

Religion, Politics and Society in Britain 1066–1272



Henry Mayr-Harting

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Religion, Politics and Society in Britain 1066–1272

Religion, Politics and Society in Britain

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*To Felix and Loredana
Ursula and Robin*

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Series Editor's Preface

No understanding of British history is possible without grappling with the relationship between religion, politics and society. How that should be done, however, is another matter. Historians of religion, who have frequently thought of themselves as ecclesiastical historians, have had one set of preoccupations. Political historians have had another. They have acknowledged, however, that both religion and politics can only be understood, in any given period, in a social context. This series makes the interplay between religion, politics and society its preoccupation. Even so, it does not assume that what is entailed by religion and politics remains the same throughout, to be considered as a constant in separate volumes merely because of the passage of time.

In its completed form the series will have probed the nature of these links from c. 600 to the present day and offered a perspective, over such a long period, that has not before been attempted in a systematic fashion. There is, however, no straitjacket that requires individual authors to adhere to a common understanding of what such an undertaking involves. Even if there could be a general agreement about concepts, that is to say about what religion is or how politics can be identified, the social context of such categorisations is not static. The spheres notionally allocated to the one or to the other alter with the circumstances. Sometimes it might appear that they cannot be separated. Sometimes it might appear that they sharply conflict. Each period under review will have its defining characteristics in this regard.

It is the Christian religion, in its manifold institutional manifestations, with which authors are overwhelmingly concerned since it is with conversion that the series begins. It ends, however, with a volume in which Christianity exists alongside other world religions but in a society frequently perceived to be secular. Yet, what de-Christianisation is taken to be depends upon what Christianisation has been taken to be. There is, therefore, a relationship between topics that are tackled in the first volume,

and those considered in the last, which might at first seem unlikely. In between, of course, are the 'Christian Centuries' which, despite their label, are no less full of 'boundary disputes', both before and after the Reformation. The perspective of the series, additionally, is broadly pan-insular. The Britain of 600 is plainly not the Britain of the early twenty-first century. However, the current political structures of Britain-Ireland have arguably owed as much to religion as to politics. Christendom has been inherently ambiguous.

It would be surprising if readers, not to mention authors, understood the totality of the picture that is presented in the same way. What is common, however, is a realisation that the narrative of religion, politics and society in Britain is not a simple tale that points in a single direction but rather one of enduring and by no means exhausted complexity.

Keith Robbins

Acknowledgements

It may seem surprising to some that after publishing two books on the tenth-century Ottonians, their art, religious culture and intellectual world, I should, as if suddenly, produce a book on religion in Britain from 1066 to 1272. But it is not sudden at all. My doctoral thesis was on the Bishops of Chichester and their documents in the twelfth century. Since the 1960s, therefore, the Carolingians and Ottonians on the one hand and twelfth-century British (more particularly English) history on the other have been two parallel and absorbing strands in my studies and teaching. For many years in Oxford I gave undergraduate lecture courses on English History 1066–1215 generally, or on Religion, Politics and Society in England for the same period, and these lectures have formed a part-basis of the present book.

While this book was in preparation I received a British Academy grant, which I acknowledge with gratitude, to have a part-time Research Assistant for six months. That was Timothy Crafter. Tim was marvellous. He understood perfectly what I needed and helped me a great deal with the bibliography and with sorting out some knotty problems. His influence would have been more apparent had so much of it not been preventative – warning me against certain lines of argument and forestalling my gaffes (any which remain are entirely my responsibility). It was always stimulating to talk with him.

In an important sense my help has lain in all those historians whose publications I have used and cited, as well as some others whom I have not cited but who have influenced me. Amongst others to whom I am indebted I wish to mention above all Christopher Brooke, who has been a guiding spirit to me since I was a lecturer in his department at the University of Liverpool in the 1960s; and also to Hugh Doherty, the late Valerie Flint, David Howlett, John Maddicott, Stella Panayotova, Richard Sharpe, and Nicholas Vincent. None of these is responsible for any defects or errors.

I owe a large debt of gratitude to my wife, Caroline, for much general support and encouragement, and in particular for typing the list of abbreviations and the select bibliography. I am also grateful for the help and kindness I have received from Keith Robbins, most astute and sympathetic of General Editors, and from Mari Shullaw and Josie O'Donoghue at Pearson and latterly from Kathy Auger.

For some of the illustrations I am indebted to the photographic skills of friends; for the two of Iffley church to Roger Ainsworth, and for that of Melbourne church to Sarah Railton. I thank the vicars/rectors of both churches for their permission to use these photographs in my book. For permission to reproduce the illustration from the St Albans Psalter I am grateful to the Dombibliothek of Hildesheim, and for help to its Director, Jochen Bepler. I am grateful to David Sansom for the map of the region of Bridlington.

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Abbreviations

- CCCM = Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis (Brepols, Turnhout)
- C and S = *Councils and Synods with other documents relating to the English Church*, II, Part I, 1205–1265, eds F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney (1964)
- CS = Camden Series (Royal Historical Society)
- EEA = English Episcopal Acta (British Academy Series): EEA 1, ed. David Smith; EEA 4, ed. David Smith; EEA 9, ed. Nicholas Vincent; EEA 10 ed. Frances Ramsey; EEA 18, ed. B.R. Kemp; EEA 20, ed. Marie Lovatt; EEA 24, ed. M.G. Snape; EEA 26, ed. D.P. Johnson
- EETS = Early English Text Society
- EHD = *English Historical Documents* (1042–1189, ed. D.C. Douglas, 1953; 1189–1327, ed. Harry Rothwell, 1975)
- EHR = *English Historical Review*
- EYC = *Early Yorkshire Charters*, eds W. Farrer and C.T. Clay (12 vols, 1914–65)
- JEH = *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
- MTB = *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, 6 vols, ed. J. Craigie Robertson, RS 67 (1875–83)
- MV = *Magna Vita S. Hugonis, The Life of St Hugh of Lincoln*, eds Decima Douie and Hugh Farmer (2 vols, 1961, 1962)
- ODNB = *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004)
- PRS = Pipe Roll Society
- RS = Rolls Series (HM Stationery Office)
- TRHS = *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
- VCH = Victoria County History

Introduction

The period of British history covered by this volume is an important, almost dramatic one, in terms of the interaction of religion, politics and society. First of all there was the Gregorian Reform of the Papacy in the later eleventh century, which revolutionised the concept of how the clergy and the laity related to each other and began the effective governmental domination of the church by the papacy in the medieval West. Not one chapter of this book can shake itself free of this revolution in European history.

