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EPISCOPAL REGISTERS AND THE VISITATION  
PROCESS IN ENGLAND AND FRANCE  
IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

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## ABSTRACT

### EPISCOPAL REGISTERS AND THE VISITATION PROCESS IN ENGLAND AND FRANCE IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

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During the thirteenth century, the ancient practice of episcopal visitation was revived by energetic popes, who wished to extend both the administrative power of the Church and its ability to initiate moral reform. Episcopal registers provide invaluable information about the justifications, procedures and consequences of visitations, since bishops were the major agents of this activity. For this thesis, a small group of episcopal registers was selected from the body of thirteenth-century English and French registers. These registers were examined to determine how individual bishops carried out their responsibility to visit regularly the religious houses in their dioceses, and to what extent their efforts were successful. This analysis reveals a fundamental dilemma in the late medieval Church: the inability of even the most zealous bishop to solve moral and social problems through a physically demanding, time-consuming and unwelcomed administrative act.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The medieval Church was such a complex institution, and its records so sporadically preserved, that it is difficult for students of the present age to understand the nature of religious life in the Middle Ages; yet it is the very complexity of the Church which compels historians to study it. The literature which has survived from this period clearly shows the centrality of the Church, not only in meeting the spiritual needs of the people, but in organizing medieval society politically, economically and culturally. Indeed, without the efforts of the Church to preserve written documents and to educate the clergy, most of the evidence which comes to us from the Middle Ages would have been destroyed or might never have been written at all. The great variety of contributions which the Church made to medieval society cannot be denied. These many contributions serve, in fact, to explain why the Church was for several centuries one of the most powerful forces in Western Europe.

Despite the enormous strength of the medieval Church, however, its expansion was limited by a number of factors, both external and internal. Certainly political leaders throughout Europe tried, often successfully, to harness the authority and bureaucracy of the Church for their own ends. By the thirteenth century, the Church managed, at least temporarily, to assert its independence from secular control under the brilliant leadership of Pope Innocent III and his successors. After having achieved this autonomy and acquired the wealth and military support to defend it, the Church was left to deal with a distressing inherent weakness: the fundamental contradiction between the Christian

values of peace and poverty and the presence of a wealthy and militant ecclesiastical hierarchy. In broader terms, the Church faced a serious dilemma by the thirteenth century because its evolution as a vital component in the economic and political spheres of medieval Europe could no longer be reconciled easily with its theological premises. Many aspects of the religious history of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries can be seen in terms of the Church's attempts to deal with this contradiction.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the conflict between religious theory and practice in the late Middle Ages by focusing on the episcopal office, an office which symbolizes in some important ways the precarious juxtaposition of secular and religious interests which prevailed in the thirteenth century. The medieval bishop was a man of many roles. He was a civil servant, who was expected to advise and serve his king in all matters of political policy and diplomacy. He was a feudal lord, who administered his episcopal estates with care in order to maintain an income appropriate to his high office. He served the popes as a local official and tax collector in a vast ecclesiastical bureaucracy. He was, moreover, a religious leader who was required to offer the sacraments to his flock and to teach them how to live virtuous lives through sermons. To add to this already tremendous burden, the bishop was expected to visit the major religious houses in his diocese at least once every three years in order to correct abuses and to initiate reform.

Clearly, the episcopal office and the role which the bishop played in the Church of the late Middle Ages cannot be understood completely without a careful examination of each duty that a bishop was charged to

perform. The limitations of time and space force us, unfortunately, to study only one aspect of the episcopal office, the visitation process, with the hope that such a specialized analysis will reflect bishops' attempts to cope with people who refused to conform to the standards of religious life. This analysis will be accomplished through an examination of six episcopal registers from England and France dating from the mid-thirteenth century to the beginning of fourteenth century. Although each of the registers is highly individualistic, each contributes to a larger picture of ecclesiastical structure and religious discipline in the late Middle Ages; for while each bishop was different and approached his duties in a distinctive way, all of them faced the same recurring problems in their diocesan work.

Bishops in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were both prominent and powerful members of European society, and yet in many ways were merely intermediaries in a vast administrative hierarchy. The structure of ecclesiastical government, which had been complicated for centuries by the legal, economic and spiritual ties which existed between officials at various levels, became even more elaborate in the thirteenth century as a result of the reform movement. Determined to extend its legal jurisdiction throughout Europe, the papacy in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries sponsored a massive program of codification of ecclesiastical law along the lines of the Roman system. With such a tool at their disposal, thirteenth-century popes not only could collect ecclesiastical taxes more efficiently, but could also take advantage of the lucrative position of the Curia as the highest court of appeal in Western Europe.

The right of the papacy to preside over a supreme court and to



collect revenues would have been little more than a theoretical prerogative had the papacy not been able to rely on a well-developed system of ecclesiastical government. The major organizational unit of the medieval Church, the diocese, had emerged quite early in the history of the institutional Church, but developed legally and politically throughout the Middle Ages, so that by the thirteenth century it represented one of the most sophisticated institutions in Western society. Although dioceses varied greatly in geography, size and population throughout Europe, all of them shared certain characteristic features.<sup>1</sup> All of them were governed by bishops, who were in theory to be elected freely by the canons of the cathedral chapter. Some of the most bitter confrontations between Church and state during the Middle Ages resulted from the kings' insistence on the right to influence the choice of bishops. Since bishops almost always took on important state functions upon elevation to the episcopate, kings clearly had a vested interest in the selection process. Naturally, Church leaders, and particularly the papacy, fought hard to remove the taint of secular control in the selection of bishops. This theme of struggle between Church and state over the episcopate carried over into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries both covertly and overtly, and thus colored the relationship of bishops to their spiritual and secular superiors throughout the late Middle Ages.

Bishops also had to contend with their peers, not only as fellow civil servants or advisors to the crown, but as participants in councils for reform. The most troublesome relationship among bishops was that between archbishops and their suffragans. The custom of grouping several contiguous dioceses under the authority of the wealthiest or

most prominent province was practical from a bureaucratic point of view because it provided opportunities for centralized administration. From a personal standpoint, the elevation of one bishop over others frequently led to jealousies and tensions, especially when archbishops were vigorous in exercising their legal prerogatives over their suffragans. Even the most tactful archbishops rarely managed to avoid angry encounters with the other bishops under their jurisdiction. Thus bishops were routinely affected on professional and personal levels by this particular aspect of Church administration.

The archiepiscopal office deserves some special consideration, since all of the registers used for this study were compiled by archbishops. Although the office of the metropolitan had existed from the days of the early Church, the nature and scope of the office was not clearly defined in the Middle Ages. The archbishop was identified in medieval society by the symbols of his office: the pallium and the cross which was carried before him when he travelled within his province. These symbols signified the metropolitan's primacy over his suffragans, an authority granted to him by the pope. Beyond this vague assertion of supremacy, the specific legal and jurisdictional rights of the archbishop were elusive. In general, the archbishop's power was rooted in a combination of legal precedents and personal prestige. The most important legal prerogatives of the archbishop were his superior court and his right to make visitations throughout his province. The issue of archiepiscopal visitation was a prominent one in the thirteenth century because during this period metropolitans attempted to strengthen this right by exercising it vigorously, while the visitands resisted the increased activity just as vigorously. The fact that archbishops often

held major diplomatic or advisory positions in secular governments, or held other ecclesiastical offices simultaneously with the archiepiscopal office made the metropolitan a powerful figure in medieval society. Nevertheless, it is difficult in the present day, as it was in the thirteenth century, to define the office precisely.<sup>2</sup> Some sense of the complex nature of the office will emerge, however, in our discussion of the metropolitan visitations of six prominent thirteenth-century archbishops.

The connections between bishops and the religious within their dioceses were complicated by the power which secular authorities exercised over the clergy at all levels of diocesan administration. The struggle between kings and popes over the investiture of bishops is one of the most dramatic instances of secular interference in clerical affairs, but such interference was not limited to the highest offices. Whereas royal interest in episcopal elections stemmed from the kings' desires to see their loyal servants placed in positions of status, secular intervention at lower levels of ecclesiastical administration concerned issues of property or endowments of benefices. Medieval custom encouraged secular lords to bequeath portions of their land to the Church as evidence of their piety. These gifts greatly enriched the parishes, monasteries, convents and other religious institutions which received them, but the gifts also contributed to secular interference in these institutions when the benefactors' heirs asserted their right to participate in decisions concerning the use of the gift. If, for example, a noble willed a portion of his property for the purpose of providing income for a clerical office, his family could claim the right to select the candidates for that office. Not infrequently, noble

families selected their relatives for these benefices, so that the families continued to benefit from property which technically belonged to the Church. Since bishops relied on endowments to support many of the costs of diocesan administration, they were obliged to consider the wishes of the laity when vacancies occurred in most ecclesiastical offices. The needs and concerns of ecclesiastical administration in the Middle Ages, therefore, cannot be separated neatly from the economic, social and political prerogatives of the laity. Medieval bishops were drawn into complex webs of secular interests to such an extent that we cannot define easily the scope of their authority even at the lowest levels of diocesan administration.

The administrative authority of bishops within their dioceses was also thwarted by the presence of 'exempted orders'. The exempted orders had special dispensation from the pope, and could legally refuse to submit to the authority of anyone but the pope himself. The increasing number of houses acquiring exempt status during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries seriously undermined the ability of the episcopate to administer and reform, while it strengthened the relative importance of a papal authority too distant to monitor the exempted orders properly, but too powerful for the bishops to challenge. We see, then, that while ecclesiastical structure in the late Middle Ages was sophisticated and highly organized, it was also cumbersome in many ways. Its most prominent officials often worked at cross purposes. It was influenced inappropriately by secular forces. Still, the strength and distinctive development of the Church in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries suggest that the institution of episcopal visitation deserves careful examination, for this institution helps us both to trace the

roots of the weaknesses of the medieval Church and to place those weaknesses in the larger context of the Church's merits and successes.

For these reasons, we will begin a more specialized study of the late medieval Church by focusing on the documents which provide the best evidence for understanding how ecclesiastical administration was conducted at the episcopal level. The registers of the bishops of England and France from the mid-thirteenth to the beginning of the fourteenth century provide enormous amounts of information about many aspects of late medieval religious, social and political history. It will be useful now to turn to a more detailed analysis of the uses, value and limitations of episcopal registers as historical sources.

Since episcopal registers varied greatly in style, purpose and content, it is difficult to generalize about them, but some of the more prevalent characteristics of these documents should be explored with some care. An episcopal register can be defined essentially as the journal or ledger which the bishop used to record his official activities. These journals often included copies of correspondence with popes, kings or other bishops; lists of the people the bishop ordained into holy orders; lists of clerics whom the bishop instituted into vacant offices; copies of legal contracts which involved ecclesiastical property; and notations concerning court cases and settlements involving marriage or property disputes in which the bishop had served as an intermediary. Bishops frequently included in their journals lists of injunctions against clerics who were found guilty of offences which were discovered in the course of visitations. Somewhat more rarely, the registers contained the itinerary of the bishop.

Episcopal itineraries are particularly useful historical documents

because they can be used to reconstruct many aspects of the compiler's personality. Indeed, they can answer such questions as how much the bishop traveled, and when he traveled; how large was his retinue and of what was it composed; and how many days did he spend visiting religious houses, serving the king presiding over courts, performing sacraments, entertaining dignitaries, or attending synods. In addition, the itineraries often provide a daily account of the revenues which the bishop collected and spent. Financial records are especially interesting because bishops held considerable property, collected taxes and often incurred enormous debts.

Naturally, a well-kept and complete register provides a wealth of information about the conditions which existed in the diocese and can reveal much about the personality of its bishops. It must be remembered, however, that registers were intended for practical and immediate purposes; they were notebooks, not diaries intended for posterity. Depending on the preferences of the bishop, his register might be a single chronological account of all noteworthy episcopal acts, or he might maintain several registers simultaneously, each devoted to a particular classification of acts. Examination of the original documents has also shown that entries were not usually made on a daily basis, and that they were written down by scribes, either from rough notes or under the dictation of the bishop. This method was probably a reasonable alternative to daily record-keeping, since the already cumbersome process for writing on parchment rolls would have been much too awkward to perform under itinerant conditions. The process was, indeed, so arduous that bishops did not regularly keep registers until the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Of the small

number of registers which were kept before this period, far fewer have actually survived to the present day. The expansion of the practice of keeping registers in the thirteenth century reflects a growing interest on the part of ecclesiastical officials to rationalize the central administration of the Church during this period. Thus, these registers make a dual contribution to our understanding of the Church in the late Middle Ages: as individual documents they provide specific information about the strengths and weaknesses of ecclesiastical administration, while their very presence indicates the overall tendency of the Church to consolidate its power in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by strengthening its bureaucratic structure.

We can see, therefore, that whatever its form, an episcopal register has the potential to tell us much about the financial, legal and political characteristics of a particular diocese. In many instances, these documents can be used in conjunction with other kinds of records to determine the complicated relationships which existed between bishops, secular lords, kings and other high religious officials. For the purposes of this project, however, we will be concerned chiefly with the evidence the registers provide about the work of the bishop within his own diocese, particularly in his capacity of visitor and religious reformer. Because all visitations were conducted according to prescribed procedure, visitation records are repetitious, and often seem perfunctory. If the reader is patient enough to compare entries closely, the visitation records nevertheless contain a bounty of information about the activities and attitudes of the clergy, as well as their most common moral and administrative offenses. Indeed, the repetitive quality of the registers, both in terms of the bishops'

observations and in their methods of attacking the most serious offences, underscores the enormous amount of indifference which plagued the late medieval Church and which rendered permanent moral reform impossible. We will attempt to use the accounts of visitations to investigate the roots and to describe the effects of this religious apathy.

It should be noted, however, that like any other kind of primary document from the Middle Ages, episcopal registers present problems for historians attempting to evaluate them. The most obvious difficulty that historians have with such sources is that they are fragmentary. Many episcopal registers have not survived at all, and of those that have survived, most of them have not survived completely intact. This problem is particularly troublesome in the case of bishops who recorded different types of evidence in separate volumes, since the chances of having all of a bishop's books survive seven centuries are small. Even the work of the bishops who recorded their activities chronologically in one or two volumes can present problems for the historian because in most cases at least some deterioration of the parchment has occurred over time. The historian, then, must often be content to piece together a reasonable interpretation of a bishop's diocesan work by examining carefully the register itself and comparing it to other contemporary documents.

Another major problem which arises with episcopal registers is that they must be evaluated from the perspective of the people who created them, and this perspective is not always easy to recapture. Although the registers were kept for practical reasons, they are nevertheless documents which reflect the attitudes and personalities of their



compilers. Historians can infer much about the bishop's interests, education, spirituality and conscientiousness if they have a good understanding of the social conditions of the time in which the register was written and are diligent about looking for clues in the document. They need to be careful, however, not to try to infer too much. It is possible to get the impression that the state of the medieval Church was much worse than it actually was when one merely accepts the evidence given in the registers without qualifications. Two factors which historians must consider when they analyse episcopal registers are the high frequency of negative entries and the tendency of bishops to say little about houses which they found in good condition.

Bishops frequently recorded at great length the faults and abuses which they encountered in the course of their visitations, and rarely found a house which did not require some sort of correction. On the few occasions when a visitor found nothing amiss, he would in most cases make a short notation that everything was in good order, and would not describe the favorable qualities of the house in detail. When we consider that notations in registers were primarily for future reference, the obvious emphasis on the negative is understandable. Bishops were not so interested in remembering how good a house was as in how much it improved over the course of successive visitations. The realization of this fact makes our interpretation of the contents of the visitation documents more balanced and reasonable, since we do not assume that a prelate never encountered good behavior. A more serious problem is that the visitor could have been deceived easily by clerics who conspired to keep the existence of abuses a secret from him. Even worse, an unpopular monk might be falsely accused by his spiteful

brothers. Registers, therefore, do not always provide a true illustration of the state of affairs in a given religious house.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, then, the problems which confront the historian who attempts to evaluate visitation documents are real, but can be overcome in many cases by recreating the perspective of the writer, despite the fact that the physical destruction of documents or errors made by the original writers complicate this kind of historical investigation.

It would be useful at this point to discuss briefly the specific sources which were chosen for this paper. As has already been mentioned, this paper is based primarily on six registers from English and French archbishops from the mid-thirteenth to the early fourteenth century. While all of these registers treat the issue of visitation, they vary widely in terms of the amount of space devoted to describing the visitation process. In all of the registers, however, there is adequate evidence to determine how the bishop conducted visitations and what kinds of administrative and disciplinary problems were prevalent in his diocese.

Although late medieval episcopal registers are generally more available for England than for France, three of the six registers used in this study are from France. In contrast to England, where historical societies have subsidized the editing and publishing of episcopal registers in discrete volumes, comparatively few French registers from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have been printed in a systematic fashion. One reason for this phenomenon may be that ecclesiastical records simply have not been as well preserved in France as they have been in England. When French registers have been edited, moreover, they have been published usually in historical journals or as

appendices to monographs, so that they are difficult to locate through conventional bibliographical methods. The few French registers which have been published, however, are extremely valuable sources.<sup>4</sup>

The most famous register which has survived from thirteenth-century France is the journal of Odo Rigaldi, archbishop of Rouen from 1247 until 1275. Odo's place of birth has been a subject of controversy, but most modern scholars agree that he was born sometime between 1200 and 1210 in a region called Corquetaine near Paris. His father was a knight and held considerable property in this area. Of the six children of the Rigaldi family, three came to hold important ecclesiastical offices. Odo began his religious career by studying at the University at Paris. In 1236 he joined the Franciscan order and continued his scholarship under the direction of the renowned Alexander of Hales. Before becoming archbishop of Rouen in 1247, Odo was chosen by the Franciscan General Haymo to a commission intended to determine the proper interpretation of the word 'poverty' in the Franciscan rule. Thus Odo brought with him to the metropolitan office great personal knowledge of religious life and theology.<sup>5</sup>

During the three decades of his episcopal service, Odo compiled an amazingly detailed account of the state of the Church in his province. Because Odo was so diligent about recording his activities on a regular basis, and because he worked so tirelessly in his province to fulfill all of his duties, his register is both remarkable and invaluable to historians. It provides fascinating insights into all aspects of episcopal administration and enhances our understanding of the spiritual dimensions of the episcopate. Odo's perceptiveness and sensitivity in conducting visitations, qualities apparent throughout the register, have

given us an opportunity to observe religious life in thirteenth-century France in great detail. Because of the overwhelming significance of this document, it has been edited and translated from Latin into English by Sydney M. Brown and Jeremiah F. O'Sullivan.

Another French archbishop who has left to posterity an important register is Simon de Beaulieu, Archbishop of Bourges from 1284 until 1291. Little, unfortunately, is known about the background and early ecclesiastical career of Simon de Beaulieu. We can assume safely, however, that he was well-trained in canon law and that he was a prominent figure in late thirteenth-century France, since he was made a cardinal by Pope Clement V, and had a reputation for being a skillful litigant.<sup>6</sup> Unlike Odo, Simon was much more interested in the legal and administrative than in the spiritual aspects of the visitation process, since his main goal as archbishop was to protect the dwindling prerogatives of the see of Bourges.<sup>7</sup> His register shows, however, that he was not uninterested in maintaining moral discipline. Simon's register serves, therefore, as a useful contrast to that of Odo Rigaldi. The register of Simon de Beaulieu was edited and published in Latin during the seventeenth century along with many other documents of the medieval Church by the French scholar Etienne Baluze. The text which will be used for this paper comes from the 1761 publication of Baluze's Miscellanea, which was reedited by Jean Hardouin.<sup>8</sup>

The final French visitation register which we will examine for this paper was written by Bertrande du Got, who was archbishop of Bordeaux during the first five years of the fourteenth century. Like Simon de Beaulieu, Bertrande du Got is known primarily for his ecclesiastical career after his service as metropolitan. Bertrande du Got was elevated

to the papacy in 1305 and served the Church in this office as Clement V for a decade. His archiepiscopal career is of greater interest to us, however, because he compiled a journal of the visitations which he conducted in Bordeaux from May of 1304 until June of 1305. The nineteenth-century French historian, Joseph F. Rabanis, discovered this document while completing research for a book concerning the relationship between Clement V and his king, Philippe le Bel. Rabanis edited Bertrande's register, and the document appears in the appendix of Clement V et Philippe le Bel.<sup>9</sup> Although Rabanis used this register for quite a different purpose than to investigate the effectiveness of episcopal visitation, the register provides a wealth of information concerning diocesan administration in late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century France.

