measure of the achievements of both king and archbishop that their deaths did not disrupt the general pattern of development of the English Church. Rufus proved to be a very different man, morally and spiritually, from his father. Anselm, in temperament and character, differed from Lanfranc at many points. Yet there is no great break to be noted at the end of the 1080s. The consequences of the Conquest continued to be apparent in an unbroken line of development.

CHAPTER FIVE

Domesday Book: Ecclesiastical Organisation at the End of the Eleventh Century

To understand the development of church organisation in the late eleventh century is a worthy objective and yet in a sense only touches the surface of things. We have, always important, sometimes dominant, the evidence of Domesday Book to take into consideration. Whoever tries to approach the problems connected with the nature and status of the English Church at this period sooner or later has to grapple with the mass of information contained in this record. Historian after historian has attempted the task, often starting with reservations and hesitations, and sometimes with querulous complaints. Some of the complaints are justified. Domesday Book will not tell us what we want to know; and moments of sheer frustration occur when we realise how much was known and not recorded. Yet by and large the historian has much more to be grateful for than to see as matter for complaint. No other community in medieval Europe has so much information packed in relatively uniform style that covers so much of its life, including its ecclesiastical life.

If we approach the problems at three levels, the advantages to us of the Domesday evidence, even more than the difficulties, become apparent. To take first the most prominent level, that of the great dignitaries, new Norman prelates for the most part, exercising power and influence at the centre and in their various localities. Exactness cannot be wished for, but we know that roughly a fraction of something between a little over a quarter and a fifth of the landed wealth of England was in the hands of the Church.[1] We can tell also, sometimes directly, often by inference, that the systems of exploitation and accounting on the church lands tended to be more efficient than that on secular estates. Only the royal administration, conducted itself by clerics, could equal the skill of the officers of Lanfranc, the bishop of Salisbury or the bishop of Durham, or, to take an example from a surviving English prelate, that of the Worcester episcopate. Let us look in detail, for example, at Wiltshire, where the bishops of Winchester and Salisbury ranked among the greatest of the landowners. Both bishops won reputations as administrators of the first order. Walkelin of Winchester (1070–98) matured under William Rufus to become, with Ranulf Flambard, the chief financial officer of the Crown. Osmund of Salisbury (1078–99) was a more complex character. He had been king's chancellor from 1070 to 1078, presiding over the royal writing office at a time when Latin finally replaced English as the sole official language of government. He made substantial contribution to the ordering of liturgy according to the 'Use of Sarum'. He appears to have acted as a commissioner for the Domesday survey in the south-western circuit; and there is some evidence that suggests that the circuit return known as the Exeter Domesday may have been written at Salisbury. The arrangements made by Bishop Osmund for his lands in Wiltshire were a model of their kind. His estates were grouped into four great manorial complexes with a smaller holding at Charnage, assessed at 5 hides for tax and worth £4 in 1086. The four centres were all convenient for tax collection. Potterne paid gold for 52 hides and was valued at £60. Bishops Canning was also worth £60 to the bishop, with complex attached holdings worth another £35. Before 1066 it had paid tax for 70 hides. Ramsbury, a former episcopal see, was the third centre, with a tax obligation for no less than £90 in 1066. The total value was given at £70, of which £52.15s was the bishop's. Salisbury itself constituted the fourth great holding, with a geldable capacity of 50 hides and a value of £47 in the bishop's demesne and £17.10s in the other men's holdings. A mass of detailed information is also given, including the names of many sub-tenants, a high proportion suggesting survival of Saxon landholders at that level. The concentration of financial rights and duties illustrates admirably Norman use of existing late Anglo-Saxon structures to good purposes. Great churches could and did spring up at places like Bishops Canning, providing for ecclesiastical fiefs safehouses as effective as castles were to prove for the secular lords.[2]

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[1] W.J. Corbett, *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. v, 1926, pp. 507–11, gives a good general statistical basis, though there have been many attempted refinements since his day.

