illustrates some interesting aspects of their relationships with local communities, particularly those opposing the nunneries. The presence of litigation indicates that the choice to divest themselves of nearby lands may very well have been a good strategy to avoid conflicts with people of local importance. The men opposed to Handale and Stixwould all belonged to networks of people with connections to local power and influence compared to the nunneries. Nicholas de Marske, eventually found guilty of assaulting Prioress Ivetta of Handale, may have been a local strongman. The court records

describe him as having a sword as well as having charge of Humphrey Pex and several others (*garciones dicti Nicholai*).<sup>98</sup> He had impounded Handale's animals, probably acting for his employer John of Lazenby who certainly had some influence in the village. Apart from his position as rector of Loftus, which linked him to Guisborough Priory, which held the advowson of the church, Lazenby's several commissions to act for the archbishop linked him to higher networks of administration and power.<sup>99</sup> Against this group, Ivetta and Handale seemed able to muster less significant support. Her witnesses, a cowherd and a local man, were weaker members of society who, indeed, owed their own positions to the priory's patronage. These were apparently the only two men she could call upon against the armed Nicholas, Gilbert, Humphrey, and others, all backed by the well-placed John of Lazenby. Furthermore, the assault happened a little before sundown on the vigil of an important feast day in the Use of York: "*uigilia sancti Mathei apostoli que contingit quasi in fine autumpni ultimo preterito post horam uesperarum ante occasum solis*". This could indicate that Ivetta, recognising her relatively weak position, set out when she thought few people would be present to stop her on account of the vigil or the approaching end of daylight.<sup>100</sup> Most remarkable is that, seemingly unable to call on anyone else for aid, Ivetta herself had set out, perhaps trusting in her religious status for some protection. The prioress of Stixwould, who appeared to have more men to call upon, did not have to take this personal risk because she could muster men of the house to defend her interests. As brothers or servants of the house, however, these men were probably not powerful or influential in the village. Moreover, a complaint from 1308 indicates that the prioress' men were badly outnumbered by the relatives and men of Robert de Godsfield, which suggests their status and influence in the village relative to Gosfield.<sup>101</sup> Stixwould priory faced a new and socially ambitious knight in the village whose local influence

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<sup>98</sup> BIA, CP E 3d, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5.

<sup>99</sup> *Reg. Corbridge*, nos. 1:330, 1:376, 1:391, 1:398; *Reg. Romeyn*, no. 1:521.

<sup>100</sup> "the vigil of St Matthew, apostle, which falls just about the end of the harvest [20 September], after the hour of vespers before the setting of the sun". BIA, CP E 3/4, CP E 3/5; *Missale Ebor.*, 1:xxxviii.

<sup>101</sup> TNA, KB 27/184, mem. 38d; *CCR 1307-1313*, 87; *CPR 1307-1313*, 166.

was probably similar to that of Lazenby at Handale.<sup>102</sup> The existing evidence suggests that these nunneries could only call on those who were dependent on them such as lay brethren or servants. Moreover, as discussed above, no person with powerful links, including the priories' patrons, ever seemed inclined to aid them or become involved in their affairs.

Handale's and Stixwold's apparent lack of relations with local powers, together with their drawing on support from within themselves or those tied to them, suggests the need to reposition female religious. The nuns pursued isolated lifestyles and, indeed, donations of far-away lands to them suggest that such isolation was an expected characteristic of women religious. Despite the apparent success of both houses in this pursuit, there is no evidence of reciprocal support on account of their religious status from local gentry, such as other studies suggest might have been expected.<sup>103</sup> This does not mean all nuns lacked local social support but, instead, highlights that each nunnery or religious house generally must be studied within a context of local relationships, which allows for both support and enmity from various groups. Both nunneries pursued costly litigation through the secular courts, which seems to have come to no definitive conclusion. They may have negotiated settlements out of court but, especially in the case of Stixwold, repeated disputes suggest that these were not secure. Indeed, Handale had an even poorer record of success in the secular courts, which might reflect its poverty and lack of influence. A case brought against Guisborough Priory indicates another battle to preserve Handale's holdings and the resulting out of court settlement records that Handale surrendered a great deal more land than Guisborough.<sup>104</sup> Prioress Ivetta had made another unsuccessful claim of assault in the secular courts in 1303. She complained that several men had taken and imprisoned her for a day at Yarm for which she claimed £40 in damages, but in 1303 the jury ruled in favour of the defendants and the

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<sup>102</sup> McLane, 'Violence and Litigation', 24-26.