The three registers from England which I examined for this thesis consist of two complete registers from York and one small excerpt of a visitation register for the diocese of Canterbury. Both of the York registers have been edited and published under the direction of the Surtees Society. The register of Walter Giffard, Archbishop of York from 1266 until 1279, is arranged chronologically, with each year divided according to the five dioceses of the province of York. Walter Giffard was the eldest son of Hugh Giffard of Bayton, a man of substantial wealth and rank, and Sibilla, coheirress of another prominent land-holder, Walter de Cormeilles. Aside from our knowledge of Walter Giffard's ancestry, we know little of his early life and education. He was educated at Cambridge, and was elevated to the bishopric of Bath and Wells in 1264. In 1265 he was made Lord Chancellor of England. Although he officially resigned this position when the pope appointed

him to the see of York in 1266, he held a position in English society as advisor to Henry III and Edward I until his death in 1279.<sup>10</sup> His register reveals much, not only about the state of religious life in York in the late thirteenth century, but also about the demands of royal service on an ecclesiastical official.

The other York register was compiled by John Romanus, who held the see from 1286 until 1296. In many ways John Romanus is one of thirteenth-century England's most fascinating figures because of the contradictions in his background and training. He was the son of a treasurer of York, who was also a priest. Despite the fact that his father was a priest, the legitimacy of John Romanus was not seriously questioned, and he received several important ecclesiastical positions in York from thirteenth-century popes. Although he was best known for his administrative work, he studied at both Oxford and at Paris. In his years of service for the English Church, John Romanus amassed a large fortune, which brought him a good deal of criticism; yet his great talent for business and his vast administrative experience made him a logical and acceptable choice for the see of York when it became vacant in 1285.<sup>11</sup> In his ten years of service in York, John Romanus compiled a surprisingly large and detailed register which provides valuable information about all aspects of the metropolitan office in the late Middle Ages. Indeed, his great administrative skill is revealed in the register by the fact that the forms which he developed for various legal transactions became standard throughout late medieval England.

The final English visitation document is an excerpt from the register of John Pecham, archbishop of Canterbury from 1279 until 1292. This document records the visitation of Canterbury diocese from 1292

until 1294, immediately after Pecham's death, was published originally in the collection Archaeologia Cantiana. This excerpt was translated into English when it was incorporated into English Historical Documents<sup>12</sup> and it is an example of an archdeaconal visitation on behalf of a bishop. Like Odo Rigaldi, John Pecham enjoyed a distinguished career as a Franciscan and as a scholar before his elevation to the metropolitan see. Not only was Pecham well known for his scholarship at Paris and Oxford, but achieved the high honor of appointment to the papal schools at Rome as lector in theology. When the see of Canterbury became vacant in 1279, Edward I hoped to have his chancellor fill the vacancy. The Pope disapproved of Edward's choice, and appointed Pecham instead, despite Pecham's desire to continue his academic career. Since Edward accepted Pecham willingly, and Pecham agreed to serve in Canterbury, the new archbishop soon was able to begin a long and fruitful career of legal and moral reform. His large register, the first to survive from the see of Canturbury, is rich in detail about the religious life in the thirteenth-century England.<sup>13</sup> The Canterbury visitation document reflects Pecham's diligence and deep concern for moral reform in the medieval Church, which prevailed in Canterbury even after Pecham's death. This document, along with the others from York and France, illuminates episcopal administration and the problems of visitations from many perspectives and therefore forms a useful body for close historical analysis.

There are several justifications for the selection of such a group of registers for analysis. First, they cover an appropriate span of time. By examining registers from the second half of the thirteenth century, we can look at the growth of the late medieval Church during a

period of relative calm, between the late twelfth century and the profound crisis of the Black Death of the mid-fourteenth century when the papacy took great interest in directing ecclesiastical reform. By choosing registers from both England and France, moreover, we can explore a number of issues which have bearing on episcopal administration. We can compare the methods and circumstances of English bishops to those of the French to assess the degree of centralization which the late medieval Church achieved. On the other hand, the variety of regions represented in this group of registers allows us to study the effects of such non-ecclesiastical factors as geography, local government and national affairs had on episcopal administration. Because the vitality and efficiency of the Church was comparatively great in England and France during this period, these registers reveal some of the prevailing strengths and weaknesses of this immensely powerful institution.

Indeed, the registers of bishops from France and England are featured here because the dioceses represented in this group were particularly diligent about compiling and preserving records; thus a proportionately higher number of registers from these areas have survived. Certainly other registers for the period in question have survived and could have been included in this study. Since the object of the study was to examine carefully a small number of primary sources, the author attempted to choose documents which reflect as much as possible diocesan administration in northwestern Europe in the thirteenth century from the standpoint of the effectiveness of the bishops and their special interests.

These registers, then, reveal at least one major aspect of



ecclesiastical organization in the late Middle Ages: the bishop as a visitor in his diocese. They provide, moreover, an excellent means for determining how successful the episcopate was in maintaining order and fostering moral reform. Since the registers were produced in England and France, areas which seemed to have achieved relatively high standards of religious behavior in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Europe, they are particularly appropriate for the kind of analysis that will be attempted here.<sup>14</sup> These documents indicate that the extent of success or failure of the late medieval Church to reform itself should be examined from the standpoint of the successes and failures of its most active administrators in carrying out their charge to reform. By focusing on the kind of training bishops generally received in the thirteenth century, on the selection of bishops and diocesan staff, on the theory of visitation and on the results of such pursuits as described in the primary sources, one can begin to refine, and indeed challenge in some instances, some of the traditional interpretations of ecclesiastical history of the late Middle Ages.

## II. THE SELECTION OF BISHOPS AND EPISCOPAL STAFF

Episcopal visitation was a complex administrative process which demanded a variety of bureaucratic skills as well as a dedication to the cause of reform. Since the attitudes and motives of bishops influenced the manner in which they conducted all episcopal affairs, including visitations, it is important to have some conception of how men were selected for the episcopal office and how they were prepared to hold it. In order to evaluate any bishop's success in performing the task of episcopal visitation, therefore, we must investigate how clerics were trained for the episcopal office, how they were chosen for this office, and in turn, how they chose the staff which would assist them in executing their duties. Such factors as the social class, economic status, political affiliations, education and religious training of a candidate could affect both the candidate's chances for selection and his ability to manage diocesan affairs after consecration. Because dioceses varied widely in terms of their size, population, culture and political significance, no simple procedure existed for finding the most suitable candidate for a given see. It can be argued that the selection of bishops was such an enormously controversial process during the Middle Ages because the episcopal office required an individual who could serve the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the state and the people with equal proficiency. Clearly, there are few people in any age who could fulfill completely those expectations. Nevertheless, the Church was served throughout the medieval period by bishops who, however imperfect, succeeded in keeping the central machinery of diocesan administration functional.

In general, bishops in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were highly educated men, and were expected to have received training both in theology and in some kind of ecclesiastical or civil administration before they were appointed to a see.<sup>1</sup> The most prominent institution for providing theological training for the clergy was the university. By the thirteenth century, the clergy could also receive significant theological education in monastic institutions. The primary source for administrative training was service for the royal court, which relied on the Church to provide its administrative staff. High-born or well-educated clerics provided talented administrators for the monarchy, and were often rewarded for their service with appointments to vacant sees. Most bishops in the late Middle Ages received training from at least two of the three possible sources, but usually held primary allegiance to only one. For this reason, historians have been able to discover patterns in medieval ecclesiastical administration by classifying bishops according to the institutions from which they obtained the training for the episcopate.

In his analysis of the English Church in the fourteenth century, W. A. Pantin offers a list of six categories into which the bishops of the thirteenth and fourteenth can be placed. These categories include civil servants; scholars; religious; officials of the Roman Curia; diocesan administrators and cathedral clergy; and aristocrats.<sup>2</sup> He takes care to warn us, of course, that one person might belong to two or more categories at once, depending on his previous career. In addition, he briefly summarizes the composition of the English episcopate from 1215 until 1275. According to Pantin, eight of the seventy-eight bishops who ruled between 1215 and 1272 were religious, forty-two were

diocesan administrators, at least thirty were recognized as scholars, thirty-seven were diocesan administrators or members of cathedral chapters, and one was a papal legate. Pantin notes the gradual trend towards the appointment of administrators and magnates at the expense of religious and scholar bishops. Indeed the number of religious who became bishops was remarkably small, even though the Franciscan and Dominican Orders were influential, and several prominent cathedral chapters were staffed by monks.<sup>3</sup>

Although the distinctions between the categories described above often may be vague, it is clear that factors in a bishop's background could influence his judgments concerning episcopal matters. Bishops who had come from a monastic order might be more inclined, for example, to stress monastic reform in the course of their visitations than those administrator-bishops who had learned to protect the legal and financial rights of the episcopate. Bishops who had excelled as scholars might likewise encourage their own interest in learning by maintaining more rigid standards for examining candidates for offices and by being generous about granting leaves of absence to clergy for study. As we have seen, Odo Rigaldi and John Pecham, who had been not only theologians of some repute but also Franciscan friars before their elevation to metropolitan sees, took great care to encourage moral reform throughout their dioceses as well as to keep unqualified clerics out of important religious offices. Their diligence in these areas is amply demonstrated through their registers of visitation. On the other hand, Simon de Beaulieu, with the instincts of an administrator and magnate, emphasized the legal and financial aspects of his relationship with the religious houses of Bourges far more than he stressed moral

reform.

This is not to say, however, that bishops routinely ignored aspects of religious life which were not part of their immediate experience. The decline in the number of scholar bishops in England in the fourteenth century did not result in an episcopate which was illiterate or indisposed to encourage scholarship. On the contrary, as historian Kathleen Deeley suggests, the bishops of the early fourteenth century were not only well educated themselves, but contributed a great deal to the intellectual vitality of England through their own scholarly interests, their work for the administration of learning in their dioceses, and their endowment of learning.<sup>4</sup> We must conclude, then, that barring the existence of an occasional incompetent or narrow-minded prelate, the episcopacy of the thirteenth-century England and France was composed of well-educated men who received training from a variety of secular and religious spheres. Indeed, it can be argued that the difficulty bishops had in reforming the clergy stems not from their negligence or ignorance, but rather from their inability to devote the kind of energy to the task which would have been required for its success.

Having reviewed the sources of training for late medieval bishops, let us turn to a discussion of how bishops were actually chosen for the positions which they held. It has already been mentioned that variations in size, location, economic structure and political status among the dioceses caused the specific administrative needs of each diocese to be distinct. Because the bishop was expected to serve his king, his pope and his flock simultaneously, many different interests competed to influence the appointment of such an important official. In

theory, of course, the canons of each cathedral chapter elected bishops without any interference from outside forces. By the thirteenth century, however, ecclesiastical officials conceded that bishops were chosen according to the wishes of kings and the papal Curia.

The issue of episcopal election had a long and bitter history in the Middle Ages which reflects one of the central dilemmas of medieval Christianity. As long as any ecclesiastical official functioned on behalf of the state, the Church could not keep secular forces from attempting to control the election of bishops, abbots or priors; but since the clergy was the major source for literate administrators, the state naturally relied on the clergy to fulfill its own bureaucratic needs. For the most part, royal interests were taken into account in the election of bishops throughout the Middle Ages, but the power of kings to choose candidates for the episcopate waxed and waned in a cyclical fashion. The reason for the cyclical pattern is that the control of episcopal elections by kings or other powerful secular magnates inevitably led to serious abuses which the Church was compelled to eliminate. Of course, some lords and kings were conscientious about recommending only qualified, dedicated clergy for election. More often rulers were inclined to appoint incompetent or immoral supporters to episcopal offices, to sell offices to the highest bidder, or to allow sees to remain vacant in order to collect diocesan revenue. According to Margaret Deanesly, Church officials seemed convinced by the eleventh century that many abuses in the Church stemmed originally from excessive lay control.<sup>5</sup>

The ecclesiastical response to this problem was complex, and was not ultimately successful in checking lay interference in Church

affairs. Throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries Church and state clashed violently in Germany, England and France over the issue of episcopal investiture. Although these confrontations ended in solemn written agreements between popes and kings, the compromises which were negotiated so carefully rarely resolved the real issues behind the conflicts or managed to eliminate religious abuses. If anything, the struggle for the authority to appoint bishops permanently undermined the power of a diocese to reform itself, because the cathedral chapters were forced to defer their right to episcopal elections to powers whose political or economic interests usually did not reflect the needs of the dioceses themselves.

In the thirteenth century the struggle between Church and state also inhibited the movement for moral reform and administrative consolidation. In regard to this issue, the British historian Sir Maurice Powicke observes that "[a]ny idea that the Church in the thirteenth century was a united and efficient force, smoothly concentrated like a machine for a single purposeful effort, is soon dispelled by the records of litigation. In these it appears as a sensitive and quarrelsome organism of vested interests and of rights rooted in custom and privilege."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps more than any other officials in late medieval Europe, bishops were deeply entangled in the legal and bureaucratic processes of late medieval social organization. It is no wonder, therefore, that their visitation records depict a system overburdened with legal procedure and tainted by the failure to achieve real reform.

Who, then, were the men who assumed such an awkward but vital task in late medieval society? On the whole, the episcopate of the

thirteenth century was comprised of some of the best-educated persons medieval society had to offer, although most of them were not scholars or theologians in the in the technical sense. While some of these men must have been sympathetic towards the new monastic orders of the thirteenth century or to monasticism in general, few of them came from monastic careers. The majority of late medieval bishops clearly came from the ranks of royal administration, and were much more often appointed than freely elected according to canonical procedures. Most significant, thirteenth-century bishops were almost without exception members of the noble classes. Children of wealthy and prominent families clearly had advantages in the patronage system of episcopal appointments during the late Middle Ages. Popes and kings found such children excellent candidates for ecclesiastical offices by virtue of their economic and social status. They could, moreover, afford to attend universities, and thus were well-prepared to enter the royal bureaucracies. In some cases, wealthy candidates could purchase an episcopal appointment, or at the very least secure rich endowments which would allow them to win the king's favor through state service while being supported by the Church.

Although the episcopate was quite clearly an elite group throughout the Middle Ages, and many capable people were barred from episcopal service because of their modest birth, medieval society did not question the legitimacy of such elitism. Indeed, as the French historian Augustin Sicard argues in his study of pre-Revolutionary French bishops, people in the Middle Ages accepted the fact that the episcopal office required men who could deal as equals with the powerful lay lords, and that it deserved to be staffed by men whose heritage and cultural



sophistication merited the prestigious rank of diocesan administrator.<sup>7</sup> The registers of the six archbishops which we intend to examine all reflect the aristocratic bearing of the prelate. Even those archbishops who were fundamentally concerned with the welfare of the poor, tended to view them from an aristocratic point of view. Because bishops were not selected for the purpose of serving the poor or of working with the religious houses in their dioceses on a daily basis to bring about reform, it is not surprising that even the bishops most sympathetic to pastoral needs lacked the capacity to transform medieval Christianity into a cohesive and morally progressive institution. Indeed, the episcopal registers clearly reflect the fact that bishops were often unable or unwilling to devote most of their energies to reform through episcopal visitation because they had not been selected for that purpose.

Most bishops in the thirteenth century did manage to improve religious life and ecclesiastical organization in their dioceses, at least to some extent. The limited amount of progress which did occur would have been impossible without the efforts of the episcopal staff. The conflicting demands on a bishop's time made it difficult for him to concentrate on any one task for any length of time. Bishops, therefore, delegated authority to lower diocesan officials, who were trained to perform legal, financial and spiritual functions of the bishop's in the event of his absence. Until the tenth century, when dioceses were sparsely populated and episcopal administration was relatively simple, the delegation of authority was impermanent and flexible. As the population of the dioceses in England and France began to grow, episcopal administration became increasingly sophisticated to meet the

growing needs of the Church. Thus by the twelfth century the delegation of authority was a regular feature of diocesan structure, and specific offices evolved, just as the high offices of the state had evolved from the basic duties of the king's household.<sup>8</sup> The capacity of a bishop to choose capable, dependable people for diocesan offices could be a key factor in his success or failure as an administrator, and could profoundly affect his power to initiate reform through episcopal visitations. Even such diligent prelates as Odo Rigaldi, who insisted on conducting as much of his diocesan business as he possibly could, relied on a large group of trained scribes, lawyers and treasurers to organize his affairs.

Episcopal staff can be divided into two general categories: the diocesan officials and the bishop's household or 'familia'. Unlike the familia, whose members could be chosen personally by the bishop, diocesan officials were selected in a much more complicated way. By the thirteenth century, diocesan administration was based on a system of distinct offices which were separately endowed. Such a system assured the continuation of basic diocesan functions in the absence of a bishop, but only at the expense of the interference of benefactors, who thought of endowments as their property, into ecclesiastical affairs. Bishops reacted to the challenges of kings, popes and magnates to influence the selection of diocesan officials by delegating authority to only a small number of central bureaucrats.<sup>9</sup> Bishops only rarely had the opportunity to select even these officials without having to consult with a lay or clerical patron. The discussion which follows will describe the integral role diocesan administration played in the movement towards reform through episcopal visitation. For good or ill, the bishop had to

rely on clerics not of his own choosing to carry out some of the most important functions of the see. He was indeed fortunate when his diocesan officials were qualified and cooperative. Frequently, however, such was not the case.

The central organ of episcopal administration in the thirteenth century was the cathedral chapter. The chapter consisted of canons, who by the eleventh century were each supported by endowments called 'prebends'. Throughout most of Europe the canons were men in secular orders. In England, however, some of the cathedral chapters were staffed by a community of monks. This peculiar custom originated in the monastic structure which prevailed in the Anglo-Saxon Church.<sup>10</sup> Whether the chapter was monastic or secular, its main functions, in theory, were to elect new bishops, to govern the see during periods of vacancy, and to advise and assist the bishop in all diocesan affairs. These functions depended upon a certain degree of compatibility between bishops and their canons which did not usually exist in reality in the late Middle Ages. As kings and popes usurped the canon's right to elect their own bishops, and as the canons struggled to maintain legal and financial autonomy, the cathedral chapter came to have only a limited role in the administration of the diocese.

After the bishop, the most important person in the diocese was the archdeacon. The office of the archdeacon evolved slowly. Initially, the archdeacon was the executive officer of the bishop's household, but by the beginning of the thirteenth century, the archdeacon, like the cathedral canons, had a well-defined sphere of influence and was supported by a separate endowment. Thus the bishop could not simply appoint a cleric to the position when it became vacant or remove an

incompetent one because of the complicated legal status of the office. The archdeacon had specific legal and spiritual duties to perform on behalf of the bishop. He supervised the clergy in his territory, instituted clerics to benefices, held visitations in the years when bishops did not visit, and held a court which dealt with ecclesiastical matters within his territory.<sup>11</sup>

For various reasons, archdeacons were not always reliable as far as the bishop was concerned. Because the bishop could not remove the archdeacon and did not have time to supervise all of his activities, he could not prevent the archdeacon from abusing his rights to collect payments and pecuniary fines in lieu of attending to pressing diocesan affairs personally. The bishop, therefore, relied more often on two other officers: the vicar general who did the routine work of the diocese, and the official principal who held the bishop's main court. In addition, the bishop employed bailiffs and seneschals to administer temporal landholdings, and could expect suffragans to take on his spiritual responsibilities in his absence from the diocese. Frequently, administrative problems arose which could not be solved by one officer. In such cases, bishops would establish ad hoc delegations. While royal authorities preferred not to use this method, bishops seemed to prefer it to the utilization of regular diocesan administrators, since episcopal registers are full of examples of delegated commissions conducting diocesan business.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the rural dean served an important function in diocesan administration as a liaison between the bishop and the local clergy. He was usually elected by the resident clergy of a group of parishes, and followed the bishop's specific instruction to deliver citations,

admonish absent clergy to reside, report on public penances, or attend to other needs of the deanery. In England the rural dean often performed legal functions, while his continental counterpart, the archpriest, did not participate in diocesan administration in a judiciary role.<sup>13</sup> When we consider the nature of the diocesan staff, we see that the thirteenth-century bishop had a fairly elaborate bureaucracy at his disposal, but did not have the practical means to control it very well. Thus the selection of diocesan staff, just as the selection of the bishop, was a complicated affair that was frequently entirely out of the hands of the people who actually conducted ecclesiastical administration. Bishops nevertheless depended on this staff to maintain diocesan government so that they could pursue their pastoral duty to conduct regular visitations.