Indeed the presence of substantial churches at sub-cathedral level brings us to reconsider the second level at which the evidence of Domesday Book gives effective meaning. We have already discussed the minster churches of late Anglo-Saxon England, and modern scholars, notably John Blair, have rightly emphasised their continuing importance into the twelfth century. In a vastly influential paper which opened up the topic to serious consideration, Blair surveyed the secular minster churches of Domesday Book.[3] He brought together evidence for what he called the 'superior' churches of the survey, some of which enjoyed the services of two or more priests or canons, others where the priest or the church held more than the normal share of arable, more than a hide in some cases, indeed as much as two hides in some rare instances. He also brought correctly into the picture descriptions of churches which went outside the normal pattern in the estimate of separate tenancies or separate values. All this helped to alter the balance of thought concerning the nature of ecclesiastical structures in the later eleventh century. There had been a general understandable consensus that such minsters of the older types, some serving areas equivalent to ten or more later parishes, had had their day by 1066. Undoubtedly the future did not lie with them. The effects of the monastic revival, coupled with the multiplication of manorial churches in late Anglo-Saxon England, diminished their role. But we must now recognise that that role was still far from negligible in 1086. A wide range of what may properly be called collegiate churches continued to exist, many based on old minsters, others new, many served by groups of *clerici* or *presbyteri* or *canonici*. Exercise of traditional rights such as churchscot or rights over subordinate chapels was a mark of their special position; and a great number of them enjoyed royal or episcopal patronage. We suspect that the austerity of the Exchequer Domesday Book has concealed their true number. The fortunate survival of the *Domesday Monachorum* of Christ Church, Canterbury, describes twelve East Kent minsters, only six of which are recognisable in Domesday Book itself.[4] There are significant regional variations. South of the Thames in Hampshire, Wiltshire, Berkshire and parts of Sussex and Somerset superior churches are common, though for the most part of relatively small size. In Devon and Cornwall they are fewer but more substantial, which has led many of us to see them as more directly analogous to the *clas* churches of early medieval Wales. The Welsh border, too, sees a heavy concentration; whereas they decrease in number progressively as we move east and north into the Danelaw. Even so, no area exists without some superior churches, and overall they can be numbered in their hundreds. Some were clearly akin to the houses of canons drawn into coherent order and discipline by the second move of monastic reform in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries when the example of St Augustine of Hippo rather than that of St Benedict proved the guiding light.

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[3] John Blair, 'Secular Minster Churches in Domesday Book', *Domesday Book: A Reassessment*, ed. Peter Sawyer, 1985, pp. 104–42.

[4] *The Domesday Monachorum of Christ Church, Canterbury*, ed. D.C. Douglas, Royal Historical Society, 1944; also S.P.J. Harvey, 'Domesday Book and its

The origin of these secular minsters was complex. Surviving literary sources justify us in concentrating on the Benedictine revival in late Anglo-Saxon England, but they serve also to observe another ecclesiastical phenomenon, and that is the introduction of knowledge of Carolingian rules for the exercise of uncloistered canonical life. As early as the reign of Athelstan, the Rule of Chrodegang was being copied in England to apply to *clerici* who wished to live canonically with all honesty and reverence.[5] St Werburh's at Chester, St Oswald's at Gloucester and, possibly, St Alhmund's at Shrewsbury were early examples of royal interest in strengthening Mercian religious life before the full revival of Benedictine observance under King Edgar. Yet, as we have seen, such foundations, as at New Minster, Winchester, were regarded as too slack by the zealous monastic reformers of the late tenth century; and much was made of the need to replace canons who had lost their austerity (and presumably their celibacy) by monks committed to the disciplined and celibate life of their corporate communities. Even so, patronage continued by royalty, by great earls, and by lesser men; and in the background of the Domesday evidence must be placed our knowledge of patronage given to such foundations. Mercia again is rich in examples – at Leominster, Wenlock, Chester (St John's, and continued support for St Werburh) and Stour – and similar evidence can be found elsewhere. The most striking and well-documented example, which we have already discussed, was Harold Godwinson's full-scale support for Waltham.[6] Set up under strong influence from Lorraine, it was strictly governed, though the canons lived in their own houses, enjoying their own prebends. The spiritual impact of such establishments was as variable as it was incalculable.

The evidence of Domesday Book highlights one element that proved a source of weakness and, in some instances, of scandal. They were valuable assets and only too easily treated as property. Some of the leading administrative officers had already by 1086 benefited from this characteristic. Regenbald, who might well have been the first known formal chancellor, owned no fewer than five minsters, including Cirencester (where he was buried), Milborne Port and Frome.[7] Ranulf Flambard held the great minster at St Mary's, Dover, and Christchurch and Godalming. Most important of all is Harold's Waltham, where the canons appear to have set up a school and to have been thoroughly active in all the secular charges within their ambit. For a long period the discipline held, but by the 1170s there was need for extra support and sanction, and Waltham, with all the mystique of Harold's purported shrine, passed under the control of the Augustinian Order. Financial advantage certainly swirled around these substantial churches of middle rank. In a famous example, recorded in detail in Domesday Book, we learn that St Mary's at Huntingdon had belonged to Thorney Abbey, but the abbot had pledged it to the burgesses. Even so, as the claim has it, King Edward had given it to two of his priests, Vitalis and Bernard. They in turn had sold it to Hugh, King Edward's Chamberlain. That was far from the end of the matter. Hugh had then sold it to two priests of Huntingdon, a transaction for which they had the royal seal. In spite of all this – and the mind boggles at the possible legal complications, charges and countercharges – Eustace the sheriff now held it without proof of delivery, without writ and without seisen. The case was still *sub judice* and so one must not jump to conclusions about ultimate rights and wrongs, but the crabbed record makes the point clearly enough. A church of some standing can still be treated as a piece of property, subject to normal property law over transmission and proof of ownership.[8]