<sup>103</sup> Burton, *Yorkshire Nunneries*, 24-25; Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, 61-62; Gilchrist & Oliva, *Religious Women in East Anglia*, 57-58, 81-82.

<sup>104</sup> TNA, CP 40/61, mem. 37d; Brown ed., *Cart. Guisborough*, no. 2:881.

prioress went in mercy.<sup>105</sup> The poor record of the priory in the secular courts, and Ivetta in particular, may have encouraged her to bring the Loftus case to the church courts and treat it as an assault against a religious, which tends to confirm the weakness of her position outside local networks. It is difficult to make conclusions about these two nunneries' relationships with local powerful people because most of the recorded interactions are confrontations. These were, however, often in economic matters where the engagement of the priory drew them out of their hard-earned recognition as religious and where respect for their status may no longer have protected them. From the existing evidence it seems safe to suggest that the local powers ignored the priories unless economic interests clashed.

Although Handale and Stixwould seem to have been vulnerable houses with poor local connections, there is no need to position them as entirely isolated. They were already seen to have local connections that can be explored, even though these connections were not what might be expected. Instead of examining these houses as objects of patronage and recipients of protection, they might be examined as the centres of their own networks, as dispensers of patronage, cultivating relationships to those dependent on them. Although this understanding of monastic communities is normally associated with wealthier houses, such as St Mary's in York, Fountains, or Barking, the example of these two nunneries suggests that similar relationships existed, albeit of a different quality, at lower social levels. Handale and Stixwould offered patronage to lay brethren and servants who relied on the priories for their livelihoods. In the case of Handale, there is evidence of charitable works that probably also won supporters. Stixwould, on the other hand, had churches at its disposal which, as already seen, could be gifted to local men who, as the parish priest, might be the priory's man in the village. These interactions involved people in weaker and more dependant positions in an interaction with the priories where they received some benefit from the priory. In other

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<sup>105</sup> TNA, CP 40/154, mem. 224.

words, they attracted people who required patronage and aid but had very little to offer in return. Stixwould, being relatively wealthy, may have found it easier to cultivate these relationships but Handale, although bound to a great extent by circumstances of poverty, also seems to have found a way to develop a small group of supporters.

For support is precisely what these clients could offer: support for and recognition of the nunneries' lifestyle and status as religious women. This would have been particularly important in litigation and disputes since, as this thesis tries to demonstrate, the participation of laity who guarded local knowledge contributed to the construction of official records and acts. Juries and inquisitions relied upon local people and the example of Handale may very well illustrate this process on a long-term basis. The responses to positions in the York cause paper show that either the defendants local to Handale's surroundings or their proctor from Whitby, whose links to Handale have been examined, were willing to acknowledge Handale as a religious community based on the nuns' devotional lifestyle:

Item ponit quod est mulier religiosa; Item ponit quod monialis; Item ponit quod est religiosa in eadem domo professa ... Item ponit quod predicta domus de Handale in diuinis officiis Deo est dedicata; Item ponit quod omnes professe mulieres dicte domus in diuinis officiis Deo ministrant.<sup>106</sup>

The defendants' admissions to each of these positions suggest they, local people, viewed Handale and the women there as religious. The process of ecclesiastical law meant that it would, in fact, have been in their interest to disprove any of these positions, but that they could not or chose not to suggests that they knew that no local deponent would testify otherwise.<sup>107</sup> The pursuit of particular lifestyles and strategies by Handale and Stixwould, therefore, produced two results. The disposal of patronage could produce loyalty and support, while simultaneously helping to confirm the nunneries as religious institutions, living out the expectations of their self-imposed lifestyle. Their choices, sometimes shaped by

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<sup>106</sup> "Item, he [the defendants' proctor] puts that she [the prioress] is a religious woman; Item, he puts that she is a nun; Item, he puts that she is a professed religious in the same house ... Item, he puts that the said house of Handale is dedicated in divine service to God; Item, he puts that all the professed women of the said house minister in divine service to God." BIA CP E 3d, CP E 3/1.

<sup>107</sup> Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation*, 14-16.

circumstances, were strategic choices that improved their relationships with local communities who defined them as religious. They gained the support of those who guarded local knowledge, and may have realised the importance that such interactions with the laity could have since the laity offered definition and recognition to them.