In one area the bishop did have real control over the selection of his staff. This was in the area of the familia. Since the medieval bishop spent a large part of his time travelling in his diocese, he required a permanent staff to accompany him. A small percentage of the familia generally consisted of servants who cooked and served meals, cared for the bishop's belongings and attended to the horses of the bishop's entourage.<sup>14</sup> In addition bishops brought with them many people who served them as scribes, treasurers, legal advisors or personal companions. Most of our evidence concerning the bishop's familia comes from the list of witnesses which accompany the legal transactions which are recorded in the episcopal registers.

According to the British historian C. R. Cheney, the witnesses of episcopal documents can be classified in three general categories. The first group was composed of chaplains (capellani). Bishops usually



included two or three chaplains in his familia. Bishops also brought with them a large number of clerks (clerici) to serve in their chanceries and exchequers. For the purposes of theological and legal advice, men of academic status (magistri) were included in the familia.<sup>15</sup> Adding to this group the occasional presence of diocesan officials or other dignitaries, the bishop's familia was clearly large, heterogeneous and versatile. Since the custom of travelling with large retinues was burdensome to the houses which had to provide shelter and food for the bishop and his familia at their own expense, a canon was included in the Fourth Lateran Council to limit the number of an archbishop's mounted attendants to fifty.<sup>16</sup> It is not surprising that bishops and archbishops chose to have large familia, not only for the sake of prestige and convenience, but because they could influence personally the composition of the familia in ways they could not hope to influence the selection of other diocesan officials.

If the selection of bishops and their staff in the late Middle Ages reveals anything about the medieval Church, it is that the complex network of private interests which governed ecclesiastical promotions interfered with the process of centralization and reform. Even after the papacy asserted more control over episcopal appointments, diocesan administration did not necessarily benefit, because popes were usually more interested in making strategic compromises than in finding the most respectable and dedicated candidate for diocesan offices. These conditions naturally hindered the process of moral reform, although they did not render it impossible. Since the people who attained the episcopal office in the thirteenth century were educated and competent administrators, they had the capacity to sustain the functions of

diocesan government. More important, these prelates showed the capacity to utilize a bureaucracy over which they had only incomplete control to help them to meet the administrative requirements of the diocese as well as to provide some of the pastoral needs of their flocks. Clearly, bishops were not selected primarily on the basis of their talent to reform religious life within their dioceses; yet their training prepared them at least adequately to perform the task of episcopal visitation, one of the most powerful tools available to the medieval Church for achieving reform. As we turn to a more detailed study of episcopal visitation we should keep in mind the fact that bishops and their diocesan staff considered the responsibility to conduct visitations only one of the many responsibilities of diocesan and secular administration for which they had been chosen to undertake, and that the ultimate failure of reform through visitation was due in no small measure to the pressures placed on them by the episcopal office itself.



### III. THE VISITATION PROCESS

Episcopal visitation in the second half of the thirteenth century served an important function for the medieval Church, not only within the dioceses themselves, but for the Church as a whole, because it combined administrative and spiritual elements into one procedure. It provided, therefore, a convenient method for the Church to employ in its efforts to centralize ecclesiastical power and to establish a program of moral reform throughout Europe. The success of this method depended, however, on cooperation among the papacy, the episcopate, the diocesan officials and the clergy, as well as a certain degree of understanding on the part of secular lords who had acquired legal rights to control ecclesiastical property. Since cooperation and understanding among these groups were more often lacking than present in the thirteenth century, the path toward spiritual and administrative reform was often difficult when it was not blocked entirely.

Indeed, the visitation documents which have survived from this period show quite clearly that one of the major obstacles to spiritual or administrative reform originated in the isolation of religious houses within dioceses and the subsequent lack of adequate episcopal supervision. This chapter is intended to investigate the visitation process in England and France in the thirteenth century in order to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the system, which in turn can help us to assess the state of religious life in England and France during this period. This investigation will be accomplished through an analysis of the theory of visitation, the procedures involved in this act, the most common methods for determining the spiritual and

administrative health of religious houses, the most frequently occurring abuses and the techniques employed for the correction of these abuses. We shall see that in spite of the zeal of many thirteenth-century prelates, the real achievements of the visitation process were limited.

The institution of episcopal visitation as a pastoral and administrative process had a long and complex history. During the Carolingian period, theologians and ecclesiastics began to express the need for the Church to investigate regularly the state of religion on a local level. At the beginning of the tenth century, the basic principles of visitation, as well as a list of questions which were to be asked during a visitation, were combined in the De synodalibus causis of Reginon of Prüm. Although bishops were to be the primary agents of visitation, archdeacons, archpriests and abbots also were permitted to undertake certain types of visitation. Since visitors had the privilege of collecting a visitation tax, or procuration, visitations were unpopular from the early days of this custom.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the pecuniary benefits of visitation, the episcopate did not take much interest in it during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, because the papacy did not insist that bishops conduct visitations and because the burdensome nature of medieval travel discouraged them from pursuing this kind of activity. Episcopal visitation was revived in the thirteenth century when popes Innocent III, Honourius III and Gregory IX tried to impose this task on bishops as a way of counteracting the decay of monasticism. At first, these popes hoped to reform monasticism simply by strengthening the various monastic orders. They chose the Cistercian Order as their model for reformed monasticism because the Cistercians displayed a capacity for centralized organization; thus,

they assumed that the reformation of a few prominent Cistercian houses would spread fairly quickly to minor houses. They were disappointed to find, however, that the vast number of Benedictine houses in Western Europe could not be reformed along the lines of the Cistercian model because there was too little uniformity among the Benedictine houses to organize them effectively. The popes therefore turned to episcopal visitation as an alternative method for instituting monastic reform.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to its pastoral function as an institution of communication between the hierarchy of the Church and local religious communities, visitation had an administrative function which was in practice much more controversial. Especially in the case of archbishops, the act of visitation could be used to great advantage from an administrative standpoint. As French historian Pierre Andrieu-Guitrancourt has observed, "le droit de visite n'existe pas seul et, on l'aura remarqué, il est trop étroitement lié aux autres prérogatives métropolitaines pour qu'on le puisse étudier indépendamment; c'est, en effet, un acte de juridiction supérieure et de juridiction aussi bien gracieuse que contentieuse. . . ."<sup>3</sup> The archbishop, indeed, could interpret his visitation rights so broadly that he could justify any order which he might issue for the purpose of correcting an abuse, or an interference in the jurisdiction of a suffragan. By the time of Innocent III, a program of limiting the independence of monastic orders was clearly taking shape, and included as its central component the expansion of episcopal jurisdiction over them. Under this program, the pope insisted that diocesan synods be held yearly for the purpose of determining policies regarding monasticism, which the bishop would then carry out in his visitations.<sup>4</sup> This program, as one can imagine,

produced a good deal of discontent within the dioceses. It might have been more effective than it actually was, however, had the popes not undermined the authority of the episcopate by exempting orders from episcopal supervision and by encouraging clerics who were dissatisfied with episcopal justice to appeal to Rome.<sup>5</sup>

Closely connected to the administrative justification for episcopal visitation is its legal justification. If we remember that bishops took on many political and administrative roles in medieval society, we can understand why they wished to guard their right to enter the religious houses of their dioceses, collect procurations and issue injunctions. When a bishop could assert his right to visit a house and demand procuration, he set a legal precedent for all subsequent visitations of that house. So important was this legal right that bishops often collected full procurations from extremely poor houses in order not to lose the right to visit in the future, and then remitted all or a large portion of the fee. Indeed, aside from the basic legal framework behind episcopal visitation, the most prominent legal issue was that of procuration. Originally, procuration simply involved the right of the bishop to receive food and lodging for himself and his retinue. In time, the custom of payment in kind evolved into payment in money, which was more convenient for religious houses and more lucrative for the bishops. Once money payments became standard, the papacy could profit from episcopal visitations, because papal delegates had the right to make visitations on behalf of bishops and to claim one half of the acquired revenue for the papal treasury.<sup>6</sup> The controversy which arose over procurations stemmed from the fact that bishops could abuse the right, either by demanding food for an unnecessarily large retinue or by

collecting a tax larger than the food and lodging would have cost the house. In both cases, legal attempts to eliminate these abuses were thwarted.<sup>7</sup> The real legal battle over visitation occurred in a different sphere as religious houses sought legal protection through papal exemption and bishops fought bitterly to retain their prerogatives.

We see, therefore, that by the thirteenth century, episcopal visitation was a complex and controversial institution pastorally, administratively and legally. Its diverse nature has been summarized cogently by the French historian Noel Coulet, who observes: "[l]a visitation fournit une connaissance directe de la situation matérielle, spirituelle et morale de paroisses et des maisons religieuses, permet un contrôle de l'exécution des ordres donnés et de l'observation des lois de l'Église, offre l'occasion d'un contact avec le clergé qui en simule et entretient le zèle et la fidélité. Elle est instrument de pastorale et moyen de gouvernement."<sup>8</sup>

When we move beyond the theoretical aspects of visitation, however, our task becomes more difficult because we must now attempt to interpret the visitation documents and to derive valid conclusions from them. We have seen that by the middle of the thirteenth century episcopal visitation was a well-developed procedure with a prescribed method of inquiry. In examining the registers themselves, it is nevertheless crucial to remember that such records are not simply administrative or legal, but also human documents which reflect the particular attitudes and interests of the visitor.<sup>9</sup> It is appropriate, therefore, not only to describe the procedure for visitation in general, but also to explore some of the variations in the visitation practices of the six prelates whose registers we intend to examine.

Since the evidence for analysing the visitation procedure is scanty, historians have been forced to attempt to determine the most common practices by synthesizing English and continental sources. Naturally, variations existed depending on the conscientiousness of the bishop and the specific circumstances of the visitation, but in general bishops adhered to a fairly rigid schedule of activities. Before the bishop arrived at the religious house he usually sent a warning letter to its superior cleric in order to assure the presence of the leader during the visitation. Occasionally the bishop would require the witness to return a certificate which promised that the house would accept the visitor. On the day of the visitation, the bishop and his retinue would arrive at the house, forming a procession which would be received by the leader of the house. The bishop would then be taken to the chapter house where he preached a sermon. These sermons often combined scriptural lessons with an exposition of the bishop's right to conduct visitations. After the sermon, the bishop and the leaders of the house discussed the legal and financial aspects of the visitation. Finally, when the house was cleared of spectators who had come to see the bishop, the bishop and his staff would begin to examine the members of the community.<sup>10</sup> After examining the inhabitants as thoroughly as time would permit, the bishop commented on his findings to the entire community. He might offer advice to the community or admonish the leader for lax discipline or mismanagement. In cases of individual abuses, the bishop could order formal or informal punishment to the person who had committed the crime. At this point the bishop and his retinue could retire, or they might leave in order to conduct visitations in neighboring houses. Records of the visitations were kept

carefully, probably in the form of brief notes, and then incorporated into the bishop's official register at a later date.

The evidence for the generalizations above comes from the close analysis of individual entries from the visitation documents. For our purposes, the register of Odo Rigaldi provides an excellent starting point because of the thoroughness and sensitivity of this particular archbishop. Indeed, G. G. Coulton acknowledges the special significance of this document when he states: "it may almost be said that this book yields more real insight into medieval conditions, under detailed examination, than all of the rest of our [English] registers put together."<sup>11</sup> One reason for the unique quality of Odo's register is the attention he paid to describing his activities. The entry concerning Odo's visitation of a suffragan on 21 January 1249 not only confirms the existence of a basic visitation procedure but provides some interesting information about Odo's dedication to the task of visitation:

We came to Lisieux and were received by the chapter with a procession and the church all decorated. We delivered a sermon to the chapter gathered or convoked in the bishop's palace. There we exercised our right of visitation and inquired whether the bishop carried out his episcopal duties. The canons replied that he had not celebrated Mass in the cathedral of Lisieux during the past year; they do not know what he may do elsewhere, and they say that he is unable to exercise such of his episcopal functions as dedicating churches, consecrating the chrism, blessing nuns and the like. . . . This day our expenses were borne by the bishop.  
 JANUARY 22. We received procuration from the chapter of Lisieux.<sup>12</sup>

Odo's inquiry reflects his concern for maintaining basic ecclesiastical functions throughout his province, as well as his insistence on keeping careful records of his financial transactions. From the time of his elevation to the episcopate in 1247 until his departure for the Crusades in 1269 Odo conducted visitations regularly, consistently and thoroughly, despite the rigors of medieval travel and illness which plagued him throughout his prelacy.<sup>13</sup>

Other archbishops, of course, referred to their visitation procedures regularly throughout their registers, although in most cases this information was presented in a standard form which did not vary from visitation to visitation except in date and place. The renowned legalist and administrator Simon de Beaulieu, for example, used essentially the same form, including a letter of announcement, for all of his visitations. The form which he used to announce and record visitations has been preserved in this entry from the year 1284:

SIMON Dei gratia Bituricensis Archiepiscopus, Aquitaniae Primas, dilectis in Christo filiis Abbati & conventui de Anglia Pictavensis diocesis salutem in Domino. Burdegalensem provinciam jure nostrae primatiae visitantes, hac instanti die dominica post festum beati Matthaei Apostoli & Evangelistae ad locum vestrum intendimus declinare. Unde vobis mandamus ut nobis & familiae nostrae dicta die necessaria praeparetis. Datum die Martis praecedenti anno Domini MCCLXXXIV.

Die igitur dominica post festum beati Matthaei Apostoli & Evangelistae dictus Dominus Bituricensis Archiepiscopus veniens de abbacia Fontis Gombauidi parrochiae de Fongombaut Buturicensis diocesis, ubi sabbato praecedenti sacros celebraverat ordines & praedicaverat, Burdegalensem intravit provinciam, Abbate Angliae se quinto in equitaturis veniente obviam Domino per leucam & ampliers, & salutante Dominum cum hilaritate vulus.<sup>14</sup>



Hereafter, Simon proceeded to describe the results of his investigation of the house and recorded the recommendations which he made to its leader.

Similarly, Bertrande du Got used essentially the same form for describing his visitation practices. Although he did not include references to letters of announcement in his journal, he recorded his activities in detail. The thirty-ninth entry of the journal, which was made in June 1304, provides a good example of Bertrande's method of recording visitations:

Agen- Le 39 port quil seroit aussy alle en la ville d'Agen et illec recu processionnellement par leuesque et chappitre de lad. ville avecq son train aux despens dud. seigneur evesque et le lendemain auroit celebre messe annonce la parole de Dieu confirm et baille tonsure a plusieurs et y fait sejorn au despens du chappitre.<sup>15</sup>

Like Odo and Simon, Bertrande mentioned the procession, and indicated that he preached a sermon. A much more regular feature of Bertrande's visitations, however, is his emphasis on the sacraments which he performed in the course of his visitations. This emphasis should not imply that Bertrande was more diligent about performing sacraments than the other archbishops, or that he was less concerned with the financial and legal aspects of visitation simply because he did not choose to make note of these matters at any length. He obviously preferred to list all of his activities in a standard form rather than to elaborate on them in each entry. Because visitation documents are so subjective, it is difficult to make broad statements concerning the attitudes and aims of a particular prelate without consulting corroborative evidence. We can begin to discover, however, what was routine in thirteenth-century

visitations by looking for similarities in various registers. Likewise, we can assume that the differences reflect, at least to some degree, the interests, preferences and goals of individual prelates.

The visitation records for the English archbishops of the thirteenth century tend to support Coulton's somewhat dreary assessment of them. The bulk of the registers of Walter Giffard and John Romanus are devoted to legal transactions, orders, licences, injunctions and presentations. In both registers, there is evidence that these men were diligent about making visitations. This evidence comes chiefly from letters of announcement and injunctions against guilty clerics. In the register of Walter Giffard, the entries concerning visitation are quite thorough in listing the offences which the archbishop discovered and the advice which he offered, but they do not describe the procedures he used in conducting visitations. The Canterbury visitations of the 1290's were recorded in the same manner.

In the register of John Romanus, visitation announcements appear frequently and often follow a regular form, just as did those of Simon de Beaulieu. The notice of John Romanus to Southwell in June of 1287 is an example of the type of announcement which he generally sent:

1045. 2 kal. Julii (June 30, 1287). Lanum. Visitacio cleri et populi prebendarum Suwell. Dilectis in Christo filius, capitulo nostro Suwell. Quia clerum et populum ecclesie et prebendarum vestrarum Suwell. die Veneris proxima post instans festum translacionis beati Thome Martiris intendimus per Dei gratiam visitare, devocioni vestre injungimus et mandamus quatinus citetis preemporie de singulis prebendis vestris vicaros et presbiteros qui in eisdem ministrant, ac tres vel quatuor viros fidedignos de tenentibus ecclesie et prebendarum vestrarum Suwell., quos ceteris preferat opinio commendato, quod predefecto die Veneris tempestive coram nobis compareant in prefata ecclesia Suwell., visitacionem nostram, etc., ut supra est in anno j<sup>o</sup> anno in visitacione cleri et populi prebendarum Ryponie.

In this announcement, John Romanus not only warned Southwell of his impending arrival, but instructed the community as to how to prepare for his visit. Although his announcements were much more specific and less formal than those of Simon de Beaulieu, their existence in his register reflects his attention to the preliminary procedures of the visitation process, despite the absence of regular descriptions of his activities during the visitations which he conducted. His register, when compared with those of the other prelates, indicates that episcopal registers were flexible and subjective records of an activity which was a regular feature of European society in the thirteenth century.

The most important aspect of episcopal visitation was, however, the investigation of the clergy. The bishop was expected to preach, perform sacraments and settle legal disputes, but his primary role was to reform his flock morally and administratively. Since religious life in the thirteenth century was rich in the variety of institutions which existed to serve the people, bishops could not use the same standards for every religious house or parish which they visited. The variations in the wealth, prominence and functions of these institutions required the bishop to have a thorough knowledge of the legal connections, economic basis and religious practices of each house he intended to visit. The type and severity of offences which he encountered in the course of his visitations, moreover, could influence the bishop's choice of a means of investigation. Usually, in fact, bishops used several methods concurrently.

Because episcopal visitation of the secular clergy was different in some significant ways from that of monastic orders, it will be useful to examine the basic differences between secular and regular clergy in the

medieval Church. The major distinction between secular and regular clergy is that the secular clergy served the laity through direct ministry, while the regular clergy were supposed to live separately from the secular world in groups which organized their spiritual and social behavior on the basis of a rule. Although both types of clergy experienced some of the same problems and were exposed to the same temptations, their essential functions in medieval society were quite distinct. Because the bishop was by the definition of his office the highest secular cleric in his diocese, he was obliged to take special care to discipline the secular clergy, even if his background and religious inclinations were monastic. Of course, no bishop or archbishop could hope to visit every parish in his diocese or province, simply because they were so numerous. Instead, bishops visited the rural deans, and instructed them to maintain discipline in the parishes within their deaneries. Such a charge was not a simple task, even for a diligent dean, since the dean had little inherent authority, and generally accomplished his duties through example and persuasion rather than by force. He had little control even over his schedule for visiting his parishes, since the bishop generally decided such matters for him.<sup>17</sup>

The episcopal visitation of the dean was therefore a significant aspect of the bishop's ministry. When the bishop examined the dean he not only asked questions of the dean himself but sought witnesses from the community to confirm the reputation of the dean. As we have seen from John Romanus' notice of visitation, bishops could request to have a group of clergy and lay people present at the time of the visitation, whose testimony could help the bishop to determine the efficiency or

morality of minor Church officials. In the case of rural deans, the bishops were generally most concerned about how well the dean disciplined parish priests. He asked, for example, whether the priests resided in their parishes, performed the sacraments regularly and correctly, cared for vestments, service books and chalices, served the poor, and led reasonably moral lives. The following excerpt from Odo Rigaldi's register reflects indirectly the kind of relationship which existed between bishops and deans:

October 2. At Paris. This day, and by our order, we had made an examination of the investigation done by the dean of Valmont touching the life, morals, way of life, and other attributes of Robert of Ros, a priest presented to Saints' Church. The investigation revealed that the said priest had received his [Holy] Orders from an outside bishop without receiving permission from the bishop of his own diocese, and for this reason we were unwilling to admit him to the said church.<sup>18</sup>

In this case, the dean had the responsibility of determining the character and legal standing of the priest before Rigaldi's arrival, but he had no authority to act on his own.