Next, during the period, two radically innovative forms of the Christian religion were developed, one by the Cistercians of the twelfth century, the other by the Friars of the thirteenth. When Ralph Haget, Abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Fountains in the 1190s, said of his inner vision, or experience of the Trinity while he chanted two verses of the Psalm, *Confitemini Domino*, that ‘from that moment no misfortune, no sadness has ever come to me which could not be mitigated by the remembrance of that vision, and such a confidence and hope was poured into my soul by this showing, that I could never after doubt of my salvation’, he was saying something that an eighteenth-century Methodist might well have been able to repeat, but which I doubt could have been said by anyone in so personal a way before 1050 or 1100. The Cistercians of course accepted papal and episcopal authority, but there was an implicit challenge from them, in giving such weight to inner spiritual experience, against all external ecclesiastical authority, and even against some of the effects of the Gregorian Reform itself. And in their truly Protestant sense of personal calling can be seen a response to the older Benedictine monasteries becoming filled, under demographic pressure, with conscript armies of sometimes unwilling or unsuitable recruits. Despite this the twelfth century was also a period of exceptional vibrancy for many traditional Benedictine monasteries, and for the regular canons. Where the Friars are concerned, one may see their espousal of poverty, particularly with the Franciscans, and their

espousal of learning, as a reaction to the build-up of wealth by many ecclesiastical institutions including Cistercian, and to the fact that mere logic-choppers in the academic world were starting to be big earners. They moved, welcomed, into the University of Paris, where their abhorrences had already been articulated by the school of moral theologians under Peter the Chanter in the last decades of the twelfth century.

Our period was also one of many arresting personalities: amongst kings in relation to religion at least David I of Scotland; amongst political bishops Lanfranc, Thomas Becket, and Hubert Walter of Canterbury, Thurstan of York, St Hugh and Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln, and Richard of Wych of Chichester; amongst spiritual leaders St Anselm, Ailred of Rievaulx and Haymo of Faversham; amongst potent holy persons or recluses Christina of Markyate, Wulfric of Haselbury and Godric of Finchale; amongst outstanding writers William of Malmesbury, John of Salisbury, Jocelin of Brakelond, and the author of the *Song of Lewes*; amongst exceptional scholars/scientists Adelard of Bath, Alexander Nequam, Robert Grosseteste, and Richard Rufus of Cornwall; and amongst laymen in relation to religion Simon de Montfort and others. These are not people with medieval quirks which make them inaccessible to the understanding of us moderns. They are human beings, who can speak to us from their own situations as directly as human beings of stature can from any age.

I do not hesitate to call the people I have named Christian humanists, in the sense that their religious values were also human values, supported (where relevant) by what we would call humane learning. This may prompt the reader to ask where in my book has that well-known phenomenon, ‘The Twelfth-Century Renaissance’, got to. My answer is that it is everywhere, but I do not use the label in a litanising way.

What is this book about? In today’s culture everyone has to have a ‘story’. My story is not a narrative of political events or ecclesiastical politics. Narrative histories can be highly illuminating in the hands of historians like David Carpenter. But often they seem to me to lack explanatory force as to change and continuity. On one occasion a review of a collection of analytical papers centred on Richard I’s reign, which I was asked to write for a national Sunday broadsheet, was rejected on the grounds that I had not ‘told the story’. What story was that? No doubt they wanted a rousing narrative about the life and deeds of Richard the Lionheart, spiced up with a few disparaging remarks about the author (whom in actual fact I admire). On the other hand, I do not entirely go along with the flight from politics, which one may note sometimes among historians. Robert Bartlett’s *England under the Norman and Angevin*

Kings, indeed relatively devoid of politics, represents an outstanding achievement, which I have constantly drawn on. In general, however, to feed the widespread and rather manufactured disillusionment with politics and politicians, by giving the impression that politics does not matter, can be a dangerous game for a historian to play. When I gave the lectures to students, which are partly the basis for this book, those students were facing examination questions that were in my opinion *too* political on balance. So I used to say that my lectures might help them to take a broader view of what politics was, thus bringing relevantly into their answers social, cultural and religious perspectives.

Hence Keith Robbins's invitation to contribute to his series, *Religion, Politics and Society* was very welcome to me, because I felt that the purpose of his series and my approach were ideally suited to each other.

What, then, is my 'story'? It is a story first and foremost about how a constantly changing religious culture impacted in various ways on politics and political culture. The phrase 'political culture' is itself one of contested meaning nowadays. I mean it in the most neutral and untheoretical possible sense of how power relations and patronage actually worked, and how people thought about these. One cannot of course mean anything with absolute neutrality. There will be those who say, quite rightly, that to study the impact of religious culture on political culture is in itself anything but a neutral approach to the examination of power relations. So perhaps I should agree that I have my own not entirely neutral vantage point, like anyone else, but that I have tried not to allow my perception of what the political culture is to be distorted by it.

But my story has at least two different levels to it. It is also about the impact of religious culture on society as a whole, as the title of the series suggests to be appropriate. When one is talking about religion as an ingredient in the sense of community within the shires and hundreds and villages or parishes, however, one is still talking about politics. For as I have been constantly at pains to argue (this is not an assumption or a premise) there is a continuum in the political culture between 'higher' politics (kings, barons, bishops, etc.) and the politics of the localities.

At this point the reader may wish to raise a question: is it possible to study the impact of a religious culture on a political culture and a society without also by reverse, studying the impact of the society and its political culture on the religious culture? It is emphatically not possible, and in this book the reader will see it constantly happening beginning with the opening chapter, where an attempt is made to show the impact on the church and religion of the agrarian and commercial expansion of the twelfth

century. Further on, to give just two examples, neither the shrines of black-monk monasteries nor the religious/economic character of Cistercian monasteries are explicable without considering the needs of a society of burgeoning wealth. Nor are the friars of the thirteenth century explicable without the already developing urbanisation of Britain. Moreover it is impossible to suppose that the massive attempt to Christianise the parishes could have occurred without having a profound effect on the Christianity which made this effort, e.g. in the educational standards of the clergy, and in the heightened sense of the authority with which they felt themselves to be invested.

We must also take into account the whole nature of politics in our period, so utterly different from our own. When we talk about politics, in modern times we are thinking of capital cities with rulers or political bodies, where bureaucracies are primarily located, and where political events and speeches principally happen. Twelfth-century Britain was not at all like this, and it was only beginning to happen in England in the thirteenth century. For most of our period the English kings were itinerant, moving in England and in their French dominions from one royal centre to another. Royal ministers or administrators were mostly clerics. Bishops and many abbots were important secular as well as spiritual lords. When, like Richard I on crusade, kings were away from their kingdom, power readily fell into the hands of grandee churchmen like Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury. There was no lay bureaucracy as such. The whole image of kingship was largely constructed by churchmen. There were no humanists who were not Christian humanists. So religion and politics were intertwined, each suffused with the other, in a way impossible from the sixteenth century onwards. All this means that we are far from being able to distinguish religious culture and political culture as two separate forces impacting on each other. They are too much mingled with each other for that.