The fate of many of these superior churches is hinted at in Domesday Book and rapidly becomes clear in the twelfth century. Reorganisation of secular cathedrals had impact on their survival, though often in distorted form. The general move in a non-monastic context, as at York or Lincoln or Salisbury, was towards a system of named prebends with the stalls firmly allotted to specific churches. London is the outstanding example, where Bishop Maurice was the creative force. Appointed in 1086 after eight years' service as royal chancellor, his private life was a matter of great scandal. A libertine of the first order, he had the endearing temerity to claim that his sexual exploits were necessary for the preservation of his health. His public life more than compensated for his rather untypical misdemeanours. He set up an enduring system of thirty prebends serving his cathedral at St Paul's, a model for fair distribution of revenue as well as a secure means of maintaining continuous exercise of clerical duties at the cathedral. Some of the stalls were held by important national figures: by Robert, bishop of Hereford; by the almost inevitable Ranulf Flambard; and by Ingelric, the refounder of the church of St Martin-le-Grand. A network of power, influence

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[5] *The Old English Version of the Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang Together with the Latin Original*, ed. A.S. Napier, EETS 150, 1916.

[6] *The Waltham Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Leslie Watkiss and Marjorie Chibnall, 1994, pp. xiv–xxv

and financial expertise protected St Paul's. Ingelric was a key active figure in the background. St Martin-le-Grand developed under his guidance into a collegiate church that trained a succession of leading administrators, feeding into the royal chapel, something of a Balliol of its day. Such collegiate churches fitted in easily to the mores of the age. Many enjoyed exercising patronage over them, and with it opportunities for building ventures. New monastic impulses, notably the evolution of the Augustinian, and then later of the Premonstratensian, canons, helped to muddy the lines of succession and complicated matters of status.[9]

Secular lords were also not slow in using the flexibility offered by these churches of middle rank to their own advantage and purposes. Again the evidence from Domesday Book is precise. Roger Montgomery, earl of Shrewsbury, held no fewer than twelve superior churches in Shropshire, with a further six on his Sussex lands. In Shropshire he used his rights freely to support the clerks and others of his elaborate household. The bishop of Hereford is also shown to have been a great exploiter of the resources of ancient minsters. Traditional local revenues were sufficient to satisfy the needs of an administrative system at the headquarters of a diocese or of a great fief and still leave enough over to support, rather after the fashion of Chaucer's poor parson or Trollope's poor curates, priests who would serve the everyday needs of what became virtually their parishioners. Much still needs to be done to make the picture intelligible in many parts of England, but the general trend is clear and in some instances capable of close analysis. Even where bishops or great magnates were involved, a tendency existed for ancient minsters to split into their component parts. John Blair has pointed to a telling and possibly archetypal example at Bromfield in Shropshire, a minster served by twelve canons which had been patronised by Edward the Confessor. The canons preserved much of their land with six prebends, still active until 1155, when the church was annexed to Gloucester Abbey. It seems likely, however, as Blair suggests, that the other six of the basic prebends, strewn along the valleys of the Teme and of the Onny, had already developed into heavily localised village churches by that date.[10]

It is appropriate, therefore, that we recognise the importance of the superior churches, many of which bear the character of collegiate churches, over the crisis of the Norman Conquest. Many were located naturally in

central places and some offered opportunity for stimulating urban growth. They provide a practical lesson in continuity from the Anglo-Saxon past. Even if a large part of their revenues was hived off to the advantage of new lords, the active priest or deacon in charge of their everyday needs would continue to exercise his regular round of preaching and teaching in the English tongue. Pressure on them from above from cathedrals, the monasteries and new feudal lords was accompanied by pressure from below to institute a regular pattern of parish churches. Their influence and very existence diminished in the course of the twelfth century. Some survived in tolerable good shape, notably those able to resist episcopal pressure, as at Dover or Wolverhampton. The new Orders, especially the Augustinians, inflicted further pressure to move away from a canonical structure to a monastic one. Heavily patronised by Henry I and his advisers, the Augustinians flourished, but some more amorphous groups of *clerici* persisted throughout the Middle Ages. At Bampton in Oxfordshire a community recorded in the 950s was served by three vicars in the thirteenth century, still jealously guarding rights over tithes and burial fees, and surviving in recognisable direct line of descent as late as 1845.[11] Sometimes a local cult helped to preserve them as a respected central place for worship, a relic of astonishing continuity from Anglo-Saxon days.