In the visitation records of Canterbury diocese we see that deans not only lacked authority, but had many administrative duties in addition to their pastoral responsibilities. The visitation record for Newchurch in 1294 states that:

[a] mandate had been issued to sir John, rector of Seymeton, dean of Lymene, to summon the clergy of his deanery to inquire into the vacancy of the church of Newcherche in the gift of the King of England.

The dean appeared and asserted that he had been so much occupied in certain arduous business relating to the subsidy for the Holy Land that he had not been able to reduce his certificate to writing, but confessed that he had received the mandate with due reverence, and asked to certify by word of mouth that he had duly cited the following persons<sup>19</sup>....

Clearly, the life of rural deans must have been marked by a certain amount of frustration, since bishops relied on them so heavily but gave them little independent authority. Successful visitations and sound financial administration in any diocese depended in large part on the diligence and skill of the rural dean. Indeed, much of the evidence which we have about the state of the clergy in the Middle Ages comes indirectly from the labors of these officials. Bishops could hardly have discovered and corrected as many abuses as they did without the aid of the deans.

We should not assume, however, that the relationship between bishops and deans was necessarily repressive, or that the bishop performed only a punitive function during visitations. On the contrary, bishops provided many useful services for the clergy: they ordained new clerics, gave permission for leaves for study, received resignations from benefices, and absolved penitent sinners.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the visitations of secular clergy brought the bishop into contact with the people, as he confirmed children, blessed cemeteries and churches, and listened to confessions.<sup>21</sup>

Episcopal visitation of the regular clergy differed from those of the secular clergy primarily from the standpoint that monastic orders were expected to live under a kind of spiritual and administrative

discipline which could never be expected of the laity. The usual procedure for conducting a visitation of a monastery or convent began with the examination of the entire chapter by addressing questions to the assembly. This was followed by the private interrogation of as many members of the house as was possible. The bishop would often delegate trusted members of his familia to conduct some of these private interrogations. When too many clerics were present to examine them singly, they were examined in small groups. This kind of investigation was called an inquisitio; it was not, however, a formal inquisition because its purpose was only to inquire into the state of the house and not to determine the guilt of of an accused cleric or to try him.<sup>22</sup> During these interrogations, the religious were asked to reveal the names of people in the community who had sinned, and to comment on the financial and spiritual health of the house. The bishop could also ask to see the financial records, service books and other religious paraphernalia of the house in order to determine whether the house was conscientiously maintained. When these examinations were complete, the bishop would confer with his familia before deciding what kind of disciplinary action was appropriate or whether more extensive investigations were necessary.

Since bishops rarely commented specifically on every aspect of visitation, our understanding of the visitation process is based on a composite analysis of the best visitation records. In a sense, we reconstruct the most common procedures by looking for common features in many visitation records. For this kind of study, Odo Rigaldi's register is particularly useful because his visitation entries were unusually thorough. An entry such as the one for the visitation of the priory at

St. Aubin in March 1259 can therefore reveal much information:

This very day we visited the nuns' priory at St. Aubin, after we had pronounced God's word. Sixteen nuns were there. The prioress was away. At our last visitation we forbade them to receive or give the veil to anyone without our special mandate. However, despite our command, they had received as a nun and bestowed the veil upon a certain girl, to wit, the daughter of Sir Robert, called Malvoisin, knight. When we asked them why they had presumed to do this, they replied that urgent necessity and poverty had so compelled them, and that in consideration of their consent, the father of this girl had given and endowed them with an annual income of one hundred shillings, and they had a letter to prove this. They added that they had done this without the consent of the prioress. We, realizing and considering that they had not done this without vice and greed and of depraved simony, subsequently ordered the dean of Bray, by letter patent, to admonish, as the law requires, the said nuns to remove this girl from their house before Ascension Day and, having taken the veil from her, to return her to her father's house. Upon the prioress we enjoined and caused her to have enjoined a penance which seemed expedient because she had allowed such a crime, and likewise upon the nuns for their boldness in undertaking such a matter.<sup>23</sup>

This entry shows that Rigaldi's visitation procedure included the three distinct phases which have been delineated above. He began his visitation by convening the chapter and preaching a sermon. Then, after referring to his notes concerning the priory, he investigated the moral and financial state of the house. Finally, he assessed the nature of the abuses which he had discovered and gave suitable punishments for them. By examining such entries as this, we see that administrative patterns emerge which reveal the standard practices and objectives of episcopal visitation in the Middle Ages.

No one was more aware of the deficiencies of this system of this inquiry than the bishop. Not only was there the danger of conspiracy either to protect a powerful individual or incriminate falsely an unpopular one, but even sincere testimony could be inaccurate or



exaggerated. Such problems undoubtedly prompted Odo Rigaldi to make the following statement regarding his visitation of Lisieux:

We found Richard Faiel to be ill famed of the wife of Richard the tailor. Called before us, they promised to behave themselves better in the future. Item, we did not believe some other stories which were told us about some of the others.<sup>24</sup>

In spite of the limitations, however, bishops were compelled to use these methods in their attempts to learn about the state of religious life in their dioceses. A major factor in the failure of bishops to reform the Church in the thirteenth century must rest in the inability of even the most zealous prelates to confirm and eliminate the abuses which plagued the secular and regular clergy.

What were the major moral and administrative abuses which the archbishops discovered and attempted to remedy? The moral abuses varied widely in severity from negligence in observing the monastic rule to sorcery or heresy. Most of the administrative problems were associated with the mismanagement of monastic property, either through the ignorance or the corruption of the clergy. When conducting visitations, bishops in the late thirteenth century used the statutes of Pope Gregory IX as their guide for assessing the state of religious life in the monasteries. These statutes, which had been issued in 1234, were intended specifically for the reform of the Benedictine, Cluniac and Premonstratensian Orders, but contained advice which was appropriate in a much broader context. The essential message of the Statutes was that all monks should lead lives characterized by obedience, continence and poverty. Moreover, religious leaders were required to provide 'frequent and particular explanation' of these concepts for all those decided to

be monks.<sup>25</sup> More specifically, the Statutes called for regular confession and communion, the abolition of private property, the proper care of all monastic property, and the removal of all seculars from the monastery. Abbots were forbidden to sleep and eat in private quarters on a regular basis. The monks were asked to announce publicly in chapter the violations of the rule committed by their brothers in order to maintain a high state of morality within the house. Most important, the Rule of the Order was to be read in chapter at least three times a year.<sup>26</sup> Although the Statutes do not require anything more strict than to adhere to the Rule of St. Benedict, many monks and abbots complained of their severity. Nevertheless, both in England and France, the Statutes took on the status of a monastic constitution. In 1249 the English bishops decreed that the Statutes of Gregory IX, together with other reforming legislation, should be publicly read at regular intervals,<sup>27</sup> while Odo Rigaldi required the abbots in Rouen to read the Statutes in the vernacular at least once a year.

Unfortunately, bishops could not reform the Church merely by insisting that the clergy listen to the ideals of monasticism, even if they had been able to enforce the command to read the Statutes. By the thirteenth century monastic life had become so lax that indulgence on the part of the religious was almost possible to eradicate. The archiepiscopal registers abound in examples of monasteries and convents whose major abuses were in the form of negligence of certain features of the Benedictine rule. Two characteristic examples of monastic indulgence appear in the register of Odo Rigaldi. On his visit to the priory at Le Désert in October 1256, Odo noted that:

Six Benedictine monks from the abbey of Troarn are there. They do not confess often enough; we enjoined them to correct this. They have no copy of the Rule; we enjoined the prior to get one or to have one written out. They do not observe the fasts of the Rule; we urged them to correct this. They eat meat freely; we<sup>28</sup> absolutely forbade them to eat meat save as the rule permits.

In the following year, Odo observed at the convent at St. Armand that:

[f]orty-five nuns are there as well as four girls who have been promised that they would be received before any others. They have seven maidservants. Silence is badly observed, especially in the monastery and in the dormitory. The abbess does not eat in the refractory; whenever she eats in her own chamber she always has certain ones as her companions, and does not call the others for such recreation. When the nuns are in the infirmary, they have no one to read the Divine Office to them. We enjoined the abbess not to be ready or lenient in granting permission to the nuns to undertake traveling, but to be stern and to give them permission to go only for a definite time. We forbade them to appoint any almoness or to give alms without consent. Item, we forbade them to<sup>29</sup> receive anything from their relatives without permission.

In these instances the offences were not so much the products of immorality as they were symptoms of the disintegration of the rigor of the monastic rule. Several factors underlay this laxness. One of the most perplexing problems of medieval monasticism was that the monasteries became repositories for people who were considered unable to fulfill secular social roles. This is particularly true of the sons and daughters of lords who could not provide for them in any other way but to place them into religious orders at an early age. While it would be unfair to imply that many inhabitants of monasteries were not truly committed to a religious vocation or that young children could not grow up to embrace the monastic tradition, it is clear that many of these people considered the monastery a prison and tried constantly to

circumvent its restrictions.<sup>30</sup> Another factor which contributed to laxness was the aristocratic backgrounds of the inhabitants of religious houses. Even though the monastic rule and canon law prohibited the acceptance of money from people who wished to become monks or nuns, the practice thrived, and the religious life was effectively limited to the more affluent classes.<sup>31</sup> Endowments also influenced the complexion of monastic population. It was difficult for the Church to instill in the aristocratic clergy the value of poverty when they had been taught to enjoy the private luxuries of a noble life. Finally, although monasteries became increasingly wealthy in the thirteenth century through generous gifts and general economic prosperity, they did not experience a corresponding increase in spirituality. If anything, greater wealth encouraged greater indulgence and ambivalence towards the rule.<sup>32</sup>

It is not surprising that the indulgent atmosphere which surrounded monastic life encouraged much more serious moral offences. These offences included such crimes as assault, thievery, dishonesty and usury, crimes which occurred far more often than ecclesiastical officials cared to admit. The most common crime, however, was incontinence on the part of the priests, monks and nuns. While celibacy had been an ideal of the Church at least since the days of Pope Gregory the Great, significant progress in the realization of that ideal had not taken place by the twelfth century. The great twelfth-century canonist Gratian was dedicated to the principle of clerical celibacy, and he reasserted it forcefully in his Decretals.<sup>33</sup> In the course of the thirteenth century bishops worked hard to eliminate its non-observance but encountered resistance both from secular and regular clergy. The

deep frustration which these prelates felt as they tried to contain immorality is reflected in Walter Giffard's entry concerning his visitation of Felley priory in July 1270:

Item, quia per Radulphum de Codenore, super fornicione graviter diffamatum, scandalum turpiter suscitatur, precipimus quod idem Radulphum claustrum non exeat nisi in comitiva prioris vel subprioris, donec per gestum suum ac conversationem laudabilem et honestam hujusmodi scandalum sopiator, ac a nobis gratiam metuerit exeundi.

Item, quia Robertus Barry quedam bona de domo subtraxit, et cum mulieribus frequentius conversator, quorum pretextu inhonesta predicantur de ipso, volumus et precipimus, quod similiter in claustro se teneat pacifice, suum sequens conventum, in nullo existens officio, donec de sua melioratione et vitae honestate consisterit per indicia manifesta, et a nobis gratiam obtinuerit ampliorem.

Item, quia filius Willelmi de Dounham nimis frequentur ingreditur ad patrem suum, ac idem W., paterno ductus affectu, aliqua quae domi possent prodissa committit filio, matri quae in venico habitat defenda, sitque suspicio quod sicut canis ad vomitum ita redeat at peccatum, precepimus quod idem una cum aliis claustrum non exeat, sed conventum sequantur ut deget, donec suscipio, incontinentiae hujusmodo penitus auferatur.<sup>34</sup>

Another offense which was less common than incontinence, but no less serious, was violence. The causes of violent encounters between abbots and monks, among the clerics, and among the lay people varied considerably, but such actions were clear violations not only of the Rule but of basic tenets of the Christian faith. Bishops therefore punished violent behavior severely whenever they discovered it. The attitude of the bishops towards such behavior is reflected in the record of Bertrande du Got's visit to Cessac priory in October 1304:

archevesque auroit aussy visite le prieure de Cessac pres le Mont de Dome et y fait tous actes ace requis et necessaires et le lendemain jour de lundy istre monte a leglise de Mont Dome et apres avoir ouy messe avoir annonce la parole de Dieu au peuple avoir confere la confirmation et tonsure a plusieurs et pour ce que led. prieur de Cessac auroit refuse de recevoir led. seigrieur comme il devoit et a cause de la violence quil avoit use avecq armes et violent injure faite avec effusion de sang au cimitiere dudit prieure en les personnes de messire Helie de Bosco, presbytre et chappelain dudit archevesque fust par icelluy seig. archevesque excommunie et denonce pour excommunie avecq les denommez leures complices.<sup>35</sup>

Despite harsh punishments, however, violence was not noticeably reduced. When members of religious communities are unable to settle disputes in a peaceful fashion, we can assume that the state of religious life is less than healthy. The presence of such violence in the late medieval Church reveals the decadence of religious life as well as the futility of the reform movement.

The most serious moral crime of the late medieval Church was heresy. Heresy, of course, is a broad term which encompasses everything from an excessive belief in superstition to the profession of an unsanctioned theology. Although heresy had always been considered a threat to the Church, it took on an even greater significance in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as a result of the cultural and institutional evolution of Western European society. As we have already seen, the Church sponsored a major reform movement during this period in order to consolidate its administrative and spiritual power. A key feature of this movement was its great emphasis on the codification of religious law, despite the fact that Christian theology presented many contradicitons and insoluble problems.<sup>36</sup> While the codification process succeeded in establishing clear-cut legal policies for the Church, it also created a system of canon law which discouraged free thought and

inquiry on controversial theological matters. Because the Church vigorously enforced conformity to the codified law, many intellectuals faced ostracism or severe punishments for exploring ideas which might not have been considered heretical a century earlier.

Another aspect of the issue of heresy is related to the decline of monastic discipline during the thirteenth century. It is not surprising that Church plagued by indulgent, corrupt or poorly trained personnel would alienate or offend certain segments of the population. Some people fell into old patterns of superstition, which involved various types of sorcery. In some areas, entire communities embraced heretical religions, often in part to protest the hypocrisy and cruelty of their religious and secular superiors. Perhaps the best example of this kind of behavior was the outbreak of Catharism in Southern France in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Although the Church fought against this threat bitterly, the heresy was not destroyed quickly or without great violence.<sup>37</sup>

Of course the Church was especially concerned when the clergy was found guilty of heresy. The August 1286 mandate of John Romanus to the rector of Birkin to find a heretical monk indicated that the problem of heresy was both real and a matter of serious concern to Church officials:

Litteras ad revocandum apostatam qui fuerat de Ryevalle. Domino Roberto de Everingham, rectori ecclesie de Byrken. Accepimus, non est dudum, quod quidam Godefredus (sic) Darel, qui a religione et ordine Cisterciensi, quem in monasterio de Ryevalle professus fuerat, apostatavit, ut dicitur, in seculari habitu probosius jam vagatur, maleficiis et incantacionibus nefariis inserviens, per que et quas plebem Dominicam decepit fidemque ecclesie reicit in propriae salutis dispendium et orthodoxorum scandalum, proth dolor, manifestum. Cum nostro itaque incumbat officio errantes oviculas ad recitiudinis similitam meditatione sollicita revocare, devocioni tue committimus et mandamus quatinus vias prefati apostate scrutari studeas diligenter, ipsumque caute repertum nobis presentare procures, ut, viso vultu morborosi pecoris, premissa investigemus plenius, et, quatenus saluti predicti vagi expedere viderimus, ordinemus consularis de eodem. <sup>38</sup>

The fact that such a scandalous situation could exist in thirteenth-century monasticism suggests both the need for moral reform and the obstacles which inhibited it.

Just as prevalent as moral decadence, and no less annoying to episcopal visitors, was poor administration on the part of abbots and priests. If these local officials could not maintain discipline and manage Church property, the bishop would find it extremely difficult to rely on them to make necessary reforms or to collect ecclesiastical taxes. One corrupt prior or abbot, in fact, could create more tension and inefficiency in a religious community than could many recalcitrant monks. As a result of mismanaging monastic property, many abbots were unable to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter for their monks. This negligence led, in turn, to quarreling among monks, either because they had to compete for the fruits of the house, or because they struggled over how to remove the offending abbot from the monastery. The fact that monks had little control over such conditions as famine, sickness or poverty, whether their misfortunes were the result of incompetence of abbots or acts of nature, led to unproductive discontent



and apathy.<sup>39</sup> Since bishops could not always ensure the appointment of good personnel, they looked for corruption during their visitations and punished it severely when they discovered it. An excerpt from an entry in the register of Simon de Beaulieu reveals the kind of problems that bishops encountered with local officials in the late thirteenth century:

Super quo dicti Prior & capitulum Domino regratiantes, ipsi Domino conquesti sunt de familia sua, eo quod expensas factas non ita rigide computataverant ut debuissent, & prout ipsi computataverant secundum ipsorum assertionem, & ita gravebantur ut in grossis carnibus & pollatura & palia & in foeno: quibus post multorum responsa, finaliter Dominus respondid quod si crederent minus fideliter computatum fuisse, venerent ipsi vel mitterent Pictavis dum ipse praesens esset, & ipse libentissime faceret fideliter computare; praefertim eum sua familia, cujus intererat computare, jam praecessisset.<sup>40</sup>

Simon and his episcopal colleagues obviously hoped that warnings and threats could achieve adequate reform in certain cases. The existence of mismanagement and corruption was bound to continue, however, as long as monasticism remained decentralized. When heads of houses enjoyed autonomy and lacked regular supervision they could not be forced to become efficient managers.<sup>41</sup>

Another pervasive administrative abuse in the thirteenth-century Church was the presence of uneducated or poorly educated people in official ecclesiastical positions. Since the Fourth Lateran Council, bishops were required to see that clerks who were promoted to ecclesiastical offices had been properly prepared for their duties. The most common method for determining the qualifications of a candidate to a benefice was for the bishop to examine him in the presence of the patron and other suitable witnesses.<sup>42</sup> Bishops frequently recorded the events of the examinations in their registers as the following passage

from Odo Rigaldi's register suggests:

This day, that is to say, the Tuesday before Pentecost [1253], we examined Geoffrey, cleric, presented to St. Richard's church at Harcourt, on the passage: omnia autem aperta et nuda sunt eius oculis. Asked what part of speech aperta was, he replied, "A noun"; asked if it might be any other part of speech, he said, "Yes, that is to say, a participle." Asked from what verb it was derived, he said, "From this verb: aperio, aperis, aperii, aperire, aperior, aperieris, etc." Asked for the formation of compati, he said "Compatire from cum and patio, pates, patui, patere, patendi, patendo, patendum, passum, passu, patiens, passurus, patior, pateris, passus, patendus." Asked what pateo, pates, meant, he answered "To open or to suffer." Asked what part of speech obsque was he said, "A conjunction"; asked what kind, he said "Causal." Examined in chant, he did not know how to sing without solfeggio or note, and he was even discordant in solfeggio or note. We therefore, both because of his insufficiency, and because after an investigation which we had caused to be made about him, he was found to be ill reputed of incontinence and of quarrelsomeness, did not think he should be admitted to the said church. Those present were: Brother Osmond; Brother Walter of Menieres; Brother Roger, his relative, all Friars Minor; Ralph, priest at Deville; Master Maur, our physician; Master Peter of Aumale; Stephen, priest at Blenelle; and Everard, son of the count, our clerks.<sup>45</sup>

Odo was clearly concerned not only about the candidate's knowledge of Latin, but about his ability to perform the Mass and his personal character. Because the candidate did not meet Odo's standards, he was rejected. In other cases prelates might accept the candidate on the condition that he study for a period of time before beginning his ministry. Such provisions were necessary when patrons presented young candidates who had not yet even taken minor orders. The unfortunate result of this practice is that it allowed clerics to receive endowments from a benefice which they did not serve and in which they did not reside. We see, therefore, that the bishops faced a serious dilemma when choosing personnel. They could allow an unqualified cleric to hold an office or they could require him to study at the expense of having a

benefice improperly administered. In either event, the potential for abuse and mismanagement was great.