The reader will see that I have often been concerned with the history of the other countries of Britain besides England. But I cannot deny that this is a distinctly Anglo-centric book, at least as to the rest of Britain. That is not only because I know more about England and better understand it. It is also because I have conceived the whole study in such a way that the English sources for it are immeasurably more abundant than those for any other parts of Britain.

There may be readers who feel that my treatment of some important themes has been inadequate. Why, for instance, have I not said more about religion and national identity? On this particular theme I have said some

things of relevance in relation to Wales and Scotland, and even to England when writing of the thirteenth-century Robert Grosseteste. However, I am not sure how much religion as such had to do with national identity in the Britain of my period. Religion is not necessarily an important element in the rise of a national identity. Rees Davies brilliantly showed how much English domination in this period had to do with the rise of national identity in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. But religion, or even ecclesiastical politics, played little part in his analysis. John Gillingham, in his *The English in the Twelfth Century*, has shown that there was a resurgence of English national identity in the mid-twelfth century, in which clerics, with their literary interests, played no small part. But as he himself says, quoting Diana Greenway on the archdeacon, Henry of Huntingdon, these were clerics 'passionately concerned with the history of secular power' (p. 141). It would be a mistake to think of religion as being the force in the articulation of national identity in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Britain that Catholicism was in twentieth-century Poland, Orthodoxy has been in Russia, or Hinduism is to some Indian nationalists. For more on this, and on the significance of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* in the twelfth century, see pp. 184–5.

All the same, to those who think that I should have said more about this or any other theme, I quote the words of a friend of mine when I observed to him that in a very fine book of his there was nothing about X, naming what I thought an important topic. He replied disarmingly, 'I didn't think it necessary to write about X, while there were people like you around to do so!'

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CHAPTER 1

Church and Economy in the Long Twelfth Century

The ideas of both *the* church and *the* economy are in an important sense anachronistic for this period. The concepts of the universal church and of the English church (not the British church) were of course there in the background, but in the foreground what generally mattered most to people were their own individual churches – the church of Christ Church Canterbury, the church of St Augustine’s Canterbury, the church of Bath, the church of Wells, the parish church of Kirklevington, etc. So when I talk about the church, I am usually talking about observable trends or tendencies or mentalities within the churches. Again, for this period it would be absurd to think of an entity called the economy of a country which anybody could perceive as a whole, let alone try to manage. But that does not make it nonsense to observe some widespread economic trends or developments occurring in various parts of the country, not least within the churches, which because of the preservation of their records often give us our best evidence of such developments.

There can be no doubt that the long twelfth century, say from the Norman Conquest of 1066 to Magna Carta of 1215, saw a great rise in population and economic prosperity.¹ Within Britain the evidence for this is by far the clearest in England. How do we know about population in twelfth-century England? We do not have censuses; they started only in 1801. We do not have parish registers, which have enabled the Cambridge Institute of Demography to make great strides forward in the study of their subject; they started only in the sixteenth century. For twelfth-century demography we are not in a world of accurate quantitative measurement. Nonetheless we have strong if impressionistic indications that population was rising, of which nobody doubts the validity. They relate partly to evident pressures on land – the assarting (forest clearance for cultivation) and

draining of lands, or the demand for peasant tenancies; partly to the large numbers of new towns being established and established ones being enlarged; and partly to the ease with which the new religious orders, like the Cistercians, Augustinians and Gilbertines, could recruit not only many monks and nuns but also thousands of lay brothers to act as their labour force.² This rise in population carried on continuously throughout the thirteenth century, and here we get a new kind of evidence for it, new because it comes from a type of manorial account which landlords only began to keep in the thirteenth century, but evidence of pressure on land entirely congruent with that of the twelfth century. This evidence is the writs of entry, showing that landlords could continue to charge peasants a high price when they entered on a land tenancy.³

A neat example of the importance of assarts comes from Peterborough Abbey. The abbey nearly went broke as a result of the Norman Conquest and the Norman abbots using its lands to reward their followers, military and otherwise. It was saved in the twelfth century by the new wealth acquired from assarting on its lands in Northamptonshire. This process was already well under way by 1143 when King Stephen granted Peterborough freedom from secular impositions for its assarts there.⁴ None of it, however, would have been any good to the abbey if it could not find tenants for its new holdings.

The Cambridge demographic research has shown that, on its evidence, the key factor in demographic growth is nuptiality, namely the age at which people get married. The younger they tend to marry, the greater the rise in population. We have no evidence for this factor in the twelfth century. On the Cambridge showing, however, the growth in the means to feed and care for people once they are born cannot be taken as revealing the cause of population growth, but it can be seen as a response to and stimulated by it. In the pages of the *Economic History Review* during the 1950s, two fine social and economic historians had a debate about the estates of Glastonbury Abbey, Somerset. Reginald Lennard said that by 1189 20 Glastonbury manors had peasants occupying some of its demesnes, i.e. lands which would otherwise have been directly administered by the abbey and from which it would directly draw all the profits. M.M. Postan replied that this was only since the previous Glastonbury estates survey of 1171, and that therefore there were far more of such peasant holdings than Lennard had thought.⁵ Both of them saw this only from the point of view of the landlord, Postan thus taking the gloomier view of the Glastonbury Abbey economy. But the situation was obviously good for peasants who wanted to feed their families. So was all the assarting and

draining of lands in Lincolnshire at the same time, as H.E. Hallam showed; to a great extent, he wrote, this was 'a small man's enterprise'.⁶ In fact it is now argued that in many twelfth-century villages the pattern and conditions of peasant tenancies did not evolve gradually but were created at a stroke, with an implication that peasants had at least some bargaining power on their side.⁷ In this connection, one cannot help observing that in the accounts of miracles of healing collected at saints' shrines, of which more later and which are so revealing of social ills, there is very little evidence of anything like malnutrition. At his Canterbury shrine, Thomas Becket was far more likely to have to cure you of insomnia or constipation, typical ills not of economic misery but of rising economic opportunities!⁸

One may question whether the spread of peasant holdings on to the demesnes of landlords was such a bad business for landlords either. In the expanding economy of the twelfth century landlords needed labour to meet new consumer demand, whether in the form of labour services due from the tenancies or of money in the form of rents to pay for labour. In the twelfth century landlords often did not try to maximise their profits either by direct management of much of their estates or by drawing up written accounts for their manors.⁹ Why this was so is a complex question, but it was so. Perhaps they felt well enough off as it was. Only towards the end of the twelfth century did this seriously begin to change, partly because landlords started to feel the pinch of increasing royal taxation. The point to make here is that while landlords were extensively leasing out, lesser men could profit mightily from the situation. For example, the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds had long leased out its manor of Tilney (Norfolk) for £5 a year. Five pounds represented the annual income of a comfortably off parish priest or the annual salary that a Spanish professor of mathematics would be paid by the king for teaching in the school of Northampton.¹⁰ Around 1190 Abbot Samson of Bury decided to take Tilney back into his own direct administration. The first year he made a profit of £25 out of it, and in the second, not quite so good year, £20.¹¹ Somebody – it might have been a knightly man or an enterprising merchant or peasant, but in any case somebody too unimportant to be named in the historical record – must have been making a fortune out of that lease.