This position was, however, fundamentally unstable and required constant interaction and negotiation with the priories' clients. Previous chapters have shown just how unstable such relationships could be and religious houses, with long local interests and involvement, would have had to manage relationships with their neighbours on a constant basis. The dialogue between clergy and laity was, therefore, not based only on occasional moments of crisis and conflict but, potentially, made ongoing contributions to the long-term construction of structures of local religion. The recognition given by laity might be withdrawn and the fastest way to achieve this was for the priories to transgress their self-appointed boundaries that marked them as religious women. This was particularly the case in their involvement in local economic affairs, where both priories suffered the most losses including physical assault. This was a relationship based on exchanges of both material and less tangible benefits but one that gave the laity a key role in defining the nuns. The failure to live to the laity's expectations could result in a lack of support and protection. At the worst, these same laity might have supported those opposed to the priory. Their support, then, was necessary to maintain the very religious life that these women had adopted and with lay support went the power to approve and influence the definitions of these women. The knowledge and approval of the laity might be echoed in a verse of folk-lore collected in the nineteenth century:

If you go to Nun Keling, you shall find your belly filling of whig or of whay;  
But go to Swine, and come betime, or else you go empty away.  
But the Abbot of Meaus doth keep a good house by night and day.<sup>108</sup>

This cannot be traced to the Middle Ages, although the mention of the abbot of Meaux is interesting. The rhyme, however, does demonstrate that the laity held opinions about houses,

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<sup>108</sup> 'Yorkshire Local Rhymes', 166.

and the discussions here suggest that these opinions had real effects within the relationships established in localities. Cistercian nunneries throughout the region might have occupied ambiguous social and religious spaces in their communities, poorly connected and normally involved in lands only beyond their own village. They pursued strategies that bound them to the laity, recognising the importance laity could play in the management of local affairs, and relied on their rewards of support and recognition in complex relationships. They were relationships of negotiation, expectations, claims, and exchanges, which were central to the construction of medieval religion.

## **V: Conclusions: Some implications**

Despite its apparently straightforward narrative, the story of John de Crophill's burial, which introduced this thesis, is neither simple nor predictable. Instead, it and the other cases examined here show the complexities characteristic of interactions between medieval clergy and laity. Within these interactions, and longer-term relationships, laity had roles that participated in and contributed to the construction of practices of religion, whether official or popular. The laity has appeared here as both partners and opponents to clergy. Lay people have been seen to have resisted, accepted, participated in, co-operated with, and even manipulated official ecclesiastical processes. They performed these roles from within interactions and dialogues with clergy, which influenced or resulted in outcomes affecting local practices, such as oblations, and wider practices, such as saints' cults. Local interests, motivations, and strategies all contributed to the complexity of these interactions, which trouble the dichotomies that often purport to describe relationships between clergy and laity. As historical descriptions, dichotomies of instruction and reception, command and obedience, or coercion and resistance do not adequately describe interactions between clergy and laity because they do not fully allow for the complexities present in those relationships.

The temptation towards such dichotomies is not, however, surprising because they are the result of a model for understanding relationships between clergy and laity that, however benevolent, presumes distance and division between them and is slow to allow for their mutual participation in each other's culture. As described in the Introduction, the work of Burke and Gurevich influences approaches to understanding the cultures associated with official and popular religion. In this model, clergy might participate in the popular culture of the laity, particularly as appropriators of aspects of that culture but, traditionally, the laity is seen to have had few opportunities to influence official religion apart from their disputes with and resistance to it. Opportunities for lay participation and co-operation are under-acknowledged

in a model that tends towards essentialism, assigning characteristics of official or popular cultures to individuals and generating the dichotomies that cannot describe completely their complex interactions. At its most extreme, this model and its associated dichotomies sometimes slip into a causal explanation of historical events rather than remaining a description of them. The culture subsumes individuals, who are presumed to act from their cultural position at all times in deterministic ways.<sup>1</sup> Culture certainly does affect the strategies and options available to an individual and it may even contribute to a preference for a particular strategic choice, but culture does not entirely determine these choices. In the interactions considered here, individuals chose from among several available options in light of their particular local expectations, interests, and motives. The choice to resist clerical action was one available option but it was not inherent to a lay cultural position, nor, as seen in Chapter 5 on refusals, was it less strategic than other options. The laity could equally choose co-operation and participation when it was to their benefit, and clergy, rather than resisting such lay choices, accepted the laity as partners in dialogue and even, sometimes, expected such interactions.