The result of non-residence and mismanagement was the physical deterioration of Church property. Competent bishops, therefore, did not forget to examine the buildings, books, vestments and other provisions of the houses which they visited.<sup>44</sup> Considering their constant attempts to encourage Church officials and parishioners to keep Church property in good condition, the bishops must have been frustrated by the large amount of destruction which they encountered. The visitation of the church of Fairfield of Canterbury diocese in 1294 reveals the extent of deterioration which could be found at the end of the thirteenth century:

A frontal for the high altar is lacking, because there is only a poor carpet before the same.

A cloth is required for the lectern, because the one that is there is very dirty and in poor condition.

There is an antiphoner which is of no use or value and a legend of no value.

They lack a psalter, manual, processional, ordinal, collectar and martyrology.

The church was never dedicated, and the altars in the chancel are of wood badly put together, also the walls of the chancel are in bad condition because they are full of holes in the lower parts; moreover, the churchyard is dedicated, but not the church, because it is of wood and daub.

The oil has not been changed this year, the church font has no lock as it ought to have.<sup>45</sup>

The unfortunate aspect of this kind of negligence is that while bishops could identify it, they could do little to reverse or prevent it. Even though many religious houses thrived in the thirteenth century, the presence of negligent officials and poorly managed houses seriously undermined the quality of religious life both morally and administratively.

Although bishops in the thirteenth century had to be cautious in

making judgments concerning these abuses, they did not hesitate to correct clear violations of the Statutes of Gregory IX or other overt offences. Bishops employed several different methods of correction which varied in severity depending on the seriousness of the offence. When a bishop discovered a certain amount of disorganization in an otherwise healthy parish or monastery, he usually offered informal advice or warnings to the offenders. The instructions were then recorded in the register so that the bishop could refer to his notes upon the next visitation in order to assess the progress of the house. In regard to his visitation of the priory of Mont-Deux-Amants in December 1256, Odo Rigaldi made the following notation:

We visited there, finding twelve canons. We enjoined them to read the Rule through at least once a week....The sick are ill provided for; we enjoined them to correct this. We particularly enjoined the subprior to be diligent in visiting the sick and to make provisions for them as the illness of the patient seemed to render expedient. They do not get their clothing as soon as they need it, for it is given to them after too long a delay; we enjoined them to correct this.<sup>46</sup>

In this instance, the failings of the house were the result of carelessness, not of grave sin. Odo obviously believed that the problems in this house could be easily resolved if its inhabitants could be persuaded to be more attentive to the practical needs of the house and if they would spend more time studying the Rule.

More serious offences incurred more formal penalties. These penalties could involve large groups of people or a single cleric, depending on the nature of the offence. According to French historian Paul Adam, bishops often charged entire parishes with the responsibility of repairing ruined churches by imposing heavy fines if the parishioners

did not comply with his orders, and by promising indulgences if they did.<sup>47</sup> The visitation of Brookland parish in the diocese of Canterbury confirms Adam's assertion:

The church is badly covered, the gutters and timber are rotten. Wherefore the parishioners are summoned, and because it is said that they are liable, it was enjoined on the wardens that they should cause all the said defects to be repaired before the next visit of the lord [?commissary] to the marsh under pain of twenty shillings.<sup>48</sup>

Both groups of people and individuals could be punished through the use of injunctions. Injunctions were formal complaints made by the bishop, which either imposed a penalty on the offenders or promised that a penalty would be imposed if the the offender did not reform his behavior within a specific period of time. Bishops often used the form of the injunction to list the abuses of a house so that its inhabitants would have a clear understanding of its deficiencies. An excerpt from a long list of injunctions, which Walter Giffard issued to a house of canons, illustrates this function of an injunction:

In nomine Domini, Amen, etc. Compertum est per inquisitionum, factam ut decuit in conventu, quod ea quae in proxima visitatione nostra tam ore quam littera corrigi precepimus et servari, in nostri contemptum et non modicum domus dispendium animarumque periculum, adhuc penitus remanent incorrecta, immo expernicioso neglectu inobedientur videntur esse rejecta, maxime cum excessus pristinos hactenus continuari pateat evidenter. Ob quod prius injuncta, secundum quod ea in scriptis dedimus, volumus recitari et ea per singula precepimus observari, contemptum premissum taliter puniendo, ut scilicet ad honestatem et decorem (sic) ordinis et carnalium affectuum repressionem, carnibus in refractorio feriis non utantur; et donec omnia sic neglecta ad stratum debitum reducantur, semel singulis mensibus in secunda feria presens scriptura, una cum priori, publice coram omnibus in capitulo perlegatur.

Injunctions were also used to punish individuals who had committed serious moral crimes. In the case of the canon William of Durham of Felley priory, Walter Giffard issued this injunction:

Item, compertum est quod Willelmus de Dunham de Rosa, muliere quadam, filium suscitavit, quia frequenter ingreditur domum, et ea quae ibi potest acquirere defert matri suae, quae habitat in vicino, et suscipio est quod dictus Willelmus per filium suum intermedium copiam habeat matris suae, et quod canis ad vomitum, redeat ad peccatum. Ne, igitur, religionis honestas per talem insolentiam penitus corruat et succumbat, precipimus quod idem claustrum suum non exeat, donec suspicio incontinentiae penitus auferatur. Quod si precepto nostro presumpserit contraire, ipsum ad aliud monasterium transferemus, et ipsum etiam <sup>50</sup> alias puniemus quod alii delinquere decetera formidabunt.

Many injunctions called for punishments which were harsher than simply confining a monk to the cloister or sending him to another monastery. Bishops had the power to suspend or excommunicate clerics who were guilty of gross immorality, or who were too incompetent or corrupt to administer a benefice even marginally well. Although bishops were forced to rely on inefficient methods of investigation, they clearly had strong deterrents at their disposal when they were certain that they had uncovered grave sin. The frequent use of the injunction in the thirteenth century registers suggests that bishops were prepared to punish the offences which they encountered to the extent that their inquisitional methods, and sense of fairness and propriety would permit.

Bishops also had specific methods for correcting administrative or financial abuses. These methods fell into three general categories. First, the bishop might try to limit the freedom of the leader of the house to spend the house's income by insisting that the entire house be consulted before any major transaction was completed; by providing for

the safe custody of the common seal; by appointing a few treasurers from the house who would be jointly responsible for receipts and expenditures; or by providing for the regular presentation of accounts.<sup>51</sup> In more serious cases of mismanagement, the bishop could require an episcopal licence for business transactions, or appoint a guardian (custos) to supervise the temporal affairs of the house.<sup>52</sup> In the case of the church of Kirkby Moorside, John Romanus appointed a guardian not so much to assist the vicar in financial matters as to help to carry out his duties in the midst of infirmity:

466. 6 kal. Dec. (Nov. 26, 1286). Wilton'. Thome, rectori ecclesie de Barton' in Rydale. Convertentes pie consideracionis intuitum ad statum vicarii de Kirkeby Moresheued, qui senii importunitate frangitur et visus privacione afficitur, adeo quod cure sue, set nec sufficere poterit sibi ipsi, te, de cujus circumspecta industria plene confidimus, predicto vicario et vicarie sue in custodem et coadjutorem canonicum peficimus per presentes, quod onus tibi injungimus assumendum; proviso quod, deductis sumptibus necessariis, tam circa personam alendam quam circa alia contigencia faciendis, de bonis residuis nobis fideliter responeas, ut de hiis de utilitatem ecclesie disponamus.<sup>53</sup>

It is evident that bishops were aware of the difficulties of contemporary administration and were innovative in finding ways to help clerics to solve their own administrative problems.

The continued presence of moral and administrative abuses in the late thirteenth century suggests, nevertheless, that the methods of episcopal visitation were not adequate to the task of eliminating immorality and inefficiency from the Church. Indeed, as G. G. Coulton points out, even such men as Odo Rigaldi and John Pecham were forced to diminish certain punishments in order to prevent the crimes from becoming public scandals.<sup>54</sup> The six archiepiscopal registers provide

invaluable insights into the justifications, processes and limitations of episcopal visitation in the late Middle Ages. Through them we see a system which relied on the personal integrity and energy of high ecclesiastical officials, who were often thwarted in their attempts to reform by a society which regarded the financial and legal prerogatives of the Church with jealousy, and attempted to limit them. If any fact emerges from our discussion of the visitation process, however, it is that bishops easily could have spent their entire careers on the single task of reforming through visitation. Considering the numerous other demands on their time, it is remarkable that these prelates as much as they did to reform the medieval Church.



#### IV. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EPISCOPAL VISITATION

Despite the diligent labors of the episcopate in the second half of the thirteenth century, the Church failed to achieve its goal of complete moral and administrative reform of religious life. The work of the episcopate was not entirely futile, however. Evidence exists to show that the bishops' efforts to educate the clergy, encourage preaching and improve the administration of religious houses achieved some notable successes. Unfortunately, this progress seems rather limited and sporadic in light of the more common tendencies toward ambivalence and indulgence on the part of the clergy. The roots of this situation of restricted reform in the midst of spiritual and administrative stagnation lay in certain inherent problems in the late medieval Church, which the reform movement was not intended to solve. Because bishops were intimately involved in the process of reform, their visitation registers provide a valuable resource for investigating the extent of the effectiveness of the reform movement.

How can we assess the effectiveness of episcopal visitation as expressed in the registers? In general, three methods yield important information concerning the progress of the late medieval Church. The most obvious approach is to compare the entries which were made for a particular house during a bishop's career. This method has the advantage of illustrating the effectiveness of a single bishop. Its major disadvantage is that it depends entirely on the quality of the register which is being analyzed. The register of Odo Rigaldi, who made some kind of notation for nearly every visitation he conducted, is more useful than the registers of Walter Giffard and John Romanus, who

usually commented on a visitation only when injunctions had to be issued.

In Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries in the Thirteenth Century, C. R. Cheney attempts to assess the effectiveness of the visitation process in curbing a specific list of abuses by studying Odo Rigaldi's register systematically. Cheney notes, as we have noted before, that Rigaldi possessed extraordinary pastoral talents and displayed a fine character. Moreover, he conducted diocesan affairs efficiently. His register reveals his remarkable consistency and diligence during his long career as archbishop of Rouen, since Odo recorded his visitations in great detail. According to Cheney's calculations, Rigaldi visited at least forty-nine houses of regular clergy six times each during his twenty-one years as archbishop; he visited forty-five of these more than ten times each. Cheney therefore concludes, quite reasonably, that Rigaldi's register provides adequate evidence for estimating the state of monastic clergy in Rouen in the mid-thirteenth century and for assessing Rigaldi's success in eliminating abuses.<sup>1</sup>

To assess Rigaldi's success, Cheney divided the archbishop's prelate into three seven-year periods (1248-1255, 1255-1262, 1262-1269), and counted the incidents of specific offences in each of the three periods. Since Rigaldi made approximately the same number of visitations in each period, the periods can be compared directly. The offences which Cheney considered include: the ignorance of the Rule and the Statutes; discipline (monks not accusing each other in chapter); failure to follow the Rule (ownership of property, incontinence, lack of silence); lone monks; irregularities in common life and claustration; and the neglect of the infirmary. Cheney also examined such aspects of monastic

life as the administration of houses, the observance of food regulations, almsgiving and monastic debt. By comparing the aggregate number of each of the abuses in all three periods, Cheney reached some interesting conclusions about the state of monasticism in the thirteenth century. His statistical analysis shows that the frequency of abuses declined during the course of Rigaldi's prelatecy. In some cases Rigaldi's successes were dramatic. The number of houses which did not possess a copy of the Rule decreased from forty-eight to eleven between 1248 and 1255. It was easier, of course, for Rigaldi to insist that monks obtain copies of these documents than it was for him to ensure that the monks would follow their instructions. Rigaldi had more limited success in forcing the regular clergy to accuse each other in chapter. The number of injunctions concerning this matter dropped from thirty in the first period to nineteen in the second period. Incidents of incontinence also declined from forty-two in the first period to nine in the third period. The number of injunctions against the ownership of private property actually increased, however, from twenty-one in the first period to thirty-four in the third period.<sup>2</sup>

Cheney concluded that Rigaldi deserves most of the credit for the moderate improvements in clerical life which occurred during his prelatecy; certainly the archbishop worked tirelessly to achieve them. The fact that Rigaldi invested so much effort into the visitation process and yet obtained only slight results in curbing the most significant abuses led Cheney to this rather dark conclusion:

[I]f from the handling [of the data] one impression deeper from the rest has been left it is, surely, that the archbishop's chief obstacle was passive unspirituality in the cloister. Rigaud could enforce administrative reforms, he could have the Rule written and read; but the little self-indulgences of the religious, their private stores, their meat for meals he could not prevent.... The long persistence of the evils and the repetition of injunctions shows the opposition against which he contended. Only a strong external force continually returning could make an impression upon a disordered monastery, however zealous its head might be. To emphasize the amount of success which Rigaud's efforts rewarded is not to forget the limitations always operative. The archbishop could not make religion flourish: he could prevent its worse decay.<sup>3</sup>

In its remarkable detail, Rigaldi's register reveals the crucial importance of bishops to the reform movement of the late Middle Ages. This register and others from the second half of the thirteenth century show further that the forces which interfered with the bishop's ability to make visitations inhibited the success of the reform movement as a whole.

The registers of Walter Giffard and John Romanus are appropriate for the second method: the comparison of entries concerning a particular house from the registers of two or more bishops. Again, this method is most effective in examinations of dioceses for which there is a history of consistently detailed visitation registers. The province of York is remarkable for the volume of diocesan material which was collected and preserved from the Middle Ages. According to English historian A. Hamilton Thompson, however, the voluminous York series "is concerned almost entirely with diocesan business, and that business is largely formal and rehearsed at great length with endless repetitions."<sup>4</sup> This tendency to repeat may stem in part from the relatively unsophisticated nature of York diocesan administration. Although the province of York covered a vast territory, it consisted of only three

rather impoverished sees, and thus never had the opportunity to develop the kind of substantial system of central administration which had evolved in Canterbury.<sup>5</sup> The register of Walter Giffard and John Romanus reflect the habit of the registrars to include in the permanent record only those documents which might be necessary in the future, to renew, confirm or revise diocesan litigation.<sup>6</sup> Thus a great deal of interesting and potentially useful information has been lost to us. Although it is possible to use the registers of Walter Giffard and John Romanus in a comparative analysis, these documents generally lack substantive information on any but the most notorious houses. Needless to say, in areas in which ecclesiastical archives have suffered from neglect or destruction, this method is unreliable.

When a series of episcopal registers has been preserved, the second method can be used with some reservations. The register of Walter Giffard and John Romanus show clearly that many of the problems which Giffard identified in the 1270's remained uncorrected in thirty years later. Two visitations of Bolton priory reveal this lack of progress. In December 1271 Giffard visited Bolton priory, and noted that among other abuses:

Item compertum est quod Johannes de Pontifraceto, celarius, non est multum utilis in officio, et quod plures sunt in conventu magis ad illud idonei. Item compertum est quod silentium in ecclesia, claustro, dormitorio, refractorio, non bene servatur. Item quod infirmi fratres non bene procurantur, nec secundum exigentiam ordinis humani visitantur. Item quod Johannes de Ottele, licet professus novicius, tamen non reddit servitum suum cordetenus juxta morem disciplinae regularis. Item quod celarius et subcelarius, quando vacare possunt, non intersunt divinis officiis nec collationibus quae fiunt in conventu, et quod frequenter post refractorio lautius quam ceteri fuerant....Item computus de communibus rebus et administrationibus per obedientarios non redditur in communi.

This excerpt suggests that the monks of Bolton priory regularly disobeyed the Rule and that the priory was inefficiently administered.

John Romanus' visitation of the same priory in July 1286 shows that the monks had made little progress in the preceding fifteen years:

Noverint, etc., quod, cum nos, Johannes, etc., officii nostri debitum prosequendo, idibus Julii, anno gracie M<sup>o</sup>CC<sup>o</sup> octogesimo sexto, priorem et conventu de Bolton' in Cravene, in suo caitulo, pastoralis sollicitudine visitaverimus, ac domum ipsam gravi ere alieno invenerimus oneratum, quod a domus ejusdem humeris comode executi non poterit; nec bona monasterii in proprios usus veniant, que ante visitacionem nostram in hujusmodo quibusdam singularibus personis de gremio pro separato victu fuerat assignata. Nos, communi utilitate ejusdem collegii pensata quam singularium personarum quarumlibet privatis comodis censuimus preferendam, provisiones et assignaciones de bonis prefati monasterii, quibuscumque personis ejusdem collegii sub quavis forma concessas, de consensu prioris, omnium eciam singulorum de gremio, revocavimus, irritavimus, et annullavimus, ad revelacionem uberem depressionis notorie qua domus non mediocriter affligitur memorata.

These two evaluations of the same house clearly indicate that bishops had difficulty in removing administrative inefficiency and violations of the Rule from houses which were consistently mismanaged. The comparison of entries concerning the same house from several registers might be a useful method for examining the effectiveness of visitation in a particular area over a long period of time.

Despite the advantages of the second method, however, it is inappropriate for this thesis for several reasons. The second method naturally limits the historian to an investigation of a few isolated regions within a single diocese or province. While such a study might offer many insights into the problems and administrative features of the houses which have been mentioned most often in the registers, the result of the study would have only a narrow application. A more significant

problem is rooted in the fragmentary nature of the evidence. Since the archbishops of York did not include much material on visitations in their registers, and since few bishops provided any more than one substantive account of any but the most notorious houses, the historian would find it difficult to reconstruct a representative view of religious life during the Middle Ages using the second method. The registers used in this thesis were produced in different areas, and vary in style, purpose and length. While they are similar enough for us to draw conclusions about the visitation process from them, they are not similar enough for an analysis based on tracing developments within specific houses. The comparison of records within a single see forces the historian to restrict the use of contemporary registers from other sees to the secondary role of corroborating the evidence of the primary registers. Because I intend to explore the issue of the effectiveness of episcopal visitation on a wider scale than either the first or the second method can provide, I must turn to a broader method of analysis.

The third technique for assessing the effectiveness of episcopal visitation involves a synthesis of a variety of registers which were compiled during a relatively large period of time. This method is based on the assumption that a variety of documentation serves to enrich and refine the conclusions which have been derived from the analysis of primary sources. As Coulton argues in his study of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century monasticism, "monasticism had the same ideal everywhere in the West, and its practice so nearly the same from country to country that the burden of proof lies not upon the writer who would illustrate English by French conditions, but upon him who would forbid such illustrations. . . . Common sense seems to suggest that, where

witnesses are fairly unanimous, their testimony is not weakened but strengthened by their variations of time and place. . . ."<sup>9</sup> The same argument would be valid for the secular clergy as well. The synthetic method has good potential for assisting us in understanding episcopal visitation because it allows us to incorporate any pertinent information from a variety of registers as long as we take into account the distinctive character of each register. Clearly, this method permits the historian to chart advances or reverses in medieval religious life on a much broader basis than is possible with the other methods. Even more than with the other methods, however, interpretive skill is essential in the synthetic approach, so that the differences and similarities among bishops' registers can be assessed accurately. In the context of this study, the synthetic approach involves identifying the forces which might have limited the effectiveness of visitation, and then using a variety of contemporary sources to determine the extent to which these forces actually impeded visitation. Using the registers which I have described in previous chapters, I hope to show that one of the most crucial forces which inhibited major reform through visitation was inherent in the episcopal office itself. We shall see that while bishops had the capacity to improve religious life, and actually succeeded in some limited respects, the demands of the office, the personal failings of the bishops and the pressures placed on bishops by the Church diverted bishops from their responsibilities to reform their flocks.