The estates of Glastonbury Abbey have already been mentioned. Going back to Somerset, the biography of an anchorite, or recluse, Wulfric, who lived next to the church in the village of Haselbury Plucknett during the second quarter of the twelfth century, gives us an interesting economic setting. Haselbury was situated in one of the richest parts of Somerset both in agrarian and pastoral terms already in the time of Domesday Book

(1086), and during the twelfth century marshes were being drained on the nearby River Yeo. In the Life of Wulfric new fisheries on this river are also mentioned. Wulfric himself had a full-time 'boy' as a servant, he could call on the services of a scribe, and he accumulated sheep, cows and lots of gold, silver and precious clothes, probably by no means all of it other people's.¹² Even an ascetic could flourish materially in a prospering community!

The great expansion of towns is predicated on the rising profitability of agriculture. As Susan Reynolds has said – and she applies this even to sea-ports which engaged in long-distance trade – 'what provided the basis of most towns' livelihood was not the cake of overseas commerce but the bread and butter of distribution and marketing for the surrounding region'.¹³ Between 1066 and 1215 something over 100 new towns were successfully established in England.¹⁴ A good example of these is Banbury in North Oxfordshire, founded by Bishop Alexander of Lincoln in the 1140s primarily to act as a market for the surpluses of the more southerly estates of his bishopric. The town was laid out in a planned way with burgage tenures on either side of the main street.¹⁵ Burgage tenures usually involved no labour services but only payment of a money rent, parts or the whole of them could be sub-let, and they allowed of unusually free sale or purchase. Hence such tenures were much in demand not only by merchants, bakers and the like, but also by religious houses and country barons and knights, because they were an exceptionally fluid form of investment. It goes without saying, however, that they were in demand only so far as the market was a success.

Of towns which had been Saxon *burhs*, many were only on the threshold of their true development at the time of the Norman Conquest. With Oxford, for example, the initial boost probably came with William the Conqueror's putting its castle into the hands of Robert d'Oilly. Some destruction of Saxon houses was almost certainly the initial result of the building or enlargement of this castle, but thereafter the greater security which it afforded surely stimulated Oxford's market, trade and industry. The clearest sign of its twelfth-century growth in prosperity is the large number of stone churches whose existence is attested within a radius of a few hundred yards of its centre, Carfax. These churches are too early to be explained by the rise of the university; the very earliest evidence of scholars in any numbers comes from the 1170s. Another sign is the establishment of Jewish money-dealers in the town from no later than about 1140, with a Jewish quarter in existence by 1180. We meet the Oxford Jews, several of whom we can name, including one Moses the Liberal apparently a patron

of learning and supporter of scholars, first of all in the records of the royal Exchequer a propos of their financial dealings with Henry II's government. Some remarkable documents survive, however, recording loans by Jews to Oxford citizens of the 1180s and 1190s.¹⁶ The first specialised Oxford guild was in existence by the 1160s – a guild of shoemakers.¹⁷ Some of the tired old oxen who crossed the ford probably failed to make it much further!

Bristol is another town, originally also an Anglo-Saxon *burh*, whose rising prosperity can be charted by the number of its Norman churches. They included Earl Robert of Gloucester's foundation of the Benedictine priory of St James (Robert a natural son of Henry I), and, more important, the Abbey of St Augustine, a house of Augustinian canons founded by Robert Fitz Harding, a wealthy Norman supporter of Henry I's daughter Matilda against Stephen, and of her son Henry II. Thus Bristol rose on the Angevin cause. Once again, a fine early Norman castle had much to do with its rise. During the twelfth century the import of wine and wood and the export of (Cotswold) wool became big business at the port of Bristol.¹⁸ But every conurbation needs a secure food supply. London, for instance, besides its vital agrarian hinterland, particularly in Kent, received a regular supply of pickled herrings from Yarmouth.¹⁹ When Henry II's expedition of 1171 sailed to Ireland (to cut a baron, one of the Clares called Strongbow, down to size), the king's fleet was provisioned with huge quantities of grain, raised quickly in Somerset by his sheriff in that shire.²⁰ We are catching a glimpse here of how and from where the city itself was normally fed. Like Oxford, Bristol had a flourishing Jewish community in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; Moses the Liberal, mentioned above, had migrated from Bristol to Oxford before 1177.²¹

Both Oxford and Bristol became cathedral cities only in the 1540s under Henry VIII, both episcopal seats being created out of the two distinguished houses of Augustinian canons which had been dissolved as such in the Dissolution of the Monasteries, St Frideswide's at Oxford, and St Augustine's at Bristol. Unlike Oxford, Bristol did not become a notable centre of learning until modern times. Yet strangely enough, the university in Oxford probably owed its rise in part at least to the town's commercial *decline* in the thirteenth century. For its food and its trade, Oxford had depended very much on the navigation of the River Thames. It was at the point on the Thames, also, where the road from Southampton to Northampton, much used by the kings in their journeys, crossed the river. Oxford reached its commercial apogee in the late twelfth century. Thereafter the Thames got clogged up with fish weirs and navigation suffered. A clause of Magna Carta (1215, cl. 33) complains about it – a clause very

likely inserted as a result of Oxford pressure, but probably without avail. So the merchants moved out, leaving a lot of cheap run-down property, ideal for scholars to move into.²²

For comparison with Bristol and Oxford we may move up to York. Donald Nicholl gives a lively picture of York around 1114, when Thurstan became its Archbishop. He writes of the contribution of the Jews to the life of the city. They came as money-lenders who could advance York's commercial enterprises, but they could and did also help Christian scholars with their study of the Hebrew Bible. For example, a Yorkshire boy studied Hebrew with them for three years, and copied out 40 psalms in Hebrew script, whose calligraphy was much admired by the Jews themselves. That was Maurice who later became Prior of Kirkham, a house of Augustinian Canons in Yorkshire. Having written of the Scandinavian and Norman elements in the city, and of the establishment after the Norman Conquest of important monastic communities there Nicholl continues^{22a}:

It can be seen that the community of some eight or nine thousand souls at York which now had Thurstan as its pastor embraced a variety of races and cultures such as few modern communities of a similar size could equal . . . Around the cathedral centred the life of the archbishop's familia and his canons, the intellectuals, the music master and the master of the schools; around the mint dwelt the goldsmiths and metal-workers; along the wharves traders berthed their ships from the East Riding, from Ireland and Germany and the shores about the North Sea.