This movement towards the third level of ecclesiastical activity, the concentration on the individual local church, represents a further field where Domesday Book evidence, carefully handled, can cast fresh light. The future lay at the local level, as all can admit, with the parish church, heading towards the familiar pattern of one priest, helped by assistants, a deacon or a curate, possibly with oversight of an ancillary small church or chapel. Domesday Book itself was not primarily concerned with the location of village churches nor with their value, except as they represented tangible financial assets to their landlords, spiritual or lay; and information about that value was often subsumed in other aspects of the Domesday record. The result is that the record is spasmodic and scattered. In Suffolk and Huntingdonshire, however, the enumerators exceeded their brief and the record appears to be reasonably full. There are 85 places mentioned in the Huntingdonshire survey, and in 53 there is reference to the existence of churches. Suffolk is a much larger shire with some 639 places (including towns and hamlets). Churches are referred to in no fewer than 352 villages. Even in Suffolk there are some areas where the record is poor. Nevertheless the ample coverage helps to confirm a conclusion drawn from other evidence, legal and common sense, namely that opportunities for easy access to public worship were open to almost all the inhabitants of England.[12]

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[9] C.N.L. Brooke, 'The Composition of the Chapter of St Paul's, 1086–1163', *Cambridge Historical J.*, 1951, pp. 111–32. C.N.L. Brooke with Gillian Keir, *London, 800–1216: The Shaping of a City*, 1975, pp. 310–12 (Ingelric), pp. 340–2 (Bishop Maurice).

In detail, complications abound relating to uncertainties on the part of those who collected information for the survey and also from the final compression of information into Domesday Book, skilful though the master scribe might be. There are many examples of churches being mentioned at only one of the villages on the property of thegns who held a variety of estates; and one is justified in inferring that the named church was a point used for the collection of geld or other church dues. This inference is stronger where thegns bearing a territorial name occupy estates at which a priest is mentioned. In Hertfordshire, Aethelmaer of Benington Lordship and Anschil of Ware fall into this category. Some thegns had interests in many churches, a reminder to us of the complications arising out of any oversimple explanation of the evaluation of a parish system. Edwin, a wealthy thegn in the reign of the Confessor, bequeathed land on his death to twelve churches, eleven of them in Norfolk. From such diversity of patronage it is easy to see how a set of parishes could evolve rather differently from the manorial norm dependent on a local resident lord and also from a splitting up of the holdings of ancient minster churches. Cornwall, with its exclusive references to the collegiate, stands on a touchstone of contrast, though there, as we have already suggested, the establishment of parish churches for each village with dependent hamlets was certainly delayed in the Celtic West. Domesday Book provides our central body of information but there is much ancillary material also, some prepared in readiness for its construction, others quite independent. The Kentish evidence is particularly strong. Documents survive relating to matters such as the reorganisation of chrism-money and other dues, dating to the early years of Lanfranc's period of office. From them we know that there were many churches, probably 400 or more, in Kent. Even after taking into account the advanced nature of the shire, with its easy access to the Continent, this is a significant number, pointing again to the conclusion that there were few inhabitants of eleventh-century England outside convenient range of a church.[13]

The general move towards a more uniform parish system was well under way by 1066 and was vigorously extended in the early Anglo-Norman period. St Wulfstan of Worcester encouraged church building throughout his diocese, building them on his own manors and consecrating those founded by thegns and sub-tenants at, for example, places as diverse as Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, Longney in Gloucestershire and Ratcliffe in Nottinghamshire.[14] In the Berkshire folios of Domesday Book we find a famous and classic case for new building. At Whistley, some three miles from the big church at Sonning, the inhabitants found it difficult to attend church because of flooding at the fords. The abbot of Abingdon owned the manor, and it was agreed that he should establish a priest there, having all oblations reserving the rights of the bishop of Salisbury (the lord of Sonning) and giving him half a mark annually.[15]

It is fair to assume that where we find an entry in Domesday Book referring to a church, there was also a priest. At Market Bosworth in Leicestershire there was a priest with a deacon, and the familiar picture comes to mind, probably accurately, of a vicar with his curate. Some churches were wealthy. Long Melford in Suffolk, a village later famous for the size and beauty of its church, had land of the order of 240 acres under its control, a substantial estate indeed.[16] Most holdings, when specified, were of a more modest order, much in line with what one would expect from a moderately prosperous villager. Priests were freemen, and it is reasonable to assume that they were normally expected to enjoy at least the normal peasant holding in the arable. Variation is the keynote in the erratic Domesday evidence, and where the arable holdings have been described, examples have been found varying from 4 or 5 hides to half a virgate (15 acres). The rather strange entries in the Middlesex folios are the most revealing. Only eighteen priests are mentioned in the whole shire, but the holdings of all of them are recorded. Three priests held a whole hide (120 acres), one held 90 acres, five held 60, six a modest 30 and three only 15.[17]