Since the registers chosen for this study vary greatly in terms of style, length and purpose, all three methods for determining the effectiveness of episcopal visitations can be used to good effect. It



is important to remember the problems which stand in the way of making firm conclusions based on any of these documents. The registers contain lacunae and errors. Bishops, moreover, were inclined to emphasize the negative discoveries rather than to dwell on the achievements of respectable houses. Nevertheless, we should not minimize the value of episcopal registers to broaden our understanding not only of the effectiveness of episcopal visitation as a means for reform, but also the vitality of the thirteenth century reform movement as a whole.

The reform movement which was initiated by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century prelates had many facets. Although many of the reformers' objectives could not be met, some aspects of the reform movement were more successful than others. One of the most progressive elements of thirteenth century religious reform was its emphasis on an educated clergy, since in essence knowledge is the basis of any substantial reform. We have already seen how Odo Rigaldi tried to place qualified and literate people into vacant offices. The level of education of thirteenth-century clergy is difficult to evaluate because scholars do not agree on the implications of the primary evidence and because many bishops commented more on the moral failings than on the ignorance of the clergy. After analysing the episcopal registers of medieval England, John R. H. Moorman has concluded that the majority of the clergy received very little instruction. In fact, some must have been almost completely illiterate, despite the Church's constant efforts to maintain a high standard of education for priests and monks.<sup>10</sup> The registers certainly abound in examples of clerics who did not possess the necessary books to conduct services, could barely read Latin, and had only a limited understanding of theology. It is easy to assume,

therefore, that the efforts of the Church to reverse this kind to ignorance were futile for the most part.

The nature of episcopal registers prevents the historian from gaining any real insight into the methods the Church employed to educate its clergy. Since no formal system of seminary training existed in the Middle Ages, we must assume that most clerics prepared for careers in the Church either by serving a beneficed cleric or by attending a university or school. Since bishops often granted permission for priests to leave their parishes to study at a university, we must assume that most bishops encouraged the clergy to be educated.<sup>11</sup> In September 1268, for example, Walter Giffard gave the rector of the church of Thorenton permission to study theology for three years as long as he could assure that his parish would not be neglected (*ita quod dicta ecclesia debitis non fraudetur officiis, et animarum cura in ea nullatenus negligatur*).<sup>12</sup> In May 1293, John Romanus not only allowed the rector of Brandesburton to leave his parish to study, but specified that the fruits of the parish would continue to go to the rector.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, these bishops recognized the importance of an educated clergy, and attempted to make clerical study possible. The registers provide little direct evidence to suggest that bishops checked to see whether priests actually attended universities during their leaves of absence.

Despite the bishops' willingness to support clerical education, their registers reflect negligence involving religious books. The visitation of Fairfield church in Canterbury diocese reports that:

There is an antiphoner which is of no value, and a legend of no value.

They lack a psalter,<sup>14</sup> manual, processional, ordinal, collectar and martyrology.

Likewise, Odo Rigaldi complained continually of the poor state of the service books in the religious houses which he visited. These incidents suggest that many clerics in the late Middle Ages did not know how to care for books, and imply that some priests and monks did not value or were unaware of the contents of these books. Although the registers of medieval bishops do not provide enough evidence to determine the exact state of clerical education, they obviously provide some indirect insight into this facet of medieval religious life. The bishops acknowledged the existence of unqualified clergy, and attempted to correct this problem when they encountered it. What they failed to see, however, was the need for a consistent and thorough program of training for all clergy.

Some historians have turned to other kinds of evidence to trace the state of the clergy in the later Middle Ages. Manuals to assist parish priests and friars to preach became more common in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. In addition, episcopal legislation reflects a tendency on the part of the clergy to place a new and greater emphasis on theological matters in their mandates to priests. The constitutions which were established in 1240 by Walter de Cantilupe, Bishop of Worcester, were devoted in part to the duties of a priest to understand certain theological concepts and to include such information in frequent sermons for his parishoners. One portion of the constitutions enjoins priests to act according to a specific instruction:

Scientque sacerdotes ea, quae exiguntur ad verae confessionis poenitentiae sacramentum. Et quia observatio decalogi necessaria est fidelibus ad salutem: exortamus in Domino sacerdotus, et pastores animarum, ut sciant decalogum, id est decem mandata legis Mosaicae, quae populo suo sibi subjecto, frequenter praedicent, et exponant. Sciant quoque, quae sunt septem criminalia peccata, quae populo praedicent fugunda. Sciant etiam saltem simpliciter vii ecclesiastica sacramentas quae sunt. Habeat etiam saltem quilibet eorum fidei simplicem intellectum secundum quod continetur in psalmo, qui dicitur "Quicumque vult," et tam in majori, quam in minori,<sup>15</sup> symbolo; ut in his plebem comissam noverint informare.

The emphasis on the emerging body of popular theology and on the proper instruction of priests reflects the desire of the episcopacy to use the clergy as a tool for wider moral reform in the Church.

The best way to assess this intention is to determine the extent to which the episcopal mandates were carried out. Although the primary sources do not reveal directly the extent of improvement in clerical learning, they reveal it indirectly through the evidence they provide concerning preaching. Some historians have argued that sermons were rare in the thirteenth century, but the increasingly large number of episcopal instructions to priests and examinations of clerics suggests that the amount of pastoral preaching must have increased as well. Indeed, D. W. Robertson argues that there is evidence to show that in ordinary parishes, priests regularly delivered sermons on Sundays and feast days.<sup>16</sup> The work of the parish priest was supplemented, indeed some would argue circumscribed, by the activities of friar preachers. Even though the friars were organized into monastic orders and did not hold regular pastoral offices, they were carefully selected and rigorously trained to preach about the same topics which bishops enjoined the parish clergy to master.<sup>17</sup>

The registers which were selected for this study do not provide

much evidence to show that bishops specifically encouraged parish priests to preach sermons. Perhaps bishops considered the moral state of the clergy a more pressing matter than their ability to preach, or assumed that virtuous and competent priests would not need to be reminded to preach to their parishioners. The enthusiastic support which bishops gave to mendicant orders reflects, however, their desire to supplement the work of parish priests. By the second half of the thirteenth century, the Franciscan and Dominican Orders, with their highly educated and well-trained friars, exerted enormous influence throughout Western Europe. Both Odo Rigaldi and Walter Giffard referred to friars, particularly the Dominicans, as 'Preachers'<sup>18</sup> and accorded the friars great respect. Indeed, Rigaldi, who had begun his ecclesiastical career as a Franciscan, often dined and lodged with friars on his journeys. The entries in Giffard's register which concern mendicant orders indicate that he took great interest in the activities of the friars. In January 1270, for example, Giffard gave the friars of Mount Carmel at Gloucester permission to build an oratory, obviously with the intention of allowing the friars to settle in this area.<sup>19</sup> Not only did Giffard allow the friars to build religious structures, but he permitted them even more substantial privileges. Giffard's decision to grant the Friars Minors the right to hear the confessions of Cistercian nuns indicates his willingness to extend their pastoral duties beyond the realm of simple preaching:

W. permissione, etc. dilectis in Christo filiabus, priorissae de Hanepol ac priorissae de Appleton, necnon et aliis priorissis ejusdem ordinis per Ebor. diocesim constitutis, salutem, etc. Cura nostri officii pastoralis non excuset et inducet super gregum dominicum nobis commissum circa ipsius salutem jugiter cogitare. Cum igitur nostrum sit vobis de confessoribus utiliter providere, vobis mandamus, firmiter injungentis, quatinus Fratres Minores [et Predicatores], qui in ecclesia Dei fulgent velud spendor firmamenti, ad vestras confessiones audientas, sicut hactenus fieri consuevit, non obstante inhibitione ex parte abbatum Cisterciensis ordinis vobis factis, recipere studeatis, quia dicti abbas in vos nullam habent jurisdictionem ordinariam, vel etiam delegatam. Quare vobis inhibemus, sub pene canonicae districtiois, ne dictis abbatibus decetero intendatis vel eorum injuncti seu mandata absque nostra licentia in posternum admittatis. Quod si secus geritis, contra vos cum servitate juris viriliter procedemus.<sup>20</sup>

Even though the mendicant orders were still relatively new organizations by the late thirteenth century, they clearly captured the attention and admiration of ecclesiastical leaders. It is likely that bishops looked to friars to assist them in their task of upgrading religious life on the local level, at first simply through preaching, but ultimately through assuming the other pastoral duties of the parish priest. The registers say little about the tensions which must have arisen between friars and priests by the end of thirteenth century. They suggest strongly, however, that bishops consistently favored the work of the friars even though their encouragement of the friars resulted in the decline of the prestige of the secular clergy.

The growth of interest in preaching in the thirteenth century is reflected also in the development of the sermon as a literary form. Historians of medieval literature point out the usefulness of examining the documents which preachers used to assist them in the writing of sermons, as well as the texts of actual sermons which have survived. G. R. Owst has commented on the power of preaching to convey the

theological precepts of scholars and prelates to the popular mind.<sup>21</sup> The combination of episcopal mandates to parish priests, mendicant preaching and the intellectual activity of the universities resulted in the expansion of inspirational literature in the thirteenth century which was intended, in the words of French historian E. J. Arnould, "instruire, aussi completement, mais surtout aussi simplement que possible, le bas clergé et le peuple."<sup>22</sup> To these forms we must add the episcopal sermon. Although it would be misleading to suggest that bishops succeeded in reforming all of the problems of ignorance among the clergy, the registers show that they considered the sermon a vital tool for educating the clergy and people. Episcopal sermons served not only to instruct the clergy in theological matters, but also to provide the parish priest with a model for effective preaching. If we can judge the amount of episcopal preaching which occurred in the late Middle Ages by the number of times bishops referred to this act in their registers, bishops must have given sermons on a fairly regular basis. Both Simon de Beaulieu and Bertrande du Got mentioned sermons in practically every entry which involved visitations. Since neither bishop included any information about the contents of their sermons, we cannot assess exactly what messages they attempted to convey to their listeners.

Odo Rigaldi's register provides more information on this matter, because Rigaldi regularly distinguished between sermons given in Latin and those given in the vernacular. He remarked, for example, that in August 1264 he preached in the cathedral of Rouen on the occasion of the vigil of the Assumption.<sup>23</sup> Two years later, Rigaldi made the following notation concerning his visitation of Rouen Cathedral:

With God's grace we came to the cathedral at Rouen to exercise visitation. In the chapter house we preached a sermon in Latin to the canons, chaplains, and clerks-choral, and especially to the holders of the benefices in the said church whom we had collected there by means of a letter which we had sent to the hebdomdary about this.<sup>24</sup>

Rigaldi did not comment on the content of these sermons, but we can assume that they were directed toward an audience whose knowledge of Latin and ecclesiastical affairs was sophisticated. Rigaldi did not indicate that any of the sermons which he gave in parishes and monasteries were in Latin. He no doubt intended these vernacular sermons for people who did not know Latin and whose grasp of theological concepts was more limited, since his audiences at many visitations included uneducated members of the lay community. His insistence that abbots have the Statutes of Gregory XI translated into French<sup>25</sup> implies, moreover, that he recognized the educational deficiencies of the clergy.

While such medieval documents as episcopal registers rarely tell the historian exactly what he wishes to know, they provide subtle insights into many complex issues. The high frequency of references to episcopal sermons in the registers and the suggestion that bishops adapted the form of the sermon to suit a variety of audiences shows that bishops regarded the sermon as a vital tool for communicating with their flocks. Bishops who conducted regular visitations, in fact, probably added significantly to their ability to correct moral and administrative abuses through effective and appropriate sermons.

As we have seen through C. R. Cheney's study of Odo Rigaldi, basic moral reform also occurred to a limited extent as a result of regular episcopal supervision of the moral and administrative integrity of the clergy. Even the historians who deny any real improvement in the



Church in the thirteenth century acknowledge Rigaldi's successes. After a careful examination of the register, C. Q. R. Jenkins argues even more strongly than Cheney that Odo successfully diminished such crimes as incontinence, drunkenness and neglect of duty as a result of his vigorous visitations, and concluded that Odo's endeavors had a measurable positive effect on the moral and administrative abuses of thirteenth century Rouen.<sup>26</sup> In spite of the continued presence of immorality and inefficiency in the Church, both England and France produced a fine group of energetic and diligent bishops in the thirteenth century. They undoubtedly had a positive effect on the clergy simply because they encouraged regular contact between the clergy and bishops. The work of these bishops reflects a vitality in the late medieval Church which should not be minimized even in the midst of serious structural problems. Indeed, we need to be reminded of the fact that the Church was not isolated, but was a complex institution in a quickly changing society.<sup>27</sup> The leaders of the reform movement deserve, therefore, to be acknowledged for their achievements which were engineered under extremely difficult conditions.

On the other hand, the successes of the bishops were not complete enough for us to disregard the fact that bishops continued to encounter grave sin and administrative mismanagement throughout the thirteenth century. Although identifying all of the causes for clerical immorality is beyond the scope of this project, I would like to propose that restrictions on the bishop's ability to conduct regular visitations was one of the most serious reasons for the failure of the late medieval reform movement. The reasons for the bishops' failure to reform religious life through visitation can be traced to a variety of sources

originating both within the Church and outside of it.

One of the most obvious obstacles to reform was simply the unrelenting demands of the episcopal office. On the most basic level, thirteenth-century bishops were expected to serve a society which often confused the theoretical meaning of the episcopal office with the actual duties which the office entailed. As historians Marion Gibbs and Jane Lang point out, the episcopacy was steeped in lofty ideals:

The bishop within his diocese was as the Pope to the whole Church. He should be like Moses, the type of true prelate, who, from contemplating God on Mount Sinai, came down to help and teach His people, or again, to use the more common illustration, he should be as the 'Pastor', guiding and feeding and watching over his flock night and day, and prepared to suffer for it. In other words, the bishops must practice the vita contemplativa et activa, a life of prayer and fasting and meditations and a life<sup>28</sup> spent in his diocese, visiting, reforming, and preaching.

Since these criteria required the prelate to be personally devout, knowledgeable in theology, and capable of conducting the ordinary business of a diocese, the demands of his office were immense. Unfortunately, most kings viewed bishops not as pastors, but as servants of the realm, and therefore placed demands on bishops which were completely removed from their theoretical pastoral function.<sup>29</sup> The variety of forces which competed for a bishop's attention naturally prevented him from performing each element of his office well at all times. In the case of reform through visitation, one could argue that even basic competence was not sufficient to make significant progress. The most diligent and zealous bishops found it difficult to include thorough, regular visitation in their schedules.

Bishops were frequently called away from their diocesan

responsibilities by secular business of various kinds. Odo Rigaldi, for example, often left his diocesan work to serve on the Norman Exchequer; in addition, he was a member of the Parlement of Paris and served on the council of Louis IX.<sup>30</sup> Between September 1259 and July 1260 Rigaldi participated actively in the negotiations between Louis IX and Henry III of England. On 3 December 1259 Rigaldi noted that:

In the apple orchard of the king of France, in the presence of the kings of France and England, and of many barons and prelates of both realms, we read aloud and made public the agreement made between the two kings. And here the king of England did homage to the king of France.<sup>31</sup>

Rigaldi's prominent role in this important political encounter suggests that his duties in thirteenth-century France were not limited to ecclesiastical matters and that he attended to his secular duties with the same diligence which he applied to the metropolitan office. Certainly these responsibilities to the state must have drawn him away from visitations on occasion.

The registers of Walter Giffard and John Romanus indicate that archbishops also spent much of their time sorting out legal problems which occurred in their provinces. A typical example of the kind of legal question which concerned an archbishop appears in Giffard's letter to the archdeacon of Bath in 1266:

Suo magistro H. de Corebrigge, officiali, salutem, etc. Si controversiam iam habitam super ecclesia de Gameleston nostrae dioc., ad quam dilectus filius Rogerus de Denecastria presentatur, cuius inquisitionem aperuimus et inspeximus, contigerit per resignationem adversarii sui ad eandem ex adverso presentati, aut alias legitime sedari eidem R. custodiam prefatae ecclesiae nomine nostro committatis ad nostrae beneplacitum voluntatis. Valeatis.<sup>52</sup>

Giffard and Romanus must have spent a considerable amount of their time deliberating over such questions as the custody of churches, given the frequency of this type of entry in their registers. The legal administration of a province, like state service, required highly trained and respected personnel. The registers show that archbishops were qualified for these duties and, to their credit, took them seriously. We can see, however, that these activities could easily pull prelates away from other responsibilities which were more closely related to the process of reform.

Bishops were thwarted not only by the demands of their office but by the rigors of medieval travel. The problems of travel were particularly acute for archbishops, who had to visit several dioceses. When we consider the primitive state of roads in the thirteenth century, the difficulty of obtaining protection from the elements, and the vast distances which had to be covered on horseback, it is easy to see that the process of visitation could be burdensome and unpleasant. Even when a bishop was willing to attempt a full visitation of a diocese, the great number of religious houses forced him to limit the amount of time he spent at each house. On occasion, conditions were poor enough to place the prelate in actual peril. The possibility of being in a serious accident while travelling is reflected in Odo Rigaldi's entry for February 14, 1253: "At Bergamo, and this day we crossed the [River]

Adige at Trezzo, but not without danger."<sup>33</sup> When poor weather and roads did not completely stop a bishop from conducting visitations, they could slow his progress so such a degree that his ability to visit most of the houses in his diocese was severely restricted.

A more serious demand on bishops which limited the power of bishops to conduct visitations was secular interference into ecclesiastical affairs. By the thirteenth century some positive efforts had been made by papacy and canonists to reduce the rights of laymen to invest ecclesiastical office as if they were feudal land grants. As early as the First Lateran Council in 1123, the Church attempted to abolish the custom of clerics receiving payments in money or kind for performing religious rites.<sup>34</sup> The intention was, of course, to redefine ecclesiastical property in spiritual rather secular terms. The registers of thirteenth-century bishops indicate, however, that these attempts to check the secularization of the clergy were only partially successful. Instead of placing the selection of candidates for benefices solely in the hands of the clergy, the canonists restructured the system of appointment. Under the new system, laymen could no longer appoint clerics to any offices which carried with them spiritual authority. The laymen who had simply appointed candidates in the past were required by the thirteenth century to undergo a more complicated procedure of presenting a candidate, and then waiting for the bishop either to reject him or to admit and induct him into office.<sup>35</sup> It is clear, however, that bishops did not escape the control of secular interests entirely, because they were forced to take into consideration the desires of influential lords. When bishops had to struggle even to place qualified candidates in ecclesiastical offices, their difficulties

in initiating reform must have been enormous.

The most common kind of secular interference in ecclesiastical affairs involved the right of secular lords to present candidates to vacant benefices. In many cases the candidates had not even been ordained before their benefactors presented them. Since bishops did not usually choose to challenge the presentations except in cases of gross negligence on the part of the candidate, they were forced to provide interim clerics to vacant benefices until the candidates were old enough to be ordained. Thus John Romanus issued a mandate in July 1289 to induct William, son of Roger, to the church of Friston on the condition that he be prepared for the priesthood and be legally ordained.<sup>36</sup>

Bishops also had to contend with the attempts of barons to seize the property of religious houses. In February 1295, for example, Romanus was forced to issue a mandate against Henry de Percy to prevent him from molesting the canons of Healaugh for trying to obtain their rights.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the inherent tension between barons, who resented the wealth and legal privileges of the clergy, and the bishops, who had a responsibility to maintain the integrity of ecclesiastical property, led to bitter exchanges between the two factions. In Normandy, this struggle reached such proportions that Odo Rigaldi summoned his suffragans in September 1257 in order to draw up a specific list of grievances against the barons to be submitted to the king. Their complaints against the secular courts included the following clauses:

First, they cite bishops or cause them to be cited by one sergeant, albeit they are in the habit of being cited by four knights. Let this be referred to the king.

Item, they seize clerics although they are not discovered in the very act of committing the offence. Let justice be done.