One of the most revealing signs, or indeed consequences, for English religious life, of rising economic prosperity in the twelfth century, is the large number of recluses. There have always been hermits, anchorites and reclusive holy persons, male and female, in the Christian religion and not only in the Christian religion. But they appear to be extraordinarily numerous in twelfth-century England. When the Cistercian abbot, John of Ford, was writing his Life of Wulfric of Haselbury in the 1180s, some thirty years after that Somerset anchorite had died, he uncovered a whole network of recluses in South Somerset and Dorset who had known him (this way of life was a good recipe for longevity!), including several women – Matilda of Wareham, Odolina of Crewkerne and Aldida of Sturminster Newton. Much earlier, c. 1115–20, when the celebrated Christina of Markyate was looking to establish herself in a hermitage, she ran into a whole network of male and female recluses in Eastern England. The pipe rolls (the royal Exchequer accounts) show that in 1162–63 Henry II was paying out sums of money in various parts of the country to support at

least six recluses. This year is not chosen quite at random, for it was the first year that the king's redoubtable clerical opponent, Thomas Becket, was Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1169 when Nigel, Bishop of Ely and Royal Treasurer, died, and the revenues of the bishopric of Ely fell into the king's hands, and its accounts are recorded in the pipe roll, we see again that the bishop had been supporting half a dozen more such individuals.²³ The evidence goes on and on. The famous ones, like Wulfric of Haselbury or Christina of Markyate, were famous because *lives* of them were written. There was, however, perhaps an element of chance in who was written up or even in whose *lives* have survived (at least four manuscripts of the Life of Wulfric have survived, but only one for Christina of Markyate and that by a lucky chance). We should not assume that all the others were lesser in way of life or influence.

One might have imagined that the life of a recluse might have seemed the ideal route out of poverty into an existence which may have been ascetic but was certainly not poor. But where we know anything the very reverse was the case. Christina of Markyate's background was that of the well-to-do Anglo-Danish upper class of Huntingdon, and she became a recluse to escape a marriage to an eligible Huntingdon bachelor.²⁴ Wulfric of Haselbury was born into a modest English family in Compton Martin, on the other side of Somerset from Haselbury Plucknett, but he became a parish priest at a period when the material possibilities for that profession were rising, and as a priest he followed the hounds and hunted with falcons while, 'amidst the captives of worldly vanity, he awaited the moment of his calling' (i.e. his conversion to a truly religious way of life).²⁵ Matilda of Wareham had made a living as a cushion- or quilt-maker before she became a recluse.²⁶ Godric of Finchale (Co. Durham) had started as a small pedlar in the villages of East Anglia and became a top merchant, building his fortune on long-distance trading journeys to Denmark, Flanders and Scotland (suggesting that towns like Aberdeen, St Andrews and Dundee, growing in the twelfth century, were being drawn into the English urban boom) before throwing it all in to establish himself as a hermit on the banks of the River Wear.²⁷ His *Life* was written by Reginald, a monk of Durham. Robert of Knaresborough in Yorkshire (ob. 1218) came from an upper-class family in York, of which his brother became mayor, while his mother was a York money-lender.²⁸ The latter is a striking example of how twelfth-century women could make careers for themselves, especially in towns; perhaps her opportunity came after the 1190 pogrom of Jews at York, or perhaps she was a member of the rival economic establishment that was part responsible for it.

None of this ought really to surprise us. Any materially expanding, upwardly mobile society generates people who become disgusted with the rat race and want to opt out of the competition for money, status (Godric was said little by little to have been able to keep the company of city merchants),²⁹ and husbands. Peter Brown, explaining the background from which the Holy Men of Late Antiquity in the East Mediterranean arose, has pointed out that these men were not oppressed peasants. Their malaise was more subtle. 'Late Roman Egypt was a land of vigorous villages where tensions sprang quite as much from the disruptive effects of new wealth and new opportunities as from the immemorial depredations of the tax-collector.'³⁰ One may even say something similar of Galilee in the first century AD. Nobody could suppose that Peter gave up everything to follow Jesus because his fishing business was doing badly, when it was employing staff, when there were salt pans on the shores of Lake Galilee, and when new markets for preserved fish were opening up because of the Roman occupation of Palestine, and indeed across the Roman Empire.³¹

It will already have become abundantly clear that the church was a beneficiary on a large scale of the expanding wealth of twelfth-century England. At the time of the Norman Conquest and of Domesday Book (1086) there were many hugely wealthy churches whose endowments often went back centuries, and hugely wealthy churchmen. All the same, the twelfth-century church saw something akin to an economic miracle if we think of the development of cathedrals with their organisation of dean, precentor, treasurer and schoolmaster/chancellor, and prebends (i.e. lands or churches allocated to the support of each canon); of the impositions on abbeys to help finance the royal government; of the establishment of archdeaconries as officials in every diocese; of the vast increase in the numbers of parish churches and their endowments; of the new orders of monks or canons and nuns, and the new hospitals and schools which were endowed; of the innumerable and often spectacular cathedrals, abbeys and parish churches which were built. Much of the wealth to do all this was the wealth of the churches, or the bishops, themselves; but much of it was lay wealth. We shall be returning to all this when we come to cathedrals and monasteries and parish churches, and their impact on societies.

The church was not only a beneficiary of expanding wealth in the twelfth century; it was also a creator of it. First of all in *attitudes*. Do changes in attitudes affect economic realities or do economic changes affect attitudes? Probably it is both ways round. Whatever the case, sentiment (to use the language of the stockbrokers), sentiment about humankind, became more optimistic from around 1100. The most obvious sign of it is that the devil,

who had cramped people's style (including economic style) and caused pessimism about the possibilities of human nature, started to get driven out of human affairs, and not abolished of course, but pushed down into hell. The great breakthrough here came with the *Cur Deus Homo* of St Anselm, written in the 1090s after he had become archbishop of Canterbury. *Why had God become Man?* Not everyone found Anselm's answer to this question satisfactory, but in one important point he laid down a marker. God had not become man in order that, in this death, Christ could 'buy' the devil out of his rights over human beings, rights created by sin, because, Anselm maintained, the devil had never had any rightful dominion over men and women.³² Incidentally, many of Anselm's own trusted correspondents were women. A little later, in the 1120s, a group of English Benedictine abbots whom we shall come to in a later chapter, were very keen to press for the idea and the liturgical celebration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the idea that Mary as the mother of God had been preserved from original sin at the moment of conception.³³ This notion that a human being could in principle be sinless was strongly opposed by monks of the Cistercian order, who saw themselves as in many ways rivals of the traditional Benedictines. But as we shall also see later, the Cistercians themselves had in other respects very optimistic ideas about the moral and material improvability of the human condition.