A priest would, then, be regarded as among the more prosperous of the villagers in most parts of the country. He would have an interest in the tithe, though he would receive only a portion of it. The lords of village churches found the granting of tithes to favoured monastic houses in Normandy or England a convenient and painless way of endowing their favourite houses. Royal servants such as Regenbald, described as 'the first great pluralist', could benefit from the grant of churches, leaving the active local clerics substantially impoverished. Three of the most influential bishops of the first generation after the Conquest, Maurice of London, Osmund of Salisbury and Osbern of Exeter, were conspicuously adept at exploiting their control over local churches. Ownership of churches in their secular attributes was regarded very much as ownership of any property. But occasionally from the Domesday record we have a glimpse of something nearer our picture of an eighteenth-century squarson. At Martell in Dorset there were four priests who were substantial sub-tenants, one of whom held $2\frac{1}{2}$ hides, one $1\frac{1}{2}$ hides, another $1\frac{1}{3}$ hides and yet a fourth with 1 hide. Details relating to the land owned by the priest with $1\frac{1}{2}$ hides specify that his estate comprised two ploughs, four villeins, two bordars, a mill which rendered 5 shillings, 11 acres of meadow, some woodland and no fewer than eleven houses in Wimborne.[18]

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[12] H.C. Darby, *Domesday England*, appendix 4, 1977, p. 346. His figures for Huntingdon and Suffolk are slightly amended from those given in the earlier volumes on Eastern England, published in 1952.

[13] Reginald Lennard, *Rural England 1086–1135*, 1959, pp. 293–4, with reference to *Domesday Monachorum*, pp. 5–15 and 77–9; to *Chronica Angliae*, 20 vols. ed. Thomas Hearne, 1720,

[14] Emma Mason, *St Wulfstan of Worcester, c.1008–1095*, 1990, pp. 145–6.

[15] Lennard, *Rural England*, pp. 314ff.

[16] *DB* i, Leicester, ed. Philip Morgan, 1979, land of Grandmesnil; *DB* ii, Suffolk, ed. Alex Rumble, 1986, land of Bury St Edmunds. The whole estate at Long Melford consisted of 12 carucates (1440 acres), and was well stocked. The manor had appreciated in value from £20 to £30.

The age-old division into fat livings and poor livings undoubtedly existed; and not surprisingly many of the fat livings were held by men of high rank, or by men who would serve the king, the bishop or the great magnate as household officers. The resident priest could be ill paid. He could also, although this may have been unusual, be subject to direct personal service. In Archenfield, a border district of Herefordshire where Welsh custom was powerful, the priests of three churches that belonged to the king had the duty of conveying messages from the king into Wales and also of saying two masses a week on his behalf.[19]

For long, and probably for all the Anglo-Norman period, the resident village clergy remained English, with few exceptions. Celibacy remained the ideal, but the practice depended much upon the vigour and beliefs of the individual bishops. Charges of illiteracy and of drunkenness and general moral turpitude were to become frequent, particularly as moral fervour in the hierarchy became more intense as the teaching of the Hildebrandine reformers seeped through. Given the energy of the late eleventh-century bench of bishops, it is highly likely that a reasonable proportion of priests continued to exercise their office without major scandal. The survival of many Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, especially from the scriptoria of Canterbury, Exeter and Worcester, suggests that the teaching and preaching experience of late Anglo-Saxon England continued to be influential. Rare but significant references to the work as village priests early in their career of such major figures as Wulfric of Haselbury in Somerset or, even more so, of Gilbert of Sempringham in Lincolnshire hint at solid continuity in pastoral work on the part of priests throughout the trauma of Conquest.[20] In the monastic world the religious impulses proved at times quite sensational. It is unlikely in the extreme that this period of church building left the standard of ministration impaired in the villages of England.

Much of this evidence from Domesday Book, if properly addressed, has a bearing on the vexed questions of what was involved in lay ownership. There are enough indications from a variety of sources, principally legal sources relating to the evolution of canon law, to show that the dominant trend was away from ownership on the part of the laity towards patronage. By the end of our period the process is accelerated. The strength of church courts during Stephen's reign, increased sensitivity towards Roman law coinciding with the work of Gratian on the Continent, point to the fertility of the 1140s. But already in England the dislocation of lordship over many local churches caused by the Norman Conquest imposed some radical thinking over the relationship of lay lords to resident priests. An Anglo-Saxon thegn was expected to own his church and his bell-house. New owners, even if they moved to found new churches, would be more open to pressure to conform to a reformed position in return for the spiritual benefits they expected to receive, and to be content with the authority visited in them as patron rather than to apply the full rigour of landlord control.