The laity could choose options other than resistance and conflict because they were often willing participants in their interactions with clergy, from which position they might derive more benefit. Indeed, as the first section of this thesis showed, clergy expected to have interactions characterised by a constructive dialogue with the laity. The breakdown of this dialogue could lead to disrupted cultural outcomes, such as the unstable devotional practices examined in Chapter 2. This breakdown of dialogue only highlights the importance of dialogue in the processes constructing medieval religion. These processes, particularly administrative processes, might appear in the historical narratives as clerically controlled, but, as the third section of this thesis indicates, there was every opportunity for laity to participate

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<sup>1</sup> Boyle, 'Montaillou Revisited', 126-130; Scott, 'Gender', 1065.

in and influence the narratives and their outcomes. The laity might even participate in the definition of official religion in ways that affected their clerical neighbours, as seen in Chapter 6 on nuns. In their interactions with clergy, therefore, lay people were strategic thinkers with a number of options for action, including strategies ranging from co-operation to conflict. The model proposed here, which acknowledges lay participation in official clerical structures and processes, is able to describe more fully the relationships between clergy and laity because it accounts for a wider variety of possibilities than a model that presumes a fundamental distance between the two groups. It is important to note that this is not some discovery of lay agency or of a larger spectrum of lay options for action that was never historically present. It is, rather, the reclamation for the laity of options that were always available to them, but which the historical narratives obscure. In other words, the history behind but informing surviving narratives indicates the possibilities that laity had to participate in and contribute to constructions of official culture normally considered beyond their influence.

Although this thesis has been written as a regional study, it has wider implications. The sources and approaches used here are not unique to the region. Other parts of England, and at different periods in history, generated pastoral literature and records of devotional practices. Bishops' registers became common across the dioceses of England and these documents are open to the same type of analysis used here. Other types of record available in other regions and periods, but not here, could also contribute to a similar project because they contain narratives open to analysis. Further studies, regional or otherwise, that tackle more fully the narratives of medieval ecclesiastical administrative documents could think about how new narrative readings affect current views of laity within medieval religion, particularly within orthodox religion. Such an understanding may also go some way to solving a problem highlighted by John Arnold. Reviewing different approaches to the study of medieval religion, he comments that criticisms of a two-culture model often reduce history to

specificity. In other words, he points out that case studies sometimes reveal nothing more than their particular characters in a particular time and particular place.<sup>2</sup> Despite the use here of case studies situated in localities, this does not happen in this thesis because the approaches and records can be replicated. Moreover, these case studies have moved beyond specificity to suggest a new hermeneutical position to the two-culture model. The re-positioning of laity as capable of participating in and affecting the culture of clergy suggests the interactions between the groups as, themselves, a position, which is subject to historical inquiry just as elite, popular, clerical, and lay positions are. As a position, interaction allows for co-operation, acceptance, tension, conflict, and resistance because it is created by the resolution of these and re-creates them as outcomes. Interactions are a dynamic position capable of both being produced and producing because, unlike oppositional positions such as official and popular, which are implicitly closer to the margins, interactions lie at the centre of medieval religion.

While approaching medieval religion through interactions allows for opposing positions, this approach simultaneously reduces the conceptual distance between the people inhabiting those positions because they come to operate in a shared space. If the examples examined here are any indication, it seems that understanding local contexts with their particular mixture of interests, motivations, and needs is central to understanding interactions between clergy and laity. Indeed, the importance of local contexts has occasionally been acknowledged, if not assumed, here. The repeated interactions of clergy and laity working out local issues contributed to the formation of the dominant cultures of the period as similar choices and decisions were made across the villages and parishes of the Humber Region Lowlands. Decisions of precedent from judicial interventions in local affairs made their way into central records, which might, then, inform processes and decisions made elsewhere. In

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<sup>2</sup> Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, 12-13.

this sense, the creation of a particular official or popular religion was neither top-down nor bottom-up, in the classic formulations, but, rather, circular. Indeed, the notion of self-perpetuating cultures constantly constructed from multiple directions accounts for the complex interactions between clergy and laity more than other models. As a meeting space for cultural interactions, local contexts also provided a boundary space wherein cultures could test, challenge, and define each other. Interchange, fluidity, and possibility characterised this space and the interactions taking place within them. Similar processes may have occurred across the medieval world, but future studies of other regions will have to determine the particular nature of the characteristics and outcomes of these processes elsewhere.