As the twelfth century went on, phenomena which had previously been regarded as demonic, such as ghostly apparitions, came to be regarded as in a sort of natural category, namely of marvels. Of course in visions of hell or the after life, such as the Vision of Thurkill, the devil still held sway in his own dominion.³⁴ But stories of revenants, or generally troubled and guilt-ridden persons appearing in the world from the afterlife, for instance, were increasingly absorbed into concepts of the natural world. Walter Map, in his *Courtiers' Trifles* (early 1180s), an entertaining book full of legends, wonders and gossip – 'a rough inventory of the mental furniture of a learned and witty twelfth-century clerk', as Christopher Brooke calls it³⁵ – describes a *prodigium* which makes the point. A knight of Northumberland had a visitation from his long dead father, who wanted to be absolved by a priest from his sin of withholding tithes. The knight at first thought it was the devil, but he was mistaken.³⁶

During the twelfth century, disease itself – and this had an important bearing on life expectancy and material well-being – came to be seen increasingly as having natural rather than diabolical causes. Revenants, or apparitions of the walking dead, which were widely thought to spread disease, are again a case in point. Robert Bartlett has said that the explanation

of that phenomenon had to be made in some way to fit Christian tenets; and referring to the *History of English Affairs*, written by the Yorkshire Augustinian Canon, William of Newburgh, in the 1190s, he adds:

William of Newburgh manages a neat combination of Christian metaphysics and naturalism by describing the reanimation of the corpses as 'the work of Satan' but by attributing the spread of disease to the contaminated air that the corpses created. Indeed, describing a case at Berwick, he writes that 'the simpler folk feared that they might be attacked and beaten by the lifeless monster, while the more thoughtful were concerned that the air might be infected and corrupted from the wanderings of the plague-bringing corpse, with subsequent sickness and death'.³⁷

One may note here the assumption that the more educated you were, the more likely you were to explain disease in a natural or positivist way.

Another interesting example of the natural explanation of disease is found in Walter Daniel's *Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, written not long after Ailred's death in 1167. Walter Daniel was not the greatest brain nor the least neurotic psyche in twelfth-century Britain, but he was an educated man and he was interested in medicine. He tells an extraordinary tale about how Ailred encountered a man who had swallowed a little frog in his drinking water which had grown inside him, eaten away his entrails, and made him look a horrifying figure with drawn face, bloodshot eyes, and dimmed pupils. Now kings are powerless to eject frogs from their bellies (says Walter with his rare capacity to hit some irrelevant nail on the head), but Ailred, 'dismounting from his horse', inserted two fingers into the man's mouth, uttered a prayer (the nearest we get to any implication of the miraculous), and lo and behold, the frog climbed onto his fingers and departed. Then out came a lot of horrible pus and glutinous humours and the man was cured.³⁸ 'A likely story', one might say; but a story driven by the natural.

The practical interest in health and health care taken by the church, though also by the lay aristocracy, is a notable feature of the twelfth century. At the time of the Norman Conquest a distinguished doctor, Baldwin, who came from Chartres, was Abbot of Bury St Edmunds.³⁹ An even more famous doctor, Faritius, a Tuscan from Arezzo, became Abbot of Abingdon under Henry I, the king believing that he was often curable only by Faritius's antidotes. The queen also trusted him above all other doctors. It was said that he would have been elected Archbishop of Canterbury in 1114 had it not been thought inappropriate that one who

spent so much time examining women's urine should occupy that position.⁴⁰ Later on Henry I had another remarkable foreigner, the Spanish Jew Petrus Alphonsi, as his personal physician.

Under this king many hospitals were established at English towns – London, Colchester, Norwich, Newcastle, Barnstaple and others.⁴¹ True, twelfth-century hospitals had much broader charitable purposes than simply to care for the sick, as is illustrated by the foundation of St Bartholomew's Smithfield, which made special provision for children whose mothers had died in childbirth.⁴² Others were established to receive pilgrims. But there is much evidence that a primary concern of hospitals was to look after the sick. True again, many hospitals were founded as leper hospitals, with the idea of isolating lepers. Henry I's own queen, Matilda, founded the leper hospital of St Giles, Holborn.⁴³ The twelfth century developed this zeal for identifying and isolating minorities, such as heretics, Jews and lepers,⁴⁴ rather in the way that the scholastics of that century were developing the method of breaking down a question into its subdivisions and then examining each of these separately. However, in the case of lepers, this still meant care for the sick, for once founded their hospitals were continually enlarged and protected, and by none more assiduously than churchmen. Roger of Pont l'Évêque, Archbishop of York, who was not everyone's favourite in his time and who actually had a reputation for meanness,⁴⁵ issued a string of documents during his episcopate (1154–81) for the protection of St Peter's/St Leonard's Hospital York and for the enlargement of its resources.⁴⁶ Admittedly the latter was mostly to be done with other people's money, but at least it showed his concern. In the 1180s Bishop Seffrid II of Chichester granted from his own resources to St Mary's Hospital for eight 'lepers' outside the gate of Chichester eight woollen tunics each Christmas, eight linen tunics at Easter and a bacon or ham at Christmas (pig-farming was altogether fairly big business in twelfth-century England).⁴⁷ When the Third Lateran Council of 1179 ordered that where possible, 'lepers' should live a common life with their own church and cemetery,⁴⁸ it was ordering something that was already being done on a wide scale, but here Bishop Seffrid was building on it perhaps under its immediate impact. One may wonder how good people were at diagnosing leprosy as distinct from other forms of external illness (just as church courts often lumped all kinds of confused people with real heretics). But there are strong grounds for thinking that leprosy could be and generally was distinguished from other skin illnesses. It remains the case on the other hand that many hospitals were for the sick generally. St Mary's Hospital, Chichester, for instance, was explicitly stated to be for

lepers, whereas the York hospital was stated to be for receiving the poor and curing the sick.⁴⁹