Item, they do not wish to bring to justice or seize excommunicated clerics, at the mandate of their bishops or their officials. Let this be referred to the king.... Item, they are unwilling that agents of the bishops be present at the summons of the king, albeit they attended formerly. Let the king be approached.<sup>38</sup>

These complaints not only illustrate the attempts of secular lords to get in the way of ecclesiastical administration, but explain why bishops spent so much time immersed in legal matters. With this kind of secular interference in diocesan affairs, it is not difficult to understand how bishops might have been distracted from their pastoral responsibilities.

Thus far, we have assumed that the episcopate of the thirteenth century was comprised of honest, diligent men, who were confronted with great obstacles from within the Church and from the secular elements of society. We must not overlook the fact, however, that bishops could be as prone to immorality as any other cleric; indeed, given the pressures of the episcopal office and the financial and political influence of it, we may wonder that more bishops in the thirteenth century were not discovered to be immoral or negligent. Obviously, personal weaknesses of a bishop could disrupt his ability to conduct any sort of diocesan business, but episcopal immorality was particularly destructive for the process of visitation, since it severely undermined the authority of the bishop to suggest reforms. According to Coulton, John Pecham complained in 1279 of a contemporary bishop who had been provided a see despite his notorious incontinence. No evidence exists from this period to show that any bishop was deposed or forced to resign his office. Coulton

argues further that in all of the countries in Western Europe in the late Middle Ages there were frequent complaints about prelates who were "precluded by their own sins from all effective correction of their flocks."<sup>39</sup>

The effect which episcopal immorality could have on conscientious priests and monks is reflected in the lamentation of Trithem, a late medieval abbot:

I am a liar, or the contumacious are often rebuked by the contumacious [visitors], the foul are accused by the foul, who thereby thinks to have escaped from his accomplice as though it were not enough to have consented with him . . . . They condemn outwardly that which they do in secret . . . often the avaricious rebukes the covetous, the lecher rebukes the immodest. . . . What think ye, Fathers, can deceivers of this sort be found among the visitors themselves? I dare not say; yet I know by experience. Many say many things; few show forth what they say in deed; they avail not to reform themselves and their own, and they strive to compel others to observance.

With so little respect and trust between the religious and their bishops, the suggestive power of the visitation process to reform often must have been severely curtailed.

Even when bishops were not guilty of such grave sins as incontinence, they could often be accused of living luxuriously, in direct opposition to the ideal of their office. Since the episcopate was drawn primarily from the nobility, bishops were imbued with the extravagant tastes of secular courts. The papacy did not discourage the opulence of the bishops, but instead fostered it by bringing them to the brilliant court of Rome.<sup>41</sup> Not only did such indulgence reflect poorly on the integrity of the Church hierarchy, but it also encouraged bishops to neglect their diocesan responsibilities. Certainly when they were



attending courts, they were not present in their dioceses to make regular visitations, give spiritual guidance to the clergy, provide the sacraments and secure the proper administration of the diocese.

The extravagant tastes of medieval prelates also led to serious financial problems. In order to maintain a standard of living appropriate to their prestigious positions in the Church and to secure their influence with the civil government, bishops frequently used for their personal use revenues which were necessary to the administration of their dioceses.<sup>42</sup> In addition to their inordinate expenses, their inefficiency in keeping financial records and balancing accounts created difficulties for them. Because prelates spent their treasuries as lavishly as secular lords, but lacked the administrative machinery and income to sustain such expenditures, their resources became more and more dissipated.<sup>43</sup>

In the six registers which we have examined for this study, episcopal debt seems to be the most consistent and most serious source of neglect. Although bishops received considerable income from their courts, from procurations and from tithes, they also expended a large part of it in the basic administration of their dioceses. Even a frugal and unpretentious prelate such as Odo Rigaldi spent great sums of money during his visitations and other travelling. Providing for a large household and travelling throughout Rouen was certainly expensive. Odo also relinquished a substantial portion of his income by remitting procuration income to needy houses, as is suggested by a letter recorded in his register in July of 1250:

To all who may see this letter, Philip, prior of Les Biards, in the diocese of Avranches, greeting in the Lord. Be it known to you that when the Reverend Father Eudes, by God's grace archbishop of Rouen, visiting his province, demanded procuration from our priory by reason of his visitation, we did not deny it to him so far as our resources allowed; but, pleading the privilege of poverty, we begged him to spare us this fee, and he, moved by our prayers and considerate of our poverty, graciously remitted the fee on this occasion.<sup>44</sup>

Since Odo was more concerned about practicing his legal right to visit than in collecting procurations, he could be moved to charity when the burden of the tax seemed too onerous, even at the expense of the episcopal treasury.

Not all bishops depleted their treasuries primarily in administrative and charitable pursuits. Walter Giffard of York, for example, was plagued by debt throughout his thirteen years of service. Much of his income went directly to Rome to expedite his business there. In order to pay for his proctors in the Curia, Giffard began to borrow money from Italian merchants, which in turn intensified his financial problems. He was burdened further by the unpaid debts of his predecessors.<sup>45</sup> His personal extravagance contributed no small part to his financial troubles. His register, in fact, contains numerous references to gifts which he made to his relatives. To his sister, Alice de Mandeville, alone Giffard gave gifts of money on four separate occasions. In July of 1271 Giffard not only gave his sister an expensive present, but paid for her journey from Guilford to Churchdown.<sup>46</sup> Giffard also accrued large debts as a result of his large household expenses. Because he was already heavily in debt, these lavish expenditures must have been a great source of embarrassment for him, especially since he was incapable even of repaying the debts of his predecessors.<sup>47</sup> We should not assume from this description of Giffard's

financial difficulties that the archbishop was notoriously immoral or negligent. This illustration of episcopal debt shows, however, that the personal weaknesses of bishops could interfere with diocesan administration by paralysing the effectiveness of the episcopal treasury and by damaging the reputation of the see. Not only did debt-ridden bishops provide poor examples to their flocks, but their concerns over financial administration could distract them from their pastoral duties. Even when bishops were not entirely to blame for their financial difficulties, their inability to keep their dioceses out of debt severely diminished their power to make significant moral and administrative reforms through visitation.

In spite of the demands of the episcopal office and the presence of prelates who were either immoral or inefficient, the reform movement might have achieved greater success, had the Church itself not presented structural and theoretical obstacles to pastoral reform through episcopal visitations. The source of these obstacles is rooted in the fact that the Church in the late Middle Ages served a variety of functions which were not inherently spiritual. Having evolved simultaneously with the other political, legal and economic institutions of Western Europe, the Church had acquired a number of feudal characteristics by the thirteenth century which came in conflict with the traditional diocesan structure of the Church. This conflict is nowhere more evident than in the debate which raged over the exempted orders. Since the pope was the vicar of the entire Church, he had a theoretical right to place any religious house under his personal jurisdiction. Popes exercised this right from time to time since the days of Gregory I (590-604). By the thirteenth century, however, the

papacy adopted a more rigorous policy towards exemption which allowed a large number of houses to petition for the right to be free of episcopal supervision.<sup>48</sup> Several reasons exist to explain this change. First, and most basic is the fact that popes could claim for Rome all of the revenues which would have gone to bishops as procuration fees by sending papal delegates to conduct visitations. A more subtle justification for exemption was that the papacy could use this practice to limit the independent prerogatives of bishops, and thus centralize the economic aspects of ecclesiastical administration. The popes argued, moreover, that by assuming the responsibilities of supervising religious houses, they could limit the influences of secular lords who were prone to use ecclesiastical revenues for scandalous purposes.<sup>49</sup>

Unfortunately, the practice of exemption did more than centralize the economic and spiritual authority of the papacy. By diminishing the power of bishops to supervise houses in their diocese, exemption undermined the process of episcopal reform. The exempt houses were not only visited infrequently by papal representatives, but they could legally refuse even to hear a bishop's informal advice. As early as the mid-twelfth century, bishops were already complaining of the consequences of exemption. In a letter to pope Alexander III, the archbishop of Canterbury asserted that the exemption of Malmesbury abbey had

destroyed the yoke of obedience, wherein was our one hope of salvation and the remedy for former transgressions. Abbots loathe to have a corrector of their excesses; They embrace the loose licence of impunity and relax the yoke of claustral discipline to full freedom of desire. Hence it cometh to pass that the revenues of almost all the monasteries have been given up for a spoil and a prey. For the abbots, outside, pander to the cares of the flesh. . . caring for naught so long as there be peace in their own day; meanwhile the cloisters, as a folk without a head, spend their time in sloth and idle words, nor have they a president to bend them to the fruit of a better life: nay, if you heard their tumultuous contentions, you would think that the cloister differed little from the marketplace.<sup>50</sup>

As the number of exemptions and other legal challenges to the bishops' right to conduct visitations increased in the thirteenth century, the ability of prelates to supervise moral and administrative reform became increasingly restricted.

The frustration which bishops experienced as a result of exemption emerges in Odo Rigaldi's entry concerning the priory of St. Martin-de-Belleme, a dependent priory of Marmoutier. Honorius III granted a bull to Marmoutier in April 22, 1220 which exempted the abbey and its priories from procuration because of its adherence to Cluny.<sup>51</sup> By the time of Rigaldi's prelacy, the struggle had expanded well beyond the mother house. Rigaldi recorded the following entry concerning his attempted visitation of St. Martin-de-Belleme in January 1255:

Since by common and customary right it is within our power when visiting the diocese of Siez to visit all religious places, and to receive procuration from them, we turned aside and visited the priory of St. Martin-de-Belleme, and we warned, and by this writing still warn, the authority the prior and monks of the said place to receive us under the authority of common law, and to answer us about the state of their house. Item, we warned, and by this present writing still warn, the prior and monks that they should receive us for the visitation and procuration of the priory of St. Leonard-de-Belleme, especially since the bishop of Siez is reported to receive procurations in these two places, and the prior, Geoffrey by name, says that he holds the administration

of both priories.<sup>52</sup>

Since many religious houses could claim exemption because of their association with a house with papal exemption, bishops saw their sphere of influence dwindle. A bishop could not insist upon visitations of houses claiming exemption until he proved that his customary rights superceded the rights of the priory. Even when bishops eventually managed to assert their rights to make visitations, they lost opportunities to enter religious houses and correct abuses within them. Indeed archbishops could be questioned, much to their distress, on the right to visit their own chapters, as this 1294 letter from John Romanus suggests:

Mirabilia, ne dicamus inania, que scripsistis nobis, vehementem dant materiam admirandi, presertim, cum de jure communi quociens necesse fuerit, nobis nostros liceat subditos visitare, ac privilegium, quod asseritis expiratum, nobis nostro perpetuo sit concessum, ad convocandum vestros confratras, per certum nostrum et necessaria causa quam vobis in adventu exponemus aliis nostris quas vobis misimus insertis litteris, rejectis motivis vestris frivolis, ad salutem animarum vestrarum<sup>53</sup> affectu paterno visitacionis intendimus officium exercere.

We should not doubt, therefore, that the willingness of religious houses to refuse visitations, whether their refusals were legally justifiable or not, seriously disturbed archbishops, and destroyed the possibility of their making regular and fruitful visitations in many cases.

Thus the attempts of the papacy to extend its prerogatives by resorting to sophisticated canon law interfered fundamentally with the diocesan system of administration. Had the papacy substituted an alternative system, the reform movement might have continued successfully. As it was, the Church relied on bishops to carry out

reform while it undercut their power to do it, which led, obviously, to their ineffectiveness to reform through visitation.

Another aspect of this conflict between the social and spiritual functions of the Church in the late Middle Ages is reflected in the increasingly strained relations between various levels of the ecclesiastical organization. A dramatic illustration of this problem can be seen in the bitter struggle between bishops who attempted to assert their jurisdictional rights and leaders of religious houses who were willing at times to come to blows to prevent such assertions. By the thirteenth century, episcopal rights and responsibilities had lost the theological simplicity which had surrounded them in the days of the Early Church. Bishops were no longer so much important spiritual teachers and leaders in their dioceses as they were feudal magnates of the Church. The bonds between bishops and their subordinates were no longer merely confined to spiritual and administrative matters, but were entangled in innumerable legal and economic considerations and privileges. Abbots, priors, bishops and archbishops all defined their offices, at least in part, in terms of the amount of property which they controlled, and each official fought vigorously for the rights to control ecclesiastical property or to make legal decisions, despite the fact that all ecclesiastical property was owned, theoretically, by the whole Church, and that conflicts within the Church were, theoretically, to be solved in a peaceful manner free of treachery and bitterness.

The confrontations which Odo Rigaldi had with his suffragans suggest that even the Church's highest officials often refused to accept each others' ecclesiastical rights and responsibilities. Rigaldi routinely enraged his suffragans by his insistence on the right to visit

his suffragans' dioceses at will, and by his custom of listening to appeals of cases which had not been heard in the episcopal courts. In July 1253 Rigaldi's suffragans made a formal complaint by sending the archbishop the following letter:

Lord Archbishop, you have aggrieved and are aggrieving the suffragans of the province of Rouen by absolving provisionally and without any knowledge of the case of their subjects who assert that they have appealed to you from them [the suffragans] or their officials contrary to justice, by usurping to yourself power of this kind and thereby weakening their jurisdiction and prejudicing ecclesiastical authority, whereas none of your predecessors used this power; and you have again usurped this power after an appeal made on their behalf from you to the Apostolic See because you revoke without jurisdiction the sentences imposed by them and their officials by appealing such cases to yourself or to your court, or you reduce such sentences contrary to the spirit of the Constitution of Rheims.... On account of these grievances, and lest you should attempt further such, I William, their proctor, appeal to the Apostolic See on their behalf and seek apostoli.<sup>54</sup>

In order to defend archiepiscopal rights, Rigaldi made a journey to Rome in the winter of 1253. During his stay in Rome, the Pope forbade Rigaldi from hearing appeals which had by-passed his suffragans, and denied the archbishop the right to absolve those who had been excommunicated by his suffragans or their archdeacons. The Pope affirmed Rigaldi's right to visit his province as he pleased.<sup>55</sup>

An equally disturbing example of uncooperativeness in the late medieval Church is that of Bertrande du Got, who had many violent encounters with ecclesiastics when he tried in 1304 to visit the diocese of Bordeaux after a six year lapse.<sup>56</sup> His visitation of the priory of Cessac, as we have seen, shows the deep antagonisms which existed in the late medieval Church in graphic terms: ('led. prieure de Cessac auroit refuse de recevoir led. seigneur comme il devoit et a cause de la



violence quil avoit use avecq armes et violent injure faite avec effusion de sang au cemitiere dudit prieure eu les personnes de messire Helie de Bosco, presbytre et chappelain dudit archevesque fust par icelluy seig. archevesque excommunie et denonce pour excommunie avecq les denommez leur complices.')<sup>57</sup> When we can find evidence of churchmen coming to blows over the issue of jurisdiction, we must conclude that the structure of the Church in the late Middle Ages was far from conducive to reform. How, indeed, could bishops maintain regular contact with religious houses which so badly needed guidance, when priors, archdeacons, fellow bishops and the Pope himself repeatedly stood in the way of the visitation process?

This conflict even affected the Church at the local level. As the English historian Colin Platt notes, the drive towards protecting ecclesiastical property succeeded in separating priests from their congregations. Certainly the bishops having a genuine desire to reform the Church, encouraged priests to learn to perform a more sophisticated liturgy and to lead purer lives. An even greater threat to the Church in the minds of late medieval ecclesiastics was the possibility that immoral priests could deprive the Church of its property. In this regard, Platt contends that "[i]f marriage had had no such consequence as children, it could very well have survived in the Church. It was the clerical family that presented the danger, far more than the parish priest's lust for his wife."<sup>58</sup> The work of theologians and canonists to justify and foster the practice of clerical celibacy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries served not only to elevate the priest above his congregation in a spiritual sense, but to tie him more completely than ever before to the legal and administrative control of the Church.<sup>59</sup>

Walter Giffard's injunction against married priests from serving at the altar, which was issued to Snaith Church in August 1270,<sup>60</sup> like similar injunctions of the other archbishops, suggests that priests were called upon to separate themselves in certain fundamental ways from the customs of their parishioners; any suggestion that priests might be influenced by worldly behavior would taint them and their sacramental acts. Of course, many priests rejected this ideal and often ignored the episcopal injunctions against married priests. Bishops therefore called frequent diocesan councils in order to determine ways to proceed with moral reform in the parishes where episcopal injunctions yielded limited success.<sup>61</sup> Clearly, the reform movement initiated by the papacy and engineered by the episcopate succeeded in reorganizing the Church structurally. It is less clear that this movement brought about substantial moral reform.

On 1 April 1269 Odo Rigaldi visited the abbey at Corneville for the thirteenth time in twenty years. Even by Rigaldi's rigorous standards, this frequency of visitation can be considered admirable. Yet if we examine the last entry concerning Corneville we might wonder how much he had accomplished for all of his diligence. He reports:

With God's grace we visited the said abbey of Corneville, where there were eight canons in residence; eleven were outside in obediences. There was none with cure of souls in the parishes of Corneville or Ameriville, nor had there been for many days, due to the carelessness and negligence of the prior. This much displeased us. We then ordered the abbot to see to it that these places had in them priests charged with the care of souls within forty days, or that otherwise we would place secular priests in them.... They had no prior; we ordered the abbot not to delay in promoting someone as prior, and to receive some good youths or lettered clerics and to gown them as speedily as he could decently do so, in order to augment the number of canons and bring it up to at least twelve, and thus embellish the divine cult. Item, that he should make better provision for the sick than had been made,

especially to procure some serving lad who should attend them.<sup>62</sup>

What this entry points out in a specific way is the general mood of dissatisfaction which late thirteenth-century archbishops expressed about the moral and administrative health of their provinces. Bishops fought continuously for the right to make visitations, perhaps often to the extent that jurisdictional struggles distracted them from the actual process of reform. Even a prelate of such a high character as Odo Rigaldi could rarely hope to visit any house more than a dozen times in two decades, and could not expect that such supervision to bring about substantial improvements. If the effectiveness of episcopal visitation is so questionable for the best prelates that the medieval Church could produce, we might well wonder how less capable or diligent prelates fared. While episcopal registers do not explain every reason for the decline in religious life in the late Middle Ages, they show convincingly that the personal limitations of bishops, in conjunction with the limitations of the episcopal office itself, contributed greatly to the failure of bishops to achieve lasting reform through the visitation process.

The evidence which has survived concerning episcopal visitation in the thirteenth century is difficult to assess, not only because of the inherent difficulties of examining primary sources from the Middle Ages, but because the record of effectiveness of episcopal visitation is mixed. In the areas of administrative consolidation, some real achievements might have occurred as the result of episcopal supervision. The registers do not reflect a significant improvement of morality or efficiency in most religious houses, despite the fact that the entire

hierarchy of the Church was mobilized for the purpose of reform in the thirteenth century. One important cause of the ineffectiveness of episcopal visitation lies in the dilemma of the episcopal office. Even when prelates were truly dedicated to lives of poverty and service to the Church, which was not the most common case by any means, the competing demands of the episcopal office, and the struggles which bishops faced in maintaining their rights to visit and reform religious houses severely diminished their chances to succeed in their reforming endeavors. The failure of the reform movement in the thirteenth century can be linked, of course, to prelates who were not perceptive or dedicated enough to the task before them. A more fundamental obstacle to reform was that the movement was rooted not in the flexible, sensitive approach of the traditional Christian community, but in the artificial constructs of canon law which was imposed upon the religious from above.<sup>63</sup> The complicated social and political entanglements of the episcopal office made bishops willing to do their best to attempt basic reform in their dioceses, but not to take steps which would threaten the traditions of their office.<sup>64</sup> In essence, the legal enforcement of reform through episcopal visitations, diocesan councils and papal decrees could not hope to succeed in a society which had not been inspired by a rebirth of spirituality in the Christian people. This being absent, the general ineffectiveness of the reform movement is both understandable and regrettable.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The registers of the six archbishops which we have examined in this study have shown the complexity and frustrations of religious life in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The issue of episcopal visitation provides an effective focus for analysing the problems of the Church during this period because the act of episcopal visitation was a point of intersection for a variety of powerful political, social and ecclesiastical interests. Visitations were conducted by officials who were chosen and trained for many duties which were not associated with religious reform. Rulers relied so heavily on bishops to perform the administrative and diplomatic functions of their kingdoms that the selection of bishops was usually a major political issue. It is not surprising, therefore, that thirteenth-century bishops found it difficult to balance their responsibilities to the state against their spiritual obligations to their flocks.