Any attempted assessment of the state of ecclesiastical organisation towards the end of the eleventh century has to take into account these underlying attitudes towards lay ownership. Yet it would be wrong if, even with the massive support of evidence from Domesday Book and its satellites, we concentrated too exclusively on the internal English situation. The Norman Conquest admittedly distorted the picture. It could always be argued that England was a special case. But England was still an integral part of Western Christendom, and there remains one field of activity which demands attention if we are to begin to understand the Church in England in the reign of the Conqueror and his immediate successors. In European terms the period is often referred to as the age of the Investiture Contest. At the centre of events was the public quarrel between Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand), 1073–85, and the Emperor Henry IV, 1056–1106. Relationships between Church and State suffered such a crisis that the old tradition of co-operation involved in the so-called 'Carolingian compromise' was shaken to its very core. And yet in England this compromise survived with the king and the archbishop working in close accord to bring elements of advanced moral

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[18] *DB* i, Dorset, 1.31, ed. Frank and Caroline Thorn, 1979, Hinton Martell.

[19] Ibid. The Archenfield entry precedes the Hereford folios proper and constitutes a document of maximum importance for any examination of Welsh customs. Archenfield,

[20] Lennard, *Rural England*, pp. 234–8. *The Book of St Gilbert*, ed. Raymonde Foreville and

and organisational reform into an old-fashioned Christian kingdom where the king still effectively controlled appointment to key offices in the Church. How did this state of affairs come about, and to what extent were contacts with the Papacy amicable and not subject to strain?

One thing is certain: Pope Alexander II (1061–73), ably assisted at the papal curia by Archdeacon Hildebrand, had given full legal support to William's invasion of England in 1066. The Norman case was apparently accepted, and Harold portrayed as an usurper and an oath-breaker who consorted with clerics, especially Archbishop Stigand, of doubtful title. With ideas of papal leadership in Europe taking feudal shape, it was natural that many at the Roman curia should consider conquered England as a papal fief. King William himself did little to dispel this notion in the early years of his reign. He paid great deference to papal legates. He approved the payment of Peter's Pence, a tax which was regarded by the Papacy as a recognition of lordship. He supported fully the reforms initiated by Lanfranc. He wanted a moral Church. But as king of England, he was also heir to traditions and special customs that left him with much authority over the Church. He showed every inclination, for example, to exercise full powers over the matter of appointment to episcopal office. When the energetic and dynamic Hildebrand succeeded Alexander II as Pope Gregory VII in 1073, difficulties were inevitable. As part of a conscious centralising policy, the Pope attempted to enforce attendance at Rome from the prelates of England and Normandy. He aimed above all and specifically at establishing a claim for fealty from William for the kingdom of England. A critical point in English affairs came in 1079–80. Gregory, at the height of his second big quarrel with the Emperor Henry IV, wished to rally support. He had shown anger over Lanfranc's failure to visit him. He now summoned two bishops from each of the English and Norman provinces to attend his Lenten Synod at Rome in 1080. Their failure to do so re-opened tensions over the question of fealty. Either orally or in writing he made a formal request to King William that fealty should be sworn. William's reply has survived and is rightly hailed as a diplomatic masterpiece. He rejected fealty sharply on the grounds that he had never promised it, nor had his predecessors ever paid it. However, he apologised for negligence in paying Peter's Pence during the past three years, when he himself had been out of England. He promised to make good the deficiency, sending some by the papal legate and stating a firm intention to send the rest by the envoys of his trusted archbishop, Lanfranc. A possibly ominous note is sounded at the end of his letter when he thanks the Pope for his prayers, and expresses the earnest hope that he will continue to love the Pope and to hear him most obediently. Hildebrand, busy elsewhere, sensibly let matters rest. King William continued to respect him, but also continued to be political master of his own Church in his own duchy and kingdom.[21]

Perhaps, indeed, one should not marvel too much at the persistence of this old-fashioned relationship between the king and the English Church. Wise men at the Papacy were willing to put up with it, recognising the special circumstances existing in an England ravaged by the uncertainties inevitably following the processes of Conquest and settlement. Discipline was needed to bring a measure of peace and order into the land-holding position; and only the king had the immediate authority to impose such discipline. From the beginning of William I's reign to the end of Stephen's, surviving legal evidence tells the same story, with the survey that resulted in Domesday Book as the supreme example of royal initiative in this field. Disputes involving claims by churches of dispossession by new Norman lords, disputes between churches over legal ownership of lands or rights were almost without exception settled in royal courts, sometimes involving the king or special commissioners (notably Geoffrey of Coutances in the first generation), often directed to shire courts with witness taken in traditional fashion from the men of good standing in the hundreds.