Pursuing further the subject of health care, so obviously an important aspect of explaining twelfth-century material well-being, this century saw growing numbers of men described in the documentary sources as *medicus*, or doctor, so much so that it has been seen as the first age of the English medical profession. We should not get over-excited about this. Sometimes the term could have meant little more than a village healer. Even when it indicated some practical knowledge of surgery or medical text books, the person in question was not necessarily a full-time doctor, any more than the person called in a royal record of 1199 Master William the Poet necessarily spent his time doing nothing but writing poetry (particularly if he were the William of Blois who was to become Bishop of Lincoln in 1203!).⁵⁰ Nonetheless when every salutary caution has been borne in mind, we do appear to have the embryonic beginnings of a medical profession in England during the second half of the twelfth century. Talbot and Hammond listed 98 doctors for this half century, and that number could almost certainly be at least doubled by an exhaustive scouring of the sources.⁵¹ Most of the 98 seem to be men of substance (three in Oxford), some are known to have owned medical books, and 31 are given the title of master (*magister*), which was not always recorded when it might have been. A *magister* was a person of education and trained intellect, whose medicine, even if secondary in his professional life, was unlikely to have been mere folk healing. In addition we now know that knowledge of medicine as taught at the famous medical school of Salerno in South Italy was starting to reach England before 1200.⁵² Its reception shows a more positivist approach to the subject.

When later on we speak of people's search for healing at the saints' shrines at churches, we shall of course be talking about supernatural rather than scientific medicine. It is important to remember that the search for supernatural or 'folk' healing, which if it causes people to feel healed is in itself conducive to better health in society, did not collapse in face of a more positivist approach to medicine, any more than Lourdes has collapsed because of modern medicine. Twelfth-century men and women could move fluidly between the two kinds, treating one as now an alternative, now as an extension, of the other.⁵³ They felt that within the area of health care, their possibilities of choice (if allusion to a modern mantra can be forgiven) were being enlarged. In 1200, when the body of St Hugh of Lincoln was being carried back from London, where he had died, to Lincoln, it rested one night at Biggleswade (Beds), where in the evening a

man broke his arm in the crush around the bier. He was in great pain and was told that if he could hang on, in the morning his arm could be set by doctors – not a bad indication of the availability of practical medicine at the time. However in the night he received a healing vision from the saintly bishop himself.⁵⁴

One of the marks of economic growth in the twelfth century was the development of specialised production. We have already mentioned shoes at Oxford, to which we could add that there were two goldsmiths among the leading 63 citizens there in 1191.⁵⁵ In York the market for cutlery gave rise to specialised production there.⁵⁶ It even seems that there was a commercialised market for devotional objets d'art. A sculptor and painter came to Godric of Finchale because he could not sell his work at St Cuthbert's fair in Durham. Godric prophesied good sales for him – after the poor man had given him a golden cross, a rather steep consultant's fee one might think – and it worked.⁵⁷ Miracle or no, this story suggests that by the later twelfth century art was more a matter of the market and less an exclusive matter for patron and artist than one might think. Similarly, toys could be bought commercially. When Gilbert of Sempringham thought that his followers needed cheering up, while they were in London to answer charges of the king's justices (1160s), he bought them some spinning tops.⁵⁸ The fact that the recluse, Matilda of Wareham, could earn a living making cushions or quilts again points to an increase in profitable specialised production.

The churches played an important role in stimulating specialised production and the development of specialised skills. When the bishopric of Chichester with its revenues, and its financial commitments too, fell into the king's hands in 1169, its accounts show that one mark a year (two-thirds of a pound) was being paid to a glazier for the upkeep of the cathedral glass.⁵⁹ One mark a year would have been a significant proportion of a craftsman's annual wage. Although we sometimes think of monks devotedly labouring in their cloisters to produce their manuscripts, the rich abbey of St Albans already in the first half of the century was employing professional scribes – not monks nor necessarily clergy at all – for this purpose.⁶⁰ At the same time Westminster Abbey, who felt that they had many rights and properties which they lacked the documentary evidence to prove, were employing skilled professional forgers to make good the deficiency.⁶¹ At Norwich Cathedral Priory, when the dubious and anti-semitic cult of 'Little' St William got going in the second half of the century, the boy saint always wanted candles in gratitude for cures at this shrine. He gave nasty dreams to people who failed to give them.⁶²

His shrine helped to pay the Norwich electricity bill, so to speak; and it also gave the city's chandlers profitable business.⁶³

A most intriguing possible example of economic specialisation is presented to us by Farne Island off the coast of Northumberland. In the twelfth century the powerful Durham Cathedral Priory were keen to monasticise and take under their control the previous sites of hermitages such as Godric's at Finchale or that on the Farne Islands. One motive for this may have been to establish centres where their monks who were so disposed could live a more contemplative life than was possible in the bustling Cathedral Priory itself, where moreover the liturgical schedule was a heavy one. But another motive was undoubtedly economic. During the time of Bartholomew as hermit on Farne Island, this clearly had to do with its eider ducks, which were stringently guarded by the Durham monks. Bartholomew was a Durham monk who arrived on the island 1149–53 and died there in 1193. This is what his *Life*, written by Geoffrey of Coldingham, another monk of Durham, had to say about the eider ducks:

*For ages this island has offered an abode to certain birds, whose name and type has persisted miraculously. In the nesting season they gather there. They soon obtain the grace of such tameness from the holiness of the place, or rather from those who have sanctified the place by their way of life [i.e. the hermits who live or have lived there under Durham sponsorship], that they do not abhor being seen or being in contact with humans. They love quiet, and yet are not disturbed by noise. Nests are prepared everywhere far from the inhabitants. No one presumes to harm them or to touch their eggs without permission. The brethren [i.e. there were presumably other hermits besides Bartholomew] serve some of these eggs to themselves or their visitors. The birds are not troubled by their use as food. They seek food in the sea with their males. Their chicks, as soon as they are hatched, follow on, their mothers going ahead, and having once entered their native waters do not return to their nests. Their mothers also, forgetting the soft bed which had been theirs, recover their pristine rapport with the sea.*⁶⁴

Now given that we know of the existence of such a person as a cushion- or quilt-maker in twelfth-century England (i.e. Matilda of Wareham) it seems clear that the real economic interest of Durham here was not the eiders' eggs but their soft beds, that is eider down. An eider duck produces at least twice as much down as is necessary to accommodate her eggs and herself, and she will willingly step aside to allow a human being to take half of it. Thus harmony with nature and profitable business may be satisfactorily combined.