Thirteenth-century bishops were also servants of their popes, and were forced thereby to operate within a large and cumbersome bureaucracy. The attempts of the papacy to consolidate its power within the Church and to launch an ambitious program of reform did not work in the best interests of the bishops because they were expected to be the central agents of the reform and yet were asked to relinquish the prerogatives which could have helped them to enforce the new papal code of reform. Indeed, bishops discovered in this period that even such basic rights as visiting the houses in their dioceses and appointing competent candidates to diocesan offices were being assumed increasingly by the papacy or by powerful secular lords. Even those bishops who were

sincerely dedicated to the task of reforming the secular and regular clergy must have been frustrated by the political and ecclesiastical policies which seemed to be at odds with the fundamental goals and intentions of the reform movement.

The bishops, moreover, usually found themselves in the awkward position of challenging the accepted standards of medieval society whenever they attempted any kind of vigorous reform. Priests and abbots were more inclined to consider a bishop's counsel or admonition as an unwelcomed interference into their temporal business than as a reasonable display of concern on the part of their spiritual father. Even when bishops managed to maintain peaceful relationships with the regular and secular clergy within their dioceses, they frequently engaged in conflicts with the laity. Not only did the nobility resent the wealth of the Church, which had grown considerably because of the previous generosity of the nobility towards the Church, but the emerging bourgeoisie objected to the ability of clerics to enter into commercial enterprises without legal risk because they were protected by benefit of clergy.<sup>1</sup> In the face of rapid economic and social change throughout Western Europe, bishops were expected to sustain the power of the Church in spite of the numerous legal and financial challenges to their own authority by papal and secular forces.

All of these conditions affected the bishop's capacity to conduct effective visitations. Prelates who had learned to value luxury and secular power before their elevation to the episcopal office were not inclined to adopt the ideals of poverty, meditation and frugality after they became bishops. Such bishops not only provided poor models for their spiritual children, but also could actually disrupt diocesan

administration through inefficient financial management. Other prelates, who were too preoccupied with civil service or who found the process of conducting visitations too arduous, could neglect their responsibilities by delegating unqualified officials to take on the task, or by avoiding the task entirely. In these cases, the people of the dioceses lacked both administrative direction and spiritual rejuvenation through moral reform and the regular participation in certain sacraments. The bishops who were willing to take their diocesan responsibilities seriously were confronted with a bewildering amount of opposition from priests, monks, abbots, suffragans, lords and popes, in short from nearly all elements of society.

Nevertheless, the fact that we have found registers from this period which reflect an interest in episcopal visitation indicates that the episcopate was willing at least partially to carry out the reform program of the papacy. Such particularly diligent bishops as Odo Rigaldi and John Pecham succeeded in keeping the condition of the Church from deteriorating as a result of moral and administrative abuses in their provinces, although neither of these men rooted out every source of vice or even temporarily checked the erosion of religious life within their sees. The registers of the other four archbishops do not reveal remarkable successes in these areas, despite the fact that all of these prelates devoted time and energy to the visitation process. The major realization which emerges from all of the registers is that these archbishops were consistent in their attempts to guard archiepiscopal prerogatives, and that all of them were willing to accept far less than perfection from the houses which they visited in order to prevent scandal or the complete rejection of their authority. The inefficient

methods of inquiry, their personal sense of practicality and justice, and their precarious legal authority permitted no other course of action.

In spite of their efforts, the task of reforming religious life was beyond the scope of episcopal power by the end of the thirteenth century. No prelate could counteract the theological and spiritual decay of the monastic ideal without reversing the growing materialism of late medieval society. The legalistic solutions to the problems of immorality and negligence which had been established by the papacy could not transform a society which was no longer committed spiritually to the ideals of traditional monasticism. Indeed, one of the central causes of the ineffectiveness of reform through episcopal visitation was the attempt of the Church to use traditional methods and traditional standards when neither the methods nor the standards were appropriate for Western Europe's more advanced social structures.

The failure of the reform movement in the late Middle Ages must be viewed in terms of the central dilemma of the medieval Church: the inability of religious leaders to differentiate between the social and the spiritual functions of religious institutions. The efforts of the papacy to create an ecclesiastical government which was more powerful than any secular state indicates that the Church was as prone as any other medieval institution to develop along political and administrative lines instead of along spiritual and theoretical lines. The Church could not exercise control over its own huge bureaucracy without limiting the intellectual, spiritual and structural flexibility which had characterized the early Church and which was inherent in the concept of a Christian commonwealth. Because the goals of the papacy were



inconsistent with its methods, the program could not have succeeded in meeting its specific demands.

To the extent that the revival of episcopal visitation in the thirteenth century was intended to eliminate ambivalence, inefficiency and immorality in the clergy and people of Western Europe, this method failed to achieve its purpose. The registers from this period reflect little substantial improvement of religious life in any form. The registers reveal a condition, however, which permanently changed the religious and social development of Western Europe. The daily notations of thirteenth-century bishops point out the coexistence of old and new attitudes which fostered confusion and bitterness at the time but which led ultimately to the intellectual and religious traditions of the modern age.<sup>2</sup> Bishops and other ecclesiastical officials were probably unable to discern the fundamental causes of the frustrations and struggles which they faced in the course of their duties, but their registers illustrate the inherent conflicts in the Church in great detail. Although we cannot praise these men for reforming late medieval religious life or inspiring a return to the ideals of the Benedictine Rule, we must acknowledge their contributions to our understanding of the underlying forces of late medieval Christianity. Simply by recording routinely their visitations these prelates have provided to historians information which may be in fact more enlightening and useful in the present age than it was to the prelates of the thirteenth century.

## VI. NOTES

### I. Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Deanesly, in A History of the Medieval Church (London: Methuen and Company, 1969), comments on the variations in size and customs in dioceses throughout Europe. These variations include significant differences in ecclesiastical government as well as regional differences in the celebration of festivals (p. 187).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Brentano, York Metropolitan Jurisdictions and Papal Judges Delegate (1279-1296) (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> G. G. Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion, Volume II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), pp. 267-268.

<sup>4</sup> Bibliographical references for the French registers used in this thesis, along with some references to secondary literature on the topic of visitations were found in Noel Coulet's "Les visites pastorales," in Fasc. 23 of Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental, ed. L. Genicot (Brussels and Turnhout, Belgium: Institute d'études médiévales, 1967).

<sup>5</sup> Jerimiah F. O'Sullivan, ed., The Register of Eudes of Rouen, trans. Sydney M. Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. xvi.

<sup>6</sup> L. de Lager, "La primatie et la pouvoir métropolitain de l'Archevêque du Bourges au XIIIe siècle," Revue d'histoire

Écclesiastique, 26 (1930), p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> J. de Bascher, "La chronologie des visites pastorales de Simon de Beaulieu, Archevêque de Bourges, dans la première et la deuxième Aquitaine à la fin du XIIIe siècle," *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, 58 (1972), p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> De Bascher, p. 81. The complete reference for this edition of Simon's register is: Etienne Baluze, ed., Acta visitationis provinciarum Burdegalensis et Bitericensis, facta a Simone de Bello-loco Archiepiscopo Bituricensi, Aquitainiae Primate, ab anno Christi MCCLVXXXIV usque ad annum MCCXCL, in Miscellanea, t. 1 (Paris: J. Riciomini, 1761), pp. 267-392.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph F. Rabanis, ed., "Journal de la visites pastorales de Bertrande du Got du 17 Mai 1304 au 22 Juin 1305," in Clement V et Philippe le Bel (Paris: Auguste Durande Librairie, 1858), pp. 147-199.

<sup>10</sup> William Brown, ed., The Register of Walter Giffard, Lord Archbishop of York: 1266-1279, Volume 109 of Surtees Society Publications (Edinburg: Blackwood and Sons, 1904), pp. i-v.

<sup>11</sup> Background for John Romanus was derived from the introductions of the two volumes of his register. The bibliographical references for his register are as follows: The Register of John le Romeyn, Lord Archbishop of York: 1286-1296, Part I, Volume 123 of Surtees Society Publications (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1910); and The Register of John le Romeyn, Lord Archbishop of York: 1286-1296, Part II, Volume 128 of Surtees Society Publications (London: Andrews and Company, 1917).

<sup>12</sup> "Episcopal Visitation of a Diocese: Cantebury Diocese,

1292-1294," ed. Harry Rothwell in English Historical Documents, Volume III (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1975), pp. 705-722.

<sup>13</sup> Maurice Powicke, The Thirteenth Century: 1216-1307 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 469-470.

<sup>14</sup> Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion, II, pp. x-xi.

<sup>15</sup> Coulton discusses this problem at great length in Volume II of his major study of the medieval Church. In a chapter entitled "Monastic Capitalism" (pp. 18-33), Coulton asserts that the moral crisis of the late medieval Church can be traced to the evolution of a worldly, profit-oriented attitude in Western monasticism which was impossible to reverse by the thirteenth century.

## II. The Selection of Bishops and Episcopal Staff

<sup>1</sup> W. A. Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), p. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> Pantin, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Pantin, p. 10. Although I have not encountered an analysis of French bishops in the thirteenth century which is comparable to Pantin's analysis of English bishops, the more general sources concerning thirteenth-century French history suggest that Pantin's generalizations can be applied to the French Church as well.

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Edwards, "Bishops and Learning in the Reign of Edward II," Church Quarterly Review, 138 (1944), p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> Deanesly, pp. 98-99.

<sup>6</sup> Powicke, p. 468.

<sup>7</sup> Augustin Sicard, L'ancien clergé de France: les évêques avant la révolution (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1962), pp. 6-7.

<sup>8</sup> Robert E. Rodes, Ecclesiastical Administration in Medieval England (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 101.

<sup>9</sup> Rodes, p. 100.

<sup>10</sup> Rodes, p. 101.

<sup>11</sup> Rodes, pp. 102-103.

<sup>12</sup> Rodes, pp. 104-105.

<sup>13</sup> Rodes, p. 104.

<sup>14</sup> Oscar Darlington, The Travels of Odo Rigaud (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), pp. 40-41.

<sup>15</sup> C. R. Cheney, English Bishop's Chanceries: 1100-1250 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1950), pp. 9-11.

<sup>16</sup> Darlington, p. 34.

### III. The Visitation Process

<sup>1</sup> J. Gaudement, "Le gouvernement de l'église à l'époque classique," in Histoire du droit et des institutions de l'église en occident, Volume 10, ed. Gabriel Le Bras (Paris: Sirey, 1955), pp. 130-131.

<sup>2</sup> C. R. Cheney, Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries in the Thirteenth Century (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931), pp.

17-19.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Andrieu-Guitrancourt, L'archevêque Eudes Rigaud et la vie de l'église au XIIIe siècle d'après le 'Registrum Visitationum' (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1938), p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> Cheney, Episcopal Visitation, pp. 21-23.

<sup>5</sup> Cheney, Episcopal Visitation, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> W. E. Lunt, Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages, Volume 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), pp. 109-110.

<sup>7</sup> Rodes, pp. 137-138.

<sup>8</sup> Coulet, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> G. G. Coulton calls this kind of interpretation the 'realistic theory' in "The Interpretation of Visitation Documents," English Historical Review, 29 (1914), p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> Cheney, Episcopal Visitation, pp. 55-61.

<sup>11</sup> Coulton, "Interpretation of Visitation Documents," p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> O'Sullivan, pp. 69-71.

<sup>13</sup> S. Brown, "Eudes Rigaud," Moyen âge, Ser. 3, 2 (1931), p. 175.

<sup>14</sup> Baluze, p. 267.

<sup>15</sup> Rabanis, pp. 156-157.

<sup>16</sup> Surtees Society, Volume 123, p. 365.

<sup>17</sup> Gabriel Le Bras, L'église et le village (Paris: Flammarion, 1976), p. 240.

<sup>18</sup> O'Sullivan, p. 366.

<sup>19</sup> English Historical Documents, Volume 3, p. 721.

<sup>20</sup> Andrieu-Guitrancourt, pp. 148-149.

<sup>21</sup> Olga Dobiache-Rojdistvensky, La vie paroissiale en France au XIIIe siècle (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1911), p. 79. All of the registers which I have examined for this thesis indicate that archbishops devoted much time and energy to these activities. Even the registers of Walter Giffard and John Romanus, which do not contain so many complete entries on visitation as the others, contain numerous references to presentations, leaves of absence, confirmations and consecrations.

<sup>22</sup> Cheney, Episcopal Visitation, pp. 76-79.

<sup>23</sup> O'Sullivan, p. 411.

<sup>24</sup> O'Sullivan, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> The Statutes of Pope Gregory IX on the Reformation of the Monks of the Order of St. Benedict, in O' Sullivan, p. 737.

<sup>26</sup> Statutes, pp. 737-746.

<sup>27</sup> David Knowles, The Religious Orders in England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), pp. 11-12.

<sup>28</sup> O'Sullivan, p. 291.

<sup>29</sup> O'Sullivan, p. 321-322.

<sup>30</sup> Eileen Power, Medieval English Nunneries: 1275-1535 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 25-27.

<sup>31</sup> Power, pp. 16-17.

<sup>32</sup> Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion, Volume 2, pp. 20-21.

<sup>33</sup> Jean Gaudement, "Gratien et le célibat ecclésiastique," in La société ecclésiastique dans l'occident médiéval (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980), p. 341.

- 34 Surtees Society, Volume 109, pp. 314-315.
- 35 Rabanis, p. 166
- 36 Gabriel Le Bras, Introduction à l'histoire de la pratique religieuse en France, Volume 1 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1942), p. 40.
- 37 Yves Dossat, "Catharisme et Gascogne," in Église et hérésie en France au XIIIe siècle (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982), p. 149.
- 38 Surtees Society, Volume 123, p. 158.
- 39 John R. H. Moorman, Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), pp. 250-252.
- 40 Baluze, p. 269.
- 41 Knowles, p. 55.
- 42 Marion Gibbs and Jane Lang, Bishops and Reform: 1215-1272 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 162.
- 43 O'Sullivan, pp. 174-175.
- 44 L. Delisle, "Le clergé normand au XIIIe siècle," Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes, Ser. 2, 3 (1846), p. 489.
- 45 English Historical Documents, Volume 33, p. 716.
- 46 O'Sullivan, p. 295.
- 47 Paul Adam, La vie paroissiale en France au XIVe siècle (Paris: Sirey, 1964), p. 285.
- 48 English Historical Documents, Volume 3, 715.
- 49 Surtees Society, Volume 109, pp. 317-318.
- 50 Surtees Society, Volume 109, p. 320.
- 51 Power, p. 217.



<sup>52</sup> Power, p.228.

<sup>53</sup> Surtees Society, Volume 123, p. 160.

<sup>54</sup> Coulton Five Centuries of Religion, Volume 2, p. 339.

#### IV. The Effectiveness of Episcopal Visitation

<sup>1</sup> Cheney, Episcopal Visitation, p. 151. Like other historians of this topic, Cheney assumes that conditions in Rouen reflect conditions in contemporary England.

<sup>2</sup> Cheney, Episcopal Visitation. These figures are listed in Appendix I (pp. 168-174), and are discussed qualitatively in the last chapter of the book (pp. 149-167).

<sup>3</sup> Cheney, Episcopal Visitation, p. 167.

<sup>4</sup> A. Hamilton Thompson, The English Clergy and their Organization in the Later Middle Ages (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Rodes, p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Surtees Society, Volume 109, p. 145.

<sup>8</sup> Surtees Society, Volume 123, p. 56.

<sup>9</sup> Coulton Five Centuries of Religion, Volume 2, p. x.

<sup>10</sup> Moorman, p. 90.

<sup>11</sup> Surtees Society, Volume 109, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Of the registers which I examined, the following contain references to leaves for study: Odo Rigaldi's, John Romanus's and Simon Beaulieu's. Such references occur with varying frequency within the

registers. The fact that 10 of the first 106 entries in Walter Giffard's register concerned leaves for study indicates that the practice of granting such leaves was a regular feature of thirteenth-century ecclesiastical administration. These entries were made between 30 August 1268 and 18 September 1270 (Surtees Society, Volume 109, pp. 1-31).

<sup>13</sup> Surtees Society, Volume 128, p. 71.

<sup>14</sup> English Historical Documents, Volume 3, p. 146.

<sup>15</sup> Concilia, Wilkins, I, p. 667. Quoted in D. W. Robertson, "The Frequency of Preaching in Thirteenth Century England," Speculum, 24 (1949), p. 380.

<sup>16</sup> Robertson, p. 388.

<sup>17</sup> William A. Hinnebusch, The Early English Friars Preachers (Rome: S. Sabinae, 1951), p. 267.

<sup>18</sup> O'Sullivan, p. 659.

<sup>19</sup> Surtees Society, Volume 109, pp. 92-93.

<sup>20</sup> Surtees Society, Volume 109, p. 295.

<sup>21</sup> G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> E. J. Arnould, Le manuel des péchés: étude de littérature religieuse anglo-normande (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1940), pp. 27-28.

<sup>23</sup> O'Sullivan, p. 563.

<sup>24</sup> O'Sullivan, p. 643.

<sup>25</sup> O'Sullivan, p. 86.

26 C. Q. R. Jenkins, "A Thirteenth Century Register: Odo, Archbishop of Rouen," Church Quarterly Review, 101 (1925), pp 89-90.

27 Gabriel Le Bras, Institutions ecclésiastique de la chrétienté médiévale (Paris: Bloud and Gay, 1959), p. 44.

28 Gibbs and Lang, p. 1.

29 Gibbs and Lang, pp. 1-2.

30 O'Sullivan provides a detailed summary of Rigaldi's state service in his introduction, pp. xxxiv-xxxvi.

31 O'Sullivan, pp. 396-397.

32 Surtees Society, Volume 109, p. 175.

33 O'Sullivan, p. 196.

34 G. W. O. Addleshaw, Rectors, Vicars and Patrons in Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Century Canon Law (London: St. Anthony's Press, 1956), pp.4-5.

35 Addleshaw, pp. 18-21.

36 Surtees Society, Volume 123, p. 87.

37 Surtees Society, Volume 123, p. 136.

38 O'Sullivan, pp. 327-328.

39 Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion, Volume 2, p. 259.

40 From Chronicon coenobii hirsaugiensis, p. 420. Quoted in Coulton, p. 259.

41 Adam, p. 206-207.

42 Adam, p. 208.

43 Sicard, p. 117.

44 O'Sullivan, p. 96.

- 45 Surtees Society, Volume 109, pp. xii-xiii.
- 46 Surtees Society, Volume 109, p. 115.
- 47 Surtees Society, Volume 109, p. xvi.
- 48 Edouard Fournier, Nouvelles recherches sur les curies, chapitres et universités de l'ancienne église de France (Paris: Séminaire des missions étrangères de Paris, 1942), p. 99.
- 49 Fournier, p. 108.
- 50 Quoted in Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion, Volume 2, p. 248.
- 51 O'Sullivan, p. 104.
- 52 O'Sullivan, p. 258.
- 53 Surtees Society, Volume 128, p. 17.
- 54 O'Sullivan, pp. 176-177.
- 55 The papal decision is summarized by O'Sullivan in a note, p. 198.
- 56 Rabanis, pp. 50-51.
- 57 Rabanis, p. 167. See also Chapter III, p. 57.
- 58 Colin Platt, The Parish Churches of Medieval England (London: Secker and Warburg, 1981), p. 51.
- 59 Edouard Privat, La religion populaire en Languedoc du XIIIe siècle à la moitié du XIVe siècle (Toulouse: Cahiers de Fanjeaux, 1976), p. 391.
- 60 Surtees Society, Volume 109, p. 323.
- 61 L'église et le village, p. 243.
- 62 O'Sullivan, p. 716.
- 63 Gibbs and Lang, p. 178.

<sup>64</sup> Gibbs and Lang, p. 179.

## V. Conclusions

<sup>1</sup> Robert Fawtier, The Capetian Kings of France, Lionel Butler and R. J. Adams, trans. (London: Macmillan and Company, 1960), pp. 211-212.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Ozment, The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 137.

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