A famous and revealing cause was pleaded quite early in the Conqueror's reign, probably in 1072, at Penenden Heath near Maidstone in Kent.[22] Conflict arose between two of the greatest men in the realm, Odo of Bayeux as Earl of Kent, and Archbishop Lanfranc. Odo had taken full advantage of his position as a key person in the settlement from the very earliest days to encroach on the lands and liberties of the archbishopric in Kent. Lanfranc, tough and experienced, though arriving late, in 1070, fought for his new interests. Matters were aired and partly settled in a long hearing, presided over by Geoffrey of Coutances, and extending over three days. Evidence was taken from Englishmen well versed in the law, and incidentally anxious to be freed from the bad customs which Odo, acting as vicegerent as well as earl, had imposed on them. In a spectacular move, Aethelric, bishop of Chichester, a very old man, was brought specially to Penenden Heath in a chariot at the king's command to discuss and expound the old legal customs. The result was a success for the archbishop. With only minor exceptions calculated to preserve royal rights over the highway, Lanfranc was to be free from interference by royal officials. Geoffrey of Coutances presided over similar tribunals elsewhere, notably over a major dispute between the bishop of Worcester and Evesham Abbey concerning the nature of episcopal rights in the tract of country in the West Midlands known as the Oswaldslaw.[23] The long-drawn pleas concerning spoliation of the lands of the abbey of Ely were matters of great concern to the king, who attempted restoration on the basis of sworn testimony of Englishmen who remembered the state of affairs at the time of King Edward. King William even ordered a written report from Archbishop Lanfranc as a result of the sworn inquests concerning the lands of Ely.[24] Elsewhere it is a similar story. The two great abbeys of St Albans and Westminster were often at daggers drawn; notably over lands on the borders of their interests at Barnet, Radlett or Aldenham. Abbot Frederick of St Albans claimed that he had leased Aldenham to Westminster for a limited period only, but royal support to Westminster ensured that the manor was retained by them.[25] The testimony of the English was important to the king and his advisers because of his basic claim that he was the true successor of the English dynasty. William was perfectly willing to rely on able survivors such as Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester and Abbot Aethelwig of Evesham, a man described as holding great secular power because he surpassed everyone by his intelligence, his shrewdness and his knowledge of worldly laws (the *only* ones he was held to have studied!).[26]

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[21] *EHD* ii, no. 101. *Lanfranci Opera*, ed. J.A. Giles, 1844, p. 32.

[22] *EHD* ii, no. 50. John le Patourel, 'The Reports of the Trial on Penenden Heath', *Studies in Medieval History Presented to F.M. Powicke*, 1948, pp. 15–26. David Bates, 'The Land Pleas of William I's Reign: Penenden Heath Revisited', *BIHR* 51, 1978, pp. 1–19.

The same pattern of activity in vital ecclesiastical business continues under the sceptical William Rufus, the ruthless Henry I and again to some extent under Stephen and Matilda. Time and time again litigation occurs in the royal courts, leading to establishment of proof of tenure (deraignment, *dirationare*), and the continuity in use of the hundred jurors, or the wisest of the English, is a thread running through our admittedly scrappy surviving evidence. Burial rights, even details such as the holding of wakes or the tolling of bells, were brought forward as well as matters concerning tenure. Rufus showed his scepticism when fifty men accused of forest offences went to the ordeal of the hot iron and were adjudged innocent. He introduced a discordant note by asserting that his royal justice was to be preferred to the apparent wayward judgement of God.[27] Eadmer told a revealing story of Henry I in action, showing the dangers as well as the advantages of royal

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[23] W.L. Warren, *The Governance of Norman and Angevin England, 1066–1272*, 1987, p. 29.

[24] Edward Miller, *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely*, 1951 and 'The Land Pleas in the Reign of William I', *EHR*, lxii, 1947, pp. 441ff.

[25] Barbara Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages*, 1977.

[26] R.R. Darlington, 'Aethelwig, Abbot of Evesham', *EHR* xlviii, 1933, pp. 1–22; Mason, *St Wulfstan of Worcester*, pp. 126–7.

support. After the strong prohibition against priests associating with women made at the Council of London in 1102, Henry I ordered his ministers to act against them. But many were innocent and therefore not enough money was collected in fines. Henry I therefore levied a general tax on the parishes, so involving a pathetic appeal by priests. Some 200 of them turned up in alb and stoles, though barefoot, only to be driven away. They appealed to the queen, who dissolved into tears but was too frightened to intervene. Yet to what other quarter than the royal could churchmen turn in routine matters? After Easter 1132, Henry I heard disputes over boundaries between Llandaff and St Davids. In 1148 Stephen judged in favour of Battle Abbey, which claimed exemption from the episcopal authority of Bishop Hilary of Chichester.[28] We shall see how the authority of Rome grew in legal matters in the first half of the twelfth century; and yet the royal court remained a magnet for those wanting decisions in routine ecclesiastical affairs.