It may seem perverse to introduce yet another case study in a conclusion, but the records can never cease to provide the best examples and illustrations of the general processes understood from them. A brief examination of one more example, therefore, brings to an end this study. It illustrates how both clergy and laity might construct cultural meanings of religion around an object in complex relationships of interests and assumptions. In May of 1310, six men petitioned Archbishop Greenfield for release from a sentence of excommunication that he had pronounced on them for poaching in his park at Beverley and there assaulting a cleric of his. Greenfield imposed various penances upon the men, including the holding of candles in Beverley Minster during mass. One penitent, John of Boynton, was also ordered to perform a penance at the parish church of Cottingham, where the parish priest was to explain his crime and penance to the parishioners. After Boynton heard this order, the scribes recorded that:

*Quibus intellectis et habita deliberatione ex parte prefati Iohannis aliquali super quibusdam articuloꝝ supradictorum, uidelicet, de fideiussoribus inueniendis pro obligatione dictarum xl li., quos nequiuerat inuenire ut dicebat, et de pace ordinanda inter ipsum Iohannem et Ricardum de Anelagby, quam ordinationem sine maiori consilio suscipere et perficere ut asseruit non audebat...*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “For his part, the said John, having had time to deliberate over and understand certain of the said articles, namely the finding of guarantors for the obligation of the said forty pounds, which he said he would be unable to

Although this judicial process does not appear to leave much room for lay participation apart from submission, there still seems to have been some negotiation, for the scribes show no surprise at Boynton's deliberations over his acceptance of the archbishop's judgement. As a canonical procedure, however, the narrative certainly privileges the influence of clergy over the procedure. Nevertheless, one particular action highlights the important roles that laity could have in the construction of practices of religion. After the various judgements had been read out the men were taken for the swearing of an oath never to commit such crimes again:

Deinde postmodum incontinenti exierunt cum clericis domini et aliis ad maius altare in ecclesia beati Iohannis Beuerlaci et super rubio libro beati Iohannis posito super altari singillatim iurarunt quod nunquam decetero parcum predictum causa mali perpetrandi intrabunt nec alios ad hoc intrare procurabunt, et quod nullum dampnum in aliis rebus suis quibuscumque facient seu etiam fieri procurabunt.<sup>4</sup>

Behind this narrative there remain hints of a dialogue between clergy and laity to which both contributed. An agreed upon significance for the meaning of the book upon which the oaths were sworn emerges from this dialogue, and it is not clear who had the most influence in this process.

It is unclear what this red book was, although it was likely some copy of the Gospels or other liturgical aid containing Sacred Scripture. Equally unclear is the origin of its spiritual power to bind people to hold an oath. The narrative privileges an interpretation of the book as a construction of official religion, with the cathedral clergy, who must have believed in its spiritual or social power, forcing the penitents to take an oath upon it. This assumption, however, relies upon an interaction between clergy and laity to which they both contributed because the clergy, presumably, would not have made the penitents take an oath on the book unless they believed that it held some meaning for the penitents also. In other words, the clergy, regardless of their understanding of the book, must have thought these lay men

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find, and of the peace ordered between himself, John, and Richard of Anelagby, which order he did not dare, as he asserted, to undertake or perform without further counsel..." *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1522.

<sup>4</sup> "Then, afterwards, the intemperate men went out with the clergy of the lord [archbishop] and others to the high altar in the church of blessed John of Beverley, and they each swore on the red book of blessed John placed upon the altar that they would never henceforth enter or procure any to enter the said park in order to do wicked deeds, nor make any damage or procure any to do so concerning any of these things [the conditions of absolution]." *Reg. Greenfield*, no. 3:1522.

assigned a similar meaning to it. The penitents, of course, could have given their assent to the ceremony of the oath-taking during the deliberations surrounding the conditions of their absolution and, at the most extreme, done so in a cynical ploy to outwit the clergy. This interpretation, although possible, does not, however, do justice to the range of possibilities open to the laity that this thesis has demonstrated because it continues to limit their actions to resistance from beyond official structures. It should, therefore, also be considered that the clergy, through their previous experience with and observations of local laity had noticed that they also assigned meaning to sacred objects. Whether popular understanding or clerical instruction was more influential in this case, or any other, cannot always be determined. What is important is that the clergy may have understood that they shared with the laity an understanding about this book. This shared assumption gave the clergy and laity a common cultural language to which both contributed and both could use, for the book's meaning may have come from neither an official or popular culture but, rather, from the complex interaction of both. Medieval religion was replete with symbols and ceremonies that had official and popular meanings. These were constructed and used at local levels although they may have been regulated or legislated through wider official processes. Nevertheless, it is entirely possible that the meanings and power of medieval religion were products not of a clash between officially imposed doctrines or popularly held beliefs, but of complex interactions between clergy and laity sorting out the messy business of life and faith.

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