It would be a mistake to see specialisation in the twelfth century only in terms of production of consumer goods, and not also of professional skills, as the case of scribes and glaziers already imply. If the century may be called the first age of the medical profession, it was also the first age of the engineering profession. The reason was advances in warfare. Twelfth-century warfare was not primarily a matter of open battles, but of castle-building and siege warfare. The Italians took the lead here. If the crusaders needed to besiege a fortress out in Palestine, the Genoese could lay on a siege for them in all its aspects – mercenaries, siege engines, siege platforms, ships from which operations could be conducted. In the 1150s, the Holy Roman/German Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, depended on Italian engineers for his military efforts to master the cities of Northern Italy, as the cities of Northern Italy did to resist him.⁶⁵ In Britain, where castle warfare was of paramount importance, a leaf was taken out of the Italian book. Engineers were employed to do clever things (*ad facienda ingenia*), particularly ballistic clever things, in attacks on castles, as well as to destroy enemy castles. When Henry II in 1176 ordered baronial castles to be destroyed, the royal justices who went into East Anglia, for instance, to supervise such demolitions took a qualified and well-paid engineer, an Englishman called Ailnoth, with them.⁶⁶ This was the age when the crossbowmen, the arblasters or *arbalistarii*, vital both in besieging and in resisting sieges,⁶⁷ came into their own. For example, in the 1150s a crossbowman called Walter had a landed holding of some significance in Suffolk, while in the 1140s another called Odo appears quite high up in a witness list to a document of Bishop William of Norwich.⁶⁸ A number of crossbowmen may originally have come from Wales, always a source of supply for skilled soldiers in the twelfth century.

By 1200 a whole class of knightly men, and probably also a little below knightly level, had come to be seen as professional administrators. They were used as such by Richard I's government, headed by his chief minister who was also Archbishop of Canterbury, Hubert Walter (we shall return to him later). Men of this middling level of society, or many of them, rose to be useful as professionals, in large part at least because they were needed as jurors in numbers all over England to execute Henry II's legal reforms and new legal processes. Thus under Hubert Walter there were to be three knights in each shire to be keepers of the pleas of the crown (i.e. to assess and keep a record of any action, event or death, from which the king might be owed money). This was the origin of the coroner's office.⁶⁹ Under a royal edict of 1195 for the pursuit of criminals, all men above the age of 15 were to be drafted into a sort of communal police force for keeping the

king's peace, and supervising this draft were knights appointed (*milites assignati*) to the task.⁷⁰ When in 1198 the king's government proposed a new carucage or land tax, a knight in each shire, accompanied by a clerk to keep a record, was to assess the value of the land to be taxed.⁷¹ It is very likely that similar men to these (and one has to remember how mobile English society was and how easily men could rise into this knightly class by wealth and ability) were employed by the great landholders and the great churches to administer and do the accounting for their estates and manors when they began to shift markedly from leasing to direct management around 1200.⁷² Was, for instance, the obviously efficient leaseholder of Tilney left unemployed when Abbot Samson of Bury St Edmunds took this manor back into the abbey's direct management? One may doubt it.

Professional surveys – of estates and assets – were a developing feature of Henry II's government. The royal example spread. In 1185, just when emphasis on direct management of their estates by great landholders was coming to be in vogue, the Order of Templars held an inquest of their lands, widely scattered in England, and of their donors. The record survives. The Templars were a crusading order and a military mainstay of the Christian crusading state in Palestine. They held lands throughout the West to enable them to perform their function. The mid-1180s was a critical time for them because of the threat of the Muslim, Saladin. In fact the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem fell to Saladin after the Battle of Hattin (1187). Hence the Templars needed help and needed to know what their assets and who their friends and donors were. The administrative centre of the Templars in England was the Old Temple, Holborn, London, but they also had regional administrative units, or preceptories; and it was clearly the preceptors, professional estates stewards who were themselves Knights Templars and came largely from middling or knightly families, who conducted the 1185 survey.⁷³ The survey may sound dryly tenurial, but in fact, whether one is interested in blacksmiths or goldsmiths, doctors or bakers, piglets or cart-horses, boon works or labour services, it is riveting.

Where did the greatest development of professionalism and professional elitism occur in twelfth-century English society? Undoubtedly amongst the clergy. But that must await a later chapter when we consider the parish clergy.

The accumulation of wealth and the development of organisation had some good results for social and spiritual welfare. Many parish churches were endowed and there was a great expansion of schools (under church control), even in places like Dunstable and Huntingdon. There were also some less good results, most of all the frenetic careerism to which it led.

There had of course always been careerism in the church, and it was not necessarily for the worse. Pope Gregory the Great in his *Pastoral Care* of the 590s had contrasted laudable ambition, where the motive to do a good job for one's neighbour's sake outstripped the love of prestige, with laudable lack of ambition or desire to lead a secluded and contemplative life. But two things made careerism show its less attractive face rather often. One was indeed the love of prestige, particularly as bishops were normally appointed by the king's influence except in Stephen's reign when Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury often had the leading voice,⁷⁴ and hence to be appointed a bishop was to prove that one had arrived politically. Walter Map in his satirical *Courtiers' Trifles* wrote of how he could not control his own household, who would side with guests outstaying their welcome, so putting himself to great expense, and saying to him, 'don't be too anxious; trust in the Lord; it is common talk that they will make you a bishop!'⁷⁵ Walter had indeed no need to be anxious financially. He was canon and prebendary in two cathedrals; in 1196–97 he received the plum archdeaconry of Oxford. But he died still only an archdeacon in 1209 or 1210.⁷⁶

The other thing which made careerism show its less attractive side, notwithstanding that there had always been careerists in the church, was that wealth and organisation had greatly expanded the opportunities for it. Now there were not only bishoprics, and in the monastic world abbaties and priorships, but also cathedral dignities (deanships, precentorships, chancellorships, etc.) and prebends, canonries in collegiate churches, and perhaps above all archdeaconries. The pattern of cathedral dignities and prebends (i.e. individual shares in the endowments for the canons) developed in England after the Norman Conquest and in some cathedrals only after 1100.⁷⁷ Archdeacons, hardly known in England before 1066, were a feature of the church introduced after the Norman Conquest, seemingly from Normandy by Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury. By about 1100 most archdeacons were territorial, i.e. they were Archdeacon of Bedford, or Archdeacon of Wiltshire or Archdeacon of Oxford.⁷⁸ In the enforcement of church discipline over clergy and laity they were the bishops' right-hand officers, and not infrequently their nephews. And they generally became very rich. When the learned and clever John of Salisbury wrote his satirical moralising work on politics, the *Policraticus* in the 1150s, he made an overblown attack on ambition, writ large in church and secular affairs, and on its sister vice of avarice. Quite a lot of what he wrote was clearly targeted on archdeacons.⁷⁹ Then in 1164–66 he wrote to his old friend Nicholas of Sigillo, formerly a royal clerk, who had talked down archdeacons,