The judicial attributes of Domesday Book, the noting of complaints and dispossessions concerning ecclesiastical land, fit easily and naturally into this ongoing picture of royal concern for good order in the Church. Such attributes speak equally of the Church's need for royal support in order to achieve good order. One final comment is perhaps imperative. We can see how by its very nature Domesday Book can tell us little of the inner life of the Church in England. We have also seen that it can tell us much of the wealth of the Church. If we take our conservative estimate of something like a quarter of the landed wealth of England resting in ecclesiastical hands, with a roughly even division between the secular church and the monastic, we sense a further complication and yet also a further hint at this inner life. The situation is admittedly complicated by the existence of monastic chapters in some of the leading sees and by Norman efforts to link prosperous abbeys with impoverished bishoprics, successful in Bath and Wells, ultimately successful in the Chester, Lichfield and Coventry arrangements, and unsuccessful in East Anglia, where Bury St Edmunds maintained its monastic integrity, though Ely became the centre for a new see. Cathedral or abbey, prosperity did not always yield spiritual success, but by and large William and his advisers and his energetic bishops and abbots could pride themselves on the existence of a Church under royal control exhibiting most of the characteristics that might be expected in the reforming climate of the late eleventh century.

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[28] Martin Brett, *The English Church under Henry I*, 1975, makes the point (p. 95) that the king's court was frequently engaged in determining matters that one might suppose more properly the preserve of the archbishop. His analysis of archiepiscopal and episcopal jurisdiction is essential to modern study of the problems, especially, pp. 91–100

Conspicuously this reforming zeal made itself manifest in building projects. The generation after 1066 witnessed one of the biggest building booms in medieval English history. In the 1070s six great ecclesiastical buildings were begun: Canterbury (Christ Church), Lincoln, St Albans, Rochester, Hereford and Winchester (Old Minster). Presumably work at Battle Abbey was already under way. In the 1080s four more were started: Ely, Worcester, Chichester and Gloucester. In the 1090s another four were added: London, Chester, Durham and Norwich. The impetus for such enterprise must have received central direction, and Lanfranc may personally have been involved in advising such activity. Nor was the impetus halted by the death of William I. Initiation and continuation of the construction of our typically massive Norman great churches continued through the reigns of his sons.

The construction did not lack ornament. Wall paintings were in use in great churches and in small. Lanfranc provided Canterbury with paintings, as did the priors of the next generation, Ernulf (1093–1107) and Conrad (1107–26). Gilbert the sheriff founded Merton Priory in 1114 and handsomely decorated it with paintings and other images, as was the custom. At St Albans a painting was placed above the high altar of the new church (1077–93). Attention has been drawn to indications of a positive talented school of wall painting in Sussex.[29] We neglect at peril the continuity of effort in church building and ornamentation from 1066 to 1120, especially in great churches, but also and perhaps with extra thrust in monasteries and lesser churches at the end of our period. Builders and craftsmen had golden opportunities and many thrived. The movement at the top of society from the Conqueror to William Rufus and Henry I, even to Stephen and Matilda, had little impact in detail on these important manifestations of the vitality of Anglo-Norman religious life.

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[29] David Park, 'The "Lewes Group" of Wall Paintings in Sussex', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, vi,

CHAPTER SIX

The Anglo-Norman Church:
The Sons of the Conqueror, 1087–1135

Continuity is the main theme to be isolated in any examination of the Anglo-Norman Church from the reign of William I to the reigns of his sons, William II (1087–1100) and Henry I (1100–35). A willingness to accept the best of Continental moral reform, especially when to the newcomers' advantage, was coupled with an awareness of English peculiarities and a very positive attitude to the building and ornamentation of churches, sometimes on a massive scale. There were, however, differences, some of which can be attributed directly to the personalities of the kings themselves. William I was harsh and unyielding in insisting on what he considered his regal rights, but his support of moral reform in the Church was unquestioned. This could be said of neither of his sons who succeeded him, Robert in Normandy nor William Rufus in England. William II in England quickly gained an evil reputation as a despoiler of the Church. He supported, it is true, some good causes, the abbey at Battle, or the new Cluniac priory at Bermondsey, and he acquiesced in the appointment of Anselm, a truly great theologian and spiritual leader, to the archbishop's see at Canterbury (see below). However, these acts were heavily outweighed in the minds and pens of the succeeding generation by scandals over his personal life and sexuality and over what amounted to a systematic policy of financial exactions from the Church at large. His father had seen to it that the Church was integrated into the new Norman world of military service and William II had close advisers, notably Ranulf Flambard (later bishop of Durham, 1099–1128), who knew how to exploit to the full financial duties owed by the great churches for their ecclesiastical fiefs. A bishop-elect paid what amounted to a relief on entering his see. Vacant sees or abbeys were treated after the fashion of lay fiefs, and the king as their lord took the revenues of